

EXORCIZING THE GENERAL

Gabriel García Márquez, *Clandestine in Chile*, London; Jonathan Cape £13.99.

During the Spanish 'reconquest' of Chile in the years 1814–17 – a time when habits of inquisition and interrogation were burned deep into the tissue of the emergent nation – the Governor of Santiago boasted: 'I shall not leave the Chileans even tears with which to weep'. In our own period the experiences of the dungeon have again been visited upon the people of Chile who have had to learn once more, as Ariel Dorfman has put it, 'when to be silent, when to speak softly and subtly – and when to scream'. This more recent episode is now drawing to a close. But history has weighed heavily on Chile, reproducing a recurrent dynamic of repression, civil war and terror. Indeed, contrary both to conventional perceptions from Europe and, I'm afraid, to the perilously ahistorical beliefs proclaimed by the political generation which came of age in the revolutionary interregnum of Popular Unity, historic Chile was far from the incarnation of a uniquely benign Latin American constitutionalism. The authoritarianism of the *caudillo* is structured deep in the dynamic of the historic nation.<sup>1</sup>

In this moment of democratic advance it is as well to remember the recurrence of authoritarian rule. But the delusions bred by a political culture which lacked historical curiosity, although perhaps a more abstract issue, are also significant. Moreover, in a society which until very recently intermixed the visual flow of television commercials with lyrical evocations of the conflagration of the Moneda Palace – the bombs and the strafing announcing the extirpation of the contagion of Communism and the inauguration of liberty, of Year One of the new regime – the dialectic binding authoritarianism and the suppression of historical memory becomes a pressing issue. That an authoritarian regime should require the active repression of given histories and the assembling of some contingent, serviceable alternatives has been a common observation in political literature since the 1930s.<sup>2</sup> That this can function as a denial of history, as commentators in Europe insisted when they awakened to the systematic mendacities perpetrated by Stalinist and fascist ideologues, may also be true, at least to a degree. The need to recover and recreate repressed public histories remains a minimal political objective. In the Chilean case if we recall that the Pinochet regime launched its ideological offensive by sacking libraries and heaping up books to burn, ever since has attempted stringently to outlaw all manner of publication, and now has ended its days by the wholesale destruction of incriminating departmental archives, the need to recreate public institutions which can piece together adequate accounts of

these years and which can cultivate, inform and deepen historical consciousness would seem a rudimentary precondition for any conceivable democratic politics.<sup>3</sup>

The temptation in all this is to suppose that if Pinochet and the generals, resorting to one falsehood after another, were denying or suppressing historical memory then – by way of a neat Hegelian pirouette – the people, who have suffered this loss, are transmogrified into the unadorned truth of history.<sup>4</sup> The pressures to recover a heroic populism of this type are compelling, and perhaps even vindicated by Allende's final impassioned broadcast. Ironically it would appear that this turn to a simple populism is most evident amongst the generation which had barely been born during the Popular Unity years, imagining that all that is necessary is to turn the clock back and resurrect the once triumphant forces of 1970–3. To follow this path, today, relying only on tales of past heroism and fortitude would in its own way be to endure another defeat. In the current situation danger presses in from every quarter. The fate of Alfonsín in Argentina should provide a sufficiently stark warning about the future. The conjuncture of political forces in Chile is finely balanced and complex. Strategically, it is necessary to know Chile historically.

But we know enough about the workings of historical consciousness to appreciate that this is not only a matter concerning public or collective memories. The subjective dimension is clearly of overwhelming significance too, for as one astute commentator has put it, 'real history moves deep within memory, experience, consciousness and custom'.<sup>5</sup> The destruction of Popular Unity did indeed require extirpation of a lived culture. One function of the terror, for example, was – by means of torture – the calculated destruction of the individual psyche, unhinging memory and private histories and affections. Exile too has functioned as a kind of mechanism for inducing amnesia. As an entire genre of twentieth-century literature demonstrates life in exile turns with unusual intensity on dreams, imagining from afar an existence which has already been disappeared, to adopt the now common Latin American idiom. 'In all cases', writes Dorfman of his own representative experience,

the General weighs at the centre of one's life, a dark anchor narrowing the range of every choice. Thus, it will be difficult to grow accustomed to his absence. He is burned into our memory, into our customs, into the way we speak, into our dreams. How are we to exorcise him?<sup>6</sup>

These private histories, caught up in a vortex of terror, exile and devastating economic dispossession amount in sum to an authentic, collective diaspora: for these experiences to be redeemed a momentous effort of cultural reconstruction is required.

Yet during the long years of defeat the experience of the past necessarily ran deep, and emotionally it proved troubling to relinquish a past which no longer had any stake in a new political reality. Those of Allende's supporters who survived the coup had virtually no other Chile but Popular Unity they could imagine. By all accounts the period of Allende's government was intermittently an intoxicating experience, punctuated emotionally by the great

public carnivals when the impoverished possessed for themselves the city streets. The transformation wrought by the junta in the wake of September 1973 was so violent – so profoundly unbelievable to those who suffered it – that it only became possible, subjectively, to imagine a future by obsessively clinging to memories of the past, even while these memories grew dimmer and the reality more distant. Thus it would seem that as there was no Chile which could be imagined politically a deep dislocation in historical memory resulted, bequeathing an air of unreality to the politics of the opposition for a considerable period. But slowly, out of the catastrophe of defeat, an alternative Chile was constructed, both in imagination and organization. On the one hand, given the closure of orthodox public political spaces combined with unprecedented state intervention in the private domain, there emerged in the private sphere a newly conceptualized politics which drew more deeply than hitherto on the resources of private memory and which was more open to the feminine and the domestic. We need only witness the determining role undertaken by women as mothers, wives and lovers in first challenging authoritarianism in Chile, Argentina and elsewhere to see evidence of this new politics.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand from 1983 to 1986 the opposition re-formed as an uncompromisingly public antagonist to the state, once more erupting onto the streets in order to confront head on the repressive apparatuses. This wave of demonstrations was the decisive act in breaking the unity of the conservative forces and in creating the conditions for the constitutional ousting of Pinochet as president. But these public contestations were also cathartic, overcoming fear and creating in themselves the possibilities for a new Chile. From that point on a culture cohered which articulated the experiences of this new historic bloc of the Chilean people by drawing on a language which suggested the transcendence of violent, psychic disturbance – the lifting of a nightmare, the healing of traumas or, as we see with Dorfman, a hope that the fantasized omnipotence of the General can be exorcized. If a new Chile is to be created it will only happen when it is possible to dream about a future without being possessed by nightmares from the past.

A striking attempt to describe these issues – particularly that which I've described as the dislocation in historical memory or consciousness – is Gabriel García Márquez's *Clandestine in Chile*.<sup>8</sup> Márquez, writing in the first person singular, tells the story of Miguel Littín, once Chile's premier film-maker during Popular Unity, and his 'adventure' (as the Spanish title has it) in returning secretly from exile in order to film his 'rediscovery' of his estranged homeland. The movie which eventually emerged, Littín's sprawling four-part *General Statement on Chile* (1986), was not rapturously received and failed to make much impact on the political culture of the opposition.<sup>9</sup> Márquez's book about the making of the film is a deal more interesting. It's based on a week-long interview with Littín, and one can imagine the scene: the two friends and erstwhile collaborators reunited, the interviews interspersed with private reminiscing and generous draughts of *pisco* to maintain the charge of adrenalin. The book carries the feel of intimate, nocturnal male conversation of which Márquez declares himself so fond. It is, in the balance of the complete

Márquez *oeuvre*, a relatively slight work – though not so slight that it escaped the attention of the Chilean authorities in Valparaíso who impounded 15,000 copies and, resorting to their well-tried practice, burned them.

At first glance it may appear to be little more than an example of Márquez's *réportage*, a genre of writing to which he still devotes tireless energy.<sup>10</sup> But it carries greater significance precisely to the degree to which he embarks upon an exploration of the relations between politics, memory and exile (through the figure of Littín), while at the same time the book represents an intriguing convergence between the historical imagination of the great *caudillo* of Latin American literature and the specifically Chilean endeavour to fashion a new historical identity in the aftermath of dictatorship. On completing *The Autumn of the Patriarch* in 1975 Márquez vowed – rashly – never to publish another novel until Pinochet was destroyed.<sup>11</sup> With characteristic bravado this he has failed to do. *Clandestine in Chile* can be read, perhaps, as atonement for this forgivable lapse.

Márquez, of course, has been the most prominent figure in the peculiarly Latin American, and peculiarly fertile, reconstruction of the modernist aesthetic, virtually inventing for our own times a genre of writing aptly characterized by Linda Hutcheon as 'historiographic metafiction', a form now widely imitated and popularized. This complex renewal of modernism is above all marked by the culture of the periphery, even though in Latin America the reverberations from the seismic moment of European and North American high modernism remain unusually active. In my own view the narrative form which has emerged from this unequal cultural exchange between centre and periphery is a recognizable inheritor of European historical realism, though drastically wrenched from the familiar epistemological and aesthetic bearings which underpinned the grand traditions of the European realist novel. This may seem a fine distinction, but worth making if only to check the current predilection for a free-wheeling postmodernism, in which Márquezian aesthetics become just another indistinguishable, indeterminate feature of the cultural melt-down brought about by the end of history and by the impossibility of narration. Whether one chooses to regard Márquez's work as 'historiographic metafiction', or prefers to cast him as a 'mythical realist', the critical point is surely to understand his writing as a decisive extension and reconstruction of realist fiction and Márquez himself as perhaps the pre-eminent novelist of uneven development.<sup>12</sup>

In this sense his writings are subsumed by the imaginative consequences of living, in global terms, the conditions of 'backwardness'. For Márquez this has less to do with structures of economic dispossession (though these are present in the novels) than with living in the interstices of an intricately complex system of combined and uneven historical times, as the startling opening sentences of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* make evident. In this reading Latin America possesses a history in which it is condemned by both its European progenitor and its North American master to a peculiarly labyrinthine time in which agency and progress – the *doxa* of Europe's Enlightenment – while pervasive as abstractions in the culture of the continent

can in practice mean little. Consequently, if in Chile there occurred amongst Allende's defeated forces an unnerving dislocation in historical consciousness, a dominating motif in Márquez's fiction (and, through the image of exile, in much twentieth-century Latin American fiction) is the belief that this represents the abiding, historic reality of contemporary Latin America. Thus in his Nobel speech Márquez states that Latin Americans have been dispossessed of the means 'to render our lives believable' and in this – and here Márquez repeats an idea familiar in the cultural history of the continent – lies 'the crux of our solitude'.<sup>13</sup> For all its national specificities Chile, in these deeper cultural terms, becomes symbolic of the continental experience, exemplifying Márquez's 'solitude' and the conditions of exile, an exile not just from place but *as if* from historical time itself.

It's this illusion about the displacement of Latin America from historical time which proves problematic when considering Márquez and his fiction. Within the novels themselves there is plenty of evidence to demonstrate that Márquez himself elaborates highly sophisticated relational and causal historical structures (hence the appropriateness of terms like 'historiographic' and 'realist') even if the fictive characters of his imagination are often shown to experience their lives as emptied of historical meaning. It's worth recalling in this context that Márquez was irreversibly formed by the experience of the Cuban Revolution, and that this epochal turning-point in the hemisphere afforded a measure of historical justification for the vision of a Latin America freed from the most pressing mechanisms of exploitation, providing a powerful instance of a small nation taking possession of its history. Arguably the Cuban Revolution was also decisive in creating Márquez as a writer.<sup>14</sup> Yet while all this is true the issue is complicated by the fact that Márquez also carries a sensibility deeply sceptical of the power of politics to break out from the historical legacy of Latin America's colonial past. Here we encounter an existential terrain fashioned less by Cuba than by the *violencia* of Márquez's native Columbia, a fatalism which echoes through his stories and is most memorably depicted in the epic of Colonel Aureliano Buendía's thirty-two failed uprisings. He has spoken openly about his life in these terms. Moreover these sentiments are given intellectual justification – as one might have feared from Márquez's extravagant claims about the essential virtue of femininity – by a dispiritingly archaic sexual politics in which women, devoted to their 'primordial function of perpetuating the species' happily 'lack any sense of history', while men 'travel the world bent on boundless folly which pushes history forward'.<sup>15</sup> This little homily on sexual difference reveals only too clearly its own origins, cast in the mentality of Hispanic colonialism which in other aspects of cultural life Márquez is only too ready to overturn. But whatever his suspicion of the delusions bred by given histories and politics, and whatever his fascination for the repetitious morbidity of a Latin American history which all the while appears mobius-like to turn in on itself, he none the less is irresistibly drawn – despite himself it would seem – to a notion of the determining power and emancipatory potential of history.

It is this which prompts Carlos Fuentes, in a lecture on Márquez, to propose that:

One way of seeing Latin American history, then, is as a pilgrimage from a founding utopia to a cruel epic that degrades utopia if the mythic imagination does not intervene so as to interrupt the onslaught of fatality and seek to recover the possibilities of freedom.<sup>16</sup>

The religiosity of the trope may be indicative of the ambivalence at work here, just as we hear more in Márquez of 'the onslaught of fatality' than we do of 'the possibilities of freedom'. Even so the liquidation of memory – the plague of amnesia, the massacre of the banana workers witnessed solely by José Arcadio Segundo and the miraculous disappearance of their cadavers in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* – reveals the elemental need for historical knowledge. Indeed, it seems that in order to create a sufficiently active critical consciousness Márquez has been forced deeper back into the cultural formation of the continent, excavating and reconstructing a history from the very moment of independence. The most recent result, a depiction of Bolívar far removed from the heroic strain, has been appropriately scandalous.<sup>17</sup> In fact recently Márquez has been able to express in familiar terms the need to wrest the institutions of historical knowledge away from the academy.

My work is getting closer to history, and now, with the money from *The General in his Labyrinth*, I've set up a Foundation to write the real history of Columbia – as it *is*, not as it's been written so far . . . what I really want is a clandestine academy of history, because the official Academy is interested only in its own version of reality.<sup>18</sup>

It would seem that the 'mythic imagination' to which Fuentes referred represents nothing more nor less than the recuperation of historical consciousness.

Although I personally favour this idea of Márquez as a clandestine 'magical historian', experimenting in his fiction with the intricacies of combined historical times, it must inevitably remain a partial view. Márquez is too mesmerized by the possibilities of fictional narrative, too obsessed by the pleasures of the text, to be anything other than a historian *manqué*. Be that as it may, his yearning to recuperate and reconstruct historical consciousness should be taken seriously. And in this his novels obviously play the central role. In the national culture of Columbia – part of what Carpentier once called 'the continent's baroque area', the true home of the Latin American 'boom' novel – his fiction undoubtedly claims a high popular currency.<sup>19</sup> But Márquez is too restless an intellect – and his too titanic an ego – to be constrained by the requirements of a single medium. In the same breath that he invokes history he now enthuses at length about the potential of the cinema as a popular form, harbouring the ambition to create a cohesive Latin American cinema. Such aspirations are not new.<sup>20</sup> Nor is Márquez's dedication to cinema. In the fifties he worked as a professional reviewer and boasted a spell in Cinecittà; more recently he has run an annual film and television workshop in Havana, inaugurating in 1985 the Latin American Film Foundation. Sub-

sequently he has been appointed director of Mexico's state-run film industry. This devotion to film and television as popular media partly arises from his fascination with different forms of narrative, but partly also from political concerns.<sup>21</sup>

It is through the commitment to film that the connection between Márquez and Miguel Littín arises. In the past they have collaborated together, Littín making an early attempt to shoot on film a Márquez novella. Currently there is talk of the two of them embarking upon a movie about Sandino – a project once floated, incongruously, by Cecil B. de Mille. Márquez appeared in Littín's *General Statement on Chile* discussing his friendship with Allende and thence committed himself to recounting Littín's own story in *Clandestine in Chile*.

For his part Littín manifests a passion for the cinema which rivals that – so often parodied – of the erstwhile young tyros associated with *Cahiers du Cinema*, by whom he himself was lionized in the seventies. Littín's reputation was secured young following the release, in 1969, of his film *The Jackal of Nahueltoro*, which created a minor sensation in the history of the Chilean cinema, giving voice to popular dissent at a critical moment. A year later Allende appointed him head of Chile Film. This in effect established Littín as Popular Unity's official film-director: it was he, for example, who recorded the famed discussions between Allende and Debray in the heroic moments of the socialist interlude. But even before the coup, under the combined weight of material deprivation, bureaucratic inertia and political sectarianism Chile Film had all but collapsed.<sup>22</sup> When the coup occurred Littín, like thousands of others, was forced to flee and continue his work in exile, becoming – in the words of one not wholly sympathetic authority – 'the epic film-maker of Latin American resistance'.<sup>23</sup>

For some, the cultural effects of this enforced dispersal meant that the very idea of a national culture had temporarily lost all meaning: in the case of the cinema, for example, despite the unprecedented volume of films made commercially in Chile during the Pinochet years, the most self-consciously 'Chilean' films were made abroad, the experience of exile and dispersal necessarily predominating. Whatever view one takes of this, undoubtedly it was the case that – of those who survived – leading representatives of the intellectual culture did indeed migrate, either heading for the Hispanic centres of Mexico, Havana or Barcelona, or to the traditional Latin American capital of Europe, Paris.<sup>24</sup>

Others were less fortunate, condemned abruptly to hallucinogenic existences in unknown towns in the northern reaches of Europe. Either way, those in exile found their former lives shattered, their sense of Chile as an *actively* imagined community bloodily dismembered, and themselves facing a future seemingly without a past. Years later – when the prohibitions had lessened and, by means of deliberately arcane and unintelligible administrative procedures, those listed as enemies of the state were deemed no longer dangerous and allowed to return – one could literally see the halting recomposition of lost generations: parents with young black-eyed children who spoke playground English with Birmingham accents being shown for the first time the

sights of their nation's capital, or chance meetings in bars and public squares of old friends parted since the final days of Popular Unity. The cohering of these fragmentary emotional histories underlies the public transition to democracy, and is inseparable from it.<sup>25</sup>

Like all those caught in this momentous episode, Littín came to be preoccupied by the question of how these personal histories were to be remembered – and not least by the question of how his own life had been transformed. For Littín himself the problem essentially was a cinematic one, exploring the most appropriate aesthetic forms in which these histories could be reclaimed. All other areas of cultural life in Chile – including the formal historiographical institutions – were, in diverse ways, invaded by this same defining issue, not to mention the intense debate about justice and retribution which inevitably is coming to dominate political society. Maybe, though we have yet to see, the prolonged proximity of terror and the shared experiences of the existential loneliness of exile will allow a modest reconstruction of conventional cultural and political discourses, in which the imperatives of public and private histories will be less polarized than hitherto.

A curious feature of this situation however is the degree to which the great autocrat, Pinochet himself, has defied direct imaginative representation. Here, one might have supposed, is the very makings of an epic. An appropriate novelistic form, at least, is already to hand. In Latin America there exists an established tradition of 'dictator' novels, first emerging amongst exiles in Paris in the 1920s, and – after an inebriated evening's plotting in a London pub by Mario Vargas Llosa and Carlos Fuentes – consciously relaunched in the late 1960s. Yet, to date, no such treatment of the dictator has appeared. Perhaps, as Dorfman seems to imply with his emphasis on the subjective toll of these terrible years, such a reckoning is premature.<sup>26</sup> Or, there again, perhaps the force of national-popular tradition may be a significant factor. Thus those portrayals of the Pinochet years which have appeared have tended to centralize popular life, dealing with the mechanisms of national politics only tangentially, foregrounding private rather than public relations.<sup>27</sup> Historically in Chile the dominant popular genres have for long been lyrical (I have in mind the extraordinary popular resonance of the poems of Neruda, for example, or the songs of Violeta Parra) in which the emotional rhythms of popular life disrupt the public discourses of the nation. In these popular forms – and crucially too in humour – the experience of authoritarianism has tended to be articulated in non-epic dimensions, obliquely, ironically, eschewing the grand narrative in favour of insights more fleeting, intimate and personal.

Yet as its title makes plain, Littín's film *General Statement on Chile* attempted a reconstruction in the epic dimension, setting out to produce a full-scale account of twelve years of Pinochet on every aspect of social life in the country. At the same time, it must be said, Littín was careful to emphasize that the perspective and judgements which formed the film were his own, reflecting the shock of one returning to his native country after a prolonged period of exile. In this way – and, also, by making Salvador Allende the emotional as much as the political focus of the film – Littín endeavoured to



weave together the political and the subjective. Yet the ambition of the project remains its most unmemorable feature. The film itself is uncharacteristically overblown, displaying all too evidently the element of obsessionism of a long-term exile – this at least Littín is perspicacious enough to concede – who lays claim to an immodest disposition, and who was bankrolled sufficiently abundantly for him to indulge far too many whims.

What the film lacks, Márquez's book – *Clandestine in Chile* – possesses: an intimacy, arising from the intensive conversation of the two friends; a degree of narrative economy, exerted by Márquez; and a modest objective, claiming only to be an 'emotional reconstruction' of Littín's return to Chile. In this instance Márquez's recuperation of history is almost entirely subjective, reflecting upon the relations between memory and place, politics and identity.<sup>28</sup>

One can see how the prospect of recounting the drama of Littín's return to Chile appealed to Márquez. It provided an opportunity to mock Pinochet, documenting how a prominent enemy of the state not only could enter Chile illegally, travel freely within the country and gain access to the President's private office in the Moneda Palace, but also record the whole thing on film. It afforded Márquez the chance to investigate, in concrete terms, the condition of exile, in relation to time and place. In choosing to retain the form of the first-person singular for his narrative – and as the teller of the tale also adopted a new persona – Márquez was provided with sufficient scope for an element of narrative complexity and play, if not to a degree entailed in his metafiction, decidedly more than is conventional in common-or-garden *réportage*. And, one might hazard, Márquez couldn't resist the lure of a straightforward boy's adventure story.

Behind Littín's film, observes Márquez, there hovered 'another film that would probably never be made', and *Clandestine in Chile* represents Márquez's attempt to script that never-to-be-made film. The book is moving, catching something of the cinema's capacity to convey episodic memories as constitutive of the past-in-the-present, the incessant collapsing of the one into the other.<sup>29</sup> At the outset the dislocation of Miguel Littín's historical memory is extreme. To return home he has to become, literally, another person and undergo elaborate preparation to learn his new identity, adopting a new sexual, national and class persona. In the event his memories prove unable to connect with the realities of the new Chile: 'The Chile I remembered no longer existed', he admits, his own image 'lost in a fog of nostalgia'. Having overcome geographical distance and physically crossed the political border, the mental borders are less easily negotiated: Littín was forced to learn, at speed, how to live as 'an exile in my own country'. Or as this is conveyed at its most epigrammatic: 'I was resigned to not being me'.

But through this other Littín gradually begins to acquire a more focused perception of the new Chile, his shift in perception involving a relocation or replacing of memory. This is particularly pronounced in his meeting with his mother, family and old friends. This refamiliarization is given a suitably Márquezian twist when Littín discovers that, by chance, his mother had prepared his favourite dish – a recipe of great complexity only ever cooked

on the most special of occasions – with no inkling that her son was about to come in from the night, and twelve years of exile, to escape the curfew. This magic was heightened when Littín was also to discover his mother had physically relocated his old office – transporting it piece by piece from the capital – such that it existed in its new surroundings, a precise memorial to the old, as if it had never been disturbed.

This journey deeper into the country, documented frame by frame on film, brings with it – so the narrative implies – a rediscovery of Chile, of family and private past, and ultimately of self. These private experiences, restoring a lived sense of the past, are reflected for Littín in an emergent public sphere: in the culture of the *poblaciones* – ‘in a sense liberated territories’ – holding fast to the iconography of Allende and Neruda; and – in more contestatory form – in the FPMR [the armed wing of the Communist Party] which, in Littín’s view, had ‘unified the democratic opposition’.<sup>30</sup>

It would be foolish to underestimate the human significance of Littín’s restoration of self or to deny the political effects of a collective popular culture which, in cherishing images of Allende and Neruda, refused to allow an entire historic experience to be consigned to oblivion. At this level the narrative affirms those political processes which make possible, subjectively and collectively, the ‘repairing’ of memory and the formation of historical consciousness. But the resolution to this narrative is in many ways deceptive.

‘In our long trips around the country’, we read,

we did not come upon a single place where he (Salvador Allende) had not left something of himself. There was always someone whose hand he had shaken, whose child he had been godfather to, whom he had cured of a stubborn cough with a tea he had prepared from the leaves of a plant in his own yard. Or there would be somebody for whom he had got a job or against whom he had won a chess game. Anything he touched was preserved as a relic.

Even accepting the fact that to a remarkable degree Allende saved himself from the vanities of high office, this is none the less – after all the paraphernalia of Uncle Joe patting the heads of young pioneers in the thirties, or the mind-bending deification of even less exalted leaders in our own times – a shocking piece of writing. It does more than describe the unambiguously religious motifs which do indeed exist in the popular mythology of Allende: it exults in them. Are these the musings of Littín, or of Márquez, exemplifying the religiosity of his sense of history noted by Fuentes? We can’t know. Either way, the ambivalence intensifies when we recall that much of Márquez’s *The Autumn of the Patriarch* parodies precisely sentiments such as these, where he has his avuncular Bonapartist, in his youthful and radical incarnation – not quite curing stubborn coughs – but giving his all repairing the Singer sewing machines of the *campesinos*. And as Márquez was clear to show there, these are systems of memory in which history is diminished.

Or again, it’s difficult these days to take on trust the ease with which any one of us can just ‘be me’. It is precisely the permanently labile nature of

identity which is most telling, formed as much by the darker side of the human psyche as by enlightened reason; as one recent account has it: 'Identity is formed at the unstable point where the "unspeakable" stories of subjectivity meet the narratives of history, of a culture' – although, one might add, these 'narratives of history', graphically in the case of Chile, *also* contain their unspeakable elements.<sup>31</sup>

The difficulty is not only theoretical: as the Littín figure gradually dispenses with the trappings of his disguise and comes ever closer to his idea of his essential self, his dislocation from his past seems less to have been resolved than to have acquired a new desperation. His recklessness, his impulsive desire to declare himself, to bait the police, his appalling breaches of security which endanger himself and those close to him appear in sum to be audacious attempts to assert, to call out, that he does indeed possess a past. 'I had an irrational impulse to identify myself, to shout out my name, to tell the world that it was my right to be home.' In fact, such a determination would seem, in the context, perfectly understandable and rational. What appears unnerving, and gives reason to doubt the degree to which we can read this tale as a straightforward story of subjective redemption, is the self-destructiveness which subsumes this discovery of self, putting his life and that of others on whom he depends in very great danger. It accounts too for his extraordinary Will Hay departure in which the clandestine figure finally explodes and Littín reaches his flight by the skin of his teeth.

Moreover in dropping his disguise Littín transformed himself from being a respectable Uruguayan businessman and 'house-broken husband' to a more comfortably bohemian character, untainted (so the text suggests) by any hint of masculine timidity or effeteness and unrestrained by domestic obligation. The force of this in the narrative would seem to imply that the shift from Uruguayan to Chilean, and from respectable to bohemian, is at the very least underwritten by repossession of a disturbingly unproblematic masculinity. This retrieval of masculinity accompanies the outlandish acts of bravado perpetrated in public by Littín, and indeed gives shape to his whole 'adventure'. Littín's clandestine return to Chile clearly does attempt to give history a little push: but then what are we to make, in this context, of Márquez's disparaging conception of men's 'boundless follies' in linking their destinies to that of history? For it makes perfect sense to read the entire narrative of *Clandestine in Chile* as an exemplification of that exact fantasy.<sup>32</sup>

And in the last instance it is striking too how irresolvable is the convergence between self and home. It is, rather, as if home functions in this story as a vanishing mediator, impossible to live with even when the quest has been completed. We need to remember that the narrative closes – at the point when Littín's flight rises high above the Andes – with Littín himself about to face a renewed phase of exile.

For Littín home, the sensuous, imagined community of his native Chile, once more dissolves into memory. At the same time – as Márquez for one would see it – while experiencing this loss Littín travels from periphery to centre, re-entering the core structures of world-time and inhabiting a culture whose

institutions and collective memory demarcate those who possess history from those who are denied it. And this inescapability from exile is one of the paradoxes around which, in their different ways, the work of both Márquez and Littín revolves. The universalizing ambitions of the cultures of the metropolis, all the while generating desires for the unambivalent certainties of a metahistory, inevitably tend to repress 'peripheral' histories – conquered and incessantly reconquered – at one moment recovering them in a fanfare of spectacle and sentiment, at the next allowing them to dissolve into forgetfulness. Thus emerges the structure of feeling which, in all good faith and all good reason, can reach out to the dispossessed, imploring them to free themselves from labyrinthine servitude and to march with history, while simultaneously knowing that – in the terms proffered – this cannot be. There need be no bewilderment at the scepticism this produces on the part of the powerless: for too long the promise of modernity in Latin America has brought neither emancipation nor the intermittent *jouissance* of the metropolis but, more accurately, terror.

Perhaps, it might be said, these concerns are now remote. Pinochet has gone, confined to his bunker in the mountains. The new president, by contrast, continues to live in his mock Tudor house in the suburbs, and wears the more familiar uniform of the governing classes of the late twentieth century – the symbolically democratic, anonymous grey suit. The soldiers are off the streets and the political market back in business. In sum, the recognizable structures of bourgeois normality, of the bourgeois public sphere, have slowly made their return.

While true, the political counter-argument carries equal weight. We still should remember just how close was the constitutional removal of Pinochet: on the evening of the plebiscite of 5 October 1988, while the population could tune in only to five hours of cartoons, Pinochet prevaricated, persuaded only at the final moment by representations from the US embassy and from his old comrade in arms, General Matthei, who realized the game was up.<sup>33</sup> Even so, the political legacy of Pinochet ensures that, behind the facade of civilian normality, much of his system remains intact.<sup>34</sup> Nor is the political record of the incumbent president himself, Patricio Aylwin, that of an unblemished defender of democracy. As president of the Christian Democrats in September 1973 he was a decisive agent in the organization of the coup against Allende – indeed I once heard him described by an old Popular Unity cadre as 'the political chief' of the coup.<sup>35</sup> Although insistent during the elections that he was not one to destroy democracy for a second time, when men such as he take command it is possible to see why there exists a political imperative to leave the past undisturbed.

But these are not simply matters of personal political ambition. For in a deeper sense there are no means by which the institutions of the emergent public sphere possess the capacity to open up and contend with the complex pasts which are still active in Aylwin's Chile. Not that there haven't been attempts to enlarge the processes of public life, such that the myriad of past private sufferings might in some way register, collectively and publicly, in the present and for the future. The formal transfer of power, from Pinochet

to Aylwin, was one such occasion – the presence of Márquez, one might add, marking the continental significance of the event. Or more fully, the reburial of Allende – transferring his body from Viña to the capital – was clearly a highly ritualized testament to the collective personal histories of all those destroyed by Pinochet, and – according to Dorfman – functioned as a psychic release for those (amongst whom he included himself) still inhabiting the emotional world of Popular Unity, allowing the movement from myth to politics.<sup>36</sup>

But it is symptomatic that the centrepiece of this ritual was Allende's corpse. Civic normality in Chile has been shadowed by a darker, less visible, disturbed collective reckoning which focuses on the bodies of the dead – their absence, in the case of the *desaparecidos*; their discovery, where mass graves have come to light; their mutilation, consequent upon grisly autopsies conducted by medical officers of the state; and, in some instances – alongside Allende – their resurrection and reburial. There is in this an almost tangible, necessary digging into and digging up of the past, publicly exhuming histories which for too long have been denied and repressed. In this lies the promise of future reparation. When, in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Márquez imagined the advent of modernity bringing with it mass murder and the inexplicable disappearance of the bodies of those who'd been killed, he was – once more – insisting upon the need for a properly historical politics. But, after Pinochet, it can also read like all too terrible a prophecy.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

With thanks, and more, to Catalina Palma.

#### NOTES

- 1 For important reflections on this theme see Brian Loveman, *Chile. The Legacy of Hispanic Capitalism*, New York, 1988; and, working in the slipstream of Barrington Moore, Maurice Zeitlin, *The Civil Wars in Chile*, Princeton, 1984. The first quote comes from Loveman, p. 115; the second from Dorfman's 'Notes from abroad' *Granta* 11, 1984, p. 237.
- 2 This is not to suppose the essential falsity of all these versions of history. An important text, published in Spanish, English, French and German, was the *Declaration of Principles of the Chilean Government* of March 1974. This emphasized the 'Hispanic essence' of the nation and the need for Chile's 'reorigination'. It also explicitly revived the figure of Diego Portales, the great nineteenth-century conservative of Chilean politics. For a discussion of this document see Hernán Vidal, 'The politics of the body. The Chilean junta and the anti-fascist struggle' *Social Text* 2, 1979.
- 3 An influential and courageous start was made by a serialized history in *La Epoca*, republished as Ascanio Cavallo, Manuel Salazar and Oscar Sepúlveda, *La Historia Oculta del Regimen Militar*, Santiago, 1988.
- 4 For a grotesque instance of unashamed lying near to home, Alistair Horne's interview with General Pinochet in the *Sunday Telegraph* of 20 December 1987 should be consulted.
- 5 Benedict Anderson, 'James Fenton's slideshow' *New Left Review* 158, 1986, p. 87.

- 6 Ariel Dorfman, 'Adios General' *Independent*, 9 December 1989. A stimulating discussion in these terms of the situation in Argentina (which boasts a psychoanalytical intellectual culture of Parisian intensity) can be found in Janine Puget, 'Social violence and psychoanalysis in Argentina: the unthinkable and the unthought' *Free Associations* 13, 1988.
- 7 Jane S. Jacques (ed.), *The Women's Movement in Latin America. Feminism and the transition to democracy*, London, 1989 – especially Carina Perelli's contribution on Uruguay; Jennifer G. Schirmer, "'Those who die for life cannot be called dead.'" Women and human-rights protest in Latin America' *Feminist Review* 32, 1989; and Elizabeth Jelin (ed.), *Women and Social Change in Latin America*, London, 1990.
- 8 Granta Books, Cambridge, 1989.
- 9 Littín was billed to speak about the film and his work at a *Guardian* lecture at the National Film Theatre on 9 November 1987, though in the event he proffered more his own idea of chic anecdote than anything of substance.
- 10 Little of this has been translated but see: 'Operation Carlota' *New Left Review* 101/102, 1977; 'Sandinistas seize the National Palace' *New Left Review* 111, 1978; 'Mystery without end' *Granta* 11, 1984; and 'The future of Columbia' *Granta* 31, 1990.
- 11 Stephen Minta, *García Márquez. Writer of Columbia*, New York, 1987, p. 40.
- 12 Here I'm drawing loosely from talks by E. J. Hobsbawm and Gerald Martin at a conference at Birkbeck College, 30 September 1989; Linda Hutcheon's discussion of historiographic metafiction is in 'Beginning to theorize postmodernism' *Textual Practice* 1:1, 1987, while the notion of Márquez as 'mythical realist' comes from Gerald Martin's impressive *Journeys Through the Labyrinth. Latin American fiction in the Twentieth Century*, London, 1989, p. 142.
- 13 'The solitude of Latin America' *Granta* 9, 1983, p. 58. It may be of interest to recall that on his being nominated for the Nobel prize the *Telegraph* (22 October 1982) referred to Márquez as the 'unknown writer, while *The Times* (14 December 1982) covered his acceptance speech by noting, dispassionate as ever, 'Castro's rum starts anti-American orgy'. Fidel had demonstrated his regard for Gabo by despatching to Oslo 1,500 bottles of Cuban rum. For a more recent if dissonant reading, see Octavio Paz's Nobel speech, 'In search of the present' *Times Literary Supplement* 21 December 1990.
- 14 Márquez arrived in Havana within days of Fidel's victory; for his public reflections on Fidel, 'Plying the word' *NACLA. Report on the Americas* 24:2, 1990.
- 15 Gabriel García Márquez and Plinio Apuleyo Mendoza, *The Fragrance of Guava*, London, 1982, p. 106. The passage follows a dreadful anecdote about the occasion when, at a cocktail party in Europe, Márquez encountered 'the most beautiful woman in the world'.
- 16 *Gabriel García Márquez and the Invention of America*, Liverpool, 1987, p. 10.
- 17 Though little more scandalous than Marx: 'Bolívar y Ponte' *The New American Cyclopaedia*, Vol. III, 1858; in K. Marx and F. Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. 18, London, 1982. Márquez's version is to be found in *The General in his Labyrinth*.
- 18 Interview, *Times Literary Supplement*, 20 October 1989. Although this view may appear disarmingly unproblematic, Gerald Martin deploys a fine reading of Márquez's apparently most deconstructionist novel, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, in precisely these terms: *Journeys Through the Labyrinth*, pp. 229–35. Márquez's view of professional historians is wryly conveyed in *Big Mama's Funeral* whose story he must tell 'before the historians have time to arrive'.
- 19 Alejo Carpentier, 'The Latin American novel' *New Left Review* 154, 1985, p. 107. It is interesting to note that the scenario for the third novel of Isabel Allende has now shifted from her native Chile to this anonymous baroque zone of the tropical north: see her hugely hyped *Eva Luna*.
- 20 In this respect Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino's *Hour of the Furnaces* remains of critical significance; see their 'Towards a Third Cinema' in Michael

- Chanan (ed.), *Twenty-Five Years of the New Latin American Cinema*, London, 1983. However Márquez's current hopes for subverting from within the genre of soap-opera could hardly be further from their concept of 'guerrilla cinema' – though this fascination with soap is now common in the literature of the continent: in Márquez's *Love in the Time of Cholera* and, for example, in the novels of Mario Vargas Llosa, Isabel Allende and Manuel Puig. Antiquarians may care to note that in the aftermath of the Argentinean coup of 4 June 1943, which launched Perón's political career, the new government banned all soap-operas from the radio: Ray Josephs, *Argentine Diary. The inside story of the coming of fascism*, London, 1945, p. 96.
- 21 A characteristic motif in many of the novels of 'the boom', Márquez included, can be found in accounts of the coming of the cinema in Latin America, incubating its own peculiar relations of modernity and implanting a dominating aesthetic for novelists of a later generation. In fact, the 'magic' of 'magical realism' derives as much from Hollywood as from historic underdevelopment – or rather, from the combination of the two. By 1920 95 per cent of screen time in South America was taken up by US films: John King, *Magical Reels. A History of Cinema in Latin America*, London, 1990, p. 11.
  - 22 See the interview with Littín in National Film Theatre/The Other Cinema (eds), *Third World Cinema*, London (n.d., 1972?), pp. 28–31; and with Patricio Guzmán in Julianne Burton (ed.), *Cinema and Social Change in Latin America*, Austin, 1986, pp. 60–2. Given my earlier comments on perceptions of Chilean history common during Popular Unity, it is intriguing to note that the first manifesto published by film-directors in support of Allende proclaimed the need to 'recover the tremendous figure of Balmaceda, anti-oligarchist and anti-imperialist'. The reference is to José Manuel Balmaceda, President of Chile 1886–91, and suggests to my mind a distinctly quirky historical reading. The manifesto is published in Coco Fusco (ed.), *Reviewing Histories. Selections from New Latin American Cinema*, Buffalo, 1987, pp. 118–20.
  - 23 King, *Magical Reels*, p. 181.
  - 24 Dorfman observes that 'it is in the cinematic field that the paralysis of Chilean culture is most alarming', 'Notes from abroad', p. 243. For Littín's reflections on this and on his participation in the Havana festivals, Parminder Vir, 'Film, culture and politics: the festival of New Latin American Cinema' *Race and Class* 29:1, 1987; and see Zuzana Pick, 'The dialectical wanderings of exile' *Screen* 30:4, 1989.
  - 25 Alan Angell and Susan Carstairs, 'The exile question in Chilean politics' *Third World Quarterly* 9:1, 1987.
  - 26 Dorfman himself, in writing his own novel, *Widows*, about Chile and its disappeared – for various reasons, not all to do with anonymity – doubly distanced himself from his own narrative by setting the story in 'a country resembling Greece' in a time which conflated the Metaxas regime and the War, and secondly by presenting the author of the narrative as a Danish partisan completing the manuscript a few days before his death at the hands of the Gestapo.
  - 27 I'm thinking particularly of Isabel Allende's *The House of the Spirits* and Antonio Skármeta's *Burning Patience*.
  - 28 For relations between memory and the aesthetic in the fiction, Michael Palencia-Roth, 'The art of memory in García Márquez and Vargas Llosa' *MLN* 105:2, 1990.
  - 29 To my mind, a model – unbearably sad – still remains Alain Resnais and Jorge Semprun's *La Guerre est Finie*, a classic articulation of the experience of exile.
  - 30 This reading of Littín's is highly contentious, though not as contentious as his ludicrous designation of Diego Portales as 'one of Chile's liberal forefathers': see footnote 2 above.
  - 31 Stuart Hall, 'Minimal selves' in *Identity. ICA Documents* 6, London, 1987, p. 44.

- 32 There may then prove to be an irony in the words of Pinochet overheard by Littín: 'You can't believe a woman even when she's telling the truth'.
- 33 Alan Angell, paper to the Institute of Latin American Studies, 6 December 1988; informative on the background is Alfred Stepan, 'The last days of Pinochet?' *New York Review of Books*, 2 June 1988.
- 34 One of the best analyses comes from a prominent Christian Democrat: Genaro Arriagada, *Pinochet. The politics of power*, London, 1989. On the day on which power was transferred Pinochet boasted: 'Not one of my men will be touched' *Sunday Times*, 11 March 1990 – and (to date) so it has proved.
- 35 For clear evidence see his comments in *Le Monde*, 25 September 1973.
- 36 'Dead and alive' *New Statesman*, 21 September 1990; this should be read alongside John Berger's 'Che Guevara' in his *The Look of Things. Selected essays and articles*, Harmondsworth, 1972.



## LEEDS INTELLECTUALS AND THE AVANT-GARDE

Tom Steele, *Alfred Orage and the Leeds Art Club 1893–1923*, Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1990; 284 pp.; £35.00.

The *New Age*, which Alfred Orage and Holbrook Jackson purchased in 1908 with money put up by a theosophist friend and Bernard Shaw, was arguably the most significant British cultural journal of the twentieth century. Under Orage's editorship it introduced a readership of up to 20,000 to the modern movement in the arts, and to continental philosophy and psychology from Nietzsche to Bergson and Freud. Shaw, Arnold Bennett, Walter Sickert, Ezra Pound, T. E. Hulme, Katherine Mansfield and Herbert Read were among the contributors. One of the reasons why Sidney and Beatrice Webb founded the *New Statesman* was to counteract the *New Age's* rejection of Fabianism for individualist and, later, Guild Socialist doctrines. All this is reasonably well-known, and it forms the subject of Wallace Martin's *The 'New Age' Under Orage* (1967). Orage's ideas are examined at length in David S. Thatcher's *Nietzsche in England* (1970) and Tom Gibbons's *Rooms in the Darwin Hotel* (1973).

Orage's leadership of the radical intelligentsia (a word that was coined in the *New Age*) was preceded by thirteen years as an elementary schoolteacher in Leeds – a phase of his career that, until Tom Steele's richly informative and far-reaching study, could have been accurately summed up in the phrase 'provincial obscurity'. Yet it can now be seen that his success as a London editor was a direct consequence of his intellectual activities in Leeds, where, according to Jackson, he was regarded as a Socrates responsible for the dream of 'turning the dingy Yorkshire town into a modern Athens'. The Leeds Art Club founded by Orage and Jackson in 1903 continued to flourish for fifteen years after both men had left for the metropolis. Under the leadership of Frank Rutter, Michael Sadler and Jacob Kramer, the Club pioneered the reception of Post-Impressionist and abstract painting in England. Herbert Read, who joined in 1912, went on to become the most influential interpreter of modern art in Britain after Roger Fry. Read's *Arts and Letters* began publication in 1916 as a brief attempt to rival the *New Age*; later Orage chose Read as his successor as literary columnist for the latter journal. Read in his turn was to become the close friend and critical sponsor of the most celebrated Yorkshire-born artist of this century, Henry Moore.

One would look in vain for any mention of the Leeds Arts Club in the general histories of modernism and early twentieth-century British culture that have appeared in the last few decades. In future the omission will be

harder to excuse. Tom Steele's work is as notable for its alertness to the wider issues of cultural theory and history as it is for an exemplary thoroughness of detailed research. The concepts of the 'metropolitan intellectual' and the 'provincial avant-garde' are carefully scrutinized at the same time as being reaffirmed by Steele's analysis. One can trace here a definition of a specifically English form of artistic modernism, and also a riposte to what Steele calls the 'almost masochistic' views of the national culture propounded by Perry Anderson, Terry Eagleton and Martin Wiener in their influential books and essays. Finally, Steele amply demonstrates the cultural vitality of a particular moment in the life of the industrial city, without falling into a Lowry-like sentimentalization of northern grittiness. His intense inwardness with the writers and artists with whom he deals can lead him to write, for example, that Herbert Read's 'graphic Road to Damascus passed through the smoke-blackened heart of Leeds' – yet there is a hint of mockery as well as of authorial romanticization in this.

The members of the Leeds Arts Club felt no temptation to romanticize their city. In 1905 their most popular visiting speaker was George 'Burnhard' Shaw (as the *Yorkshire Post* dubbed him). Shaw said that the Arts Club's mission should be to get the people of Leeds to burn down their city and build a better one, replacing themselves, at the same time, with better people. H. G. Wells's novel *In the Days of the Comet* (1906), set in the Potteries, shows something very like this happening. Nobody then saw the disasters of municipal housing nor, for that matter, the Richard Hoggart on the horizon. The Arts Club thought of itself as an oasis in the midst of what all were agreed was an industrial wasteland. Its members' ideal of citizenship was based on ideological convictions which owed nothing to sentiments of regional difference or local pride. Their points of cultural reference lay outside the West Riding, and outside England as well, even though many of them were busy building up the university, art gallery, art school and theatres in their city. As Steele puts it, 'what they summoned up was the America of Walt Whitman, the Celtic fringe of Yeats and Synge and the Europe of Nietzsche, Ibsen and Wagner'. Does this sense of being at the critical intersection of cosmopolitan influences help to define the concept and function of an avant-garde, or at least a British one?

A manifesto adopted in 1910 stated that 'The Club values no enthusiasm for either Art or Philosophy which does not consciously react upon the ugliness, stupidity and chaos of modern civilisation'. The Club stood for a missionary version of the 'religion of art', and also for the unity of the arts and intellectual discussion. Except for the painter Jacob Kramer, its leading members were critics, patrons and cultural functionaries rather than creative artists. The events they put on were mostly lectures, exhibitions and dramatic performances; and the activities of the Club itself (as opposed to its offshoot the Playgoers Society) usually had a critical or theoretical aim. On one occasion, painters and photographers were asked to compete in representing the same scene, while, on another, Kandinsky's paintings were accompanied by 'musical illustrations' on the piano. In its bridging of practice and theory the Arts Club stands somewhere between the regional groupings (such as

Mackintosh's Glasgow) associated a generation earlier with the Arts and Crafts Movement, and the theoretical 'schools' of the contemporary academy, beginning with *Scrutiny* a quarter-century later. Leavis's notion of the civilized élite could be seen as marking the continuation, and also the retreat, of the Arts Club ethos.

It is hard to know to what extent the Arts Club was unique, or at least confined to the West Riding. There was a flourishing rival or sister organization in Bradford before the First World War, of which the only memorial, it seems, is a passage in J. B. Priestley's memoirs. Another perhaps comparable grouping, though on a much smaller and more anecdotal scale, is D. H. Lawrence's circle of 'neo-Pagan' friends in Eastwood and Nottingham. All these groups embody some sort of response to the rise of socialism, to the Fabian Society and the women's movement; their typical 'rank and file' member would be a female schoolteacher. When Orage went to London he was instrumental in setting up the Fabian Arts Group. The arguments between socialism and individualism that were voiced in Leeds by Orage and Jackson sound uncannily like the debates in *Women in Love* between Birkin and Gerald. One can attribute this either to a common cultural ambience or to the fact that Lawrence himself seems to have been an avid *New Age* reader.

Where the Leeds Club stands alone is in its public character and in the richness of the documentary sources, from newspaper reports to scrapbooks and private diaries, that it left behind. One can see from Tom Steele's account how much its intellectual energy and dynamism was due to its functioning as a form of cultural politics, conceived in reaction against, or at least as a necessary supplement to, a more orthodox politics. Orage was a former Independent Labour Party member and activist who, on May Day 1896, had addressed a crowd of 8,000 on Hunslet Moor. His first experience of literary journalism came from the regular column, entitled 'A Bookish Causerie', that he wrote at this time for the *Labour Leader*. Yet soon after giving up political militancy he was to be found in theosophical circles, to which he was introduced by his wife Jean and by the mystical socialist Edward Carpenter. Orage took a lifelong interest in the occult. He may have joined the Order of the Golden Dawn, and when in 1921 he finally gave up the editorship of the *New Age* (a title that did not then have the extra resonance it has recently acquired), it was to become a disciple of Gurdjieff at Fontainebleau. In 1900, however, he came under the influence of Holbrook Jackson, a member of the Fabian Society whom he met by chance in a Leeds bookshop. Jackson introduced him to Nietzsche's philosophy, and dismissed his theosophical friends as 'yoga-stricken mugwumps'.

Nietzscheanism and Fabianism were already combined in the person of George Bernard Shaw. Orage, however, made a deeper study of Nietzsche's philosophy, producing two books on him in 1906. Later, under the influence of G. K. Chesterton, he came to repudiate the doctrine of the Nietzschean superman, and with it both Shavian evolutionism and Fabian administrative socialism. The liveliness of the *New Age* owed much to Orage's absorption of Nietzsche's aphoristic method, as well as to his intellectual volatility. His eventual political allegiance was to Guild Socialism, the theory deriving from

*The Restoration of the Gild System* (1906) by another Yorkshireman, A. J. Penty. Guild Socialism had a solid Morrisian and Ruskinian pedigree, but that it became a recipe for ideological instability is shown by the later destinies of its leading adherents. Some like Palme Dutt and Willie Gallagher became founder-members of the Communist Party, while others turned to Christian Socialism and to Social Credit, and Penty himself became a father-figure for Mosley's British Union of Fascists. What they had in common was hostility to the Webbs and the Labour Party; Orage added to this a strong impulse towards intellectual anachronisms and atavisms, ideals as far removed as possible from the commercial, industrial and democratic realities of politics in a city like Leeds.

Tom Steele is an expert guide through these shifting ideological and cultural positions. More than this, he is concerned to demonstrate a thematic and discursive continuity throughout the history of the Arts Club, from the early lectures of Orage and Jackson down to Herbert Read's *Philosophy of Modern Art* (1964). This is, to some extent, a matter of style. In Orage's hands the literary 'causerie' transcended its self-indulgent, impressionistic origins to become a tightly-knit sequence of paragraphs delivering decisively authoritative judgments. No justification was offered and no tentativeness allowed. This style of aphoristic directness deriving from Nietzsche was far removed from the gentle reasonableness of Cambridge and Bloomsbury, of Leslie Stephen's *Hours in a Library* or his daughter Virginia Woolf's *The Common Reader*. Orage's disciples in this respect were such seminal figures of English modernist literary criticism as T. E. Hulme, T. S. Eliot, and Herbert Read (who was to edit Hulme's posthumous *Speculations*, and to become Eliot's assistant on the *Criterion*).

But if his style was Nietzschean, Orage considerably diluted Nietzsche's ideas. His thought is characterized by an acceptance of social organicism, a Ruskinian revolt against commercial ugliness, and a belief in a permanent underlying spiritual reality (such as theosophy might be expected to reveal). Steele shows how this mixture of doctrines can be traced more widely in the activities and predilections of Arts Club members. Social organicism and Ruskinian aestheticism were reflected in the Club's civic idealism, which led naturally to an interest in the garden city movement and modern town planning. In 1905 Jackson took the Club on an excursion to Liverpool, where they admired the towering stone buildings, fine avenues, and electric trams. Later, under Michael Sadler (the Vice-Chancellor of Leeds University) and Frank Rutter (the Director of the city Art Gallery) the Club mounted a spectacular series of art exhibitions, including a Post-Impressionist show in 1913 and a 'Cubist and Futurist' show opened by Wyndham Lewis eleven months later. The Vorticist artists David Bomberg, Jacob Epstein, Edward Wadsworth and Lewis exhibited in Leeds as well as being illustrated in the *New Age*. Also in 1913 Sadler tried unsuccessfully to arrange a *Blaue Reiter* exhibition in London, surely one of the great might-have-beens of British art history. His son translated Kandinsky's *Art of Spiritual Harmony* into English, and father and son championed the Russian painter's abstraction against Picasso's Cubism, finding in it an occult resonance that led back to the

theosophical doctrines familiar to the Arts Club. The Club members formed a ready audience for an avant-garde art which in the name of a more spiritual truth swept away conventional pieties and the naturalistic reproduction of visual appearances. In their enthusiasm for the new art, however, they had reckoned without the local press and the Leeds public.

The press was ready to indulge experimental art so long as it was shown on the Club's private premises. Things were very different when the members' civic consciousness led them to propose a series of panels by contemporary artists in one of the public rooms of Leeds Town Hall. In 1920 Sadler exhibited the sketches he had commissioned from Kramer, Wadsworth, Stanley Spencer, Paul Nash and others. Kramer and Wadsworth used Vorticist motifs to depict Leeds as a 'smoky and energetic chaos', and were condemned for their pains as 'artistic Bolsheviks' in the *Yorkshire Evening Post*. Sadler precipitately removed the sketches, and no more was heard of the plan to decorate the Town Hall. In 1923 he commissioned another controversial work, a war memorial by Eric Gill showing Christ chasing the money-lenders out of the temple. The sculpture was unveiled at Leeds University to another storm of protest. Soon afterwards Sadler left to become Master of University College, Oxford. The Arts Club was now falling apart. Rutter had been dismissed from his post as Director of the Leeds Art Gallery, apparently because of a row over the purchase of a Pissarro painting. Orage left London for Fontainebleau and Gurdjieff. Only the Playgoers Society and the Art Theatre continued to flourish. These no longer constituted an intellectual centre, but merely a means of bringing serious opera and drama to what was once again firmly seen as a provincial outpost. In 1919 two brilliant young sculptors had entered the Leeds School of Art, but they both left for the metropolis and the Royal College as soon as they could. Their names were Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth.

Though they are but marginal figures in this story, Moore and Hepworth sum up the 'romanticized modernism' which Steele sees as the characteristically English contribution to early twentieth-century art. It was the logical outcome of the mass of ideas and influences which had first congregated in Orage's fertile brain around the turn of the century. Inevitably there are some loose ends in this history that Tom Steele leaves around for others to pick up. One such is the figure of Mary Gawthorpe, an Arts Club member who became Secretary of the Women's Social and Political Union and then an editor of the *Freewoman*, a journal soon to be remoulded by Ezra Pound and retitled the *Egoist* – a title betraying Nietzschean and perhaps also Oragean influences. Scholar Press's contribution to this remarkable book leaves something to be desired, since it is poorly indexed and sub-edited, and at times repetitive. (There are, however, some excellent photographs.) Orage is lucky indeed to have attracted two such probing and intelligent studies as this one and Wallace Martin's survey of the *New Age*; they are just about the best examples we have of the grassroots approach to the high-cultural history of the modernist period.