

## CHAPTER III

### ORAGE'S EDITORIAL METHODS

IN discussing the development of *The New Age*, S. G. Hobson says:

The reader cannot fail to be impressed with the editorial grip and sense instinctively shown in the earliest issues. It is said that a good editor never writes a line; certainly he will be judged by the paper as a whole and not by what he himself writes. In these early numbers the professional will notice amateur touches, inequalities in literary values, and the like, but they do not detract from the high editorial level immediately attained.<sup>1</sup>

This achievement was a product of the joint efforts of Orage and Jackson. It is difficult to say which of the magazine's features were the outcome of Jackson's influence. In view of the form that the magazine was later to take, it seems that he wanted to make it similar in format and content to the other political weeklies of the time. He thought that if *The New Age* appealed to middle-class Socialists, and if the amount of advertising in the magazine could be increased (advertisements being a prerequisite for profits), its financial problems would be solved. Orage, on the other hand, envisioned *The New Age* as an experiment in a new form of journalism, a weekly which would devote as much attention to the arts as it did to political commentary. He disliked the onerous task of securing advertisements, preferring to rely upon gifts from benefactors who did not attempt to influence the policy of the magazine.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Pilgrim to the Left* (London, 1938), p. 140.

<sup>2</sup> Mairet, pp. 48-9.

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By the end of 1907, the political opinions of the two editors were diverging. In that year and in 1908, Holbrook Jackson was a candidate for the Fabian Executive; although he was not elected, he seems to have gained wide support in the Society as a whole. Orage, on the other hand, was collaborating with Cecil Chesterton, Clifford Sharp, Wells, and others, in a political 'cave' intent upon overthrowing the conservative leadership of the Executive.<sup>1</sup> In a 'Private and Confidential' letter to H. G. Wells, he said that they should consider 'whether the Fabian Society has not ceased to be the medium of free discussion; whether, in fact, it has not become so dogmatic as to make its future as an intelligent organ of discussion and enquiry very doubtful'.<sup>2</sup> Orage felt that the limitations of the Society should not be those of the magazine, and that *The New Age* would be of more value to the Socialist movement as a whole if it criticized Fabian policies. The working classes and the labour unions represented an effective political force through which Socialism could be achieved; he had more faith in their efforts than in those of the middle-class Fabian Society.

But Orage did not use *The New Age* as a platform for the expression of his own political theories when he became its sole editor in January 1908. Subscribing to the precept that a good editor never writes a line,<sup>3</sup> he devoted his energies to obtaining contributions from the best writers of the age. The methods he used in doing so,

<sup>1</sup> Mrs Cecil Chesterton, *The Chestertons* (London, 1941), p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Letter to H. G. Wells dated 9 June 1907.

<sup>3</sup> Mairet, p. 47. For want of a staff member able to write the 'Notes of the Week', Orage was forced to do so himself after 1909. His literary column, 'Readers and Writers', commenced two years after Arnold Bennett ceased contributing 'Books and Persons' (1911); in the interim it had become increasingly apparent that no one but Orage could fill the gap left by Bennett's departure.

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according to Arnold Bennett, help explain the magazine's success. In discussing the problems confronting periodicals, Bennett says that the most serious one is

the exceeding difficulty of obtaining the right contributors. English editors have never appreciated the importance of this. As English manufacturers sit still and wait for customers, so English editors sit still and wait for contributors. The interestingness of *The New Age*, if I may make an observation which the editorial pen might hesitate to make, is due to the fact that contributors have always been searched for zealously and indefatigably. They have been compelled to come in—sometimes with a lasso, sometimes with a revolver, sometimes with a lure of flattery; but they have been captured.<sup>1</sup>

When he found either achievement or exceptional promise in the works of a contemporary author, Orage took the unusual step of asking him to contribute to the magazine. Allen Upward says that he was 'almost the only editor who has approached me of his own accord to ask for contributions, and he offered me an absolutely free hand'.<sup>2</sup> It is probable that the single contributions of Galsworthy, John Drinkwater, J. E. Flecker, Rupert Brooke, and others were made in response to editorial requests. Later, when editing *The New English Weekly*, Orage sent approximately one hundred complimentary copies to prospective contributors each week, with requests for comments or contributions;<sup>3</sup> this serves as some index of his earlier methods.

The first issues of *The New Age* to appear under

<sup>1</sup> NA, VII (8 Sept. 1910), 443.

<sup>2</sup> '20/1631' [Allen Upward], *Some Personalities* (London, 1921), p. 242.

<sup>3</sup> Letter from Orage to Ezra Pound dated 29 Oct. 1932. I am indebted to Mr Pound for allowing me to examine his letters from Orage.

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Orage's editorship testify to his success in obtaining contributors. In response to a request for a discussion of his objections to Socialism, G. K. Chesterton wrote an article entitled 'Why I Am Not a Socialist', which appeared in the issue of 4 January 1908. The following issue contained an article 'About Chesterton and Belloc' by H. G. Wells. Chesterton and Belloc both replied, only to be routed by Shaw's brilliant analysis of the 'Chesterbelloc', that fabulous, four-legged pantomime creature which claimed that it was the *Zeitgeist*.<sup>1</sup> The controversy, one of the most significant in their incessant political combat, continued for several months and broke out again later in the year. It was carefully planned and sustained by Orage; his suggestions to the combatants that they reply at each stage of the debate were accompanied by advance proofs of the latest article.<sup>2</sup> Their contributions were always printed exactly as written, which is not always the case in journalistic publication. Orage was quick to realize that 'established writers hate to have their "copy" meddled with. There are too many clever sub-editors who like an article to appear as they want it and not as the writer wants it. Orage would have none of it. The article was never touched by blue pencil, even if it ran two or three lines over the column.'<sup>3</sup>

Shaw, Wells, Chesterton, and Belloc were not paid for their contributions, a fact which testifies both to their generosity and to their opinion of Orage. Ideally, an editor is able to pay all of his contributors, roughly in proportion to the quality of their work; however, as *The*

<sup>1</sup> 'Belloc and Chesterton', *NA*, II (15 Feb. 1908), 309-11.

<sup>2</sup> Orage's letters to Wells dated 24 June and 17 Nov. 1908, contained such proofs; it is reasonable to assume that this courtesy was extended to Shaw, Belloc, and Chesterton.

<sup>3</sup> S. G. Hobson, *Pilgrim to the Left*, pp. 140-1.



2. MR G. K. CHESTERTON by Tom Titt

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*New Age* was operated at an annual loss of over one thousand pounds,<sup>1</sup> this was impossible. And, indeed, it does not seem to have been necessary, for many were willing to contribute without payment. There were several reasons for this: Socialists wanted to do what they could to forward their cause; some admired the magazine and its audience, considering it the ideal medium for the publication of their works; and still others contributed because of their admiration of Orage. Perhaps the most important factor, suggests S. G. Hobson, was that writers were free to express their convictions in *The New Age*; they were willing to forgo payment in return for intellectual freedom.

Whilst it is assuredly a proof of disinterestedness that . . . these busy and well-established authors should write for love of adventure, I draw another conclusion: that the best work is unpaid: that no commercial value can be attached to it. At the time I was doing a great deal of well-paid technical and commercial journalism; I dictated every word and damned it heartily. What I did for *The New Age* was infinitely harder work and infinitely more enjoyable. Nor could the observer fail to notice the joyous light-heartedness of the *New Age* writers when they foregathered. . . . You cannot appraise a revolution in guineas.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> NA, XI (26 Sept. 1912), 525-6; XIII (14 Aug. 1913), 458. 'The New Age Press' was incorporated in 1908, with £8,200 capital; it was seriously in debt when the stockholders liquidated in 1917. The company's financial records are preserved in the Public Records Office. Most of the subscribers to the first stock issue purchased five shares or less; only one purchased more than one hundred shares, indicating that during its early years *The New Age* enjoyed widespread support among Socialists. The chief financial supporters of *The New Age* in later years were Lewis Wallace, James A. Allan (later Lord Allan, of Glasgow), and Sir Henry Slessor.

<sup>2</sup> *Pilgrim to the Left*, pp. 145-6.

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The intellectual freedom of *The New Age* was part of its declared policy. In an editorial concluding the first year of its publication, Orage wrote:

If the social revolution which both Socialists and the better sort of non-Socialists alike desire to see is to be brought about peacefully by the persuasion of the intelligence (and only so will a revolution succeed), it will be, we are more and more convinced, by frankly and fully discussing now before the tide is on us all the outstanding, obscure, and vexing problems associated with the revolutionary propaganda, and visibly arising in its wake.

To this end, friend and enemy of Socialism alike will find the need more and more insistent of some neutral ground where intelligences may meet on equal terms. . . . We shall therefore continue to invite and welcome discussion even when, as sometimes happens, our own cherished convictions are the first to be challenged.<sup>1</sup>

Many were puzzled (and some Socialists were irritated) by Orage's editorial tolerance. According to Belloc, it was not without significance in the history of English journalism. In dedicating his book *The Free Press* to Orage, he wrote: 'You were, I think, the pioneer, in its modern form at any rate, of the Free Press in this country. I well remember the days when one used to write to *The New Age* simply because one knew it to be the only paper in which the truth with regard to our corrupt politics, or indeed with regard to any powerful evil, could be told.'<sup>2</sup> With characteristic pungency, Pound states the difference between Orage's policy and that of other editors of the time:

*The New Age* permits one to express beliefs which are in

<sup>1</sup> NA, II (25 Apr. 1908), 503.

<sup>2</sup> 'Prefatory Letter to A. R. Orage', *The Free Press* (London, 1918), p. v.

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direct opposition to those held by the editing staff. In this, *The New Age* sets a most commendable example to certain other periodicals which not only demand all writers in their columns shall turn themselves into a weak and puling copy of the editorial board, but even try to damage one's income if one ventures to express contrary beliefs in the columns of other papers.<sup>1</sup>

Believing that 'discussion, after all, is the rational remedy for everything',<sup>2</sup> Orage opened the columns of the magazine to all who fulfilled his two basic editorial requirements: that they write sincerely, and write well.<sup>3</sup> His confidence that truth would emerge from free discussion, and his belief that 'the persuasion of the intelligence' was the only valid basis of social change, indicate clearly the influence of Plato on his thought.

He himself was always ready to instigate discussions if no one disagreed with the opinions of imposing contributors. 'He had the art-finesse if you like-of setting the roaring wild beasts at one another and realizing the value of their later thoughts,' says one contributor. 'They were stimulated by opposition exactly as footballers and prize-fighters and race-horses.'<sup>4</sup> The significance of T. E. Hulme's articles on 'Modern Artists',<sup>5</sup> for example, cannot be fully understood unless seen in relation to the series by Walter Sickert appearing at the same time. This

<sup>1</sup> NA, XVI (14 Jan. 1915), 277.

<sup>2</sup> NA, XIV (8 Jan. 1914), 307.

<sup>3</sup> NA, IV (28 June 1909), 280. There is a remarkable correlation between Orage's statement of his editorial criteria and one of Ezra Pound's comments on the magazine fifty years later: 'No honest opinion clearly expressed was refused a hearing' (Interview, July 1959).

<sup>4</sup> Letter from Alfred Newsome dated 31 May 1960.

<sup>5</sup> NA, XIV & XV (16 Jan.-9 July 1914). Reprinted in *Further Speculations*, ed. Sam Hynes (Minneapolis, Minn., 1955).

controversy, like that between Shaw, Wells, Chesterton, and Belloc, was a result of editorial planning. Contrary to custom, contributors could not expect immunity from attacks within the magazine. Some of them, as a result of such attacks, criticized Orage (and the magazine) ever after. Such are the liabilities of freedom of expression, which it is perhaps best to recognize as inevitable and to evaluate in light of its ultimate advantages.

It was Orage’s hope that by stimulating and co-ordinating the abilities of the contributors, he would be able to find solutions to all of the outstanding political, economic, social, and cultural problems of his time. It would be more accurate to say that he sought a single solution to these problems, for he was attempting to find a theory under which they could all be subsumed. No proposed solution to economic problems, for example, would satisfy him unless it solved the literary problems related to it, such as the proliferation of inferior literature and the financial difficulties of serious writers. He also required that such a proposal be based on a coherent philosophy of man, and that it take into account spiritual as well as social problems. And finally, he insisted that it be based on common sense. He defined common sense as

a grip upon reality which never weakens even when the substance is of the very thinnest. In the simplest form I should say that common sense is the successful resolution of the mind to hold nothing true that is not implicit in the common mind. . . . The brilliant common sense to which I have often referred as the ambition of *The New Age* is not, in my interpretation, the discovery of anything new; it is the rediscovery of what everybody knows but needs to be reminded that he knows.<sup>1</sup>

The religious idealism that was manifest early in

<sup>1</sup> NA, XXI (20 Sept. 1917), 447.

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Orage's life did not disappear when, in 1900, he turned to more immediate problems: it was simply transferred to them. His Promethean objective and his confidence in the possibility of solving all problems rationally were based upon a religious hypothesis:

Intellectually, as I have observed before, we are honourably bound to agnosticism. But this does not make impossible certain hopeful guesses or imaginative hypotheses, one of which is this: that in time we shall find a reason for everything. I believe that we are not so far off the discovery of a few more 'reasons', as materialists imagine. . . . On the supposition—purely supposition, note—that there is an 'intention', discoverable by and, in the long run, agreeable to, human reason—of which 'intention,' moreover, we and our reason are a part—a modified doctrine of the absolute in matters of ethics would certainly be necessary. And without such a doctrine anarchism, it appears to me, is inevitable.<sup>1</sup>

There would be no political or economic solution to the world's problems, he often said, while the spiritual solution remained in doubt.

The comprehensiveness of Orage's objective explains the inclusiveness of *The New Age*. Under his editorship, it contained considerably more discussion of art, literature, and philosophy than it had in 1907, leading some Socialists to criticize it for not remaining exclusively political. 'We are sometimes told by the old Socialist buccaneers,' wrote Orage in 1909, 'that *The New Age* is too damned literary, or too damned aesthetic, or too damned something or other. But the fact is that Socialism in *The New Age* is losing its bony statistical aspect and putting on the colours of vivid life.'<sup>2</sup> Obviously his programme could not succeed unless it incorporated the best of contemporary

<sup>1</sup> NA, XIV (20 Nov. 1913), 81.      <sup>2</sup> NA, IV (28 Jan. 1909), 280.

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thought from a number of fields. Occasionally he commented on the proportion of the magazine devoted to each aspect of culture and indicated the balance that he hoped to achieve. In 1913, to cite one instance, he editorially sought contributors who could keep the magazine informed of recent developments in science, an Italian literary correspondent (there were regular contributors responsible for nearly all of the other languages of Europe), and someone with ‘a talent for expository philosophy’ (as T. E. Hulme’s indolence had left a gap in this respect).<sup>1</sup> From time to time there were special supplements to the magazine on such subjects as Architecture, Sociology, Town Planning, and the Art of the Theatre.

Intellectual freedom and breadth of scope, however, were not the only ingredients necessary for the achievement of Orage’s aims; these provided only ‘the freedom of the explosive which is not confined in a cannon, spending itself incalculably in all directions’, as Shaw said in discussing the magazine.<sup>2</sup> They required the co-ordination and cross-fertilization, the unification and elaboration that are essential if a periodical is to be edited rather than agglomerated. It was in performing this function that Orage’s editorial abilities were most evident. He integrated the efforts of contributors by meeting with them frequently and introducing them to one another, by creating literary and political circles similar to those of the eighteenth-century coffee houses. On Monday afternoons, for example, he could always be found in the basement of the ABC restaurant in Chancery Lane, where he read the proof sheets of Thursday’s issue in the company of the contributors. When these sessions ended at about six

<sup>1</sup> *NA*, XIV (18 Dec. 1913), 211.

<sup>2</sup> *Pen Portraits and Reviews* (London, 1932), p. 42.

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o'clock, recalls Paul Selver, a few of them might accompany him to his flat near the Safe Deposit.

Sometimes we began our circuit at an Italian restaurant near the corner of Gray's Inn Road. . . . The Holborn Empire was another of our haunts. It removed from us any taint of undue intellectualism which might have been left over from the conclave at the ABC. And we frequently wound up at the Café Royal which, in those days, was somewhat more of a café than it is now. . . . At a later date the Chinese Restaurant in Piccadilly Circus became one of Orage's resorts, and we used to meet Epstein there.<sup>1</sup>

Thus the discussions of politics and the arts that had commenced in the afternoon would often continue until late in the evening.

The names of those who attended these meetings are legion. In the early years, Clifford Sharp, Cecil Chesterton, S. G. Hobson, M. D. Eder, A. E. Randall, J. M. Kennedy, and Beatrice Hastings were often present; H. G. Wells and Arnold Bennett attended occasionally. Later, they were joined—some of them, replaced—by F. S. Flint, J. C. Squire, Katherine Mansfield, Ezra Pound, T. E. Hulme, Ramiro de Maeztu, Stephen Reynolds, and Ashley Dukes. And after the war, Edwin Muir, Herbert Read, Michael Arlen, Denis Saurat, Janko Lavrin, and Philip Mairet, to mention a few, attended regularly. There were also occasional visitors, such as Yeats, Epstein, Augustus John, Upton Sinclair, and R. S. Crane. 'These regular, informal meetings,' says Mairet, 'were a forum around Orage's editorial work, and were always essential to his method. Here he was frequently accessible to all who wrote for the paper; and it was these group discussions and dissensions that generated the intellectual

<sup>1</sup> *Orage and the New Age Circle* (London, 1959), pp. 48-9.

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tension which *The New Age* communicated to its readers throughout the country.<sup>1</sup>

One of the purposes of these meetings was to increase the intellectual scope of the contributors and to show them how their interests could be related to other fields of thought. Many whose interests were purely literary (Ezra Pound among them) received their first political and economic education in the Chancery Lane ABC. Orage hoped that each contributor would be led to see his objectives as a part of the whole magazine's policy. 'Politics, philosophy, literature, psychology—all cultural topics (and in this case *cultural* does not require inverted commas) were discussed,' says Janko Lavrin. 'One could not find so high a level of conversation anywhere else in London; one went away from each discussion with new ideas and new points of view.'<sup>2</sup>

In addition to the Monday afternoon meetings, there were weekly discussions at the Kardomah Café in Fleet Street and occasional lunches at the Sceptre restaurant.<sup>3</sup> At his table at the Café Royal, Orage was usually surrounded by a group of *New Age* contributors. On Tuesday evenings there was T. E. Hulme's renowned salon at 67 Frith Street; more than half of those who are mentioned as having attended were contributors.<sup>4</sup> Orage's occasional sallies to the Poetry Book Shop and Yeats's evenings provided him with additional contributors and fresh ideas.<sup>5</sup>

Unfortunately discussion, one of the most important

<sup>1</sup> Mairet, p. 46; and various contributors.

<sup>2</sup> Interview, Apr. 1960.

<sup>3</sup> Letter from R. S. Crane, 17 Feb. 1960; interview with Marie Rambert (Mrs Ashley Dukes), May 1960.

<sup>4</sup> Alun R. Jones, *The Life and Opinions of Thomas Ernest Hulme* (London, 1960), pp. 94-8 (and the sources he cites); H. J. Massingham, *Remembrance* (London, 1941), p. 33.

<sup>5</sup> NA, XIV (9 Apr. 1914), 722; NA, XIII (22 May 1913), 89.

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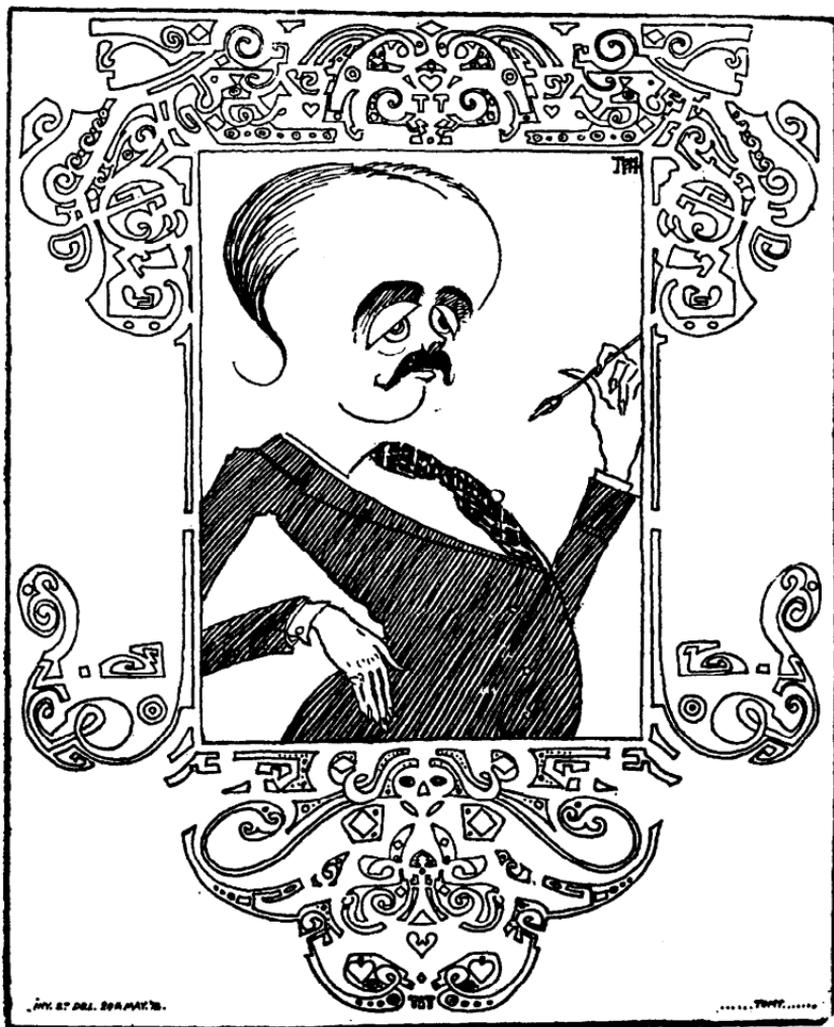
factors in the evolution of literature, is the least permanent. If there had been a Boswell present, we might know, for example, what Ezra Pound said to Edwin Muir and the extent to which T. E. Hulme was indebted to J. M. Kennedy, the intellectual Tory whose condemnation of post-Renaissance culture preceded Hulme's by a year.<sup>1</sup> Fortunately, we have a partial record of these discussions: it is embodied in *The New Age*. The results of a conversation on Tuesday night often appeared as an article in the next issue; Monday's political debate might be embodied in the 'Notes of the Week'; and Orage's suggestions regarding a new approach to a problem often resulted in a short story or a whole series of articles.

Orage dominated these sessions not so much through volubility (according to Mairet, 'he usually gave the initiative to others'),<sup>2</sup> or truculence (Hulme seems to have presided over his evenings with a combination of intellectual and physical aggressiveness), as through his personal presence and his occasional incisive comments. He had 'an intellect with a cutting edge that went through pretensions like butter', says H. J. Massingham. 'But he was more than an acid, even a ferocious critic; he was a genuinely constructive thinker, and his creative example permeated the whole journal.'<sup>3</sup> Janko Lavrin says that 'one was never bored when talking to him. Those who have spent their lives in the company of "intellectuals" will realize that this is high praise. He was the only real *causeur* in London.'<sup>4</sup> Edwin Muir's comments indicate why Orage's suggestions were of such great value to writers:

Orage was one of the most brilliant talkers I have ever

<sup>1</sup> See J. M. Kennedy, 'Tory Democracy', *NA*, IX (4 May-21 Sept. 1911).

<sup>2</sup> Mairet, p. 46.    <sup>3</sup> *Remembrance*, p. 31.    <sup>4</sup> Interview, Apr. 1960.



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listened to, particularly on the border-line where conversation meets discussion. . . . His mind was peculiarly lucid and sinuous, and could flow round any object, touching it, defining it, laving it, and leaving it with a new clarity in the mind. From a few stammering words he would divine a thought you were struggling to express, and, as if his mind were an objective clarifying element, in a few minutes he could return it to you cleansed of its impurities and expressed in better words than you could have found yourself. . . . He was a born collaborator, a born midwife of ideas, and consequently a born editor. His mind went out with an active sympathy to meet everything that was presented to it, whether trifling or serious; and his mere consideration of it, the fact that his intelligence had worked on it, robbed it of its triviality and raised it to the level of rational discourse.<sup>1</sup>

'I have mentioned a new line of thought to Orage,' says Rowland Kenney, 'and within an hour he would undermine my own arguments with it; in the meantime he would have grasped its implications and shaped it into a coherent whole, improving it almost beyond recognition in the process.'<sup>2</sup>

Orage's meetings with contributors were the source of the magazine's unity and the basis of its vitality. His creative understanding seized on the random ideas of contributors and related them to the programme of the magazine. If disagreements developed into debates, he often acted not as an arbiter, but as a mediator, combining the best elements of each point of view. Editing was to him a positive, a creative function, extending from the formation of a comprehensive policy to the problems of the youngest contributors.

Orage's consideration in dealing with young writers, many of whom had never before appeared in print, is one

<sup>1</sup> *An Autobiography*, p. 172.

<sup>2</sup> Interview, Mar. 1960.

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of the most important aspects of his editorial methods. He never sent the printed rejection slips that most editors find indispensable; each contribution was acknowledged by a personal note the day it was received.<sup>1</sup> Frank Swinnerton's first contribution to *The New Age*, for example, was an unsolicited review of Bennett's *What the Public Wants*. The regular dramatic critic had seen and reviewed the play; 'Nevertheless, there came back a rather nice little note from Orage, thanking me for my "extreme kindness" and explaining about the critique already commissioned.'<sup>2</sup> No contribution was rejected without some indication of its faults and virtues. Alfred Newsome says that 'Orage's letters told them, encouragingly if possible, diplomatically, why their proffered contributions would not quite do—and they rewrote 'em. In that function, "nursery-governess", Orage had a patience that wore out only if the case was hopeless.'<sup>3</sup>

Those who have encouraged and attempted to help young writers realize how difficult and unrewarding the task can be. There are inevitably more failures than successes, criticisms are often misunderstood, and in the end the thankless effort may not seem worth making. It takes unusual perspicacity to discern the latent virtues of an inexperienced writer, and to aid their development without superimposing one's own preoccupations on his work. With the exception of Ezra Pound, Orage seems to have been more successful in this respect than anyone else of his generation, According to Janko Lavrin, he obtained from the contributors the best work of which they were capable.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Alfred Newsome, interview, May 1960.

<sup>2</sup> Frank Swinnerton, *Background with Chorus* (London, 1956), p. 108.

<sup>3</sup> Letter, 31 May 1960.

<sup>4</sup> Interview, Apr. 1960. In discussing the period between 1915 and

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His acceptance of a contribution from a young writer was often accompanied by an invitation to visit him at the *New Age* office in Rolls Passage, which intersects Chancery Lane immediately below Cursitor Street. The building which at that time housed 'Bonner & Co., The Chancery Lane Press' and the small room which served as Orage's office was destroyed during the war, but several descriptions of it have survived in novels and memoirs. After entering the back door of the printing shop and climbing two flights of narrow stone stairs, the visitor would encounter Miss Marks, Orage's secretary, one of whose most important duties was to protect him from unwanted callers. If he was expected, he would enter a small room containing two desks, three chairs, a set of pigeon-holes, and a typewriter.<sup>1</sup>

Paul Selver has described his first visit to the *New Age* office:

Well, there sat Orage behind a somewhat battered roll-top desk, in what might be described as a fair-sized cubicle, the walls of which were draped with cartoons,

'Please sit down, Mr Selver,' he said, and the everyday words sounded to me like a snatch of lyricism. In a daze I discovered myself shaking hands with him and feeling the hypnotic effect of his smile.

Most of those who knew Orage and have recorded their impressions of him agree that he cast a spell on his hearers. Often enough, too often in fact, famous men are credited with qualities to which they have but the flimsiest of claims. But I can avouch that whenever Orage made his appearance,

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1922, Sir Stanley Unwin says that 'no one was doing more to assist and encourage young authors of promise [than Orage]'. *The Truth About a Publisher* (London, 1960), p. 153.

<sup>1</sup> Descriptions of the office can be found in: Paul Selver, *Schooling* (London, 1924), p. 258, and *Orage and the New Age Circle*, p. 14; Carl Bechhofer-Roberts, *Let's Begin Again* (London, 1940), p. 261.

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wizardry came into action. The Orage magic was no mere legend. Nor, in my case, did it ever diminish. . . .

The captivating externals of Orage were matched by his voice. What epithet am I to apply to it? Musical and well-modulated? Yes, but many people with voices of this description lecture on faith-healing or make speeches at election meetings or defend swindlers in the law courts. Orage, however, used his voice for worthier purposes. Thus, the first remarks I heard from him were in praise of the Slav poetry which I had unearthed.<sup>1</sup>

Thinly disguising *The New Age* as the *New Endeavour* and himself as Pendlebury, Carl Bechhofer-Roberts subjects the magazine and its editor to merciless satire in his novel *Let's Begin Again*. Nevertheless, his first impression of Orage ('Whitworth') was similar to Paul Selver's:

'Well, well,' he said, 'I expected to see an old man and you're but a boy.' So caressing was his voice that these words sounded to me like sweet praise, as doubtless they were meant to do. 'Sit down, my dear Pendlebury, and tell me all about yourself.'

He tapped out a pipe, filled, and lit it. Every one of his gestures was graceful; in all the years I was to know him, I never saw him do or say anything gauche. . . .

'What do you think of Mr Whitworth?' [Miss Jones, the secretary,] asked me.

'He's awfully kind,' I replied. 'Isn't he?'

'He's the most wonderful man in the world,' she said, her face lighting up. I had seen the same reverent look on Mr Breadbasket's face when he spoke of Whitworth. I was to see it again and again so often in scores of other people, men and women, young and old alike.<sup>2</sup>

Inspired with such admiration, young writers were willing to labour over their contributions and to profit from Orage's criticisms.

<sup>1</sup> *Orage and the New Age Circle*, pp. 14-16.

<sup>2</sup> *Let's Begin Again*, pp. 261-2.

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The contributions of the young and inexperienced were usually printed in a section of the magazine entitled 'Pastiche'. It was set in small type in order to afford space for the works of as many promising aspirants as possible. As they improved, their contributions would be promoted to the larger type of the front part of the magazine. Thus a distinction between the editorial literary standards and the unequal but interesting works of the young was maintained, and an incentive for further effort added. Paul Selver has written an interesting account of how, after his contributions had appeared in 'Pastiche' for two years, he attempted to write literary notes for inclusion in the column 'Readers and Writers' at Orage's request:

Flattering myself that I had made a first-rate job of it, I sent off the manuscript and awaited a message of approval. Instead my article came back, scored with emendations. The accompanying note from Orage let me down lightly, but I could not doubt that he was disappointed in me as a writer of prose. I had been looking forward to one of those neat little eulogies which Orage alone knew how to bestow, and now I found myself ruefully staring at my mutilated screed. . . . And I felt thoroughly resentful. But then it occurred to me that the distasteful task of re-writing my article must have taken up a great deal of Orage's time which he could and should have devoted to some better purpose. My resentment slowly ebbed and I began to feel guilty as well as crestfallen. . . .

Slowly I improved. Little by little I grasped how and why the standards of Orage differed from the 'essays' which I had penned as an undergraduate, without incurring any professorial censure and occasionally even basking in lukewarm professorial praise. . . . Hence, many weeks went by before Orage began to print my articles word for word as I had written them.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Orage and the New Age Circle*, pp. 51-2.

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Orage devoted a considerable portion of his time to teaching young contributors the fundamentals of prose style. After they had absorbed these lessons, he directed their attention to the subtler aspects of expository prose, to the methods of attaining a seemingly effortless conversational tone which conceals the strenuous intellectual effort required to achieve finality of judgment in criticism, to the attainment of simplicity and lucidity regardless of the complexity of the subject matter. This aspect of his work is well illustrated in a series of letters which he wrote to Herbert Read when the latter superseded him as author of the column 'Readers and Writers'. 'I have kept them all this time,' says Herbert Read, 'not only because I was so grateful to Orage for the help he gave me at the beginning of my career, but also because they illustrate his creative conception of an editor's function.'<sup>1</sup>

[No date; early July, 1921?]

Dear H. E. R.,

(a signature I like for 'R & W') I missed your letter in London, but it has followed close on my heels here. Let me say at once that I think 'R & W' will do,—at the least as a good beginning. You have the causerie style and a good sense of what can and cannot be said in brilliant talk at leisure. Also you can range, i.e. let one thing suggest another; a kaleidoscope is the proper model for one type of the first-rate causerie. Having said this—and of course, meaning it—I proceed to welcome your willingness to come and talk with me. My particular forte as R. H. C. was (if I may say so) a kind of inspired audacity. I certainly took great pains to be right; but

<sup>1</sup> Letter dated 21 Nov. 1959. In the following extracts, explanatory notes have been enclosed in brackets. 'R & W' refers to the column 'Readers and Writers', 'R. H. C.' to the pseudonym that Orage used while writing that column. The occasional abbreviations ('&' for 'and', 'yr.' for 'your', and 'shd' for 'should') have been written out.

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thereafter I *said* it as if no trouble had been involved at all. I think that this confidence is contagious; and there is nothing I should like better than to see it conveyed on to your page. . . .

I thank you exceedingly for your spirit and kindness in sentencing yourself to six months hard labour [Herbert Read had agreed to write twenty-six articles]; and I hope that, between us, we shall make it fruitful to all concerned.

Yours sincerely,

A. R. Orage [headings and signatures are omitted from the following extracts.]

July 14, 1921

You need not take my kaleidoscope idea too seriously. The only point of it is not to disappoint readers, but to surprise them *pleasantly*. Keeping readers' attention always slightly strained is a strategy of the subtlest order. There is no *rule*, but variety is certainly one of the elements. . . .

I hope you won't feel it necessary to sweep under every mat. Keep your critical energy for the enemies who count.

[Postmark: July 21, 1921]

It will do; but strategy suggests that the *earlier* of your 'R & W' should deal with the *current* letters, leaving over the old stagers for off weeks. The present is the more actual and plastic; and a *new* 'R. H. C.' should announce a new critique of which the *living* should stand in awe.

Tues. [July 26, 1921?]

Very many thanks for R & W III. I think it is very good. Later on, and when we can discuss together, I'll suggest a higher *pitch* of subject-matter; but for the present your choice is good. Ford Madox Ford wrote yesterday that 'you were the man for the job',—said job being one he had offered to do,—viz. R & W for the N. A.!

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Aug. 7, 1921

I like your notes on Russell, though in my opinion he deserves severer and, in fact, savage treatment; but I have still a bone to pick in the matter of 'problems' and solutions. I hope you'll be able to come and pick it with me.

Mond. [Aug. 15, 1921?]

No. VI received with many thanks,—and compliments. I think you are doing exceedingly well; and my only criticism is that you are less dogmatic, conclusive, final, black-cappish than R. H. C. was wont in his latter days to be. The fact seems to be that you are, still, rather more occupied with *problems* than with *solutions*—and anxious, therefore, to keep them always open; while, on the other hand, *my* latter day tendency was to close them once and for all. I won't say which method is better; but I will leave you to gather my opinion from my experience!

Aug. 22, 1921

Your holiday has begun to bear fruit very early! And I am particularly glad that it has renewed your health. Health is a divinity and a very jealous one. But beware of the robustiousness that writes an *essay* in place of a *causerie*. 'Everything divine runs on light feet'; and I will take the liberty of saying that the discussion Romanticism v. Classicism is just a little on the scholastic side. The criterion, however, in all these things is neither subject nor treatment in the abstract,—but one's relations with one's readers! *Provided* they are interested, *provided* they are kept in hot pursuit,—anything is permissible. Au contraire, nothing is justified in writing that is not read. I gently recommend you to *cultivate* your divinations as regards your readers. You will never see them, probably never hear from them,—yet somehow you must *know* them intimately if your *causerie* style is to be perfected. With that sage advice, I conclude,—with all good wishes. . . .

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Aug. 26, 1921

Ever so many thanks. The style is certainly several leagues nearer the goal: but (do forgive me) beware of too often choosing subjects *unfamiliar* to your readers. Enlighten them about things they *think* they already know! Good holiday!

Sept. 5, 1921

Very good, indeed; in every way (may I say without reflections on its predecessors) the best so far. I see now: the causerie style (i.e. *your* style) requires the urge of some fresh enthusiasm to carry it along rapidly. Pace is an essential of the causerie; but it can only be developed by the whip of a keen interest. You like 'Moby Dick' immensely, and become lyrical about it,—lyrically critical, of course, for otherwise it would be gush. Critical lyricism! Voilà the causerie! . . .

How easily correspondence develops misunderstanding. I did not intend to warn you against the 'unfamiliar' as such. There is no subject in the world barred to you on one condition, that you sustain your readers' attention. And when I say 'readers', I mean what a parson or orator means by his audience. Individuals may nod or go out or disagree; but the speaker *knows* whether he has got his audience in hand. Similarly, *you* should know by clairvoyance and other devices whether you have your readers' attention. Given that, and you may write even of Shaw without risk! . . .

P. S. The quality by which a book survives is its *force*. It is exactly comparable in this respect to a top that spins. How long was it wound up for?

Dec. 21, 1921

. . .

For the less immediate future—say, a few months hence—beware of the *danger* of the causerie style: want of compression, *on occasion*. You should now and again introduce deliberately a few chiselled sentences just to assure yourself that you are not in slippers automatically.

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To be fully appreciated, these letters should be read as commentaries upon the articles to which they refer. Nevertheless, they retain a general value apart from the articles, and the inferences that one can draw from them regarding Orage's editorial methods are significant. When compared with Paul Selver's account of Orage as a teacher of prose, they show that *The New Age* was a school which accommodated those who had attained a high degree of literary proficiency as well as those just beginning their careers. Carl Bechhofer-Roberts spoke for scores of writers when, on being asked where he was educated, he replied, 'On *The New Age*.'<sup>1</sup> Orage devoted a considerable portion of his critical and creative energies to this aspect of editing. Gorham Munson once asked him why he did not devote more time to writing; 'I write writers,' he replied.<sup>2</sup>

As stated earlier, *The New Age* was not able to pay most of its contributors. Orage's advice constituted a type of payment, from which many received tangible rewards later in their careers. Although it was not generally known at the time, a number of young contributors were paid-but on the basis of need and ability rather than ability alone. Pound provides the most striking evidence concerning the importance of these payments: 'My gate receipts Nov. 1, 1914-15, were 42 quid 10s. and Orage's 4 guineas a month thereafter wuz the *Sinews*, by gob the sinooz.'<sup>3</sup> Several contributors lived on the pound or guinea a week that they received from the magazine. T. E. Hulme, Richard Aldington, Allen Upward, Ivor Brown, and Edwin Muir were paid, as were the staff writers A. E. Randall and J. M. Kennedy. Of the older

<sup>1</sup> Alfred Newsome, interview, July 1960.

<sup>2</sup> 'A. R. Orage', *New Democracy*, II (18 Nov. 1934), 626.

<sup>3</sup> Pound, *The Letters of Ezra Pound, 1907-1941*, p. 344.

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contributors who were able to subsist on their other literary earnings, only one was paid for his articles. 'How long am I going to continue making [*The New Age*] a present of £150, at least?' wrote Bennett to his sister in 1908. 'There is no virtue in me, because I only do it for the amusement of self and a few others.'<sup>1</sup> Realizing the value of 'Books and Persons', Orage agreed to pay him a guinea a week for the column (a low price in comparison to Bennett's usual fee).<sup>2</sup>

If payments to contributors had been deducted from the magazine's revenue, its deficit would have been at least half again as large as it was. In a letter to Upton Sinclair discussing Sinclair's plan for the 'endowment of genius', Orage reveals the source of the funds used for this purpose.

I do not fervently believe in your scheme. Good will come of it, however, if attention is directed to the necessity of making some sort of provision for young genius; but I am sure the way is not by a Committee, however enlightened. What I should like to see done more generally is what I have seen done in particular cases. You may guess, for instance, that the paid writers of *The New Age* are not paid by *The New Age*. The business side could not keep them in bread and butter. Who pays? Well, there you are. I have a number of friends who are willing to take my word that such and such a writer is both hard-up and able. They provide me with a little fund which I pay to the writers *as if it came from the N.A.* In one case, a different procedure is adopted. My best writer (guess his name) has been receiving £200 a year from a friend solely in order to permit him to write for the N.A. for nothing. I could do with several more such friends. . . . That is

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Reginald Pound, in *Arnold Bennett* (London, 1952), p. 194.

<sup>2</sup> Bennett, 'Books and Persons', *The Evening Standard* (10 July 1930), p. 5.

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rather my line. Get your millionaire to trust you alone with the money: use your own judgment; but *don't* rely on another soul. I'm in perhaps a peculiar position, being able to employ but not to pay. Consequently I'm the very man to entrust with a fund: since these wealthy people can pay but cannot employ.<sup>1</sup>

No account of Orage's interest in young writers would be complete without an indication of his ability to detect talent in their early works. The first published works of the following authors appeared in *The New Age*: F. S. Flint, T. E. Hulme, Katherine Mansfield, John Middleton Murry, Storm Jameson, Herbert Read, Ivor Brown, Llewelyn Powys, Ruth Pitter, and Edwin Muir. It is interesting to compare *The New Age* with other contemporary literary periodicals in this respect. According to a comprehensive survey of Little Reviews, 'most of the significant little magazines discovered no more than two writers worthy of note. . . . Those that discovered four or five are exceptional, the authors of this book finding only four magazines that have reached this level in the past half century.'<sup>2</sup> Orage's influence as a teacher of writing is indicated by the following letter from Katherine Mansfield :

Feb. 9, 1921

Dear Orage,

I want to tell you how sensible I am of your wonderful and unflinching kindness to me in the 'old days'. And to thank you for all you let me learn from you. I am still—more shame to me—very low down in the school. But you taught me to write, you taught me to think; you showed me what there was to be done and what not to do.

<sup>1</sup> Letter dated 9 June 1910. Six of Orage's letters to Upton Sinclair are now in the possession of the Indiana University Library.

<sup>2</sup> F. J. Hoffman, Charles Allen, and Carolyn F. Ulrich, *The Little Magazine* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1947), pp. 13-14.

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My dear Orage, I cannot tell you how often I call to mind your conversation, or how often, in *writing*, I remember my master. Does that sound impertinent? Forgive me if it does.

But let me thank you, Orage—*thank you for everything*. If only one day I might write a book of stories good enough to 'offer' you. . . . If I don't succeed in keeping the coffin from the door you will know this was my ambition.

Yours, in admiration and gratitude  
Katherine Mansfield<sup>1</sup>

The individual attention that Orage gave to countless writers, correcting their prose, sharpening their minds, suggesting themes and methods of treatment congenial to their particular abilities, was one of his most valuable contributions to the literature of our time. Ezra Pound has suggested that this aspect of his editorial methods had a general influence on the development of twentieth-century prose. 'Orage and F. M. (Hueffer) Ford,' he says, 'are the two figures of the period who keep getting larger while the others decline.'<sup>2</sup> As editor of *The English Review*, Ford brought together the best of the creative prose then being written in England. Orage's literary criticism (and his influence in teaching the young) was 'NOT aimed at novel writing, french impressionist criteria, BUT in tradition from Sam Johnson, and towards expository prose, i.e. clarity of a different kind'.<sup>3</sup> Through example and precept, Pound suggests, Orage helped maintain the precision of language as a mode of analysis and definition during the first two decades of the century.

The results of his other editorial objectives are evident in the volumes of *The New Age* that appeared under his editorship. In one sense, the magazine is representative of its age: to examine its successive issues is to follow an

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Mairet, p. 59.

<sup>2</sup> Letter from Pound dated 20 June 1959.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

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exceptionally complete chronicle of the development of culture during these years. We shall see how other disciplines influenced the technique and content of literature and how the audience reacted to the innovations that confronted them. We shall also see how *The New Age* influenced these developments, introducing and encouraging certain movements and writers, criticizing others, attempting to give coherence and direction to the cultural life of the period. 'I am convinced,' said Herbert Read in a letter to Orage, 'that when the literary history of the period between 1907 and 1922 comes to be written your influence will be found to have run deep and far.'<sup>1</sup> The following discussion will provide further evidence in support of that opinion.

<sup>1</sup> Letter to *The New English Weekly*, I (21 Apr. 1932), 21.