

PART THREE
1911-1914: NEW DIRECTIONS

CHAPTER VII
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BY 1911, *The New Age* had established its position as one of the most important weeklies of the time. A leading article appearing in *The Spectator* that year paid tribute to the magazine and its writers:

We should like to take the opportunity of expressing our appreciation of the literary and journalistic ability with which *The New Age* is conducted. We disagree profoundly with its political, moral, social, and religious views, and often find in it articles which seem to us wrongheaded and unjust in a high degree. We should not be sincere, however, if we would not admit, as journalists, the courage and independence of those who conduct it.¹

In a contemporary article concerning periodicals of the time, C. K. Ogden indicated that *The New Age* was of considerable importance in shaping the policies of the Labour Party,² and the attitude of many non-Socialists towards its political commentaries is indicated in a letter to Orage from Stephen Reynolds: 'I don't think I agree with your policy—it's hard to know—and I'm certainly not a Socialist in any immediate sense of the word, but

¹ Quoted in *NA*, IX (4 May 1911), 22.

² In *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*, vol. XXXVII, no. 2 (Tübingen, 1913); quoted in *NA*, XIII (30 Oct. 1913), 800.

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may I say how much I have appreciated your facing the facts instead of inventing political fictions? Whether one agrees with *The New Age* or not, one does look forward to it.¹ The circulation was not strictly sectarian; among the authors not ostensibly interested in partisan politics who read the magazine were D. H. Lawrence, Ford Madox Ford, Harold Monro, and Wyndham Lewis (who said he was 'a great admirer of *The New Age* ').²

During these years, political differences led to the founding of two new political weeklies, both edited by former contributors to *The New Age*, and the circulation and financial position of the magazine suffered as a result. Hilaire Belloc, who never agreed with its programme, had contributed in order to expose political chicanery and to point out what he considered the imbecilities of Socialism; in 1911 he founded *The Eye-Witness*, hoping thereby to promulgate his views more effectively. Cecil Chesterton became the editor when, in 1912, this journal became *The New Witness*. During 1907 and 1908, he had written the 'Notes of the Week' in *The New Age*; when he, G. K. Chesterton (his brother), and Belloc left the magazine, it lost three of its most brilliant and entertaining political writers.³

The New Age itself was largely responsible for the appearance of its most significant rival, *The New Statesman*. For political reasons which will be discussed at greater length in the following part of this study, Orage was highly critical of the policies of the Fabian Society. In

¹ *Letters of Stephen Reynolds*, ed. Harold Wright (London, 1923), p. 130.

² M. D. Eder, letter to *The New English Weekly*, I (21 Apr. 1932), 20; *NA*, XXIII (27 June 1918), 144; *NA*, XIV (8 Jan. 1914), 319.

³ Belloc, however, contributed to the magazine occasionally during the following ten years.

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1912, when he, A. J. Penty, and S. G. Hobson formulated a political theory which came to be known as Guild Socialism, *The New Age* began to advocate radically new solutions to the problems which had given rise to Socialism. Traditional Socialists were left without a weekly journal to support their cause, and consequently, in 1913, *The New Statesman* was founded, with the blessings of Shaw and the Fabian Society. The political editor was Clifford Sharp, a former Director of The New Age Company and a regular contributor; the literary editor was J. C. Squire, former poetry reviewer and parody-writer for *The New Age*. Partisan feeling ran high when the journal appeared; Orage is reputed to have said it was ‘worse than the *Nation*—the damnation!’¹ And H. G. Wells, writing in *The New Witness*, said: ‘One of their best writers is almost good enough for *The New Age*. . . . Ideas! There is not so much as the tenth of an Orage in the whole enterprise.’²

Undoubtedly London journalism was enriched by the appearance of these two weeklies, but their immediate effect on *The New Age* was to increase its financial difficulties. By August, 1913, its circulation had decreased to 4,500.³ In the face of these circumstances, aggravated by financial difficulties, Orage was able to keep the quality of the magazine virtually unimpaired. When the funds realized from the incorporation of *The New Age* dwindled, he secured private financial support; as older writers left the magazine, he found brilliant young contributors,

¹ Mairret, p. 71.

² Quoted in *NA*, XIII (1 May 1913), 18.

³ *NA*, XIII (14 Aug. 1913), 458. The price of the magazine was increased from threepence to sixpence in Nov. 1913, with the result that the circulation decreased by one thousand during the following year.

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whose inexperience was only a short-lived disadvantage as a result of his painstaking care in training them. At the same time, the size of the magazine was increased from twenty-four to thirty-two pages.

A description of its contents and a list of the contributors during this period will be helpful in indicating its position in relation to other weeklies of the time. Political commentary, economics, and foreign affairs occupied about half of its pages, the remainder being devoted to discussions of the arts, reviews, and creative works. 'Notes of the Week' and 'Foreign Affairs', written by Orage and J. M. Kennedy respectively, were regular features. (The Foreign Office is said to have exerted pressure for the removal of Kennedy's predecessor, C. H. Norman.) Kennedy, a former reporter for the *Daily Telegraph* who was reputed to know all of the languages of Europe, was an assiduous reader of foreign periodicals, and few articles of political significance escaped his attention. G. D. H. Cole, Rowland Kenney (the first editor of the *Daily Herald*), and S. G. Hobson were among those who regularly contributed articles on politics; the most renowned of the contributors in the field of economic analysis were J. A. Hobson (to whom Keynes was indebted for his theory of chronic underconsumption) and Arthur Kitson (who also contributed to the *Financial Times*). A number of writers served intermittently as foreign correspondents during these years; Ernest A. Boyd and Upton Sinclair wrote on the United States, Marmaduke Pickthall on the Near East, Richard Aldington on Italy, and C. E. Bechhofer on Russia.

In securing contributors concerned with the arts, *The New Age* was exceptionally successful. T. E. Hulme and E. Belfort Bax kept readers informed of recent trends in philosophy; A. M. Ludovici and J. M. Kennedy, both



8. A PAIL OF SLOPS by Walter Sickert

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engaged at the time in the translation of Nietzsche's complete works, contributed expositions and contemporary applications of his philosophy. Religious topics were discussed by a number of writers, including Conrad Noel, Allen Upward, and Orage himself. One of the most significant features of the magazine was its discussion of art during these years of conflict between the traditionalists and the importers of Continental innovations. Walter Sickert, as the art reviewer, proved himself an articulate and entertaining defender of the older school, while T. E. Hulme expounded the philosophic basis of aniconic design. After F. S. Flint ceased contributing to *The New Age* in 1910, J. C. Squire served briefly as the poetry reviewer; his discussions were of less significance, however, than those of Ezra Pound, who contributed thirty-six articles to the magazine during these years.

Of these contributors, four (Orage, Kennedy, A. E. Randall, and Beatrice Hastings) wrote approximately one-third of the magazine's contents each week. A. E. Randall, in addition to his articles on psychology, wrote a weekly column entitled 'Views and Reviews', and, under the pseudonym 'John Francis Hope', acted as the dramatic critic from 1912 onwards. (Shaw said of him that *The New Age* has had the rare fortune to secure the services of a critic of the theatre who understands what is happening on the stage technically.)¹ Beatrice Hastings displayed amazing versatility as reviewer, poet, and satirist; she was most effective, albeit unnecessarily malicious, in the last capacity. The sphere of her contributions was gradually decreased, and, in 1913, Orage replaced her critical columns with his own 'Readers and Writers'. These staff members were not responsible for the policy of the magazine, which was the prerogative of Orage, but they

¹ NA, XXVIII (13 Jan. 1921), 128.

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provided that core of regular features necessary for a weekly and discharged that function with unusual ability. As the other contributors were not usually pledged to submit articles each week, they wrote only when they had something to say, an arrangement which must have been partially responsible for the high quality of their contributions.

Some mention must be made of the occasional contributors, numbering over six hundred during the magazine's history, who played an important part in its development. Between 1911 and 1914, they included T. Sturge Moore, Rupert Brooke, John Rodker, J. E. Flecker, Wyndham Lewis, Stephen Graham, Storm Jameson, G. W. Russell, John Cowper and Llewelyn Powys, Marinetti, and John Middleton Murry. Many of them were unknown aspirants to literary success; others, like T. Sturge Moore, contributed because no other journal was willing to publish some of their works;¹ a few, like Marinetti, used the magazine's hospitality to expound their own gospels of Art and Life. Their contributions were important in that they provided a cross-section of contemporary literary activity.

The preceding lists of contributors provide a general picture of the scope of the magazine during these years. Many of their contributions are still interesting in and of themselves or in relation to specific disciplines, but have no place in a general discussion of the magazine itself. In the following pages we shall be concerned first with the new cultural trends which asserted themselves in *The New Age* during these years and their relation to the literary

¹ In a letter to *The New English Weekly*, VI (15 Nov. 1934), 120, T. Sturge Moore says that no one else was willing to publish his 'Aesthetic Aims', which appeared in an 'Art Supplement' to *The New Age*, VI (7 Apr. 1910), 6-7.

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development of the period. Next we shall examine in detail the discussions of poetry that appeared in the magazine between 1908 and 1914, and their importance in the development of the new noetic methods that emerged during these years. And finally, we shall survey the frenzied outburst of artistic activity just before the war.