Wyndham Lewis and his Readers
Reviews of Wyndham Lewis 1911 - 1931

Wyndham Lewis and his Readers
1911-1931

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This thesis follows the public reception of the painting and writings of Wyndham Lewis from his first exhibitions in 1911 through to the publication of *Hitler* in 1931, and is based on a new checklist of criticism and reviews. The study shows that Lewis monitored his reputation with great care, and that many of his decisions with regard to the deployment and revision of his texts can be seen as conditioned by the short term needs of maintaining a satisfactory public standing. I also suggest that this hampered him in his highly original attempt to find a means to express hatred in a form which could be legitimated and hence guiltless.

Chapter One discusses Lewis's early exhibitions and the reception of *Blast* and argues that the need to appear as a radical force in British painting pushed him towards a manner, abstraction, uncongenial to his aims, and induced him to bury his remarkable writings in a polemical journal.

Chapter Two examines the reviews of *Tarr* and explains the book's commercial failure as one reason for Lewis's attempt to re-establish himself as a painter in 1919-21. The public reception of the Tyro drawings is used to illustrate his failure, and Lewis's sudden decision to turn wholeheartedly to writing is explained as a consequence of this.

Chapter Three describes Lewis's twin projects of 1922-24, and their fragmentation in 1925-27. The rehandling of the material is shown to have been unfortunate in that it created a public impression that Lewis was solely a critic. This chapter also proposes that during 1926 Lewis abandoned several of the central planks of "The Man of the World" and began to take on a conservative cast. The publication of *The Childermass* is described as an abortive attempt to regain public standing as a creative writer.

Chapter Four discusses the reception of *Paleface* in 1929, and reference is made to Lewis's growing interest in questions of race. *The Apes of God* is described as a final demand for the submissive homage of the reading public.

Chapter Five analyses *Hitler* and shows that the book was widely and correctly understood as a cynical attempt to defend Nazism, and that its content provided alert contemporaries with a key to the Aryanism which had been a substantial component of Lewis's thought since 1926.
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A very large part of the bibliographical research on which this project is based was carried out in Cambridge University Library, and I should thank the staff of the West Room for their forbearance during a year and half of incessant and unreasonable demands.

Nevertheless, this dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration.
Introduction

This study examines the development of Wyndham Lewis's thought and career between 1911 and 1931, from Lewis's first exhibited paintings up to the publication of Hitler. Its principal goal is to demonstrate that Lewis was extremely sensitive to criticism, and that many of the decisions taken in the course of these years can be best understood as attempts to manage his public standing. In pursuit of this aim I survey the arrangements which Lewis made for the publication of his material, concentrating on revisions, plans, aborted plans, and redeployments of earlier texts. These shifts and changes in direction are related to the public reception, which is studied through the medium of reviews and essays. The methodology is conventional, but the survey is unusually thorough for Lewis studies, and the resulting picture is at variance with the orthodox account of this period of his life.

But the study is not confined to these chilly objectivities. Since Lewis's private programme, as with any writer that has one, is the most important constraint on his public marketing, and indeed in this case accounts for many of his difficulties, I have also attempted to bind an account of these motivations, or rather one of them, into my narrative. The Darwinian psychology on which this description is based is controversial and in its infancy, and my extrapolations from it are amateur and doubtless very wide of the mark. I offer it here despite these reservations because it seems to me to make sense of Lewis's peculiar qualities with a clarity that other approaches do not, and because I suspect that if academic literary study is to develop connections with a materialist (or overtly pragmatic) science of human activity, as it ultimately must if it is to continue as a university subject, then it will be by taking the wealth of information so carefully tabulated by literary scholarship and handling it in such a way that it serves the more abstract disciplines as a source of data and hypotheses.

Briefly, I propose that Lewis's entire literary and painterly career can be seen as a search for a means of making misanthropic judgements without experiencing guilt. It is mostly at this rather literary level of articulation that it first occurred to me, and it is in this form that the argument appears in the text, but there is some sense in admitting that my presentation has been given shape by a period of intensive reading in evolutionary biology, particularly in the works of Robert Trivers, and latterly from the growing field of evolutionary psychology, which I know principally through a collection of essays, The Adapted Mind, edited by Jerome Barkow, Leda Cosmides, and John Tooby. I have found the defense of the adaptational approach to human psychology in the latter book of particular interest. The fundamental proposition of this line of investigation is that far from being a fully integrated general purpose computational system, the mind is composed of partially integrated content-specific modules. These modules were of course shaped by the conditions of man's evolutionary history, and hence an adaptive study is the royal road to an understanding of cognitive architecture, though there is no reason to suppose that the behaviour generated today, in very novel circumstances, is always adaptive. A psychology based on this view is concerned with the forming of hypothetical modules, and designing tests for their existence. This functional analysis is at present tentative, and Tooby, Cosmides and Barkow suggest that in approaching an organ so complicated as the human brain a researcher is entitled to employ either of two complementary methods. They may 'start with a known phenotypic phenomenon, such as pregnancy sickness, language, or color vision, and try to understand what its adaptive function was', or one can 'use theories of adaptive function to help one discover psychological mechanisms that were previously unknown.' It is with the first of these that I am concerned, and though I do not think that literary scholars are really competent to take 'a known psychological phenomenon, and begin to investigate its adaptive function, if any, by placing it in the context of hunter-gatherer life and known selection pressures', I suggest that since literature contains a wealth of phenotypic phenomena,

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3 'Introduction', p. 10.
behavioural fossils if you like, it is possible that we may usefully systematize this data and generate preliminary hypotheses for detailed consideration by those with the appropriate training.

Having observed that Lewis's work, and that of other writers and artists, seems to be very largely concerned with the justification of negative judgements, we are in a position to outline a very crude modular map of this event. Let us suppose that we have a module for estimating the value of adjacent individuals. Co-operation is man's biggest trick, and the regulation of its operations one of our abiding concerns, religion, jurisprudence, and ethical philosophy being, for example, almost entirely concerned with it. Throughout most of our history man has been living in small groups where the establishment of co-operative relationships is of extreme importance, and the cost of failure in this respect enormous. One would therefore expect any evaluatory mechanism to be much more demanding with regard to negative judgements than positive ones, and I think that everyday experience confirms that we are protected against a too hasty application of hostile evaluations by a sense that they require much more extensive legitimation than positive ones. When this legitimation is not forthcoming the judgement is held in suspension pending the result of further investigation. We experience this process subjectively as guilt. This mechanism would function adequately for regulating relations within smaller groups where negative evaluations would occur as acute rather than chronic events. But in situations where populations are extremely concentrated, situations to which we are not well adapted, negative evaluations are exceedingly common, and as a consequence we experience nearly continual guilt and spend much of our time attempting to legitimate these judgements.

John Carey's recent book, *The Intellectuals and the Masses* is directly concerned with this subject, though he seems, despite some puzzling observations on demography in the conclusion, to be unaware of it. His work draws attention to the frequency of misanthropic opinions in modern English literature, but attributes this to an educated middle-class snobbery. Unconscious of his own guilt-avoidance techniques, Carey exercises his hatred on the 'intellectuals', legitimating his action by invoking the cause of the common man, who is presumed to be pure and untainted by these unpleasant emotions. A moment's reflection on one of his key examples shows this to be an implausible and inadequate description. H. G. Wells is castigated for repeatedly slaying humanity in fictional effigy, but Carey overlooks the fact that these stories were immensely popular, and that therefore we are justified in assuming that the pleasure in the destruction of the masses is not merely an 'intellectual' peculiarity, but a widespread predilection. And thus Carey's entire polemical argument collapses. In its place we have a view which sees misanthropy as endemic, and regards the prominence of literary intellectuals in this matter as the result of the fact that they leave more records, and perhaps because in their work as professional thinkers they display the internal workings of concepts normally left unanalysed. One might even go further and say that writers offer techniques of guilt avoidance tailored to particular audiences. The merit of such a view is that it enables us to make distinctions between the obviously rather different approaches of Virginia Woolf, who claims superior sensitivity as a legitimation, and Wells, who justifies genocide because it leads to human progress. Carey's heavy-handed morality sees both as examples of intellectual contempt, and thus fails to recognize that one is designed for a small and rarefied audience, and the other for a large part of a literate democracy.

It seems to me that many aspects of the literature of the Western European tradition (and for all I know that of other traditions as well) can be explained in terms of guilt avoidance, and certainly I doubt whether our grasp of English literature since 1600 can be said to be complete without reference to it. Perhaps the central point to remember is that although the cognitive mechanisms underlying these facts are presumably common to all human beings, the particular method of legitimation will vary according to the circumstances of the individuals concerned. It does not, therefore, make much sense to say that Joyce was a philanthropic writer, and therefore better than the misanthropic Lewis. Rather we should examine their work as different approaches to the same problem, adjudicating between them on the basis of the efficiency with which they work. Lewis, in my view, is interesting because his methods attempt, at least in the early part of his life, to legitimate his judgements in an individualistic form, when most of his contemporaries were invoking higher units - society,

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the people - and was throughout his career dealing with his hatred in a naked form when others were seeking to conceal their negative judgements as positive ones.

The question of Lewis's search for a guiltless hatred forms the backbone of my description of his thought, but the argument is not given in full here since my aim is primarily to do justice to the neglected question of public reception. This relative weighting may seem perverse, and I had perhaps better say that I am content with it, for the time being at least, since it reflects the course of my research. A detailed study of the reviews has led me to a number of hypotheses which call for new analyses of Lewis's books, and while I have attempted to show that there are good grounds for thinking that such analyses will very probably support my hypotheses, I have not chosen to conduct any of those studies here.
A Note on the Graphs

Distributed through the text are nine graphs illustrating Lewis's reputation, and the commercial success of his books. The following notes explain the content and method of calculation employed. The data available is of very uneven quality, and has not permitted the use of a consistent policy of representation. I have therefore chosen the least inadequate graphing technique for each of set of information.

1. "Reviews of Wyndham Lewis" (Frontispiece): This chart displays the fluctuations in Lewis's standing as represented in the numbers of references to his work, both in books and periodical reviews. The figures are drawn from my own checklist of Lewis criticism for this period, included here as Bibliography 1.

2. “Tarr” (Facing p. 17): This chart displays income arising from sales of Tarr, the figures in grey boxes being decimalized expressions of sums recorded in the Egoist Press ledgers in the British Library. The Ledger, for example, record that between July and November 1918 income amounted to £83.12. Because the ledgers do not record income at regular intervals, the sum for a given period has been graphed as pence per day, thus allowing comparison with other periods.

3. “The Caliph’s Design” (Facing p. 22): This chart displays the numbers of copies sold, for example, the Egoist Press ledgers record that in November and December 1919 188 copies were disposed of. Since the ledgers do not record sales figures at regular intervals this figure has graphed as the average number sold per month, thus allowing comparison with other periods.

4. “The Art of Being Ruled” (Facing p. 45): This chart displays the numbers of copies sold, and is calculated on similar principles to those used for The Caliph’s Design.

5. “The Lion and the Fox” (Facing p. 52) This chart displays the numbers of copies sold, and is calculated on similar principles to those used for The Caliph’s Design. It should be noted that the Grant Richards ledgers are very well kept and record figures are regular intervals, making this graph the most reliable of any given here.

6. “Time and Western Man” (Facing p. 55): The Chatto & Windus ledgers for this volume record no useful figures for sales or numbers of copies sold, and in order to represent the commercial success of the book I have been driven to use the binding records, which are an indirect, but useful indication of public demand.

For example, Chatto bound 700 copies before publication, and sales were sufficient to require them to bind a further 100 in November, and a similar number in December. This third binding seems to have been sufficient until February, when another 100 were bound. This binding was not depleted until December.

In order to facilitate comparison between these periods the number of copies bound has been divided by the number of days before the next binding, thus enabling us to see that during October Time and Western Man was selling perhaps as many as 14 copies a day, but that during November this had fallen to something like 4 copies a day.

7. “Tarr, 1928” (Facing p. 70), 8. “Paleface” (Facing p. 72), and 9. “Hitler” (Facing p. 99), are all calculated on similar principles to those used for Time and Western Man above.
EARLY EXHIBITIONS

To the best of my knowledge it was in 1911 that Lewis first began to receive public criticism of his work. There was no thunderbolt from a clear blue sky, and only the faintest hint of foreboding in the *Sunday Times* notice of the Camden Town Group exhibition: 'A few visitors may be shocked at the elongated noses in the squarely-drawn heads by Mr Wyndham Lewis, but with the exception of these two pen drawings I cannot recall any exhibit which could justly be described even as "queer."'\(^1\) Lewis reported the responses to a friend, exaggerating the disturbance in a characteristic fashion:

the drawings I showed at Carfax Galleries, which I supposed, naturally, would go unnoticed, caused widespread indignation. The critics would begin: 'Despite the alarming announcements of the character of this 'Group', we find that amongst this band of honest, hard-working and interesting men (with one exception) that good old English conservatism has saved from the excesses' etc.

Then the next paragraph would begin 'That one exception is Mr. Wyndham Lewis, whose blackguardly, preposterous, putrid,' etc.\(^2\)

Later in the year Arthur Clutton-Brock, until his death the anonymous voice of official, and often friendly, opinion on the pictorial and literary activities of Mr. Wyndham Lewis, peacefully buried another three of his exhibits in *The Times* with the remark that though he was not the bad practical joker that many would take him for, Lewis had missed the point of abstract art, since he did not use beautiful materials, or have strong emotions, either of which might have sufficiently decorated the works to make them acceptable. The 'geometrical experiments' were 'merely diagrammatic'.\(^3\)

It was a quiet enough beginning, but Lewis immediately leapt to prominence in the following year, largely, it appears, because Roger Fry and his imitator Clive Bell attempted to co-opt him into their programme for the reformation of English art. Fry's *Nation* review of the 'Allied Artists' exhibition at the Albert Hall found that the possibilities of the building had been largely ignored by the exhibitors, and that 'One artist, and one only, Mr. Wyndham Lewis, has risen to the occasion presented.'\(^4\) The price of such praise proved to be that 'Kermesse', the large and now lost design for the walls of Frieda Strindberg's night-club, 'The Cave of the Golden Calf', should be understood only as a formal exercise. Fry's description quite deliberately withholds any substantial indication of the representative content, and indeed delays the slight hint he is prepared to give:

His quantities and volumes have decisive relations to one another: long before one has begun to inquire what it represents, one has the impression of some plastic reality brought about by the deliberately intentional colour oppositions. When we begin to look more closely, we find indeed that the rhythm of these geometric forms is based upon the rhythm of the human figure.

To understand this painting, Fry continues, the viewer must subscribe to the formalist theory of painting, he must 'exert the passive attention' to the 'rhythmic disposition of abstract units of form', just as he would when listening to music.

Bell took up this point a week later in the *Athenaeum*, so echoing Fry, both about Lewis and the other artists, that there can be little doubt that this was part of a concerted plan of flattery. The spectator 'will be able to judge it ['Kermesse'] as he would music - that is to say, as pure, formal, expression.'\(^5\) Where Fry advised the viewer to 'look down into the arena from the gallery' Bell more helpfully recommended that he should 'take the lift'. The advantage to be gained was the same. Fry considered that 'at this vast distance [the viewer]

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\(^1\) Anon, 'Round the Galleries', *Sunday Times* (18 June 1911), 16.

\(^2\) September or October 1911 to Thomas Sturge Moore. The original is in Box 30 of the Sturge Moore papers held at the University of London library. I have consulted these items on microfilm.

\(^3\) 'The Camden Town Group', *Times* (11 December 1911), 12. The authorship of anonymous items in *The Times* and *The Times Literary Supplement* has been determined by consulting the marked copies held in the Group Records of News International Ltd., by whose kind permission the information is here published. Note that in the footnotes the titles of articles are given in short form. Full titles will be found in Bibliography 1.

\(^4\) 'The Allied Artists at the Albert Hall', *Nation*, 11.16 (20 July 1912), 583.

\(^5\) 'The London Salon at the Albert Hall', *The Athenaeum*, No. 4422 (27 July 1912), 98.
will not be disturbed by the absence of merely descriptive form', and Bell repeated that 'having shed all irrelevant prejudices in favour of representation [the viewer] will be able to contemplate it as a piece of pure design.' He concluded with a flourish of that condescension by which one individual attempts to recruit a follower:

There is a laboriousness about this work which seems to represent the artist's unsuccessful struggle to realize in paint his mental conception; and it is for this reason that we admire it rather as a promise of something great than as an achievement.

Fry and Bell were largely successful in diverting Lewis into an exclusive pursuit of formal goals, and this remained true even in 1914 when Lewis was supposedly rejecting Fry and everything that he stood for. Though Lewis's cruel cartooning of the human form seems clear enough to us, he may not have clearly recognized his interests. Even so, Fry and Bell's indifference to the matter of his work ought to have alerted him to the selfish nature of their proffered friendship. This seemingly neutral and avuncular criticism was requesting Lewis to settle down and play tunes on his colour organ and form drum, to give up, in fact, the very line of investigation upon which he was working. Less interested observers, Clutton-Brock in the *Times* for example, were aware that Lewis regarded abstraction as an instrument. Of 'Creation', another lost picture exhibited at the Albert Hall, he remarked that 'it is not intelligible, but we are persuaded that the artist means something by it, because the design, considered abstractly, has a lucidity and precision we have never found in pure nonsense pictures such as the works of most of the futurists. [...] there is a rhythm which leads us to believe that the sense is obscure rather than wanting.' The second 'Post-Impressionist' exhibition in November drew a similar comment from Rupert Brooke, writing in the *Cambridge Review*: 'Wyndham Lewis is more or less alone in resembling Picasso in method. But he gives an angular geometrical representation of reality which has an unexpected amount of emotional appeal'. And, in the course of a critique of Clive Bell in the *Saturday Review*, C. H. Collins Baker went to the heart of the matter: 'Mr. Bell assures us that Mr. Wyndham Lewis's art is practically independent of "association or suggestion". Obviously if this means anything it is that this gifted painter's art means nothing.' Nevertheless Lewis was deeply interested in the exclusion of representative elements, and it is possible that his further experimentation with this manner was in part an attempt to align himself a little more clearly with the forces for change in the English art world at this time, of which, for all their faults, Fry and Bell were most clearly the major critical representatives. Those writers who perceived that his interests were not compatible with the radical formalist programme were generally columnists for papers with conventional outlooks, a fact which may have cost Lewis several years of pointless attempts to prosecute his experiments in an unsuitable medium.

Before the Ideal Home Exhibition scandal broke later in the year, Fry was still affable, praising Lewis in the *Nation* for his 'Group', which he thought 'more completely realized than anything he has shown yet', but still considered it only as a cunning selection of 'those lines of movement and those sequences of mass which express his personal feeling'. This feeling was described as 'Michelangelesque in its sombre and tragic intensity', but no attempt was made to suggest that this mood might be a response to some object, though a reader has the feeling that this has been tactfully excluded from Fry's account rather than quite undiscovered. In October these doubts were allowed to surface, now that Lewis had broken with the Omega Workshops and was publicly accusing Fry of dishonesty. The job was given to Bell, who seems to have relished it. Lewis, he says, promises to become that rare thing, a good academic artist: 'academic in the good sense of the word, that is to say, he uses a formula of which he is the master and not the slave.' He claims to admire Lewis's use of his formula to manipulate 'vast organizations of form', but finds that he is dogged by 'an

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7 'The London Salon: Exhibition at the Albert Hall', *Times* (30 July 1912), 8.
8 'Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition', *Cambridge Magazine*, 2.7 (30 November 1912), 158-9.
9 'Post-Impressionist Prefaces', *Saturday Review*, 114.2976 (9 November 1912), 577.
Excessive taste for life' (Bell, oddly, assumes that all passion is affirmative.), and as a consequence 'He is inclined to modify his forms in the interest of drama and psychology to the detriment of pure design'. No longer prepared to continue their overtures the Fry and Bell group now declared what they must have been seeing all along, that Lewis had other interests beyond their remodeling of art in musical form. Lewis's persistence in this manner for another two years requires explanation. We have already seen that in 1912 the critics who were supplying accurate reports of his work tended to be working for establishment papers, and were thus overshadowed, for Lewis, by Fry and Bell. In late 1913 Bell too, at last, turned in an honest description, as if it were the last word in condemnation. Though containing facts from which Lewis could have learned a great deal, this description was also discredited, because of the source from which it came, and the spirit in which it was given. And in any case Lewis would be anxious to shrug off such criticism by showing that he was, of course, a painter and a master of form, but though he might have been well advised to steer into the skid and accept the remarks of Bell, only defending his right to do as he liked, Lewis was in an awkward position. His experimentation with misanthropy was leading him inexorably towards writing, while the requirements of maintaining a position in the art world were drawing him away from it.

PRE-BLAST

Rumours of a new magazine, Blast, were circulating as early as January 1914, when Orage reported them in his regular column in the New Age, adding some exceptionally acute, and sceptical, comments about its future. He correctly predicted that 'It will, of course, be amusing for an issue or two, and connoisseurs will purchase early numbers as an investment for their old age', but he wondered whether it would be a forum for useful discussion, since the 'conductors of "Blast" will naturally be more concerned to propagate their ideas than to defend them'. It would seem that Lewis planned this magazine immediately after breaking with Fry, almost certainly so as to give him some platform from which to broadcast his ideas and counter the insidious influence of his ex-partner. But Blast did not appear immediately, and by the time it did, on the 1st of July, the venture had been absorbed by Vorticism, and with the advent of Ezra Pound a very significant change came over Lewis's public projection. The interim period is instructive since it shows us Lewis in a transitional stage during which he was undergoing two divergent developments. On the one hand he was moving away from formalist theory in painting, and in fact away from painting altogether, and on the other he was pronouncing himself in favour of non-representative art, and even practicing it. This complex was not readily evident to contemporaries, who were perhaps understandably confused by Lewis's pronouncements. In reviewing the very straightforward depictions of scenes from Shakespeare's Timon of Athens Richard Aldington assumed that the pictures illustrated 'his moods after reading' the play, and claimed that he did not know 'what they represent, and do not even know whether they mean to represent anything'. Aldington's youth must be pleaded at this point, and it should be admitted that other commentators did not miss the significance. Fry said of work exhibited in the London Group exhibition at the Goupil Gallery, that

In front of his abstract designs one has to admit their close consistency, the clear and definite organizing power that lies behind them. But it is rather the admission at the end of a piece of close reasoning than the delighted acceptance of a revealed truth.

T. E. Hulme also remarked that Lewis's painting at this show had characteristics of serial composition:

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13 'Readers and Writers', New Age, 14.10 (8 January 1914), 307.
14 The official publication date of Blast has never before been certainly determined. The date given here is based on the fact that one of the reviews, 'Blast', Pall Mall Gazette (1 July 1914), 7, is headed 'Published To-day'.
16 'Books, Drawings and Papers', The Egoist, 1.1 (1 January 1914), 11-12.
His sense of form seems to me to be sequent rather than integral, by which I mean that one form probably springs out of the preceding one as he works, instead of being conceived as part of a whole. Both were noticing that even in his most abstract compositions Lewis was adopting the characteristics of verbal, oral verbal, argumentation. But it was not until the extent of this shift became visible. The vast majority of critics were still convinced that Lewis was uninterested in representation, and indeed they had every reason to think this, since it was only in the structural nature of his abstract work that his change of direction was becoming apparent. A comparison with Bomberg may make this clearer. G.R.H. in the *Pall Mall Gazette* found that Lewis did not deal in 'form, significant or otherwise, but in patterns and shapes which are only willful distortions of form.' He particularly complained of Lewis’s habit of tacking his ‘patterns onto descriptive titles [‘Christopher Columbus’, ‘Elated’]’ which suggest representation. Setting these aside, this critic decided that he could regard the works ‘simply as arbitrary patterns that represent half-formulated philosophic ideas which he feels himself incompetent to express in graphic art’, and that ‘judged thus, the designs are clumsy and unrhymical in shape and ugly in colour.’ Bomberg, on the other hand, although also giving titles to his works, ‘In the Hold’, ‘Japanese Play’, and so revealing himself as the sort of lunatic who ‘christens his Turkey carpet or nicknames his wallpaper’, had a ‘precise and dainty’ sense of design: ‘Unlike the work of Mr. Lewis, they possess a continuous rhythm, and they are only spoiled for us if we seek for representation within their intricate shapes.’ G.R.H. was not to know that Bomberg’s titles were acts of honesty, an admission of the objective scene with which he began, and which by a rather mechanical refractive process, performed on graph paper with a ruler, he had rendered unrecognizable, or nearly so, while Lewis’s abstractions were composed as cumulative sequences, almost as doodles drawn from the wrist rather than the shoulder, and having the characteristics of handwriting rather than drawing. Nor was he the only critic deceived by this subtle difference. The critic of the *Observer*, P.G. Konody provides a similar example of misappraisal, this time favourable to Lewis. Bomberg’s ‘lineum patterns’ are ‘so far removed from any possible subjection of natural forms that one passes his “Japanese Play” and “In the Hold” without attempting to worry out its possible significances.’ With Lewis, however, Konody detects a ‘fascinating air of powerful vitality, [and] a firmness and a sureness that suggests a very definite purpose.’ In a confused way both these critics were correct, although it might be thought that Konody, by claiming definite purpose, is seeking to suggest structural integrity. G.R.H.’s preference for Bomberg was, I suggest, an unthinking response to the structural integrity provided by the scene underlying the pattern. Without being able to retrace the path by which Bomberg arrived at his final work, the viewer responds to the stability and interrelations of the forms which remain as ghosts or vestigia in the geometric arrangement. Lacking this foundation, and based on a very different method of composition, Lewis’s results seem shapeless. Konody, on the other hand, recognized that Lewis’s technique produced a picture made of elements which had very strong relations with some of its neighbours, those preceding and succeeding it, for example, but, almost certainly, not with all of them. The viewer perceives this as purpose, or tendency, and we need only return to Fry’s remarks to see that this sense of direction might be described as having affinities with verbal sequence, and, in a technical sense, as being governed by syntactic logic.

The question arises as to why the direction of his work seemed hidden from Lewis, or, if we assume a good deal of awareness on his part, why he concealed it as far as possible. This is by no means as difficult a question as it might appear. In the first six months of 1914 Lewis was rapidly preparing himself for the role of avant-garde leader. The publication of the *Timon* portfolio, and elegant stunts such as the decoration of Lady Drogheda’s dining room, one of the most strikingly reported of his works before *Blast*, and the establishment of the Rebel Art Centre in May formed part of a gradually accelerating publicity campaign to establish the New Art, with Lewis as its leader. As is evident from the reviews and articles so far quoted, the criterion of modernity was non-representation. The further Lewis could take this the stronger, because more extreme, his position in art politics would become. The
drawback was that this work would have no explicit bearing on his concern with interpersonal harmony, though one might say that the incomprehensibility of the Nietzschean artist-genius was, for a while, one of Lewis’s experiments towards finding a position from which he could guiltlessly reject other human beings. This unhappy division of his energies, already noted as present in 1913, now began to trouble all his pictorial work. On the one hand there was the problem of intrusion of recognisable elements. As Sickert told readers in the *New Age*, although the ‘faces of the persons suggested are frequently nil, non-representation is forgotten when it comes to the sexual organs.’ And even when successfully avoiding simple representation Lewis’s sequent composition led *f6* viewers into making Kanody’s mistake, discussed above, of thinking that the sense of purpose was evidence of underlying reference. Clutton-Brock, for example, considered that Lewis’s ‘listless sod’ has a certain logic for the eye, the kind of logic we find in some complicated piece of machinery whose working we do not understand; and this logic communicates to our minds a sense of power which could hardly be communicated by any purely abstract form.23 The publication of his magazine was, thus, a major event for Lewis since it gave him a means of developing his real interests while simultaneously making advances in the race for art-political influence. Indeed, I would argue that with publication of *Blast* Lewis ceased to prosecute his intellectual experiments in painting, but turned to writing. It is, in my view, an error to believe that the war, through some deep distress, humanized his soul, and sent him back to figural representation. Rather abstraction was a temporary aberration, an error forced on him by local social politics, and far from relevant to his concerns. One might even say that the war saved him from the embarrassment of the impasse into which he had now fallen, and gave him a breathing space in which to turn to the verbal experiments which were so much more suited to his purpose.

**BLAST**

The publication of *Blast* at the beginning of July was a personal triumph for Lewis. His hand was to be seen everywhere in it, and he was the contributor of the bulk of the items. It established him instantly as a personality, or, as he might himself have said, a ‘gossip-star’. This was not unplanned. In the months immediately preceding issue a new public character was born, that of Mr. Wyndham Lewis the rebel intellectual leader. Essentially this was the public projection of a character already devised for private salon consumption, but translation into a form for wider distribution inevitably brought further changes. The two most important indications of this construction are an interview given by Lewis to the *Daily News* and *Leader*, and an essay by Ezra Pound in the *Egoist*, the first of which printed a large photograph of Lewis, and the second presented him as figure of universal and comprehensive interests, a mind representative of a whole class of minds.

Mr. Lewis has in his ‘Timon’ gathered together his age, or at least our age, our generation, the youth spirit, or what you will, that moves in the men who are now between their twenty-fifth and thirty-fifth years.24

The ‘Lewis’ invested by Pound has become the dominant image for this period, though the details appear to have more to do with Pound’s own interests than with Lewis’s. When Pound claims that the ‘Timon’ drawings ‘expressed the sullen fury of intelligence baffled, shut in by the entrenched forces of stupidity’, and that Lewis is devoted to ‘driving the shaft of intelligence into the dull mass of mankind’, he is attributing to his icon, and Lewis is one of his first heroes, an educator, and an artist. What Pound means, however, is that any society is a moral approach to the public which is not characteristic of Lewis at this time. These slight qualifications aside, Pound’s remarks can be taken as an accurate reflection of the character that Lewis was now adopting. The single purpose of the piece is to make Lewis’s leadership credible, and it carries this off with a humiliating prostration.

We are not lesjeunes of ‘the thirties’ nor of ‘the nineties’ nor of any other decade save our own. And we have in Mr. Lewis our most articulate voice. And we will

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25 ‘Mr. Wyndham Lewis and “Blast”’, *Outlook*, 34 (6 July 1914), 15-16.
sweep out the past century as surely as Attila swept across Europe. [...] One can only stand by and say 'Credo' [...] The process of establishing Lewis's character in the public mind continued steadily in reviews of Blast itself. Ford Madox Hueffer writing one of the first of his many biographical reminiscences describing early meetings with Lewis. Where Pound had insisted on Lewis's commanding nature, Hueffer asserted his mystery, and cryptic profundity: The long overcoat descending to the feet, the black wrappings to the throat, the black hair, the pallid face, the dark and defiant eyes [...] When further deepening Lewis's mystery, rather than invoke the incomprehensible pictures, they reported his silences, punctuated as Ford said by 'rare but incisive words', and Pound remarked, in the piece quoted above, that Lewis had 'been for a decade one of the most silent men in London', a remark which contributes to the feeling that it was Lewis's verbal output which caught their attention. The impression was accepted beyond Lewis's immediate circle. At the climax of a series of poetic caricatures, Kipling, Yeats, and Pound being amongst the other victims, John Felton referred to Lewis as 'sinister, prodigiously vain,/ Affectionately Sphynx-like, immobile, witty.' 26 The persona created for Lewis during these months was largely a literary one, a point which accurately reflected his preoccupations, but was not quite what was required. Pound, presumably well-informed of Lewis's desires, had taken great pains in his article to refer to Lewis as a pictorial artist, his references to Lewis as word-man being accidental, such as 'most articulate voice', and perhaps more informative for that.

In tandem with this construction of 'Wyndham Lewis', rumours were circulated of the magazine's imminent publication, and these seem to have been effective in generating mild interest. The Manchester Guardian remarked that rumours had 'been in the air some time' and that 'it was known that the Rebel Art Centre was preparing to astonish us'. 27 In extent and intensity it was a modest enough publicity campaign but ensured that Lewis's name had more substance to it when referred to in the columns of a newspaper than ever before, much more in fact than any other Vorticist, and the result was that Blast was perceived, as R. A. Scott-James said in his review, as 'Wyndham Lewis's magazine'. 28 This sudden leap to prominence, the first of several in his career, brought Lewis into contact with a greater quantity of criticism than he had met to date, and it was mostly concerned with his writing. But the quantity of the response should not be overestimated. Blast certainly enjoyed a certain social notoriety, of the kind suggested by Richard Aldington: 'On two occasions I have seen copies of "Blast" brought into crowded rooms - full of ordinary sort of people - and from that moment "Blast" has been the sole topic of conversation.' 29 And the press reception was sizable, but not outstanding - a generous estimate, allowing for the discovery of further pieces, would not number the notices at more than thirty. In considering Vorticism the viewer tends to assume that its scandal value was much greater than was in fact the case. As a stunt the publication of Blast seems to have outraged no one, though A. R. Orage did find it 'another sign of the spiritual anarchism of modern society'. 30 The general consensus, apart from Aldington and Ford, who were contributors, was that the magazine was a rather pale shadow of Marinetti, and its contents too heterogeneous to constitute a serious threat to the established canons. The Manchester Guardian's judgement that the publication was notable only for presenting the 'tamest assertions' in the 'most explosive language', 31 is representative. And even this mild burst of attention lasted barely two months, indeed it showed signs of falling away sometime before the occurrence of those events in Europe often supposed to have pushed it from the pages of the newspapers. In brief, examination of the press reception of Blast will reveal that, though containing concepts of considerable interest, and several promising lines of enquiry (I am thinking of 'The Enemy of the Stars'), the magazine failed in its own terms. It was an art-political gesture, and as that its impact was negligible, as indeed was the impact of Vorticism. There has been a consistent trend amongst memoirists, art-historians, and other critic-commentators to inflate the supposed notoriety of this movement so that it will be in proportion with their nostalgic and sometimes patriotic

26 'Contemporary Caricatures', Egoist, 15.1 (1 August 1914), 297.
28 'Blast', New Weekly, 2. (4 July 1914), 88.
29 'Blast', Egoist, 1.14 (15 July 1914), 272.
30 'Readers and Writers', New Age, 15.10 (9 July 1914), 229.
31 op. cit.
sense of its romance. Bradford Morrow, for example, has surveyed the press in his introduction to the recent facsimile and found that 'The Athenaeum, Poetry Review, The Morning Post, The New York Times all howled derision upon the appearance of BLAST'; adding, that 'a pervasive sense of bafflement and anxiety reigned in many quarters among both friends and enemies.' Examination of the reviews themselves will show that there were no howls, only slightly bored growls, and that most writers were very far from baffled.

Publication day brought a representative spread of reviews. At one extreme was the Pall Mall Gazette's snobbish scorn:

The chill flannelette pink of the cover recalls the catalogue of some cheap East-end draper, and its contents are of the shoddy sort that constitutes the East-end draper's stock.33

At the other was Richard Aldington's loyal and far from objective boost: 'this is the most amazing, energized, stimulating production I have ever seen.'34 In between stood the Times. The authorship of this piece has been impossible to determine due to a gap in the Times archives, but its cautious sympathy gives every reason to suppose that it is by Arthur Clutton-Brock: 'if one can shut one's eyes to their violent gesticulations, one may peruse with some profit their notions'.35 Even favourable reviewers such as this found common ground with their more dismissive counterparts in their estimation of the importance of Futurism to Vorticism. This was partly ignorance. The Athenaeum's reviewer offered as a discovery of his own that the magazine might not be a genuine Futurist production, but something different: 'perhaps Blast is not a Futurist, but rather a Vorticist effusion.'36 Often, however, it was the result of an informed understanding, and a survey of those reviews where the connection is stated explicitly will go a long way to explaining why it was that no reviewer, even those who did not choose to refer to the fact, seems to have been caught badly off-guard by this new movement:

Pall Mall Gazette: 'the newest group of young madcap painters (who may be described in stud-book language, as the "Vorticists", out of "Cubists", by "Futurists" [...] It opens in the latest fashion, in imitation of Signor Marinetti, with several strident "manifestos", but the descent from Futurism to Vorticism has obviously thinned the blood.'37

New Statesman: 'Almost all the pictures reproduced are (like the typesetting of the first pages) Futurist in origin.'38

Observer: 'Throughout "Blast" there runs a note/hostility to Marinetti and Marinettism. And yet, without Marinetti "Blast" would have been inconceivable. The Manifestos are based on those of the Italian Futurists, but lag far behind them as regards force, literary form, wit and original thought. The form adopted is almost that of Marinetti's mots en liberty; the display of type is an adaptation of some of the pages in Marinetti's Zang Tumb Tumb. The praise of the ports of England and machinery of every kind is distinctly futurist; and even Marinetti's sneer at "long hair under the sombrero" is echoed in the blessing of the Hairdresser.'39

Morning Post: 'The Post-Futurist quarterly is a vast folio in pink paper covers, full of irrepressible imbecility which is not easily distinguished from the words and works of Marinetti's disciples.'40

33 Anon, 'Blast!', Pall Mall Gazette (1 July 1914), 7.
34 'Blast', Egoist, 1.13 (1 July 1914), 248.
35 Anon, 'Blast': The Vorticist's Manifesto, Times (1 July 1914), 8.
37 Anon, 'Blast!', Pall Mall Gazette (1 July 1914), 7.
40 E. B. O., 'Noise Spirals', Morning Post (13 July 1914), 2.
New York Times: ‘All this, it may be observed, is merely a rather dull imitation of Signor Marinetti and his Futurists.’

These are not howls, but the weary remarks of those who feel they have seen it all before. The indications of ancestry are correct. *Blast* is inconceivable without Futurism, and the fact that it defines itself in opposition to Marinetti does not in the least point diminish this truth. The *New York Times* reviewer, who is far from perceptive in other ways, accurately described the process of its genesis:

Signor Marinetti and his friends forced their exotic radicalism upon London, and the noses of the native revolutionaries were put out of joint. What were they to do? Join the Philistines and, forsaking ‘progress’ uphold the established tradition? That would be a sane and unthinkable apostasy! They must create a new revolution, more extreme and violent than Futurism. This they have done. Futurism is Italian, Imagisme is French, but Vorticism is made in England. Support native industries! Buy British wares! Buy ‘Blast’!

I do not judge this to be a paranoid incomprehension taking refuge in unrestrained hostility. It is, surely, a clear-headed and informed assessment of a line of descent. In so far as Lewis was able to use *Blast* as a vehicle for his tentative inquiry into guilt and misanthropy, and less consequentially into other formal matters concerning the use of connectives, the contents are of considerable originality, but this was obscured by the obviously false claim to significant distinction from Futurism. *Blast* sadly wasted Lewis’s skills as a writer by diverting him from a course in which he was making more progress than any other modernist, into the comparative triviality of highly perishable art politics. Two reviewers, Aldington and Orage seem to have realized this when they singled out ‘The Enemy of the Stars’, and they were practically alone in doing so, as being of especial interest. Aldington devoted nearly a third of his review to discussion of the play, and was unequivocal in his expressions: ‘To me the most portentous, the surprising piece of work in the whole volume is Mr. Lewis’s “Enemy of the Stars”. It stirs one up like a red hot poker.’ His appreciation was based, as it happens, on the degree to which the play could be recruited as an Imagist item, but this should not be allowed to totally devalue his judgement. Orage provides a more striking demonstration of the way in which this extraordinary work was being blotted out by association with the other contents. In his first notice, in the issue for the 9th of July, Orage had rejected *Blast* as a symptom of decline and decay:

*It is, I find, not unintelligible - as most of the reviewers will doubtless say - but not worth the understanding, [...] More, no doubt, will be said of it in these columns, for in the absence of any movement of ideas, any movement must be discussed. All the same, its significance will have to be put into it; for of its own self it contains none.*

The following week he opened his article with a striking admission, and attempted to make good his error without too humiliating a change of position:

*When I wrote my note on ‘Blast’ last week I had not read Mr. Wyndham Lewis’s chief contribution - ‘Enemy of the Stars’. It deserves to be called an extraordinary piece of work much more than Miss Rebecca West’s study of ‘Indissoluble Matrimony’.*

West’s work he found over-ornamented and empty, whereas Lewis’s play ‘contains ideas of an almost grandiose dimension, though felt rather than thought.’ This, he added, was also symptomatic, and gave evidence of a revolt against reason. Though confused, and quite uncertain as to the subjects under discussion, at least as uncertain as Lewis himself, Orage’s brief note is the only review that I have seen which seems aware of the sinister qualities of this *lebensdram*:

‘I’m afraid [...] that the plunge into the dark is going to be seductive of the young. It sounds romantic, it makes a great clatter in both in the mind and in the world, and it stirs the solar plexus, and it produces an illusion of life. All the same, it is past racial history’.

Aldington, so much more agile in his observations, had only noticed that Lewis was a dab hand with an image, but Orage, in his blundering, came close to seeing that with this play

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42 ‘Readers and Writers’, *New Age*, 15.10 (9 July 1914), 229.
Lewis had begun to articulate a new morality in which there was room for sanctioned hatred, and none for the unqualified brotherliness so recently established in rational terms during the enlightenment. This remarkable work ought to have struck the readers and writers of 1914 like a bombshell. Instead, Lewis condemned it to obscurity by using it to bulk out a lighthearted, and derivative, prospectus whose triviality leached into everything bound up with it.

Unoriginality would perhaps not have been sufficient to ensure that Blast met with so dull a reception had it not also been a form with which the London public was wearily familiar. Marinetti had been a press star for several years, and though Lewis’s ‘manifestos’ were excellent of their kind, and, as the Times said, contained ‘a great deal more matter and meaning than is to be found in the Futurist Manifesto’, public interest, and Blast was, after all, designed to stimulate public interest, could no longer be drummed up in a genre now stale. There were other faults in the project which reviewers were quick to notice. Had the magazine given unequivocal evidence of a phalanx of like-minded men and women, working with strong interests in common, it is more likely that the venture would have been taken seriously. But it was obvious that the contents were a gathering. J. C. Squire, who cannot have been so obtuse as critical fashion would now term him, put his finger squarely on the problems: ‘after all the manifestos, one comes across the first installment of a serial by Ford Madox Hueffer [...] beginning:

We had known the Ashburnhams for nine seasons... My wife and I knew Captain and Mrs. Ashburnham as well as it was possible to know anybody, and yet, in another sense we knew nothing at all about them.

- and continuing in much the same style. If this Vorticism, we have known it all our lives. The same thing may be said of the story, Indissoluble Matrimony by Rebecca West. [...] With the exception of Mr. Lewis, who contributes a long play, the only Vorticist littérateur who really tries to live up to his name is Mr. Ezra Pound; and le bon Ezra nearly bursts himself in the attempt.\footnote{Quoting Pound’s ‘His Vision of a Certain Lady Post Mortem’ he comments, quite reasonably, ‘What in heaven’s name has this to do with the whirling vortex of contemporary life?’ Squire was by no means alone in seeing that the contributors had little, if anything in common, beyond acquaintance. The reviewer in the Morning Post also chose Pound to demonstrate that the Vorticists were not as modern as they claimed. Of ‘Come My Cantillations’ he remarked that it was nothing but a ‘kind of genteel Whitmanese’\footnote{The critic of the Pall Mall Gazette noticed this discrepancy between manifesto and performance when he observed that Pound and Hueffer were ‘flies in amber’, and Ford himself admitted as much when he opened his review of Blast with the remark ‘Vorticism, Cubism, Imagism - and Blastism - may well sweep away anything for which I have stood or fought’. West’s story he termed ‘work in the past method’, and Pound’s contributions were rejected as ‘too moral’, a point taken up by Aldington. Commenting on the ascetic and puritan religious sentiment permeating Vorticist theories, he wrote:}

I imagine Mr. Lewis has too much commonsense for him to be drawn into any religious revival. As to Mr. Pound, I am not so sure. As the uncleanness of his language increases to an almost laughable point the moral sentiment of his writing becomes more and more marked.\footnote{The problem was, as Squire had already noticed, that Pound was attempting to live up to Lewis in his anger, but ‘Mr. Pound is one of the gentlest, most modest, bashful, kind creatures who ever walked this earth; so I cannot help thinking that all this enormous arrogance and petulance and fierceness are a pose’. The manner may have come to be natural to Pound, but at this time it was most decidedly not so. These cracks and divisions were often evident because conservative papers, such as the Athenæum, found things to praise:}

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\item \footnote{44 ‘Books in General’, New Statesman, 3.65 (4 July 1914), 406.}
\item \footnote{45 E. B. O., ‘Noise Spirals’, Morning Post (13 July 1914), 2.}
\item \footnote{46 Anon, ‘Blast’, Pall Mall Gazette (1 July 1914), 7.}
\item \footnote{47 ‘Mr. Wyndham Lewis and “Blast”’, Outlook, 3.4 (4 July 1914), 15-16.}
\item \footnote{48 ‘Blast’, Egoist, 1.14 (15 July 1914), 273.}
\end{itemize}
Some of the writing in this blastodermic production merits attention, notably 'Indissoluble Matrimony', and - to a lesser extent - 'The Saddest Story' [...] Spencer Gore’s Brighton Pier and 'Richmond Houses' are restful [...]49

Nor was this inconsistency simply between contributors. P. G. Konody, blessed in Blast, and a sympathizer and defender of new movements in the arts, found troubles within Lewis's own articles. Writing of Lewis's obituary appreciation of Spencer Gore, he commented that it 'makes one a little dubious about the seriousness of the rest':

Mr. Wyndham Lewis cannot have it both ways. He cannot be Vorticist and Impressionist at the same time. And yet, on page 149 he sneers at 'the lean, belated Impressionism at present attempting to eke out a little life in these islands [...] and on the next page he goes into poetic rapture over Spencer Gore's impressionism'.50

The answer to this conundrum may guessed at by taking up the point that the Blast contributors were all friends of, or well known to Lewis. It seems possible that Lewis's movement from general philanthropy towards misanthropy had a less adventurous correlate in his uncritical attitude to the compatibility of the work of friends. Lewis has so often been called a 'bad friend'.51 that it seems worth pointing out that he would on occasion damingly compromise his projects in order to remain loyal. Orage, that puzzling figure, was aware that friendship, was the cohesive force in Vorticism. Pound's essay in the Fortnightly Review52 attempted, he said, to 'establish some connection between Vorticism in painting and design and "Imagism in Verse"', and was, as usual, 'very obscure, the more so for the pains he takes to disguise the real relations. I imagine myself that the only connection between the two was due to the accident of Friendliness':

Mr. Pound happened to like Mr. Wyndham Lewis, and there you are.53

The majority of reviewers, then, exhibit confidence and contempt in dealing with Blast, whether they speak from an informed position, like the Manchester Guardian when it kindly said that the manifesto 'contains some quite good ideas, but most of them are old ideas, and the new ideas are no newer than Nietzsche',54 or whether, like the writer in Truth, it looked up 'blast' in the dictionary, found it was a 'disease of flatulence among sheep', and closed its review with a prayer:

Sang old Rabelais in a ribald song to do with the adventures of amorous Toss Pot,

'A very small rain lays a very high wind.' Flatulence is a dull and boring complaint, both in sheep and artists. Please God, send the rain.55

With such pieces there is always the quite reasonable suspicion that the writer is anxious and agitated, but they are rare in comparison with the former variety, and these could be exceptionally damaging, as is the case with the Guardian, which astutely remarks that the 'style [...] - the style of fustian and hurly burly, - in which the Vorticist's ideals are proclaimed seems quite sincere, and [...] is the perfection of the romantically-sentimental use of words.' This is not merely thrown off, the writer actually taking the trouble to document it by pointing out that when Blast claims to describe the 'efficiency' of its vortex in terms that a scientist of mechanics would recognize it is blurring: 'In the precise sense "efficiency" has not much to do with a "vortex". The truth is, these Vorticists have conceived a romantic and sentimental notion of vortices (just as they have of the future and most other things), and they use the word "vortex" merely for a certain vague emphasis.'

So Vorticism effectively came to an end. Against all expectations another number was assembled for the following year, but the moment had passed. Lewis's attempt to bid for leadership in the arts had foundered, his magazine had proved, as Poetry, in one of the last reviews, said, to have 'something of the wan excitement of Fourth of July Fireworks on the day after the Fourth',56 and Vorticism, as Orage said cruelly, in the article cited above, now seemed 'a little thing, that in the simmering of the pre-war period suddenly became a bubble,
and is now burst. But it was not burst by the war, it simply hadn't the strength to endure. It had failed to create the scandal required, largely because it was transparently derived from Futurism, now no longer a marketable commodity in London, and had, even to the cursory inspection of contemporary reviewers, no substantial community of intellects underlying it. When Lewis later remarked that Vorticism was 'what I personally did and said at a particular time'\(^{57}\) he was being unwittingly modest. With the exception of Pound few of the signatories showed any interest in the continued existence of the movement, or its supposed doctrines. Subsequently Lewis was inclined to take advantage of the movement's posthumous fame, which began to grow surprisingly soon after the effective point of death, 1915. The story, uncharacteristically pathetic for Lewis, was a lament for a lost future. But this was a deception. It was easier to blame the war for the failure of the movement than to admit to errors or to grant that Vorticism was a hollow concept, used to gather the admittedly interesting work of a diverse group of artists and writers, many of them bound together by bonds of amity resulting from a very general hostility to the traditional, rather than any close consonance of programme or aim. Lewis's failure to establish himself as an art leader is not however, in my opinion, the disaster of this episode, since success would have placed him in the extremely difficult position of having to maintain an eminence in a discipline which could not provide him a workbench suitable for his present concerns. He was now committed, whether he knew it or not, to writing. The catastrophe was the wasted publication of a text which he was only to equal occasionally in succeeding years, and was never to surpass, 'The Enemy of the Stars'.

Before leaving 1914 one final class of criticism relating to Blast requires comment. With his increasing commitment to verbal art, Lewis made himself vulnerable to critics trained in that field, either at University, or by long apprenticeship to the journalistic profession, and they were not slow to point out that Lewis evidently had not been so:

*Pall Mall Gazette:* 'Unfortunately even the largest type does not conceal indifferent grammar and bad spelling.'\(^{58}\)

*Times:* 'The fine frenzy of the authors of Blast has made a havoc of its printing press, and we do not remember seeing in a publication of its size so many misprints.'\(^{59}\)

*New Statesman:* 'The early pages - which were written, one imagines, by Mr. Wyndham Lewis - are amusing, with their lists of persons and institutions which are to be respectively blessed and blasted. The juxtapositions are pleasing; the endless errors in spelling are equally so.'\(^{60}\)

*Egoist:* 'It seems to me that this hard, telegraphic sort of writing [in 'The Enemy of the Stars'] expresses pretty well one side of our modern life. I don't know that I shall write like that myself, because I always write grammatically constructed telegrams[.].'\(^{61}\)

*Manchester Guardian:* 'Some literary skill might have concealed the real nature of "Blast"; but the amateur in writing is terribly penalized when he is a romantic sentimentalist in ideas.'\(^{62}\)

A spoof letter announcing a new competing art movement, Infinitism, and signed Marionetti Bombelewis was still ruder:

we shall publish a biennial journal to be entitled 'The Dam', in which, by the aid of Esperanto, simplified spelling, and bad grammar, we hope to convey to suffering humanity some faint glimmering of our high aims.\(^{63}\)

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58 Anon, 'Blast', *Pall Mall Gazette* (1 July 1914), 7.
59 Anon, 'Blast', *Times* (1 July 1914), 8.
63 'New Art Movement', *Observer* (5 July 1914), 7.
This line of attack was recognized by Lewis's colleagues as a valid criticism, and in defending his editor Ford Madox Hueffer could do no better than try to deflect this criticism by invoking the biggest precedent he could think of: 'It is no good saying that *Blast* is vulgar and contains many misprints. That was said of Shakespeare and the Folios bristle with misprints too.'64

Whether Lewis was in any sense wounded by this demonstration of incompetence I don't know, but it seems reasonable to attribute importance to these remarks since Lewis would never before have received, in his adult life, such criticism. When some art writers grumbled that the new painting was a refuge for those who had not mastered their craft, Lewis could immediately exempt himself privately, and demonstrate the fact publicly if necessary, by turning out an academic drawing of a high standard. The manner complained of could be conclusively explained as a matter of choice. But to remarks on his knowledge of orthography and grammar, Lewis could have no reply. It would not be sufficient to say, truthfully, that these errors were of slight consequence, and did not affect the worth of the texts in which they appeared. Indeed, no critic had suggested that they were damaging, the point had been simply to remark, with a snobbish jeer, that Lewis was a beginner, and made errors through ignorance, through weakness not choice. Criticism of his control of the elementary technique of writing is a recurrent feature of the criticism, up to the present day, and it accounts for much of his sense of isolation in the literary world. A painter by profession, and a writer by necessity, Lewis would never quite shed the sense of his amateur status in his new art. In particular it would cause him to underrate his own early writing, or at least to feel that it was not sufficiently armoured for unrevised publication, or republication.

**AFTER BLAST**

There was no afterblast. When the initial report had subsided, and it did so without significant reverberation, nothing followed. There was no public controversy, no continued debate, and, as far as can be judged, little interest amongst the Vorticists themselves. Lewis himself was ominously silent. Found alone continued to publish articles on the movement, but it was clear that he had no more than his own authority for the pronouncements. It was not until March, and the exhibition of The London Group at the Goupil Gallery that those associated with *Blast*, and the Rebel Art Centre, appeared publicly again as related artists. In his own review of the show, in the second issue of *Blast*, Lewis commented that 'The critiques in the daily Press of this particular Exhibition have been much the same as usual.'65 It was in fact unusually meagre in quantity, and uniformly bored. Arthur Clutton-Brock remarked that it was 'only a group for exhibition purposes',66 which was quite obviously so, and further suggested that Vorticism, with all its apparent intolerance, had little or no principle. In the *Egoist*, now passing through a cool phase in its relations with Lewis, Frank Denver dismissed the Vorticists as derivative and pitiable:

> They are pioneers, panting in the rear of Munich, Paris and New York, astonishing themselves with their own prodigious vitality and perverse originality.67

Here too, from a different point of view, the insubstantiality of Vorticism is the main matter at issue. It lacked the definition needed to galvanize a public now becoming obsessed with the progress of the war, or to establish itself as an international presence. Indeed it could hardly do the latter without the former.

After more months of silence Lewis organized a further show of Vorticist art at the Doré Gallery in June. The show attracted slightly more attention than the 'London Group', but stirred no more dust. In the *Westminster Review* Middleton Murry indicated the 'many misprints and grammatical blunders'68 in Lewis's preface to the catalogue, and rejected the movement on philosophical grounds, saving only his particular pet Gaudier-Brzeska, who was in any case 'a sculptor first and Vorticist afterwards'. The *Athenaeum* wearily repeated the by now standard criticism that these paintings were 'plans', and added the more

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64 'Mr. Wyndham Lewis and "Blast"', *Outlook*, 34. (4 July 1914), 15-16.
65 'The London Group 1915 (March)', *Blast*, 2 (July 1915), 78.
67 'The London Group', *Egoist*, 2.4 (1 April 1915), 60-61.
perceptive remark that any estimate of Vorticist theory must be provisional, 'Mr. Lewis being as, alas! is usual - too busy pointing out the inadequacy of other methods of painting to have space adequately to explain his own'.

It was a thoroughly lifeless reception. Drawing's Gunn Gwennet reviewed the show as energetically as any:

The brightly coloured sticks, wedges and other geometrical shapes have been given the appearance of possessing tremendous dynamic force. It is wonderfully well done, quite an achievement in its way.

But she spoiled the compliment by seeing that these were obviously best regarded as designs for 'floorcloth, inlaid linoleum, cretonnes and other fabrics', an observation I judge to have been made without an unduly heavy sarcasm. But there was worse to come. Colour, a magazine launched at the same time as Blast, and doing very nicely now, showed that the Vorticism of 1914 was almost forgotten, if it had ever been known at all:

Vorticist Exhibition. - The first exhibition of works by a number of painters and a sculptor who have hitherto been known either as cubists or futurists or both [...].

In this dismal weather Lewis launched the second and greatly improved number of Blast. It sank immediately, with barely a ripple. In the normal course of events a periodical would not be reviewed at all, and then only for the first number. The handful of notices which greeted Blast, should, then, be regarded as a bonus, yet is clear that this was no ordinary magazine and might, in different circumstances, have received at least as much attention as the first issue. However, the exhibition, which Lewis may well have expected to provide the necessary ground preparation for publication, on the model of 1914, had barely been noticed at all, and Blast, 2, was reviewed mostly by the intellectual journals, weeklies and monthlies. I have seen only one review in a daily, and this perhaps explains the paucity of others:

It took a great deal to keep up with them [the vorticists] when we had plenty of time on our hands and were on the lookout for diversion. But now nobody cares twopence about the lot of them. Even the topical pictures at the Academy are preferred to the finest flights of Etchells or Nevinson [...] We may wonder why some of them have not followed poor Gaudier-Brzeska to the war; but otherwise they do not interest, and they may shout louder than ever and be more original than ever and still they do not interest.

The distraction of the war, it is important to note, is only part of the trouble. As the title makes clear - 'Art of Yester-Year' - the passage of time seemed to have been accelerated during the conflict, and as a consequence anything pre-war now seemed prematurely antique. Hueffer noticed this too, opening his review by referring to the first issue as 'published so many thousand years ago'. The war was an epoch making event, in the strongest sense of the term, and it formed a landmark in every man or woman's personal sense of history. The war was the present, the pre-war was the past, and Vorticism, Wyndham Lewis, Blast, all that now belonged to the past.

1915 closed dismally. Vorticism was now, plainly, no longer a movement with a future, and Lewis was sick. His major piece of writing to date had been published but barely read, as a painter he had failed to escape from the shadows of Picasso and Marinetti, and now the war had made further agitation in art politics quite impossible. In any case, his painting had reached an impasse, indeed had reached it as early as 1913, and no longer promised him further discoveries. But his writing, though poorly displayed, and embarrassingly unprofessional in its presentation, had shown great advances, and it was to this that Lewis was now turning nearly all his energy, much of 1915, and one suspects some of 1916, being spent preparing Tarr.

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69 Anon, 'Vorticist Exhibition at the Doré Galleries', Athenæum, No. 4573 (19 June 1915), 556-7
70 'Vorticism and Mysticism', Drawing, 1.3 (July 1915), 56.
71 Anon, 'Palette and Chisel: Vorticist Exhibition', Colour, 2.6 (July 1915), 198.
72 Anon, 'Art of Yester-Year: A War Number of the Weird and Unwonted', Daily Graphic (31 July 1915), 12.
73 'On a Notice of 'Blast'', Outlook, 36,913 (31 July 1915), 143-4.
During 1916 Lewis had published several stories, considerable sections of his novel *Tarr* and several other pieces. They may have been read attentively, but periodical publication does not catch public attention as does a book, and it is inevitable that he should have been planning to gather his writings together at this time, indeed there is considerable evidence that Lewis had been planning a volume of his stories under the title “Our Wild Body” in 1913, and even expected it to be published in 1914. An early list perhaps compiled in 1917 suggests that Lewis was not only planning to resurrect this plan, but was also projecting a number of other volumes. The fact that he did not follow any of these ideas through to completion needs explanation, but I can do nothing to clarify the matter at present, beyond suggesting that Lewis had been seriously wounded by the reviews of *Blast* and wished to revise his texts in detail, brushing them up and rendering them less vulnerable. I do not think it is going too far to say that this nervousness cost Lewis a significant place in literary modernism. Had he accepted the impossibility, in the war situation, of heavy revisions, and instead settled for a lighter editorial retouching, Lewis would have been able to issue, in rapid sequence, a collection of volumes, *Our Wild Body*, *The Enemy of the Stars*, and *Tarr*, displaying in unmistakable form a set of experiments with conscience and hatred that were otherwise scattered and easily overlooked. As a result of this hesitation the substance of his achievements was not evident to his contemporaries in 1917 because his writings were mostly in shadow, or manuscript. It is a neglect which continues to this day, for the same sort of reasons, and is found even amongst devoted admirers.

The war years, then, are important, but since a clearer explanation does not seem feasible at this time I shall pass over them. It was a period when Lewis’s relationship with the public was indirect, since Pound was acting as his representative, and when he was in fact, after beginning his military training, writing and painting very little. This changed only at the beginning of 1918 when Lewis returned to London under the aegis of the War Artist’s scheme, and was able to resume the management of his career. Thanks to Pound’s efforts he had been continuing to publish despite his military service, and indeed his return to painting prevented for the time-being any fresh literary work, the publication of *Tarr* in this year being in fact a hangover from Pound’s regency, and the other works, such as ‘The War Baby’ and ‘The Ideal Giant’, published during this time all being slightly earlier compositions. Lewis was certainly involved in the correction of proofs for *Tarr*, but the publication of his first ambitious novel should not be allowed to obscure the fact that he made a definite and apparently total recommitment to painting in this year, and this was to remain his predominant interest again until the latter half of 1920. It is clear from his bibliography in this period that Lewis had made this decision before the publication of *Tarr*, the reason being as I have already suggested, a loss of confidence in his mastery of words. I suspect, then, that the return to art was dictated largely by the need to reassert himself in a genre where he felt himself to be a master rather than a neophyte. It is also possible that he had expended the greater part of his literary material and had to pause to produce more. This would have been a moment, late, but better now than never, for him to have collected his productions to date, to have fulfilled the plans outlined in the list mentioned above, but he did not do so, and the reason for this is, and the strength of his renewed commitment to painting, is perhaps only intelligible in the light of the public reception of *Tarr*.

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2 See Bernard Lafourcade, ‘The Early Writings: A Lewis List’, *Enemy News*, No. 10 (May 1979), 12. Close examination of this list and associated evidence renders many of Lafourcade’s conclusions untenable, particularly with regard to pieces such as “Inferior Religions”, which can now be reasonably assumed to be composed prior to 1914 (the currently accepted dating is 1917).
TARR

*Tarr* was Lewis's first book, and his first publication of stature to appear on both sides of the Atlantic. Unsurprisingly it brought him a larger press than any previous event, and by and large it was a favourable press. Where there was hostility it was of a kind more likely to arouse mirth or contempt than anxiety:

*New Age*: 'There is not, from beginning to end of this book, one sane person, one sane mood, and if the origin of the insanity is known to the author, he does not reveal it; he only reviles and befouls life without even glorifying art.'

*Nation*: 'If we are to share the author's ideal of a world of cosmopolites, we may at least reserve the hope that it may be peopled by human beings and not by gibbering monotonous bogeys and bores such as inhabit these pages...'

*English Review*: 'The style is a bit strange, noteworthy is the absence of beauty in the writing.'

But even in the most kindly notices, even from Lewis's friends, there was a consistent, if often muted, criticism of the formal elegance of the piece. In Pound's first, and famous, remark this criticism creeps in almost as if by accident: 'Joyce is, by comparison, cold and meticulous, where Lewis is, if uncouth, at any rate brimming with energy, the man with a leaping mind.' This is special pleading, more than a little condescending, as if remarked by an adult of some promising child, and it is no surprise to find Pound reporting in a letter to Joyce that 'Lewis is a little annoyed with my note on Tarr.' In a brief note published in the *Egoist*, Eliot similarly treated Lewis as a prodigy: 'Tarr is a commentary upon a part of modern civilization: now it is like our civilization criticized, our acrobatics animadverted upon adversely, by an orang-outang of genius, Tarzan of the Apes.' This is much more than casual witticism, suggesting, with the sly obliquity typical of Eliot's criticism, that Lewis was not a normal civilized literate, but an oral savage, who resembled Rice-Burroughs's hero in having an amateurish and self-taught grasp of written language, perhaps acquired, as was Tarzan's, by an accidental meeting with some printed texts in his jungle home. His insights amuse the sophisticate much as the penetrating inadvertancies of an idiot savant. These very lofty remarks, which are not widely known amongst Lewis scholars, were considerably moderated, muddled, and emasculated, for his later, and famous, review, in which Lewis was described as having 'the thought of the modern and the energy of the cave-man', a proposition which applies equally well to Lewis if the attributes are transposed.

Eliot and Pound were by no means alone in expressing the feeling that, though interesting, Lewis was not in fact of the writer's guild. The reviewer, Francis Hackett, in the *New Republic*, talked of Lewis's 'fatiguing tricks of style' and his 'cacophonous' manner, the latter being a standard form of the inelegancy complaint. Vincent O'Sullivan's review in the *New York Times Review of Books*, was sterner still, bluntly and tactlessly listing the faults of the book:

its turgid style, its gargoyles characters, its incoherencies, and perpetual suggestion of something struggling through, deterred from manifesting itself by the writer's lack of skill.

So much for the components of the book, and as for the larger design, 'What plot the novel possesses is of a more or less inchoate description'. Even O'Sullivan's qualifications come freighted with scorn: 'we feel that he has, or at least honestly believes, that he has, something to say, and hope that some day he may succeed in learning how to say it.' Ford Madox Hueffer was more genial, but in essence was saying similar things:

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4 Anon, 'Reviews', *New Age*, 23.21 (19 September 1918), 338.
5 Anon, 'Humor Alive and Dead', *Nation*, 107.2772 (17 August 1918), 176.
6 Anon, 'Books: Fiction', *English Review*, (September 1918), 239.
7 "Tarr" by Wyndham Lewis', *Little Review*, 4.11 (March 1918), 35.
9 'Contemporanea', *Egoist*, 5.6 (June-July, 1918), 84.
10 'Tarr', *Egoist*, 5.8 (September 1918), 106.
11 'Purple Cows', *New Republic*, 15.193 (13 July 1918), 322.
Of course there are enormous slabs of art talk interspersed amongst the seductions, brawls, duels, and fun generally. But they are, those slabs, very cunningly arranged for skipping; they don’t really matter a bit, or they wouldn’t if it were not one’s patriotic duty to point out that there is a shortage of paper. And on the subject of style he was more damaging because more precise: Tarr is naturally not a perfect book. It contains longeurs [...] not merely redundant passages that can be skipped, but the less pardonable redundancies of words and adjectives in places calling for tight handling. The reviewer in the United States Nation found it ‘singularly remote from anything recognizable as an English novel but for the accident that the English tongue has been more or less used in writing it.’

Robert Nichols, in one of the most ecstatic reviews, wrote ‘Here at last is the twentieth century prose, not at its best, mind you (that is still to come).’

The suggestions of incompetence were not simply of this technical kind. Rebecca West was the first of many critics to complain that the novel was wrongly titled. From the preface the reader gathers, she pointed out, that Lewis ‘intended the artist Tarr and his spiritual adventures to be the main subject of the book. One is, therefore, inclined to make the book stand or fall according to the success of Tarr, and that part of the story which concerns Tarr is very definitely a failure,’ while the ‘real achievement of the book, which gives it both its momentary and its permanent value, is Kreisler’. Early versions of the book, mentioned in letters to Sturle Moore, had taken Kreisler as the centrepiece, so Lewis would have been made aware from West’s remarks that his attempt to redesign the book had failed to erase traces of the original form. The imbalance was obvious to many contemporary readers. The Athenæum pointed out that Tarr was the ‘vaguest portrait’ of the principal characters, and while Eliot referred to Kreisler and Bertha as ‘permanent for literature’ he extended no such compliment to Tarr, and indeed he noted that the presence of these two characters caused a conflict between two methods, each trying to dominate the novel: ‘We cannot say, therefore, that the form is perfect. In form, and in the actual writing, it is surpassed by ‘Cantelmann’s Spring Mate’. From this devastating remark Lewis might at least have drawn the comfortable thought that he was getting better.

Perhaps the severest of all the criticisms came from Pound, and given the special relationship between them it is obvious that his remarks would be the most wounding to Lewis of any, particularly because they again made the comparison with Joyce:

Despite its demonstrable faults I do not propose to attack this novel. [...] Joyce’s novel [A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man] is a triumph of actual writing. The actual arrangement of the words is worth any author’s study. Lewis on the contrary, is, in the actual writing, faulty. His expression is as bad as that of Meredith’s floppy sickness. [...] After a broadside such as this, delivered with very little awareness of its potential to hurt, Lewis might have been glad to find that ‘The book’s interest is not due to the “style” in so far as “style” is generally taken to mean “smoothness of finish”, orderly arrangement of sentences, coherence to the Flaubertian method’, and he would not in fact have thought that the stylistic quibbles were central, or undermined the interest of his writing as an act of intellectual discovery. But taken together, these reviews, particularly those of his friends, persuaded him that though writing might be a useful medium for private experimentation it was not a suitable vehicle from which to prosecute a public career.

The reviews aside, and I think it is sufficiently evident that though this was a bad press for so ambitious a man as Lewis, it was not unfavourable, there were other reasons to be dejected. Sales were never considerable, and income figures from the Egoist Press account ledgers show a very sharp falling off immediately after the war. Figures for the Knopf

13 ‘Views and Reviews’, Outlook, 42.1069 (27 July 1918), 86.
14 Anon, ‘Humor Alive and Dead’, Nation, 107.2772 (17 August 1918), 176.
16 ‘Tarr’, Nation, 23.19 (10 August 1918), 508.
17 A letter of Sep. or Oct. 1911 (Box 30 of the University of London’s Moore papers) refers to ‘Otto Kreisler’s Death’.
18 Anon, [Short notices], Athenæum, No. 4632 (August 1918), 366.
19 ‘Tarr’, Egoist, 5.8 (September 1918), 106.
edition may have been slightly better, since a second issue was printed in 1926, but in neither case did the book enter what marketers today term the ‘critical’ phase, as Joyce’s books rapidly did, where further advertising becomes unnecessary since fame itself generates further fame. Lewis may not have expected to make much money, but the almost instantaneous dwindling of sales was most disappointing, especially so after substantial coverage in all grades of periodical from daily to quarterly. Within a year of publication Tarr was selling only a handful of copies each twelve months, a fact which requires explanation. The likeliest hypothesis, it seems to me, is that Tarr was perceived as a ‘war book,’ a work deriving from the conflict and hence of no further interest after the armistice. The cause of this, of course, was the character of Kreisler.

Lewis had recognized this problem as early as 1915 when he wrote the prefaces found, in slightly different forms, before both the New York and London editions:

This book was begun eight years ago; so I have not produced this disagreeable German for the gratification of primitive partisanship aroused by the war. On the other hand, having had up my sleeve for so long, I let him out at this moment in the undisguised belief that he is very apposite."

Even a more efficient disclaimer, and it is typical of Lewis to capitalize on his opportunity in the same breath as that which disallows opportunism, could not have protected the book. In the context of the war Kreisler would inevitably take on the cast of propaganda. The Cambridge Magazine, almost the only periodical in England to take a pacifist line, astutely remarked, ‘Tarr will, we fear, appeal chiefly to those who are enabled to derive comfort from the fact that the character of Kreisler was conceived in times of peace and is nevertheless synonymous with violence, rape and irresponsibility.’ It was certainly true that hardly a reviewer failed to remark on this aspect of the book, and to one surveying the material in series it appears to be the dominant impression received by contemporary readers.

Arthur Clutton Brock in the Times claimed that ‘No one, we think, has expressed the common German state of mind so clearly in an individual, or reduced it so finally to an absurdity.’ The secret of Kreisler is the desire for material power and his acquiesced with the world because it will not take him seriously. […] And Bertha, the German heroine, is another specimen of unreality, the older, servile, sentimental kind, that encourages and submits to Kreislers.

In all Clutton Brock devoted only one third of his substantial article to this matter, by no means an unusual proportion. Even slight reviews, such as A St John Adcock’s brief mention in the Sketch, found room to remark on the ‘many striking portraits of “Huns’ and “Hussites’ nor was the situation different in the United States, where Vincent O’Sullivan found Kreisler the ‘typical German. Boor and sensualist, bragget and bully’ in every way ‘true to the German type the war has revealed.’ There was consensus in fact, from, on the one hand, the Morning Post, which in an uncomplicated way found the book a notable ‘illumination of the German’ to Ford Madox Hueffer, who gave the matter an ingenious and uniquely intelligent cast which suggests that, regarded from one angle, the book was already out of date, and belonged to different phase of the war:

Regarded as ‘propaganda’ Tarris better than most: it contains Germans! That is presumably why it is not published by the Ministry of Information, for this work will certainly not conduco to the formation of a League of Nations that shall include the Central European Powers. Such subtlety as this was rare, and Rebecca West’s reading, which, in total, took up slightly under half of her notice, is more typical of the crudity to be found even in informed readers.

In watching Bertha Lunkens […] and Kreisler […] we have the same baffled feeling with which Europe has watched Germany for the last four years: here are people the whole of whose beingis oriented towards ugliness.

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22 Tarr (London: Egoist Press, 1918), ix.
28 ‘Mr Wyndham Lewis’s First Novel’, Outlook, 42.1069 (27 July 1918), 86.
29 ‘Tarr’, Nation, 23.19 (10 August 1918), 508.
The Egoist Limited

Price 6s. net; by post, 6s. 4d.

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'A Battery Shelled', *The Caliph's Design*, the *Fifteen Drawings* portfolio, and to be preparing a third number of *Blast*, which would be mostly concerned with the subjects raised in his pamphlet, but would also contain a 'story'. He also formed, in association with this revival, a new group of painters, later known as 'X Group', and expected to arrange an exhibition of their work in November. On top of all this he was involved with the set designs for two ballets, the music being by William Walton, one of which, it was hoped, would be produced by Diaghilev, was planning a one-man exhibition of a hundred paintings and drawings, and was also revising his early stories.35

This was obviously an impossibly optimistic schedule, and in October, when this energy began to manifest itself publicly, it became evident that those literary activities not connected with the arts had been set aside. On the 22nd of that month he gave a lecture in a series organized by the Arts League of Service at the Conference Hall, Central Buildings, Westminster, under the title 'Modern Tendencies in Art',36 and his long essay on the same subject appeared a week later as *The Caliph's Design*.37 In November he exhibited a portrait of Ezra Pound at the Goupil Gallery Salon,38 and began a series of four articles on 'Prevalent Design' for the *Athenaeum*. In early December a monograph on Harold Gilman appeared with an introductory essay by him, and on the 13th the exhibition of paintings intended for the Imperial War Museum opened at Burlington House, Lewis's 'A Battery Shelled' attracting significant attention in many of the numerous reviews. Later in December, or in very early January, he published his portfolio, *Fifteen Drawings*, to carry his reputation beyond the gallery visiting circle and there seems to have been a small exhibition of drawings in January at the Adelphi Gallery, but almost nothing is known of this show.39 At any rate as an event it is quite overshadowed by the 'X' group exhibition which opened in March.

This was a period of intense activity. Lewis concentrating his energies almost entirely on painting and drawing, or writing about painting and drawing, and it was by no means an unsuccessful campaign, which makes its faltering in 1920, and its transformation into the 'Tyro' project of 1921 extremely puzzling. Since it is not sufficiently recognized that the years 1919 to 1920 mark a high point in Lewis's standing, at least in the United Kingdom, I shall survey the press of this period before turning to the more interesting questions arising from Lewis's failure to build on his good start.

The Canadian War Memorials exhibition held at Burlington House in February was not, as far as I know, widely reviewed, but the *Burlington Magazine*, then as now a highly influential and conservative publication, found very kind and perhaps representative, words for Lewis's 'The Gumpit'. The writer is probably Walter Sickert:

Mr. Lewis, who is here working in a manner more naturalistic than is, perhaps, thoroughly congenial to him, makes us aware of intellectual effort dispassionately concentrated on homogenous, expressive design. The result is, within its limits, completely successful, and is a work of real distinction.40

Lewis's 'Guns' show, the opening date of which can now tentatively be given as the 2nd or the 3rd of February, was received with similar warmth. Konody in the *Observer* gave it pole position in his column, and opened with a fanfare: 'The series of drawings shown by Lieut. Wyndham Lewis at the Goupil Gallery must be classed among the most significant artistic interpretations of war experience.'41 Ezra Pound cheekily reviewed the show twice, once in the *Nation* under his own name, and once in the *New Age* under the pseudonym B. H. Dias. It is instructive to compare his respectful remarks on Lewis's skills as a draughtsman, and manipulator of paint, with the much more confident, and condescending, handling of Tarr. Perhaps we may even see an effort here to chase Lewis into painting and out of writing:

I have at no time been at pains to conceal my belief in Wyndham Lewis's genius, but I cannot expect this belief to be shared by people who are unfamiliar with his work, very little of which has been easily accessible to the public. The

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36 Reported in Anon, 'Mr. Wyndham Lewis on Art', *Athenaeum*, No. 4670 (31 October 1919), 1127.
38 See P. G. Konody, 'Art and Artists: Mr. Wyndham Lewis and the Goupil Gallery', *Observer* (9 November 1919), 10, where it is favourably reviewed.
40 R. S., 'The Canadian War Memorials Exhibition', *Burlington Magazine*, 34.191 (February 1919), 80.
41 "Guns" by Lieut. Wyndham Lewis', *Observer* (2 February 1919), 7.
present exhibition is a phase, and by no means the most important phase of the work of one of the chief of living artists; it is dispassionate; it is without rhetoric; it is at the furthest remove from vulgarity.\textsuperscript{42}

This strain, incidentally, is found elsewhere in Pound's remarks on Lewis, whom he correctly diagnosed as being extremely poor at presenting himself effectively. In 1916 he had told Lewis 'you have left you your stuff in a filthy and dusty pile on the floor of your studio so that apart from the humble writer of this epistle and yourself and perhaps a few stray hetairae [sic] there is no one in this island who knows who and what you are',\textsuperscript{43} and writing in \textit{L'Art Libre}, in 1920, he commented that Lewis 'has only very recently begun to be known in London'.\textsuperscript{44} This latter remark indicating that the campaign of 1919 was to be regarded as at least partially successful. Aside from this matter of skill in advertising Pound makes no substantial criticism of Lewis's technique, or his choice of matter, even performing contortions in order to apologize for the representational nature of the work, a point to which I shall return:

Mr. Lewis's triumph [...] consists in having made his whole composition of such formal interest, just that, interesting by reason of its form, form combination, drawing, and at the same time so reticent that the mind slowly sinks into the work and receives its communication in due gravity. For this reason, although I give up no jot of my admiration, of my preference for his 'abstract' work, I consider the present work an advance, or at any rate not an artistic retrogression.

Nor was the praise only from friends. Arthur Clutton-Brock of the \textit{Times} praised the 'subtlety of design', and found in the now lost 'To Wipe Out', a large oil showing an intense bombardment, 'a curious and even beautiful design, conveying very directly the sense of enormous forces let loose'.\textsuperscript{45} Writing earlier in the year Pound had very cunningly noted that Lewis's war commissions were sufficiently highly regarded to deserve the commendation of comparison with the past painters of Italy - 'the elderly are content to compare them to Lucca Signorelli'\textsuperscript{46} - a phenomenon which we shall trace throughout the year, beginning with Clutton-Brock, who found that Lewis was 'really pursuing the methods of the Ferrarese artist, Cosimo Tura': 'His figures, his ground, his very explosions, look as if they were made of iron, like Tura's'. Thus reassured by the existence of precedent, and the demonstration of drawing, he felt able to dispense a barely qualified recommendation: 'It is not very agreeable, but it has a beauty of its own, and the great ability of the artist will make these drawings documents of a curious phase in the thought and Europe.'

'Guns' was on its way to being a hit. The \textit{Illustrated London News} reproduced two drawings as a full page article, remarking in the caption that the show was 'arousing much interest and comment'.\textsuperscript{47} 'Dry Point' in the \textit{Weekly Dispatch} provided an 'art worse than war' quip which perhaps illustrates this:

And is war really as bad as this? said a lady to her cavalier when wandering round Mr. Wyndham Lewis's exhibition at the Goupil Gallery of work in which he attempts to express in paint the emotions aroused by life in the artillery in France. Mr. Lewis will be delighted with this criticism, for it means that he has got 'across the footlights' to at least one member of the public;\textsuperscript{48} Lewis would not have cared, unless it were for the faint indication of celebrity that the piece indicates. Plippancy of this sort does not, in fact, strike a reader of the exhibition's press as being typical. O. R. Drey's closing encomium, 'The whole exhibition is a work of remarkable intelligence and passionate contemplation; in these rarer gifts there has been no exhibition of war pictures to equal it\textsuperscript{49} better gives the tone of the reception, though it comes from a friend.

Some indication of the service done to Lewis by his 'Guns' show can be found in H. E. A. Furst's 'About Wyndham Lewis', which appeared in the highly conventional and thriving \textit{Colour}. Furst explained that he had been forced to change his opinions:

\textsuperscript{42} 'War Paintings by Wyndham Lewis', \textit{Nation}, 24.19 (8 February 1919), 546-7.
\textsuperscript{43} Pound to Lewis, July 1916, \textit{Pound/Lewis}, 46.
\textsuperscript{45} 'The Gunner in Art: Mr. Wyndham Lewis's Pictures', \textit{Times} (11 February 1919), 13.
\textsuperscript{46} 'The Death of Vorticism', \textit{Little Review}, 5.10-11 (February-March 1919), 48.
\textsuperscript{47} 'Guns' on War; 'Guns', at the Goupil', \textit{Illustrated London News} (15 February 1919).
\textsuperscript{48} 'Paint and Painters', \textit{Weekly Dispatch} (23 February 1919), 2.
\textsuperscript{49} 'War Pictures by Mr. Wyndham Lewis', \textit{Westminster Gazette} (24 February 1919), 2.
Until a few days ago I frankly belonged to that part of the public which rashly laughed at Wyndham Lewis and his Vorticists. I do not laugh now, certainly not at, though possibly at times with him. I owe this conversion primarily to two independent facts. Firstly, I visited his exhibition ‘Guns’ [...] and discovered that his drawings are, very properly, not beautiful. Secondly I read Blast for the first time [...].  

The principal point is the effect of ‘Guns’, but the importance of Blast to Furst provides an instance of the growing fame of Vorticism, long after it was, in practice, defunct. The bulk of the article, the detail of which need not concern us here, is a disagreement with Lewis’s earlier abstract work, which Furst feels is an impious attempt to handle the ineffable. The war drawings satisfied him completely, in so far as they seemed to be a ‘courageous effort to bring about the holy union of form and matter, of subject and expression’: ‘Therefore: Bless Wyndham Lewis and the Wyndham Lewis Gun.’ All in all, Lewis seemed to have won over a large part of the hostile audience in England, his ‘Guns’ show largely creating, I suspect, the conditions responsible for the very surprisingly favourable reception given to the more modern exhibits in the Imperial War Museum exhibition later in the year. But favour at home may have had high costs abroad, as can be judged from the article published in the Little Review for July by the American art journalist, John Cournos, living in London at that time. The piece is a reply to Pound’s ‘Death of Vorticism’, cited above:  

What Mr. Pound does not tell us is that both Mr. Lewis and Mr. Roberts, as far as their work for the government is concerned, have compromised with their art. In their pictures painted for the Canadian War Museum and exhibited recently at the Royal Academy, they have returned to realistic representation to such a degree that ‘the elderly’ have indeed every justification for comparing their work to Lucca Signorelli.  

The good press at home certainly appeared to be largely due to this return to representation, even Pound, as has been noted, holding that the ‘Guns’ drawings represented an ‘advance’. Clutton-Brock was plainer still:  

Mr. Wyndham Lewis, in a preface to the catalogue of his exhibition [...] explains why the objects in those pictures and drawings can be recognized for what they are. He has, he says, set himself a different task. We confess we do not ask for any explanation. On the whole we prefer those drawings to his more abstract work[.]

And Furst’s praise was acquired, as noted, almost entirely because of the representational qualities of the work. Bearing this in mind, O. R. Drey’s defence of Lewis’s ‘sculptural habit in drawing’ seems quite superfluous. He had no need to point out that ‘his pictures in this exhibition do not carry the doctrine of subjectivity as far as complete abstraction of design’, or to reassure the reader that ‘Natural forms are still there, though they have been made to adapt themselves to the artist’s mastering sensibility to rhythmic continuity of line and balance and mass’, since no one seemed in any doubt on this point. Documentary evidence of the impact of Lewis’s work on the continent at this time is lacking, but one can be reasonably certain that Cournos’s article would have been known in Paris, and that news of Lewis’s war pictures would have travelled by other means. If the Times was read in Montparnasse it could only seem that Lewis was being absorbed into the establishment.  

When the campaign resumed in October and November, Lewis seemed to have grown magically in stature. The Cambridge Review devoted just over half a page to The Caliph’s Design, and what is more it found his style praiseworthy, pointing out that, unlike his Caliph, Lewis was compelled to express his dream in words, but ‘the words, however, are of the best’. In the course of a long review in the Athenaeum John Middleton Murry wrote that in spite of its faults ‘the person who reads to the end of these seventy pages without conceiving a respect for the author’s powers can only be described in terms that Mr. Lewis can use with more mastery than ourselves. Tolerance also characterized the Times Literary Supplement’s review, where Lewis was put in his place as a painter cum writer - ‘Mr. Wyndham Lewis practices the other art of writing with an air of impatience and haste, as if

in moments stolen from painting, but the reader is advised to be patient, since 'the book is worth it'. As a literary writer Lewis had found himself under continual fire for solemnisms, but as a painter writing on painting he would be forgiven a great deal, particularly if he appeared, as he did to Clutton-Brock to be providing an argument against non-representational art. The tone remained slightly condescending though. The anonymous Spectator reviewer found the style 'involved and cumbersome', acutely remarking that Lewis 'appears to have soaked himself in Carlyle' resulting in a 'literary apostrophe' of 'short temper and long sentence'. P. G. Konody in the Observer wrote of Lewis's 'command of sparkling epigrams' spoiling his commendation by adding that the argument was 'jerky, like the work of a man whose lightning thought continually outstrips his slow expression', and the manner a 'rude lapidary style', this last itself being one of the best, because most ambiguous, epigrams on Lewis's writing that I have come across. A change was taking place in the way in which Lewis's writing was perceived by those with literary credentials, and in fact there is even a slight hint that his verbal talents were coming to be more highly regarded than his pictorial ones. In October the Athenaeum had carried a brief mention of The Caliph's Design, not apparently by Murray, in which the book is praised as 'very wild and whirling and witty' and much better than Marinetti, but the reviewer closed by asking rhetorically 'does Mr. Lewis really know much about any other than literary art?' Criticism of this stamp was to become common in the twenties, but at this time it is definitely atypical, and its appearance is therefore of very great interest since it suggests that Lewis's burst of activity as an artist could not entirely conceal from some contemporaries the likelihood that this field was no longer one in which he prospected with any commitment.

The Caliph's Design does not appear to have been much reviewed - with the exception of Charles Marriott's article in the Outlook all the pieces of importance have already been cited here - but those received were long, detailed and appeared in papers of wide circulation or high prestige. The Egoist's account suggests that sales proceeded briskly, at least to begin with, and as late as December the society magazine, the Sketch introduced The Caliph's Design into its semi-fictional gossip column, where its representative 'young woman', Mariegold, suddenly, and quite unexpectedly displays intellectual interest:

Talking of architects', burst in Mariegold, 'what about their 'Vortexes'? Christmas was such a pre-war old fashioned orgy this year, with Christmas trees, plum-puddings, and all the nonsensical Victorian apparances which make one thoroughly comatose, that I had to get a little mental stimulus, so I collected a copy of Wyndham Lewis's latest utterance on modern art, 'The Caliph's Design - Architects, Where is your Vortex?' and found that it quite dragged me back to our own exciting post-war mode of thought.'

'Wyndham Lewis is one of the Great Men in the Modern world of Art and Letters,' I replied, 'and everyone who goes to the show at Burlington house, where the Moderns have found a footing for the first time on their official war business, has something to say about his contribution.'

It is important to notice here that the book was buttressed by Lewis's exhibited work, even by one picture amongst a thousand. Indeed, it is an index of his standing at this time that a single picture of his could draw the attention of reviewers describing large group shows, such as the Goupil Gallery Salon of November, to which Lewis contributed a now lost portrait of Ezra Pound. This picture dominates many of the reviews, as it appears to have dominated the exhibition itself. Frank Rutter in the Sunday Times prostrated himself before it, commenting that though the show contained painting by 'John, Pryde, Sickert, and others, sculpture by Eric Gill, watercolours by John Nash, all sorts of interesting things, it contains nothing bigger in every way than this painting by Wyndham Lewis', and in his ecstasy Rutter embarrassingly begs his God to trample upon him: 'it is a stimulating tonic to all who regard art as self-expression and rejoice to find an artist powerful enough to stamp his personality on

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55 Anon, 'The Caliph's Design', Spectator, 123.4772 (13 December 1919), 582.
56 'Art and Artist: Mr. Wyndham Lewis and the Goupil Gallery', Observer (9 November 1919), 10.
57 Anon, 'Fine Arts', Athenæum, No. 4678 (31 October 1919), 1237.
58 'Poets in Art', Outlook, 44.3140 (6 December 1919), 587.
59 Anon, 'Look Here', Sketch, 109.1405 (31 December 1919), 5.
us, willy-nilly in a way we cannot possibly forget.\(^{60}\) No other painter is mentioned except as a foil to Lewis, the whole section of a column devoted to the Goupil show being taken up with this 'great work by a great artist', and the rest of the piece, a review of the Royal Society of Portrait Painters exhibition at the Grafton Galleries, being reduced to negative contrast. Rutter was not alone in his raptures. Even the staid Arthur Clutton-Brock gave the picture high praise in his *Times* notice, where he provides another example of those comparisons with old masters that were now becoming common in criticism of Lewis:

> Mr. Lewis's portrait of Mr. Ezra Pound is large and intimidating, like the great figures of Andrea del Castagno. It has the same grandeur of design, the same power of expressing feeling in form.\(^{61}\)

Charles Marriott, writing in the *Outlook*, felt the picture showed how dependent contemporary painting was on architecture, and thus gave the lie to Lewis's assertions at this time, in his lecture and in *The Caliph's Design*, that architects should learn from painting. Contrasted with the 'Mumbo-Jumbo' of his theory, the picture proved that Lewis 'paints much better than he talks or writes'.\(^{62}\) The *Burlington Magazine*, described the other exhibitors, and wondered 'what Mr. Wyndham Lewis is doing *dans cette galère*, since the Pound portrait was 'a refreshing piece of work' in which 'Design and colour are both skilfully used to express a very definite conception and to gain plastic quality'.\(^{63}\) The reviewer warned Lewis against 'acquiring an element of representation inconsistent with the use of abstract design', which suggests the possibility that Clive Bell may have been the author, and also serves to indicate growing suspicion that Lewis was retreating from his earlier advances.

This triumph was followed by another at the Burlington House showing of pictures acquired for the nation under the war artists scheme, which opened on the 13th of December. As has been mentioned, one striking aspect of the press treatment of this show was the friendly words found for the younger and less academic painters. As the *Daily Mirror* put it, in a paragraph headed 'The New Official Art', 'Now that the seal of official approval has been stamped on modernism we can no longer laugh at Vorticism, Expressionism and Post Impressionism. Wyndham Lewis and Nash and Roberts and Lamb are Britain's "official" artists, and the Royal Academicians have to take a back seat.'\(^{64}\) By and large this was, in fact, what happened, the explanation being that comment on the war was felt to be the prerogative of, as the *Daily Mail* put it, the 'Men Who Saw': 'Before the more amiable art of the elderly one feels like saying, "But you know nothing about [such] things"'.\(^{65}\) The nature of the experiences was taken as justification of oddities of manner, and this gave the papers a simple way of making room in their appreciations for 'an extremist like Mr Wyndham Lewis', since even his 'out-and-out Cubism' could not be 'too fantastic for circumstances that demanded of men a sacrifice of their humaneness'. From the beginning, Lewis's 'A Battery Shelled' appeared as one of the most important exhibits in what was a vast display. The *Times* set the tone of all subsequent reviews with its substantial paragraph:

> He has not allowed 'Nature' to intrude her irrelevancies, nor has he submitted to any convention of design. It is like a symphonic poem, almost as free as music must be from imitation, and free also from musical pattern - whether you like it or not, you must confess you can almost see and hear the shells, so powerful an equivalent for their material force is given by those strange shapes across the sky.\(^{66}\)

By any standards the press was extremely favourable to Lewis, the *East Anglian Daily Times* thinking his "the most striking picture"\(^{67}\) in the show, and the *Sunday Times* found it "impressive, brilliant [...] distinguished".\(^{68}\) The *Westminster Gazette* also commented on the

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\(^{60}\) 'Modern Portraits', *Sunday Times* (9 November 1919), 5.
\(^{61}\) 'Old and New Methods in Art: Goupil Gallery Salon', *Times* (10 November 1919), 17.
\(^{62}\) 'Ruskin and Some Others', *Outlook*, 44.1137 (15 November 1919), 508.
\(^{63}\) Anon, 'A Monthly Chronicle: The Goupil Gallery Salon, 1919', *Burlington Magazine*, 201.35 (December 1919), 278.
\(^{64}\) Anon, 'The New Official Art', *Daily Mirror* (12 December 1919).
\(^{65}\) Anon, 'Young Artist's Triumph: War Pictures By Men Who Saw', *Daily Mail* (12 December 1919), 7.
\(^{67}\) Anon, [title not known], *East Anglian Daily Times* (13 December 1919).
\(^{68}\) Frank Rutter, 'Imperial War Museum: War Paintings at Burlington House', *Sunday Times* (14 December 1919).
picture's "sallow and inhuman brilliance" while the *Arts Gazette* found "brilliance of design and splendid colour" together with "essential tragedy", and the *Observer* remarked on this "tremendously impressive" and "highly sophisticated art".

**'X' Group**

Up to the end of the year there was hardly a dissenting voice. The *Pall Mall Gazette*, it is true, felt that Lewis and the Vorticists 'gave one no real sense of the emotion of war, for with them everything is sacrificed to their idea of design, and it must be admitted that an indigent 'Artillery Officer' called 'Battery Shelled' a 'bad joke' but these are easy exceptions. However, for reasons which I do not pretend to understand, this began to change in the early months of 1920. A possible explanation is that the daily press, which provided the early reviews, was staffed generally by younger critics, whereas the monthlies and quarterlies, whose reviews would of course appear after some delay, were written and read by an older and less flexible group. Whatever the truth of this it is clear that by the time the show was drawing to a close it had become controversial, in the manner that might have been expected at its opening, and naturally Lewis's picture was taken as a type specimen of the new rubbish art. A coiling of opinion can be seen in the *Architect's* review at the beginning of January: 'Without venturing to express any dogmatic opinions on these new forms of art, we must confess that personally we find no joy in them. We are not without curiosity as to the mental processes of the exponents, but as explained by, say, such an excellent and vivid phrase maker as Mr. Wyndham Lewis, we find conscious eccentricity rather than enlightenment.' The *Architectural Review* devoted much more space to the academicians than previous reviewers had done, and Lewis, wrongly identified as the painter Bayes, was knocked aside dismissively: 'one admires the decorative sense displayed in [...] 'Battery Shelled', while regretting the artist's unwillingness to dispense with eccentricity in the treatment of his shadows in cubes and squares.' However, Hannay, in the newly founded *London Mercury*, found that the 'crude Vorticism of Wyndham Lewis and W. P. Roberts' had 'once a negative, destructive, rebellious value', but had proved itself now 'a mere mechanical formula'.

But full scale hostilities only broke out when the fitfully named C. Reginald Grundy, the editor of the *Connoisseur*, gave an interview to the *Daily Graphic*, and stimulated a controversy in that paper. I have not yet traced the various parts of this small storm, but its outline is easy enough to understand from those pieces so far located. The *Daily Graphic*'s cover for the 5th of February 1920 speaks for itself. Lewis's 'Battery' is scornfully labelled 'for posterity', while Detaille's 'Dream' is a 'Great Picture [...] which anyone can appreciate'. Grundy's opinions were published at length in the *Connoisseur*, under the title 'Spurious Art', the first page bearing a reproduction of 'A Battery Shelled'. Grundy found this, and other works of the same ilk, to have been 'disgracing the exhibitions of the New English Art Club and the Imperial War Museum [...] The majority of their works could have been equally well executed by the veriest tyro.' (Lewis, incidentally, was to take up this phrase, the 'veriest tyro', in 1921. Grundy's assault was not on Lewis specifically, or indeed on the younger exhibitors at Burlington House, but on all modernism whatsoever.

When Van Gogh or Matisse imitated the work of children, they were not expressing their own feelings, but were trying to depict nature from an artificial standpoint. The inspiration of Mr. Wyndham Lewis and some of Mr. Nevinson's is equally artificial. These artists make no attempt to interpret nature through the medium of their emotions, but substitute arbitrary conventions for natural forms, and paint their pictures accordingly. Mr. Wyndham Lewis's *Battery Shelled*, acquired, at the nation's expense, for the National War Museum,
affords an opposite example. The work is destitute of imagination or feeling, and is built up as mechanically as a proposition in Euclid.

Such opinions were hardly likely to have hurt Lewis, but they do show, and the alacrity with which the Daily Graphic exploited them confirms this, that the new art might be tolerated for a while, but it remained unwelcome, and liable to swamping by unpredictable returns to conventional taste. This instability, after the seductive appearance of public recognition in December may well have been a significant contributing factor to Lewis's confusion in 1920.

This aside, Lewis's plans were going well. His introduction to the monograph on Gilman had been well received, and his portfolio, Fifteen Drawings, had drawn a highly favourable notice from R. H. Wilenski in the Athenaeum, and a lengthy consideration in the Times Literary Supplement, which greeted the folio as proof that there was no need to suspect Lewis of illustrating his theories, and that in any case his drawings 'do not need to be justified by one'. The old master comparison was, this time, a contrast with Correggio, the point being to suggest Lewis was unlike him in being suspicious of the 'allurement of the physical world, and especially of the human body': 'for him it does not represent a wish-world of dreams. It is part of life, to be criticized, mastered by the will like the rest of our ordinary experience.' Indeed no other critic of Lewis's work, not even Pound, provides so adequate a commentary on the puzzling material of Lewis's art at this time, and though it is not strictly relevant to the progress of my argument at this point I shall digress briefly to draw attention to this fact. Clutton-Brock noticed that these were pictures hovering on the brink of misanthropy:

What he draws is any naked man or woman, almost any animal seen as male of female; it is not a person at all. He uses these figures as characters are used in improper French Farce, where we have any male and any female presented to exhibit the absurdity of sex in a plot which turns sex into mechanism and laughs at it. Mr. Lewis does not present it so to laugh at it; there is nothing improper in his drawings, but a kind of frankness which may shock because there is neither reticence nor sympathy in it.

This last sentence can be applied with justice and profit to a very large part of Lewis's experimentation with his misanthropic tendencies, and the fact that it does not apply to such later works as The Human Age, which, like the crucifixion itself, is sensationarily improper, suggests, to me at any rate, the superiority of the earlier work.

The content of Wilenski's review is trivial in comparison with this lucky hit, but it has some historical importance since it was the occasion for a feud between Lewis and Clive Bell which expanded to discuss the newly formed 'X' group, and perhaps contributed in some degree to its failure. Rather carelessly Wilenski claimed that Lewis was 'an artist who has certain affinities with Leonardo da Vinci', and though this was immediately and strongly qualified by the admission that 'he has less skill of hand' the force of this retraction was itself qualified by the remark that Lewis had more 'sense of humour' and the same 'passion for experiment and contempt for the easy task'. We know from a letter to Lewis from E. McKnightKauffer that Fry was 'very excited in his mind about X Group getting their show in before the London Group. Also that he advocated preventing this happening'. Obviously, the Fry circle was already mobilizing to combat this new threat to their authority. Wilenski's remarks were, in this circumstance, a gift to Bell, who made his move shortly before the opening of the 'X' group exhibition in the last week of March. His article, also in the Athenaeum, accused English painting of an intense parochialism so shameless that it carelessly measured itself against the highest standards of European, and particularly French, painting. An acrimonious correspondence ensued, with the result that the 'X' group exhibition opened in the midst of controversy. Lewis's contributions to the 'X' group show played directly into the hands of those, like Bell, who were prosecuting an ad hominem campaign which they probably felt to be no more than simple retaliation. Even in the words of a sympathetic reviewer, Frank Rutter in the Sunday Times, the merest description gave the impression of an overweening self-obsession: 'To this exhibition, which is very largely the outcome of his own irrepressible energy and zeal, Mr. Wyndham Lewis contributes one

78 Arthur Clutton-Brock, 'Mr. Wyndham Lewis's Drawings', Times Literary Supplement, 19.940 (22 January 1920), 47.
79 'Mr. Lewis as Draughtsman', Athenaeum, No. 4679 (2 January 1920), 19.
painting and six drawings of himself.\textsuperscript{81} The ‘X’ group show was not, as far as is known, widely reviewed, but the coverage was decent, the \textit{Sunday Times, Times, Outlook, Observer, and Truth} all giving more or less sympathetic reviews of substantial size.\textsuperscript{82} It was certainly a disappointing showing after the coverage accorded to Lewis’s works in the 1919 exhibitions, but the sales figures for \textit{The Caliph’s Design}, remained respectable through 1920, and suggest that Lewis’s stock was still high. April of this year also saw the publication of the first critical article to take on Lewis’s whole body of work. This piece, by W. G. Constable,\textsuperscript{83} may be presented as evidence to support the hypothesis that the early part of 1920 had seen the formation of Lewis’s public stable public image, and since it usefully summarizes the conclusions there is some point in dwelling upon it. Constable opened his essay by drawing the reader’s attention to the diversity of Lewis’s work - ‘He is a journalist, a novelist, a revolutionary and a painter [...] Mr. Lewis stands alone to-day as both a serious painter and writer’ - and it is with the relationship between these two branches of this activity that the essay is in fact principally concerned. In both arts, Constable claimed, Lewis was sincere, but his stylistic novelties, his ‘strange epithets and piquant neologisms’, his distorted planes, all sprang from vanity, ‘the desire to be remarkable, to be at all costs different from other people’: ‘It comes to this, that Mr. Lewis is a striking instance of the egoist in art.’ Moreover he was a quarrelsome egotist, one who ‘not merely resents criticism, but is eager to provoke it; for criticism enables him to make his personality felt.’ His own criticism, in which his ‘favorite weapon is the bludgeon’, such as \textit{The Caliph’s Design}, was a ‘series of vigorous attacks upon everything and everybody Mr. Lewis dislikes’, and, though shrewd in diagnosis, was ‘singularly elusive when it comes to suggesting a remedy’.

Turning again to the painting Constable concludes that ‘his genius is analytical and descriptive rather than creative’, and adds that ‘he fails to give his conceptions life and vitality’, that ‘he lacks the emotional power which, superimposed on intellectual process, produces living reality from a collection of parts.’ And the underlying reason for this is that Lewis’s pictures are literary, a point resurrected by Bell, of course. They are not ‘anecdotal in the sense that Frith’s “Derby Day” is’, but the analytical character of his pictures reveals a temperament that ‘turns facts into symbols which he cleverly arranges, so that an attentive person can translate them back into facts as though they were symbols of another kind - namely words’. In sum, Lewis was brilliant, bad tempered, vain, negative, and in both his writing and his painting he displayed a critical rather than a creative bias; he was a writer who paints.

There is no reason to suppose this article particularly influential; its importance is as an indicator of the way that Lewis was now striking the more thoughtful members of the public. Although now standing higher as a painter than ever before, it was clear to contemporaries that Lewis’s inclinations, which were not well understood by any, even perhaps by Lewis himself, were taking him back to writing. Despite the futile invention of bogus absolute categories, ‘writers who paint’ and ‘painters who write’, and the unconsidered mysticism which supposes that ‘creation’ cannot risk association with analysis because creation must be ineffably primary, and analysis is of course secondary, despite these flaws which render the piece negligible as prescription, many of Constable’s remarks appear just when placed in the context of my own view of Lewis’s activities. Lewis was concerned with public standing, and did in fact consciously mark himself off from his contemporaries in the art and literary worlds with stylistic mannerisms, but, in addition, these mannerisms were parts of an exacting programme of research. Lewis was indeed an egoist, the attempt to guiltlessly assert selfishness being part of his programme. And he was of course quarrelsome, that being also a reflection of his understanding, an imperfect understanding, of the ubiquity of interpersonal conflict. - With more cunning he might have smiled and smiled. And finally his painting did have literary leanings, because the course of his thought was leading him towards questions which could only be handled with words, while the pressures of his career were forcing him to continue as a visual artist. The resulting canvasses are extremely interesting, but unsatisfying, and result, from the attempt to prosecute an enquiry in a medium unsuitable to it.

TYROS

With the 'X' group show Lewis's post-war commitment to painting came to an end, though this would not have been obvious to Lewis, or the public. His campaign had been, in many respects, a success, the reviews establishing him as a known and radical artist. And while the representational nature of his work might have damaged his standing on the continent, many of the European painters were themselves moving in this direction, and now that Lewis had a domestic reputation to brandish in Paris he could with more certainty have entered the international art market, though, as an Englishman, he would have been at a great disadvantage in a milieu now financed by the dollar. Lewis was aware that this was the next necessary move, remarking in another letter to Quinn in June 1920, that a painter in England must 'supplement exhibiting here very largely with exhibitions and practice abroad.' But he did nothing to further a move, or arrange an exhibition of his work, though with Pound now living in Paris he had every opportunity. And Pound was more than willing to help, taking the initiative in letters to Lewis in June and July 1920 asking for drawings to show in Paris, and attempting to get Lewis to send photographs of paintings for reproduction in the Dial in New York, and also permission for the Dial to reprint Lewis's Athenaeum articles from the previous winter. Lewis obviously dithered, since the next letter begins 'Dew fer christ's sake send on your story & also permission to use in U.S.A anything that has come out in Athenaeum'. This indecision was the result of yet another collapse of self-confidence and switch in direction. In a letter to John Quinn on the 14th of June, Lewis replied to Quinn's observation that he was a better writer than a painter 'I know that it would be temptation to me to neglect my painting for this other activity', yet he recognized some weakness in his painting and tried to explain it:

What has occurred is that: (A) In the three years before the War, during which I started my work as a painter, I had to waste 50 per cent of my time in propaganda and similar activities. (B) The whole War-time was sheer loss of time, big war-paintings included. Hence, I should be the last person to claim for my finished work anything more than a character of essay, and unfulfillment. I will ask you in five years' time, when I am forty years old, to have another look. These coming few years should be my first years of complete work.

Rather than build on the achievements of 1918 and 1919 Lewis simply chose to start again, the emphasis still being, it should be noted, on his achievement as a painter. After a short period of seclusion, from summer 1920 to spring 1921, he wrote again to Quinn, reporting on his progress:

I gave you in a letter 12 months ago a pretty complete account of how I stood, and what I intended to do; and you at that time were good enough to write that that was a fair and open statement. About my present work and activities, or most of it, I don't have to make the reservations that my war work seemed to me to necessitate [...]

The project, of which so much was expected, was, astonishingly enough, the flimsy, and so definitely 'literary', series of grotesque cartoons which Lewis termed 'Tyros'. Of one of them, 'Praxitella', Lewis told Quinn that it was 'the best I have done', and he retailed with evident excitement his intention to 'sell (world-rights) outright a book of forty drawings of Tyros and Tyro scenes (with letter-press)'. It appears that during the second half of 1920 and the beginning of 1921 Lewis had taken a dramatic step towards abandoning painting without being clearly aware of what he was doing. The reasons for this change are not clear, but it appears at least a plausible hypothesis that Lewis's feelings of isolation intensified during this period as a result of, firstly, Pound's removal to Paris, and most importantly the death of Lewis's mother in February. Pound had been a loyal supporter, a ready source of praise and encouragement, and without him Lewis would have no colleague in London except the more reserved Eliot. Important though the loss of Pound might have been for Lewis, it could not

84 14 June 1920, The Letters of Wyndham Lewis, 120.
85 See letter to Lewis of 21 June 1920, Pound/Lewis, 124
86 Pound/Lewis, p. 125.
87 Lewis to John Quinn, 14 June 1920, The Letters of Wyndham Lewis, 120.
88 Lewis to John Quinn, 2 May 1921, in Richard and Janis Londraville, 'Two Men At War With Time: The Unpublished Correspondence of Wyndham Lewis and John Quinn: Concluded', English, 39.165 (Autumn 1990), 240.
possibly match the impact of the absence of his mother. For the larger part of his life she
had formed Lewis’s dominant audience model, and her unqualified admiration for his work
insulated Lewis against the most painful shocks of contact with the opinions of strangers.
Equally, she was to return to an intense search for a guiltless method of expressing his hostility to and dislike
of his conspecifics, his activities remaining, for reasons already discussed, within the bounds
of the pictorial arts. In his desperation to find a solution he followed the only viable path, to
caricatural cartoons, and so was brought to the brink of literature. That he was barely
conscious that this development was leading him further and further from an art with which he
could command international respect as a painter, or, as the reviews were to show, much
regard at home, was a failure of self-knowledge and a mismanagement of his interests. More
sympathetically one might call it testimony to the intense and blinkered single-mindedness
with which Lewis was now working.

Exhibitions are not as widely noticed as books, so the number, eleven, should not be
taken as surprisingly small. The coverage is better judged by the quality or size of the papers
concerned, and when this factor is taken into account it is obvious that the Tyro show was a
hit. The *Sunday Times* carried two articles the day before the show opened (this can now be
given definitely as the 11th of April thanks to internal evidence in Frank Rutter’s review),
and reviews appeared in the *Observer, Daily Express* (with a Tyro drawing), *Times, Nation
and Athenaeum, Truth, Outlook, Spectator,* and *London Mercury,* while the *Sketch* carried an
illustrated full page. The celebrity generated also stirred the *Times* to interview Lewis for
his opinions on the opening of the Royal Academy show, and two satirical pieces on modern
art made oblique reference to Lewis by picking up his word ‘Tyro’, these last being, in spite
of their triviality, perhaps the best indicators of fame. But this press, though respectful, was
not gratifying, and the fame it produced was not enduring, Lewis appearing to slip from the
consciousness of the newspaper and periodical journalist after the end of April. The problem
was that the Tyros struck most reviewers as ephemera, and Lewis had intended the Tyros to
carry the show, which also contained a substantial number of oil portraits and a large group
of drawings, also portraits. But the exhibition was, Lewis told Quinn in his letter of the 2nd
of May 1921, ‘economically successful’, going on to say that ‘Praxitella, is sold. The portrait of
myself as a Tyro, myself as the painter Raphael, Lady in arm-chair, are also sold, in
addition to about thirty drawings’. Whether these included many Tyros, or whether they
were mostly the non-tyronic drawings, which were almost universally praised by reviewers,
is not known with any certainty, but there is evidence to support the latter supposition.

Though Edward Wadsworth is know to have bought ‘Praxitella’, and Sidney Schiff ‘Self-
portrait as a Tyro’, Charles Rutherston’s large collection, the bulk of which is now held by
Manchester City Art Galleries, seems to be composed of items bought from this show, none
of which are Tyronic. This is circumstantial evidence but it seems likely that Lewis was left
with many of the Tyros at the end of his exhibition. They attracted attention, but on the
whole people didn’t buy them. It is tempting, therefore, to suppose that they were a stunt,
employed to drum up interest in the more substantial work in the rest of the exhibition, and
there is something in this. But a letter to Quinn of the 18th of April, in which he remarked of

91 J. Lloyd, ‘Art in Common Life: Mr. Wyndham Lewis on the Academy: Educating Parliament and
Ministers’, *Times* (28 April 1921), 13.

92 Kineton Parkes, ‘Tyronics’, *Drawing and Design*, No. 14 NS (June 1921), 464. Pantaloo,
‘Caffeyroyalties’, *Drawing and Design*, n.s. no. 16 (August 1921), 555.

93 For information on the provenance of these paintings see Jane Farrington, *Wyndham Lewis* (London:
Lund Humphries, 1980). For ‘Praxitella’ see p. 85, ‘Self-portrait as a Tyro’ see p. 88. Rutherston’s many
holdings are documented on pp. 77-85.

94 Richard and Janis Londraville, ‘Two Men at War with Time’, 238.

89 “Tyros and Portraits”, *Sunday Times* (10 April 1921), 15
April 1921), 10. Frank Rutter, “Tyros and Portraits”, *Sunday Times* (10 April 1921), 15. P. G. Konody,
‘Mr. Wyndham Lewis’s “Tyros and Portraits”, *Observer* (10 April 1921), 8. Anon, ‘Dean Swift With a
Brush: The Tyroist Explains His Art’, *Daily Express* (11 April 1921), 5. Arthur Clutton-Brock, ‘Mr.
Wyndham Lewis: Haunting Images of an Alien Art’, *Times* (14 April 1921), 8. O. Raymond Drey,
‘Exhibitions of the Week’, *Nation and Athenaeum*, 19.3 (16 April 1921), 106. Anon, ‘Caricature Without
Humour’, *Truth*, 89.2319 (20 April 1921), 684. Osbert Sitwell, “Wyndham Lewis as a Tyro - and Other
Pictures”, *Sketch*, 114.1473 (20 April 1921), 89. Charles Marriott, “The Imitation of Nature”, *Outlook*,
47.1212 (23 April 1921), 356. H. S., ‘Some Galleries’, *Spectator*, 126.4844 (30 April 1921), 555. Howard

For information on the provenance of these paintings see Jane Farrington, *Wyndham Lewis* (London:
Lund Humphries, 1980). For ‘Praxitella’ see p. 85, ‘Self-portrait as a Tyro’ see p. 88. Rutherston’s many
holdings are documented on pp. 77-85.
evidently at the apparent success he had achieved in inventing a pictorial method of approaching his central obsession. He told Quinn, in the same letter (the editors found this passage difficult to decipher, and I reproduce their queries), 'I [...] attempt to create a medium for satire, once more: making this extravagant imaginary race a [world?] into which one can [use?] such satiric [notions?] as recur to one.' In his interview with the Daily Express, Lewis also put the Tyros forward as significant satiric art, and, incidentally, suggests a better reading for at least one of the queried words in the letter:

A Tyro [...] is a new type of human animal like Harlequin or Punchinello - a new and sufficiently elastic form or 'mould' into which one can translate the satirical observations that are from time awakened by one's race.

The significance of comparison with figures from drama, that uneasy compromise, should not escape us, any more than the fact that Lewis uses 'observations' here in the sense of 'verbal opinions or descriptions', these observations being translated into a pictorial form which, Lewis openly admits, is a substitute for words:

Satire is dead today. [...] the sense of moral discrimination in this age has been so blurred that it simply wouldn't understand written satire if it saw it.

People are, in fact, impervious to logic, so I have determined to get at them by the medium of paint.

But it is a puzzle that Lewis should not have recognized that this would be perceived as a move away from serious art, a puzzle that is unless we see that he had begun to redefine art history for himself, and in this new account his work was rejoining the tradition of English satirical painters. He told the Daily Express that his work was not a departure because 'Hogarth didn't die so long ago', and Quinn was informed that his magazine, the Tyro would not only cover modern work, but 'some classic vein like Rowlandson, Hogarth etc: (Rowlandson is a great popular draughtsman very much neglected. [...]').

The modern Parisians now seemed to him a continuation of nineties aestheticism, as he remarked in the Daily Express: 'I am sick of these so-called modern artists amiably browsing about and playing at art for art's sake. What I want is to bring back art into touch with life'. Such a clarification of aims was obviously a considerable achievement. The Tyro project, though a failure, in terms of his career as a painter, the death-knell of Mr. Wyndham Lewis the Artist in fact, made it clear to him that his interests lay in a direction where pictorial work could not help him. For the moment, however, it seemed as if he had found a solution where he could exercise his interest in and dislike of other humans (the show consisted entirely of pictures of members of his 'species', and of himself, the opposition, the hostility between them, being implicit) and also stake a claim for rank as a major artist. The critics were to disabuse him.

Frank Rutter, in the Sunday Times, pushed the portraits aside with some unflattering remarks about their colour, and then turned to the Tyros: 'According to Mr. Lewis these [...] are at once "satires, pictures and stories". Let me say at once, they are far more successful as satires than anything else.' He admitted that they were brilliant and unconventional, but added that they were hardly more than caricatures, and rather interestingly in view of Lewis's claim that the pieces were impersonal, closed his review by regretting that Lewis was 'frittering away his genius for satire on persons of no importance', a remark which suggests that some at least of the Tyros were recognizable.

Another loyal friend, P. G. Konody of the Observer, gave the exhibition a long review, and pronounced, as Lewis must have hoped all the critics would, that 'this remarkable exhibition cannot fail to establish Mr. Lewis as one of the dominant figures in contemporary British art', but he based this hope, or prophecy, on the quality of Lewis's drawings, and made only expressions of confusion with regard to the Tyros, which he saw as 'amusing', a weak word with which to greet something that Lewis clearly thought was reviving a neglected and important connection between painting and thought. In the Times Clutton Brock appeared to find the portraits tedious, identifying that of Miss Iris Tree as 'simply a failure', and in the others he found them evidence of Lewis's attempt 'to take the Kingdom of Heaven by violence, and to make his defects seem merits':

For instance if he draws a face, and if the eyes will not submit their natural subtlety to his strength, he just leaves them out, trying to convince us that they ought to be left out.

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95 2 May 1921, in Richard and Janis Londraville, 'Two Men at War With Time', p. 240.
But he felt that although flawed they at least showed how Lewis was on 'his way back from pure abstractions', and many of the drawings were 'beautiful'. The Tyros were relegated to a tiny fraction of this sizeable review, and dismissed: there is no promise, we think, in the pictures he calls 'Tyros'. Perceptively as ever, Clutton-Brock noticed that though these were aimed at resurrecting the caricature of types rather than individuals they seemed to have a tone that was original. He happened to find the results disagreeable, terming them 'undifferentiated violence [...] exploitive rather than expressions.' In essence this is quite correct, though it is possible to place a positive rather than a negative value upon this exploitive, or rather on the experimental advance that it represents. But in a general sense Clutton-Brock had seen Lewis's problem. The Tyros were stuck; they had done what they could, and would go no further.

Drey, in the Nation and Athenaeum, provides an account very much as Lewis might have dictated it, and since Drey was a close friend he may well have done so. The larger part of the review is concerned with the Tyros proper, most of it being summary of Lewis's own explanation, and only once does Drey see that this is not perhaps a conventional satire concerned to smile folly. 'We fear' he says 'we must all at times be Tyros to Mr. Lewis', but he recovers himself with the comforting reflection that, naughty as we might be, 'we may still disguise the truth amongst ourselves'. The lack of thought given to the issue can be best judged by Drey's unqualified acceptance of the 'blood relationship with the caricatures of Vernet, Gillray, Hogarth, Rowlandson, [and] Bunbury', when a moment's reflection would have led him to see that the Tyro physiognomy, particularly its awkwardness when presented full or three-quarter face, in the 'Reading of Ovid' for example, reduced the range of expression to such a small and banal repertoire that it could not possibly hope to compete with the artists whose heir it claimed to be. It was thus an absurdity to 'look to Mr. Lewis's Tyromancy for a continual and varied illustration of our peculiarly modern nastiness and imbecility.' As Clutton-Brock had noticed, the hostility was undifferentiated, and this monotonous quality made it quite unsuitable for the sort of varied social commentary of which Drey imagined it to be capable. In truth these pictures were moving to something more interesting, though they were themselves imperfect articulations of it. The anonymous reviewer in Truth saw the point immediately, and realized that it applied not only to the Tyros but also to the associated portraits:

there is a suggestion of more hate than love for his fellow-men in the 'tyros and portraits' [...] The show might be called caricature without humour. In the great satirists like Daumier you feel a deep human sympathy underlying their work, even a great pity for suffering humanity. In the work of Mr. Wyndham Lewis you find a cold contempt, not so much for human weakness and folly as for all mankind.

Lewis could hardly have expected his hostility to find many willing to toady to it, so should not have been much surprised by such remarks, or those of Charles Marriott, writing in the Outlook, who found the Tyros harmless to those depicted but 'intensely cruel to Mr. Lewis in what they reveal'. However, it is more likely that Quinn's rejection was of more consequence, and Pound's remark on the first number of the Tyro more discouraging still: 'Can't see that Tyro is of interest outside Bloomsbury.' But still more important was the simple fact that Lewis found himself unable to do anything further with the Tyro face. In the first number of the magazine there were several reproductions, while the second, squeezed out at length in March 1922, contained only one, on the cover. Lewis felt obliged to account for this:

The only Tyros this number contains are Bestre, and X and F, and they are written about and not shown graphically. This absence of tyronic images is in order to have a full display in this number of pictures and drawings by London artists [...] The next number will contain more Tyro drawings.\footnote{97}

This was putting a brave face on it, and hardly explained why he had printed reproductions of several non-tyronic works of his own in preference to the grinding manikins. In fact Lewis had done almost nothing further on his Tyros, but could not admit to dropping them without wrecking the magazine he wished to continue. He was still painting, in a mysterious and inscrutable manner, but no longer appeared to have a cohesive programme. As is plain from his remarks here his principal focus of concentration was on writing again, inevitably responding, on the one hand, to the public's lack of real excitement, and on the other to the
The constrictive nature of the pictorial 'mould' he had chosen. We need not suppose that Lewis was persuaded of this latter point by the reviews, or the criticism of his patrons and friends, whose remarks were in any case too vague to be of much assistance. When prompted Lewis could be a ruthless critic of his own work, and he now dropped what believed to have been a mistake, taking little care, it seems, even to preserve many of the original drawings, most of which are lost.

The Tyro show of April 1921 was Lewis's last major public appearance in his intensive post-war campaign to establish himself as a painter, but it does not mark the transition into the so-called 'underground' phase. Between the abandonment of the instructive Tyro experiment and Lewis's total immersion in the British Museum Library there was an interval, a period of confusion, in which he began writing again, revising, for example, 'Bestre', for publication in the second number of the Tyro, and composing the 'Tyrionic Dialogues', also published in the Tyro. The Tyro novel, 'Hoodopip' has not been dated with any precision, but there is internal evidence to suggest that Lewis was still working on it at the beginning of 1922, and may even have considered it a worthwhile proposition as late the winter of that year. Apart from tentative work in fiction, he was also painting and drawing, and writing on art. His pictorial works of this time are solemn, private, exercises, about which he has, unusually, left no verbal commentary. Pound's extremely vigorous efforts in July 1922 to secure Lewis an exhibition in Milan were rebuffed in terms which show that he had again wiped his slate and considered himself to be beginning anew:

If you wish to remain a friend of mine observe the 4th. & 5th. line down ['If you are indulging a disappointment with me, leave me alone for a bit.'] Until I can produce something unassailable, & better than I have up to the present, it is perhaps best to leave me alone. It is too early yet, you can believe me when I say it, to write retrospectively of me. [...] Let me alone for a little, that will be best. You will have plenty to talk about before very long: and all your talkative, generous, burbling instincts be satisfied.98

In the same letter he referred to exhibitions planned in London and Paris. Neither of these projects came to anything, and the little we know of the Paris venture, from letters to Sidney Schiff, who was mediating with the dealer concerned, Léonce Rosenberg, shows that he was prosecuting it without energy or interest.99 Lewis's depression was obvious. A reviewer of the Goupil Gallery Spring Exhibition, in which Lewis exhibited, commented that the 'few drawings by Wyndham Lewis are very tame, in fact they are scarcely Wyndham Lewis at all',100 and Walter Sickert's notice of the second number of the Tyro, which he regarded as an intellectual achievement of the first order, detected, for all his 'naughty words', a 'boyish modesty' which 'leads him to a real undervaluation of himself'.101 But this period of indecision, noticed retrospectively by Sickert, ended as abruptly as it had begun, and the stimulus was, there can be little doubt, the publication of Ulysses in early 1922. Letters to Sidney and Violet Schiff in this period make it clear that the book had an enormous impact on Lewis. As late as the 12th of April, when he had not read it, he was still able to take a self-confident line on the subject of Joyce:

I was glad to hear that neither Joyce's imposing urbanity nor his strong family sentiments escaped your husband. I hope his lofty condescension towards his contemporaries was also not lost. But he's a pleasing, delightful fellow, with all his schoolboy egotism and Irish nonsense.102

Then, after some mild references, there is a chill, in a letter of the 20th of May, as Lewis read Ulysses and began to withdraw from personal contact which might inhibit his criticism:

Joyce I don't want to see especially, certainly not here. What on earth should I do with him: ... Yesterday I borrowed Ulysses from Miss Weaver. Shall write review. Why not? I like him; but why wait for other people to say piecemeal what I can say at once.103

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98 Lewis to Pound, July 1922, Pound/Lewis, 134.
100 R. A. Stephens, 'Art Notes: The Goupil Gallery Spring Exhibition', New Age, 30.23 (6 April 1923), 300.
101 [Review], Burlington Magazine, 41.235 (October 1922), 200.
102 'Letters of Wyndham Lewis to Sidney and Violet Schiff', 19.
Six days later, on the 26th, Lewis wrote again, obviously having read the book, to tell Sidney Schiff that it was 'definitely romantic [...] masturbatory, historico-political Irish fairyland', immersion in which made one long for 'some more conceptual statement, at a lower temperature'. Stirred by this reading, he had begun a thorough investigation of Joyce, remarking in the same letter, that had also just read A Portrait of the Artist. Lewis's direction was changed, and he began work immediately on the new project, probably working both on fiction and discursive prose criticism, dropping hints about this new work in a letter of July to Pound, quoted above, and informing Violet Schiff of his progress on the 5th of September: 'I want to get a large section of my great book typed out in its roughest, earliest draught [sic.], so that I can slowly work on it through the next six months.'

Lewis's intensely competitive character was aroused, and Joyce gave him an adversary in literary politics whose work must be opposed. Moreover, Joyce, like most if not all writers, all people, at the time, engaged in reflections upon the misanthropic matter, but sought to repress the emergent consciousness of man's rational hatred for his conspecifics by a mystical, and traditional, affirmation of brotherhood, though it may be that Joyce achieved a satisfactory personal relationship to other people through the act of supernal intellectual condescension referred to by Lewis in his letter to Schiff. This last qualification aside, Lewis's work was in every respect opposed to Ulysses, the questions of flux, the blurring or assertion of the boundaries between organism and organism being. I suggest, merely aspects of the basic difference of opinion on the legitimacy of hatred. With an opponent whose position had been set down so clearly Lewis was better able to see his own aims, many of which, of course, did not relate to Joyce except indirectly. The Tyro exercise had taught him that despite his difficulties in the field of literature, the spelling of 'draft' being far from easy, he had no option but to write, while Joyce provided the galvanic shock that ended a short period of hesitation, and sent him into the library for three years to produce statements in a multiplicity of genres, all encircling a single goal, the relation of self to others.

Chapter 3: 1923-1928

THE MAN OF THE WORLD

From 1922 until 1925 Lewis was working on two books. One, a gathering of substantial essays on philosophy, literary criticism, sociology, and politics, he named, almost immediately, 'The Man of the World'. The other, a group of related narratives, began as 'Joint', the title coming from one of its sections, but by 1925 was known as 'The Apes of God'. This reading of the evidence is, it should be admitted, controversial. The composition of these projects is not well understood, and advances have been somewhat hindered by a persistent belief amongst critics, perhaps stemming from Hugh Kenner, that Lewis wrote them as one book not two. Evidence from a letter to Pound in April 1925, when the 'Man of the World' was being split up, indicates that the truth was more complicated:

After one attempt only I saw how difficult it would be to find a publisher who would give me what I wanted for my five hundred thousand word book, The Man of the World - (longer than War & Peace, Ulysses & so on). Luckily its form enabled me, without very much additional work, to cut it up into a series of volumes. In each part of the original book I had repeated the initial argument, associating it with the new evidence provided by the particular material of each part. I dare say even, as it turns out, it will be better as a series of volumes, which I can assemble under the title of The Man of the World. - One of them, as you may have heard, is to be printed by Macalmon [sic.] That is all about the question of CLASS, but I have not got a title for it yet. There is a hundred thousand word volume, called The Lion & the Fox about Shakespeare, principally. There is one called Sub Persona Infantis which deals with a particular phase - you know the one - of the contemporary sensibility. The Shaman about exoliti & sex-transformation. The Politics of the Personality (100. thousand) principally evidence of philosophy, one (100. thousand) called The Politics of Philistia & one called The Strategy of Defeat (40 thousand). Then there are 2 vols. (not of course part of the Man of the World) of The Apes of God (fiction) the first of which is nearly done. Joint (sketched & partly done) Archie (complete, thirty or forty thousand). - The Great Fish Jesus Christ (45 thousand). The rehandling for definite publication of these things is taking some time.

The letter is, on the face of it, very confusing, and there is only one readily intelligible statement: the fiction is discrete from the criticism, a point corroborated by a later letter to Pound in which Lewis remarks that the book was 'not fiction'. But if this is so, it is very strange that the works chosen as comparisons for the critical sections should both be massive fictions - 'War & Peace, Ulysses' - and odder that a catalogue should move without difficulty from non-fictional parts of one project to the fictional parts of another, as if they were logical neighbours. The words 'not of course part of the Man of the World' are, according to Materer's edition, an insertion, which suggests to me that Lewis was far from thinking them quite separate schemes, and that it was not until he looked over the letter that he bothered to make fiction and philosophy distinct. That 'of course' makes one very suspicious. Although the explicit statement of this letter forbids one from seeing the 'Apes of God' material, in which I include The Childermass since it is a development of a section in 'Joint', we can nevertheless take it as evidence supporting the view that Lewis was developing what he would have held to be a single thesis in several genres. At the very least it suggests that they are of equal importance. The Kenner hypothesis, then, is

2 See Lewis to Ezra Pound, 29 April 1925, in Pound/Lewis: The Letters of Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis, ed. by Timothy Materer (Londons: Faber and Faber, 1985), 144.
3 See Kenner, 'Excerpts from 'The Man of the World'', Agenda, 7.3-8.1 (Autumn-Winter 1969-70), 182. This line is followed by Reed Way Dasenbrock, a pupil of Kenner's, in the 'Afterword' to his edition of The Art of Being Rulad (Santa Rosa: Black Sparrow, 1989), 432.
4 29 April 1925, in Pound/Lewis, 144-5.
5 11 June 1925, Pound/Lewis, 150.
6 The 'Joint' papers are now in Cornell University Library. A misleadingly mild selection has been published by Hugh Kenner, 'Excerpts from "The Man of the World"', cited above.
wrong, Lewis would not have published his fiction and criticism between the same covers, as a \textit{lanx satira}, however appropriate that might have been for a satirist, but the identity of purpose assumed by Kenner is quite correct. We can imagine them on the shelf as two uniform volumes. However, it is altogether more controversial to suggest that the last sentences of the letter indicate that 'Joint', 'Archie', and 'The Great Fish' together form 'The Apes', and my work on the relationship between \textit{The Childermass, The Apes}, and 'Joint' is not sufficiently advanced to permit firm conclusions at this time. However, it seems to me that the evidence so far gathered, witheld here for reasons of space, makes it very likely that the material we know as \textit{The Childermass} and \textit{The Apes of God} formed subsections of an earlier work, though they have very little resemblance to the original scheme, despite traces of their earlier form. For the remainder of the thesis I shall assume that this view is correct, and present Lewis's career between 1925 and 1930 in terms of the fragmentation of these two great bundles of texts, 'The Apes' and 'The Man of the World', into separate volumes, placing considerable emphasis on the way in which Lewis pressed material from the early twenties into the service of later ideas. In particular I shall show that the philosophy that motivates the 'Man of the World' and 'The Apes of God' is distinct from that of \textit{Time and Western Man}, though it is evident in \textit{The Art of Being Ruled}. I shall also suggest that the fiction from his initial scheme was used as a vehicle to carry a growing interest in a supposed anti-European semitic conspiracy.

The importance of the fragmentation is that the sequence in which these parts were published caused an important discrepancy between the public's image of Lewis, and his self-image. He felt himself to be an encyclopaedist ('The Man of the World' was to be a compendium of principles with which to meet the modern environment: Enquire within upon everything. The 'Apes of God' would be a fictional counterpart demonstrating the confrontation between individual and society), but his universal interests were arranged in a definite hierarchy, some parts lying closer to his dominant self, as he would have seen it. Moreover, the interrelatedness of his twin projects, and perhaps more importantly the rank of each section, was clear to Lewis in the sense that he was the subject at the centre of a great network of interests. But this integration was hidden by the recasting, and, more importantly, the transformations meant that Lewis's own synchronic view of his output (the map of his mind) was not at all evident to a public observing the issue of his work from the diachronic perspective. Sequential publication also meant that the later parts were revised under the pressure of the reception accorded to the earlier parts, a point which will come to seem more important as we move to consider Lewis's work from 1927 to 1930.

This dissonance between Lewis's self-image and the image the public saw presented by the sequence of his books arose because the criticism appeared first and in a phalanx. His difficulty was, as the letter to Pound suggests, that the fiction required more work than the criticism, which he wrote rapidly and found comparatively easy to prepare for the press. But more than this, the plan for the fiction was very unstable. Originally conceived as having many departments, by 1924 or 1925 one particular section entitled 'London' was beginning to absorb all his attention, and it should be no surprise that it happened to be a section in which Lewis's misanthropy was permitted to control almost every sentence. D. H. Parker has argued persuasively that the 'singular spate of ruptures' in Lewis's friendships in the period 1924 to 1925 was part of a deliberate programme of isolation which gave him the right to recycle these acquaintances as material. The catalogue is certainly impressive. In 1924 he broke with the group of rich friends, Edward and Fanny Wadsworth, Richard Wyndham and O. R. Drey who were supporting him, provoked a quarrel with two other significant patrons, Sydney and Violet Schiff, rejected the friendship of John Rodker, began a long standing feud with the Sitwells, and even made attempts to break off relations with Elliot and, in 1925, with Pound. Most of these people are portrayed, with varying degrees of cruelty, in \textit{The Apes of God} as it was finally published in 1930. In some cases the break seems to precede the inclusion in his work, as is the case with the Wadsworths, Wyndhams, and Dreys, and in some cases Lewis struck first. The evidence we have for this

\footnotesize{7 David Heywood Parker, 'Some Portraits of the Artist in the Writings of Wyndham Lewis', submitted for the degree of D. Phil at the University of Oxford, 1973, p. 69.  
8 See The Letters of Wyndham Lewis, 142ff.  
10 \textit{The Letters of Wyndham Lewis}, 149-54.  
11 Pound/Lewis, 150ff.}
pre-emptive hostility comes from the two sections of The Apes which were published in the Criterion in 1924. In the first of these, 'Mr Zagreus and the Split-Man', John Rodker, Krang, is humiliated by Mr. Zagreus, who, Parker demonstrates, was at this time a representative of Lewis himself. In the second, 'The Apes of God', Zagreus promised his protégé, Daniel Boleyn, that he would show him some 'apes', 'a pseudo-Proust' and 'a family of "great poets" (each one on a little frail biographical family pedestal)', unmistakable references to Sydney Schiff and the Sitwells which were both recognized by their targets, Osbert Sitwell writing to Lewis warning him not to get onto a 'frail biographical track in [his] new book.' In the Schiff circle Lewis became a demonic figure, though the Schiffs themselves appear to have preserved a becoming air of tolerance, the effect of which was to draw denunciations of Lewis from friends more solicitous of their honour than they were themselves. Edwin Muir wrote to Sydney Schiff on the 8th of May 1925 to say 'I find him interesting - there are very few evil, positively evil, figures in our literature at present, and positive evil has an inspiring quality.' Ignorant of his own evil, Lewis imagined that 'he is right and all the world wrong', but this unconscious wickedness lacked, Muir thought, the joy of the innocently diabolic: 'There is rather a sort of satisfaction at proving the whole world to be as unhappy as himself; the world is his enemy, and his satisfaction is to reduce it to humility.' Such a rich testimony to Lewis's aura of anti-social hatred at this time is the more interesting in that it must be based more on personal contact, and on knowledge derived from gossip, than from reading. It is in fact gossip itself, and perhaps supports Lewis's belief that the most effective poison was the sotto voce vilification of private intercourse.

'London' grew because Lewis found that he had so many extra things, or people (the distinction need not be sharply made), to put in it. The growth was unfortunate in that it blotted out some very promising satiric material, and because the delay meant that the book would be completed at a time when Lewis was responding to the requirements of his audience by adopting an extremely unsatisfactory justification for his prosecutions, the claim of impartial observation. In doing so Lewis was not only, perhaps unknowingly, discarding a much stronger method of expressing hatred without guilt, but was also adopting a new legitimation so obviously untrue that it did not even satisfy those who believed such impartiality possible. I shall return to these points when considering The Apes. For the present it is sufficient to point out that Lewis considered that his fiction was not, for a number of reasons, ready for publication. There is some reason to suppose that he was aware of the undesirability of appearing solely as a critic, since he asked Pound to assist him in finding a publisher to reissue 'The Enemy of the Stars', with a long preface. Pound replied that he didn't think America 'ripe' for the play, and the project died. Lewis was confined thereafter, with disastrous consequences, to the parts of the 'Man of the World'. The marketing of these volumes had been troublesome from the beginning, and since the development of the published volumes was determined by these difficulties there is some sense in making a provisional attempt at a description of the transformations Lewis worked upon the materials, and how the published volumes relate to what we know of the original project. The following description is tentative, but represents the first attempt to put something new in place of the Kenner hypothesis, and I ask indulgence for it on that ground.

From the letter to Pound of 29 April 1925 we know that Lewis had broken the 'Man of the World' in seven sections, though he refers in another letter, of 7 May, to six, a point which may seem of significance later. These sections are listed below, with extra information and comments drawn from other sources:

1. Lewis told Pound that this was to be printed by Robert McAlmon, and was about Class, but that no title had been decided upon. In a letter to McAlmon of 27 March 1925, it had been called 'Critique of Class', on the 1st of April 1925

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12 Criterion, 2.6 (February 1924), 124-42.
13 Criterion, 2.7 (April 1924), 300-10.
14 Quoted in D. H. Parker's 'Some Portraits of the Artist', page 67. The original letter is the Lewis collection of Cornell University Library.
16 Lewis to Pound, 7 May 1925, Pound/Lewis, 147.
17 Pound to Lewis, 12 May 1925, in Pound/Lewis, 148.
18 Pound/Lewis, 147.
19 The Letters of Wyndham Lewis, 165, where it is misdated 1926.
the 'Politics of the Primitive', and on the 7th of May, in writing to Pound, it was called 'Critique of Class' again. From the letter to McAlmon of the 1st of April we learn that there were three sections, 'Cliché Personality', 'Patria Potestas', 'Primitive Communism', and that it was 70,000 words long. The titles, and section headings, suggest connections with The Art of Being Ruled.

2. Lion and the Fox. There seems to be very little difficulty in determining the course of events for this volume, since it appears to have been the section most easily detachable from the main bulk, and most readily distinguished, as is indicated by the fact that it found its final name so rapidly. Its state as we now have it, between covers, is the nearest of any of the published parts to the original 'Man of the World' version. Lewis removed it from the whole and sent it to Grant Richards in April 1925, and it was accepted almost immediately. But the volume did undergo changes. Richards put Lewis in contact with Henry Seidel Canby, then editor of the Saturday Review and Professor of English at Yale University, on the 23rd of July 1925, and the day afterwards wrote in reply to a lost letter of Lewis's:

'It seems to me from your letter that you are making a greater job of this revision than was contemplated - greater, certainly, than was contemplated by me. It should be a job of days or hours rather than weeks. [...] The advice of no American, however much of a pundit, is necessarily better than the opinion of the author.'

Canby's scholarly opinion had clearly rattled Lewis, perhaps reviving ghosts of his earlier experience of the literate world's sneers at this oral-savage's attempts to write, and he wanted time to make adjustments in order to prevent a repetition.

3. 'Sub Persona Infantis'. In an appendix to his edition of The Art of Being Ruled, publishing what he calls 'draft chapters', Dasenbrock reports that the Carlow Collection of Lewis material in the Poetry Collection of the State University of Buffalo has a group of chapters clearly relating to the later book but headed Book III: Sub Persona Infantis. The correlation of this figure with its position in the list sent to Pound may well be insignificant, though I am inclined to believe that it is meaningful, and that what Dasenbrock assumes to be an early draft is in fact a surviving fragment, perhaps the only recognizable one, of the original 'Man of the World'. There are 24 chapters surviving, and assuming that each chapter is about 1300 words long, the length of the first unpublished one printed by Dasenbrock, this would make it in excess of 30,000 words long. Many of these closely resemble chapters in The Art of Being Ruled, but the sequence is very different. As Dasenbrock puts it, 'Book III' contains 'material that made its way into Part VI [of The Art of Being Ruled], "Sub Persona Infantis". But it also contains material from Parts V, VII, VIII, and IX as well'.

4. 'The Shamans'. Nothing else is known of this section, except that it clearly relates to parts of The Art of Being Ruled.

5. 'The Politics of the Personality'. Lewis estimates the length of this part at 100,000 words. It was completed by early February 1925, Lewis delivering it personally to Macmillan's on the 6th with a covering letter. Eliot had introduced Lewis to Charles Whibley, a reader for Macmillan, who had already seen part, 'The Politics of Philistia' (item 6 below), and Lewis clearly expected that it would be Whibley who would deal with this new section, and indeed his covering letter says he was writing separately to him to say that

20 Lewis to McAlmon, 1 April 1925, The Letters of Wyndham Lewis, 156.
21 Pound/Lewis, 147.
22 Letter to Lewis in the Grant Richards Archive, now held by Illinois University Library.
23 The Art of Being Ruled, ed. by Reed Way Dasenbrock (Santa Rosa: Black Sparrow, 1989), 385.
24 Lewis to Daniel Macmillan, 6 February 1925, British Library, Add. 55274.
the typescript was now in Macmillan’s office. This letter to Whibley is probably that published by W. K. Rose in his Letters of Wyndham Lewis.25

Whereas The Politics of Philistia - of which you read a part - deals more with politics, the book I have now handed to them [Macmillan’s] (The Politics of the Personality) is based largely on the evidence, for my general argument, of philosophy and science. It traces the systematic crushing of the notion of the Subject in favour of the propaganda of collectivism: and aims at showing philosophy obediently harnessed to physics and psychology, circumscribed to a fashionable and purely political role.

It is of considerable importance that Lewis mentions only the philosophical sections, that is to say parts 2 and 3, of Time and Western Man, and that the stress is on collectivism rather than ‘Time’. I shall suggest later that when the ‘The Revolutionary Simpleton’ was added to this material Lewis made substantial alterations in the bearing of this book, not so much by revision, but by marshalling the same evidence to a different end.

The MS was at last sent to Whibley on the 1st of April,26 and he replied on the seventh, commenting, in a note to Daniel Macmillan which accompanied his report, ‘It is not the work which I read before, & it deals only incidentally with politics.’27 In his letter to Whibley, quoted above, Lewis had indicated that he felt that ‘The Politics of Personality’ was a prolegomena to ‘The Politics of Philistia’, and Whibley’s report confirms this:

This book appears to be an introduction to The Politics of Philistia, which I had already read at Mr. Wyndham Lewis’s request. It deals mainly with philosophy and science, as preliminaries to the political system of the individual, which is to follow it. I do not find it of great interest itself, & its bearing upon politics is not easily intelligible without the second part. It is long & full of repetitions, though it covers a vast tract of philosophy, & I cannot advise you to publish what is incomplete in itself, & does not clearly show its connection with the political system it is intended to introduce.28

A number of important points arise from this. Firstly there is no mention whatever of the literary criticism which we know as book one of Time and Western Man. Secondly the ‘Politics of the Personality’ was ground-clearing for the positive statement of the ‘Politics of Philistia’.

6. ‘The Politics of Philistia’. Lewis estimates the length at 100,000 words. Whibley’s report describes the piece as being a ‘political system of the individual’, a point which will fall into place when we come to review the reception of The Art of Being Ruled, to which this material clearly has strong links.

7. ‘The Strategy of Defeat’. Lewis estimates the length at 40,000 words. This is another mystery, but some idea due to its contents can be found in the fact that the title forms a section heading in the long essay, ‘The Foxes’ Case’, published in October 1925.29

With these facts in hand we are now in a position to attempt a simple narrative covering the fragmentation and transformation of the ‘Man of the World’. In the early part of February 1925 Lewis submitted the whole of approximately 500,000 words to Alec Waugh at Chapman & Hall, who said it was not a publishable venture as it stood.30 Fortunately

25 The Letters of Wyndham Lewis, 155. Rose dates the letter as circa March. There is a possibility that the date of this piece is somewhat later. Whibley was out of England in early February, returning on the 1st of April, so the first letter did not reach him immediately, and from evidence in a letter to Daniel Macmillan of 31 March 1925 (BL, Add. 55274), it appears that Lewis wrote again at this time.
26 Daniel Macmillan to Lewis, 1 April 1925, BL, Add.MS. 55617, fol.152.
27 Charles Whibley to Daniel Macmillan, 7 April 1925, BL, Add. 55026.
29 Calendar of Modern Letters, 2.8 (October 1925), 75-90.
30 To Alec Waugh 2 February 1925, in Cornell University Library. Paul Edwards kindly gave me a copy of his transcription.
Robert McAlmon was looking for books to publish with his Contact Press in Paris, and expressed interest. Lewis offered him the first section, ‘Critique of Class’, perhaps as early as late February or March 1925.\(^3\) In late March or early April, The Lion and the Fox was offered to Grant Richards, who rapidly closed with Lewis, and galvanized him into further work on his book.\(^2\) It was now too late to turn back, and Lewis was unable to accept an offer from an unnamed publisher, received on the 7th of May, for the ‘whole book’.\(^3\) But although the Shakespeare book was progressing towards publication, other sections were not finding their path so smooth. ‘The Politics of the Personality’ had been submitted to Macmillan on February the 6th, and sent on to Charles Whibley for a report on the 1st of April.\(^4\) His verdict was, as Macmillan’s said, ‘not such as to encourage us to undertake its publication’.\(^5\) This firm rebuttal would have been particularly upsetting since Lewis must have expected that Eliot’s mediation would have ensured that his typescript was treated with more respect.

McAlmon was also withdrawing uneasily from his contract, troubled with doubts about the scientific respectability of Lewis’s theory,\(^6\) and in any case their relationship was deteriorating rapidly as a result of Lewis’s quarrel with McAlmon’s friend Ernest Walsh.\(^7\) The exact details of the affair are not clear, to the present writer at least, but they presumably explain the lapse some time around July 1925 of McAlmon’s commitment to publish ‘The Politics of Philistia’.

Rebuffed on two fronts, Lewis responded by turning to the material in which he had the most confidence. Macmillan’s refusal had shaken and convinced him that the ‘Politics of Personality’ needed reconsideration, but McAlmon’s feather-brained failure of courage had not similarly damaged his confidence in the other group of essays, so he turned to the making of a new book for resubmission to another publisher by gathering ‘Critique of Class’ (70,000), ‘Sub Persona Infantis’ (30,000), ‘Shaman’ (Length not known), and ‘The Politics of Philistia’ (100,000). This book would have been in excess of 200,000, at least 30,000 words longer than The Art of Being Ruled as we now have it. But we know from the evidence of the abandoned chapters from ‘Sub Persona Infantis’ that Lewis was prepared to cut, so the excess in length is not a strong objection to my account, and there was, as Lewis told Pound, a good deal of repetition in the original script, much of which may have been removed. The sections were shuffled into one another like playing cards, and the new volume was offered to Chatto and Windus later in the year, Charles Prentice accepting the volume in a letter of October the 7th.\(^8\) Further evidence in support of this view is Lewis’s later remark, in Rude Assignment, that the ‘date of writing [...] is in effect, 1925’,\(^9\) the imprecision of the phrase being quite compatible with my account.

In Enemy, 1, issued in February 1927, Lewis promised to collect under the title, Creatures of Habit and Creatures of Change, ‘a set of essays which have appeared here and there during the past year’,\(^10\) which refers to some or all of the long pieces published in Edgell Rickwood’s Calendar of Modern Letters, perhaps ‘The Dithyrambic Spectator’ (only a little later Lewis was planning to publish the essay as an appendix to Time and Western Man), certainly ‘The Foxes’ Case’ and ‘Creatures of Habit and Creatures of Change’ itself.\(^11\) This would, I suggest, have been a reconstituted ‘Strategy of Defeat’, no doubt revised. For reasons not understood this plan fell through.

The length of Time and Western Man is roughly double that of the ‘Politics of Personality’, but my narrative above accounts for all the other sections of the ‘Man of the

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\(^3\) See Lewis to McAlmon, 27 March 1925, in The Letters of Wyndham Lewis, 165, where it is misdated 27 March 1926.

\(^2\) Richards replied on the 6 April 1925, letter in the Grant Richards archive.

\(^3\) Lewis to Pound, 7 May 1925, Pound/Lewis, 147. Materer’s text contains the sentence ‘With Methuen I have only contracted for one vol. of almost 100 thousand words, which I shall call Critique of Class’, Methuen being a mistranscription for McAlmon, which Lewis often wrote as Mcalmon.

\(^4\) See BL, Add.MS. 55617, fol.152, Daniel Macmillan to Lewis, 1 April 1925.

\(^5\) BL, Add.MS. 55617, fol.468.

\(^6\) See Lewis to McAlmon, 24 July 1925, in The Letters of Wyndham Lewis, 161.

\(^7\) See The Letters of Wyndham Lewis, pp. 160-1, and Pound/Lewis, 155.

\(^8\) In the Chatto and Windus letterbooks, Vol. 112, p. 337, held by Reading University Library.


\(^10\) Preliminary Note to the Public, Enemy, No. 1 (February 1927), vii.

World’, so this extra material would appear to be new. The obvious explanation, suggested by the Macmillan correspondence, is that Book I, ‘The Revolutionary Simpleton’, which is literary criticism rather than the philosophy apparently sent to Macmillan, was not part of the original manuscript. I will go further and hypothesize that it was entirely written during 1926, for publication in the Enemy, and that after briefly considering issuing it together with ‘The Politics of the Personality’ through his own Arthur Press. Lewis then used it as bait to interest Prentice in the rest of the book, which he would naturally believe to be a continuation of this amusing demolition of eminent contemporaries, but was in fact far less saleable abstraction. Lewis’s letters to Prentice have not been traced, but Prentice’s reply of 24 February 1927 indicates that he had only been shown the enticing section, and was thus mislead into believing that the rest of the book would be current work, and more of the same:

I have now read the ‘The Revolutionary Simpleton’, and greatly look forward to seeing the completion. Chatto’s I have not the slightest doubt, will be very glad and ready to publish the full book, [...] Prentice took the matter gracefully, and when he had seen the entire manuscript, which was sent to him in April, he replied merely that he had enjoyed it despite being unable ‘fully to correlate it with Book I’.

It is also apparent from this letter that Lewis was treating the book rather as he had treated The Art of Being Ruled, that is as a repository for miscellaneous material that happened to be lying to hand, and had decided to see if Chatto could be induced into accepting ‘The Dithyrambic Spectator’ as an appendix to what was now Time and Western Man. But Prentice, quite reasonably, pointed out that the book was already very long and gently refused to include it.

This account of the ‘Man of the World’ requires further research, for instance in the Lewis collection of Cornell University Library, and consultation of the various manuscripts in the Carlow Collection at Buffalo may be of great use. The present state is doubtless flawed, but still, I believe, a reliable guide, and even if I am only broadly correct several other points become clearer. Firstly with Lewis reworking and rearranging on this sort of scale the neglect of his fiction appears less surprising. Secondly, the perplexing fault lines in The Art of Being Ruled, which attracted the attention of many reviewers, and the major change of emphasis in Time and Western Man, become instantaneously intelligible. I shall argue later that in 1926 Lewis moved away from the optimistic egotism of ‘The Man of the World’, and sought instead absolute and supernal guarantees of his individuality. ‘The Politics of the Personality’, the introduction to his earlier statement, was now submitted to some considerable torsion in order to make it harmonize more acceptably with the arguments of the ‘Revolutionary Simpleton’. The ‘Politics of the Personality’ had been concerned with the relevance of evolutionary theories to the question of the One and the Many, the purpose being to defend the principle of individuation, which Lewis saw threatened in the work of Bergson, Marx, and, incorrectly, in the writings of Darwin. By 1927 Lewis was less concerned with the individual, and much more taken up with the legitimation of objectivity. Many of the arguments are the same, but there is this difference: Where the ‘Man of the World’ defended the person and attacked evolution for its supposed collectivism, the theory of 1926/7 was defending the impersonal absolute (the guarantor of Lewis’s own judgement), therefore attacking relativising Time.

But these confusions and contradictions were not much noticed by readers. Far more serious for Lewis’s reputation was the fact that his fiction was withheld. Within an eighteen month period he put before the public The Art of Being Ruled (11 February 1926), The Lion and the Fox (6 January 1927), Time and Western Man (29 September 1927), and two numbers of his critical journal, The Enemy were issued in the same year, one in February, and one in September 1927. This seemingly bland statement of facts matters because although one need not take too seriously Lewis’s description of himself as being ‘underground’ in the early and mid-twenties, his pre-war and post-war celebrity had undoubtedly lapsed in the period 1921 to 1925, when he published only articles in minority journals, and as a consequence the public character given him by the critical outpouring was not seen against his past; he acquired, unwittingly, a new identity. To the readers of the papers where his books were reviewed, and to those who actually read his books, the

42 See Lewis’s ‘Preliminary Note to the Public’.
43 Chatto and Windus, letterbook 116, p. 574.
44 26 April 1927, letterbook 117, p. 92.
sequence of publication, 1926 to 1930, suggested that he was a critic who also published fiction, rather late in the day.

‘WYNDHAM LEWIS REAPPEARS’

For reasons beyond Lewis’s control, principally the insolvency of his publisher,\(^{45}\) The Lion and the Fox was delayed, and the first instalment of his material to be issued was The Art of Being Ruled.

So far in my discussion the reviews have been seen as having considerable and rapid effects on Lewis’s direction, but between 1926 and 1930 this is not, with two very important exceptions, the case, or rather the effect is weaker and more difficult to track. The reception of The Art of Being Ruled does not register itself in the character of The Lion and the Fox, for obvious reasons, but it does have an important impact on Time and Western Man, and the public response to the first two of these works forced Lewis’s hand, by pushing him in 1927 towards the rapid publication of his fiction, and if I am correct in my suspicion that this caused the fragmentation of the ‘Apes of God’ into The Childermass and The Apes of God, it may well be of some significance. I shall argue, then, that the fiction was presented in a new and perhaps less desirable form because of the need to appear with a creative as well as a critical face. This argument, though relevant to The Art of Being Ruled and its reviews, will be discussed in tandem with The Lion and the Fox and Time and Western Man. But the reception of 1926 had a more immediate effect, which may seem surprising given the nature of Lewis’s publications at this time, and the approach needs some justification. Though I do not believe that the reviews simply washed over Lewis like an Arctic wave breaking on the bows of an invulnerable battleship, I accept that so much of his work in this period was already completed by the time that the periodical criticism began to appear, that the reviews could not in fact have the same sort of determining effect on the character of the work as that which has been demonstrated earlier. However, I shall suggest that the central position of the ‘Man of the World’ argument, the position which gave it its title, was dropped largely as a result of the reviews of The Art of Being Ruled. The remaining ‘Man of the World’ material was then redeployed in order to support the new case, and the reverberations from this event were even to change the significance of the components of the ‘Apes of God’. This redefinition of aims, which occurred during 1926, probably during the writing of the ‘Revolutionary Simpleton’, was in fact nothing less than the rejection of both the ungrounded egotism, and the developmentalism on which Lewis had based his entire thesis in The Art of Being Ruled. This shift in ground has not before been noticed, perhaps because from the first the fatalistic evolutionism itself has not been clearly recognized by readers. Certainly, later scholars and critics, anxious to produce a seamless argument from Lewis’s chaotic opus, have overlooked it, and made light of the small but clear admission of the volte-face included by Lewis both in The Revolutionary Simpleton\(^{46}\) and in Time and Western Man.\(^{47}\) Even contemporary reviewers, who had no such programme, did not often see The Art of Being Ruled’s all pervading time-mindedness, as Lewis would have called it had the book been by Spengler, though there are some bright glimmerings of understanding here and there which repay attention and facilitate triangulation on this elusive point.

Chatto and Windus do not appear to have made great efforts to ensure that Lewis’s first book with them was widely publicized. Ledger entries show that although the number of free copies distributed to the press, 84, was normal, a surprisingly small sum was devoted to advertising, only £25,17s, as opposed to £70 for Time and Western Man, £51 for The Wild Body, and £48 for The Childermass.\(^{48}\) This small commitment is evident in the number of prepublication announcements carried by the papers, the Chatto albums containing only two, one in the Daily Telegraph and one in the Daily News.\(^{49}\) They contain similar phrases and are almost certainly drawn from a Chatto press-release, the content of which

\(^{45}\) See the Grant Richards archive.
\(^{46}\) The Enemy, No. 1 (February 1927), 184
\(^{47}\) Time and Western Man (London: Chatto and Windus, 1927), 138.
\(^{48}\) All figures drawn from the ledgers of Chatto and Windus, now held by Reading University Library.
has some interest as indicating the way that both publisher and author were thinking of the book, at least for presentation to the public. The Daily News scrupulously put quotation marks round those phrases not written by its own staff, so it is possible to say that the copy handed out by Prentice and Lewis described the book as being about "feminism and its concomitants", "the contemporary idolatry of the child", "the theories of Sorel and Proudhon", "the decay of liberty", and "the growth of Fascism and Bolshevism", in other words as a forbiddingly abstract political volume, and it may be this, apart from the great length of the book, that accounts for the puzzling slowness with which reviews appeared. After an initial flurry of short notices on and immediately following publication day, the 11th of March, there was near silence until the following month. The initial reports, are, as one might expect, heavily dependent on general impressions rather than careful reading, and there is evidence that further facts were drawn from another press-release giving biographical details, a typescript of which, with corrections in Lewis's hand, survives in the Chatto archive. This document, headed 'Biographical details for publicity purposes' takes Lewis from Rugby, through the Slade, his years of foreign travel, association with Ford Maddox Hufleffer, his break with Roger Fry, Blast, war service, and 'X' group, and finally the Tyros, giving details for each of these sections, and plainly intended to assist journalists who had never heard of Lewis. Turr, oddly, is not mentioned. Little of the information was used, and assuming that nothing was added before despatch to the newspapers, writers were able to supply extra details, not always correctly, from their own sources. The Evening Standard announced that 'Wyndham Lewis Reappears' and explained that Lewis was a painter famous before the war, who in 1923 had 'suddenly immured himself in the British Museum Library to write a book on modern life', and the Daily Graphic reminded its readers of Blast and Turr, comparing the 'Wyndham Lewis of the pre-war days, the Wyndham Lewis who painted the walls of the Cave of the Golden Calf and shouted artistic revolt with his friend, Frank Harris' with the author 'who emerges almost in cap and gown this morning'. These notices give the impression that Lewis was still very much a name in London literary circles, and that people were inclined to think that they knew about him, even if they perhaps did not, as the puzzling link with Frank Harris makes one think is the case here. He was in limbo, his outline blurred but recognizable, and as a result he suffered from the misrepresentation which follows a lapse of reputation, a point which will be taken up later, but was not able to make use of a startling reappearance to catch attention and impress himself upon the public.

After these short notices very little happened for ten days, and then very slowly the reviewing began to gather pace, beginning with Ralph Straus's unreflective puff in the Sunday Times, which at least indicates that Lewis was able to benefit from the publicity machine of the big papers. Straus's piece is of little importance but its date gives it prominence, and it also introduces the basic categories into which the vast majority of subsequent criticism tends to fall. There is the opening gesture towards the book's vigour:

*It is [...] outspoken, witty - there is no reason, of course, why your philosopher should be dull, though so often he is [...].* 51

And there is conventional praise for the thumbnail sketches of contemporaries and others that 'make very good reading', the boring assertion that the book is 'provocative, inspiriting', and the supine acceptance of Lewis's claims 'to think for himself'. These barely merit more than a passing glance, but Straus also begins the long line of readers who took The Art of Being Ruled to be a prescriptive work, containing 'tentative proposals for a happier future', when in fact the argument of the book is that the revolution is out of the hands of individuals, and must be weathered. Writing of the gradual infantilization of society Lewis explains that this is not, any more than any other feature of the revolution, a cause for dismay:

> For the house is to be rebuilt; and it will be rebuilt, without any doubt at all, on a more admirable pattern than ever before. But at the moment at which the last scrap of wall between the salon and the nursery disappears, you may find it difficult to summon your optimism to this prophetic reconstruction. These pages are written principally in order to enable you to grasp the method of

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50 Anon, 'Wyndham Lewis Reappears', Evening Standard (11 March 1926).
51 'An Intellectual Revolution', Sunday Times (21 March 1926)
that especial social \textit{ritournelle}, and play your part without \textit{gaucherie}. Once you have the key to the transaction, you may find it diverting up to a point.\footnote{Art of Being Ruled (London: Chatto and Windus, 1926), 243.}

One has only to wait, and paradise will arrive, but in the meantime, ‘during the revolutionary violence of this change of standpoint, the intellect has to be shielded’.\footnote{Op. cit., pp. 266.}

And this Lewis believes he has done:

I have set out only to clear a little space in the midst of the ruins of our society, where a few of the advantages of the future society (that everything so clearly prognosticates, and whose outlines, in the aspirations of a few political thinkers, artists, and scholars, are distinctly see) can be enjoyed by those who care to avail themselves of certain facilities here specified.\footnote{Op. cit., pp. 71-2.}

Lewis, then, is not a conservative in any political sense. He has no interest in preserving institutions, but only in protecting certain intellectual matters of value that may be damaged during the prolonged transitional stage as human society develops from one thing into another. \textit{The Art of Being Ruled} is the art of lying low, of protecting yourself against the gigantic turbulence of historical forces as the old system is swept away and replaced by a better thing. There is no hint anywhere in the argument that Lewis believes that the new society may not be successfully formed, or that effort is needed to bring it into being. On the contrary he seems to believe that it will inevitably be born, the only thing within the control of individuals being their own survival, and the survival of those conceptual tools useful to them. It is not my purpose to examine this aspect of the book in greater detail, but this optimistic developmentalism, with its \textit{laissez faire} non-interventionist attitude to politics must be borne in mind whenever we think of the ‘Man of the World’, and also of the fiction related to it. Just as a Marxist might have taken comfort in the healthy condition of a capitalist economy, as confirming the passage of yet another stage on the path to revolution and the millenium, so Lewis observed the chaos of his time as a hopeful sign though a dangerous one, and the intelligent individual would not be so delighted by the spectacle of change as to forget to duck the flying rubble and save his valuables from the general demolition. The various compartments of his project were to function as a celebration of the process of revolution, a certain satisfaction being derived, even, from the savage assaults on concepts and pursuits dear to Lewis, and care being taken not to hinder the erosion of the individuality of the masses in order to make way for the longed for change. Indeed the fading of individuality is actually a good thing, since it is, Lewis imagines, the beginning of an evolutionary process which will create a new society composed of two different species (Lewis meant this quite literally) of human beings living in a symbiotic relationship with one another. Intellectuals who try to combat the decline will be acting against their own interests, and in fact they need do nothing since the processes of capitalist advertising are paving the way to a better arrangement:

Earlier in this essay it was remarked that: ‘Left at the mercy of this vast average - its inertia, “creative hatred”, and conspiratorial habits where the “new” is concerned - we shall always checkmate ourselves; and the more we shall lose ground.’ But if this inertia (1) is satisfied by a businesslike organization of its desire (its \textit{What the Public wants} requirement), and if (2) this inflexible organization severs it entirely from all the free intelligences in the world, which it more and more isolates, then a new duality of human life (introducing perhaps a new species, and issuing in biological transformation) would result. That is why, far from molesting or subjecting to damaging criticism (of a vulgarizing description) the processes of \textit{stultification} which are occurring, everything should be done, (publicly, and at large, of course) to hasten it. So it can be truly said with fullest good sense that whenever you see a particularly foolish play, read an especially idiotic article, full of that strident humbug to which we are so accustomed, you should rejoice.\footnote{Op. cit., pp. 421.}

Lewis’s account of speciation would have been odd by the standards of the biology of his own time, and appears absurdly vitalist in ours, and it is evident that he is drawing less on the emerging science of population genetics, and more on the vitalist thought present in some versions of social darwinism, in Marx, and in Bergson. In the ‘Apes of God’, I suspect,
Lewis would have presented a documented study of the decaying society, spiced with a relish for the birth of the new that this dissolution presaged. His Ape-watchers, Archie, Joint, and Bully, would have been 'men of the world' (in the positive sense of theorists of action, Machiavelli, or Stendhal, as opposed to the little worldly-wise man; Lewis uses both senses) or apprentices riding, not without difficulty, the revolutionary storm. In terms of the misanthropic argument employed earlier, this would be a method of legitimizing a universal hatred by representing Lewis himself as a conscious man, the heir of the ages, buffeted by the lunacies of his time without being himself part of them, and contemptuous of those who were. Lewis dropped this argument in the course of 1926, and never again took it up (unless you think the religion of the last years of his life harbours a similar chaff-winnowing millenialism) largely because several of the reviews, though having only a partial understanding of the volume, rubbed Lewis's nose in the optimism of his political beliefs.

Many reviewers seem to have had difficulty grasping the simple elements of the book's argument, which, as my quotations above show, were obvious enough. Richard Aldington's review for Vogue, for instance, did well to notice that the book spoke of 'inevitable revolution', but revealed the weakness of his grasp upon the matter in noting that 'in his denunciation of contemporary society Mr. Lewis has donned the prophet's cloak', and went off the point badly when he reported Lewis's intention to right the world by 'Lacedaemonian measures of severity, segregation, castration, and iron oppression'. And in interpreting the remarks on the youth cult as evidence that Lewis felt a 'stern anguish because people make fools of themselves on the Riviera' he was misrepresenting the surface of the book, though it might be argued to be a sensible enough understanding of the deep structure, where my 'misanthropic' argument would suggest that a wish would be found transforming itself into a prophecy. Aldington is quite right in saying that 'All one firmly possesses here is the certainty that Mr. Lewis, like others before him, is more successful in his Inferno than in his Paradiso, in denouncing things and people as they are than in reconstructing them as he thinks they ought to be', but he failed to see that Lewis was not even trying. He wanted merely to unmask the present, the future could look after itself, and one of the attractions of the developmental position for Lewis may have been that he was excused from having to say in detail what he wanted, thus leaving him free to lash about. These accusations of a solely negative criticism have very little bite, from Lewis's point of view, but the hint of a religious tinge in The Art of Being Ruled is an acute understanding. I should myself say that there was more of the St. John the Divine than Dante in Lewis, but the sense of a purposeful and ordered universe, or at least one that will conclude adequately for the virtuous (by which Lewis means the conscious Egoist), is unquestionably present. Aldington, moreover, noted a certain soppiness being carried along with the stern prediction of an iron and efficient rule, which he points out is 'as repulsive and probably as unlikely to adopted as all the other Utopias from Plato's to William Morris's [...] nor will a mere disciple of the sage who composed the work known as Ecclesiastes be expected to welcome them.' The movement of the accusation is cunningly contrived. With Plato there is no problem; who would not be content with such a comparison? But to be said to be a Morris, all flowers and dreams, is hardly a flower itself, and such a person would not impress the bitter Ecclesiast who enables us to dismiss hopes of a terrestrial paradise as the dream of the worldly.

The same criticism can be found in the Morning Post, made this time through conventional party politics rather than the medium of religion, and it is amusing to see how flabby and vulnerable Lewis could be made to seem from the high battlements of the Tory position:

He is, of course a revolutionary, but since he admits that there must always be rulers and ruled in a community, he belongs to the pink rather than the blood-red group. From his point of view revolution does not imply violence or bloodshed, but a change of mentality which will enable both rulers and ruled to understand their jobs and so co-operate in the building up of a happy future for mankind.57

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56 'New Books for the Morning Table: Grave and Gay', Vogue, 67.8 (April 1926), 70, 92.
It was perhaps this aspect of the argument that misled Edwin Muir into thinking *The Art of Being Ruled* 'the book of a very remarkable man, and, one feels a very magnanimous one'.

The *Times Literary Supplement* reviewer, J. W. Sullivan, was more able to get to grips with the thesis, thinking that the purpose was 'to give an analysis of modern European society, to describe its chief characteristics, and to give a sketch of a possible future state of things that the author considers to me more desirable.' He registered Lewis's belief in the powerful determining influence of politics, and employed arguments against it that resemble those later used by Lewis himself against Spengler: 'He believes that the present political atmosphere favours the sudden flowering of a certain human type, of which Einstein is a member. This is attributing altogether too much power to the political atmosphere.' But Lewis had to attribute that power to it in order to entertain any hope for the future, since he did not believe, at this time, that intellectuals should involve themselves in the transformation that was being worked as the result of the momentum of the historical dialectic. The reviewer in the *Sphere* also pointed this fatalism out to its readers, by remarking that for Lewis 'the political theory of the times is leading us to the Collectivist state, as represented by Italy and Russia', the passivity of individuals being stressed again a sentence or two later, 'He believes that British political theory will bring us, within a decade or two, into Fascist-Socialism.' It is disappointing to discover that the commentator could not build on this, but somehow managed to overlook the care with which Lewis describes his analysis of decadence as so many reasons to be cheerful, but it is not unusual for commentators to be so limited.

A more binocular understanding is to be found in the remarks of the *Yorkshire Post*, which treats Lewis's ideas as a laughable absurdity: 'Mr. Wyndham Lewis [...] sets out to astonish us. He does astonish us very much in that he preserves an attitude which we had fain considered effective in a mildly comic manner, to the end of his book. We look for a last chapter which never comes in which he shall throw away the mask and begin 'But, seriously ...' Lewis is portrayed as worrying in an old womanish way that the intellect is in danger, and against this the reviewer sets himself as a model of calm, 'The modern attack on intellect surely has no deadening effect on it. It is, after all, mainly a discussion of terms.' This is to question the existence of a state of crisis: 'there is no sign, as the author is bound himself to admit, that science and art have deteriorated since our new philosophical theories and psychological demonstrations came into vogue.' And it is extremely naive of Lewis to think that the sort of world he expects to spring into existence would be preferable: 'To imagine that there would be a greater freedom for the intellect in Mr. Lewis's impending Utopia is transparently ridiculous.' Lewis's argument is indeed weak at this point, as Aldington and others had said. He has no very clear idea what the future holds, and cannot therefore say as definitely as he does that the revolution is for the good. Unsurprisingly it was this optimistic component of his 'Man of the World' philosophy that Lewis abandoned in 1926, retaining many other departments of the analysis in a conservative structure.

Similar glimmerings of illumination appear in the review of the *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, which acutely noticed that Lewis was enjoying the chaos of his time, and that 'A society in ruins is a theme after the heart of a revolutionary of his type', which makes it all sound rather jollier than it appears in Lewis's own presentation, and perhaps exposes its weakness. Yet again, the insight is not carried through, and by the end of the piece Lewis is seen as prescribing Bolshevism and Fascism as a remedy. Further partial understandings of Lewis's drift, stressing his fatalism, were published in the *Cape Times*, which found that the only principle emerging from the book was the suggestion that 'the perversion of evolutionary processes is the chief business of the malign forces which control to-day's world', but immediately afterwards Lewis is described as a 'gentlemanly pessimist' since he believes that the stultification of the masses renders them beyond revolution. The Melbourne *Argus* more accurately represented the book's proposals with the cunning aphorism that 'The sheepishness of the average man bounds Mr. Lewis's pessimism at one

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59 'An Analysis of Society', *Times Literary Supplement* (8 April 1926), 258.
60 Anon, 'The Art of Being Ruled', *Sphere* (10 April 1926).
62 Anon, 'The Fluxions of the Soul', *Cape Times* (29 April 1926).
end of his thought and his optimism at the other. The Lyttelton Times thought Lewis a militant, and pointed out that for him revolution seems more like ‘religion than rebellion’. This writer was more than usually perspicacious, and also singled out Lewis’s barely concealed belief that ‘Power is good’, and most importantly a doubt in Lewis’s mind as to the intelligence of his own hopes: ‘He allows himself a vigorous grumble at the state of things generally and remarks that “it all leads nowhere”, thus “plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose” [sic.], or complain with Tennyson’s Lotus Eater about “for ever climbing about the climbing wave”. So our social reformer has not seemingly the faith in his own panacea he would have us believe.’ This fracture was not perhaps even noticed by Lewis himself, during writing, and one can imagine the distaste he might have felt when seeing another man of the world treating his thought as on a par with all the other fashionable bergsonianism.

The early reviews, then, were peppered with half-formed realizations of the principles with which Lewis was operating, and some of them succeeded in exposing weaknesses and vulnerabilities that Lewis may have found unpleasant, for all the inaccuracies so often displayed elsewhere in the article. Such minor irritants might well have been brushed aside, but at the end of May the Nation and Athenæum published a notice by an as yet unidentified author which hit the bull’s eye other papers had so far succeeded only in grazing. With the confidence that springs from a clear grasp of what is going on in a text this critic put the title ‘Aristotle Up To Date’ at the head of the page, and explained that Lewis’s outlook was ‘much less original than his manner of stating it. It is indeed, a restatement, in modern terms, of Aristotle’s theory of the “natural slave”’. Adopting Goethe’s division of man into puppets and natures Lewis has, the reviewer concludes, concluded that since the mechanical portion of the population is “easily controlled by the scientific use of propaganda”, and that therefore ‘it is inevitable and, indeed, desirable that most of the population should turn into standardized “Robots”’. Where other reviewers found outrage this one saw Lewis surveying the “growth of a “bread and circus” policy with complacency, since he believes that, in time, the intellectual man, who alone is valuable, may thus be saved from the vulgarization which now penetrates even the life of the free intelligence’. Having fairly summarized what Lewis has to say, he then dismisses it with a brisk ‘There is nothing new in this’, and passes on to point out that Lewis’s ideas of the development of a stable society through the good offices of a mass media circus need not claim much attention since he is so impractical as to have quite ignored the ‘more difficult question of providing for a satisfying distribution of bread’. With the authority lent by these sound and well-formed, if arguable, points, the whole is summarized as ‘cheap politics [...] and intellectual snobbery’. The only aspect of Lewis’s position that is not discussed is the speciation event, and I suspect an echoic reference to this in the juxtaposition of this review with one of The Need for Eugenic Reform, by Major Leonard Darwin, the President of the Eugenics Education Society.

More sympathetic reviewers, such as Edgell Rickwood in his Calendar of Modern Letters, tended to conceal the weak spots in the argument by minimizing its fatalism. His opening description, much cited by Lewisites seeking to prove that the spirit of The Art of Being Ruled is similar to that of Time and Western Man, claims that the book is the Culture and Anarchy of his generation: ‘It has the same intention, ardently pursued but not hieratically, of arresting the degradation of the values on which our civilization seems to depend’; then inconsistently having to admit that Lewis ‘has simply described the conditions of contemporary society as he sees them and the modification which they determine in its organization in the near future. There is no question of our “fending a hand” [...]’. How this can possibly be part of an ardent campaign to preserve standards is not explained. Such equivocation reveals, more effectively than denunciation, the major weakness in Lewis’s thought at this time, but there were critics prepared to use the necessary words to correctly label this brand of historicism. W. A. Thorpe, who rather overestimated the degree to which the chaos disturbed Lewis, was perfectly correct in saying that the book offered a ‘philosophy of aloofness and discretion’, and a good deal less scornful and condescending than he might have been, in holding Lewis’s ‘politics of the

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64 Anon, ‘A Destructive Writer’, Lyttelton Times (1 May 1926).
66 Notes and Reviews, Calendar of Modern Letters, 3.3 (October 1926), 247.
intellect' to be 'Millennial politics [...] but [...] at least a saner brand of idealism than is frequently to be found.67

Though for the most part muddled, the reviews of The Art of Being Ruled together reflected most aspects of the thesis, and in certain cases, the Nation and Athenaeum review and the piece by Thorpe just discussed, Lewis seemed to be exposed, and looked down upon, as a vitalist, an optimist, a naive developmental salvationist, an unthinking social darwinist. Far from being accorded the status of a clear-sighted Machiavellian he was treated as a child whose perceptions were often acute, but who lacked an adult understanding of the workings of the universe and believed that things would turn out well in the end. It is no accident that the change of direction evident in the 'Revolutionary Simpleton', which Lewis was writing during 1926, probably during the second half of the year, counters exactly those charges. Millenialism is replaced by the dark suggestions of directionless change leading to the loss of those fortresses against nothingness so carefully constructed through human history, and rather than instructing intellectuals to stand-off from the chaos of the times Lewis immerses himself in a vigorous campaign to right wrongs and preserve the good. This change is implicit in the whole of the essay as it was published in the Enemy, No. 1,68 but can easily be overlooked since so much of the analysis which supports the position remains unchanged from The Art of Being Ruled, but there is a clear statement of this change, buried deep in an appendix and camouflaged under deprecatory remarks.69

After claiming, not quite without justice, that the indifference he had shown towards the masses in The Art of Being Ruled was in fact part of a humane programme to govern them 'without a hitch by suggestion and hypnotism', he then remarks

I have somewhat modified my views since I wrote that book as to the best procedure for insuring the true freedom of which I have just spoken. I now believe, for instance, that people should be compelled to be freer and more 'individualistic' than they naturally desire to be, rather than that their native unfreedom and instinct towards slavery should be encouraged and organised. I believe they could with advantage be compelled to remain absolutely alone for several hours every day [...] That and other coercive measures of a similar kind, I think, would make them much better people. - Perhaps this slight change of approach will be apparent in the present volume.70

Far from being a slight change this is a complete turn about. Where the 'Man of the World' was to be concerned only with his own welfare, which he conceived in a narrow sense, leaving to historical process the business of government and reform, the 'Enemy' is to be a busybody always ready with advice on what is good for you. In silently dropping his millenialist position Lewis then had also rejected the idea that the intellectual could best protect himself by aloof distinction, since if things were not certainly heading towards a desirable end it was folly to sit by and do nothing. By this rather unexpected route Lewis had come to think that his interests were tied up, to an unspecified extent, with those of the masses, and that he could best protect his own values by forcing them on the rest of his society. Thus Lewis's criticism was transformed from an instrument intended to defend himself and perhaps a few others from contamination, into a programme of general and public education, and so he moved into the position of a defender of public standards, taking up just the stance that many reviewers had mistakenly assumed was evident in The Art of Being Ruled. The advantage of such a change, from Lewis's point of view, was that although it avoided the embarrassing charges of passivity and optimism it did not require that he begin again, since the necessary revision was not so much a question of generating new arguments and finding new supporting analyses, as of simply reversing the polarity of pre-existing material. Rather than quietly rejoicing in the stultification Lewis now had only to cry Murder.

In the case of the 'Politics of the Personality' he effected this reversal by prefacing it with the 'Revolutionary Simpleton'. Doubtless, internal revision was also necessary, but

67 'Books of the Quarter', Criterion, 4.4 (October 1926), 764.
68 The Enemy, No. 1 (January 1927).
69 As early as April or May Lewis seems to have been retreating from his thesis, writing to Sturge Moore, 'For various reasons [...] it was the observations that I especially wished to give forth. Even in some places I am aware that they point to very different conclusions'. (Sturge Moore papers, in the University of London Library).
70 'The Revolutionary Simpleton', Enemy, No. 1 (January 1927), 184-5.
this method was, in comparison with a fresh start, economic of time, and perhaps most importantly did not require Lewis to make an obvious recantation. But the effects of the change are very strong in the works he produced in subsequent years, and arguably persist right through until his final writings. The 'Man of the World' thesis had, for example, located value simply in the advantage of the individual. Lewis ostensibly held this to be common to all Natures, but implicitly the club was reduced to one, and the epigraph from Parmenides a rather insincere offer of shelter:

I wish to communicate this view of the world to you exactly as it manifests itself: and so no human opinion will ever be able to get the better of you.71

It is indeed this aspect of Lewis's thought, the intimacy achieved through the informal style, that convinces many readers that they are the favoured pupil, the 'spot-pupil', and accounts for the devotion of his followers, but a less servile student will be extremely suspicious of Lewis's declarations of solicitude in this period. It is safe, in fact, to assume that he is at all times Machiavellian. The stress is on the individual, and even more strongly on Lewis the individual, and very little attempt is made to justify that individual's preferences. In a world of Puppets the Nature need answer only to himself. But if general education is the aim, as it is in the writings after The Art of Being Ruled, then some anchor must be found for the assertions of common interest. Lewis was increasingly torn between the requirements of maintaining a guiltlessly anti-social individualism and the need to demonstrate that his attitudes were publicly justifiable. The only viable way out of this trap was by invoking the guarantee of an absolute, which is variously described in his work as the objectivity of the intellect, Thomist philosophy, the non-morality of satire, and God. There were problems with all these positions, and they were in many respects inferior to those evident in the earlier writings, especially from the point of view of satisfying the misanthropic requirements of Lewis's temperament. The change in 1926 drove Lewis not only to go back on many of his achievements, but also to spoil them. Only a pitifully uncritical reader could judge The Wild Body to be an improvement on the material it warps, or simply excludes, and it is my opinion that both The Childermass and The Apes of God are interesting largely as a result of their pre-1926 origin, and valuable in so far as they carry traces of that origin. Similarly, the social analysis of The Art of Being Ruled is, as was often recognized by contemporaries, and more grudgingly since, extremely useful as a prophylactic against infection, though perhaps there are better available now. The positive in that work is classicism, but by default. In Time and Western Man the analysis is very similar, yet seems markedly inferior since Lewis is not only offering a sceptical weapon with which to defend yourself, but also a reasoned demonstration that the default alternative is beyond supersession. This aspect of the book made it simultaneously vulnerable to criticism, though not to the charge of childish optimism as with The Art of Being Ruled, and attractive to the Catholic literary world, which as we shall see gave the book considerable support. Almost without realizing it Lewis had blundered from a bizarre but interesting revolutionary position, into a predictable and stale conservative one. His failure to fully appreciate this results from the fact that both approaches were generated by the same fundamental emotional grammar, and since they both served the same needs they appeared to be more strongly related than was truly the case. Though it is doubtful whether the first would have led him to a satisfactory self-awareness of his hatred, it did have the merit of being open to alteration and revision. Much of the 'Man of the World' thesis remains tenable if you replace the optimistic dialectic with a Darwinian free-fall. Indeed, much of Lewis's difficulty would, I imagine, have disappeared if instead of the progressivist and species selectionist travesty of Darwinian thought current in the early twenties Lewis had been able to work with the New Synthesis. Indeed the individual in this scheme is very much like the artist-intellectual defined in the 'Man of the World', though without any rosy expectations for the future. Moreover, it is quite lacking in any need to justify self-interest in public terms, though occasionally doing so for Machiavellian reasons. But the 'Man of the World' project was, as has been demonstrated, almost completely effaced, first by the difficulties of publication, and secondly by the sudden realization in 1926, that he had published a view of social evolution which made him appear naive. The changes this required were more easily put through upon the criticism than the fiction, and yet again Lewis had to delay the publication of creative work while he rewrote it. But the reviews that continued to appear throughout late 1926 and the first

71 The Art of Being Ruled, 435.
half of 1927 confirmed the fact that the public was increasingly perceiving Lewis as a critic and just a critic, and a rather incompetent one at that. This had been evident to some degree in the reviews of *The Art of Being Ruled*, though many notices were more or less aware of Lewis's earlier career, and the reputation only began to harden into an orthodoxy with *The Lion and the Fox* and the first volume of *The Enemy*. I shall suggest that these pieces made Lewis quite aware that he must publish fiction soon, but the critical comments upon his new position as put forward in the 'Revolutionary Simpleton' were encouraging, and as a result he was too fully committed to the preparation of *Time and Western Man* to produce the 'Apes of God' rapidly, so he turned to the revision of early stories, working so fast that the firstproof copies of *The Wild Body* were available by the 26th of July.72

'MILLER HE IS RATHER THAN BAKER':73

Almost none of the critics reviewing *The Art of Being Ruled* seemed aware of Lewis's activities as writer and painter, a mere handful making any reference to it at all. As I have suggested, this may be because Lewis's reputation from the post-war years was still sufficiently strong to render detailed introduction unnecessary. Or, rather, that his name was known without having anything definite attached to it by way of content. The mere fact of fame made journalists unlikely to explain the career of the person even though some information would have been useful. And in the case of the intellectual press no writer would so insult the reader by reminding them of what they are presumed to know as widely cultured individuals. The result of this was simply that Lewis's name appeared without gloss or explanation in the vast majority of reviews, and this virtually ensured that its un stamped surface would be deeply impressed with the character of 'critic'.

Even those who did know of his art and fiction seemed to regard them as something belonging to the past, and not as something in which Lewis was still interested. The Daily News is the only piece amongst those that I have seen which uses the present tense in describing Lewis as 'artist and novelist'; all the others seeing these activities as history:

*Evening Standard*: 'Wyndham Lewis [...] was much before the public as an artist about 1913.78

*Daily Graphic*: 'Mr. Wyndham Lewis is as stimulating in his books as he used to be in his pictures.'76

*Sphere*: 'Mr. Lewis [...] was an able young painter in search of a modernist formula in which he could believe. Later, he took to writing queer, incisive novels, and after that to sociology.'77

*Daily News*: 'Mr. Wyndham Lewis made something of a stir in pre-war England with his vorticist paintings and his magazine "Blast".'78

This feeling was articulated even more clearly by the *Vogue* journalist who captioned a self-portrait drawing of Lewis which appeared in the same issue as Aldington's review:

*-* Wyndham Lewis seems to have deserted painting for literature. As one of the foremost members of the 'Vorticist' Group some years ago he produced work which created some sensation at the time. Since then he has written one or two novels and books of essays [...]79

And Aldington's own remarks suggested that something had gone wrong with Lewis's career: 'Admirers of Mr. Wyndham Lewis may feel some misgiving when they contemplate his recent plunge in philosopher-politico-sociological theory, inventive and prophecy'. In the light of such a remark the later observation that the book was 'as compendious as

72 See *Enemy News*, No. 6 (June 1977), 3, which reports the discovery of a bound proof stamped with this date.

73 Bonamy Dobrée, 'Recent Books', *Criterion*, 5.3 (June 1927), 339-43.


75 Anon, 'Wyndham Lewis Reappears', *Evening Standard* (11 March 1926).

76 Anon, 'Teashop Shaw', *Daily Graphic* (12 March 1926), 5, 7.

77 Anon, *The Art of Being Ruled*, *Sphere* (10 April 1926).

78 Anon, 'A Literary Curiosity', *Daily News* (14 April 1926).

79 Anon, 'Wyndham Lewis', *Vogue*, 67.8 (April 1926), 70.
Ulysses' comes to seem an oblique way of telling Lewis that he should have stuck to his last. Eliot was even blunter, the strained state of relations with Lewis at this time perhaps accounting for his unusual directness. Lewis he remarks is typical of the modern 'dispossessed' artist, who 'finds himself, if he is a man of intellect, unable to realise his art to his own satisfaction, and he may be driven to examining the elements in the situation - political, social, philosophical or religious - which frustrate his labour'. But Lewis did not of course see his work as having taken this direction, and he continued to think of himself as a creative intelligence who engaged in analytic work as a sideline. He certainly did not submit himself to the discipline which a more committed and single-minded critic might have regarded as a professional necessity, and reviewers were quick to notice that the book was as, Edwin Muir said in a letter to Sydney Schiff, 'extremely badly put together', perhaps the best version of this remark appearing in the Nation and Athenaeum:

Mr. Lewis's book consists of thirteen parts, which comprise nearly a hundred short chapters. The sentences of which these chapters are composed are usually 'semi-detached', the chapters are 'detached', and the parts may be described as 'standing in their own ground'.

While this style of argument may have seemed quite reasonable to Lewis, who did not regard himself as bound by the same rules as less varied talents, he was creating inappropriate expectations by the sequence of his publishing, and could not expect from readers the same sort of tolerance and understanding he accorded himself. This problem naturally deepened when his second book appeared. As Lewis had now turned aside from his earlier plans, his interest in the fate of The Lion and the Fox was confined to the fame it might win him, and the reception had no impact except as an indicator of his current difficulties of marketing, and interesting though some of the critics were I shall not here discuss their estimate of Lewis's Shakespearean scholarship in any detail.

Lewis's book was at last printed in early December 1926, Grant Richards writing to Lewis to inform him of the fact on the 6th, but publication was delayed because, as Richards explained, 'If [...] our London traveller were to subscribe now a new book of this kind the booksellers would laugh at him [...] With one voice they would say: "Come back after January 1st."' After some changes of opinion Richards issued the book on the sixth of January, with the hope that since copies had been issued to the press just after Christmas they 'would have good time to review the book with great care', and that some of them would 'deal with it on the day of its issue'. In fact the reviews were very slow in coming, nothing of substance appearing for nearly two weeks, and if Richards was correct in saying that 'a great deal will depend on the book being reviewed quickly' it is possible that it got off to a bad start. Lewis seems to have been dissatisfied with the advertising coverage, though it was by any standards generous, Richards spending £43 in the first two months, and mentioning Lewis in ten of his regular advertisements in the Times Literary Supplement. Despite this Lewis seems to have written in early February requesting something more aggressive than Richards's urbane and genteelly camp discussions of his firm's most recent productions. Richards's reply gives us some idea of what Lewis wanted, and is also a valuable indication of the errors that Lewis's lack of commercial acumen and knowledge was liable lead him to:

I do not agree with you as to the likely effect of the kind of advertisement that you would like to see. Readers are not attracted in these days by a whole string of extracts from papers of varying importance. [...] The readers of the Literary
Supplement, too, would, I fancy, not be attracted one way or the other by the quotations from the majority of the papers from which you quote.\(^{89}\) By the time of this letter reviews were beginning to appear in considerable numbers, and Lewis was excited by them. Reviewing The Art of Being Ralad Alldington has noted that Lewis seemed "to be in some danger of becoming a distinguished publicist," and with the publication of his journal, The Enemy, this danger became a fact, since he was able to enact the sort of plans that Richards had so convincingly published. The two-page advertisement, reproduced opposite\(^{90}\) quotes from almost all the available material, and indicates not only that Lewis appears to have been employing a clipping agency, but also a lack of discrimination. Lewis was impressed by the numbers more than anything that they chanced to say about the concepts of the book. He was, as has been mentioned, no longer much interested in the ideas himself, and this becomes evident in the sort of remarks that he chose. With very few exceptions these passages deal not with Shakespeare, or with Lewis's ideas about Shakespeare, but with generalized puffs for Lewis himself, drawn from any source that came to hand. It made him a laughing stock, and was especially damaging in that the journal itself was, on account of its criticism of Joyce and Stein, widely read outside England. In Paris for example where its braggadocio would appear as naive provincialism. An anonymous author, probably Robert McAlmon, used exactly this advertisement in his satirical sketch published in This Quarter, where Lewis is presented as saying "Did ye ever see the Dundee Evening Telegraph and The Glasgow Herald? No? Ah well... better not."\(^{91}\) The mocklabour in modernism should be remembered more often, but the point made here against Lewis is a sound one and cannot be disposed of simply by invoking that disreputable side of the international literary clique.

The items chosen also illustrate as well as can be expected the fact that Lewis was disturbed by the possibility that his status as an artist would be overlooked. The paucity of references to this in the reviews of The Art of Being Ralad has been referred to, and this problem became, inevitably, even more acute in the reception of The Lion and the Fox. But some reviewers did hint at this matter, or raise it directly, and it is of considerable significance that Lewis not only quotes from all of these articles, but quotes the exact passages which stress his non-critical character. Beverley Nichols is cited as remarking upon Lewis's "creative criticism,"\(^{92}\) and Bruce Beddow, in the Teacher's World, is quoted as using the same phrase.\(^{93}\) But it is the editing of Geoffrey West's remarks that most clearly shows Lewis's anxiety. His version runs: "The professors have had Shakespeare too much to themselves. The artist as critic - and Wyndham Lewis - is an artist of genius - begins with an advantage inconceivable to them." This was not at all what West wrote:

The professors have had Shakespeare too much to themselves. The artist as critic - and that Wyndham Lewis has never yet found perfect expression does not alter the fact that he is an artist of genius - begins with an inconceivable advantage to them.\(^{94}\)

Though pleased to find that someone was aware of his credentials, Lewis was less than delighted by the suggestion that he was turning to criticism after failure as an artist, and so expunged it. Just as the critics who had mentioned Lewis's other activities put them firmly in the past, so West had suggested chronological development where Lewis wanted the idea of simultaneity.

Bearing this in mind some of the other choices become more intelligible. On the face of the matter it is surprisingly honest of Lewis to quote A.M.A. in the Liverpool Post as referring to his "brilliant but illogical mentality," or the Birmingham Gazette's reference to his "perversity of capitalization," or the Telegraph's acknowledgment of his "individual stamp of mind," or the Spectator's description of the book as 'paradoxical, irrelevant, but stimulating.'\(^{95}\) In fact Lewis is attempting to mix into the high praise from other sources an indication that he is more than a simple orderly, critical, analytic mind, and the climax of

\(^{89}\) 11 February 1927, in Grant Richards letterbook Vol. 37, p. 488.
\(^{90}\) The Enemy, No. 1 January 1927, xvi.
\(^{91}\) Anon, "Unrecommended Pages: Alex's Journal", This Quarter, No. 4 (Spring 1929), 281
\(^{92}\) "The Literary Lounger", Sketch, 137.1774 (26 January 1927), 187.
\(^{93}\) "The Orange Box: A Misdeal?", Teacher's World, 36.1200 (26 January 1927), 675.
\(^{94}\) "An Artist on Shakespeare", Daily Herald (28 January 1927), 4.
\(^{95}\) A. M. A., title not known, Liverpool Post 6 January 1927; Anon, "Shakespeare's Heroes", Spectator, 137.5444 (28 January 1927), 159-60.
this particular thread in the advertisement appears in a very much doctored quotation from Murry:

To find causes for this painful incoherence of Mr. Lewis's dazzlingly brilliant mind ... perhaps a clue might be found in the gross and palpable extravagance of (his) praise of Chapman ... In Chapman there is also a fierce intellectual energy, etc... Chapmanesquely dangerous.

Again, comparison with what Murry in fact wrote will show Lewis removing suggestions that he is a failed artist, indeed a failure in other ways too, and twisting the evidence in a multitude of ways that go beyond mere concealment, the ordinary practice of publisher's blurbs, to actively construct a desired impression.

To analyze, to find causes for, this painful incoherence of Mr. Lewis's dazzlingly brilliant mind, lies beyond our scope. Behind it, one suspects some potent frustration; for the immediate and final impression of his book is of a fierce but baffled intellectual energy. Perhaps a clue might be found in the gross and palpable extravagance of Mr. Lewis's praise of Chapman. In Chapman there is also a fierce intellectual energy, a constant lack of control and purposeful coordination, a sense of smouldering grievance against and contempt for others, and above all an utter inability to come to any sort of terms with the society in which he lived. [...] 

Mr. Lewis is right: Shakespeare is a dangerous man; but not dangerous in the way Mr. Lewis would persuade us - not Chapmanesquely dangerous - 'with hol! such bugs and goblins in my life!' Shakespeare's is the danger not of a new chaos, but of a new order.96 

By removing the suggestion of defeat Lewis turns Murry's 'painful incoherence' and 'fierce intellectual energy' into a suggestion of a richness beyond the conception of a tamer mind. And to support this impression the actual purport of Murry's remarks on Chapman, that the thesis of the book is wrong, and that Lewis wants to find in Shakespeare the sort of silliness he admires in Chapman, is completely obliterated. Moreover, the petty thieving of the adjectival phrase 'Chapmanesquely dangerous' which Lewis turns from a quality not possessed by Shakespeare into one actually possessed by himself, is barely compatible with the character of the scrupulous and much wronged warrior, the 'Enemy'.

Lewis was obviously responding to pressure to show himself as more than a critic of other men's activities, and he almost certainly began work on revisions of early stories at around this time. However, his stock as a critic was rising, and the press greeting the first number of the Enemy was extremely encouraging. Even Murry, writing in the Times Literary Supplement, found that Lewis was a 'very good enemy', and that his 'destructive criticism' is the best of its kind to be read in England to-day.97 Here too, however, there was a suggestion that Lewis was finding his true vocation in criticism:

Ever since he published 'The Caliph's Design' we have believed that Mr. Lewis had a genius for pamphleteering. Another contemporary reader much impressed by the 'Revolutionary Simpleton', Edwin Muir, had similar reservations, expressed in a letter to Sydney Schiff. After saying that the magazine gave him 'a much greater regard for Lewis than I have had before' and remarking that the criticism of Joyce is certainly far and away the best thing I have read upon him; it is a brilliant and decisive work', he added later 'It will be outdated in a very short time'.98 I take this letter to be representative of much of the response that Lewis would have been receiving informally from friends and acquaintances, and hence evidence that he was simultaneously encouraged in his critical position and also placed under considerable pressure to produce work which would justify his claims to the status and privileges of 'creative' genius. The friendly response to this work, as opposed to the rather cool welcome given to The Art of Being Ruled, also marks the end of the earlier self-image. From now on Lewis would not think of himself as the wary observer, clutching his valuables and surfing to a better place on the surge of revolutionary violence, but rather as a warrior-priest immersing himself in the mêlée to defend ancient verities. Enthusiasm for this new policy may be one reason for the further delay of the fiction, though Lewis was probably hampered by the quantity of work required. In the letter already cited Muir adds that 'I

96 'The Lion and the Fox', Adelphi, 4.8 (February 1927), 514.
97 Times Literary Supplement (17 March 1927), 198.
shall certainly follow whatever he might write this year; the novel especially will interest me', which goes some way to supporting my contention that Lewis was still thinking of his 'Apes of God' as a single volume, and had no other plans for novels at this time. The fragmentation of that project occurred later in the year, after the publication of *Time and Western Man* and *The Wild Body*.

It should be added that Lewis had another strong reason for thinking his 'Enemy' position an improvement, and was not just reinforced by the plaudits of a few reviewers. From his side of the matter the criticism he was now producing represented an advance on the 'Man of the World' in that it seemed to be a better way, a more open way, of articulating his hostility. Many reviewers had noticed the 'embitterment' of *The Art of Being Railed*, but the optimism of the whole had distracted attention from these misanthropic features. This was not the case with *The Lion and the Fox*, which was immediately recognized as being a vehicle for hatreds. The earlier reviews are not explicit on this point, but their obliquities should clearly count as understanding. The *Sunday Times* writer, possibly Edmund Gosse, remarked on the 'absolute silliness' of Lewis's discussion of the 'natural contempt of men for their fellows', and Leonard Woolf, very shrewdly pointed out that Lewis had found, and approved, a quietistic philosophy in Shakespeare's tragedy:

The evidence for Shakespeare's contempt of and disgust with the world of action and the great actors in it is, of course, circumstantial evidence, but none the worse for being that.101

Murry disagreed that this was actually present in Shakespeare, but agreed that Lewis himself manifested a 'sense of smouldering grievance and contempt for others'.102 J. P. Holms went the whole way and identified the core purpose of the book, and even detected the fact that Lewis was unable to fully admit this purpose. Lewis, he explains, gives the appearance of confusion:

'This is not only because Mr. Lewis has chosen a study of Shakespearean drama and its author as a suitable stalking horse for the expression of his indignation with men and with life, which is in effect what he has done; but because, unaware of or unwilling to admit his personal preoccupations, he presents them to the reader as objective critical interpretation.'103

Restated in terms of my argument concerning the rehandling of interspecific hostility in a form accessible to consciousness without guilt, this would simply state that Lewis clearly hates other people, but keeps this from himself. This was certainly a difficulty in 'The Man of the World', though improvement there seemed possible and likely. The weakness of the claim to impartiality identified by Holms was to become an even more troublesome problem in the Enemy phase despite Lewis's conviction that he had solved it, and almost immediately began to infect his fiction which had hitherto succeeded in being much more honest, though less direct and satisfying for Lewis himself. I have argued earlier that the 'Man of the World' bases its contempt on the value system of the individual, of Lewis's satisfactory answer to the misanthropic question than the unjustifiable absolutes Lewis came to lean upon after 1926. It should be admitted that this is very clear in *The Art of Being Railed*, but less so in *The Lion and the Fox*, where, as Holms correctly says Lewis seems to conceal his own preferences as universals. There are in fact elements of these two positions in both books, subjectivism predominating in one and objectivism in the other. It is evident that Lewis's thought had bifurcated early, and that the considerable change discussed above as occurring in 1926 largely as a result of the reception of *The Art of Being Railed* can be seen as the direction of all his energies into one already developing branch of his thought, rather than the sudden emergence of a new one.

Lewis had already solved the problem mentioned by Holms, to his own satisfaction at least, not by being more open about his selfish interests, as the 'Man of the World' philosophy would have indicated as the best course, but by laboriously reinforcing his claims to objectivity, and in a sense this is the entire purport of *Time and Western Man*.

99 W. A. Thorpe, 'Books of the Quarter', *New Criterion*, 4.4 (October 1926), 760.
100 Anon, 'Mixed Pickles', *Sunday Times* (9 January 1927), 9.
101 Shakespeare and Machiavelli', *Nation & Athenaeum*, 40.15 (15 January 1927), 539.
102 'The Lion and the Fox', *Adelphi*, 4.8 (February 1927), 514.
103 'Notes and Reviews', *Calendar of Modern Letters*, 4.3 (April 1927), 62.
That it gave him a freer hand than before in the exercise of his hostilities is supported by other contemporary observations. Desmond MacCarthy, for example believed that Lewis's 'best passages are inspired by hatred and contempt', but thought that this 'hardly applied' to *The Lion and the Fox*, though fully corroborated in the *Enemy*.104 This hatred in the 'Revolutionary Simpleton' was also noted by Arnold Bennett:

I would like to be able to state what Mr. Wyndham Lewis is mainly 'after', but I cannot, because I have not been able to find out. One of his minor purposes is to disembowel his enemies, who are numerous, for the simple reason that he wants them to be numerous. He would be less tiresome if he were more urbane.105

On my view Bennett had in fact found exactly what Lewis was 'after', indeed Lewis, took enough interest in this short remark to reply with a substantial letter in defence of his hostility. But though it provides strong evidence of his interest in the question, the content is confusing since it seems to have more in common with the position from which Lewis had moved than the one which he was now adopting. Analysis will, I believe, show that this need not be the case, though the letter retains some of its mystery even after this has been demonstrated.

Lewis began his reply by remarking that 'We cannot all love each other', but that in spite of this the term 'enemy' has fallen into disuse:

Renaissance men [...] would not have understood this attitude. Contemporary man is less naive, and would never admit to partiality or passion. As the outlets for his instincts of competitive violence become more mental and sophisticated, the term 'enemy' becomes too vivid and palpable a thing.106

Lewis suggested two possible solutions, firstly the reinstallation of the clique as a respectable social institution in which those 'who do not wish to associate constantly with a mass of individuals with whom they are out of sympathy' can isolate themselves; and secondly Lewis's own preferred method:

A more daring and speculative procedure would be simply to reintroduce the word 'enemy'. If you find a person distasteful to you, be rude to him whenever you meet him as a matter of course [...] Society would immediately assume much more definite and interesting patterns. There would be a bold arabesque of black and white in place of the present undescrptive mauve or sickly heliotrope.

Of course these arguments do not in fact describe his efforts at this time, when he was attempting to provide a full-scale objective justification for his preferences, and was very far from admitting to partiality and passion. The question is whether this is evidence of a muddle in Lewis's mind, an unaccountable admission of the fact that his claims to objectivity were the deceitful actions of a Machiavel, a plea for different manner of social behaviour (one which would remove the need for his opportunist endeavours), or a dream of some future time when he might be so at peace with himself that he could dispense with the public demonstration of objectivity. The first option can be discounted, I think, since the issues are simple, and it does not seem likely that Lewis could hold so obviously contradictory views simultaneously. The possibility of deceit is a real one, and it must be admitted that we could regard all his work after 1926 as various screens and pretences to distract attention from the activities of the nature who deployed them. But so much effort was put into the 'Enemy' position, and its consequences spread so far through his fiction, that it appears to me unquestionable that Lewis was working as much to impress his objectivity upon himself, that is his conscience, as on his public. The wise man of *The Art of Being Ruled* might indeed have used such things as camouflage, and without any real interest in them apart from that function, but Lewis was now dissatisfied with the attitude of that book since its detached individualism had proved vulnerable to criticism from an unexpected direction, and was constructing a new means of justifying his feelings. The 'plea' reading seems implausible for similar reasons; surely he would not have expended so much effort on a philosophical investigation if it were intended only to evade social sanctions. I suspect then, that it was the last option, and that Lewis enjoyed this idea as a dream of a future in which 'If you find a person distasteful to you' you can 'be rude to him whenever you

105 'An Artist Turned Author - Mr. Wyndham Lewis', *Evening Standard* (28 April 1927), 5.
meet him as a matter of course'.107 This representation of the guiltless hatred towards which he was still working looks forward to a time when such a position might be complete, and Lewis can exercise his dislikes unhampered by a conscience, which would have been convinced of the objective justice of the reason's judgements, and without any need to demonstrate this conviction to the world. Its buoyant tone arises from the degree to which Lewis felt he was succeeding in the manufacture of a philosophical foundation on which to base his claims.

A great deal, it appears, was staked on *Time and Western Man. The Lion and the Fox* had been very widely reviewed, and the *Enemy* had been well received, thus assuring him that his new work avoided the problems shown to trouble *The Art of Being Ruled*. Apart from the drawback of appearing as a critic again Lewis was apparently in a good position. Flushed with the success of the 'Revolutionary Simpleton' Lewis had written a new and lengthy essay in the same manner, while staying New York in the summer of 1927, this time discussing the obsession with the primitive, and it was planned to issue it in tandem with the forthcoming volume, thus further astounding the literary world with his fecundity. In many ways Lewis's expectations for *Time and Western Man* were fulfilled. The book was a press sensation, reviewed by notable names, and for the most part favourably reviewed. However, the reception, to which we shall now turn, indicates that the very success of the book, in terms of its reviews, confronted Lewis with the fact of his move towards conservatism. It is also clear that this compounded the problem of his critical image, turning the creative revolutionary into the conservative critic, and this, combined with the disappointing reception of *The Wild Body*, convinced Lewis that he must publish a substantial piece of fiction with rapidity, and this precipitated yet another change of plan.

**TIME AND WESTERN MAN**

Work on the production of *Time and Western Man* was hurried. Lewis wished both to take advantage of his fame, and also to put a definite statement of his new thought into print in order to cancel the thesis of *The Art of Being Ruled*. Prentice was also excited, and the first binding order was for seven-hundred copies, as against five-hundred for *The Art of Being Ruled*. The jacket-blurb, printed on the front cover, gives further testimony to this heated atmosphere:

> This is the most important book that Mr. Lewis has so far published. [...] it will remarkably confirm Mr. Lewis's position among the outstanding figures of contemporary thought and literature.108

By and large, these expectations were fulfilled. A flutter of well primed pre-publication notices in various papers, not the most significant ones, shows that Chatto was making more effort with advertising than before, reaching the major papers of the provincial towns. One of these, in the *Southport Guardian*, rather obviously copied from a press-release, is of particular interest in showing that Lewis was already pushing ahead with his plans to appear as a creative force. The piece is principally an announcement for *Time and Western Man*, but begins by explaining that the 'surprising artist, critic and man of letters is, after almost ten years to give us a new book of fiction, [...] "The Wild Body"'.109 The other notices, though clearly drawn from the same release, were not so pliant, and stuck to the fact in hand, the imminent appearance of *An Attack on Modernism*.110 Lewis and Prentice seem to have agreed that the book should be offered as a revolutionary one, but with a sophisticated position, and included a helpful quotation in the material sent to the press. Three of the papers reproduced this, without having anything to check it against, and it is important to bear it in mind when surveying the later criticism, since it leads one to believe that Lewis may not have fully realized the significance of his change of tack:

> I am entirely sick to death, like a great host of other people, of many of the forms that 'revolution' takes today in art, sociology, science and life. I would

108 Jacket blurb for *Time and Western Man*.
hasten the day when revolution should no longer be left only in the hands of people who do nothing but degrade and falsify it.\textsuperscript{111}

The remark is adapted from \textit{Time and Western Man}, page five, and it encapsulates Lewis's attitude to his book. His new-found inclination to intervene rather than stand back is stressed, but his continued commitment to radical change is reaffirmed. Reviewers who had actually read the book would not find this description an accurate one, and indeed it was evident to those, such as the \textit{Times} writer P. Tomlinson, who had only skimmed the book, and still leaned heavily on the press-release's quotation. He remarked, with an astonishing perspicuity, 'Mr. Lewis is a literary fighter attempting to "come back"'. There was a day when he was thought to personify the modern spirit in art and letters. Other champions arose. Particularly there is Mr. James Joyce, who knows all the styles and mixes them.\textsuperscript{112} The possibility that Lewis could appear to be old at this time has not been sufficiently well-recognized by commentators, thought it was almost certainly a significant problem for him, and one which he met by prefacing the 'Revolutionary Simpleton' essay with a very youthful self-portrait, this picture being used for publicity purposes also (illustration opposite).

As was inevitable with so long a book the reviews were slow in coming, the first appearing after a week, but they were worth waiting for, and effective in promoting sales, the seven-hundred copies prepared being sufficiently depleted to justify another binding in November. Moreover, sales of \textit{The Lion and the Fox} which had slumped during the course of the year, suddenly picked up, before sliding away to almost nothing in 1928. And with Humbert Wolfe telling the \textit{Observer} 's readers that Lewis 'writes with splendid vigour and has the heart of style in him', or that 'here, radiant with life, is first-rate thinking' this surge of interest would hardly be surprising.\textsuperscript{113} For the first time in his career Lewis was benefitting from the concerted efforts of the book-ramp. The \textit{Liverpool Post} found him 'our one outstanding intellectual brave junior to Mr. Bernard Shaw', 'the finest destructive critic in this country'.\textsuperscript{114} The \textit{Birmingham Gazette} declared him to be 'one of the shrewdest and most daring of destructive critics [...] the high-brow artist-scholar with a tomahawk'\textsuperscript{115} and encouraged purchasers by declaring the 'Revolutionary Simpleton' to be 'sheer intellectual enjoyment, punctuated by chuckles over his parody, his inventive and his mockery of Gertrude Stein, Ezra Pound, and Ring W. Lardner.' But the rapturous nature of the reception does not need to be established in detail. I shall take that for granted and concentrate on the reasons, hinted at in the last quotation, for the general approval, and on qualifications and exceptions.

As early as Wolfe's review it was obvious that Lewis had been accepted so readily because he seemed to have provided an antidote to the poisonous influence of modernity, political and literary:

He sees what he regards as the most significant contemporary writers - for example, James Joyce, Miss Stein, and Proust - one after another, either consciously or unconsciously, succumbing to the Theory, and he is determined, if he can help it, this heresy shall not blight the whole of his generation. [...] If [...] it is believed that some reply must be found to Bolshevism, let us search in such a book as that of Mr. Lewis for the reply.

George Sampson, writing in the \textit{Daily News}, was saying something similar in more guarded terms when he remarked that 'What attracts in Mr. Wyndham Lewis is the energetic appearance he presents of vigorous attack upon tendencies of the day.'\textsuperscript{116} It appears from the context that Sampson was here applauding the criticism of Joyce and Gertrude Stein, and the title of the piece itself, though perhaps not provided by Sampson, further confirms the impression that the book under consideration is an attack on continental silliness: 'Mr. Wyndham Lewis and Dada-ism'. Again, he appears as the plain-man's champion in the \textit{Birmingham Gazette}'s description:

\textsuperscript{111} Quoted from the Yorkshire \textit{Herald}, 27 September 1927. This remark also appeared in the \textit{Southport Guardian}, and the \textit{Daily News}.

\textsuperscript{112} 'Politics, Biography, Criticism', \textit{Times} (30 September 1927), 6.

\textsuperscript{113} 'Time and Western Man', \textit{Observer} (9 October 1927), 7.

\textsuperscript{114} Z., 'A Defence of Intelect', \textit{Liverpool Post} (12 October 1927).

\textsuperscript{115} Anon, 'Mr. Wyndham Lewis', \textit{Birmingham Gazette} (15 October 1927).

\textsuperscript{116} 'Back to Aristotle? Mr. Wyndham Lewis and Dada-ism', \textit{Daily News} (11 October 1927).
The collection of scalps he has made by the end of this remarkable book is amazing. It includes Bergson and James Joyce, Spengler the historian and Ezra Pound. He spares not the shingle of Miss Anita Loos.117

To find such ready friends might have at first surprised Lewis, the adorning notice of the Aberdeen Press ought to have alarmed him:

He is one of the biggest figures in British intellectualism to-day [...] and he goes adventuring over the Continent breaking lances against the almost sacrosanct figures of philosophy and philosophical science - Bergson, Einstein and Spengler.118

After the now familiar glowing over the fallen corpses of 'James Joyce, Gertrude Stein, and Marcel Proust', this reviewer accords Lewis the highest conceivable accolade:

Someone has, not unadmiringly, called him an amateur of philosophy; that may explain the absence of the dry-as-dust element in his work. Certainly he is a magnificent amateur. He has proved himself the finest iconoclast of these years; his next book remains to prove his truest worth and value for Britain and his epoch.

No other reviewer that I know of has made this patriotic connection, but the idea of Lewis as the outsider making hay with the professional philosophers on behalf of the ordinary mind is a recurrent one. Alan Kemp of the Sketch, for example, expressed his 'delight to see philosophy and metaphysics in the hands of the non-professional [...] Mr. Wyndham Lewis brings a breath of very exhilarating fresh air to an overlaid atmosphere.'119 But even from quarters who might have been expected to appreciate this champion of the philistines, there appeared to be something fusty about the book. The cheeky undergraduate review by J. E. Barry in the Oxford Outlook for November, which began: 'There are many reasons why we should pay our battlers rather than buy this book',120 declared that 'Mr. Lewis's solemn Ne Temere decree against all dalliance with the Space-Time mind has really very little application to us!'

For in Oxford (and, thank God, usually in Cambridge) we never forget that we are English gentlemen, even though we do read philosophy. [...] And so we have never really taken Bergson or the English space-timers very seriously. We certainly realized right from the beginning that Spengler was a humbug; whilst our downright, brussel-sprout-loving palates have little desire for the pseudo-Parisian, Lolly-pop nonsense of the Proust-Joyce-Stein-Loos-Picasso group.

This position, it should be added, is sincerely held, but the author seemed quite aware that Britain had only Aldous Huxley and Berkeley Nichols to put it in its place, and these are offered with mock seriousness as viable alternatives. Barry clearly regarded himself as a person of some sophistication, and he patronized Lewis's belief in 'M.C.T and M.F.S (Male Chastity of Thought and More Fundamental Sanity)'.

Something has melted the one, he tells us, and arrested the growth of the other. What is that something? Not one thing he answers but three things - Freud, the Time Mind, and, of course, the subtle machinations of the Reds. Despite Lewis's efforts to ensure that he would be perceived as a revolutionary, he was being taken as a peppy buffer who blamed everything, 'of course', on the 'reds', or as a sound man whose 'onslaughts on the Bolshevski' were applauded as likely to have 'salutary effect', in the words of the Dundee Evening Telegraph.121 The problem was exacerbated rather than otherwise by the publication of the second number of the Enemy, which contained Lewis's long essay 'Paleface', written in New York during the summer. Periodicals are never widely reviewed, but some idea of the general reception can be gleaned from Arnold Palmer's notice in the Sphere:

I never expected to see Mr. Lewis draping himself in the mantle of Mr. Kipling and walking arm in arm with Mutt and Jeff to the strains of the 'The Star Spangled Banner'.122

117 Anon, 'Mr. Wyndham Lewis', Birmingham Gazette (15 October 1927).
118 Anon, 'An Iconoclast', Aberdeen Press (24 October 1927). The date of this piece, which I have not been able to check, is uncertain, the Chatto album also dating it 12 November 1927.
119 The Literary Loungers, Sketch, 145, 1813 (26 October 1927), 205.
120 'Review', Oxford Outlook, 84 (November 1927), 398-400.
121 Anon, 'Time and Western Man', Dundee Evening Telegraph, (12 November 1927).
122 'Books', Sphere, 111, 1449 (29 October 1927), 217.
The precise justice of this description, and of those above, need not be addressed in detail. It is clear to those who know a little of his life that Lewis was not quite the champion that the philistines assumed him to be, nor was he a patriotic old clubman, but as I have suggested above, there were changes in Lewis's position, particularly in his interest in absolutes, that justified the broad perception of Lewis's new work as being anti-revolutionary, not just anti-pseudo-revolutionary. His flirtation with Catholicism sealed the case, and was noticed by several reviewers, Barry amongst them, as may have been guessed by his reference to Lewis's Ne Temere decree: 'it is interesting to watch the neo-Thomism of the Roman Church [...] In fact, he really admires everything about her except what he seems to regard as her rather shabby past'. This was no simple application of a convenient branding, and the complexities of Lewis's position were appreciated by some. A. S. McDowall for instance, who quite brilliantly observed that Lewis 'was in the distinctly unusual position of accepting a God of philosophy and refusing - as something too overwhelming to co-exist with the sense of his own reality - the God of experience,' but any hint of theism put Lewis in odd company, and with his work reviewed in Blackfriars it can have escaped very few people that he was being taken up by the most conservative social institution in Europe as an ally in asserting true moral values:

Who knows Montparnasse reads gladly 'I shall attack the stronghold of the stammering ogress Trudy Stein, and the fairy pashas of that France that is not France.'

The cumulative effect of these reviews and remarks cannot be underestimated, and even in brief extracts they demonstrate unequivocally that Lewis's reputation had taken on a new cast within a very short time of the publication of Time and Western Man and the second number of the Enemy. Indeed the latter appears to have played a major part in the creation of the new Lewis, the content of 'Paleface' lending itself easily to Palmer's not wholly inaccurate reading. Another reviewer, in the American Nation put his finger squarely on the matter when he wrote that although 'radical in the literal sense of the word' (he is looking for the roots of things) he accepts [...] very few of the dogmas of current radicalism and he is no part of the dominant Spirit of the Age. Thus far Lewis would have been happy, but the conclusions were not ones he would have found agreeable:

Perhaps, indeed he is really that very rare and hence very valuable thing, an intelligent conservative who, for example, [...] can have interesting doubts about James Joyce without suggesting any suspicion that he considers Thomas Nelson Page the greatest writer yet produced in America.

Just as 'millennial' had been the dread word for The Art of Being Ruled, so 'conservative' was for Time and Western Man. In the twenties, today even, to have this term presented to one is the literary equivalent of receiving the black spot. However, whereas the 'millennial' accusation had provoked Lewis to modify his position, the conservative label did not produce a similar volte face, partly because he had nowhere else to turn, and was in any case finding that the new stance facilitated the expression of his hatreds and marked him off neatly from his contemporaries. The major reason for his inaction, however, was that he was not touched by this term in the same way as he had been in 1926. To be called a conservative did not make Lewis appear weak, as he seemed to be when described as an optimist. But it did place added pressure on him to appear as a creative force. A conservative critic is doubly sterile, but someone who is conservative and creative would be a very striking and distinctive person indeed. The importance of the reviews discussed above is not that they forced a further change in his concepts - there was no such change - but that it made Lewis yet more sensitive to public apprehension of him as a critic. Indeed, I believe that he was correct in thinking that it worsened his standing in that area, and made it still more difficult to correct. Before turning to these problems as they affect Lewis's fiction it remains to say that no reviewer with the exception of the twenty year old William Empson, who reviewed Time and Western Man for Granta in October, noticed that it was incompatible with The Art of Being Ruled:

In The Art of Being Ruled he thought that since his ideal competent Westerner would always exist in the large class that worked and invented the machines, there was no harm in the rest of the world accepting their position and being a

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123 'Time and Western Man', Times Literary Supplement (27 October 1927), 760.
124 G., 'Book Review', Blackfriars, 8.9 (November 1927), 714.
125 Anon, 'Editorials: An Enemy Worth Having', Nation, 125.3254 (16 November 1927), 535.
little less 'virile'. This idea now seems to have been abandoned, leaving some
gap, for he is oddly at home among his heresies, and sometime pillories as
seditions what he tells us he himself believes126

THE WILD BODY

The publication of *Time and Western Man* and the *Enemy* made the task facing *The Wild
Body* almost insuperable, but Lewis must have watched its issue with great anxiety,
applying to it quite unreasonable expectations. It was after all a small book of stories,
hastily assembled, and due to the exigencies of his new-found interests in absolutes, based
on principles of selection that excluded his best work, such as the Bergsonian story 'Unlucky
for Pringle', and made revisions in the light of ideas that were antipathetic to much of the
content of the original stories. The 1927 version of the pre-war story 'Bestre', for example,
replaces the original sensation tasting traveller with a platonizing satirist who reads
Berkeley and Cudworth. It was a desperate measure which has done much to obscure the
scope of Lewis's original pre-war plans for the book.

I have on several earlier occasions suggested that the prepublication announcements
are a useful way, in the absence of better evidence, of judging the drive of Chatto's publicity
at this time, and the very few notices that I have seen referring to *The Wild Body* are also
useful in this respect. Comparison of the these articles suggests the existence of a press
release designed by Lewis and Prentice to counter the 'critic' problem already observed in
the reception of *Time and Western Man*. First the *Southport Guardian*:

Thursday: from Chatto and Windus, 'The Wild Body' by Wyndham Lewis, a
collection of stories and his first fiction since 1918, though in the interval this
distinctive painter-writer-critic has published several more serious essays.127

Identical phrasing appears in the *Yorkshire Herald*:

Whatever Mr. Wyndham Lewis writes is sure to be worthy of note, and it is for
posterity to decide in which direction this versatile painter-writer-critic will
achieve most permanent greatness. Not since 1918 has he published any
fiction.128

And in the *British Weekly* the triplet is rephrased as 'artist, author and critic'129, but
obviously from the same source. There is some sense in saying that these are the only three
that I have seen, and that there is no evidence that the idea made any impact on the
reviewers of *The Wild Body*. 

The earliest that I have seen is by William Empson, in the *Granta*, and, as one
might expect, it is one of the best pieces about Lewis yet written. This review, though brief,
is a compendium of the difficulties that Lewis had created for himself, and its value is
partly to be found in the fact that he reports succinctly and bluntly opinions and impressions
which find only diffuse and dissipated expression in other reviewers. Within the first
paragraph he suggests that the inclusion of essays to explain the stories is possibly an
error, remarks on the uneveness of the material, points to the artless self-identification
with the 'ruthless he-man' Ker-Orr, suggests that Lewis comments on his stories too often,
and gives him a low mark for basic literacy.

It is nice to be told what the point of a book of short stories is, it shows a
worthy attempt at self-knowledge; but the fact is a good story has a lot of
points, and the two that Mr. Lewis wrote after he had decided what the point
was are both lamentably thin. He always throws in, too, a great deal of
innocent self-revelation, about how he is a great ruthless he-man [...] But his
chatter is irrelevant, so is his bad grammar.130

The first two points are the crucial ones, and I think that one might attribute Lewis's
growing preoccupation with the objectivity of his work to criticism of this sort. As for the
grammar, Lewis was probably now beyond the point of finding this sort of accusation so
wounding, but it is noticeable that he never republished anything without revising it, and

126 'Ask a Policeman', *Granta*, 37.821 (21 October 1927), 47.
128 Anon, 'Mr. Wyndham Lewis on his Magic Horse', *Yorkshire Herald* (22 November 1927).
130 'Where the Body is...', *Granta*, 37.827 (2 December 1927), 193.
one reason at least could be that remarks such as Empson’s maintained the pressure begun in 1914.

But from the perspective of the book’s immediate success, and Lewis was clearly thinking in terms of very short vistas, or he would never have published The Wild Body in this state, the condensation in Empson’s choice of ‘worthy’ appears very significant. We feel that there is something naive, not quite adult even, about the need to explain the stories, and also bound up in this remark is the suggestion that the fiction itself was not adequate as an instrument of understanding. Not that Lewis seems, in Empson’s opinion, to have got much closer in his critical prose: ‘He makes a great muddle (as in his essays) about the characters being mechanisms.’ The fact of the muddle is not something that I would wish to defend, and it would be very hard indeed to rebut the implied connection between this book and Time and Western Man. By attempting to square the stories with his new philosophical position Lewis had made it almost inevitable that his bid for ‘creative’ prestige was doomed to be, as he said in a note in Enemy, 3, ‘received and reviewed as a philosopher’s notebook’.131 He really might have been better advised to risk the charge of inconsistency by publishing an unrevised collection which allowed the reader to follow the somersaults and zig-zags of his ideas. At an earlier stage of his life Lewis might have taken this risk, when he was writing that ‘one must cherish and develop, side by side, your six most constant indications of different personalities’,132 but one of the unfortunate by-products of his new-found interest in the indivisible and supra-temporal self was a commitment to showing that what he thought now was what he had thought all along. In terms of my misanthropic argument this was in a sense true, but Lewis had not been so successful in his attempts to get to grips with his feelings about others to be able to use this argument.

Empson’s dismissal of the two later stories is also instructive. No critic of any note bothered to make a case for them, and those that did were not the sort of allies that Lewis would have wished. L. H. S., the reviewer in New Cambridge, for example, claimed ‘Sigismund’ to be the best of the stories, but he praised the book as having the ‘savour of that rare virtue, honesty, and as honesty is one part of eloquence, they appeal to one in all their virgin freshness’, which was bad enough, but even Lewis’s appetite for praise would have been surfeited by the suggestion that ‘the delicacy of the author’s humour is bathed in the gracious light of honesty’.133 Their inclusion, then, was a serious mistake, leading Empson to make the quite reasonable assumption that Lewis intended them to demonstrate his current position, and were his ultimate examples. No stranger to more cunning deceptions, Lewis had carelessly misled his audience against his own interests, and gave the impression of having abandoned more ambitious projects to turn to stories likely to please. The TLS reviewer, A. S. McDowall, remarked that ‘the easiest appeal in the book is made by the rollicking burlesque of “Sigismund”, where the bulldog, and still more the heroine, promptly compel laughter.’134 Other reviewers were less generous, and A. E. Coppard is surely right in thinking them ‘humorous in the flat-footed manner of the undergraduate’.135 The Yorkshire Evening Post’s ‘Bookman’ praised Lewis’s style, but wondered why, given his talents, he bothered to publish ‘such precious trivialities as the two final pieces’,136 and the Glasgow Herald felt ‘Sigismund’ was the ‘least successful’, though the reason was eccentric: ‘It is a tale of lunacy, and however lightened by wit, it is not easy to make such a subject other than distressing.’ The most oddest remarks of all were those of Cyril Connolly, in the New Statesman:

The last two stories are of a later date, and present a magnificent flowering of the author’s style. In these he has kicked away the props and left no clue for the reader as to why he should find the tales so funny.137

The praise continues, and inclines one to imagine it as sincere, but the faint aroma of scorching sarcasm lingers. We might explain Connolly’s enthusiasm by recognizing that it is the lack of theoretical props which strikes him as impressive. And there is unquestionably an intrinsically labouring of the ‘point’, not merely in the essays, but also in the body of the

131 'Notes', Enemy, No. 3 (First Quarter, 1929), 95.
133 ‘Well Bred’, New Cambridge (3 December 1927).
134 Times Literary Supplement (8 December 1927), 930.
136 'Bookman', title not known, Yorkshire Evening Post (15 December 1927).
137 'New Novels', New Statesman, 30.765 (24 December 1927), 358.
stories themselves, much of it added in 1927. In principle there seems no reason why a writer should not do a lot of direct thinking in connection with a work of fiction, but it is hardly sensible when trying to establish a reputation for creative achievement. The categories of 'creative' and 'critical' are undoubtedly too crude to be of much use, except for a bookshop's shelving policy, but they are widely held, and not only by members of the general public. It was naive of Lewis to expect that a volume constructed in this way would make much difference to his standing. This is not to say that reviewers regarded the philosophy as a definite fault. On the whole they seem to have been very tolerant. Empson's quibble is obliquely put, and McDowall thought the policy acceptable:

Mr. Wyndham Lewis states his mind in the course of a book of stories. This might expose the tales themselves to some risk, but on the whole we are glad he has taken it; for, while the main traits are visible enough, the two little essays which he has slipped in illuminate their motive.

But one can easily see elsewhere in his review that this opinion resulted from reflection, and that his first judgement, which we can expect many readers to have carried through as their final thought, was not respectful:

Theories about laughter and the comic spirit, ingenious and seldom conclusive, are usually to be found in whimsical essays or in volumes more solemn than their subject.

Alan Kemp's refusal to quote from the essays in his Sketch review because, he told his reader 'I doubt whether that would add to the pleasure or enlightenment which the stories themselves hold in store for you', supports this point. Such pieces were heavy and off-putting, making the stories seem likely, as the Birmingham Post said, before commending them, to be appreciated only by 'critic and philosopher'. Bubbling away in these otherwise favourable reviews one feels that there is a negative rating, based on the presence of the explanatory pieces, and that they would all have agreed in their hearts with the Yorkshire Evening Post:

Stories written to an intellectual theory are perhaps even more irritating than fiction adapted to an emotional theory, and it is a pity that Mr. Wyndham Lewis has included notes in the shape of what he calls 'A commentary on the system of feeling in these tales' to his new book.

The chapters called 'Inferior Religions' and 'The Meaning of the Wild Body', make somewhat difficult reading, and do little to heighten our interest in his previous stories. Mr. Wyndham Lewis is we know, full of ideas, but his ideas are one thing and fiction another.

Quite correctly, I think, Lewis was battling against this sort of inanity, which would lead, or has led, literature into inconsequential formalism. I am not saying that since he wished to correct the 'critic' image he should have published the stories without any of his apparatus, but rather that this aspect of his approach was magnified by the manner of the book's preparation. Firstly, the revision had left it with a much more factitious feel than was necessary. The original stories were written with ideas in mind, and as a consequence these propositions are distributed evenly and appropriately through the narratives, but the process of revision meant that much of the conceptual content was littered about on the surface of the fiction, and appeared much more distinct, and less integrated. Secondly, the proportion of wholly theoretical to fictional material (20 pages of 250, if we discount the last two stories) had been seriously altered by his exclusions and revisions, with the result that the map seemed to be itself a large part of the territory, and was forever getting in the way regardless of whether you ignored or tried to make use of it.

It was clear that the book had not fulfilled Lewis's unrealistic hopes, and that if he wanted the full range of his interests to be appreciated he would have to do something more substantial. Meanwhile, the pressure to justify his stance as a literary artist was continuing to rise, not only as a result of Time and Western Man, but because of further reviews of The Wild Body, and the second number of the Enemy. The general response and its character have already been sufficiently examined, and there is little point in continuing to document this in its widespread form. However, we can better understand the way that Lewis's difficulties became acute in the month of December by looking first at the growing understanding of Lewis's Catholic sympathies, and secondly at the long discussion of Lewis

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138 'The Literary Lounger', Sketch, (14 December 1927), 565.
139 Anon, 'A Soldier of Humour', Birmingham Post (16 December 1927).
published by the *transition* editors, Eugene Jolas, Elliot Paul, and Robert Sage. With this essay we reach the nub of my case concerning the 1927 period. Lewis is known to have read it, writing a reply the following year. I suggest that he read it on publication and as a consequence was convinced that he could delay his fiction no longer. The 'Apes of God' was set aside, and the *Childeermass* hurried out.

The label of Catholic is an important part of Lewis's reputation at this time, and one which he had invited. Early reviewers noticed this, but in December it became transparently clear. The *New Adelphi* 's Geoffrey Sainsbury reviewed *Time and Western Man* together with Adrian Stokes' *Sunrise in the West* and Henri Massis' *Defence of the West*, a collocation which speaks for itself, and then, to crown it all, Martin D'Arcy S.J. gave the book a tremendous puff in the popular Catholic journal, *The Month*. This review is perhaps more indicative than influential, but with D'Arcy's name on it is very likely to have been both.

It is the first piece of writing on Lewis that I have seen that presents Lewis's career in terms of a movement from error to truth (my own model goes the other way), or as a repentance:

As an artist he has been well known as one of the leaders of some of the strangest and most original movements in England, [...]. At a definite moment, Mr. Lewis, after throwing himself heart and soul into certain of those movements, stood stock still and began to question their value. With the same enthusiasm as before, he has now turned upon what he once admired [...]

This pattern has often recurred since, not only in the writings of those, like Kenner and Schenker, who believe that Lewis moved steadily from the concept of a transcendent aesthetic of genius to a belief that only an Old Testament Jehovah could give life meaning, but also in the arguments of critics, Kenner and Schenker among them, who believe that some deep distress humanized Lewis's soul in the 1930s and led him to abandon the principles of his puppet fiction to write a tender and touching study of simple yet unquestionably real people, *The Revenge for Love*. While disagreeing with D'Arcy, Kenner, and Schenker, that this is a pleasant sight, and a reason for admiring Lewis, I think that they are correct in perceiving that Lewis became progressively more and more conventional politically, or, to put it in terms of my arguments regarding hatred, more and more likely to shield his own antipathies behind the imagined edicts of a fictional Absolute. The redemptive structure supposed by those who see Lewis as gaining in charity as the years pass is quite untenable in the light of *The Human Age*, and can be simply dismissed. D'Arcy's article serves to remind us that all these positions are really ways of applauding the change of direction evident in *Time and Western Man*, and could not have arisen without it. Part of my purpose here is to show that these approaches are in many senses correct representations of Lewis's career, and are consonant with his wishes, but that they do not draw attention to the most valuable aspects of his writing, in fact they obscure it, just as Lewis himself had done.

The book itself is so turbulent that it is easy to replicate the names of its apparent targets, Flux, Bergson, time, Alexander, without actually naming the devil whose temptations haunt *Time and Western Man*, but D'Arcy's choice of quotations brings us to the heart of the matter

In this eternal manufacturing of a God, - which is really the God of Comte, 'Humanity' - you co-operate, but in such a negligible way that you would be a great fool indeed to take much notice of that privilege. Looked at from the simplest human level, as a semi-religious faith, the Time-cult seems far less effective, when properly understood, than those cults, which posit a Perfection already existing, eternally there, of which we are humble shadows. It would be a very irrational conceit which, if it were given a choice, would decide for the 'emergent' Time-God, it seems to me, in place, for instance, of the God of the Roman Faith. With the latter you have achieved co-existent supremacy of perfection, impending over all your life, not part of you in any imperfect physical sense, and touching you at moments with its inspiration. With the

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140 'First Aid to The Enemy', *transition*, No. 9 (December 1927), 161-76.
141 'Anti-Spengler', *New Adelphi*, 1.2 (December 1927), 162-7.
142 'A Critic Among the Philosophers', *Month*, 150.762 (December 1927), 511.
other you have a kind of Nothing, which it is your task, perspiring and mechanical, - weaver of the wind that you are, architect of nothingness - to bolster up and somehow assist into life and time, in a region just out of your reach. [...]144

In other words, while Lewis dislikes the beatification of change in Bergson’s developmentalism its purposive tendency is not uncongenial to him. In Bergson’s view life tends to perfection, and desires it, while in Lewis’s system this perfection is posited as being already a fact, though outside time. The difference between these two ideas is not large, not as great in fact as the difference between them both and the neutral determinism of Natural Selection. Darwin, not Einstein, is the bogey of Time and Western Man. I have already suggested that Lewis’s ‘Man of the World’ philosophy is closer to Darwin than that of the ‘Enemy’, and some further comments on the reasons for the change will be in place here. Although the Neo-Darwinian synthesis was forming through the twenties, notably in the work of R. A. Fisher at Cambridge, the majority of biologists at this time assumed either that Darwin was disproved, or that the fundamental unit of selection was not the individual, or the gene as Fisher’s mathematical arguments were to suggest, but the species. It is possible, then, that Lewis rejected his earlier position because Darwin’s materialism seemed, wrongly, to be an enemy of his individuality. In short he believed that biology, and Nature, was communist. Thus, since contemporary science could not, as far as Lewis knew, help him, he felt obliged to adopt a form of a somewhat heretical form of theology, and by allying himself, even distantl, with an institution deeply hostile to any form of science he was ensuring that he not only appeared as politically aberrant, but also as an enemy of thought, or, as transition said a ‘germ-carrier of paralysis’.145 The connection was widely recognized, Joyce remarking to a friend that Lewis was preparing for a ‘clamorous conversion’,146 and Yeats observing in a letter that Lewis was like a ‘Father of the Church’,147 and I suggest that it is one of the more important facts accounting for his reputation as a reactionary, both then and now. But as pressure on Lewis to publish more fiction the stigma of Catholicism cannot compare with the long transition essay just quoted.

The piece opens with a fable describing a rich, old Colonel whose young mistress, a milliner, proves to have such a good singing voice that she is offered work in a musical comedy in Paris, some distance from the provincial town where Colonel Mouffetard lives. Despite his tearful pleas she decides that the chance of a career is too good to miss and decides to leave him. As she steps into the taxi the Colonel ‘delivered her the most terrific and resounding kick in the behind which had ever echoed on that quiet street.’148 This story is then interpreted as a parable illustrating Lewis’s relationship with modernity: ‘instead of his leaving supposed revolutionary camps [...] modern literature has found a chance for something better and has left poor Wyndham dolefully behind’.149 The ingenuity of the story consists in suggesting two slurs which would not appear so unimpeachable in the reasoned criticism that follows it. Lewis is said to be old and rich, neither of which are powerful refutations of his arguments. The tone established by the fable permeates the rest of the criticism, and together with a number of subtle misrepresentations, forms a damning picture of Lewis as a dilettante who came into modernism late, Jolas and his colleagues incorrectly stating that Lewis only discovered Picasso after the war, imitated his work without understanding it, and then in chagrin turned against the entire modern movement. Whether these are sincere errors hardly matters, since the accusations of wealth and unoriginality would certainly have been accepted as true by many. Furthermore, the authors employ a stereotypic image of the British in order to deepen this sense of sterility. Lewis is described as painting with ‘thorough British dryness, restraint and lack of character’, and as being intellectually restless only ‘as far as a soul can be restless within the limits staked out by British good form’.150 This is the envious rhetoric of patriotic France, and though despicable has

144 From Time and Western Man, p. 455, quoted by D’Arcy on p. 514.
145 Eugene Jolas, Elliot Paul, Robert Sage, ‘First Aid to The Enemy’, transition, No. 9 (December 1927), 176.
146 Quoted in Mary and Padraic Colum, Our Friend James Joyce (London: Victor Gollancz, 1959), 145.
148 ‘First Aid to the Enemy’, 162.
149 Ibid.
carried a great deal of weight in our century. Jolas, Paul, and Sage employ it as a herald to their definition of Lewis as the 'London critic':\textsuperscript{151}

> the complacent, salt-of-the-earth, status-quo-upholding tradition of the British isbred into his bones. He is like the spinster who, unable to throw her bonnet over the windmills, takes to social service work instead [...] Look once again at the list of this ‘outlaws’ victims - Communism, Surrealism, \textit{transition}, James Joyce, Gertrude Stein, Indians, Negroes, Sherwood Anderson, D. H. Lawrence, etc. How exactly they coincide with the hatreds of the deeply intrenched nobility, the solid M.P., the British newspaper reader. Gouge the camouflage out of \textit{The Enemy} and you will have the \textit{London Times} sputtering with virtuous indignation about Russia’ plans to dynamite the British Isles.\textsuperscript{152}

The full ingenuity of this highly able mud-sling journalese can only be appreciated in the original, but even in extracts it is obvious that its attempt to present Lewis as an old, rich, aesthetically and politically reactionary, sterile, critic, is wholly successful.

Lewis’s response, not to \textit{transition}, but to the ‘critic’ problem was immediate, and definite. The best evidence we have of his thought at this time comes from a four page prospectus published anonymously by Chatto and Windus, but clearly written by Lewis. The document itself is undated, but fortunately the production details are described in a column on the ledger page for \textit{Time and Western Man}, and the dates are entirely consonant with the idea that it is a response to the criticism which had appeared in September, November, and December 1927. The first printing of five thousand took place on the 22nd of December, a further ten thousand being printed between January and March, the printing costing nearly £30, figures that suggest that Prentice fully appreciated Lewis’s worries and agreed to mount a serious publicity campaign. Its purpose is obvious, to show that Lewis had been a painter and a writer for a long time, that he had many creative achievements to his name, \textit{Blast} and \textit{Tarr} being amongst them, and that the recent burst of criticism was only a part of his character:

> it is not as a critic or as a publicist that Mr. Lewis considers himself destined to be known finally. So far in the creative field he has one hastily written novel, \textit{Tarr}, and a book of short stories to his credit. [...] But he had in preparation for some time an important work of creative fiction, which has been maturing slowly in the midst of his other activities, \textit{The Childermass}, which will be published by Messrs Chatto and Windus. The first part of this will be ready in the early part of the year. We shall not be able finally to judge of the potentialities of this extraordinary personality until these large-scale creative literary works begin to appear.\textsuperscript{153}

Now we know from the dust jacket of \textit{The Wild Body} that as late as November 1927 Lewis was intending his next book to be \textit{The Apes of God},\textsuperscript{154} and that he expected it be published sometime in 1928, so this sudden appearance of another title, without any mention of the ‘Apes’ is most striking, and requires explanation. I suggest, without any really solid evidence, that in December Lewis realized he had underestimated the amount of work needed to complete ‘The Apes’ in its original form, and decided, in view of the intense pressure on him to show himself as a creative figure once more, to break out part of the book, a dream sequence including a philosophical debate, and work it up for rapid publication. The exact course of events is not known, but roughly there seem to be two possibilities. Firstly that ‘The Apes of God’ was already substantially narrower in scope than the volume planned in the years between 1923 and 1925, and that the philosophical dream section, ‘The Infernal Fair’ or ‘The Great Fish Jesus Christ’, had already been laid aside. When confronted with the need to publish some fiction he took up this fragment and expanded it. Alternatively, Lewis abandoned the original plan of the ‘Apes of God’ as a direct result of the need for a publishable section. I am inclined to believe that the first possibility is the more likely, though one might split the difference between them and say that the necessities of December 1927 decided Lewis in a course of action which he had already been considering for some time. I further suspect, but cannot prove, that the

\textsuperscript{152} Op. cit. 165.
\textsuperscript{153} Quoted from the copy in the Old Library of Magdalene College, Cambridge.
\textsuperscript{154} See Omar Pound and Philip Grover, \textit{Wyndham Lewis: A Descriptive Bibliography} (Folkestone: Dawson, 1978), p. 16, where the front cover flap is quoted as announcing that ‘Mr. Wyndham Lewis’s new novel, \textit{THE APES OF GOD}, will be published early in 1928’.

promised additional volumes of The Childermass were not other sections from the 'Apes' fictions, but that Lewis planned to add new material to the fragment with the aim of transforming it into something independent. On this view Lewis broke up his massive fiction, much as he had broken up the 'Man of the World', in order to satisfy short-term needs. But this is guess-work. We do know, however, that a revised edition of Tarr (see the footnote on page two of the prospectus) was in preparation, probably as a herald, certainly as a companion to The Childermass, and even if my hypothesis concerning the fragmentation of the 'Apes of God' proves to be incorrect it is still clear that Lewis had been troubled by the reviews and comments in the last three months of 1927 and was making a bold attempt to regain artistic credibility in 1928. It is evident that a great deal was being pinned on The Childermass, and if I am right in thinking that he abandoned a long meditated fiction in order to rush into print, then he was gambling recklessly.

THE CHILDERMASS

Lewis had begun revisions to the material extracted from the 'Apes of God' in December,155 and by the end of February the work was complete, the typescript being sent to Chatto at the beginning of March. These changes seem to have been extensive, Prentice writing to say how much better he thought the book had become.156 At present I have very little idea as to the nature of the alterations, but Paul Edwards has informed me that papers in the Carlow Collection archive suggest that the opening section of the book as we now have it was once much shorter, a brief preliminary to the debate. Bearing in mind my suggestion that the book was rushed through as a 'creative' work it seems plausible to imagine Lewis as expanding this very lushly written prologue as a counterbalance to the philosophical dialogue that follows. Certainly the disjunction between them was worrying him in December, when he wrote to Prentice 'I should like to know if you felt that the Bailiff part seemed in any way, in its rather different treatment, to separate itself from the opening.'157

The other element of Lewis's campaign, the republication of Tarr, was not proceeding so smoothly as work on The Childermass. The decision to reissue had been taken in December, but Lewis and Prentice disagreed about terms, and it was not until the 29th of May that a contract was signed,158 so any plan to publish it as a herald for the larger volume was abandoned. This was perhaps unfortunate, the sequence The Wild Body, Tarr, The Childermass being potentially impressive as a reinstatement of Lewis's career, but it hardly seems likely that the formidable, and self-created, obstacles now in Lewis's way could have been surmounted, and he was in any case, as is clear from the revisions to The Wild Body, doing his best to obscure the developmental evidence in his texts. Prentice was largely unaware of what Lewis was up to, expecting the new Tarr to be a lightly corrected reprint. On the ninth of June he wrote to say that he had sent Lewis his own copy of the first edition:

I hope you will have finally downed him [Tarr] by the time you come back. We should start setting by the end of next month if we are to publish this autumn, so if you are going to be away some time, perhaps you would post on the book with your corrections written in it. However, I do not fancy you have really very much to do, that is, unless you decide to rewrite the book, which I do not think either necessary or desirable.159

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156 6 March 1928, Letters of Wyndham Lewis, 175.
158 See Bradford Morrow and Bernard Lafourcade, A Bibliography of the Writings of Wyndham Lewis, 34.
159 Chatto and Windus letterbook 121, p 269. The nature of these revisions cannot be discussed here, but I should record the guess that scrupulous examination will reveal Lewis stripping his novel of any bergsonian traces that might potentially embarrass him, just as he had done with the Wild Body Stories, and perhaps also attempting to soften it a little to reach a wider readership. In his Wyndham Lewis and Western Man (London: Macmillan, 1992), David Ayers has pointed out that Lewis introduced a Jewish character, Pochinsky, whose apparently philanthropic intervention as Solyk's second in fact ensures that the needless and absurd duel with Kreisler becomes inevitable (see Ayers, p. 140). Though I do not agree with Ayers that the book is transformed from top to bottom by this insertion, it is clearly true that the national allegory is altered, and that the change presents Lewis's account of the origins of the first world war.
Lewis was evidently withdrawing his trust from Prentice, becoming more secretive about his intentions with regard to Tarr, and also of his travels, on this occasion to New York. Speedy publication was the least of Prentice's worries, and his principal interest in encouraging Lewis to do as little as possible to the novel was to ensure that the next two volumes of *The Childermass* would not be delayed. Had he known how little Lewis had done in preparation for the continuation he would have despaired, and perhaps realized the extent to which he was being misled. Lewis's precipitate gamble had committed him to extrapolating what would in the 'Apes of God' have been an episode, and while I am sure that he intended, in June, to finish the volumes, it was an obligation somewhat at variance to more-articulated and treasured plans, and one from which he was to be easily deflected.

When *The Childermass* was published on the 21st of June Lewis was in New York, not returning until mid-July. It is therefore of considerable interest to find that Prentice was deeply concerned at this time by the possibility that Lewis would not complete the book, and at the end of the month was negotiating a rider to the original contract which would give Chatto additional protection. On the 24th of July he wrote to Lewis enclosing a draft clause, clearly as part of a lengthy discussion. Lewis had apparently made it clear that he was unlikely to finish in the specified time and was interested in other things, and in response Prentice had asked for some guarantee of compensation. Lewis's offer had been to submit half-sections of *The Childermass,* of 30,000 words each, as they were ready, and further to give Chatto the option of publishing a collection of his art criticism, the 'Caliph's Design' being the core, in default of this, or in the event of his death. Chatto had originally wished Lewis to offer 'Paleface' as his forfeit, but Lewis had refused. The latter part of the offer interested Prentice, but he saw that the submission of sections did not in any way strengthen his hand:

> We suggest [...] that it would be very mortifying for us if you interrupted the writing of *The Childermass* by producing some other book elsewhere, while we were powerless to bring out what you had written of *The Childermass,* since it would not be in its final form. Hence the proposal that you should give us an option on any other works with which you might decide to interrupt the progress of *The Childermass.*

The term 'option' sounds mild, but was in fact very restrictive. In 1932 when Prentice invoked this contract it described an agreement 'that you would not publish elsewhere any other work before concluding "The Childermass" without giving us the first option of it.'

Since the rider was signed on the 29th of July, only five days after this letter, it appears that Lewis agreed to these terms, though perhaps making a mental reservation. The question that arises out of this little skirmish is why he should have suddenly shown so little enthusiasm for continuing what, if his blurbs were correct, was a long-meditated, and largely complete work. One reason, as I have hinted earlier, is that 'Childermass' was not really a self-supporting book at all, and the continuation would require a great deal of new thinking. It is quite possible, and even likely, that Lewis simply couldn't see a way of proceeding to his satisfaction. Had the reviews been encouraging he might perhaps have overcome these difficulties, but they were not. I suggest that on his return Lewis scanned the responses and realized instantly that he had not broken the straight-jacket into which he had so carelessly allowed himself to be tied, and was so disheartened that he turned away from this project to deal with other things. He broke this news to Prentice with caution, saying merely that there would be a delay, but Prentice was an experienced publisher and recognised the signs of trouble, and so insisted on an addition to the contract.

It is clear from remarks in the third number of the *Enemy,* which he was writing during the second half of 1928, that Lewis was troubled by the press reception of *The Childermass,* and put a brave face on it:

> Last July [sic.] (1928) part one of *The Childermass* appeared. Until the whole book has been published I do not propose to make any references, here, to its reception in the English world of Letters, or answer certain criticisms [...]
The sentence then reaches its logical termination by observing that even thus far it was clear that he had committed an 'offence'. But at this point Lewis forgot his promise not to discuss the matter and added a 230 word parenthesis, using the most involved and difficult syntax. The effect given by this, surely the oddest sentence in the whole of Lewis's output, is one of absolute fury. The following passages are selected to give a flavour of this bizarre outpouring:

(for there can be little doubt that my 'fiction' is a graver offence than my criticism; though I believe it will be found that when some of my pals have got over their first sullen astonishment and found their tongues, and seen the termination of what is so far my major work, they will agree that if it is undesirable that I should write 'fiction' - as it is undesirable that I should write criticism, or indeed that anybody should write anything more, thereby drawing attention to their own painful, desiccated condition [...] - they will probably agree, I say, that undesirable as utterance is from me at all - apart from the objectionable fact that commonly a 'creative' work may be regarded as potentially more offensive, on the score of popular prestige, than a mere 'critical' work [...]"

And so on and so forth. From this and the following, rather more lucid, paragraphs, it appears that Lewis felt that his work had suffered on two counts. Its creative status had been neglected, through the malice of his contemporaries, and it had been treated as if it were 'fiction', in the 'Best-seller sense', and had hence not been reviewed by anyone 'whose brain is not rotted by the incessant consumption of popular novels. Lewis's snobbery is not usually this naked, and the lack of ironic qualifications and blinds is evidence, surely, of loss of temper, and of great disappointment. The grievance is, suspiciously, put in the mouth of friends, 'those readers who have complained to me', those who 'have objected that The Childermass was misinterpreted in most quarters, that The Wild Body [...] was not adequately noticed'. This device allows Lewis the option of being hard-headed after the event: 'That kind of complaint really has to be answered a little roughly: for who on earth expected the average "fiction" critic [...] to do anything but what he did'.

This piece, even in extracts, leaves no doubt that the reception of The Childermass was a bitter blow to Lewis. Its consequences extend well beyond the suffocation of the, already weak, urge to complete this work, and explains not only the decision to abandon a tainted and lost cause, but also the substantial revision and splenetic character of The Apes of God. That book should be seen both as a fresh bid for creative status, and also as an expression of an intense disgust at the London world that had slighted a composition which he knew he could not surpass, and which he correctly believed to be as remarkable as anything written by his contemporaries. It remains then to review this reception to see what so infuriated and dejected him. The key to understanding the effect of these pieces, which will not perhaps strike the reader as being so hostile, is to remember the fact that he had chosen to risk wrecking his major work of fiction, 'The Apes of God', by extracting a brilliant and remarkable passage, and the mixture of desperation and high hopes with which he consequently viewed its publication. The measure of the excitement can be taken from the fragment of a press-release quoted in the Glasgow Herald in early May:

>Much may be expected from Mr Lewis's many gifts, and his publishers do not hesitate to describe the book, which is in three parts, as 'a work of imaginative fiction in extent and accomplishment one of the most remarkable published in England since the beginning of the century'.

The remark was taken up by no other paper, hardly an auspicious beginning.

Lewis's discussion of the reception is useful, and initially I shall examine the criticism in its terms, beginning with social venom, and then examining the fiction problem. A third category, also drawn from the Enemy, will prove to be of use. In the 'Diabolical Principle' Lewis remarked on 'a very serious difficulty for some of my readers' who 'have taken me, I think, for a "defender of the faith"' 'disposed to defend against all they (but not I) regard as "ugly" in art all that is pleasant innocuous and sweet'. Consequently, they 'have been shocked to find designs and decorations within the covers of the Enemy that did not satisfy them as illustrations of what I had to say in my critical text or did not

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164 Notes' p. 94.
165 Anon, title not known, Glasgow Herald (3 May 1928).
166 'The Diabolical Principle', Enemy, No. 3 (First Quarter 1929), 25.
tally with the rôle they had assigned me.' The phrase ‘defender of the Faith’ appeared in Cyril Connolly’s review of The Childermass,\(^{167}\) sufficient ground for concluding that Lewis was also thinking of the response of several of his one-time admirers to The Childermass. These three approaches go some of the way to explaining Lewis’s feelings in July 1928, but they do not quite explain the force of his reaction. The fourth part of my discussion will suggest that the aspect of the reception that most hurt Lewis was the charge of sterility, and that this emanated from many different sources, not simply, as his scheme suggests, from those he took as malicious Bloomsbury ‘pals’, a belief which could be as much self-deception as anything else, designed to facilitate a righteously indignant response. From his own description one has the impression that there was a chorus of central London sophisticates maligning The Childermass as uncreative, but I have found only one clear and one doubtful candidate, Raymond Mortimer and Cyril Connolly respectively. On to this narrow and easily attacked base Lewis transposed the criticism of a multitude of others whose motives and characters were less easy to impugn and discredit. This was hardly justifiable, however satisfying it may have been, and however much provocation Mortimer, for example, may have given.

This review, in the Nation & Athenæum,\(^{168}\) certainly is rather unpleasant, but hardly what one would expect from Lewis’s remarks. Mortimer begins gently enough, ‘If the two subsequent sections of The Childermass are as long as the first, the novel will rival Ulysses in scale’, but gradually passes through suggestions of difficulty, incomprehensibility, obsession with homosexuality, and then comes to his climax with a poisoned smile:

> He has much imagination, he is full of interesting ideas, he can write; but this book seems to show a positively pathological absence of all intellectual control.

The stage is now set, and Mortimer continues:

> ‘The Childermass’ appears an attempt to convey certain convictions. I suggest that it is, if not ill-mannered, at any rate incompetent, to put them in such a way that, with the best will in the world, the reasonably intelligent and well-educated reader cannot make out what the author is driving at. No doubt the book will have a great success among those whose admiration for a writer increases in proportion to their inability to understand what he is saying.

The main slur here is not the most obvious one, that of incompetence, but the suggestion that Lewis is using fiction to communicate firmly held concepts. The charge of sterility was never more sophisticated than this. Connolly’s review, on the other hand, contains many more harmful accusations than Mortimer found room for, but his tone is one of excitement and respect. Lewis’s prose is ‘muscle-bound’, the opening section is boring, it is ‘only a dramatisation of the ideas of Mr. Lewis in Time and Western Man’, the whole is indebted to Ulysses, a fact which ‘perhaps explains the author’s attack on Joyce’, and that attack is ‘winged with all the disdainful personalities that envy can imagine or intimacy supply’. Lewis’s neo-classicism is a ‘sterile force’, his writing driven by a ‘colossal egotism’, and his passion for order suspicious because ‘after all, shared by Mussolini’. Nevertheless Connolly appreciated many of the remarkable qualities of the book and said so:

> No living writer has the same aggressive intellectual vitality, or the capacity to express it in such leathery, whip-cracking prose. Behind this lies a mind and a sensibility which are among the most interesting of our time [...] In spite of the die-hard background of his thought, his interests and his arguments are all magnificently dans le vrai. It is this modern quality in his sensibility that makes one forget that he is really a defender of the Faith.

Unlike Mortimer, he recognized and acknowledged the rhetorical skill, and saw that The Childermass demonstrated that Lewis was a great deal more than a commentator:

> This book comes a relief to those who pictured Mr. Lewis as a bullying pamphleteer, arriving late and heated at the queue of letters with no greater object than a desire ruthlessly to elbow his way to the top. [...] The ring-craft, the ‘terrible punch’ of Mr. Lewis have been already noted; add here his amazing chemical descriptions of scenery and human beings, his catchwords, his satire, and his superb vitality [...]
Pro and con are mixed in Connolly, but with an honesty quite absent from Mortimer’s devious concealments. In one we have critical counterpoint, in the other a poisoned chalice. However, I think it likely that Lewis was in such a state of excitement at this time that he would have been unable to see this sort of difference, or think it very important even if he did see it.

His second complaint, that his book had been misrepresented because of the convention by which fiction was reviewed in the columns of sterile narrotasters living parasitically on dull fictioneers, has a great deal more substance to it. In the *Enemy* Lewis had written of one of these individuals, ‘is not such a “fiction” critic as Mr. G. calculated, in any newspaper in which he functions, to maintain a cast-iron standard of Best-seller vulgarity and dullness […]’.\(^{169}\) ‘Mr. G.G., not to say hack’ is, as any contemporary would have realized immediately, Gerald Gould, and turning to his reviews of *The Childermass* in the *Observer* and the *Daily News* one can not only see how Lewis arrived at his judgement, but even sympathize with it.

If I were to write down abc def ghi as a criticism of his book, I am sure he would not think me excessively clever; yet there are pages in ‘The Childermass’ of words like ‘ant add narther thort wilt’. […] the point is that, amid so very much that is quite obviously nonsense, it cannot be worth while to search for sense.\(^{170}\)

Miss Hodder was eleven when she wrote ‘Pax’. It is not stated how old Mr. Wyndham Lewis was when he wrote ‘The Childermass’. [...] I do not think that the longest and most patient study could possibly hope to elicit coherence or significance from the mess, because in many places, so far as I can judge, sentence follows sentence without grammar or meaning of any kind. If it was Mr. Wyndham Lewis’s ambition to produce the silliest book since ‘Ulysses’, he has perhaps scored a success.\(^{171}\)

Howell Davies, a critic of much the same stamp, was more ingenious in conveying his point:

He rouses all that is bad in a reviewer. He gets our goat. [...] I meant to be rude myself about ‘The Childermass’ after some hasty glancing and dipping. [...] Well, then, what is ‘The Childermass’ about? I am not quite sure, but then I have only read it twice. [...] I shall go on reading ‘The Childermass’ because I can’t believe Wyndham Lewis is so devoid of meaning as he seems at first sight.\(^{172}\)

On the whole I suppose I prefer this sort of perky complacency to Gould’s prim variety, but by a whisker only. The other great reputation maker, Ralph Straus of the *Sunday Times*, lies somewhere between them: ‘I confess I do not know what to say’.\(^{173}\) This sort of negative review would at least have discouraged no one likely to find the book of interest, while the damage a plaudit could do might be incalculable. Who would pick it up after being told by Horace Thorogood in the *Evening Standard* that ‘If you once loved Meredith and now love Shaw, you will clutch at ‘The Childermass’?\(^{174}\) This is not an exhaustive selection, but it shows, quite clearly I think, that Lewis was correct in his contention that the reviewing mechanism, of the major London papers at least, was defective in being unable to find just ways of handling unusual material in fiction form.

He was also correct in diagnosing disappointed admirers as making up a large part of his bad press (it is important to understand that *The Childermass* was the first of his books to get a downright negative judgement passed upon it), and probably accounting for the general cooling that seemed to be taking place after the ecstasies of the previous year. Arnold Palmer had written of the *Enemy* that Lewis ‘was one of the most strongly individualized writers of the day - a man of exceptionally wide knowledge who has the

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169 ‘Notes’, *Enemy*, No. 3 (First Quarter 1929), 94.
172 ‘Wyndham Lewis - And Others’, *Star* (29 June 1928).
174 ‘A Novel of the Judgment Day’, *Evening Standard* (26 July 1928). I have been unable to check the date of this piece, and think that it may be wrong. The Chatto archive also contains a clipping of a letter published in the *Evening Standard* for the 28th of June, and internal evidence suggests that it may be a response to Thorogood’s review.
power to come to conclusions of his own', a 'little difficult to follow' but 'extremely well worth working at'.175 But with *The Childermass* he could do more than shake his head:

The author, the extremely gifted author, has become, at least for the moment, a man abstracted, withdrawn into his own vision, and to that vision we - or I - have not the key.176

Alan Kemp, the 'Literary Lounger' of the *Sketch*, had thought *Time and Western Man* showed Lewis to be a 'literary critic of unusual discernment', and a jargon free philosopher bringing 'a breath of very exhilarating fresh air to an overladen atmosphere',177 while of *The Wild Body* he had said, qualifications about the 'philosophizing' aside, that it was a 'marvel of nimbleness': 'What pictures! What manipulation of phrase!'178 But *The Childermass* he found to be 'Mr. Wyndham Lewis parodying himself':

Here is a man full of wit and ideas and imagination, a man who can delight and stimulate when he chooses; why should he choose to gibber when he can talk, and to splash ink when he can write, passes comprehension. [...] There are, we are told, to be two more sections of this work. No bid here.179

L. P. Hartley, too, had written a guarded but admiring review of *The Wild Body* in the *Saturday Review*,180 but was dismayed by *The Childermass*:

It is too exasperating, the way Mr. Wyndham Lewis trifles with his talent. [...] at present *The Childermass*, for all the intellectual nourishment it gives, is like a square meal awaiting a stomach and a digestion. Or ought we to say a stomach awaiting a meal? For the limitation of Mr. Lewis's work is that it is too abstract, too mental [...] Had it a firmer anchor in the heart, it would not go drifting about so far above the head.181

The alliance that both Kemp and Hartley had felt to justify their admiration of the earlier fiction was clearly not based on a reading of that alone, and indeed they felt obliged to qualify their praise, but on the nature of Lewis's critical pronouncements. Mary Agnes Hamilton, in *Time and Tide*, can be taken as speaking for them:

For his powers as a critic and as a philosopher I have great admiration. *Time and Western Man* is one of the few really original works [...] But the first part of *The Childermass* [...] I have found almost impossible to read.182

And these critics themselves can be assumed to represent substantial constituencies of opinion. It would seem that the sequence of publication discussed above had not only given him a reputation as a critic, but had given a following whose character further deepened the breach with the avant-garde. In trying to re-establish himself as a creator Lewis was addressing the English literary world, who were not prepared to support writing of his kind, and an avant-garde who might have given him the necessary protection if he had not already disaffected them. I am prepared to add that Lewis probably expected his compatriots to be more loyal, and perhaps the mild criticism of *The Wild Body* misled him into thinking that they would tolerate, without comprehending, the eccentricity of *The Childermass*. This would account, I think, both for Lewis's sense of betrayal evident in the *Enemy*, and also for the bitterness of *The Apes of God*, which is quite concentratedly anti-English.

I have already said that Lewis's grievances were real ones, but that his categories concealed the aspect which he found most troubling by suggesting that only his Bloomsbury enemies accused him of lack of creativity. As the pieces quoted to illustrate his other points show, this was held even by those who admired him, and it is a matter of no difficulty to prove that this was in fact the opinion of a very broad range of reviewers. A medley of remarks will perhaps be the most economical way of presenting this material:

*Time and Tide*: 'My trouble, however, is that Alectryon seems to me to sum only too aptly what is wrong with the whole ambitious effort, when he cries, to the said Bailiff:

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175 'Books', *Sphere*, 111.1449 (29 October 1927), 217.
176 'Books', *Sphere*, 114.1485 (7 July 1928), 28.
177 'The Literary Lounger', *Sketch*, 140.1813 (26 October 1927), 206.
178 'The Literary Lounger', *Sketch*, 140.1820 (14 December 1927), 565-6.
179 'The Literary Lounger', *Sketch*, 143.1850 (11 July 1928), 89.
180 'New Fiction', *Saturday Review*, 144.3764 (17 December 1927), 862-3.
182 'Life as a Whole', *Time and Tide*, 9.28 (13 July 1928), 683.
The whole trouble is that only your hatred is creative, it is your only way of being creative.\textsuperscript{183}

\textit{Times Literary Supplement}: '[..] this romantic conte \textit{philosophique}. It will be sufficient to say that Mr. Lewis here continues with his opinions about the mob, its hatred of great men, of the intellect, and of art [..].\textsuperscript{184}

\textit{Scottsman}: 'The first of three volumes containing Mr. Lewis's turgid epankatoe seems to be an illustration by the fiction method of several of the points made in \textit{Time and Western Man}. [..] this modern philosopher-novelist [..].\textsuperscript{185}

\textit{Guardian}: 'To read Gulliver with zest we do not need to share Swift's detestation, but it is doubtful whether anyone will read \textit{The Childermass} with zest unless he is familiar with the burh of Mr. Lewis's wit and hates where Mr. Lewis hates. And surely there is much of the book that not even the most enthusiastic upholder of Mr. Lewis's doctrines will find himself able to enjoy unless enlightened by personal explanation from the author.'\textsuperscript{186}

\textit{Grant}: 'Gulliver\textquotesingle s Travels is a book of first quality because it may be taken both ways, as story or satire; \textit{The Childermass} may not be a great book because it neglects this quality.'\textsuperscript{187}

\textit{New Republic}: 'It would promote a general understanding of Mr. Lewis's present \textit{epic} [..] if the publishers would print his three previous lengthy books as an appendix to it. For it is the same material in a new form.'\textsuperscript{188}

With the failure of \textit{The Childermass} Lewis changed his plans yet again. In July he was occupied with the final revisions to the \textit{Tarr}, which appeared in December, creating no stir, since it was reprint, but selling in respectable numbers, one of the few of Lewis\textapos;s titles to do so.\textsuperscript{189} Rather than dismissing this rapidly and returning to \textit{The Childermass} Lewis set off on more travels, apparently visiting France, Spain, and then Munich.\textsuperscript{190} Publicly he was still intending to complete the set, telling Sturge Moore, that he would be back in London by the middle of September and would \textquoteleft start work on it at once.\textsuperscript{191} This sounds promising, but I am inclined to think that his confidence here is more bravado, and that the project was already slipping down his table of priorities, and standing in its stead, \textit{The Apes of God}. In the last months of 1928 Lewis was working on the Enemy, for the most part, but also preparing several items for publication the following year. His plans are described, fortunately, in considerable detail in one of the \textit{Enemy\textapos;s Notes},\textsuperscript{192} and they are worth consideration. 'Many inquiries', he began, 'reach the office of this paper with regard to the date for completion of \textit{The Childermass}, of the appearance of \textit{The Apes of God}, of the essay announced in No. 2 on \textit{Youth Movements etc.}', and there follows a clear statement of intentions:

\begin{quote}
In order not to hasten over the completion of \textit{The Childermass}, according to present arrangements the following books will be published meantime: first in about a month or six weeks (beginning of March) \textit{Pale Face} will be published in book form by Chatto and Windus [..] This will be followed, at intervals of about a month or six weeks, by \textit{The Apes of God} and \textit{The Diabolical Principle} [..] \textit{The Apes of God} has been for upwards of five years in preparation [..] This therefore is not a new enterprise, interrupting the progress of \textit{The Apes of God}.'
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{183} Mary Agnes Hamilton, 'New Fiction: Life as a Whole', \textit{Time and Tide}, 9.28 (13 July 1928), 683.
\textsuperscript{184} Alan Clutton-Brock, \textit{New Novels: The Childermass}, \textit{Times Literary Supplement} (19 July 1928), 534.
\textsuperscript{185} Anon, 'A Different World', \textit{Guardian} (26 October 1928). I have been unable to find this piece in the \textit{Manchester Guardian} for this date, but am unsure whether the date is wrong (26 December 1928 is a possible alternative which I have not yet checked), or whether some other paper is meant.
\textsuperscript{186} T.W (T. H. White), 'Reading With Tears', \textit{Grantis}, 38.847 (2 November 1928), 87.
\textsuperscript{187} Lawrence S. Morris, 'The List of Windusian Lewis', \textit{New Republic}, 57.732 (12 December 1928), 111.
\textsuperscript{188} See graph of sales opposite.
\textsuperscript{189} To Sturge Moore, 3 September 1928, in Box 30 of the Sturge Moore papers at the University of London library.
\textsuperscript{190} 3 September 1928.
\textsuperscript{191} 'Notes', \textit{Enemy} No. 3 (First Quarter 1929), 98.
Childermass: rather what has been done is that the *Apes of God* has been finally concluded, and the other two books [*Paleface* and *Diabolical Principle*] have been expanded and finished and prepared for publication, so that they should not be held up too long should work upon *The Childermass* be protracted.

Two points should be noted here. Firstly that no time-table is set for *The Childermass*. Secondly that *The Apes of God* is in a state Lewis believes fit for the press. Of his plans we can be sure that the projected publications of *Paleface* and *The Diabolical Principle and the Dithyrambic Spectator* were immediately practical. I hazard a guess, therefore, that *The Apes* was also nearing a publishable form at this time, but that as he worked on it Lewis became more and more convinced that this book should be his major satirical statement. Into it he was pouring the frustrations of the previous year, and the accumulated hostilities of a decade. Previous expansions have been referred to in an earlier chapter, now its growth both in bulk and importance was rapid, the planned publication in April/May 1929 being cancelled, and almost everything else being set aside to make way for it. *Paleface* was passing through the press by this time, so it escaped, but *The Diabolical Principle*, the *Youth Movements* book, the *Enemy* itself, and most importantly *The Childermass*, were simply stifled by a total commitment to *The Apes of God*. The details of these changes are not my business here, and it will be sufficient to point out that ‘London’ or ‘Life’ underwent hypertrophy, squeezing other elements out of the volume, and that this expansion was due to a concentration on the London art world that probably resulted from Lewis’s resentment at the failure of *The Childermass*. It should also be pointed out that the very many of the characters in *The Apes* are Jewish, and that this appears to confirm the impression given both by *The Childermass* and the Pochinsky revision to *Tarr* (mentioned above), that Lewis’s interest in a supposed Jewish threat was growing.
PALEFACE

The publication of *Paleface* in May 1929 probably meant less to Lewis than the appearance of any of his previous works since he was now so deep in revisions to *The Apes of God*. The reviews do not, as it seems to me, appear to have played any influential role in the composition of his new book, though the success of *Paleface* (it was listed as a 'bestseller' in *John O'Londan's Weekly*) may arguably be said to have had some impact on the character of Lewis's political writing in the thirties. However, it deserves consideration here on a number of grounds. *Paleface* and its reception show that although his ostensibly moderation was noticed and accepted, many of the reviewers also felt that the book was, in effect, deeply racist. A consideration of the opinions of the reviewers will prompt reflections on why this should be so, and will suggest that *Paleface* established the ground on which Lewis's later reputation for sinister politics would be based. Attention will also be drawn to a change of emphasis in Lewis's position, a change so slight that it can easily be overlooked, but one which constituted an attempt to recover some of his revolutionary credentials and thus prepares us for an understanding of his interest in Nazism.

In short, study of *Paleface* and its reception will reveal the beginnings of the catastrophic alteration of reputation which awaited Lewis in 1930 and 1931, and helps us to understand how it is that he came to write a book about Hitler.

The first thing to say about the reviews of *Paleface* is that they are numerous (I have listed about thirty notices) and enthusiastic, the failure of *The Childermass* being all the more evident in comparison. It was a point that one reviewer made explicitly:

A previous book, *The Childermass*, was to some the outpourings of a new genius, while to others it represented the babblings of a mental defective. *Paleface* will annoy a few, stimulate many, intrigue most.

Where he had been rejected as a fiction writer he was hailed as a commentator:

**Oxford Mail:** Mr. Wyndham Lewis is perhaps the finest English critic living.

**Times:** He may or may not be one of the soundest thinkers of our day; this book proves him once more one of our most stimulating and suggestive critics.

**Nation and Athenaeum:** In this book we are literally pelted with ideas, piping hot from the most recent crater of Mr. Lewis's mind...

**Western Mail:** Let us conceded at once that Mr. Wyndham Lewis is in the front rank of original thinkers.

**Dundee Evening Telegraph:** Mr. Lewis's *Paleface* is a masterly work, combining wit with the deepest critical insight.

This generous press clearly had some effect since sales were healthy, Chatto binding 1550, of a total print run of 2000, during the period April to July, and disposing of 1276 by the end of September. This was about as well as Lewis's books ever did, testimony to his fame as a critic, and perhaps to the topical nature of the book. But one of the risks of dabbling in contemporary issues is that a carefully negotiated compromise may be ignored by partisans looking for allies or opposites, and given the fact that the *transition* writers had already used the *Enemy* version of *Paleface* to label Lewis as a racist, and the fact that the book is

6. Frederick J. Mathias, "The Decline of Paleface: Philosophy of Mr. Wyndham Lewis", *Western Mail* (30 May 1929).
used to justify such claims today, it might seem reasonable to imagine that this is how it struck contemporaries, and there is something in this. But in fact most reviews draw attention to Lewis's qualifications and studied indications. Frederick J. Mathias of the *Western Mail* remarked that ‘so conscientious is he that in this volume he prints as an antidote to his own criticism his review of Miss Mayo’s “Mother India”, in which he trounces the author for her prejudice against the Hindus.’ The *Observer’s* Ivor Brown granted that ‘Lewis is for reason and for tolerance, even though he performs a dervish dance of dialectic to overwhelm his opponent.’ And in the *Daily News* Edward East presented Lewis as a model of moderation:

If anyone wishes to be able to steer an even keel between Scylla of a stupid race-pride and the Charybdis of a ludicrous self-depreciation, he cannot do better than read this excellent work [...]11

Yet along side this there is also a prevalent feeling that for all his even-handedness Lewis was somehow not entirely sound on this issue. The *Oxford Mail*, in a piece entitled ‘Does Colour Make a Difference?’, and devoted to criticism of local resentment at the large number of Indians studying at the University, remarks ‘It would be absurd to suggest that Mr. Wyndham Lewis has much in common with the jingo or that he wants us to abuse coloured people.’ Nevertheless he added a qualification: ‘But it is equally absurd to suggest that English people should have refrained from applauding Florence Mills when she was in London with the “Blackbirds” merely because she was black.’ Geoffrey West in the *Times* was noticing the same tension when he summarized the thesis of *Paleface*, explaining that Lewis expected a new world order to come into being, and that ‘Briefly, what he fears is a preponderance of and subservience to other-than-white culture and consciousness as a component part of that new tradition’. His following sentence however belies the sense of fair play that this rendering gives:

The Black arts, he specifically alleges, are proletarian, communist, primitivist by nature [...]13

The better critics were, it is clear, responding to some ambivalence in the book, and while no one came out clearly and denounced Lewis for insincerity, several pieces, such as those above, teeter on the brink of such an accusation. We can better appreciate this ambiguity by turning to reviews which assumed Lewis to be strongly anti-black and pro-white. The *Dundee Evening Telegraph* for example simply neglected Lewis’s disclaimers:

Europe is still the brains of the world, no matter what D. H. Lawrence or Sherwood Anderson says, and no matter what strides the coloured peoples may take in the near future. Europe is still the possessor of a cultural heritage unsurpassed in the world, and the cry raised in France to defend the West against the invasion of Bolshevism from Russia and negro jazz from America well merits echoing in Britain.14

The *Morning Post* also made the connection between bolshevism and the black, and presents Lewis as a champion of Empire:

From the exaltation of the negretic mentality it is a natural and inevitable step to the exaltation of Communistic and Bolshevistic principles: the worship of the masses as against the individual, of mindlessness against intellect. [...] If white domination is to continue its representatives have a serious task of self-reorganisation to be faced before they can cope with the ever-increasing self-consciousness of the darker races.15

Just as those who saw Lewis as a moderate had ignored the undercurrent in the book, these two reviewers seem to have missed Lewis’s weakly stated belief that white separation will be a temporary stage before a final melting of the races. And just as there were reviewers who had doubted the truth of Lewis’s disclaimers, so there was at least one who felt that his anti-black stance was dangerously compromised, or rather that Lewis’s ideas ‘stratify themselves into two by no means consistent phases’.16 In one part ‘the object is to stress the

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9 The Decline of Paleface: Philosophy of Mr. Wyndham Lewis’, *Western Mail* (30 May 1929).
10 ‘Red, White, and Black’, *Observer* (23 June 1929).
13 ‘The “Poor White”: Mr. Wyndham Lewis’s Paradox’, *Times* (17 May 1929), 19.
14 Anon, In Defence of the “Paleface”, *Dundee Evening Telegraph* (28 June 1929).
inferiority and consequent danger to the white man's intellect of the negro's orgiastic anti-intellectualism', but in other parts he finds that when 'comparing the artistic achievement of the Westerner with that of his Asiatic rivals, he himself, as an artist, is forced to bow humbly towards the "coloured" East'. This hesitation results in a policy the author clearly finds intolerably liberal:

At one time he amuses himself with planning little homogenous but isolated strips of 'colour' between Caucasians, much as Mr. Chesterton once proposed to settle the Jews. At another, he sets out a grand and exactly opposite scheme for cross-breeding between the rival pigments, after a little preliminary 'crossing' of the European races. When Mr. Lewis has himself demanded the closing of the colour bar, it is, no doubt strange to find him tempted to intellectual bootlegging of this kind. But once he has taken a single swig at the 'melting-pot' it is, of course, logical to throw down every barrier to assimilation. He has ceased to prefer blondes.

This odd range of criticism suggests that Paleface was, despite its impeccable surface, radically ambiguous. One could accept him as tolerant and moderate, doubt that this was sincere, welcome him as a racist, and think that his criticism of the black races was a front for a policy of revolutionary integration, and all these positions are tenable interpretations of Lewis's argument. Given that this is so, I shall here interrupt the survey of the reception to consider the composition history of Paleface and to suggest that the book's puzzling character results partly from yet another of Lewis's trimming revisions, partly from an attempt to camouflage what he knew would be troublesome opinions, and partly because he hadn't made up his mind.

The core of Paleface was written in the summer of 1927 and published in the second issue of the Enemy. It is substantially an analysis of the kind which Lewis had employed in the 'Revolutionary Simpleton', and indeed 'Paleface' shares many of the attitudes of that work. Of 'Paleface' Lewis wrote 'these essays do not come under the head of "literary criticism". They are written purely as investigations into the contemporary states of mind', which is very precisely the way that Joyce, Stein, Pound, and others are employed in the earlier work. Like 'The Revolutionary Simpleton' 'Paleface' is interventionist, rather than stand-offish. Similarly, it has no consoling assumptions about progress, and sees the tradition of White Europe under attack and in need of defense, just as in Time and Western Man the ancient ideas of the integral self were threatened by various evolutionary doctrines. Broadly, they form different departments of the same argument, and share the same reluctance to be positive about the action that should be taken (a hesitation which I have argued above resulted from reviewers mocking the softness of his position in The Art of Being Ruled). In neither do we find clear remedies, though one certainly suggests a swing to Thomism, and there are several strong hints in 'Paleface' that Lewis would approve of the separate development of the white and black races. This hesitancy had earned Lewis the reputation of a defensive and reactionary conservatism, a label that he certainly wished to avoid, and in addition the awkwardness of his remarks about blacks in 'Paleface', where there is in fact a similar ambivalence to that found in the finished book, had given his critics, and I am thinking of the editors of transition, a pretext for casting him as a die-hard racist. It is not at all surprising, then, to find that in revising and adding to the book he tried simultaneously to demonstrate his revolutionary credentials by projecting a hopeful future, and to emphasize his tolerance towards non-white peoples.

Lewis's method was to add material to the book, but not all of these additions are relevant to my point. The introduction to section two, for example, reprints, somewhat opportunistically, Lewis's 1927 article 'The Values of the Doctrine Behind "Subjective" Art', and a large part of the first section of Paleface, for example, is an attempt to explain the origin of the Anglo-Saxon's belief that he must expand his ethics to cherish all human beings, if not all living things. This is a very significant moment in Lewis's thinking, when the abiding concern with the value of others rather surprisingly reveals itself in a clear and intelligible form, and in fact one acute reviewer, Alan Porter, remarked that Paleface was not really about race but 'the problem of the uneasy conscience'. I have suggested above, the whole of Lewis's work gyrates around this problem, or rather the conflict between conscience

17 'Preface', Enemy, No. 2, (September 1927), 5.
19 'The Poor White', Spectator, 142.5267 (8 June 1929), 904-5.
and hatred. While this section makes the place of Paleface in Lewis’s career much clearer, it
does little to help us understand the confusion of tone. Instead we need to consider the plea for
internationalism, the concept of the ‘melting-pot’, both of which are additions to the
original essay, and represent a tentative return to the optimism of The Art of Being Ruled,
though the imagined millennium is one for which we have to work.

In ‘Paleface’ Lewis had merely insisted on separation between black and white, but in
the book’s long additions this separation is presented as a temporary though perhaps
protracted transitional stage on the way to full intermingling of the world’s inhabitants. The
significance of the literature considered in the central and earlier portions of the book is no
longer only that it further confirms Lewis’s case, made in Time and Western Man, for
believing the classical self to be under attack, but that it shows the white being jostled, on
account of his puritan conscience and expansive morals, into a premature grand melt, and on
terms which are not advantageous or even fair. The following addition to the criticism of
Sherwood Anderson, and it should be stressed that all references to the ‘melting-pot’ in
Paleface are additions, will perhaps illustrate this:

We can do nothing but deplore their political short-sightedness, and all that
sentimental ‘liberalism’ or ‘radicalism’ that has brought us where we are
instead of to a position where we should have been dictators of the Melting-pot,
free to jump in or not as we like - not at least liable to be pushed in, like a small
boy into his first swimming-bath.20

In order to prevent this the Europeans should close their borders, he implies, and set up their
own melting-pot to weld the whites of that region into a coherent force better able to bargain
in the event of a final melt-down:

If (to show my enthusiasm for fusion) I may allow myself a strikingly mixed
metaphor, it is at the fountain-head that we should establish our Melting-pot -
an example to all other Melting-pots. And it is here in Europe that we should
start a movement at once for the miscenagation of Europeans - with each other,
that is - Asia and Africa could be considered later, no doubt, for incorporation in
our Model Melting-pot.21

But this is quite plainly a reluctant compromise, and the anticipation of ultimate union with
Asia and Africa appeals less to Lewis than the pan-Europeanism which he claimed to see as
an interregnum. With this in mind we are in a position to explain how it is that Paleface
came to say so many contradictory things. In a bid to show that he was interested in social
reform Lewis added to his ‘Paleface’ essay some speculations concerning the future
eradication of racial boundaries. In order to tread a middle path, and not to compromise his
own judgements, he declared the amalgamation which he saw in progress to be one which the
whites would be well-advised to reject, seeking better terms later after bringing racial order
to their own house. But the revisions to the core of the book were not thorough, and traces of
his earlier position remained. For example in ‘Paleface’, Lewis had written that ‘I believe
that we cannot, in fact, be polite enough to all those other kinds of men that we are called
upon to pass our time with [...] We should grow more and more polite: but if possible, see less
and less of those other kinds of men, between whom and ourselves there is no practical reason
for physical merging, nor for spiritual merging’, a passage which stands unaltered in the book
form. This plainly does not square easily with his professed belief in an ultimate melting-
pot, and is in direct contradiction with this remark found in the new material:

I have, in addition to my often expressed desire for a universal state, another
craving [...] I would, if I were able to, suppress all out-of-date discrepancies of
tongue, as well as skin and pocket [...] I should like to speak, and write, some
Volapuc, not English - at all events some tongue that would enable me to converse
with everybody of whatever shade of skin or opinion [...]22

Secondly, although committed to a vision of world race and state by the logic of his claims to
be a revolutionary, Lewis drew back from a wholehearted projection of this future, preferring
to imagine what amounts to Fortress Europe. It is difficult to decide whether this is
indecisive or dishonest, though on balance, and given Lewis’s intelligence, we have to assume
that this quibble was a deliberate attempt to conceal an emerging idea (it may be relevant to
remember that Lewis originally planned to call his publishing firm Free West Publications,

20 Paleface (London: Chatto & Windus, 1929), 152.
21 Paleface, 283.
22 Paleface, 68.
but later switched to the more cryptic Arthur Press. And it is as ‘work in progress’ that we should regard Paleface. Lewis’s political thinking was developing fast after 1926, but its current has been obscured by the confusing sequence of his publications. The picture can be brought into focus by discounting from the bibliography of this period books constructed from reworked material drawn out of the ‘Man of the World’ and ‘Apes of God’, and short pieces like the ‘Diabolical Principle’, which were written as parts of a personal war with Paris. This reveals that the only new writing that Lewis published between 1926 and 1930 is to be found in ‘The Revolutionary Simpleton’, Paleface, Paleface, and Hitler; in that order. I have already argued for the political significance of the ‘Revolutionary Simpleton’, and I now wish to say that the two versions of his work on race represent the developments of this position, and are in fact the road to Hitler. Moreover there are passages in Paleface that must lead one to suppose that Lewis had already begun to take a considerable interest in the development of European race theory. Consider for example the two predictions in the opening pages. I will quote the second only:

I again publish and foretell that the time will come (and that immediately) when, upon the daily ‘starred and red-billed’ appearance before the footlights of some indignant righteous figure (his face corked to look black) despatched by Mr. Knopf or Mr. Mencken or Mr. Plomer to abuse and ridicule the audience (squatting beneath him, pale both with natural pigment and with equally understandable alarm), and to tell them what a lousy lot they are, an extremely pale figure will either arise from among the spectators and dramatically approach the stage, or else will appear out of a trap, or descend from the ceiling, or merely stalk from the wings, and we shall hear what we shall hear.

Lewis is often praised for prophecy, and here is one of his best, so good in fact that one suspects inside knowledge, gathered perhaps during his visit to Munich in late 1928. A full discussion of Lewis’s interest in Aryanism must wait for another occasion, though further points are raised in the following chapter on Hitler.

No reviewer drew attention to the slight discrepancy between the first draft and the final book, and very few were much interested in the speculations on ethics, but Lewis’s proposals for the melting-pot were noticed by many and impressed no one. After describing Lewis’s social analysis in sympathetic terms M.G. in the Cambridge Review concluded ‘Mr. Lewis is rather weak in suggesting a cure for this undisputed state of affairs and is compelled to fall back on the old remedy of a “United States of Europe” and a common language; which, besides being difficult of realization, would prove inadequate.’

Leonard Woolf, in one of the best reviews, compared Lewis to an Old Testament sage:

One has, therefore, no right to complain if Mr. Lewis confines himself mainly to satirical lamentations about ‘our unhappy world’, and his only suggestions for making it less unhappy are that we should be scrupulously polite to the coloured races [...]Jeremiah himself can hardly be said to have made any practical suggestions which entitled him to the dignity or indiginity of being called a social reformer.

The point is not, as one thinks at first, that Lewis has nothing positive to offer, but rather that his very concrete proposals are too silly to merit consideration. These critics very reasonably ignored Lewis’s hint at further unification, not that it would have made much difference. The Daily Herald, for example, seems aware of this, and also aware of the fact that Lewis was not entirely happy with his own conclusions:

Mr. Wyndham Lewis, the prize iconoclast, has considerably mellowed. If he goes on as he is going he will find himself one day an International Socialist. It is rather monotonous how all critics of society tend to take this same road. [...] He proposes that Europe should follow the example of America and become a melting-pot for the mixing of races instead of a series of barbed wire camps. He wants one speech and one government for Europe; or else, the colour problem will

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24 Paleface, 4.
be solved by the whites wiping one another out in future wars. But don't mention International Socialism to him just yet.\textsuperscript{27}

Just as with \textit{The Art of Being Ruled}, reviewers suspected a naivety in Lewis's vision of things to come. One writer, Mathias in the \textit{Western Mail}, very properly remarked that Lewis 'retains faith in progress',\textsuperscript{28} a fact which might have come as a surprise to Lewis himself, but is as true of \textit{Paleface} as it was of his earlier more millennialist book. Alan Porter's version of this point, 'After the power and diversity of his criticisms, his only concrete proposals seem trivial', is the more surprising since he believes that Lewis 'points out, vividly and truly, how much cultural and even racial unity Europe possesses', but his counter-reasoning is invincible, largely because it is pragmatic rather than moral:

But in view of the problem we have inherited, politeness surely seems inadequate. It would not be easy to draw ourselves away from the growing interaction and interdependence of nations. If we grant the White Man all the self-confidence in the world, there are still others to say whether they are contented with the way in which they are treated; and it does not seem probable that they would greatly appreciate an attitude of courtesy veiling dislike, or \textit{hauter} trying not to be condescending. The other races of the world are still alive; they can hardly be met, to their own satisfaction, by a well-mannered rejection of their claims upon our attention.\textsuperscript{29}

The truth perhaps is that Lewis's positives appear feeble because he felt compelled by the social requirements of publication to present them as moderate and sensible opinions, but in the forms that he held them privately, and which we can glimpse here and there in his work, they were extremist and despairing defences thrown up in the spirit of Götterdämmerung. His inept compromise ensured that he lost on all hands. Where his extremism was visible in \textit{Paleface}, as in his remarks about blacks, he suffered from the inevitable stigma attached to such views, and where he had succeeded in concealing his feelings, as in the pan-European ideal, he appeared as a weak and inconsequential thinker who didn't follow ideas through.

It is tempting to imagine that it was his ideas about race which give the reception of this book its air of disappointment, but that is not in fact borne out by any of the pieces. Several reviewers noticed the ambivalence, but they also noticed Lewis's disclaimers, and tended to mollify their criticisms in recognition of this effort. Nevertheless, \textit{Paleface} is a watershed in his career since it marks the end of his reputation as a critic. The muddle of the book simply lost him the respect of his readers and his friends, and by venturing into an area where he had no special knowledge he laid himself open to mundane refutation. In art theory and philosophy he was relatively safe, but one did not need to be a master of abstract thought to say with authority that Lewis's proposal for European unity was that of a crank. And those with more knowledge of the 'colour' problem came down very heavily indeed on his ignorance. Rebecca West, who 'was in the United States when the movement of friendship towards the Negro changed from being a saintly audacity of the humanitarian to a resolute and even rollicking sport of the intellectuals',\textsuperscript{30} objected that Lewis had simply misunderstood the recent history of race relations, and had not seen that because of the movement of black workers into northern factories to supply a labour shortage during the war there had been a substantial increase of friction, and 'virtually the first race-riots that the North have ever seen':

This kind of conduct is as repellent to Americans as it is to any other people. I submit therefore that it was to suppress barbarism and not to revert to it that white people dropped the habit of uncontrolled abandonment to the primitive feelings of disgust excited in them by the physical difference of Negroes [...] And not unreasonably she attributes the 'priggish, lachrymose' fiction that resulted from this change of heart as merely having 'the characteristics of propagandist fiction the world over'. One need not agree with this rebuttal, and I think myself that Lewis was in fact onto something in terming the over-compensatory guilt of the white an inferiority complex, to see that Lewis was now trespassing in fields where his slapdash and intuitive working methods could be easily spotted. This recklessness in venturing into a field where he was incompetent

\textsuperscript{27} A. M., 'Our Prize Iconoclast', \textit{Daily Herald} (8 August 1929), 7.
\textsuperscript{28} 'The Decline of Paleface: Philosophy of Mr. Wyndham Lewis', \textit{Western Mail} (30 May 1929).
\textsuperscript{29} 'The Poor White', \textit{Spectator}, 142.5267 (8 June 1929), 905.
\textsuperscript{30} 'On Making Due Allowance for Distortion', \textit{Time and Tide}, 10.21 (24 May 1929), 624,
also suggested that Lewis might not be wholly sane. Several commentators had noticed that his prose writing was becoming oddly mannered, Geoffrey West observing that ‘his power of sustained invective is astonishing, though it must be admitted at times that he appears over-conscious of the fact’ and the Times of India had astutely observed that Lewis’s admittedly brilliant style was ‘like a carefully cultivated stammer’ that ‘degenerates into a habit’. Rebecca West took this line of criticism a little further when she asked why it was that Lewis ‘does not produce a greater effect on his time’, and suggested by way of an answer that his book was spoiled ‘by a fault to which it is hard to give a name’. Leonard Woolf found the appropriate metaphor with ease, prophecy:

It leads to an attitude of mind in the prophet which may easily become dangerous to him and boring to his audience. He will, unless he possesses the rare gift of intellectual humility, rapidly and unconsciously come to believe that everything which he has to say is in the nature of a message. There are already disturbing signs of this evangelical - or should one say angelical? - attitude in Mr. Lewis and his writing.

The form of the last phrase is very significant; this is more than a stylistic comment, a clinical diagnosis is being offered. Woolf is not alone in the tone of his remarks, and I suspect that his suggestion of a decline into madness, or at least eccentricity, was widely held, very largely as the result of Paleface. In a feature article on Lewis in Arts and Crafts, Montagu Slater surveyed Lewis’s career, commenting ‘it is difficult to understand that these fabulous beginnings should lead to these threadbare endings [...] it seems hard that the vision should fade into the common light of 1929.

In sum we get no further than a melancholy brooding on melancholy: a savage attack on savagery; and through it all a nostalgia; a vague feeling that there is health and actuality somewhere; calm and the end of searching; classic repose or something of the kind. Nobody knows quite what. It is indefinable. The sick man’s dream of health.

**THE APES OF GOD**

*The Apes of God*, as I have suggested in various places above, grew from one section, called ‘London’ or ‘Life’, of a narrative originally to be entitled ‘Joint’ or ‘Master-Joint’, and later called ‘The Apes of God’. This peculiar book would have dealt with the activities of three main characters, the schoolmaster Thomas Patrick Cinder (‘Joint’), the Lewis-like mastermind Bully (Sometimes disguised as Zagreus), and the Jewish intellectual Archie Hetman. A fourth character, Bully’s secretary, Daniel Boleyn, may also have been important. There were to be chapters on a bus ride taken by Joint to a park, Joint’s school, Archie’s reading in biology and psychoanalysis, Archie’s family, the War, a dream-like sequence in which Joint wandered in the philosophic afterworld, and there was to be tour of the cages, with Bully perhaps conducting Archie through the Bohemia of London including the Lenten Party of the Sitwells. This latter section eventually crowded all the other parts out of the book, much to its detriment, I should say, judging from the remaining fragments of the others, and became a repository for Lewis’s hatreds. The most significant change of all was the decision to withdraw authority from Bully/Zagreus, turning him into an Ape. The reason for this is not clear, but I believe that any future evidence that comes to light is likely to show that initially Lewis had felt Bully strong enough to justify the venom of the book, even though not absolute (there are draft notes that refer to a character called X who stands beyond Bully) and that the character would simply assert Lewis’s own self-interest, in ‘Man of the World’ fashion. He became dissatisfied with this position in 1926, and sought to provide other guarantors for his opinions, though the result of this was, as William Empson remarked, an ‘offensive covert pragmatism’ like that of Chesterton. Authority was therefore withdrawn from Bully/Zagreus, and placed, doubtfully, in Pierpoint, the off-stage

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31 ‘A Brief for the White’, Times Literary Supplement (30 May 1929), 432.
32 Anon, ‘Wyndham Lewis’, Times of India (28 May 1929).
33 ‘Wyndham Lewis’, Arts and Crafts, 3.1 (June 1929), 14.
Ape Master, and more securely still in Lewis himself, the final guarantee of objectivity being the absolute and transcendental God of Time and Western Man who lay beyond them all.

From 1928-9 onwards Lewis thought of this book as the crown of his work, the exercise of a right to judge which he had been labouring throughout the nineteen twenties to render impregnable to criticism. He believed that he had made a breakthrough in 1926, and after this time the fiction grew with great speed, Lewis showing sections of it to Prentice in 1926,35 and to Montgomery Belgin in December 1927, when he asked the enormous sum of £1000 for the rights,36 a demand which Belgin unsurprisingly refused. The price reflects Lewis's personal investment in the work rather than a sound estimate of its commercial possibilities, an error which arose again in 1929 when negotiating with Prentice over terms. Lewis conceived of the book as an expensive limited edition, apparently imagining a run of 1500 copies priced at £2.2.0,37 a strategy which Prentice thought unlikely to succeed. Chatto's offer, made on the seventh of August 1929, proposed a smaller number at a much lower price, ‘950 copies at 25s.’,38 and was unacceptable to Lewis, who replied that he would publish the book himself since ‘the discrepancy between my view as regards my book and those of your firm is of such a nature that there is no possibility at all of our accommodating them.’39 If there is any doubt remaining that Lewis considered this work to be much more important than The Childermass then we need only remember that the limited edition of that book was issued in a run of 231 copies priced at a pound, and that the trade edition sold for 8s and 6d.

Lewis was treating this as the major event of his publishing career. His commitment to The Childermass had been great, but Lewis's interest in that book had been very largely confined to the task of correcting his public image. The contents interested him, in an abstract way, but it was a book he found difficult to continue without the encouragement of critical praise. The Apes, on the other hand, was a work in which he was very much more directly engaged with his central subject, hatred, the rewards of his new formula seeming so great that it was almost impossible for him to stop writing. But private satisfaction, reinforcement one might say, was not sufficient, and hence the great weight attached by Lewis to successful publication. Indeed it seems possible that this desire for public verification increased after 1926 or 1927, as a by product of his return to some objective standard. An apostle of the 'Man of the World's' machiavellianism might console himself for public indifference by reflecting that this was no more than he expected, and rather confirmed him in his position. It would leave him cool, with no sense of raging injustice. The God-guaranteed genius who was ignored could also, of course, draw strength from public indifference, but it would take the form of righteous indignation, the rage of an aristocrat at the impertinence of inferiors. 'Natures' and 'Puppets' in The Art of Being Ruled are mysteriously distinct, that is true, but Lewis simply shrugs his shoulders at the predominance of Puppets. After Time and Western Man, with its ladder of existence, Lewis apparently held that those lower in the order owed allegiance to those above them. This was not, one must stress, a mutually beneficial co-operative dominance hierarchy, of the kind outlined in The Art of Being Ruled, but an absolute duty. This is stated with crystalline clarity in the opening section of Paleface, where in the process of discussing T.H. Green Lewis rejects any idea that all individuals must concede 'rights' to all other individuals:

What is 'due from everyone to everyone' (in the words of Green) is either (1) a merely sentimental cliché [...] or it is (2) an entirely non-sentimental compulsion - namely that that is due to merit, to personal character or to personal ability. There is nothing else 'due' from one person to another. [...] it is 'due' not because the object of it is 'human', nor because the skin in question is white or black: it is 'due' because in some way we recognize an entity with superior claims to ours upon our order, kind or system: as I see the matter, that is the only ground for an obligation that exists. [...] This obligation that all men are under to personal power or to the vital principle that resides in persons, is apt to be bitterly resented. What the 'puppet' owes to person (to make use, as in The Art of Being

35 See Bradford Morrow and Bernard Lafourcade, A Bibliography of the Writings of Wyndham Lewis, 56.
36 A Bibliography of the Writings of Wyndham Lewis, 60.
38 Prentice to Lewis, 7 August 1929.
39 Lewis to Prentice, 12 August 1929, quoted in Bradford Morrow and Bernard Lafourcade, A Bibliography of the Writings of Wyndham Lewis, 57.
Ruled, of Goethe’s terminology) is the cause of many heart-burnings and revolts, and is, where that is possible, withheld.40

What Lewis does not say is that when he had used Goethe’s terms before he had done so believing in a co-operative mutualism, an organic society. By 1929 this had been thrown aside and replaced with theocratic vassalage.

The Apes of God, then, was Lewis’s final demand for submissive homage, the strength of the claim being evident both in the weight, over five pounds, and the cost, £3.3.0, of the volume as eventually published. Prentice could not have guessed that by refusing to take the book on Lewis’s terms he was not only wounding feelings, but committing the first of the several ‘sins against genius’ which won him a place in the medical torture centre of The Human Age.41

But alongside this titanic confidence there is also desperation. It was the last shot in Lewis’s locker, the last major work that he could quarry from the post-war inspiration, and if he was ever to present a serious challenge to Joyce, as a public figure that is, it must be now. But before assaulting the continent he would have to take up a commanding position in England, and so The Apes was designed to be a scandal, a huge, rude, sensational denunciation to flush the snide hostility of his cultural enemies into the open where he could expose its inadequacies, and having beaten them from the field assume his throne at last. Everything hung upon the book’s reception.

‘A STORM IN THAT TEACUP CALLED LONDON’

The Apes of God appeared upon June 3rd last. Immediately an electrical atmosphere pervaded all the London District. In a hundred ways Mr. Wyndham Lewis was made to feel that he had gone too far. Anonymous letters of the most violent sort have flowed in at the letter box. His life even has been threatened by an airmail.42

The first review that I have seen appeared on the 9th in the Daily News and Chronicle, where Sylvia Lynd placed it third in her group notice, under the banner headline, ‘Fiction: A Novel that Shocked a Reviewer’, but the book she was referring to was Other Man’s Saucer by J. Keith Winter, a deliberate insult to Lewis, I suspect.43 Her remarks on The Apes began by complaining of the size, ‘perhaps he designed it to be a sort of chained bible for his admirers’, criticized its technique as ‘a little uncertain in manner’, and found that after the ‘portentous’ opening he had written ‘satirical comedy reminiscent in manner of Mr. Aldous Huxley’ except that Lewis ‘has not Mr. Huxley’s power of incisive portraiture or English’. Its thesis she dismissed:

‘Apes of God’ is gross and tedious, but it is not on that account a good book. It is on the contrary, a silly one. Mr. Lewis’s remarkable powers of vituperation have no adequate ground for their violence. The fact that in Paris and London there are a certain number of rich blackguards who chatter about art and possibly keep a few artists out of their proper environment matters about as much to art as the prosperity of the banana tree at Kew matters to the English harvest.

The next notice that I know of came five days later in The Saturday Review.44 Osbert Burdett began by complimenting Lewis on his productivity, expressed relief that the book was ‘not so unintelligible as The Childermass’, but remarked on its ‘deserts of apparent irrelevance’. Its episodic structure ‘invites us to choose the interesting and reject the wearisome as if it were a collection of separate descriptions.’ The style he thought suffered from an ‘infection from many of the jazz elements that Mr. Lewis appears to detest’, and though brilliant ‘one will never return to it once a primary curiosity has been exhausted’:

‘The Apes of God’ may be the most brilliant product of a season, and one day even may be reopened by those curious to recall the decade that succeeded the war, but the best work of which Mr. Lewis is capable will not, I think, be brilliance of this kind.

40 Paleface, 76.
41 This case supporting this statement will published elsewhere.
44 Osbert Burdett, ‘Reviews: Mr. Lewis’s Satire’, Saturday Review, 149.394 (14 June 1930), 759.
After this there was a wait of five days again, and then a short piece, barely over a hundred words, in S. P. B. Mais’s Recent Fiction column in the Daily Telegraph. Again Lewis was relegated to an inferior position, the headline going to ‘Mr. A. P. Herbert’s Canal Folk’ and ‘A New Colette Novel’. Mais merely observed that Lewis was wasting his time on the ‘asininity of certain unimportant sectors of the modern pseudo-intelligentia’, and advised the reader to concentrate on the ‘farce (which is magnificent) and on the analysis of modern art (which is masterly), and not worry too over-much about the display of spleen and the long passages of incoherence.’ After this drab and repetitive press it is quite a relief to come across Cecil Roberts discussion the Sphere for the 21st of June. Yet again Lewis was merely an unheaded part of a group review, but at least this time he drew several hundred words of abuse. In some ways it is, bearing in mind my remarks on vassalage above, quite sensitive to the intention of the book:

This novel represents a mass attack on the reader. It weighs 5lb 5oz., is 10 in. by 7, and 3 in. thick.

And the snooty pomposity of his criticism - ‘This is not literature, it is insolence. I don’t mind being called ignorant or old-fashioned for saying so.’ - is just what Lewis would have liked, as controversy. This poor start would have been much lightened by the long and ecstatic discussion in the Sunday Referee for the 22nd of June if it had not been by Richard Aldington. From the public’s point of view Aldington was known to be a friend of Lewis, and Lewis himself could not have avoided the conclusion that a favour was being returned, since in October of the previous year Lewis had assisted Prentice with advertising for Death of a Hero. It certainly has the air of something composed with an eye to providing copy for jacket blurbs: ‘Its perpetual stream of satire rolls like drum-fire and the bayonets of Mr. Lewis’s attacking divisions gleam between the lines. […] The Apes of God, though one of the cruellest, is also one of the most tremendous farces ever conceived in the mind of man. […] the greatest piece of writing since Ulysses’. Lewis, quite unembarrassed about printing this stuff in Satire & Fiction alongside his claim that in this age of log-rolling ‘NO ONE HAS EVER ROLLED MR. LEWIS’, was unable to choose from the welter of compliments and quoted almost the entire piece, so it probably presents his ideal review. But there are reservations, of course. Lewis is said to resemble ‘Thor using his invincible hammer to crack monkey nuts’, and he reproves Lewis for ‘over elaboration’. But it is the triviality of the subject which draws from him the remark in which we can detect the opinion concealed elsewhere in the review: ‘with subjects more universal and less personal Mr. Lewis could produce a series of magnificent novels.’ Which is as much as to say ‘This is not a good book, it is too personal to be that’.

Another four days passed without a review before the Glasgow Herald on the 26th of June initiated a flurry of notices, the Daily Mail, Time and Tide, Sunday Dispatch, Yorkshire Post, Everyman, and the Times Literary Supplement all issuing reviews in the following week, and suggesting that the storm was about to break, but with this last piece the coverage again lapsed into the doldrums. The Spectator and Nation and Athenaeum reviewed the book in mid-July, the WeekEnd Review, the Saturday Review of Literature, and the Sketch in the first half of August, two of these pieces being by L. P. Hartley, and at last the New Statesman offered its opinions in the third week of the month. With the exception of notices in the Adelphi and Bookman for October, and pieces in the Evening News.
I have standards, Lewis's poor book. The entire book, his given catastrophe. Lewis's 'recalls of Ulysses' as no book since published has done, and defended its structure by claiming, in the 'General Strike' he writes an almost copperplate 'tinte' to the completed page. But such admirers were rare. And the sort of display coverage given by the Daily Mail (reproduced opposite) is unique, and exactly what Lewis required in profusion for his plan to work. And even here the praise was qualified, of course. Lewis had 'aggressive individuality', and 'true levelling thinker'. His style was 'always lucid', but unfortunately he was 'not a good novelist' and his 'characters are little more than vehicles for his views, or Awful Examples to be flayed and stripped with all the mercilessness at his command'.

Weil Mitchison, not yet a friend of Lewis's, wrote a substantial and detailed review of the book, together with Joyce's Anna Livia Plurabelle, which might appear to be the sort of company that Lewis would like to keep, an improvement on Other Men's Sacre anyway, but the point of the conjunction is to show that Lewis's method, although well suited to 'dispel all illusions and break shams', is probably not capable of making 'either real beauty or nobility', both qualities possessed in full by Joyce's prose poem which is 'amazingly and suddenly beautiful', a work of 'extreme loveliness', a 'masterpiece'. And the overall effect of the review is to suggest that in the critical scales Joyce's one shilling papyrus weighs more than Lewis's three guineas tablet. Part of the problem was clearly that Lewis's propositions invited disagreement: 'he would sweep away equally the ideals of the bourgeoisie and the commune', and stand alone in a capital, fierce, creative individualism. But here I believe is the fallacy.' Joyce's work, more cautiously in my opinion, offered no such purchase, and consequently Mitchison was able to pronounce herself ignorant of its meaning but conscious of its beauty.

The reviews already quoted have raised the question of the worth of Lewis's targets, and this is a part to which Lewis himself returned in Satire & Fiction, a sure sign that it is mattered to him. His defense there is that 'the splendour of the persons involved - the moral stature, or the magnificent intellectual presence - is scarcely a measure of the importance of a work of art' which is a fair point, at least it is tenable. What is interesting in this defense is that Lewis protests that, though mean, his targets are significant because pernicious. Yet he had ruled out this option by declaring himself to be a non-moral satirist, that is to say he justified his hostilities by reference to a supposed objectivity derived from the inhuman vision of the demi-divine or fully divine intellect. His satire was not a social policeman, more a supernormal spy. That the persons described were all known to him might say, was a pure accident. I have argued repeatedly above that beneath these claims of pure art, or objectivity, there is always to be found Lewis's own hatred, his central subject as I have called it. In the case of The Apes he had assumed that the 'gossip-class' victims, the Sinwells principally, would produce a 'gossip-class storm', and his fidgety defense in Satire & Fiction is more an admission of disappointment than anything else. The reviewers simply refused, perhaps through fear of being involved in libel, to take up this side of the book, on which the hope of a public arena for his quarrels depended. It could equally have been that they found it dull. John Grosvenor's note, in a gossip column in the Sunday Dispatch, gives one this feeling:

My country respite permitted me to read Mr. Wyndham Lewis's quarter of a million words about the 'gossip-column' class, his novel The Apes of God. But though it is about the sort of people we know, they are the sort of people we do not write about.

51 Both pieces are quoted in Satire & Fiction, on pp. 35 and 36 respectively.
55 Satire & Fiction, p. 44.
They are for the most part an intensely small and intricate class of self-important, conventionless people. But the book is written with fine vigor. Lewis had simply vastly overestimated the scandal value of his enemies, and the respect in which they were held. Reviewers tended to think his choice wrong even when they agreed with him about the value of the persons. Lewis caricatured the Times Literary Supplement as the Literary Gazette of the Simiadae in one of his flyers, but Orlo Williams’ review turns out to think quite as little of Lewis’s enemies as Lewis himself: ‘Unfortunately the excess of his indignation is disproportionate to the importance of its objects and has blinded him to the fact that the imitation of triviality and tomfoolery is not in itself comic.’ The only piece that I have seen which lives up to Lewis’s ‘Chorus of Apes’ is a long discussion by Raymond Mortimer in the Nation & Athenaeum:

Mr. Lewis is so intent upon criticizing other people that he makes no attempt to criticize himself: he never knows when he is being a bore.

‘Apes of God’ is not a true novel. [...] If Mr. Lewis had written the book as memoirs, it would have been far more interesting, and probably no more libellous.

[...] all his characters talk in the same strident tones, and all are treated by the author with the same unimaginative contempt. Never an attempt to see their point of view, but a chutney-fed colonel’s ‘Put the beggars up against a wall, and shoot ‘em’. The only character whom Mr. Lewis does not abuse is Pierpoint, and Pierpoint is clearly intended for Mr. Lewis himself. O sancta simplicitas!

This is so clearly what Lewis wanted, outraged priggery, but which his opponents were far too cunning to grant him. Mortimer perhaps lacked self-control.

By mid-July it was clear that there would be no scandal, and that the reviews were now tailing off. Lewis’s response was to concoct a pamphlet to attempt to rekindle the flames. But the question was With what? The only act of suppression he could document was the ‘rejection’ at the beginning of July of Roy Campbell’s review by Robert Ellis Roberts, the temporary literary editor of the New Statesman. Taking this as his core Lewis started to build around it, writing to various names in the literary world asking for their opinions. The circular letter is undated, but it is known that Lewis enclosed Aldington’s copy in note dated 25th of July. The letter to Aldington shows Lewis in the process of fabricating his story:

The Apes has caused here in London a good deal of disturbance. My life has been threatened by an airman, even! [...] The agony-column of the Times has echoed the rage of people who considered themselves attacked in the Apes - many peculiar things have happened. But in several instances the Press has been got hold of - and the letter I enclose will indicate that now a counter attack is about to begin. I am admirably armed [...] I enclose (for your private perusal) a copy of a letter from Roy Campbell, who wrote an admirable review at Sharps request for the New Statesman, and had it returned because it was too favourable to my book.

In his circular Lewis repeated these charges in a slightly different form. He noted the ‘difficulties that Satire, in every period, has had to contend with - namely the enraged resistance of the more nimble and active of those influential persons, who regard themselves as attacked’, but conceded that in the case of The Apes the ‘effects of such resentment came too late to affect materially the success of the private edition.’ I am unfortunately unable to comment on the truth of this claim about sales, but rather suspect it is an exaggeration. My point here is that Lewis hadn’t decided whether his book had been damaged by a boycott or not, just as in Satire & Fiction itself he begins by claiming that he is ‘at peace with the press’, and that ‘It has not been at all a bad Press’, but a few pages later is grumbling that his enemies have a ‘finger in every literary pie’ and that therefore it is not surprising that his book should have had, ‘in certain portions of the Press, a Rough House’. The difficulty, plainly, was that he was unable to say ‘I wanted a scandal and didn’t get it’, so was forced to invent one, or in the case of the Ellis Roberts matter to embroider upon a trivial, if

58 ‘Mr. Gossip’, Nation and Athenaeum, 47.15 (12 July 1930), 475-6.
59 In The Letters of Wyndham Lewis, 190-1, where it is misdated as the 30th of July.
60 Satire & Fiction, pages 7 and 19 respectively.
malodorous, incident. This latter was presented on the cover of *Satire & Fiction* as a rejection, a 'Scandal of an Attempt to Sabotage a Great Work of Art!', though it appears from Ellis Robert's letter to Campbell that he was in fact prepared to publish the piece with alterations. This was clearly unpleasant, but not quite what Lewis claimed it to be.

By the time that *Satire & Fiction* appeared in September, Ellis Roberts had published his own review, in which he called *The Apes*, with only the slightest qualification, 'a brilliant novel', and criticized Lewis, as Williams had, only for exercising his 'animosity against folk of whom no one would know or care anything were it not for Mr. Lewis's attack'. This gave Lewis's rejoinder a hollow feeling, and was no doubt intended to. Augustus John wrote to Lewis, 'I read Ellis Roberts' review of *The Apes* in the N.S. Like most of your press, *The Times, Spectator & Nation* all had disgraceful notices.' John knocked this aside: 'He was right to make a fuss - but you! Its a good job you had some disgraceful notices. Unanimity is suspect.' Even to a friend, then, the whole pamphlet turned out to be a desperate compilation of invented grievance, and embarrassing blurb. As Evelyn Waugh remarked, the 'press cuttings and personal letters in praise or condemnation of the novel' were an 'intolerable bore' and by reprinting them Lewis showed 'great personal weakness'.

Paul Edwards has suggested that *Satire & Fiction* was 'to keep the fuss going' and was probably 'good for sales', but as I hope I have shown it was really to start the fuss, if at all possible. Whether it was good for sales I don't know, but in his letter to John quoted above, Lewis claims to have all but sold out *Satire & Fiction* itself, and when writing to Prentice on the 14th of October he claimed to have already made more than Chatto offered, with a good number of copies remaining, 'although more than you considered it safe to print as a special edition have already been sold and paid for'. In both cases Lewis had reason to boast, but we can give him the benefit of the doubt here. But even if we add to this the claims of private disturbance, or abusive letters and telephone calls, this does not alter the fact that *The Apes of God* failed in drawing his enemies into the public arena, and that consequently the book's publication must be judged, in terms of Lewis's expectations, a disaster. By October this was becoming clear to Lewis himself. The reviews had dried up, the scandal showed no signs of growing, Bloomsbury had kept its seat and had come through undamaged. Worse still, the transparent dishonesty of the book, which screened personal quarrels under the guise of god-like satire, had convincingly labelled him as a malicious man.

*Review after review commented on the intensity of the hatred:*

- **Western Mail**: 'In his haste to denounce these false disciples of Art he seems to have magnified the objects of his hate and to have caricatured his uncontrollable disgust.'

- **Sunday Referee**: 'These farcical Rouault figures are evoked only to be massacred [...] It is the most impressive display of Schrecklichkeit ever witnessed in literature.'

- **Time and Tide**: 'He hates more thoroughly and efficiently than any writer living, and is probably more effective in destroying what he hates. I can't imagine what or whom he likes, but at the moment he specially dislikes homosexuals of both kinds, the war generation still pretending to be young, messy-minded people such as Jews and Irish, artists or writers who happen to have private means, and the Sitwell family [...]'

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61 'Ways of Fiction', *New Statesman*, 35.903 (16 August 1930), 597.
62 Quoted in *The Letters of Wyndham Lewis*, 194.
63 Lewis to Augustus John, in *The Letters of Wyndham Lewis*, 194.
65 'The Books You Read', *Graphic*, 130.31762 (5 October 1930), 174.
68 Frederick J. Mathias, 'A Leviathan of a Story', *Western Mail*. Quoted in *Satire & Fiction*, 35-6.
69 Richard Aldington, 'A Stream of Satire', *Sunday Referee* (22 June 1930), quoted in *Satire and Fiction*, p. 32.
**Week-End Review:** '[...] vociferous with disgust [...] The violence of his attack leaves one breathless [...]'

**Sketch:** 'Mr. Wyndham Lewis has a capacity for experiencing and awakening disgust unapproached by any other writer of our time. [...] [Lewis's theme, the 'collapse of English social life in the grip of post-war conditions'] is continually obliterated by wave upon wave of personal disgust. His fellow human beings - 'members of the gossip-column class' - affect him with nausea [...] His temperament leads him to recoil from his fellow men with the utmost violence [...] his superb prose style, lacking the irrigation of human sympathy, [is ...] somehow divorced from reality. [...] It is terrifying and impressive and alien.'

The accusation of madness has been noted in the reviews of *Paleface* and it rose again in response to *The Apes of God*. The Spectator referred to 'Mr. Lewis's disordered genius', and Gladwyn Jebb entitled his *Adelphi* review 'Off the Rails'. This suspicion of pathology, and I accept that it is a reasonable judgement, arises partly, no doubt, because experimentation with hate is, in any form, difficult to accept. But by employing a faulty justification of his antipathies, a disguise of self-interest too easily penetrated by the reader, Lewis appeared as hypocritical or, worse, self-deceived. In his essay on non-moral satire in *Satire & Fiction* he claimed to be opposing social, remedial satire (moral satire) with the contempt of the objective intellect (non-moral satire), but the reader sees through this, and realizes that it is a dummy, no more, for Lewis's own dislikes. This position is a sad come-down, and ultimately it robs *The Apes* of greatness as a theoretical contribution to the understanding of hatred. But though the architecture of the book is inadequate, the rhetoric of the descriptions still shows signs of the honesty of the 'Man of the World', and the book remains a very great work of candid malice, one of the greatest in English, because of this. But Lewis's reviewers could hardly have found his aims repulsive however unimpeachable the logic of its presentation. *The Man of the World* would undoubtedly have struck them as inhumanly cold, *The Apes* did strike them as insanely human. There are of course traces of the first position in the book, Naomi Mitchison being one critic who saw and rejected them from the simple and conventional position of a prudent co-operator:

> We cannot stand alone; man is not made for that. When we have our revolution [...] it will be no use our all trying to be separate, splendid, Wyndham Lewis western he-men (and she-women?); we shall have to become part of a community and get our good through and in that, with a grown-up happiness that can afford not to be separate - a child with its toy in the corner - and if we are too proud to become part of a community and its future, it will probably be the worse for us.

Had Lewis completed the original plan for *The Apes* it would presumably have met a good deal of criticism along these lines. However, the weak claims to objectivity in *The Apes* do not suggest this kind of repulsive, remarkable, self-awareness, quite immune to the normal human guilts, but a normal, if grossly enlarged, peevishness which had tricked itself, and no one else, into believing that it did not stand on its own two feet, but brooded over the abyss of eternity. To contemporaries, and many since, this has seemed sick or silly.

The failure of *The Apes* as a coup in literary politics is closely related, I think, to its failure as an articulation of hatred. During the twenties he had acquired a very considerable standing in England, not of the kind he desired but a respectable one nevertheless. There had always been doubts as to his balance, and during 1929 these became stronger, until in 1930 the divine megalomania of *The Apes* discredited him utterly. He had demanded total authority, and in response the public withdrew even that which he had:

> the giant locomotive of British letters has left the rails, and is ploughing slowly along the track, tearing up sleepers and crushing insects as it goes. The passengers are aware of a painful jolting, of a growing sense of frustration. They peer towards the driver with a wild, and I am afraid an exasperated surmise. Will

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71 L. P. Hartley, 'Novels', *Week-end Review*, 2.21 (2 August 1930), 168.
73 Anon, 'A Cubist Telephone Book', *Spectator*, 145.5324 (12 July 1930), 59.
74 'Off the Rails', *Adelphi*, 1.1 (October 1930), 74-6.
the engine ever get them to their destination, or will it (horrid suspicion!) merely land them in the ditch?75

The effect of this failure on Lewis was remarkable. The satiric squib with which he intended to follow *The Apes*, *The Roaring Queen*, a simple attack on the London literary 'Fiction' racket, had been rejected by Prentice in early July.76 It was, he said, 'too risky for Chatto's to do. Too many heads are cracked, & the result would be that the wounded would take it out on us, which means not just the partners in Chatto's, but their authors also.'77 Lewis seems to have dropped the book almost immediately, his confidence in it having been perhaps destroyed by the failure of *The Apes*, and he does not appear to have made any other attempt to publish it until two years later, in 1932. Similarly, plans for a cheap edition of *The Apes* to be published by the Arthur Press,78 were temporarily abandoned sometime in October, after an abortive attempt to interest a commercial firm.79 His first literary career in ruins, disgusted with parochial England, contemptuous of the sham-revolution of international modernism, and increasingly convinced that recent history, and his own difficulties, could be understood in terms of an anti-European semitic conspiracy, Lewis now wished to see the whole contemporary world swept aside and replaced with a new order in which he might take his rightful place. There were no signs of such a change in England, or in France, and Mussolini's combination of Marinettian mechanical militarism and passéiste nationalism was not wanted. But recent Reichstag elections in Germany had brought the Nazis, of whom Lewis had known for several years (*vide* the swastikas in *The Childermass* and *The Apes of God*) into an unexpected prominence and in November Lewis went to Berlin to study Hitler.

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75 'Off the Rails', p. 76.
77 2 July 1930, quoted in Bradford Morrow and Bernard Lafourcade, *A Bibliography of the Writings of Wyndham Lewis*, p. 112.
78 See *The Letters of Wyndham Lewis*, 196-8.
79 See Lewis to Sturge Moore, 31 Jan. 1931, in the Sturge Moore papers.
Chapter 5: 1931

THE TRUTH ABOUT HITLER

Hitler has been universally misrepresented, as much by those who seek to whitewash it as by those who paint it as a black tabernacle dripping with gore. Even the most basic facts about its history have to be established. Perhaps the most important of these is that it was conceived and written as a book, and was not, as is reported in all studies of Lewis that discuss the matter, a revision and collection of hastily written articles. The book came first, the pieces published in *Time and Tide* were extracts from it. Moreover, the volume had been on Lewis’s mind for some months at least. According to Jeffrey Meyers, who does not give his source, sometime in early November 1930 Lady Rhondda, editor of *Time and Tide*, commissioned a series of articles on Hitler and paid Lewis’s travel expenses,¹ a remark which, if true, gives the lie to Lewis’s own explanation in which he claims that he was on business in Berlin, and quite by chance became interested in Hitler.² It is evident, assuming Meyers to be correct, that Lewis had been thinking about Hitler and his party long before arriving in Germany, and had even gone so far as to persuade a well known magazine to finance a closer inspection. This interest had been growing since 1927 at the latest, but Lewis would hardly have wished to see things at first hand if it had not become suddenly clear at the September Reichstag elections that Hitler was within reach of achieving power. Certainly, the book’s production was so rapid (it appeared as a serial in January and between covers in March 1931) as to make it appear an occasional work, but the planning involved suggests that we are faced here with a premeditated study got up as a spur of the moment report.

The manuscript was substantially finished by the first week of January, and Charles Prentice wrote to Lewis on the 12th to accept the book, which he had evidently read in its entirety:

> I enjoyed the Hitler book very much, and have described its contents to the firm. The length, about 40,000 words, especially if parts to be serialized, imposes, we are afraid, a publishing price of 6/- […]³

This book cannot, then, be avoided as a careless piece of financial opportunism, or shuffled aside as an unworthy journalism quite inessential to an understanding of Lewis’s thought. The evidence points clearly to conclusions that only fans would have sought to avoid: that the book is a development of his ideas, that in some way it is representative, and that Lewis himself thought it important.

Nevertheless, Hitler is journalism of a sort which none of his preceding books, and very few of his articles, would have led us to expect. It is a radical departure for him, an experiment in what was to become his basic mode of expression during the 1930s. What appears to many to be carelessness, and Hitler is both poorly researched and mendacious, can also be regarded as colloquialism. Critics are agreed that the works of the thirties abandon the ‘highbrow’ audience, cease to be competing with Joyce and Virginia Woolf for the ear of a sophisticated readership, and turn instead to that of an audience whose primary concern was contemporary politics. As he remarked in *Blasting and Bombardiering*, for one person who reads you if you write about Machiavelli, there are a hundred who will read you if you write about Earl Baldwin or Mr Roosevelt.⁴ But the reasoning behind this shift in Lewis’s policy is barely understood at all. To represent it as a tailspin into which he precipitated himself by an aberrant book on Hitler is, I think, to ignore the difficulties which his literary career had run into during the years 1927 to 1930. Rather we should see that Hitler, and all his writing of the following decade, formed an attempt to build up a new career founded on a fresh reading public, and to involve himself in the social reform which he considered necessary. In Hitler we see Lewis trying to address a new subject, political commentary rather than the theory which had preoccupied him hitherto. This necessitated a new manner, the colloquial, and a new publishing technique, the serial followed by a book.

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² *Hitler* (Chatto & Windus: London, 1931), 5.
³ 12 January 1931, Chatto and Windus letterbook 131, p. 156.
⁴ *Blasting and Bombardiering* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1937), 6
The evidence presented in earlier chapters shows conclusively, I think, that public acclaim was always a goal for Lewis, but it is equally clear that the following he desired was principally an intellectual one. Up to 1930 he had been prosecuting, with growing impatience, a strategy which would at the worst slowly build up his standing. The failure of The Apes, the marketing of which is a good example of that impatience, provoked him to abandon the educated classes, and seek instead the ephemeral approval of large magazine reading audiences. Rather than sit and wait for his smouldering reputation to burst into flames he seems to have decided to tumble a heap of combustible polemics and some highly volatile opinions on to it to get a good blaze. But there is more to it than that. The populism of Hitler is a logical extension of the interventionist political stance taken up during 1926.

Because it now seems that this decision has ensured that Lewis remains on the margins of respectable modernism we tend to assume that this twin pronged policy was a complete failure, that as Kenner says, ‘Hitler’s reputation underwent in 1931 an occultation from which it never recovered. His books stopped being reviewed at all’.

But again, the history which led Kenner to this remark is simply false. As late as 1980, Jeffrey Meyers, in the standard biography, remarks that Hitler received only four reviews. There were, to my knowledge, at least forty, not counting pre-publication announcements. With errors of this kind it is hardly surprising that other elements of the contemporary reception have been misunderstood. A discussion of the public controversy around Hitler, and particularly that around the journal articles, will not only show that one branch of his plan can be seen as a qualified success, but will also illuminate Hitler, which has been so inaccurately read largely because we have forgotten the early debate, which is superior to the later both in terms of its information and its understanding of the book as part of Lewis’s canon.

Charles Prentice seems to have been pleased with the manuscript when it was shown to him, but remarked that ‘as few of your readers understand German, as much of the German as can be translated should be translated’ and that ‘I think that if you could make it a bit clearer what a “Credit-crank” really is, the popular reader would benefit accordingly.’ This was the first time that Prentice had offered Lewis detailed advice concerning the address and register of his work, and the reason is perhaps that he was aware of the intention to seek a new audience, and was offering some guidance in reaching a reader, a ‘popular reader’, who would have been quite excluded from The Art of Being Ruled, and indeed from Paleface, though that book represents a step towards populism. This consideration was also, I suspect, behind his decision to hold the price down to 6/- (7/- would have entitled Lewis to a more advantageous grade of royalty). In the same letter he promises on behalf of Chatto to ‘do our utmost to get the book out just as soon as we possibly can’, and Hitler was rushed through the press ahead of The Diabolical Principle which had been accepted some time before. Prentice commented on publication: ‘Abst omen, but if Hitler were shot dead this afternoon, the book could not be subscribed at a better moment.’

Taken together these small pieces of evidence indicate a concerted effort to tap a market with only medium ability, a limited book budget, and passing interests. Prentice seems to have had quite a large say in the book, judging from a later letter in which he discusses the illustrations proposed by Lewis: ‘Lawrence’s black nudes I don’t think would reproduce well, and I believe the reader would appreciate something more practical instead.’ The initial objection can be discounted instantly, given that Prentice feels the need to back it up; and the term ‘practical’ is unintelligible when one considers the nature of the reproductions that actually appeared. They lack the close connection to the textual argument that the Lawrence painting, undoubtedly intended to illustrate the core chapter ‘Analysis of the Exotic Sense’, would have had. What he is hinting at is that if the book is to sell, then the pictures must be as bland, inoffensive, and undemanding as those in a newspaper. He got his way.

Bearing these things in mind I wish to argue that it is important to recognize that Hitler is in a sense an apprenticeship. The awkwardness that characterizes his manner in the articles selected for Time and Tide, arises from Lewis’s difficulties in suppressing his own hierarchy of interests, which would privilege the abstract over the informational, in favour of one which responded to events as they happened. The reviewer in the Modern Scot cited

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6 The Enemy, 190.
7 12 January 1931, Chatto and Windus letterbook, 131, p. 156.
8 Prentice to Lewis, 26 March 1931, Chatto letterbook, 131.
9 Prentice to Lewis, 11 February 1931, Chatto letterbook, 131, p. 549.
the book's failings, but didn't notice that Lewis was straining for this quality, and that the book was bad because neither its facts nor its rationale were solid. Lewis's account of the origin of his interest in Hitler is an attempt to fake this empiricism:

How I came to have the idea of writing these articles was as follows. I went to Berlin recently on business and there I spent some weeks. But I found myself at once encompassed by a strange political unrest. Generally inattentive to politics, I found it impossible to escape from these - not so much because I agreed with the matter or tone of them (indeed, I am exceedingly sceptical about, and unresponsive to, all 'nationalist' excitement whatever), as because there was an unmistakeable accent of passion and of impressive conviction in this particular agitation that I had not met with before upon the European scene.

For the magazine reader unacquainted with his earlier writing this may have been sufficient, but to an initiate of The Art of Being Ruled it is suspiciously feeble, and anyone who had read The Childermass and The Apes of God, with their ominous swastikas, Aryan heroes and devious Jews, or knew how to unveil the threats discussed above in Paleface, would have been astonished by the hypocrisy. I have suggested that the remark is a straightforward lie, but since my evidence is itself under some question it will be as well to make the motives for the deception plausible.

At the beginning of 1931 Lewis may not have been much read outside a small circle of intellectuals, but his name was very well known even in the daily press, and reviews of his work were common in nearly all journals with pretensions to discernment. His move into politics required some explanation, then, even though it need not be water-tight or comprehensive. But given his wish to appear an objective expositor he could hardly begin by declaring 'I have had an interest in anti-democratic politics for some time, since the war certainly. And when a politician like Hitler, with a position in some ways isomorphic to mine, particularly on the question of race, seemed likely to become a force in European affairs, I very much wanted to examine him and his movement at close quarters, to see whether he really fitted into the pattern of my philosophy.' Besides, any reasoning which cast Lewis as too much of a thinker would defeat the purpose of the major tactical change which he had made in his manner of addressing the reader. For the first time he was endeavouring to conceal his superiority rather than exaggerate it, a modification which one reviewer who knew the earlier work, L. P. Hartley, noticed immediately. Hartley also saw how difficult Lewis found it:

Anything that Mr. Wyndham Lewis writes has the flavour of literature even when (as is obviously the case with 'Hitler') it has been written in haste and in a deliberately popular style which does not flow quite easily from the author's mannered and fastidious pen.  

This problem was one that Lewis never solved, either in Hitler, where he abandons the attempt during the chapters on race (the heart of the book as I see it), or in any of the popular books which followed. Nevertheless the intention had been to write rather as if he were the ordinary sensual man, in Berlin on business, recording and interpreting his impressions, and though he never, at any stage in his life, succeeded in pitching his voice in such a way as to establish a relationship with his reader based on equality, Hitler is by no means his worst attempt. But the major difficulty was that he was not much interested in exposition, and simply used this as a front for apology. The result is a volume whose plan is at variance with its argument. A review of the book's structure, and comparison with the polemic which is broken and distributed through it, will make this clearer.

There are six sections to Hitler. In the first, 'Berlin', Lewis offers his deceitful explanation of the volume's origins, a sketch of Berlin's decadent night-life, and a brief description of the political turmoil of the capital's streets. The second, 'Adolf Hitler - The Man and the Party', is on the face of it a general exposition of Hitlerism. He discusses Hitler's anti-Semitism, his pacific intentions, and explains why it is that such a politician needs a quasi-military organisation. In the third section, 'Race' and 'Class', Lewis offers a discussion of the rather puzzling fact that Hitler's socialism is based on the cohesion of those of the same race rather than the same class as in Marxism. He admits that he regards 'class' distinctions as too fluid, or unreal, to be of much use politically, except as a divisive tool to
destabilize the societies of your enemies, and that he much prefers the comparative rigidities of race. In the fourth section, "Youth-Movement" Becomes "Hitler-Movement", which is a rather flat interlude, Lewis explains that Hitler politicizes Youth in a way rather different from that in the Anglo-Saxon countries, where the young are flattered, simply on account of their being young, and in order to divert them from political thought. In Germany, the young are invited to take part in politics. The fifth section, the core of the book, "All That is Not Race in This World is Dross", attempts to explain race thinking. He begins by defining the meaning of the term 'Blutsgefühl', digresses to discuss its opposite, the 'exotic sense', and returns to Hitler's biological exclusivity, and admits that he finds it rather odd. Hitler's belief in Aryan supremacy is presented to the reader, and Lewis concludes that though interesting, and possibly right in so far as technology goes, it is untenable as a description of the Arts. The section concludes with discussion of the apparent contradiction of a national party holding a doctrine like that of the 'Blutsgefühl', which cuts across normal state boundaries. Lewis expresses the hope, and the expectation, that Hitler will honour the blood-feeling of his ideas, rather than the more limited German nationalism.

The sixth section of the book, 'Hitlerist Economics', does not appear to be of great importance, despite its length. Having explained that the Nazis would repudiate the war debt, and suggested that Britain and several other countries would be well advised to do the same thing, Lewis then turns to the general principles of the Hitler's economic theory, which he explains are like those of the Social Credit thinkers. These sections are written in a heavily ironised manner, where Lewis affects to be bored by and ignorant of the details of Social Credit, which he thinks the work of cranks and madmen. However, it becomes clear that Lewis in fact finds himself very largely in sympathy with the logic of this brand of economics, and that his scorn is a defensive gesture. Having anticipated resistance on the part of the reader, where Social Credit is concerned, he employs a mock rejection to provide camouflage for his advocacy. The section closes by suggesting that Marxist thinking is closer both to traditional economics and to traditional capitalism than is Hitlerite Social Credit, and includes a number of dark hints that it is international finance that is strangling Europe. The 'Conclusion', which appears to have been written during February 1931 (it quotes from several newspapers published at the beginning of the month) makes no substantial addition to the items listed above.

The first thing that strikes one on looking over this summary, and the book itself, is how little it actually manages to tell the reader about Hitlerism. There is little or nothing about its origins, its party structure, or its manifestos. As Glennell Wilkinson, the reviewer for Everyman, remarked, 'It was positively a feat to fill so many pages and give so little information [...] there is not one single item of fresh information for anyone accustomed to read the daily newspaper and one or two magazines.'

The reason for this is simple, Hitler is not an exposition, but a defense structured around possible objections to Hitlerism. Turning again to my summary we can see that Lewis listed five features of the movement, its apparent violence, its anti-semitism, its racialism, its nationalism, and its economics, that a British reader would be likely to find objectionable or ridiculous, and then provided reasons why such judgements were premature or unfounded. These arguments are sometimes difficult to understand because Lewis hid his fundamental premise by distributing it in the body of the work, when it would have made the entire book rather clearer if it had come first.

EUROPE IN DANGER

Hitler is based on the assumption that the cultures and states of northern Europe are disintegrating, partly because of the effects of technological innovation on social structure, partly because of socialism based on class interests (for reasons discussed at the end of this chapter Lewis had no objection to socialization founded on more substantial differentiations between men, such as race), and partly because their moral expansiveness had caused them to lose confidence in their own procedures and to take a sentimental and supinely respectful interest in the cultures of others, a failing Lewis discusses at length under the title 'The Exotic Sense', where it is described as 'an unexampled pest in the latterday european democratic societies':

12 Wyndham Lewis on Hitler, Everyman, 5.14 (2 April 1931), 303.
This instability was, Lewis held, being exploited by several sources, but largely by the dispersed remnants of the once great semitic empires, and as early as page 38 Lewis can be found reporting the Nazi insistence on a 'battle of ideas, with people of Jewish origin always identified with the tendencies that destructive of the european, or 'aryan', ethos.' The Jew is permitted to reply, in a drama staged by Lewis, that 'coming as he generally does from Tartary, he cannot be expected to be much attracted by carol-singing, protestant hymn-music, or the teutonic Royal-Academism of official painting', and in any case the difficulties of the Aryans came from their own technical inventions. Little comment is made, Lewis carefully steering off in the opposite direction - 'I will not pursue this argument' - but the discussion continues for another three pages, the Nazi insisting that Jazz and Negro art come from America, a country whose culture is 'judeo-american' more than European-American. In reply to this confrontation Lewis observes that though the Jews do indeed govern England they do it rather well, and that although 'feminine, and in many ways very unpleasant' the Jews exist and have to be accepted, and in the United States and the western Europeans states the Jews are more integrated and less objectionable than in middle Europe.

In short, upon that hypothesis, is not the Jew here, from the Hitler standpoint, disinfected and anglicized? - just as in the States he has been transformed (that Yankee Abraham or 'Abie') into a true Western product - presented, to crown everything with a wild white Irish Rosel How, under such circumstances, could Abie 'remember Carthage'?

Carthage, we should remember, was the last great Mediterranean empire based on a semitic culture, and Lewis's invocation of it here should leave no doubt that the view of history as racial conflict was on his mind.

A few pages later the subject of Europe rises again, this time in connection with divisive effects of 'class' socialism. In the past these 'wars' of brother against brother were 'domestic disputes and feuds', but now the whole Earth looks on, with delight, hatred and scorn (or actively participates) in the inner readjustments of our social system. It would have been better to keep these adjustments strictly private and domestic', this leads Lewis into an excursion that is uniquely unguarded:

This broad, adumbrated, and cosmic advertisement, so much gratuitous publicity, for domestic issues, is reminiscent of another stupidity - namely, the use of great numbers of Asiatic and African troops in the War - stupid, that is, if you desire the good of Europe - intelligent if you desire its destruction.

I am not so much arguing here that the European civilization ought not to end, as merely pointing out how that destruction is being brought about. It is a subject of constant speculation how the Roman Empire came to collapse - some say Christianity, others say Mosquitos. There is no mystery at all - it is an open 'conspiracy' - about the Fall of Europe. In a word, it is the result, in the first instance, of an enormous new factor - machinery and industrial technique. In the short space of a century science turned our world upside-down. Secondly, the world being upside-down and inside-out, the shrewd parasite (existing in all times and places) psychologically an outpost as regards our settled structure, took advantage of this disorder and consequent bafflement to sting us all to death. Of course historians in the future will assert that it was influenza, or the pranks of the last Roman Kaiser. But we know better.

The villains are identified two pages later as 'agitator' and 'Goldenehoch': When two nations fall out, the armament-killing and chemical-king rage in the sheikels. [...] When two Classes fall out it is the same thing.

Little comment seems necessary upon this. But the use of the phrase 'open conspiracy', H. G. Wells's term for the organisation of scientific minds that would eventually replace the scandalous chaos of the democracies, is of very great significance, and serves to point to the
continuity of this view of Europe with Lewis's earlier writings. Elsewhere in Hitler, Lewis explains that the German 'identifies the Jew with everything that is inimical to the society to which he belongs - the political and cultural system of the Aryan World' and that 'To deal with this situation Anti-semitic Societies have recently been formed. The principal one has its offices in Paris. (Mr. H. G. Wells is a member of its committee.)'. I have not been able to ascertain the truth of this remark, but think it entirely plausible. Wells had, after all, recently observed in his Short History of the World that

The theme of history from the ninth century B.C. onward for six centuries is the story of how these Aryan peoples grew to power and enterprise and how at last they subjugated the whole Ancient World, Semitic, Aegean and Egyptian alike. In form the Aryan peoples were altogether victorious; but the struggle of Aryan, Semitic and Egyptian ideas and methods was continued long after the sceptre belonged to Aryan hands. It is indeed a struggle that goes on through all the rest of history and still in a manner continues to this day.18

There is a great deal more to be said on the subject of Lewis and Wells, and I shall confine myself here to one point. In early 1928 Lewis sent Wells the typescript of The Childermass, thus beginning an association which lasted into the early thirties. Wells replied on the 24th of January to say how much he had enjoyed it.19 Lewis's reply is very guarded, but the burden is unmistakable in view of the context supplied above:

There are some things in which I am perhaps even obsessively interested (the questions of art aside) which likewise interest you very deeply: and you have possessed in me for two or three years a reader who has come more and more to respect what you do (I am speaking not of your genius as a storyteller - that would be an impertinence on my part to speak of in that way - but your outlook on our world, of which I take it Clissold was a fairly complete expression. Also I refer to articles I have from time to time read, dealing with the questions of war and Peace, which partly because I was a soldier maybe and have especially reflected on that question, struck me very much.) That is why I sent you a copy of The Childermass, and I am overjoyed to hear that it met with your approval.20

The question which is which of the many points of comparison moved Lewis to send Wells his extravagant fiction. They shared an interest in non-democratic social revolution, they believed that the last European war had been suicidal, and that there was a grave danger of another. One might even note that much of the opening section of The Childermass is plainly modelled on the sketch of the lunar sunrise in The First Man on the Moon. But most importantly they agreed in their view of European and mediterranean history, a view which Lewis presented in elliptical and symbollic form in The Childermass. The suggestion that the book concerns an anti-European threat has been put forward before, notably by Alistair Davies in his unpublished Cambridge thesis, and in an article 'Wyndham Lewis's Fiction of Conspiracy'.21 Davies' argument, as was pointed out by correspondents, was atrociously and dishonestly made and also deployed evidence that was not only flimsy but irrelevant, yet the suggestion that Lewis believed the northern European states to be under threat, largely from the Semitic east, is, I think, correct. We need not go, as Davies did, to the arcane myths of the Munich secret society, the Thule Gesellschaft, to find a source for Lewis's view. The Outline of History is more than adequate. And to demonstrate that there is a connection we need do no more than draw a map of the territory described in the opening pages of The Childermass. The map facing is schematic, and the words within quotation marks are passages from The Childermass. The scene depicts the movement of the Aryans from the far north of Europe down into Greece, and then their migration to the western boundary. That the Magnetic City is a representation of New York, or rail, and then of course the remark from Hitler, quoted above, that the United States is more Judeo-American than anything else begins to fall into

place, as indeed does a mass of other evidence, from The Apes of God and many other sources. Of particular note is the revision to Tarr, mentioned above, which adds a Jewish character, Pochinsky, whose moralizing intervention between Kreisler and Soltyk is made in the name of peace but in fact makes a duel inevitable.22 My presentation of the case here is intended to be suggestive rather than conclusive, and I shall argue the matter at greater length in another place. At this point I shall content myself with observing that Lewis had been thinking of European history in terms rather similar to those presented in H. G. Wells’ writings, and believed, as did Wells, that the conflict between Aryan and Semite was an important part of contemporary events.

It is not known with any certainty when these ideas became of importance to Lewis, but I am inclined to think that they rose to dominance only after 1926. Before this time, as discussed above, Lewis was still a millennialist in his anticipations of a benevolent unrolling of history, while afterwards we find him preaching a vigorous programme of intervention to save Western man. When we see Hitler against this background it becomes readily intelligible as an attempt to remove various objections to the only political movement in Europe that seemed likely to address the crisis that Lewis perceived.

The polemical structure of the book can, then, be summarized: Europe is in danger. Hitlerism might be the solution (it is certainly the only force that has any promise). There are some objections to Hitlerism, but they are not sufficient, in view of the crisis that faces us, to discredit the movement. Hitler, on this view, is a book about the race, culture, and unity of the northern European peoples, and it is a continuation of the thesis presented in the Paleface essays. Moreover it has strong links with Time and Western Man, The Childermass, the revised Tarr, and The Apes of God. In the first of these Lewis examined the abstract philosophical and literary details of the erosion of the western mind, the second presented a broad and allegorical representation of the history on which the view rested, combining it with a vivid representation of the way that the Europeans were being reduced to a childlike passivity by a mass culture which had fallen into the hands of their traditional enemies, the semites. Tarr was revised in order to present an anti-semitic allegory of the causes of the Great War, a crucial stage in the destabilization which Lewis was indicating. And in The Apes of God a great mass of evidence, much of it based on his own observations of contemporaries, was produced to document the decay and degeneration in one particular city. It is hardly necessary to point out that one of the major structural polarities, of the novel is that between the enfeebled Europeans, Dan Boleyn for example, and the cunning Jew, Archie Margolin, who battens on the chaos. Scholars have tended to avoid these connections, and those that have drawn attention to them, Davies and Ayers for example, have done so in a way that has, quite understandably, discredited any argument along these lines. The contextual relationships of Hitler, and Lewis’s motivations for writing it, have thus been obscured, and our understanding of the contemporary response to these writings, which was considerably more acute than anything since, has suffered as a result. That the book was in some way a catastrophe for Lewis’s career has been recognized by many scholars, as if through fog, but the precise details have never been made clear. Now that the framework of Hitler has been revealed an attempt at clarification need not seem hopeless.

SERIAL PUBLICATION

Lewis’s claims to be an objective reporter of facts, are, as I have indicated above, a flimsy veil for an altogether more considered piece of suasion, and it should be pointed out that Lewis’s five Time and Tide articles exactly represent the polemical skeleton of the book, rather obviously so in fact. The correspondence stirred up concerned itself very largely with stripping away the inadequate covering, though it did not get right to the heart of the matter. The first public response to the articles appeared on 31 January 1931, in the correspondence columns.23 Two of the series of five articles had appeared, a general survey of Hitlerism and its aims, and a racy piece of ‘colour’ describing German low-life. The first letter was from Frederic A. Voigt, the German correspondent of the Manchester Guardian, and one of the most distinguished and respected journalists of his time. He began at what then seemed the heart of the matter: ‘Sir, - It is quite clear that Mr. Wyndham Lewis has simply

been stuffed with Nazi propaganda’. Voigt was mainly concerned to rectify Lewis’s account of the street-fighting, where the Nazis were presented as unarmed, and despite obvious irritation he preserves a reasonable balance: ‘Rifles, pistols, knuckle-dusters and knives are continually being found on the persons of the Nazis, who are at least as well armed as the Communists.’ In his reply Lewis described Voigt as a ‘very hot […] partisan of the communists’, which is hardly justifiable from the evidence in the letter, or from Voigt’s reputation.24 Lewis seems to have thought that Voigt was an unknown, remarking that he ‘is, I understand, an international journalist’. The ignorance is hardly surprising since ‘I never read the Manchester Guardian, which I regard as one of the most insidiously wrong of all great political newspapers in England’. In fact, Voigt was thought of as a paragon of integrity, and was in 1938 to denounce Stalin’s Russia as the ‘ultimate wickedness’.25 At the time of his exchange with Lewis he was known as the man who had in 1926 exposed a secret arrangement which allowed the Reichswehr to evade the Versailles treaty by developing its weapons on Soviet territory. He had even been quoted in the Reichstag itself as an authority on the matter. If Lewis had known anything of Voigt’s distinction he would surely have exercised circumspection in his remarks. As it was, his tone and his accusations can only have made him appear incompetent to anyone with an interest in foreign affairs.

In the second of the letters Cicely Hamilton rejected Lewis’s description of Berlin Westens as lurid sensationalism, to which he rather weakly replied that she was a kill-joy, and in the third, Cecil Melville, who was later to review Hitler and write a pamphlet on Lewis’s ‘adventure in political philosophy’,26 genially questioned the truth of Nazi promises of peace. Lewis ignored this last letter, and it is important to ask why. Voigt had questioned the impartiality and accuracy of the reporting with regard to the street-fighting, Cicely Hamilton had claimed that Lewis was indulging in the tricks of the yellow-press, both of which Lewis felt able to deal with, but Melville began by granting Lewis the right to be funny - ‘Mr. Lewis is right in writing in an impressionist manner about the Berlin juste en scene before getting down to an examination of Hitlerism per se.’ - then dismissed his interpretation of the Hitlerist intentions: ‘Their revangiste policies appear to offer short cuts to the solution of their problems which I do not think can be solved that way; indeed, I fear that they may prove to be but short cuts to further catastrophe.’ Melville is hinting here at Lewis’s misunderstanding of Nazi feelings towards Europe. Hitler, Lewis said in his first article, was full of ‘wildly “idealist” […] proposals for the “conquest of the Western soul”, and the founding of a peaceful confederacy of “Aryan” states.’ It will be sufficient to note that one commentator remarked instantly that Nazi policy was motivated by a desire for revenge, not a charitable blood-feeling, as Lewis believed. They were indeed interested in ‘conquest’, but not of the soul only. Melville did not write again, and the point was not taken up by any other correspondent. At this stage the most pressing thing seemed to be Lewis’s inaccuracies, and his unquestioning acceptance of Nazi reports. Initially this heckling seemed more useful than otherwise, and Prentice regarded it as an opportunity. The first announcement of Hitler that I have come across appeared at the end of January, and the bulk of them followed in the first two weeks of February.27 Chatto and Windus were not anywhere near publication, which they managed on the 26th of March, but the weekly correspondence in Time and Tide was clearly excellent publicity and some advantage had to be taken. Both Hamilton and Voigt had submitted replies, repeating their original charges, and were joined by a new correspondent who preferred the shelter of a pseudonym, ‘The Walrus’. He was the first to say that Lewis’s politics could be approached as those of a painter:

Mr. Wyndham Lewis is an impressionist artist working in words instead of paint, and he is really no more concerned with facts and things as they appear to normal minds, than a vorticist is with the world as it looks to normal eyes.28

He suggested a series of similar articles: ‘Miss Gertrude Stein on Russia, Miss Edith Sitwell on the gold problem, and Mr. Billy Bennett on the League of Nations’. West and Campbell had reproved Lewis for ignorance in their reviews of Paleface, but here for the first time

24 ‘Wyndham Lewis Replies to his Critics’, Time and Tide, 12.6 (7 February 1931), 150.
25 In his Unio Caesar (London, 1938), quoted in the entry for Voigt in DNB.
27 News Chronicle (26 January 1931); Times Literary Supplement, 30.1514 (5 February 1931), 98; Glasgow Herald (5 February 1931); Inverness Courier (6 February 1931); Obseverer (8 February 1931), 6; Week-End Review (14 February 1931).
Lewis's credentials as a social critic had been called in question, a significant moment. He suggested that an artist is concerned, or able, only to demonstrate personality or point of view: "Genesis" is not the expectant mother that you and I know - but it is Epstein. Wyndham Lewis's Germany is not the Germany that any ordinary observer knows - but it is Wyndham Lewis.' If you do not realize this, then you end up like Voigt:

I think that Mr. Voigt takes Mr. Wyndham Lewis a little too seriously. No doubt the latter takes himself seriously, but that is by the way. Lewis, I have suggested, switched to political commentary largely because he wanted to establish himself as a figure in contemporary affairs. Before the Walrus's letter it seemed as if he had made a good start. The opinions were being challenged, but he was, it appears, worth challenging, and Lewis had the temperament of a salamander in any case so was able to enjoy eruptions of controversy. But the 'Walrus' forecast, accurately, a future of notoriety without respect:

I for one would rather enjoy such interludes in this time of depression than read the studied accuracies and judicial views of grave and normal persons like Mr. Voigt, whose only merit is that they know what they are talking about, while Mr. Wyndham Lewis demonstrably does not (as if that mattered!).

Hugh Kenner's remark about 'occultation' has already been quoted, and it is appropriate here to attempt to salvage something from that insight. The 'Hitler' articles, not just the Hitler book, did damage Lewis's reputation, but in a way rather different from the straightforward suppression which Kenner suspected. Statistics may be of some use here. The following table lists the numbers of reviews and citations for the years 1930 to 1933.

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<th>Year</th>
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Such figures tell us merely that Lewis was much talked about, so long as he continued to publish books and articles. When he slowed down, as he did in 1933 due to illness, he passed from the consciousness of the periodical journalist and reader. His new strategy had succeeded in one sense - he was a name on a scale which he had not been since 1927 and 1928 - but he had failed to gain the loyalty of these ephemeral producers and consumers, and the attempt to gain it had lost him what standing he still had with intellectuals. Lewis's failure is not difficult to explain. The vaunted objectivity, the claims to be a reporter, were so easily penetrated, and the axe-grinding of the book revealed that he lost stature not only with his intellectual audience, but also with the new popular readership. With regard to the last he had made a fatal underestimate of general intelligence. As the remarks of Wilkinson quoted earlier show, the politically minded reader could not be fobbed off with a rehash of somebody else's journalism. This deceitful screening of intent was naturally irritating, the more so when the nature of the polemic was examined. The correspondents in Time and Tide had not exposed Lewis's motivations, indeed Voigt appears to have overlooked the significance of the fourth article, on 'Blutsgefühl', because it was so silly (he remarked that 'in his first three articles (thought not in his fourth) Mr. Lewis is not wholly frivolous').

The importance of this exchange in the history of Lewis's reputation is not so much that it revealed his interest in race, the reviews were to do this, but rather that for the first time in his life Lewis had been challenged and beaten from the field. He had trespassed into current affairs and had been rebuffed and exposed by one of the best known authorities on German politics. No sensible estimate can be given of the damage done to his general standing, in the London literary world, by Voigt's remarks, but there is every reason to suppose that it was considerable. And when we recall that he had already begun to appear as unstable, or mad, in 1929, this can be seen as precipitating a rapid downturn. This might not have mattered for another artist, but Lewis had claimed much of his prestige on the grounds of his superior acumen, and here were two dull people, both possessed of literary equipments much inferior to Lewis's own, running rings around him. With the reviews themselves this crisis deepened. On the one hand his credentials as an incorruptible and objective observer, already damaged by The Apes of God, were cancelled by reviewers who convicted him of straightforward falsification; and on the other hand his intelligence was questioned by those who pointed out that the dupe of Hitler could not, after all, be so bright as had been imagined. But most important of all, the racial basis of the volume was exposed, and Lewis

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29 Ibid.
found himself having to take the sort of analysis he had hitherto been dishing out to his contemporaries. The top was lifted off his book, and its clockwork and hidden passengers exposed. Moreover, the code had been broken and delivered to the public, and anyone who cared to look over Lewis’s more recent works could now find, without much trouble, that they were based on an identical version of racial and cultural history. Hitler, in other words, took a lot of the mystery out of Lewis, and for a public that believed, as many critics still believe, that a truly ‘creative writer’, like God, is nothing without faith, this amounted to complete deflation.

**HITLER, THE BOOK**

Clennell Wilkinson’s *Everyman* review has already been quoted as one of the first pieces to note the poverty of Lewis’s documentation. It was also one of the first to raise the issue of dishonesty. ‘It might be an interesting experiment to put a successful literary man’ to the task of explaining Hitlerism, ‘we might get a flood of light at last’:

And what do we find? It would hardly be unfair to answer ‘Nothing’. Here is a mere ‘write-up’ of the Nazi case, entirely uncritical, vague and unsubstantial.

There is more than a faint suggestion here that Lewis has betrayed his reader, a point that in fact recurs throughout these notices. Lewis was not, as I have shown, quite the success that Wilkinson took him for, but there seems little reason to dismiss the remark entirely, and it serves as a useful reminder that by ordinary standards he was widely known and respected. The dissatisfaction that took him into political agitation was very much of Lewis’s own making, and seemed incomprehensible to an outsider. Wilkinson remarks, with evident bafflement, on the macaronic and hackneyed style of the book, effects which Lewis clearly worked very hard at in an effort to produce a jazz journalise for wide consumption, and observes that apart from a few affectations ‘it would be hard to believe that the book was written by anyone of established literary reputation’. Wilkinson’s confusion was not unusual, and though for analytic convenience I have discussed in discrete categories those who saw Lewis as foolishly mistaken, and those who saw him as cynically deceptive, several reviewers made both points, an inconsistency symptomatic of indecision. But the confusion is understandable, and in my opinion both judgements are true if properly targeted. In dealing with the violence and anti-semitism of the Nazis Lewis was quite deliberately publishing falsehoods. In arguing that Hitler had no ‘revangiste’ aims in Europe he was sincere, and mistaken. To say this is not, of course, to offer any excuse. The point is simply that Lewis was sincerely interested in a European Racism, and was fooled by the care with which Hitler disguised his narrow Germanic patriotism for this barely more respectable ideal.

Though most reviewers seem to have felt that Lewis was less than candid in his reporting, a good number were more generous and assumed that much of what he had to say about the character of Nazism was the result of his gullibility. In the *Evening Standard* Harold Nicolson, already working with Mosley in the New Party, attributed Lewis’s ‘religious fervour’ for Hitlerism to the fact that he had ‘no sense of humour’,31 (the New Party it should be remembered was looking to Mussolini for a model at this time), and the *Scotsman*, while seeing that Lewis was ‘definitely an advocate’ of Aryanism, reported that ‘he is too much inclined to accept the Hitlerites at their own valuation’.32 The *Spectator* was similarly understanding when it said that Lewis ‘evidently believed almost everything which his Hitlerite informants told him’,33 and the *Week-end Review*, which began by convicting Lewis of dishonesty then excused him, inadvertently, by saying that he ‘had the Nazi case pumped into him, and has swallowed it whole’:

Like the peers in *Iolanthe* he ‘never thought of thinking for himself at all’.34 Reviewers were, in all likelihood, misled by the ineffectiveness of Lewis’s lies, and concluded that no man would deliberately print such transparently false reports with the intention of deceiving; he must actually believe them himself. The *Glasgow Herald*, for

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30 Wyndham Lewis on Hitler*, Everyman*, 5.14 (2 April 1931), 303.
32 Anon, title not known, *The Scotsman* (6 April 1931).
33 Anon, ‘Mr. Lewis Amongst the Nazis’, *Spectator*, 146.5634 (18 April 1931), 642-3.
34 Anon, ‘Mr. Lewis Passes on Hitler’, *Week-end Review*, 3.59 (25 April 1931), 626. The song, I am informed, is *in fact* from *H.M.S. Pinafore*.
example thought the book 'only saved from being mischievous by the fact that it is too silly to be taken seriously':

It is a monument of pretentious inaccuracy. Mr. Lewis does not know German (as his frequent blunders in translation make amply clear) and certainly does not know the German National Socialists. The Christian Science Monitor also obscured Lewis's mendacity by reminding its readers that 'Mr. Lewis is a poet, a philosopher, a serious thinker, though his humour sometimes runs away with his judgement'. The poet-philosopher is liable, on account of his fine frenzy, to be an unreliable guide, we are to understand, though none the less interesting for that.

Damaging though this reputation for silliness might have been to Lewis it is very much a minor part of the reception, and those who thought they saw 'The - yes - the ingenious Mr. Lewis' as the Bookman charmingly called him, were much less numerous than those who detected 'deliberate and frigid lying'. The mere fact of support for Hitler would have done Lewis no good, but the manner of his presentation was perhaps more influential. The writer who bears false witness is even less welcome than the writer with outrageous opinions, and the writer who thinks so little of his audience that he doesn't even bother to tell good lies is less welcome still. A mere handful of pieces accepted Lewis's account as honestly meant, a few regarded him as the dupe of circumstances, but the vast majority suspected foul play. A medley of remarks will bring home the prevalence of the accusation. The pieces are arranged in chronological order.

Graphic: 'Of what he has learned he claims to have written 'as an exponent not as a critic nor yet as advocate'. But if he is not advocate he is a very sympathetic apologist of a very remarkable man.'

Birmingham Post: '[...] Mr. Wyndham Lewis purports to be an exponent and not defender, it is clear that his impressions [...] derive from Hitlerite sources.'

Times Literary Supplement: 'Mr. Lewis shows how far he is from being a mere exponent. [...] How far the parade which accompanies it all is an expression of that rather swaggering romanticism affected by a large section of modern German youth is a question which Mr. Wyndham Lewis forbears to ask - perhaps fortunately as the answer might have tempered the warmth of his exposition.'

Week-end Review: The natural sympathies of many readers of the Week-end will perhaps be with the Nazis, rather than with their Communist opponents. But to represent the former as innocent, unarmed lambs led to the slaughter; to talk about the police being in league with the Communists 'to beat and shoot the Nazis' [...] this is to put too great a strain upon the credulity of Mr. Lewis's readers.

Isis: 'Mr. Wyndham Lewis is not often a bore, but should, I think, always be suspected. [...] The vehemence with which he insists on his impartiality would alone be sufficient to prove the contrary, but the book reads like a none too subtle journalistic puff, and anyone who reads it and comes to the conclusion that, after all, Hitler is an innocent pacifist would have to be supremely simple.'

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35 Anon, title not known, Glasgow Herald (30 April 1931).
38 Anon, 'A Worker's Notebook: A Futurist Has Visions', Daily Worker (27 July 1931), 2.
39 Only two seem worth mentioning on this score: L. P. Hartley, 'The Literary Lounger', Sketch, 154.1994 (15 April 1931), 82; R. A. Scott James, title not known, Yorkshire Post (21 May 1931).
40 Anon, title not known, The Graphic (11 April 1931).
41 Anon, 'Aspects of Hitlerism', Birmingham Post (14 April 1931).
42 Harold M. Stannard, 'Hitler and His Movement', Times Literary Supplement, 30,1524 (16 April 1931), 296.
43 Anon, 'Mr. Lewis's Passes on Hitler', The Week-end Review, 3,59 (25 April 1931), 626.
44 E. T. L., title not known, Isis (6 May 1931).
Bulletin and Scots Pictorial: 'one can't help feeling at times that the writer's sympathy is a little too apt to take all the Hitlerian arguments at their face value.\(^{45}\)

Daily Worker: 'As far as the rational argument goes the book is valueless, and such information as it gives (mixed up with 'blood-feelings', etc) is definitely misleading.\(^{46}\)

Granta: ' [...] the patent falsifications of Hitler. [...] It would be idle to go on tugging at such tatters of journalist and partisan absurdity\(^{47}\)

Liverpool Post & Mercury: 'It is [...] amusing to see the self-styled 'Enemy' or 'Diogenes' thumping someone else's political tub with polite little apologies for the nonsense talked by his hero.\(^{48}\)

Clarion: 'Mr. Wyndham Lewis claims that he has attempted to write an unprejudiced account of Hitlerism, but it is quite clear that he is attracted towards the personality and power of this Austrian leader.\(^{49}\)

Daily Worker: 'Mr. Lewis may worship his hero, but he seems to know singularly little about him. If he does know anything about him, this nauseating adulation of the Nazi leader, and the painting of his gang of bloodthirsty hooligan followers as angels of peace, can only be characterized as calculated, deliberate and frigid lying.\(^{50}\)

Jewish Chronicle: 'It is impossible to accept the statement of Mr. Wyndham Lewis that he here 'comes forward as a detached exponent [...]'] [...] His professed neutrality does not prevent him from trying to prove that the militant leader of the 'storm-detachments' is really a 'man of peace'. [...] It is not surprising that he is driven to lengthy quotations from Machiavelli in support of so indefensible a thesis.\(^{51}\)

These reviewers were, as my discussion of the opening pages of The Childermass, the correspondence with H. G. Wells, and the argumentative structure of Hitler suggests, quite correct. It was a book that set out to deceive and misrepresent. But Lewis had too much contempt for the reading public to be skillful in such manoeuvres, and the transparent style of his new 'popular' manner was more readily penetrated than the allusive and involuted texts that had preceded it. Very little new evidence was needed to question his points, but in fact the Nazi party was much in the news during the first months after publication because of a fracas at Hamburg which made Lewis's remarks on the pacific and law-abiding Nazis look still more absurd. The Scotsman put the point mildly when it said that 'The recent Hamburg outrage, though its perpetrators may be disowned by Hitler, does not strengthen the case for Hitler',\(^{52}\) and by mid-April, when Stannard reviewed the book for the Times Literary Supplement the evidence was regarded as quite conclusive:

It is also alleged that the Nazis do not stick at murder, whereas Mr. Lewis tells us that the movement is weaponless and that it proposes to get control of Prussia, and through Prussia of Germany, by purely legal means. Recent events, and

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\(^{45}\) Anon, 'The Hitlerists Explained', The Bulletin and Scots Pictorial (7 May 1931).

\(^{46}\) M.H.D., 'Reading Notes', Daily Worker (29 May 1931), 4.

\(^{47}\) B. 'O, Wild West Wyndham...', The Granta, 40.913 (29 May 1931), 469-70. I hazard the guess that B. is Jacob Bronowski. The attribution is tentative, and based largely on the self congratulatory reference to some criticism of Lewis which appeared in Experiment 3, the student magazine to which Bronowski was a contributor. The only other known piece by Bronowski referring to Lewis, 'D. H. Lawrence', appeared in Experiment, No. 7 (Spring 1931), 5-13, and perhaps suggests that Lewis was on his mind at this time. The coincidence of the initial is rather weak evidence in favour of this hypothesis, but at least does not contradict it.

\(^{48}\) Anon, 'The Nazis', Liverpool Post & Mercury (17 June 1931).

\(^{49}\) Anon, 'Hero-Worship', Clarion (July 1931).

\(^{50}\) Anon, 'A Futurist Has Visions', Daily Worker, (27 July 1931), 2.

\(^{51}\) Anon, 'The Hitlerist Party', Jewish Chronicle (4 September 1931).

\(^{52}\) Anon, title not known, Scotsman (6 April 1931).
notably the Russian repudiation of Hitler's insistence upon legality, have made further comment on this view superfluous.55 Consultation of the sales figures for Hitler at this time leads one to conclude that the Hamburg even, combined with the many unfavourable reviews, was of great importance. For the first month, March to April, sales were excellent, Chatto binding and dispatching nearly a thousand copies, half the entire print run.54 Then something seems to have gone wrong. In the next month, April to May, only a hundred copies were required, and these were not exhausted until the beginning of June. After this time sales were very slow, and the last entry in the ledger records that the remaining 250 copies were pulped in July 1941. This was partly due, doubtless, to the fact that public interest in Hitler waned rapidly, but equally it suggests that the book had gained a bad name, as well it might. Hitler was from the first implausible, and the unfolding of events in Germany was almost daily revealing it as an inadequate and untrustworthy guide, the latter point being the principal short term cause of the collapse in Lewis's standing.

A general sense of the book's unreliability was common, and most recognized that it was a transparent apology for Hitlerism, but very few were able to identify the features of the Nazi movement that interested Lewis, and of those that did few grasped the supranational character of Lewis's interest in race.

Despite a rather fuzzy understanding of Lewis's principles there was a definite feeling that Nazism was, as Reginald Berkeley in the Saturday Review said, a 'clothes horse whereon to air opinions'.55 The writer in the Adelphi brought this more into focus by remarking that the book was 'enlivened with echoes from his old familiar themes of the child-cult, the exotik' neurosis, the class-war, the sex-war, the dark laughter complex, and all the rest of it',56 but it was Cecil Melville's New Statesman review that located the precise nature of continuity:

Arriving in Berlin one day, he must have pounced gleefully upon the Hitlerist phenomenon, happy to find in it a new peg upon which to hang many of the social-philosophic ideas he expounds. For in Hitler are to be found again many of the attacks he made in his earlier books upon the things to which this Blutsgefühl is opposed — e.g., social disintegration and racial defusion [sic.], [...] Hence also his acceptance of Hitler's Blutsgefühl as the bugle call to battle against all these false gods of the modern world; as the rallying of the forces of race-concentration against diffusionism; as the stiffening up of the White Conqueror against the temptation of Exoticism. In a word, Hitler's Blutsgefühl for him is the materialization in action of his own social-philosophic ideas, the personification, in one typical German of one untypical Englishman's demand that the Western World must draw together and stand aloof from the allurements and influence of what is inferior to it, and, being inferior, contaminating.57

One might quibble here with the word 'inferior', since it is possible to present Lewis's position as advocating resistance to what is hostile, and holding that westerners culture is, as he says through Shakespeare, 'a poor thing, but our own'.58 But the case would be doubtful, and it in no way detracts from the fact that Melville is one of the very few critics who saw clearly what was motivating Lewis at this time, and had in fact formed the core of his thought for some years. Melville's lead was followed almost immediately, and perhaps quite independently, by a writer, possibly Jacob Bronowski (who is mentioned in Hitler), in the Cambridge magazine The Granta.59 The connection observed by Melville is correctly said to be the only thing in the book worth discussing. The remarks on the street fighting, and Hitlerite economics were mere fluff, 'partisan absurdity', but 'what makes this book worth analysing is not Nazi hysteria but Mr. Lewis's doctrine, a more stable and considerable thing':

53 Hitler and His Movement, Times Literary Supplement, 30.1524 (16 April 1931), 296.
54 Information from the Chatto and Windus production ledgers.
55 The Dictators', Saturday Review (11 April 1931), 535.
56 'Notes, 'Shorter Notices', Adelphi, 2.2 (May 1931), 182.
57 Blutsgefühl, New Statesman and Nation, 1.13 (23 May 1933), 469.
58 Hitler, 108.
59 Br, 'Of Wild West Wyndham...', Granta, 40.913 (29 May 1931), 469.
Its connection with Nazi doctrine is through the doctrine of *Blutsgefühl* (blood feeling or affinity); so that it is pertinent to examine how Mr. Lewis’s version of this differs from that version, say D. H. Lawrence’s which he attacked in *Paleface*. Roughly, Mr. Lewis uses *Blutsgefühl* as a basis for an intellectual assertion: he values Mediterranean and particularly Renaissance culture, believes it to be endangered by affectations of primitive non-Mediterranean cultures, and therefore identifies it with its original Aryan practitioners with whom, he believes, lies the only hope of saving it.\(^\text{60}\)

That is *Hitler* in a nutshell, and bearing in mind my observations on *The Childermass* the significance of this point is clear. I am far from certain that any reader during Lewis’s lifetime was able to unwrap the polemic of *Time and Western Man*, the *Enemy*, *The Childermass*, *Tarr*, and *The Apes of God* in the sort of detail which I have indicated is possible. Nevertheless it is obvious from the piece in *Granta*, and from Melville’s review and pamphlet, that the general relation between Lewis’s cultural theory and his political thought was now understood. Unfortunately I can present no concrete evidence to demonstrate that these two pieces were widely influential in the intellectual world, but it is surely not unreasonable to presume that a review in the *New Statesman* would be so, and if my identification of ‘B.’ as Bronowski is correct, then one may assume that this view was given prominence in Cambridge whenever Lewis was discussed. On this less than fragile base I hazard the guess that Lewis’s disgrace and internal exile in the thirties can be largely attributed not to *Hitler* itself, but to the fact that it shed light on his earlier works.

I have attempted in the course of this review of Lewis’s career to indicate the fundamental emotional grammar from which his very various positions were generated, and though a full discussion of Lewis’s undoubted aryanism and anti-semitism is not possible in this place, there is some sense in attempting briefly to relate it to his strategies for legitimating negative judgements on conspecifics. The crucial point, again, is the abandonment of the solipsistic individualism of *The Art of Being Ruled*. After this time Lewis is seen to be seeking higher authorities in whose name he may act, thus avoiding the guilt attendant on selfish action. This is a commonplace human activity, and Lewis’s collapse into it after the honest egotism of his ‘Man of the World’ philosophy is a sad spectacle. But the failure of that earlier line of thought was perhaps inevitable, given the fact that Lewis lacked an adequate definition of the individual and its interest, a definition which could only come from Darwinian theory and evolutionary psychology, which unfortunately Lewis understood as species selectionist and therefore hostile to the individual. Consequently he turned to non-material absolutes as his guarantors, and in *Time and Western Man* this proved to be the impersonal God of philosophy, Lewis claiming that his mind approximated more closely to that pure and objective reason than did the minds of other men. In *Paleface* we find Lewis asserting that the only obligation a man is under is subservience to those who stand closer to this absolute. But in tandem with this intellectual ladder Lewis also employed racial theory as a way of legitimating separation from other men. The belief that he was acting on behalf of the Aryan peoples and their culture can be explained as a device by which Lewis was able to articulate a large part of his general misanthropy. The price paid for the freedom to reject most of mankind was a sentimental brotherhood with a small part of it. In reviewing Lewis’s recent thought from the perspective of *Hitler* Bronowski provides a very informative description:

> Mr. Lewis’s only reaction of depth now appears to be that he is profoundly irritated; his only effect begins to be profoundly irritating. And this is not simply because Mr. Lewis has no capacity for admiration; or is afraid of generosity; it is rather a graver fear of responsibility which motivates him, for example, to immolate himself [...] behind innumerable barriers of colour, race, youth, politics, origin; designed less to prevent diffusion than to preserve his personality from pressure. This is the Hitlerite (a small-holder’s movement) anxiety to sustain an allotment-personality, by limiting the part of the world in which search for admirable personalities is permitted to the dimensions of a Junker-mind.

This is, I believe, quite correct. Lewis was drawn to Aryan race theory largely because it permitted him to reduce his sphere of obligations, and the fact that it also legitimised anti-semitism was agreeable since so many of the art-world acquaintances he loathed happened to

\(^{60}\) ‘O, Wild West Wyndham...’, 469.
be Jewish. Thus there is little sense in saying, as David Ayers does in his recent book Wyndham Lewis and Western Man\textsuperscript{61} that Lewis was a representative of a psychological type, the anti-semite. That itself too closely resembles the scapegoating which Ayers anathematizes. A more tenable and less self-deceived view sees in Lewis a generalized negative response to human beings, shared by many other people and probably resulting from high population density. Lewis happened to legitimate this by employing racist beliefs, anti-semitism among them, at a time when many of his contemporaries were reducing the sphere of their own obligations by seeking to liquidate the kulaks in the name of the proletariat. These apparently different political phenomena, and much else besides, can, I venture, only be understood by reference to the evolved judgemental procedures of the human mental architecture which produces and supports them. And by understanding such things we will have made a considerable gain in knowledge of ourselves.

\textsuperscript{61} For a more detailed objection to this book’s central thesis see my review in Essays in Criticism, forthcoming.
Bibliography 1

The following checklist contains full references for all known material discussing or mentioning Lewis between 1911 and 1931. It forms a part of a longer checklist running up to the present day which I intend to publish in due course.

The references here have been drawn from many sources, including the currently standard listings in Bradford Morrow and Bernard Lafourcade, A Bibliography of the Writings of Wyndham Lewis (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1978), and in Jeffrey Meyers, *Wyndham Lewis: A Bibliography of Criticism, 1912-1980*, Bulletin of Bibliography 37.1 (January-March, 1980), 33-52. Where possible these citations have been corrected, and a very considerable number of additions has been made, largely from the clipping books in the Chatto and Windus archive now held at Reading University Library.

If I have consulted an item in the course of my research the entry is followed either by the word 'yes' or the code 'no nwc' in parentheses. 'Yes' indicates that a copy has been made for my files, 'no nwc', indicates that the piece was judged to be of insufficient interest to copy. Items which I have been unable to consult are followed by the word 'no' in parentheses. The following table presents information concerning the proportion of the available reception material for any given year consulted in the course of this study. 1926: 38/60 (63%), for example, indicates that of sixty known items thirty-eight have been read. This proportion is then re-expressed as a percentage to allow comparison with other years.

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60. 'The War Baby', Art and Letters, n.s., 2.1 (Winter 1918), 14-41.
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112. Wyndham Lewis. An undated circular issued by Chatto and Windus in late December 1927. Lewis is clearly the author.
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This list contains references for all published items referred to in the course of this thesis but not covered by either Bibliography 1 or 2 above.

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Writings by Others

10. Empson, William, to Michael Roberts, 12 November 1932, quoted in Janet Adam Smith, 'A is B at 8,000 feet';

17. Michel, Walter, 'Author's Reply', Apollo, 83.47 (January 1966), 75.
The following lists collections of manuscripts containing material the substance of which has been drawn upon in the course of my study. Each entry provides a general description of the collection, followed by a list of items quoted in the dissertation above.

Grant Richards Archive

The archive of the publisher Grant Richards is held by the library of the University of Illinois. Production ledgers 5 and 6 contain information concerning the members. The Lion and the Fox, and volumes 36 and 37 of the letterbooks contain carbons of Grant Richards letters to Lewis. These have been consulted in the undated microfilm of the entire archive issued by Chadwyck Healey Ltd.

Grant Richards to Lewis, 6 April 1925. Letterbook 36, p. 227.
Grant Richards to Lewis, 23 July 1925. Letterbook 36, p. 492.
Grant Richards to Lewis, 6 December 1926. Letterbook 37, p. 297.
Grant Richards to Lewis, 11 December 1926. Letterbook 37, p. 305.
Grant Richards to Lewis, 11 February 1927. Letterbook 37, p. 448.

Macmillan Archive

The archive of Macmillan Ltd is now held by the British Library. It contains correspondence between Charles Whibley, Daniel Macmillan, and Lewis on the subject of Lewis's 'Politics of the Personality', which was submitted to Macmillan in 1925. The catalogue of this collection is as yet incomplete, and it is thought possible that further items relating to Lewis's contact with this firm may come to light.

Lewis to Daniel Macmillan, 6 February 1925. Add. 55274.
Lewis to Daniel Macmillan, 31 March 1925. Add. 55274.
Daniel Macmillan to Lewis, 1 April 1925. Add. MS 55617, fol. 152.
Charles Whibley to Daniel Macmillan, 7 April 1925. Add. 55026.
Charles Whibley, reader's report on 'The Politics of the Personality'. Mac. Vol P.

Cornell University Library Lewis Collection.

The bulk of Lewis's papers are held by the Department of Rare Books, Cornell University Library.

Lewis to Alec Waugh, 2 Feb. 1925.

Chatto and Windus Archive.

The Chatto archive is now held by Reading University Library. Ledgers for 1919, and 1925-1932 contain information concerning the production of Lewis's books. The firm's letterbooks are also preserved and contain carbons of most, but not all, of Prentice's letters to Lewis.

Charles Prentice to Lewis, 26 April 1927, Letterbook, 117, p. 92.
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Charles Prentice to Lewis, 12 January 1931. Letterbook 131, p. 156.
Charles Prentice to Lewis, 11 February 1931, Letterbook 131, p. 549.
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*Sturge Moore Papers.*

The Sturge Moore papers are now held by the University of London library, and contain Lewis’s letters to Moore, and some drafts of Moore’s letters to Lewis.

Lewis to Sturge Moore, October or September 1911.
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Lewis to Sturge Moore, 31 January 1931.

*William Jackson Books, Ltd., Archive.*

This archive is now held by the University Library at Cambridge, and contains a number of letters from Lewis.

Lewis to Mr. Steele, 13 November 1928. Add. 8698.L7.