



GENERAL INTRODUCTION

THE EVERGREEN: A NORTHERN SEASONAL (1895-1896/97)

“Four seasons fill the measure of the year;
There are four seasons in the mind of man.”
Epigraph to *The Evergreen*, from John Keats’s “The Human Seasons”



Evergreen flyleaf ornament.

Published as a semi-annual by [Patrick Geddes](#) & Colleagues in the Lawnmarket of Edinburgh and by T. Fisher Unwin in London, *The Evergreen: A Northern Seasonal* was produced out of interlacing connections as complex as those of the Celtic knot work it showcased. These include arts and crafts, Scottish Renaissance, Pan-Celticism, and an urban renewal enhanced with what we would today call an ecological concern with nature and green space in the modern world. With local roots and international aspirations, *The Evergreen* sought to express a message of social regeneration by uniting art and science in the architecture of the page and the built environment. Expressed in Geddes’s triad of “sympathy, synergy, and synthesis,” this vision was embodied in the emblem of [three flying black birds](#), each carrying a leaf in its beak, which decorated the openings of *The Evergreen*’s four volumes (Burbridge 73). As Regina Hewitt observes, Geddes conceptualized *The Evergreen* “as a resource for—and

perhaps even a manifesto of—cultural evolution” (“[Patrick Geddes](#)”). Although *The Evergreen*’s print run lasted less than two years, this innovative, interdisciplinary magazine had far-reaching impact.

In his [review for *Pall Mall Magazine*](#), Israel Zangwill highlighted the importance of the local and the social to this illustrated periodical. “Till I went to Edinburgh,” he wrote, “I did not know what the ‘Evergreen’ was. Newspaper criticisms had given me vague misrepresentations of a Scottish ‘Yellow Book’ calling itself a ‘Northern Seasonal’” (327). It was only by walking through the slums of Old Edinburgh’s Lawnmarket—then considered to be among Europe’s worst—and seeing the urban renewal and revitalization that Geddes’s projects were engendering, that Zangwill began to understand *The Evergreen* as the portable aesthetic expression of a larger socio-political vision. A botanist by training and profession, Geddes was deeply committed to the interpenetration of art and science, and to the potential of art to inspire, express, and regenerate culture and society. *The Evergreen*’s participation in the Celtic Revival was thus directed toward building an invigorated modern society, rather than nostalgically recuperating an idealized past. As Murdo Macdonald observes, “For Geddes, concern for the future implied an understanding of the dynamics of the past, which he brought to bear on his own time in his commitment to education, social justice, and ecological awareness” (69). This is why the symbol of the evergreen tree is so important to the magazine and its community.

As the [Prospectus](#) for the first volume announced in May 1895, the publishing project took “form among a group of younger Scottish writers and painters, students and men of science, whom historic sympathies and common aims are bringing back to Old Edinburgh” (3). In 1890, Geddes’s historic sympathies (and his wife Anna’s inheritance) led him to purchase and rebuild Ramsay Garden for both private flats and student accommodation, as part of his urban renewal effort in Old Town Edinburgh (Ferguson, “Patrick Geddes” 58). Ramsay Lodge had been the home of Allan Ramsay, the eighteenth-century poet whose *Ever Green: A Collection of Scots Poems, Wrote by the Ingenious Before 1600* (1724), inspired the title of Geddes’s own organ of Celtic continuity and renewal, *The Evergreen: A Northern Seasonal*. The first [Prospectus](#) for

the magazine drew attention to “the special relevance” of Ramsay’s original house and book “to the present venture,” which was likewise “aiming at a return to local tradition and living nature” (3). Ramsay Garden became home to university students, artists and intellectuals (including the Geddes family), as well as the site of the Old Edinburgh School of Art, which opened under the directorship of John Duncan in 1892 (Ferguson, “Dear Guru” 8).

The Evergreen is the material manifestation of the historic sympathies, architectural development, and school of art centred in Ramsay Garden in Edinburgh Old Town. Geddes commissioned the teachers and students to paint murals featuring legendary and historic Scottish stories and people on the walls of his private flat and the common room of the university residence. Helen Hay, who taught classes in Celtic ornament at the Old Edinburgh School of Art with Duncan, worked with Nellie Baxter to create Celtic-style ornaments to frame the Ramsay Garden murals and decorate the pages of *The Evergreen* (Young 74). The School of Art also created stained glass windows and paintings for the Outlook Tower, including a frieze for the Edinburgh Room (Kemplay 18). Murals created by Duncan, Charles Mackie, and others for Ramsay Garden and the Outlook Tower were re-designed as black-and-white illustrations for the magazine (Willsdon 322). Victor Branford’s [review for *The Bookman*](#) claimed that the magazine’s “decorations are the visible link that connect the *Evergreen* with the builder’s craft” (89). As a member of the editorial team, Branford understood that, as the first [Prospectus](#) announced, “the revival of Celtic ornament and design” was not only “a special feature” of *The Evergreen*, but also integral to its larger cultural mission (3). Over the course of its print run, *Evergreen* artists display their skilled development of a uniquely modern, Celtic-inspired form of ornamentation. While the first volume in Spring 1895 offers a decorative mishmash of Celtic, contemporary, and printer’s stock in its page ornaments, by Winter 1896-97, masterful Celtic design integrates the final volume’s overall design and theme (Kooistra, [Database](#)).

The Outlook Tower, a short distance from Ramsay Garden on Castle Hill, was an eighteenth-century observatory that Geddes had purchased and renovated as a three-dimensional encyclopedia of history and an experiential mode of understanding the

world. As Wouter Van Acker observes, Geddes “kept its original function as an optical device literally and metaphorically” (50). The floors progressed in a series of telescoping stages from the broadness of the global to the specificity of the local; the top level contained a camera obscura that projected a living image of Edinburgh itself at the moment of viewing (this feature continues to the present day). The Outlook Tower became the publishing centre for Patrick Geddes & Colleagues, founded by [Geddes](#), Duncan, and [William Sharp](#) in 1895. In addition to *The Evergreen*, the firm also published The Celtic Library, featuring works by the popular [Fiona Macleod](#) (aka William Sharp) and other revivalists, as well as editions of Celtic literature by Sharp and his wife Elizabeth. Each of these books was embellished with the device of the [three flying black birds](#) first featured in *The Evergreen*, and had covers designed by Helen Hay (Ferguson, “Patrick Geddes” 107).

When Sharp, an author and editor with experience bringing out his own magazine, [The Pagan Review](#) (1892), met Geddes in 1894, he proposed they publish a periodical together as an organ of the Celtic revival. The moment was opportune, as Geddes and his students had published *The New Evergreen* as a Christmas book the previous December. Sharp and Geddes combined forces to bring out *The Evergreen: A Northern Seasonal* as a four-part serial that functioned both as an advertising mechanism for The Celtic Library and as a manifesto for the Scottish Renaissance and Celtic revival. Like the Outlook Tower from whence it came, *The Evergreen* might also be viewed as “a symbol of resistance and a challenge to London’s hegemony as a centre of innovation and cultural production” (Hanna 6). Charles Mackie’s [coloured leather bindings](#) featured a stylized tree on the front, symbolizing the *Evergreen*’s organic view of human life and history, and an embossed pattern of rampant lions and thistles on the back, expressive of the Scottish Renaissance the magazine heralded (Beatty). The *Evergreen* was printed at the local firm of Constable, where proprietor Walter B. Blaikie (1848-1928) was Edinburgh’s leading art- and-crafts printer. With his careful attention to paper, type, ink, and layout, Blaikie “revolutionized the trade in the city” (Bowe and Cumming 43). Blaikie used the Old-Style Antique font cut by the Edinburgh-based Miller and Richard Foundry for *The Evergreen* ([Martin](#)). While letterpress and layout were set up locally, however, most of the magazine’s artwork seems to have been sent to London for photo-

mechanical reproduction by Hare & Company, Draughtsmen and Engravers. This engraver's signature appears on many, though not all, of the *Evergreen's* full-page pictures and ornaments. According to Megan Ferguson's archival research, the publishers also paid bills from the Orr Photo-engraving Company, a local Edinburgh firm ("Patrick Geddes" 115). However, this company does not appear to have signed its engravings for the magazine.

In the [Envoy](#) to Volume 4: Winter, Patrick Geddes and William Macdonald describe *The Evergreen* as "the initial outcome" of a "collective effort" by a "little group of townsmen and gownsmen" who had been gathering for ten years to rebuild and reimagine their city and the lives of its inhabitants. The authors claim that "in the semi-collegial group...there has been no central authority, still less constraint; without individual or continuous editorship, its artists and writers have each been a law unto themselves" (155). Elisa Grilli's archival research into the business operations of [Patrick Geddes & Colleagues](#), however, indicates a somewhat more formal arrangement, with [Sharp](#) working as editor with the assistance of Lillian S. Rhea and accountant John Ross, while Victor Branford and James Cadenhead directed the artistic contents; although he sat on the editorial board, Geddes only voted to break ties (27). While contributors included artists and writers from France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Ireland, and England as well as Scotland, most had a connection to Edinburgh and the Geddes circle in some way. As was typical of the aesthetic magazines of the 1890s, those involved in the production of *The Evergreen* were also contributors. Geddes averaged two to three contributions per volume; Duncan averaged two full-page illustrations as well as a number of textual decorations. [Sharp](#) contributed to all but the Winter issue, while his avatar, [Fiona Macleod](#), averaged three items per season. *The Evergreen* helped launch Macleod's career as a popular writer of Celtic stories, just as Macleod's popularity kept Patrick Geddes and Company solvent (Ferguson, "Patrick Geddes" 118). In the long term, according to Cairns Craig's research on Scottish modernism, *The Evergreen* had a significant impact on the development of "an alternative tradition that could provide a critique of current modernity, while providing a route to alternative modernity" in Scottish literature and art (763).

From the start, *The Evergreen: A Northern Seasonal* pushed against the definitional boundaries of a serial publication, just as today it challenges the critical category of “little magazine.” Although sometimes described as a quarterly, its four volumes were actually published semi-annually, with “the first series”—anticipating a never-realized second series—intended to “be complete in little over a year and a half,” according to the [Prospectus](#) (4). As “A Northern Seasonal,” each volume was dedicated to a single season of the year. These did not follow the Georgian calendar sequence, however, but rather the “natural time” of the Celts, who determined the seasons by equinoxes and solstices. The spring and autumn equinoxes roughly correlate to the first two volumes, and the summer and winter solstices to the last two. However, this publication schedule was loosely rather than rigidly observed. The Spring volume came out in May (rather than at the spring equinox in March) and the Autumn volume in the third week of October 1895 (rather than in September as planned, the time of the autumnal equinox). The issue dates of the Summer (June 1896) and Winter (December 1896) volumes roughly coincide with their respective solstices, so important to Celtic celebrations and rituals. The magazine’s international vision, multi-media expression, and socio-political agenda contest its categorization as the coterie publication of a marginal, avant-garde group for an elite audience. Drawing on *The Evergreen* as one of her examples, Evanghélia Stead challenges the critical concept of the “little magazine” as a term that warps the “material identity,” enduring impact, and formative modernity of these serials by implying limitation in size, scope, and influence (11). Instead, Stead argues, magazines such as *The Evergreen* and *The Yellow Book* in the United Kingdom, and the “petite revue” in France mark “an important shift in periodical creation” as well as in “media communication” (12). As Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker observe, such “[p]eriodicals functioned as points of reference, debate, and transmission at the heart of an internally variegated and often internationally connected counter-cultural sphere, or...network of cultural formations” (2).

Imogen Hart places *The Evergreen: A Northern Seasonal* in the arts-and-crafts tradition of magazines inaugurated with *The Century Guild Hobby Horse* (1884-1894) rather than the aesthetic or putatively decadent milieu of [The Yellow Book](#) (1894-97). Arguing that *The Evergreen* was inspired by the *Hobby Horse*, Hart cites the similar

“attention paid to the layout, the wide margins, and the quality of paper” (127). The same might be said, however, of the format for *The Yellow Book*, which likewise aspired to be book-like in form, artistic quality, and permanence ([Prospectus to Volume 1](#)). Certainly [reviewers](#) compared *The Evergreen* more often to *The Yellow Book* than to any other periodical of the day.

Unlike the *Hobby Horse*, which disavowed the involvement of artists in politics (Hart 135), or the *Yellow Book*, which professed to the values of “art for arts’ sake,” *The Evergreen: A Northern Seasonal* was deeply ideological in conception and expression. For Geddes, who established the arts-and-crafts movement in Scotland with the founding of the Edinburgh Social Union in 1884, decorative art was fundamentally political in its connections to historical tradition, social housing, and building a better collective future. As Duncan Macmillan notes, “the wish to see art somehow integrated with society, not simply as a commodity, but in the service of a moral ideal,” was a common theme in the arts-and-crafts movement. Its champions in Britain were William Morris and Walter Crane; “in Scotland,” Macmillan concludes, “it was Patrick Geddes” (271). Unlike Morris, however, Geddes was forward-looking and hopeful about modernity. For him, the arts-and-crafts movement was about continuity and renewal, not a return to the medieval past, and he was critical of Morris’s decision to produce luxury goods rather than improve workers’ homes and lives (Ferguson, “Patrick Geddes” 79). This view seems to have been shared by the Editorial Board of Patrick Geddes & Colleagues as a whole. The minutes of an early meeting, for instance, record sub-editor Lillian Rhea questioning the price point of 5 shillings per volume as indicative of commodity capitalism: “Do we not want to avoid the pit into which Morris fell with his books?” (Grilli 33). Despite an aggressive marketing campaign, however, the actual circulation of the periodical was small, with subscriptions dwindling with each number, and Geddes under-writing costs (Grilli 31). As the critic for *The Student* complained, the price was too high for university students, who would otherwise be among the magazine’s most eager consumers (Ferguson “Patrick Geddes,” 128)

The marketing and contents of *The Evergreen* are indicative of its political aspirations and international vision. It was here, as Ferguson points out, that the “Scots

Renascence” was first named and mooted, and here that Geddes called for cultural regeneration (“Patrick Geddes” 107). Geddes aimed for a wide distribution, sending out 2500 prospectuses for Volume 1, placing advertisements in international papers, and promoting the work to a network of publishers, booksellers, and universities across Scotland, England, Ireland, Europe, and North America (Grilli 33-34). Moreover, as Grilli’s archival research reveals, Geddes “paid for the services of Durrant’s Press Cuttings” as well as those of *Le Courrier de la presse* in order to receive advertisements and reviews from all the English and French papers (35). Although locally based, the range of contributors to *The Evergreen* was pan-Celtic and international, connecting to Celts in Europe as well as the British Isles. According to Ferguson, of the 65 contributors to the serial, 51% were Scottish, 18% unknown, 11% French, 7.5% English, 7.5% Irish, and 5% other (“Patrick Geddes” 113). As in *The Yellow Book*, some of the literature was published in French, rather than translated into English. *The Evergreen*’s bilingualism expressed the magazine’s role in the renewal of the “Auld Alliance” between France and Scotland, as well as Edinburgh’s cosmopolitan claims and continental connections.

Like the *Yellow Book*, *The Evergreen* published full-page black-and-white images as stand-alone works of art, rather than illustrations of the text; each was published with the title and artist’s name on the facing page. In contrast to *The Yellow Book*, which insisted on the independence of its artwork, *The Evergreen* tellingly named its pictures “decorations,” suggesting their overall relationship to the architecture of the magazine and its contents (Beatty). Also unlike *The Yellow Book*, the *Evergreen* did not strictly segregate visual and verbal materials: its textual pages were decorated with ornamental head- and tail-pieces and initial letters (Kooistra [Database](#)). Inspired by illuminated manuscripts such as *The Book of Kells*, the *Evergreen*’s deliberate revival of Celtic art was a means of forging a modern future congruent with, but not replicative of, ancient cultural practices and identities (Kooistra, “Politics” 107). As Macmillan notes, the *Evergreen* ornaments have “distinct Celtic overtones, but the designs are often quite startlingly bold and modern looking” (297), a trait recognized at the time by others involved in Celtic revival. Published in Dublin at the end of 1898, *Celtic Christmas* reproduced some of *The Evergreen*’s ornaments from Volume 4: Winter (1896-97) as “excellent specimens of modern Celtic design” (Bowe and Cumming 97). A reviewer for

the *Irish Independent* praised the *Evergreen* for its spiritual qualities, as opposed to the “demonic” traits of *The Yellow Book* (Grilli 37). Some of the cross-currents of cultural expression between Edinburgh and Dublin at the turn of the twentieth century are also evident in [The Green Sheaf](#), an Irish Celtic Revival magazine published by Pamela Coleman Smith in 1903-1905. Notably, *The Green Sheaf* was distributed in London by [Elkin Mathews](#), John Lane’s former partner at The Bodley Head, who broke up the partnership over disagreements relating to the launch of *The Yellow Book* ([Boyd](#)).

Just as the editors planned to complete the first series of *The Evergreen: A Northern Seasonal* in four volumes, they also organized each [Table of Contents](#) into thematic quadrants, evoking the schematic visual knowledge production of Geddes’s “thinking machines” (Beatty). As Branford explained in his [review](#)-cum-apologia, this “fourfold division” aimed to express “the naturalistic” and “the humanistic view” in “a harmonious whole” (89-90). Like [Geddes](#), Branford was a botanist by training, but interdisciplinary by inclination and practice. In an age of increasing professionalization and xenophobia, *The Evergreen* was as much a call to interdisciplinarity and internationalism as it was a manifesto of the Celtic revival. As Konraad Claes points out, *The Evergreen* was “the only literary magazine of its day interested in sociology and natural history” (111). In addition to poetry, fiction, and pictures in each category, the periodical published essays about science (the Season “In Nature”); human experience (the Season “In Life”); history and culture (the Season “In the World”); and regional Scotland (the Season “In the North”). In each case, the season was explored literally as well as metaphorically. Each volume opened with a decorative title page evoking the season, followed by an ornamental almanac based on the four astrological signs associated with it. The dominant elements of the magazine overall were visual and poetic. According to Ferguson, the contents across the four volumes break down as follows: 32% full-page images; 30% poetry; 21% fiction; 12% non-fiction; 4% in French; and 1% other (113).

Not surprisingly, *The Evergreen: A Northern Seasonal* received mixed reviews during its short print run. The projected “second series” never emerged, partly due to lack of funds, partly because Geddes and Duncan undertook new commitments in connection

with the International Exhibition in Paris in 1900. Its vision and influence, however, remained “evergreen” throughout the twentieth century (Craig 765). Indeed, the periodical’s ongoing cultural importance is evident in a new *Evergreen*, “harking back to the *Evergreens* published by Allan Ramsay and Patrick Geddes,” launched by the Edinburgh Old Town Development Trust in September 2014 on the occasion of the Scottish referendum on national independence (Edinburgh). And as a magazine of art and literature capacious enough to include science, sociology, and civics in its pages, and courageous enough to combine aesthetics and ideology in its outlook, *The Evergreen: A Northern Seasonal* registers an innovative Scottish alternative to the avant-garde periodicals coming out of London at the fin-de-siècle.

A Note on the Text:

The marked-up digital edition of *The Evergreen: A Northern Seasonal* is based on material copies held in Ryerson University Library Archives and Special Collections and in a private collection. The flipbook version provided by the Internet Archive is based on the *Evergreen* volumes held at University of Toronto’s Fisher Rare Books Library. The differences among these copies are especially apparent in the bindings. Charles Mackie’s embossed leather bindings are visible only in the *Yellow Nineties*’ html and pdf versions, which are scanned from a private collection.

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