Miss Close 1939

(www.bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings/paintings/search/painted by/wyndham-lewis)
Accession number: GV 1960.1430

LEWIS LETTER 38

International News from the Wyndham Lewis Society Autumn 2021

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In answer to my query about the identity of the sitter, a curator at the Glynn Vivian Gallery, Ellie Dawkins, kindly sent me the following:

'One of our volunteer researchers, Dr Barry Plummer, put together the following paragraph when we displayed the work, which contains some information on Etta Close':

> … Lewis's paintings from the 1930s and 1940s constitute some of his best-known and accomplished work. The Portrait of Miss Henrietta Close comes from this period and is likely to be c.1939. Lewis has portrayed Miss Close as a fashionably dressed and sophisticated woman. There is an air of quiet confidence about her that holds the viewer's gaze. Various papers and books are depicted in the background giving a clue to the sitter's profession of that being a travel writer. In 1924 she published a book titled 'A Woman Alone in Kenya, Uganda and the Belgian Congo' about her exploits in Africa. She was a public spirited woman who was awarded the O.B.E. in 1918 for services for the Overseas Dominions, Colonies and Protectorates in connection with the Great War. Miss Close was also a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society. She possibly was a friend of Wyndham Lewis but whatever the connection the artist has portrayed her as a woman of confidence with a touch of steel about her. Her passing was somewhat sad as she died in the mental health hospital, Chiswick House, Pinner, in 1945.

'We also have a copy here of Etta's book, *A Woman Alone in Kenya, Uganda and the Belgian Congo*. [1924]'

The portrait was shown in the gallery's *Women in Art* exhibition in 2018.

EDITORIAL

***Lewisletter* 38 appears rather soon after the previous issue as a result of the recent lockdown, which has led to more opportunities for writing and research. This mainly concerns my drawing comparisons between Lewis and the Irish novelist Francis Stuart, which begins in Vorticist London and continues through to the different roles they played in the Second World War. Two critical biographies on Stuart have already noted his connections with Lewis and I have made use of all the references to the relationship between the two in my article, plus those from Stuart's most renowned work of fiction, *Black List, Section H*. There are also more reviews of Lewis's books from the Australian Trove web-site, which again casts his work – particularly more obscure books which were barely noticed in Britain – in a different light, especially in the context of war propaganda.**

Co-incidentally or otherwise, this issue has a more feminine feel to it than usual. There is the front cover, featuring a portrait of the travel writer Henrietta Close, the main article which raises the issue of Lewis's relationship with Iseult Gonne, and the catch-up news of the journals of the novelist Mary Butts.

All this shows the potential for Society

to expand into new areas of research and extend its interests in Europe and beyond, as Lewis is seen as less of an 'English' artist than an international one (*hence the change of name of the 'lewisletter', suggested by Pete Rozycki, our designer*).

The next *Lewisletter* should be a centenary commemoration of the two issues of *The Tyro* magazine that Lewis edited in 1921 and 1922. That should clear the decks for one more issue before the Society's fiftieth anniversary in 2024. How that is to be marked depends on contributions members want to send in and if anything emerges from the archives.

Many thanks as usual to Pete Rozycki for his innovative design, to John Benson for his contributions, to David Wragg for his considered reply to my article on Rotting Hill, and to Jo Cottrell for proof-reading this issue.

ROBERT MURRAY

MEDIA NEWS

VORTICISM REVIVED (again)!

Currently in development is a film by Irish director Trish McAdam, 'The End of Romance', about the curious triangular relationship between WB Yeats, the Irish political icon Maud Gonne and her daughter Iseult. The synopsis is that it is … about obsession, a woman, an activist, Maud Gonne, obsessed with her politics, a man, W. B. Yeats, obsessed with his art and a young woman, Maud's daughter, Iseult, obsessed with herself, and how they all let love slip through their fingers. Set against a backdrop of modernism, vorticism and war, in London, Paris, and Ireland, 1916 to 1918.

Ezra Pound is also included in the list of featured characters, but frustratingly the time-scale would exclude – unless there is the deployment of some poetic licence – Lewis, who was away at the Front, and Iseult's future husband, Francis Stuart, who didn't meet her until 1920 (more speculative details about Lewis's place in this expanded entanglement can be found in the article below). The publicity material consists of a panel of images that includes the front cover of *Blast* 1, with added lettering, and the iconic black type on a puce background appears later. In the accompanying information McAdam writes that:

This was probably the most surprising image to come across in my research. It looked more like a punk image than one from 1914. But it is the cover of a magazine published by the Vorticist movement in London in 1914 and is connected to Yeats through Ezra Pound. It gave me an insight into the connection between then and now.

Elsewhere we are told that:

Maud inhabits a milieu of politics, war and revolution, but lives a bohemian lifestyle. She introduces us to a universe of avant-garde art and poetry, the incredibly productive early modernist

> movement in transition from Monet to Wyndham Lewis to Duchamp, evocative somehow of the hippie, punk, grunge, transformation in the music of the mid twentieth century, Incredible String Band to Sid Vicious, New Romantics to Nirvana, a guide to the film's irreverent structure and style.

Not too irreverent, ones hopes. The producer is Kees Kasander, who was responsible for many of Peter Greenaway's films, so hopefully things will not go too far amiss. The publicity material can be seen at: theendofromance.weebly.com. In an interview on the Irish cultural website Headstuff (www.headstuff.org), McAdam also discusses the 'modernist, minimalist tone', but mentions the 'Vorticism London of 1916', which didn't exist as most of the actual Vorticists were at the Front.

Many thanks to John Benson for sending this in from the Bristol band LICE, whose first album is entitled *WASTELAND or "What Ails Our People Is Clear!"* (Settled Law Records, Cat. SETLAW005 / 2021). John writes:

This is a satirical 'concept' album concerning the "adventures of The Conveyor, Dr Coehn [sic], and the RDC's plot to make the human race destroy itself". Reviews of the album and the printed matter issued along with it both refer to *BLAST* and the Vorticists (although without mentioning Lewis by name).

A description by Bristol online music retailer Heads on Sticks (https://headsonsticks.co.uk/2021/01/12/lice-wasteland-what-ails-our-people-is-clear/) reads in part:

"Destroy the cult of the past, the obsession with the ancients, pedantry and academic formalism" reads point one of 1910's first Manifesto of Futurist Painters. Bold declarations of visionary intent are a distinct feature of the futurist movement, an avant-garde collective of artists and thinkers born in Milan and conceived by poet Tommaso Marinetti, eschewing social and artistic tradition to forge work that would upheave the very foundations of society as well as shun the archaic aesthetics of old. From the British Vorticists, Dadaists, and Russian Constructivists who followed, the many challenging and unorthodox pieces unleashed on to conservative society were routinely accompanied with manifestos proclaiming the ills of the cultural world and their noble crusade to get rid of the obsolete and enter liberated modernity (despite some early aligning with fascism on the Italian part).

Included with the vinyl version of the album is a booklet with the complete 'libretto', the cover of which is clearly modelled on *BLAST*, and also, in an edition limited to only 50 copies, a separate booklet containing *NOTES TO ACCOMPANY WASTELAND*. The section titled Manifesto from these *NOTES* reads in full:

> The language and format of *WASTELAND*'s manifesto is based on an advert placed in *The Times* (12 June 1914) for *BLAST*. This was the short-lived publication of radical English avant-garde circle The Vorticists (1914-c.1916), who here declared it the "Death Blow To Impressionism and

> Futurism". The day it was issued several Vorticists went to London's Dore Gallery to sabotage a presentation by their affiliate-turned-rival F.T. Marinetti, the visiting leader of the Italian Futurist movement, upon whose manifestos *BLAST* was largely based. *WASTELAND*'s language was informed by a number of art circles who – similarly disillusioned with the landscape around them – asserted new aesthetic programs to reject complacency and promote invention. These soundings of the same impulse also include The Lukasbund (1809-c.1820), and the first iteration of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (1848-c.1853)….

The appropriation of the manifesto form introduces WASTELAND's twin aims of rejecting settled aesthetics in satirical song lyrics, and reflecting on implicit bias in society and art. [This can be seen on the back-cover.]

… Towards the end of the album we hear indistinctly the lyrics "AND SO WE BLAST THESE SETTLED LAWS!" These words are explained in the *NOTES* as references to "both *BLAST* and William Holman Hunt's account of a formative conversation at the birth of Pre-Raphaelism, about art having entered "a realm of settled law"."

From the 'AbeBay-Watch' section, but more relevant here is: 'A scarce first issue of the Hull poetry journal, *Bête Noir*, featuring the first publication of some of Margaret Atwood's poems as well as Jaroslaw Kosciuszko's updated take on Wyndham Lewis's *BLAST*' is on offer for £30.

Although the date is not given (it should be 1984, but the magazine appeared during the 1970s), the 70th birthday celebration blasts a list of tv celebrities – David Frost, Jonathan King, Steve Race, Clive James, Lady Antonia Fraser, Richard Baker, Russell Harty, Alan Whicker, Jimmy Hill, Malcolm Muggeridge, Joan Bakewell, Bernard Levin, David Coleman, Alistair Burnett, Harry Carpenter 'And all those who appear on tv when they should have stayed at home watching it'. Compared to the jittercrackering iconoclasts that infest the media these days, Mr Kosciuszko didn't know how lucky he was!

A blink-and-you'd miss it reference to Lewis on an interesting programme on Radio Four about Modernism and insects, entitled 'Lady Chatterley's Bed Bugs', presented by Dr. Rachel Murray (no relation, but who was the winner of the 2015 Wyndham Lewis Memorial Trust Essay prize for her paper ' "Diabolical Indigestion": Forms of Distaste in Wyndham Lewis's Body of Work', published in the *Journal*, no 6, 2015), on 4th January this year. Recorded on location at the garden of Virginia Woolf's Monk's House in Sussex, it embraces a wide range of Modernists and their fascination with bees and fleas. She paraphrased Lewis's description of soldiers at the Front 'stuck like house-flies upon a section of fly-paper as they crossed no-man's land'. The programme is available for the rest of the year.

Originally broadcast in March 2017, as 'The Sunday Feature' – 'Watcha' Doin' Marshall McLuhan?' – Ken Hollins' insightful appraisal of Marshall McLuhan (which he weirdly pronounces 'MacGluehan' throughout) gives a single

mention of Lewis, although it overlooks his actual influence on the concept of 'the Global Village'. It is still available to listen to on BBC Sounds.

The F-Word: Pound, Eliot, Lewis and the Far Right by Katrin Fritsch was published in 2019 by Logos, of Germany. The title is self-explanatory, but the presentation makes the book somewhat symptomatic of the far-right ideology it is surely intended to condemn, when this is clearly not the case. It is a doctoral thesis expanded for book-form, and as such can often be arduous to read. The chapter on Lewis, which shows the wealth of Fritsch's reading and understanding of key texts in the Lewisian canon, giving particular attention to *The Childermass* and its later development and conclusion, is intriguing, although it does labour the point about his gender politics. Although the credence given to far-right ideas and their individual proponents may be questioned, Fritsch provides a new context for the political dimension of High Modernism.

It is also available to read as an open-access pdf (www.logos-verlag.de/ebooks/OA/978-3-8325-4972-5.pdf), so you can judge for yourselves. Many thanks again to John Benson for the information on this.

Hugh Kenner's 1954 monograph *Wyndham Lewis* is to be re-published by the Dalkey Archive Press, Dublin, in December 2022. Dalkey Archive Press have previously published other works of Kenner's criticism.

NOTES AND VORTECES

An illustrated catalogue of the Fox collection at Victoria University, Toronto (with a nice photo of Cy and some of the books) can be seen at www.uvic.ca/library/locations/home/spcoll/documents/fox_exhibit_catalogue.pdf.

Again, although this belongs in the AbeBaywatch section, it is more relevant here. *Wyndham Lewis and E.J. Pratt: A Convergence of Strangers*, a pamphlet based on a lecture by Cy, published by Newfoundland Memorial University, St. Johns, in 1983, was on sale for £7.38, but with shipping costs of £17.92 – however, it is $10 on American Amazon.

Edwin John Pratt was a Newfoundland poet (1882-1964); an ordained Methodist minister, he was a lecturer in psychology who switched to teaching English. His most famous book was *Brébeuf and His Brethren*, a blank-verse epic about the Jesuit mission among the Huron Indians in Quebec, published in 1940. Cy modestly noted his lecture in his 1983 lecture at Memorial University in *Enemy News*, Summer 1984, no. 19, pointing out their 'idealisation of plain speaking, of space and the heroic, with a love-hatred for the machine and a certain fascination with the media' (p. 5).

Cy also had an article in the *Robinson Jeffers Association Newsletter* of Fall 1994 (no. 92) that also referred to Pratt – 'Robinson Jeffers in Canada: From Pratt's Newfoundland to Prairie Skull'. Jeffers was a Californian poet famed for his pioneering environmentalism. This is available online at:

robinsonjeffersassociation.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/RJN92.pdf

Following the note on an article by the critic Richard Church in LL 37, the Michael Ayrton-designed dust-jacket of *Self Condemned* (Methuen, 1954), carries on the back a quotation from a review of *Rotting Hill* by the same writer in *John O'London's Weekly* ('Would that they all had the artistry of Wyndham Lewis! In prose, as in paint, he is hard, incisive, definite'). Again, this is not included in Morrow and Lafouracade.

So far not noted in any biographical account of Lewis's complicated love-life is the revelation that he had a relationship with the English novelist Mary Butts. This is suggested in a collective review in the *London Review of Books* ('Good Things: Pederasty and Jazz and Opium and Research',

16th July 1998, Vol. 20, no. 14) by the late expert in Modernism, Lawrence Rainey, of a biography (Natalie Blondel, *Mary Butts: Scenes from the Life*) and some of her re-issued novels. (per/v20/n14/lawrence-rainey/good-things-pederasty-and-jazz-and-opium-and-research)

Butts wrote for and was published in such modernist magazines as the *Little Review* and the *Transatlantic Review*. She was an acolyte of the notorious occultist Aleister Crowley, co-authoring Book Four (1912) of his *Magick* series, although she later disassociated herself from him after witnessing the shenanigans taking place at the Abbey of Thelema in Sicily. In 1918, she met and married John Rodker – the butt (sorry!) of Lewis's satirical ire as 'Julius Ratner' in *The Apes of God*, as well as owner of the Ovid Press, which published his portfolio, *Fifteen Drawings*, in 1920. She became separated from him soon after giving birth to a daughter, taking up with Cecil Maitland, something of a reprobate, who left her with an opium habit that lasted until her death in 1937. Rainey notes that "Through Rodker she met many of the major Modernists: her diaries record encounters with Pound, Lewis, Ford Madox Ford and, during a brief period when she moved on the fringes of Bloomsbury, Roger Fry. Butts registers their comments, advice and obiter dicta. … In 1918 Butts noted: 'What we want is a new way of seeing ... a new synthesis. Joyce, Eliot, Lewis –?"'

Lawrence Rainey refers to the affair between Butts and Lewis parenthetically, in the greater context of her relationship with the American composer Virgil Thomson:

> He later portrayed Butts as the great passion of his life, the only woman who had ever tempted him from his love of music. But that overlooks the fact that Thomson was gay, something he carefully, almost pathologically, sought to conceal all his life. Anthony Tommasini, in his recent biography of the composer, has dismissed the entire affair as a fabrication on Thomson's part, and Blondel may be too ready to accept the story at face value. (Butts also refers to an otherwise unnoticed affair with Wyndham Lewis, a man not known for discretion.)

Rainey considered Butts' diaries (now

housed in the Beinecke Library of Yale University), which she kept from 1918 until 1937, as 'the most important unpublished memoir of the period that I have seen.' A selection was published in 2002 by the Yale University Press, edited by Natalie Blondel. The Introduction and some early entries are available online (docshare01.docshare.tips/files/26622/266228177.pdf – thanks to Jo Cottrell for sending this to me) but reveal little about Lewis apart from the fact that Butts named her dog 'Blast' and that the expatriate American writer Grenway Wescott, wrote in a letter in April 1923, to his lover, Monroe Wheeler, that 'I want to know Lewis better, and Eliot somewhat …' (p. 25)

Something missed by nearly thirty years was *Artspoke: A Guide to Modern Ideas, Movements, and Buzzwords, 1848 - 1944* (a companion to *Artspeak*), edited by Robert Atkins, New York, Abbeville Press, 1993. This has a short section on Vorticism and a reproduction of *Composition* (1913) (pp. 211-212)

The reference in *LL* 37 to an article in the Modernist Magazines.org blog, comparing the portrayal of crowds in *Blast* 2 and the American journal *The Crisis*, should of course have noted that the latter was edited by the Black American philosopher W. E. B. DuBois and, founded in 1910, was the house journal of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Copies of *The Crisis* can be read on the website modjourn.org/journal/crisis/.

Lewis is one of a somewhat disparate list of writers (including Roald Dahl and Paul Theroux) described as admirers of the short story and screenplay writer John Collier, in his Wikipedia entry.

Many thanks to Alan Munton for tracking down this report in the *Times Literary Supplement*, Vol. LXXIV, no. 38, 25th April 1975, serving as a reminder that the Society will be FIFTY years old in 2024. It prompted a reply from Robert Cowan, then editor of *Lewisletter* in its first incarnation, regarding *The Role of Line in Art* and *Snooty Baronet* (Morrow and Lafourcade, F1817 and F1818).

BLAST AREA

Tomorrow, Saturday, April 26, Julian Symons will be chairing a Wyndham Lewis Symposium (10 am to 6 pm, admission free and open to the public) at the Tate Gallery. The symposium is organized by the Wyndham Lewis Society, which was formed last year 'with the aim of promoting interest in Lewis and the study of his work'. If such cultural fan clubs (or scholars' outlets) have an old-world sound, they nevertheless continue to spring up: the Chesterton Society, for example, was founded last May 'for the promotion of interest in all aspects of the life and work of G. K. Chesterton', and has recently issued the first number of *The Chesterton Review*. published in Saskatoon but available in this country from Louis Schroeder, 5 Buckhurst Way, Early, Reading.

The journal of the Wyndham Lewis Society, the *Lewisletter* (edited by Robert Cowan from 175 Nithsdale

Road, Pollokshields, Glasgow), is an informal, indeed virtually a one-man newssheet of which two issues have appeared. The contributions are chiefly of a literary nature: with the exception of a piece on Lewis and music criticism by Alan Munton, they are all written by Tom Kinninmont. Lewis as a visual artist so far gets very little attention, though paintings and drawings from the Tate's collection, not normally on display, will be during the symposium.

The largest Lewis collection is at Cornell – '22 linear feet' of it. There is a smaller cache at Buffalo, based on the purchase of Lord Carlow's collection from Zwemmer's in the 1950s. The second *Lewisletter* comments on the more interesting items at Buffalo, which include the manuscript for the novel *The Revenge For Love* and a photostat of the sole surviving copy of *The Role of Line in Art*, now apparently in Australia, in the possession of Lord Carlow's son; the rest of the edition of 120 copies, printed on yellow linen-weave paper, was destroyed in the Second World War.

The Cornell collection includes some instructive and querulous correspondence between Lewis and his publishers – Chatto and Windus and, subsequently, Cassell. He was frequently asked to tone down his style of expression. *Sol Invictus* [actually *Snooty Baronet*] was originally to be called *The Last Testicle*; *The Revenge For Love* was called *False Bottoms* until Boots Lending Library censored it. Boots' prepublication report on the novel was so unfavourable that Cassell threatened to drop the book altogether.

> Perhaps somebody ought to look into the influence of Boots Lending Library on English letters between the 1890s and its demise in 1966.

In the fascinating compendium edited by Iain Sinclair, *London: City of Disappearances* (London, Hamish Hamilton, 2006; re-published by Penguin), there is a biographical essay-cum-interview by Patrick Wright, with the writer Emanuel Litvinoff (pp. 233-253). Born in 1912 in Whitechapel, Litvinoff experienced great poverty in his youth before finding some success as a novelist and later as a tv scriptwriter. He describes to Wright sleeping rough in the West End and sneaking in to the Café Royal in Regent Street to have a wash in the club's cloakroom, 'winning a smile on the way through from a knickerbockered George Bernard Shaw. He remembered catching an apprehensive glance from Wyndham Lewis, striding along Piccadilly in black cloak and wide-brimmed hat' (pp. 237-238).

Only come across by accident online, is this unlikely mention of Lewis from the late critic Christopher Hitchens in the April 2008 edition of *The Atlantic*. In a review of the first part of A. David Moody's biographical trilogy, Ezra Pound: Poet – *A Portrait of the Man and His Work. Volume I – The Young Genius, 1885-1920* (OUP, 2007), entitled 'The Revolutionary Simpleton', Hitchens celebrates Pound's iconoclasm, making particular reference to his often overlooked contribution to *Blast*, but laments what he sees as his later mental collapse with his enthusiasm for fascism:

> … though strictly speaking it lies outside the scope of Moody's book, let me quote from what Wyndham Lewis was later to write about experiencing the energy-loving and race-memory-oriented fascism that he had at first welcomed so warmly: The senseless bellicosity of the reactionary groups of the *Action Française* type may certainly result in far more violence, before long, than anyone is able to measure.

On another occasion he wrote,

> "Fascists have the word 'action' on their lips from morning to night." In the same book—*Time and Western Man*—he described his former *BLAST* colleague Ezra Pound as a "revolutionary simpleton." That could perhaps furnish a title for Moody's second volume [unfortunately it didn't, the title being *The Epic Years*, 1921-1939]. Lewis of course turned against fascism, if only because he decided that it was ultimately just as mob-centered as democracy. Pound's contempt for democracy was of a more determinedly elevated and "artistic" type.

Such a caveat regarding Lewis's own momentary reactionary stance is rare, possibly even unprecedented in such critical quarters. Hitchens' perspicacity is much missed.

(www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2008/04/a-revolutionary-simpleton)

Incidentally, has anyone noted David Moody's article, 'Wyndham Lewis: The Artist as Intellectual Superman' that appeared in the *Times Higher Education Supplement* 414, 10th October 1980 (pp. 10-11)?

FAIR DINKUM FOR LEWIS DOWN UNDER: PART TWO – 'A DON QUIXOTE TILTING AT STEEL MILLS'

To start this second selection of reviews of Lewis's work found in the National Library of Australia online archive (Trove), there is a correction to the first. The very first mention of Lewis in the Australian press would appear to be a short mention of *Blast* in the Melbourne *Australian* of 25th July 1914, preceding the notice in the Adelaide *Register* by a week.

Blast certainly made an impression on the art critic for the Adelaide *Observer* of 3rd October 1914. In a piece entitled 'Art Run Mad', he writes: 'The Great English Vortex … what it means nobody can tell – not even its votaries. In this enormous quarterly magazine, of which the first number is the size of an ordinary ledger, the writers strive hard to express themselves in a variety of ways. …' There is evident fascination with its revolutionary stance, tempered by a sense that the enterprise was essentially a peace-time indulgence:

> It is doubtful whether there will be a second number of "Blast." The great things which have come upon the world since its publication make its affectations seem singularly trumpery. But this first number is worth buying, to be put aside as one of those curiosities of literature which sometimes acquire in later years a market value out of all proportion to their artistic worth.

Indeed. One wonders how many copies were sold Down Under, especially in the

absence of any of Lewis's art-work there, except through reproductions in art-books. While Lewis was admired for his reputation as a rebel in the art-world, a phenomenon which could only be observed from the other side of the world (although some newspapers employed a London correspondent) his skills as a writer were readily acknowledged, especially as his written work was more readily available. Perhaps unaware of the often controversial nature of his work in Britain, Lewis was often quoted by Australian journalists in the commentaries of the many newspapers that existed before the last war, as an expert, not just on cultural affairs, but on social matters as well. This had some amusing consequences, but it also revealed how Lewis was exploited by various local political interests.

Reviews of books by 'Wyndham Lewis' were often accompanied by the caveat 'not to be confused with D. B. Wyndham Lewis'. (1) Dominic Bevan was a journalist and a writer, born in 1890, who cast his creative net very widely to cover fiction and biography. As a Catholic proselytizer, his *bon mots* were eagerly picked up by the more conservative newspapers, especially the Catholic newspaper, the Adelaide *Southern Cross*, although his 'Mustard and Cress' column, imported from the British sports paper, the *Sunday Referee*, was re-cycled across the political board. (2) Even so, it may be wondered as to where this brief note – a possibly undiscovered gem – in the Labor Daily service of 16th March 1928, from Lewis the Elder, came from?

RUDENESS URGES CURE SOCIAL ILLS

"Labor Daily" Service

LONDON. Thursday.

Rudeness is a cure for a lot of the world's social ills, in the view of Wyndham Lewis, the novelist. Society would immediately assume much more interesting and definite patterns, he believes, if people were to become more frank. "If you find a person distasteful to you, be rude to him whenever you meet him, and do nor refer to him as 'my friend So-and-So' " Mr. Lewis suggests, "Other people will then begin to refer to you as the 'enemy' of 'So-and-So.'"

Mr. Lewis thinks the word "enemy" has been confined too largely to military operations, and favors restoring its use frankly to the "mapping and mining operations which take place in drawing rooms as well as elsewhere."

The source of this (quoted in full, slightly adjusted to avoid journalistic one-sentence paragraphs) is not given. It may have been taken from an interview in the British press, but I cannot track it down in either bibliography. Incidentally, it lies adjacent to another report entitled 'You May Spank Flappers [but] Don't Overdo It – Judge Tells Mothers', referring to a recent court case in New York, perhaps an anticipation of *Apes of God*, which is curiously missing in reviews of Lewis in the Australian press, despite many references made to it.

Lewis was praised for his possession of the Australian ideal of plain speaking, as evident in the laudatory review of *The Art of Being Ruled* in the Adelaide *Register* of 13th November 1926. Nevertheless, in the 'Just a Word – The Spirit of the Bush' column from the editor of the Sydney *Australian Worker* of 16th February 1938, there is a plea couched in an outback proletarian rhetoric that doesn't quite fit Lewis's own political demeanour:

WANTED – ***COMMONSENSE***

WYNDHAM LEWIS, the English painter and author, is a frightfully clever fellow, and whenever he talks a lot of people listen with respectful admiration. But it doesn't follow that he is invariably right. I rather suspect, indeed; that he likes to be wrong at times, just to show us how brilliantly he can juggle with ideas.

The other day he announced that what he lived for now was 'to save the people from being ruled too much – from being ruled off the face of the earth, as a matter of fact.'

A laudable aim. But how he would accomplish it he failed to state. My own belief is, brother, that the people are ruled too much because they are fooled too much. If that be so, then obviously the way to rectify the situation is to inject liberal doses of commonsense into the public mind. Do that effectually and people will soon make short work of those who fool them.

…Unfortunately, brother, commonsense is one of the most uncommon things in the world. Even the cleverest men are often without it. They may be erudite, nimble-witted, original, amazingly ingenious, and at the same time, so lacking in commonsense as to act on occasions in the silliest fashion conceivable.

…And when we remember that the Labor Movement is the mightiest educational force ever known in history, there's no reason to take the gloomy view of the future that Wyndham Lewis does.

How say you?

I say that the idea that the editor would have addressed Lewis as 'brother' is amusing, even bizarre, but this is an example of how he was drawn into Australian politics. The editor politely condemns his pessimism, rather than his politics, but is trying to fit him into the wider ideological struggle that was taking place in Australia at the time. This was overshadowed by the threat of a war that was not necessarily supported by all parties.

Hitler was eventually dismissed as the ill-constructed piece of propaganda it undoubtedly was, but at the time it was given a more balanced reception. (3) Though generally condemned in Britain, it received a favourable review in the *Times Literary Supplement* (April 16th 1931) and a balanced one in the *New Statesman and Nation* (May 23rd 1931). In the *Albury Banner and Wodonga Express*, of 4th September 1931, Lewis's *faux pas* was greeted with an equanimity that, although misplaced, shows his stature as a political commentator:

HITLERISM: MR. WYNDHAM LEWIS'S EXPLANATION OF ITS AIMS (and) GERMANY'S "MAN OF DESTINY"

The National Socialist movement in Germany, after our surprise at its extraordinary election successes last September, has received little attention in England. We have, indeed, had little news of it, our own affairs having engrossed the attention of the press. …

… Mr. Wyndham Lewis has recently returned from Berlin full of the subject; he could not get away from it. His book is instructive and eye-opening; it is also, in parts, highly amusing, brightened by an apparent levity which, with Mr. Lewis., often denotes entire seriousness. …

… Those who look for a chatty biography of Adolf Hitler, the head and front of this movement, will not find it here. We are, indeed, told, very little about Hitler; perhaps too little. He is 'an austrian house-painter' – Mr. Lewis refuses capitals to abjectives' of nationality … Hitler, then, according to Mr.Wyndham Lewis, is not a sabre-rattler; he is 'a sort of inspired and eloquent Everyman.' The cement that binds the parts of Hitlerism together is the Blutsgelfuhl, the 'blood-feeling.' This is an intense nationalism, in direct opposition to internationalism as known to Communists – and sentimentalists. Hitler, is violently anti-Communist. This nationalism accounts, partly, for the violent anti-Semitism of the Hitlerites – that, and the enormous financial influence of Jews. But this nationalism, according to optimistic Hitlerites, might be extended to a league of white races, still retaining every vestige of nationality, for the saving of Western civilization. Hitlerite socialism would not abolish property, but it would abolish bureaucracy and abolish private banks. … Also, apparently, it would forbid all usury; nobody would, pay any interest on money because no one might borrow. Debt, then, would be eliminated, like a poison, from the social system (it all sounds so simple!) and a new dawn would rise on a new and debtless world.

This probably says more about the political sentiments of the reviewer than it does Lewis, which seemed to be influenced by the utopianism of Social Credit, something which would appeal to the paper's readership of 'cockies' – small-scale farmers. Again, Lewis is co-opted for a localised political project.

Lewis was used by both left-wing and right-wing commentators to further their own editorial purposes, but particularly by the Catholic press. The co-opting of Lewis to the Catholic-conservative cause was evident in a long piece on *Time and Western Man*, by M. C. D'arcy (SJ), in *The Catholic Advocate*, of 26th January 1928, which originally appeared in the December 1927 issue of the British journal *The Month*. (4) The Catholic press in Australia was an influential voice, defining itself as right-wing and eager to get credibility from writers apparently sympathetic to the cause of anti-

communism and they approved of Lewis's ostensibly pacifist stance in the face of a forthcoming war. This extended to repeating the same review of *Left Wings Over Europe*, albeit with some slight changes, as seen in 'The Library Table' column of the Adelaide *Southern Cross* of 12th February 1937, taking its heading from the book's sub-title, 'How to Make a War About Nothing':

In general, Mr. Lewis is concerned – as Catholics are concerned – for the European tradition. He sees now policies being marshalled by subversive forces, and all that is truly European threatened by the grotesque allies, Capitalism-cum-Communism. The war which threatens is a war into which people may be tricked or frightened by these allies, but it will be a war in which no real interest of the European peoples is served, in which their real interests will indeed be sacrificed.

The message is repeated in the 'World of Books' column in the Brisbane *Catholic Advocate* of 6th May 1937, the reviewer ('Langton') enthuses over *Left Wings Over Europe*, and begins: 'If you desire to read one of the really few good books that have been written about world politics, then read this one by perhaps the greatest of living satirists. ...', and which finishes on the same note: 'Broadly speaking he stands for the European tradition, which is the Christian one and sees in the growth of extreme Nationalism, such as Hitler aims at, and in Capitalism-Communism, forces that are subversive of that tradition and which possibly lead to a war from which Europe can gain nothing, and may very well lose all.'

Yet Australian reviewers are not so reverent as to be above criticising Lewis for his evident shortcomings as a political analyst. From the Sydney *Daily Telegraph* of 26th September 1936 comes this appraisal of his achievements, tempered by some pertinent criticism, in a review of the same book:

PLAYBOY OF THE WESTERN WORLD

WYNDHAM LEWIS is a sort of pocket Hercules engaged in cleaning out a mythical Augean stable. In all his books he has waged a private war against the gods of modern times, and has shown a consistency in his inconsistency which always demands attention. In his latest book, "Left Wings Over Europe," he gives expression to the political and social prejudices that have made his earlier writings such absurd and provocative reading. As an account of contemporary European history, "Left Wings Over Europe" is no more realistic than Old Moore's Almanac, especially in his pamphleteering in favor of Hitler, Mussolini, and the other "unsentimental" forthright dictatorships. In a marked degree he shows the bad conscience of the disputant when he turns to analyse the various elements in English democracy. …

… Those adult enough to take seriously modern history will not be too serious to laugh at Mr. Lewis for this patent essay in the absurd. Mr. Lewis has been disagreed with for so long that he no longer bothers to be persuasive.

MASTER OF MUDDLE

Amid such falsification, satire, and plain

bad writing it is difficult for the "average" educated Englishman to find his way. So, it might be apposite to recount some of Mr. Lewis's less cryptic theses.

In "Hitler", his biography of the Feuhrer [sic], he idealised the brown-shirts of Fascism, excused the blackjacks, laughed at the Liberals, and, funniest of all, took seriously Hitler's social programme of nationalisation of the banks, and re-instatement of the "small man" in [the] German economy.

Mr. Wyndham Lewis is one of those efficient publicists who entirely lacks a sense of social reality. As such, he is a stimulating fellow, whose pages are full of delight for those who like to feel that they are wiser than the person whose work they are reading. Like a Don Quixote tilting at steel-mills, Mr. Lewis will go on from book to book with Hitler as his Sancho Panza; and for his armor a complete indifference to social realities.

The view that Lewis is quixotic in his attempts to pursue a policy of pacificism is echoed in a review by 'Palette' in the Adelaide *News*, from 2nd October 1937, entitled 'Brillant Propaganda Against Communism'. The review over-simplifies Lewis's ideas, which are filtered through his individualist stance and is not exactly a work of propaganda, but which would appear to be so to a reader who is unaware of the context of incongruity and often wilful confusion in which Lewis operates:

Count Your Dead – They Are Alive [!], is the title of Mr. Wyndham Lewis' latest literary excursion. … Mr. Lewis is an extraordinary chap, and has a wit that is slapstick at times; at others, very pungent indeed. We have all smiled at Bernard Shaw even when we feel slightly offended, but with Lewis you can both smile and laugh aloud even when you are shocked, for shocked you are when you read and realise that Mr. Lewis regards those great matters of life and death involved in the foreign policy of Mr. Eden as disastrously misguided.

…Mr. Lewis represents the threatened new conflict as the most irrational and meaningless that it has ever been proposed to wage, since no vital interest of England is at stake, and since it proposes the perpetuation of an injustice to a great European community (Germany, of course). He argues further that the only possible gainer by such a war would be the Soviet. …

… I, like a good many others, no doubt, cannot quite grasp Mr. Wyndham Lewis. Harold Nicolson in the "Statesman" described him as "an enemy of sentimentalism with a lack of an even average trustfulness," but I really think he has every desire to induce his countrymen to think less incorrectly. He is a very suspicious man, and it would be, perhaps, just as well if readers took this infection from him. This remarkable self-satisfaction of our countrymen of late is apt to end in something sinister. So a few rude questions of the type Mr. Lewis is asking may possibly be all to the good. One thing for it: it is a brilliant piece of anti-Communist propaganda.

'Palette' acknowledges here that Lewis is more of a writer cast in the role of an entertainer, rather than a serious political analyst. Another review, 'Mainly About

Books', in *The West Australian* (Perth) of 15th May 1937, of the same book, favourably compares it with an analysis of the current situation by the noted military expert, Major General J. P. C. ('Boney') Fuller, C.B, D.S.O, in his *Towards Armageddon*:

The publishers explain that it is purely by a coincidence of production that these two books appear simultaneously. But the coincidence is not without its implication. The minds of both these authors are concerned with the destiny of the British Empire in the struggle to which they, like so many other not necessarily alarmist people, feel we are now committed. The two minds, one of an intelligent, restless soldier, the other of a witty satirist, look upon this problem and are appalled at the enormity of sacrifice and disaster it threatens.

Indeed, Lewis has now made a complete transition from a ('humorous novelist' – 'not to be confused with D. B. Wyndham Lewis') to a serious political commentator, as seen in this review in the Melbourne *Herald* of 19th June 1937:

BRILLIANT WRECKING BY WYNDHAM LEWIS: "Count Your Dead" – You May Soon Have To:…

Lately, however, Lewis the creative artist has been subordinated – to the regret of many people to Lewis the pamphleteer. Perhaps he might contend with others that when one's life is threatened with abrupt termination in an international war, there are more urgent things to be done than painting pictures and writing satires.

When the new war in the making was finally made, Lewis's recantation of his former pro-Hitler stance, in *The Hitler Cult and How It Will End* (1939) was taken in good faith by Australian reviewers, as seen in this piece in the 'Speaking of Books' feature in the Brisbane *Telegraph* of 8th January, 1940. The reviewer here takes up the quixotic image of Lewis made above. The book only received three reviews in Britain, whereas there were at least half a dozen in Australia. Note also Lewis's accurate prediction of Hitler's eventual demise, something that seems to have passed other commentators by (perhaps a fault of not actually having read the book):

'Hitler as "New Napoleon", But Wyndham Lewis Pokes Fun at Him'

'Wyndham Lewis beats most of the debunkers of Hitler at the game, for he just refuses to take the Fuehrer [sic] seriously. In his new book, THE HITLER CULT (Dent, 7/6), this Nordic divinity, says W.L., is just another of the false gods that history throws up, and he gives him only six years to live. The author surveys the world situation and discusses whether Britain is "in a spot." He thinks our mistake is in trying to simultaneously to look good and be powerful. He tilts at post-war windmills – the sovereign state, the British governing class, the League of Nations' Union, but finds that after all this nation is more civilised than that which produced Wagner.

Now Lewis is seen as having left-wing sympathies and a seamless connection is made between *Count Your Dead* and *The Hitler Cult*. The Australian critics obviously warmed to Lewis's aggressive rhetoric, now that the war had started. In a review

entitled 'Insignificant Blur' in *The Sydney Morning Herald* of 3rd February 1940, Lewis's equation between Hitlerism and a romantic culture that he naturally disapproved of, found favour:

One can always expect to be intrigued by Mr. Wyndham Lewis's witty, mordant, and decisive writing. Here he excels himself in vituperation and has as his thesis that now, as in 1914, it is humanely desirable that Germany should win no war against France or England.

Mr Lewis insists that since Hitler "hears voices" – he is a male Joan of Arc, and we are assured that if the Fuhrer were a poet, he would be the most boring of verse-mongers, since he is a politician with a Muse, that he is a fairy tale and is nothing if not irrational. The author laments that his judgment flipped badly in 1930 over "that unusual trinity of celibacy, teetotalism, and anti nicotine", and he is kind enough to refer to Hitler, physically, as "an insignificant blur ". Nationalism is described as a religion "because it makes no sense". … It is argued that Hitler is a post-war Don Quixote, that "Wagner taught him to think big, and Reinhart (at second-hand) taught him to look big. As a solitary he is compared and contrasted with Rousseau". Witness Mr Lewis's phlegm: "He (Hitler) is in the habit of threatening suicide, he weeps with considerable facility, his perorations are shaken with sobs, he storms and leaves like a hysterical prima donna. He is the somnambulist turned as if by magic into a perfect Pied Piper.

In a list of 'recent books' in the Sydney *Daily Telegraph*, of 27th April, *The Hitler Cult* wrongly attributed the publisher as Gollancz, rather than Dent, an act of wishful thinking by a reviewer who press-gangs Lewis into the war-effort against Germany. The turnaround in Lewis's stance is seen as complete in this review, in the Perth *West Australian*, of 16th March 1940, which I quote in full:

In this book Wyndham Lewis, with his characteristic gusto, anatomises the Hitler cult and comfortingly foretells its catastrophic termination. He portrays the Fuehrer [sic] as an out-of-date romantic who is everywhere confronted with realities which he does not understand and which he plainly seeks to dissolve and overcome with floods of eloquence backed up with fleets of bombers and murderous U-boats. What success he has had so far is attributed to the astonishment and confusion which might be caused by anyone in the twentieth century resorting to such methods and to the unwillingness of the more civilised nations to behave as he does. The author is inclined to be hypercritical of the Chamberlain Government. His book was written before the war and in it he stresses what he regards as the necessity for a real understanding with Russia. To the British Government's failure to come to terms with Stalin we have, in his view, to trace the conclusion of the Russo-German Pact with all its implications. This may be true, but surely the author would not have an Anglo-Russian pact bought, as it evidently would have had to be bought, at the price of giving Russia a free hand in the Baltic, in Poland and in Finland. Britishers must be relieved to think they have escaped such an unholy alliance. Mr. Lewis believes that Germany's National Socialism is less formidable morally, intellectually and materially than

many of his countrymen are disposed to regard it, and ridicules the notion that Hitler has, as Lord Baldwin once said, "a great brain." The German claim to *lebensraum* – a redistribution of the world estate with the lion's share to Germany – he describes as the irrational claim of a large industrial country to dominate smaller agricultural communities more richly endowed with raw materials than itself. As a way out of recurring world war Mr. Lewis leans strongly towards a federal union of the democratic countries on the lines of the British Commonwealth, a federation which would ultimately also embrace what are now the totalitarian States. The late M. Briand, it will be remembered, toyed with some such idea. Good European as he was, he cherished a dream of a United Europe, and there are many political thinkers today besides the author of this book who pin their faith to some such utopia.

Another thing the Australian reviewers pick up on is Lewis's incipient utopianism, which he went on to fully develop while in exile in Canada, as seen in another article on *The Hitler Cult*, entitled 'Machine-Age Barbarism Versus Culture', in the Adelaide *Advertiser*, of 16th March, 1940. Here Lewis is quoted – 'Believe it or not, but the history of post-War Europe is being written by a Don Quixote in real life.' It continues:

… The picture Wyndham Lewis draws here is indeed extremely gloomy. If what he fears were to come true then there would be no British Empire left. It would be broken up and England would drop back to the level from which she rose some centuries ago. She would again be nothing but a fifth-rate power, with the Royal House only a minor princely family. He suggests that if Great Britain, France, and the United States, and Italy (but without Mussolini) would form one nation under one single government, this nation would be destined to grow into a world nation – otherwise he fears that western culture may be destroyed altogether. Not that Germany would be the destroyer. Nazidom, the author believes, is much less formidable morally and intellectually than is generally thought.

… In other words, the machine-age barbarism is not confined to Germany – although Germany is its most efficient exponent – while the Anglo-French Celtic peoples are in Wyndham Lewis's opinion, the most suitable stock from which to build a cultured and tolerant world nation.

How say you, Brother?

The next and final part will deal with a more detailed look at how the Australian critics appraised Lewis's fictional work, as well as his post-war reputation. As we saw in the first part, they were very taken with *Snooty Baronet*, and I have since discovered another two reviews of the book, bringing the total up to eight.

NOTES:

(1) For example, D. B. Wyndham Lewis was referred to as an 'artist and writer', in a piece entitled 'What Is Wrong With Us?' by Canon William Barry DD, imported from *The London Catholic Times*, and reprinted in *The West Australian Record*, on 9th August, 1919. In a favourable review of *Filibusters in Barbary* ('Unvarnished Barbary. A Traveller's Description') in the Melbourne *Age*, of 1st

October 1932, Lewis is described as 'The versatile author of "The Apes of God" and "King Spider"' who nevertheless 'continues his researches into the world of sham and decadence.'

(2) Lewis was casually quoted in the *Southern Cross* of 10th September 1937, under the heading 'The Art of Letters', whereby a quote from Hilaire Belloc is followed by one from *The Dithyrambic Spectator* – 'It is very much more difficult to achieve anything in a lucid and simple utterance than in an utterance that is very complex and wrapped up in a thousand protective sheaths' (the word 'sheath' being ironic here, given its inclusion in a Roman Catholic newspaper!) The Lewis quote continues: 'This is obvious enough: for a writer with nothing at all to say can still say and say and say, but if there is no canon by which what he says can be checked he can claim the highest distinction for the manner in which he chooses to speak, if the meaning is recognised to be negligible.'

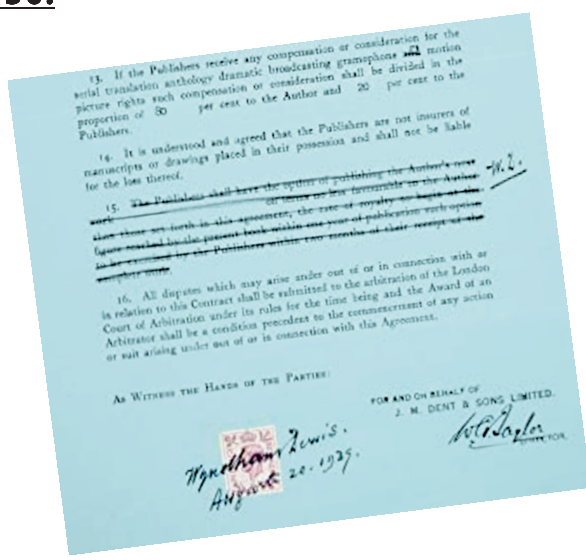
(3) Lewis was briefly cited in a list of quotations that was headed by Hitler in the Brisbane *Telegraph* of 3rd September 1938 ('NOTABLE SAYINGS – HERR HITLER'): 'I don't think the "bib and bottle" period of anybody's life is worth writing about'. I cannot trace the source of this quotation, which looks as though it should come from *Blasting and Bombardiering*, but isn't.

(4) The Reverend M. C. (Martin Cyril) D'Arcy, S. J. (1888-1976) was respected by Lewis for his intellectual prowess, and his portrait was included in the 1932 portfolio, *Thirty Personalities and a Self-Portrait* (Michel, 743). He reviewed *Time and Western Man* in an article, 'A Critic Among Philosophers', in the December 1927 issue of the British magazine, *The Month*, which was re-printed in *The Catholic Advocate* (Brisbane), of 26th January 1928. D'Arcy's book, *Catholicism*, was included in Lewis's personal library (O'Keeffe, p. 632).

ABEBAYWATCH:

Like last time, Abebooks have more books to offer than both the e-Bay and Amazon sites, although this time round there are less interesting curios. Most of the rarities which were available on AbeBooks seem to have been bought up. Prices are a lot higher here, compared with those on e-Bay.

The most eye-catching item was a signed contract with JM Dent, for *The Hitler Cult*, dated August 20th, 1939, on sale for £500. A first edition, signed and dedicated to John Gawsworth (author of *Apes, Japes and Hitlerism*) of *The Diabolical Principle and The Dithyrambic Spectator* (1931) was on sale for £450.


13. If the Publishers receive any compensation or consideration for the serial translation anthology dramatic broadcasting gramophone and motion picture rights such compensation or consideration shall be divided in the proportion of 80 per cent to the Author and 20 per cent to the Publishers.

14. It is understood and agreed that the Publishers are not insurers of manuscripts or drawings placed in their possession and shall not be liable for the loss thereof.

15. ~~[struck through]~~ W.L.

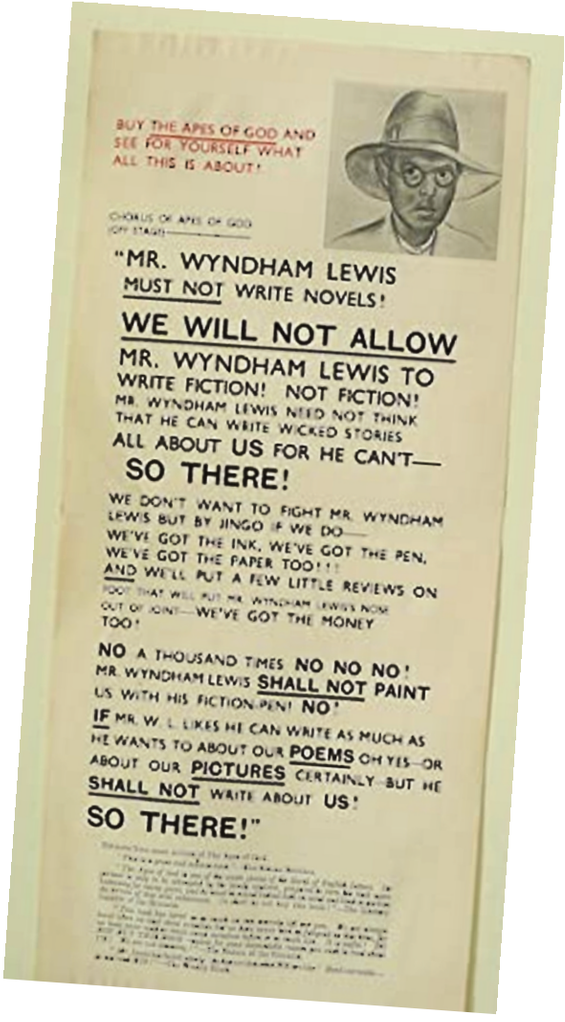
16. All disputes which may arise under out of or in connection with or in relation to this Contract shall be submitted to the arbitration of the London Court of Arbitration under its rules for the time being and the Award of an Arbitrator shall be a condition precedent to the commencement of any action or suit arising under out of or in connection with this Agreement.

As Witness the Hands of the Parties:

Wyndham Lewis. August 20. 1939.

For and on behalf of J. M. DENT & SONS LIMITED.
Director

Still available is the Prospectus for the *Apes of God* (see illustration below), a folding sheet from 1930, issued by the Arthur Press and priced at £125, which was considerably cheaper than the same item offered by an American bookseller, as reported in *LL* 37, although it was also on offer on e-Bay for a mere £30.
Another was a four-page publicity flyer for *Paleface*, published by Chatto and Windus in 1929 (no illustration), which was on offer for £30. Extracts from press notices of *Tarr*, published by the Egoist Press in 1918 – in Morrow and Lafourade, A3 (a), was on offer for £37.48 – plus £27.29 shipping from America.


BUY THE APES OF GOD AND SEE FOR YOURSELF WHAT ALL THIS IS ABOUT!

"MR. WYNDHAM LEWIS MUST NOT WRITE NOVELS!

WE WILL NOT ALLOW MR. WYNDHAM LEWIS TO WRITE FICTION! NOT FICTION! MR. WYNDHAM LEWIS NEED NOT THINK THAT HE CAN WRITE WICKED STORIES ALL ABOUT US FOR HE CAN'T— SO THERE!

WE DON'T WANT TO FIGHT MR. WYNDHAM LEWIS BUT BY JINGO IF WE DO— WE'VE GOT THE INK, WE'VE GOT THE PEN, WE'VE GOT THE PAPER TOO!!! AND WE'LL PUT A FEW LITTLE REVIEWS ON THAT WILL PUT MR. WYNDHAM LEWIS NOW OUT OF JOINT—WE'VE GOT THE MONEY TOO!

NO A THOUSAND TIMES NO NO NO! MR. WYNDHAM LEWIS SHALL NOT PAINT US WITH HIS FICTION-PEN! NO!

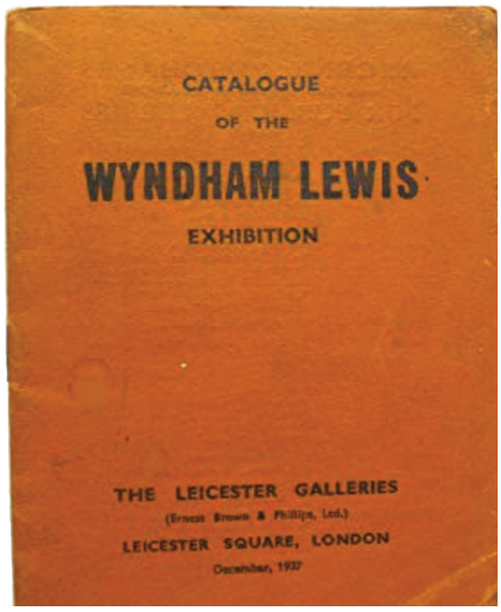
IF MR. W. L. LIKES HE CAN WRITE AS MUCH AS HE WANTS TO ABOUT OUR POEMS OH YES—OR ABOUT OUR PICTURES CERTAINLY—BUT HE SHALL NOT WRITE ABOUT US!

SO THERE!"

A newspaper 'Profile' cutting from an un-named newspaper, from 1956 with a photo, was on offer for £15.

The catalogue for the 1937 Leicester Galleries exhibition, with an introduction by Lewis was a snip at £180. There are quite few copies of the 1956 Tate exhibition catalogue on sale for various prices.

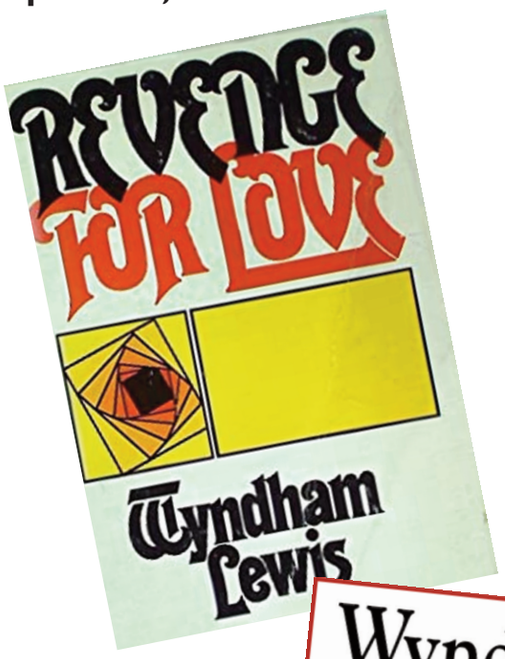
A more recent curio is a catalogue of *The Collection of Wayne Hugo Green*, published by the bookseller Glenn Horowitz, available for £20.43p (no postage cost given).

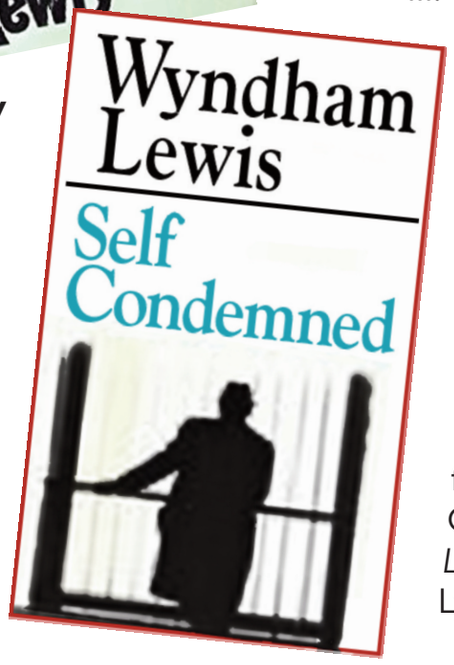

CATALOGUE
OF THE
WYNDHAM LEWIS
EXHIBITION
THE LEICESTER GALLERIES
LEICESTER SQUARE, LONDON

Sixteen Color Plates' from Blast 3, published by Black Sparrow Press in 1984, was on sale for £18.74, but with £21.83 for shipping.

A thesis by Khalid Easa, *The Notion of the Unpopular for Wyndham Lewis and Marshall McLuhan*, published by an un-named company in January 2020, is available as a paperback for £16.90.
There are some previously un-catalogued translations and re-issues. A French translation of

***The Revenge For Love – La rançon de l'amour* – published by L'age d'Homme in 1937 ('condition: ancien') was available for £26.70. There was also a reprint of *The Revenge For Love* from 1970. Being a paperback, it's**





unlikely that it's a pirate edition; it was published by Gateway, of Chicago, which was where the first American edition of the novel appeared, under the Henry Regnery imprint. Could this have been a subsidiary? The Gateway edition is not in either bibliography and the cover hasn't been reproduced anywhere else before. It was on offer for £6, plus a reasonable cost for postage. A copy of *Self-Condemned*, published in 1974 by the renowned Canadian firm of McClelland and Stewart Ltd (now part of Penguin Random House) and which also does not appear in either bibliography was on sale for less than a tenner, with reasonable postage costs. A translation into Swedish of *Enemy of the Stars – Stjärnornas fiende*, published by Bakhåll, in 1988, is available for only £4.34, but with shipping costs of £12.53. There was also this item, from France:

L'ennemi, No 4 : "Perfide Albion" : I. Décadences (Frederick Rolfe (Baron Corvo), Mario Praz, Max Beerbohm, Edouard Roditi, Ronald Firbank); II. Dans le grand vortex anglais (Filippo Tommasso Marinetti, Wyndham Lewis, Ezra Pound); III. Wyndham Lewis "versus" James Joyce; IV. (Dylan Thomas, Anna Kavan, Stefan Themerson, Margaret Tunstill, Pierre Joris); V. Stress & Strass (Chronique de la mode) (Arthur Aeschbacher, Hélène Bokanowski, Chantal Thomas). This is a literary review, *dirigée par* Gérard-Georges Lemaire, edited by Christian Bourgois and published by *le concours du Centre national des lettres et du British Council* [although no further information is available on the Council website). It was being sold by *Librairie-Bouquinerie Le Père Pénard*, of Lyons for £10.68, plus £2.59 shipping.

On e-Bay, *Blast* 2 was on offer for £1,414.38. The 1932 portfolio, *Thirty Personalities and a Self-Portrait* for £998.00. The rare, 1919 *Harold Gilman: An Appreciation* was on offer for £950. A signed, first edition of *The Art of Being Ruled*, was £725.32. *The Tyro*, no. 2 (a

timely reminder for next year's centenary) for £467.83. A first edition (second impression) of *Left Wings Over Europe* was £125. A first edition of *Beyond This Limit* was £120. A first edition of *Paleface* was on offer for £70. A copy of the 1932 *Enemy of the Stars*, with dust-jacket, was £55.

Something of a curio, which was strangely overlooked by Morrow and Lafouracade, but not by Pound and Grover, was a copy of *Time* magazine, of 30th May 1949, which featured a review of the Redfern Gallery exhibition in the same year, under the title 'White Fire', including a short interview with Lewis. This was £10 – and free postage! Bizarrely, M and L list the two other appearances by Lewis in *Time* for 1949 (4th July and 26th September – F761 and F765), but P and G do not.

Finally, there have been many old issues of the *Wyndham Lewis Annual* and *Enemy News* for sale. A job-lot of Annuals and the 2010 Journal cost £48.

Not much on Amazon, but *Tarr* is available on Kindle for the princely sum of £2.49. There are less of the pirate copies of Lewis from Gyan Books of Delhi, but they still persist. Various t-shirts and hoodies are still on sale. There is also a 'rock slate photo gift with stand', with the early Lewis-as-bohemian (with cigarette) portrait and 'Vorticist Movement' printed against a suitable background, although it's hard to say whether it's original or an artist's impression. The price is £17.99.

ARTICLE: ROBERT MURRAY

THE INNOCENT, 'RED LAUGHTER', AND A MISSING WAR: THE UNWITTING PARTNERSHIP OF WYNDHAM LEWIS AND FRANCIS STUART

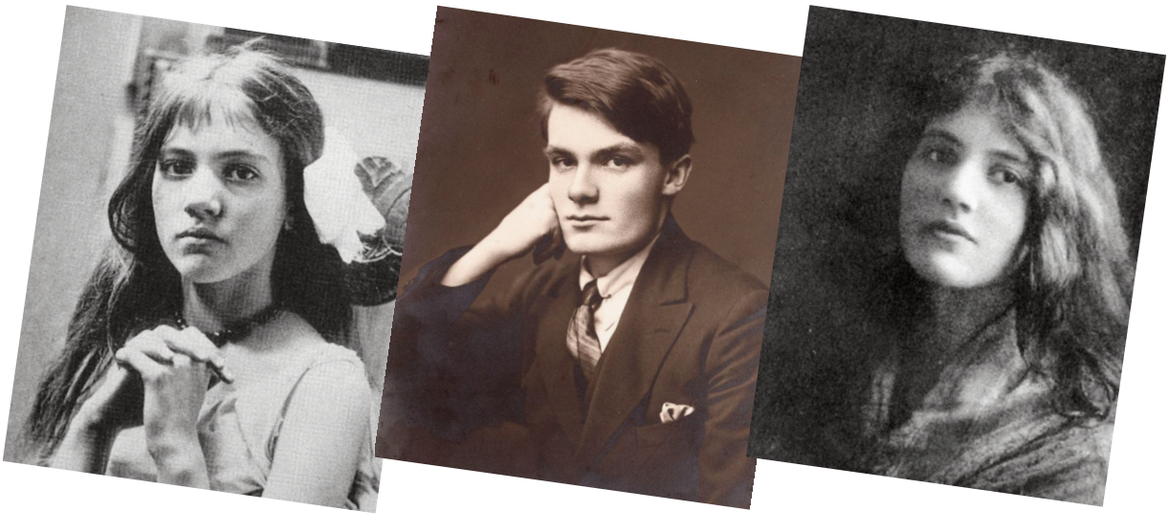
'With the manliest possible directness he squared up to the hundred-per-cent adolescent blushing sphinx, towering in front of him foot on foot.' (*The Apes of God*, Black Sparrow Press edition, p. 63)

Silent and dark and grave
But beneath,
Red laughter that sounded like an arrow.

(Francis Stuart, *Try the Sky*, 1933, p. 43)

On the surface there wouldn't appear to be much in common between Wyndham Lewis and the Irish writer Francis Stuart. Lewis was twenty years older, closer to an age that readily allowed for the revolutionary impulse of Vorticism, whereas for Stuart the expression of individuality was more subject to the politics of Irish independence and the issue of neutrality during the Second World War. Both were controversial figures, deemed to be beyond the pale of polite literary society because of their willingness to take on the awkward questions regarding the 1939-45 war.

In Stuart's case, this meant living and working in wartime Germany and co-operating with the Nazi authorities in broadcasting propaganda to Ireland. From



Francis Stuart and Iseult Gonne in their late teens

that perspective, they were very different writers and certainly different thinkers. However, there are some remarkable parallels between them that serve to illuminate the role of the outsider writer at a time in history that otherwise demanded conformity.

Henry Montgomery Francis Stuart (often known as 'Harry' to his friends and family) was an 'outcast', both self-styled and shaped by circumstance. He was born in Queensland, Australia, in 1902, of Ulster Protestant stock, but was taken by his mother to Ireland upon the suicide of his sheep-farmer father, Henry Irvine Stuart, four months later. (1) Like Lewis, the absence of his father in his life had a profound influence on him; however, unlike Lewis, his mother, Elizabeth ('Lily', née Montgomery), along with his step-father, was somewhat negligent of him, despite his also being an only child. (2) He was mainly educated in England, and like Lewis, he briefly attended Rugby public school (also without distinction). Upon the termination of his studies he immediately pursued a precarious vocation as a writer, first as a poet, then as a novelist, in a career that lasted until 1990. He became involved in the Irish Civil War as a member of the anti-Treaty Irish Republican Army, spending fifteen months as a prisoner of war after being captured in a failed raid on an ammunition train. Upon his release in 1924, after facing no charges, he resumed his literary activities, interspersing them with moderately successful attempts at chicken farming and training racehorses. (3)

While it cannot be ascertained whether Lewis and Stuart ever actually met, there are definite personal links between the two, both coincidental and what can be seen as sub-consciously intentional. It was Iseult Gonne, aspiring writer and society beauty, who provides the connection between them. Her mother was the formidable Maud Gonne, an icon of the Irish Rebellion and War of Independence and long the object of the poet W. B. Yeats' affections. She was already part of Yeats' circle in Dublin, 'Uncle Willie' being something of a figure of fun for both mother and daughter – each of whom he had unsuccessfully proposed marriage to in 1916. After Iseult's rejection, he married Georgie Hyde-Lees, whom he met through Dorothy Shakespeare, the Vorticist artist and future wife of Ezra Pound. Iseult belonged more to an era of *fin de siècle* bohemianism than Stuart ever did, being already well connected with

many of its leading players. She had earlier mentioned Lewis's name to Stuart, along with Pound's and Yeats', along with other modernists and Irish rebels like James Connolly and Arthur Griffith. (4) She had been educated in France and knew more people in modernist circles and Irish politics, especially as her step-father was John MacBride, a hero of the Boer War and later executed for his role in the 1916 Rebellion. (5) Iseult, showing some signs of literary talent, first visited London in the company of Yeats in 1911, when she was 17, attracting the attention of one of Lewis's mentors, Thomas Sturge Moore, amongst many others. (6) She had, according to Stuart's first major biographer, Geoffrey Elborn (in *Francis Stuart: A Life*), 'met many of Wyndham Lewis's friends who considered chastity to be old fashioned' (p. 30). By 1913 she met Ezra Pound, doing some secretarial work for Pound, working on *The Little Review*, a magazine seen as very scandalous at the time; they then had a brief affair. As Kevin Kiely, describes it:

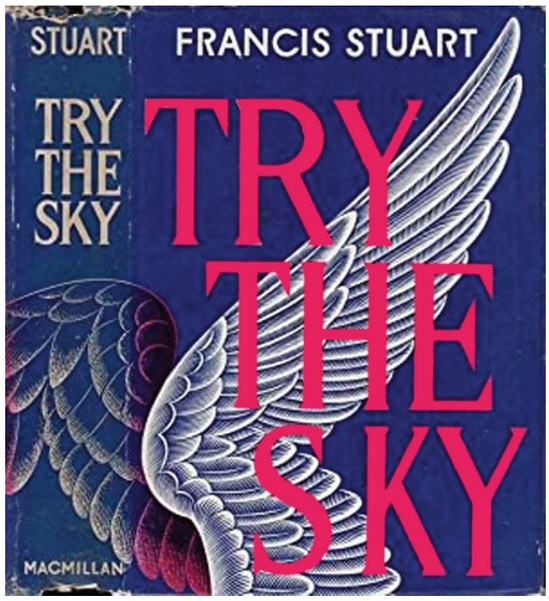
> Iseult indulged herself. She wore exotic clothes, smoked through a cigarette holder and was seen at parties with a Persian cat which, in the distance, looked like a fur-scarf around her neck. She moved away from Woburn Buildings when Yeats got her a job in the library at the School of Oriental Studies. She shared a flat with Iris Barry who also worked there. When Iseult realised that Barry had been Pound's mistress, she felt rather foolish. Pound had ended his affair with Iris first and then with her. Iseult met Lewis through Barry. Stuart was convinced that Iseult must have slept with Lewis also, such was his possessiveness about Iseult decades after the time she knew Lewis and Pound. (*Francis Stuart: Artist and Outsider*, p. 81)

Iseult's affair with Pound did not last long, and she married Stuart in April 1920, against the wishes of both their families. Why? It could have been Iseult's reaction to Yeats' proposal and to her relationship with Pound, who was eleven years older, as well as to avoid being married off to someone deemed more suitable by her mother, such as the writer Lennox Robinson (despite the fact he was gay). She was attracted to a man barely out of school, but who was showing signs of talent as a poet and who was evidently impressed by her place in high literary society. Before their marriage, they eloped with each other and lived in a flat above a greengrocer's in Charlotte Street, off Tottenham Court Road, near to the Yeats' lodgings in Woburn Place – prime Vorticist territory. Yet it was at Barry's lodging in South London that the strange, barely disclosed, incident with Lewis occurred. Lewis accidentally (on purpose?) walked into Iseult's room one night, hardly a great scandal, but one which she seems to have later exploited for the purposes of tormenting her young and inexperienced husband. Sexual peccadilloes – or rather those implied – became a source of angst for the later writer. In his best-known novel, *Black List, Section H* (1971), Stuart describes the precarious nature of his relationship with Iseult and the shadow that Lewis cast over it:

> In the evenings they ate in a restaurant around the corner … in Charlotte

> Street. Sitting at a table in a corner of the Cuisine Bourgeoise Iseult told him … about her time in the Pyrenees, in Paris, and in Normandy. Of Yeats sitting beside her in the villa at the sea, kissing her and asking her to marry him, of Wyndham Lewis coming by mistake into her room one night in the flat she'd shared with a girl friend of his here in London, and of other writers, several of whom, besides Yeats, had wanted to marry her (p. 25).

Though presumably not Lewis, whose mistress had recently given birth to two of his children – Robin (in 1919) and Maisie (in 1920). Nevertheless, Lewis became a focus for Stuart's angst in the early stages of his marriage.



Iseult may have seemed a likely candidate for one of the handmaidens, if not high-priestesses, of Vorticism, but she gradually started to lose interest in literature and the arts, eventually devoting her energies instead to establishing a family home, first briefly in Dublin, then more permanently in Castle Laragh, County Wicklow. Yeats was frustrated by her choice of partner, notoriously writing later that 'A girl that knew all Dante once / Live to bear children to a dunce …', although at the time he encouraged Stuart's literary efforts and supported the couple when their first child, Dolores, died in infancy from meningitis in July 1921. (7) Stuart's career as a poet was short-lived (much to Iseult's disappointment), virtually over by the time he actually met Yeats in June 1923, yet it had given him the impetus to pursue the cause of Irish cultural nationalism. His first book, published in early 1924, was a collection of poems entitled *We Have Kept the Faith*, partly written whilst he was imprisoned. (8) With the painter Cecil Salkeld, he set up the magazine *To-morrow*, which included a contribution from Yeats, but which only lasted for two issues, in August and September, 1924. However, it was controversial enough to merit the consideration that *Blast* could have been an influence.

The image of Stuart as either a 'dunce', or a promising young Irish poet, must have suggested to Lewis an ideal model for the character of Dan Boleyn in *The Apes of God*, which he had started to develop in the early 1920s. Stuart was a presence in 'Lewis-land' at the time, intermittently living in and around Tottenham Court Road, his local being the Plough Bar, in Museum Street, where Lewis used to frequent. If Lewis had not actually met him, then the tall and classically handsome Stuart would have stood out in a crowd and probably gave the impression of a wide-eyed innocent, especially as he was known as the seventeen-year-old who married the well-connected woman reputed to be the most beautiful in Ireland. He was also known for his reticent manner, Yeats' damning opinion at least partly

arising from Stuart's refusal to fully engage in any conversation, especially if it were literary, unless it was concerning the Gospels, farming or horse-racing.

Lewis's first biographer, Jeffrey Meyers, wrote that Daniel Boleyn was based on Stephen Spender, but surely the time-scale is too narrow for Lewis to have fully developed the character, especially as he didn't meet Spender until 1928. (9) In his 'Afterword' to the Black Sparrow Press edition of *Apes* (in 1983), Paul Edwards writes: '… the character must in essentials have been conceived before Lewis met Spender' (p. 635). Lewis's main biographer, Paul O'Keeffe, believes that Dan is a representation of Lewis himself in his own 'poet' phase, especially since he described as having black curly hair and brown eyes which, on the grounds of physical resemblance, would rule out both Spender (see the 1938 portrait – Michel, P. 86) and Stuart (who had brown hair and blue-grey eyes). In an article for *The Wyndham Lewis Annual* of 2008 (no. XIII), Richard Warren makes a convincing case that Lewis based Boleyn on the young painter Christopher 'Kit' Wood, who committed suicide just after the novel was published, making him a sacrificial victim of the maliciously-intended bohemians that so drew Lewis's ire. Yet one of Lewis's most vociferous retrospective trolls, Valentine Cunningham, in his *British Writers of the 1930s* (OUP, 1988) offers another view: 'Lewis's technique … is an opportunistic cubism, or scissor-and-paste bricolage, a sticking together of all kinds of personal references into new satiric shapes' (p.111). That would make Stuart at least part of any composite picture, thereby making Dan a more naturalistic figure, as opposed to the anachronistic models of Spender or Lewis himself.

Yet more important than Lewis's game of fictional happy families are the reverberations of Lewis's writing found in Stuart's fiction. Stuart's characters collectively assume an ideal persona that has greater significance than they would do in the material concerns of Lewis's satirical world. The innocent Irish poet wandering about in London, becomes a 'Holy Fool', as are the main characters in most of Stuart's novels. At the time when he started his career as a novelist, Stuart became more involved in spiritual matters, formulating a Gnostic belief system that simultaneously embraced the Catholicism he was formally attached to through marriage and a wider Irish cultural identity, emerging from a close reading of the Gospels and a devotion to the saints Thérèse of Liseux and Catherine of Sienna. However, the element of overt religiosity his first novel, *Women and God* (1931), led to it being critically panned; as Kiely reports, it would otherwise be 'a parable on decadent bohemianism … [it] is not the singular first novel that, say, Wyndham Lewis's *Tarr* is ...' (p. 129) (10)

Stuart's fourth novel, *Try the Sky*, published in January 1933, suggests that his reading of Lewis was not only extensive, but was adapted to this uniquely Gnostic vision. The literary model that Stuart follows owes more to D. H. Lawrence than Lewis, but nevertheless Stuart engages with elements of Lewis's ideas, particularly those in his anti-Lawrence polemic *Paleface*. (11) It examines the idea of the machine age, as encapsulated by an aeroplane flight that

ends in anti-climax, signifying a world driven by greater primeval forces that modernisation cannot conquer or even control. As usual in Stuart's novels, both pre- and post-war, the main character is a dissolute Irishman living in exile, José Sullivan, a poet and horse-trainer (note the autobiographical touch). He is in love with a young girl, Carlotta, who he met in Vienna and he takes her away on a somewhat aimless journey through Germany. They meet a strange couple, Beltane and Buttercup, making their way back to their home in Canada, after negotiating a possible arms deal with the Soviet authorities in Odessa, to bring about First Nation independence in the North of the country. However, José is aware that there are greater spiritual forces at work. The 'laughter' Stuart describes is a spiritual force, channelled through the Native American girl, Buttercup:

> I had a sense of that 'red laughter' lurking deep down in her. I began to think of the arrow, not as a pitiful relic of a lot past, almost of a lost freedom, but as a crystallised peal of that laughter, savage and ironical.
>
> … there remained hidden behind her thin red lips that proud untamable [sic] laughter at us, at all the white world and pale faces. The words I had spoken on an unconscious impulse, and laughing, were perhaps the upwelling within me of a deep and true intuition.' (p. 208)

Yet Lewis's use of the phrase describes a social and political phenomenon, the Soviet equivalent of the 'Black laughter' of colonial slaves – a phenomenon of 'Red laughter' that is simultaneously revolutionary and counter-revolutionary, an act of resistance against political oppression that the commissar and plantation-owner had no control over. As the book was published in 1933, Stuart certainly had time to have read *Paleface* (1929) and adapt its concept of laughter as more than a mere cultural weapon. José and Carlotta, his young German lover, embody a 'civilised' ideal of romantic love, one that follows a tradition in folklore and literature and is consciously pursued, unlike the primitive urges of Buttercup, called the 'Dark Princess'. Like W. E. B. DuBois's heroine of his eponymous novel, referred to in *Paleface*, the objectified person is brown and not black. Nevertheless she scorns European civilisation, especially as it is supposed to protect her home, in what Lewis later called, in his own exile there, 'The Wild Lands' of Canada.

Buttercup's much older husband, Beltane, is superfluous throughout the narrative, quite content to go along with the flow of being stuck in 'The Abyss' or 'The Flight' (as the two parts of the book are titled). Their original plan was to sail back to Canada from Vienna, but after an unlikely plot-twist (all-too common in Stuart's novels), they end up in Munich where they witness a political riot and the first portrayal, at least in an English-language work, of Nazi characters. These are an un-named Brown-shirt, who sought refuge in a hotel bathroom and who was shot dead, Carlotta herself, who shielded him possibly because she was a Nazi sympathiser (although this is unconfirmed) and was wounded, and the ebullient Dr

Karl Graf, a doctor who attends to Carlotta's wounds and a pilot who invites the party on board his plane, *The Spirit*, on an ambitious cross-Atlantic flight. The implied sympathy for Nazi protagonists reflects Lewis's reportage in *Hitler*, something that Stuart may have been picked up from Lewis at the time, rather than experienced at first hand himself, as he had not yet been to Germany, except once as a casual tourist.

The book's title is echoed in a song of the same name, one played at the launch of the plane at a public event in Munich. The song is similar to the on-page rendition of the popular jazz standard 'Waddle I Do' that Lewis includes at the end of *Apes*, another signifier of the state of the modern that Stuart finds resisted by the primeval forces that ultimately prevent the completion of the journey. In the end, José and his companions can only get as far as Ireland, landing in the place he had initially escaped from. He is left with his illusions of romantic love and the arrow that Buttercup leaves him as a souvenir of a force no amount of technology can control.

> It was not of the clever ones, of the 'thinkers' and philosophers, from whom we had anything to fear. It was only that 'red laughter' that was thoughtless, mindless, hidden in the earth, that might soar after us like an arrow.'(p.234)

In his 1959 novel *Victors and Vanquished*, the self-representative Luke Cassidy (another Irish poet), describes the forthcoming war as 'a dividing wall'. Germany is '… where I'll be farthest away and safest; where I shall be, in fact, on the far side of the great dividing wall of the war.' Did Stuart take this image from *Blasting and Bombardiering*? Again, Stuart extends the metaphor he may have got from Lewis to reinforce his own ambivalent, even trivialised, stance regarding the conflict: 'And on the other side of the wall there's a girl whom I may be able to help or save or comfort, or seduce' (p. 21). (12) Although many writers were involved in political action, especially in the Spanish Civil War, no-one went into the belly of the whale like Stuart did. There were no precedents for this, apart from actual Nazi propagandists, like William Joyce – 'Lord Haw-Haw' (for whom Stuart briefly worked, writing scripts for his broadcasts) – and fascist sympathisers like Ezra Pound, the French novelist Louis-Ferdinand Céline, and countless others, some of whom paid the ultimate price for their perceived acts of treason. (13) Following a short lecture tour in 1938, Stuart was offered a post as an English teacher the next year at the Friedrich-Wilhelm University in Berlin, which enabled him to escape a bad marriage to Iseult (divorce being illegal in Ireland at the time), as well as being able to prove himself a responsible adult and earn money for his family. He was asked to work for the Irish section of the German propaganda service, *Irland-Redaktion*; after a short spell re-writing English news reports and writing scripts for William Joyce's broadcasts, he began broadcasting in February 1942, continuing until March 1944, when Germany's defeat was then inevitable.

Both Lewis and Stuart were autodidactic individuals who had no allegiance to any

political party. They were open to the accusation that they were politically gullible regarding their varying degrees of support for Nazi Germany. Lewis's came before Hitler came to power in 1933 and was a guarded judgement, qualified by his overriding objection to British imperialism and a capitalist system that he believed could not endure indefinitely. This was somewhat blundered into, in pursuance of a line of inquiry in a vague support of an authoritarianism he naively thought of as benign. Stuart's involvement in the war borders on the flippant because of his refusal to take a moral stance on it, as seen in the extended self-analysis in his post-war fiction, as in the example quoted above. He reverts to the role of a Dan Boleyn in disregarding the moral imperative demanded of writers to oppose Hitler, by putting up a shield of innocence. Stuart initially saw Hitler as a revolutionary, just as Lewis mistakenly and notoriously labelled him as 'a man of peace'. He claimed that he was soon disillusioned with the Nazi project, but he showed no desire to make a tactical retreat back to Ireland, becoming mired in Germany's prolonged fall. Rather, he was following a Dostoevskyan inclination that he had to be on the losing side. (14)

Stuart built and hid behind the wall of Irish neutrality. That condition, in itself, was subject to many interpretations, from the Irish Prime Minister (*Toaiseach*) Éamon de Valera's, to those (like Churchill) who cast judgement on the stance of ambivalence. Neutrality was a guarantee against the charge of treason for Stuart, yet it was not an immediate safeguard. Ireland, as the new state was known since 1937, was not Switzerland. It maintained close ties with Britain and gave assistance, either covert – eg the returning to Britain of airmen who crash-landed in Ireland and the internment of German pilots – or overt, as in supplying the highest number of volunteers of any neutral state (100,000 soldiers and factory workers) to fight Hitler. As the saying at the time went: 'Who are we neutral against?'

For all his proclaimed independence, Stuart was following in a recognisable political pattern regarding the issue of neutrality, whether he intended it or not. Stuart was not fanatically pro-German (he was more admiring of Stalin), but he allowed himself to be compromised. Stuart's German-only book on the Irish hero of 1916, Roger Casement, *Der Fall Casement*, published in 1940, had a pro-German paragraph inserted at the end, though probably not by himself. Maud Gonne was pro-German and held some antediluvial anti-Semitic beliefs which were occasionally reflected in his wartime broadcasts. (15) Kiely notes: 'He was classified with Waugh, Huxley, Lawrence, Eliot, Pound, Wyndham Lewis and Graham Greene, who had made openly anti-Semitic comments in some of their writings' (pp. 52/53). Yet if these writers could perhaps be accused of the sort of 'casual' anti-Semitism common in the pre-war era, then Stuart's was more significant because, like Pound and Céline, he was complicit in endorsing the fatal consequences of Nazi policy and military action. Unlike William Joyce, Stuart was not addressing the British public, trying to win them over to the Nazi side through convincing them that they were losing the war. However, despite his later protestations of his neutral stance, in

speaking to a specifically Irish audience, tiny – even non-existent – though it was, he was still complicit in 'giving aid and comfort to the enemy'. He retrospectively extolled the bravery of the German navy at Scapa Flow just after the start of the war, and the sinking of the ship *Royal Oak*, in October 1939, with the loss of 834 men. The charge of collaboration levelled at Stuart takes on greater significance when it is considered that Lewis and Froanna were initially booked to travel on a passenger ship that was to be the first civilian vessel to be sunk in the war, on 3rd September 1939. (16) Just days before the German Sixth Army surrender at Stalingrad, he was telling his listeners about its forthcoming victory.

If neutrality was more of a political stance for Stuart; for Lewis it was a desired state of being that had to be indefinitely postponed while the war was brought to some sort of conclusion. From his point-of-view in exile in Canada the result of the war was not a forgone conclusion, although Lewis would have felt more of a threat from Soviet Russia. Neutrality was a condition that was imposed upon Lewis during his North American sojourn, whereas back home in London, life would have been as perilous as it was for Stuart in Berlin. It was hard for him to gauge the progress of the war second-hand, through newspaper and radio reports. Similarly, Stuart found that the war was not mentioned on the German home front, except in government propaganda broadcasts. Instead, the conflict took place in the respective imaginations and memories of each writer in the fiction they wrote after the war. Although as a painter Lewis willingly took part in the Allied propaganda machine, being commissioned to portray the Anaconda America Brass Foundry (*A Canadian War Factory*, 1943; Michel P 105), he was probably unaware that *The Hitler Cult* was included in Walter C. Langer's list of books that was compiled for a psychological profile on Hitler, soon after the US's entry into the war, in the same way that the Australian press cast him into the role as an Allied cheer-leader through recognising his anti-Nazi sentiments in the book (as seen above). (17) If he were paid for the task, he would have surely made radio broadcasts as well, especially if it forestalled the suspicions of his neighbours who believed he and Froanna were German spies. (18)

Complicity does not need standard-bearers, but just a quiet choice between what is often perceived to be the lesser of two evils. Both Lewis and Stuart were annoyingly disingenuous when it came to politics, but failed to admit outright that they had made a mistake of judgement. Lewis's *Hitler* remains a testament to his own falsely adopted persona of innocence, something that most of his critics overlooked, deliberately so in their zeal to make him a scapegoat for being Britain's equivalent of Francis Stuart. Lewis worked his way through this and the attendant 'bad books' of the late 1930s, with a doggedness that led, through the recognition of the dead-end that authoritarianism was, to the 'cosmic' books of the late 1940s. However, Stuart continued to trade on his self-generated outlaw status, deliberately creating a moral vacuum which invited disapproval for his actions. It was only after the

catastrophic end of the war that he found out what being on the losing side really meant. (19)

NOTES:

(1) The exact reason for Henry Irvine Stuart's suicide remains unclear, but he died in a mental institution in Sydney, some distance away from his Queensland sheep station, having made several previous attempts to take his own life, his condition exacerbated by alcoholism. Rockwood Station, which lies approximately 100 miles south of the town of Hughenden, in North-West Queensland, was co-owned with his twin-brother, George. It was up for sale in 2020 for $12 million Aus.

(2) Like her sister Janet Montgomery, Lily converted to Catholicism and supported the cause of Irish nationalism, both forsaking their Antrim homeland for County Meath. Stuart's similar path had less to do with maternal influence than his own marriage obligations.

(3) Stuart was a moderately successful poultry farmer during the late 1920s and the 1930s and owned a couple of race-horses. He was the author of *Racing for Pleasure and Profit in Ireland and Elsewhere* (Dublin: Talbot 1927). However, securing a steady income was a life-long struggle.

(4) As Kevin Kiely writes in his biography *Francis Stuart: Artist and Outcast*: 'Iseult entranced him with talk in her French-accented English of Yeats, Shaw, Synge, Lady Gregory, James Stephens, Ezra Pound, Arthur Symons, Wyndham Lewis, James Connolly, Arthur Griffith and others whom she had met.' (p. 82)

(5) The subject of a prospective film, 'The End of Romance', by the Irish director Trish McAdam, as described in the Media News section above. The French artist Joseph Granie painted a portrait of her as an angel (as seen in the publicity material for 'The End of Romance'); later William Rothenstein also drew a portrait of her).

(6) Iseult's father was her mother's lover, the right-wing French political activist Lucien Millevoye. Their first-born, Georges, died in infancy in 1893, and Iseult's conception took place in the family mausoleum which, despite the apparent sacrilege, was a bid to re-incarnate the child's spirit, partly on the occultist advice of Yeats and George (AE) Russell. Her step-father was Captain John MacBride, and her half-brother Séan MacBride, Chief of Staff of the IRA and later a prominent Irish politician. MacBride's death saved Maud from the embarrassment of divorce from someone who turned out to be an abusive partner, as well as enabling her to assume the political and social prestige entailed in the name 'Madame MacBride'.

(7) 'Why Should Not Old Men Be Mad?', written in 1936, by which time, Iseult gave birth to two more children, Ion and Katherine. This was one of several poems by Yeats which are either dedicated to or make reference to Iseult. Pound also wrote about her in *The Cantos* (see the paper by Amanda French reproduced in the publicity website for 'The End of Romance' – amandafrench.net/files/IseultGonne.pdf). Stuart himself came to terms with his own grief by writing elegiac

poems in memory of Dolores, although he is generally seen as having abandoned all his children, in much the same way as Lewis did.

(8) The title looks like a hyperbolic expression of Irish nationalist sentiment and indeed much of his early poetry was political in intent, but it actually comes from a line in Rupert Brooke's 'The Hill' (1910) – '… "We are Earth's best, that learnt her lesson here. / Life is our cry. We have kept the faith!" we said …' Note the exclamation mark in the original line which Stuart omits, thereby making it seem less a celebration of nature, than a political statement. He quoted the lines again in the novel *Try the Sky*, again without the exclamation mark (p. 149). Brooke was born in Rugby and later attended the school; his father, William Parker Brooke was a master there.

In the same year, Stuart also wrote a pamphlet, *Nationality and Culture*, also the subject of a lecture, published by the Sinn Féin party (Dublin: Sinn Féin Ardchomhairle, 1924).

(9) This is despite Spender's own assertion, according to Meyers (in *The Enemy: A Biography of Wyndham Lewis* (1980: Routledge and Kegan Paul, London and Henley) that he was the basis for Dan Boleyn (p. 180, n. 35) Also, Meyers gets the obvious lampooning of the novelist, small-time publisher and erstwhile partner of the novelist Mary Butts (see the entry in the 'Notes and Vortices' section above) John Rodker wrong, instead stating that 'Jamesjulius Ratner' is based on James Joyce (p. 180).

(10) The quote (albeit ungrammatically) continues: '…, a book that Stuart admired and recommended me to read and which I too found to be singular'. *Tarr* (Penguin edition, 1982) is included in the bibliography (p. 458).

(11) As stated in the book's Forward, written by Compton MacKenzie, who favourably compares Stuart with Lawrence: 'The influence upon contemporary thought of the work of D. H. Lawrence is an indication of our willingness to listen to any teacher with what is called a message … I suggest that Francis Stuart has a message for the modern world of infinitely greater importance than anything offered by D. H. Lawrence …' *Try the Sky* (dated November 23rd, 1932).

(12) This refers to the character of Myra Kaminski, who is partly based on Gertrude, aka Madeleine, Meissner, who Stuart fell in love with when he started working as a broadcaster for *Irland-Redaktion* in 1942.

(13) Britain only ever executed two collaborators – William Joyce and Julian Amery, the latter for attempting to recruit British P.O.W.s to fight for Germany (a crime that Stuart himself was once suspected of). Céline never made any broadcasts, but his anti-Semitic rants in print – *Bagatelles Pour Un Massacre* (1937), as well as others published during wartime – eventually obliged him to spend the rest of the war in exile in Germany, then Denmark, after the fall of the Vichy regime in 1944. Many of his fellow-writers, like Robert Brasillach and Pierre Drieu la Rochelle, were sent to the firing

squad. He returned to France in 1951. According to Kiely, Stuart kept a framed photograph of Céline in the living-room of his later home in Ireland and would proudly show it to visitors (p. 431).

(14) As early as January 1940, Ernst Von Weizsacker, the Head of the Foreign Office, told Stuart he thought Germany would lose the war.

(15) As in her condemnation of England becoming a centre of 'ursury' after the Reformation (in *Ireland Today*, March 1939). Also, in the *Capuchin Annual* of 1943, she re-affirmed her support for the United Ireland-anti-De Valera cause. Stuart himself was broadly supportive of de Valera.

(16) O'Keeffe, p. 401. The near-miss was also described in fictional terms in *Self Condemned*.

(17) This list is briefly seen in the documentary *Sex and the Swastika*, originally shown on Channel Four in 1999 – still available to watch on 'All 4' and on YouTube).

(18) O'Keeffe, pp. 471-472.

(19) Madeleine was mistaken for a German spy and, along with Stuart, imprisoned in Dornbirn, in the French sector of Austria. They finally settled in London in 1951, after sojourns in Freiburg and Paris, before returning permanently to Ireland in 1955 upon Iseult's death from heart disease finally allowed them to marry.

REFERENCES:

Unfortunately, none of Francis Stuart's books are currently in print, although some are commonly available online, especially his most celebrated, *Black List, Section H*, initially published in 1971, after Stuart spent over a decade writing and revising it, by the Southern Illinois University Press. It appeared in Penguin paperback in 1982 and was first published in Ireland in 1995 by the Lilliput Press – the edition I use as reference here. In his introduction, Colm Tóibín describes it as 'an underground masterpiece and one of the most important Irish novels written in the second half of the twentieth century' (p. x). Others to be frequently found are *The Pillar of Cloud* (1948) and *Redemption* (1949), but unfortunately *The Flowering Cross* (1950) and *Victors and Vanquished* (1959) are quite hard to find, as together the four books make up a loosely-knit tetralogy set in the ruins of the wartime Germany and post-war Europe Stuart lived in. Brendan Barrington's selection of his war-time broadcasts, *The Wartime Broadcasts of Francis Stuart, 1942–1944* (2001: Dublin: Lilliput Press) is also often available online.

Unlike Lewis, there is no bibliography for Stuart's books – apart from a potted biography on Ricorso Irish Writers database 'Francis Stuart: Life, Works, Criticism, Commentary, Quotations, References, Notes' (www.ricorso.net/rx/azdata/authors/s/Stuart_F/life.htm). Apart from his first book in1924 and his final few works, all his works of fiction were published in London, rather than Ireland, and he had a long relationship with the firm of Victor Gollancz. Few

were reprinted and none in scholarly editions. Curiously, there are many translations – in French, German, Dutch, Spanish and Hungarian – of some of the more obscure novels, particularly *The White Hare* (1936) which was also the basis for the 1995 Irish film *Moondance*. Books published pre-war are more rare and correspondingly expensive, some rarely seen on marketplace websites (recently a copy of the 1935 philosophical novel *Angel of Pity* was offered for £50 on e-Bay). None of his five plays, which had limited success on stage have been published.

Der Fall Casement noted in the text has the sub-title *Das Leben Sir Roger Casement und der Verleumdungsfeldzug des Secret Service*, and was translated into German by Ruth Weiland (Hamburg, Hanseatische Verlag, 1940).

To date, there have been four works of biography and/or criticism on Stuart, two of which are referred to above: Geoffrey Elborn, *Francis Stuart: A Life* (1997, The Raven Press, Dublin) and Kevin Kiely, *Francis Stuart: Artist and Outcast* (1997, The Liffey Press, Dublin; reprinted 2017, Areopagitica Publishing, North Carolina). The first book was by J. H. Natterstad, Francis Stuart (1974, Bucknell University Press, Irish Writers Series, Cranbury, New Jersey) and the most recent – now over twenty years ago – by Anne McCartney, *Francis Stuart Face to Face: a Critical Study* (2000, Institute of Irish Studies, Queens University, Belfast). The Kiely book makes great play on the long-standing friendship between the author and his subject, as well as exploiting the rivalries between various parties involved in the hot-house of Irish literary politics.

There are numerous articles on Stuart in the British and Irish press available online.

In addition, I have used the two biographies of Lewis – Jeffrey Meyers, *The Enemy: A Biography of Wyndham Lewis* (1980: Routledge and Kegan Paul, London and Henley) and Paul O'Keeffe, *Some Sort of Genius: A Life of Wyndham Lewis* (2000: Jonathan Cape, London)

REVIEWS:

JUDITH HENDRA

B.H. Dias and the Baker Collection

The man behind the Baker collection was an ex-Indian Army officer whom Lewis and Pound met in late 1914. Lionel Guy Baker (1874-1918), usually known as Captain Guy Baker, was another regular customer at the Tour Eiffel restaurant and was the habit of dropping by Lewis's studio, which happened to be next door. These were the months Lewis was intermittently bedridden with septicemia (from a neglected case of gonorrhea). Baker himself suffered from frequent skin rashes and chronic rheumatism from his service in India. He was married (a detail Pound and Lewis fail to mention) and had some private money. He went to Romania during the war and then France. There he contracted trench fever paralleling Lewis who also fell ill, and was sent back to England for treatment. Pound referred amusingly to Baker's situation in Canto XVI.

And Ole Captain Baker went to it,
With his legs full of rheumatics,
So much so he couldn't run,

So he was six months in hospital, Observing the mentality of the patients.

Pound went to the hospital to see him. 'Baker is, or was, depressed, says he will be where he is until the end of the war' Pound told Lewis. (Materer 82. TLS-2: 17-8-17) A couple of weeks later: 'Baker was up and dressed in his wheel chair Tuesday and a bit more cheerful...' (88. TLS-130/8/17) Writing in October Lewis told Pound, 'I think if you consulted with Baker you might work something out' referring to getting Lewis released from the front lines and into a job where he wouldn't be shot at. Later Lewis credited Baker with insisting he see the officer in charge of appointments to the Canadian War Memorials Fund. 'Why return to your battery? Listen: It's quite unnecessary. Why not paint a picture instead?' Baker told Lewis and promptly bundled him into a taxi. (O'Keefe p. 202) Baker was an early victim of the Spanish flu'. Lewis got it as well, and was taken to a London military hospital where he recovered after a struggle.

Baker began buying drawings from Lewis in 1916 and 1917. He apparently didn't think of them as investments and got genuine pleasure out of them even though he was no artist himself. Pound said Baker entrusted him with twenty drawings before he was posted to France and bought more drawings when he got out of hospital. Pound's rather loose estimates puts the total at around fifty, which is about double the number in the possession of the Victoria & Albert Museum. Pound and Lewis's' correspondence hints at Pound's role in Baker's purchases in an October 1917 letter from Lewis. Lewis talks about the drawing 'Market Women'. He is pleased with it 'quite up to the mark', and indicates the drawing is Pound's possession. (Materer 92 ALS-2. Oct. 1917)

Ezra Pound's letter to the Editor in February 1919 mentions the Baker collection. 'Neither Mr. Dias nor anyone else is qualified to speak of Mr. Lewis's work unless they have seen [it]', says Pound enjoyably playing critic and correspondent. (*New Age* 27 February 1919 from Ezra Pound) On 13 March Dias confessed he had the insider's privilege of seeing the collection. He implied he was not ready to review it because it had not been exhibited. Two weeks later Dias mentioned a public institution had received the offer of a valuable collection of drawings by Lewis. The (potential) donor was a Captain Baker. 'Art Notes' explained:

Capt. Baker, alarmed at the rapidity with which the best of Wyndham Lewis' work was being absorbed by America, determined to retain in England a collection of Lewis as representative as that possessed by the Quinn collection in New York.

Originally he entrusted 'Mr. Pound' with twenty drawings and instructions they were to be offered to the 'South Kensington Museum' should Baker and the artist die in the war. 'The instructions specified that if the S. Kensington or other public were not yet ready for such "advanced" work, Mr. Pound was to retain the pictures until the official eye had been educated'. At the time Dias was writing he did not know if Baker had drawn up a will covering the later acquisitions,

'...whether the collection go to the nation or not it is to be hoped that, at any rate, some adequate and illustrated catalogue of the collection will be issued, and that at least a suitable record of Baker's patriotic endeavour will not be lost'. ('Art Notes', *NA* 27 March 1919) Pound called the museum the 'South Kensington' ignoring the name was officially changed to the Victoria and Albert Museum as far back as 1899.

By September Dias was able to say 'this very day' the *New Age*'s 'representative' had inspected the drawings at South Kensington. Pound-as-Dias rushed to his typewriter to write 'Art Notes' for 25 September: '...he can now firmly compliment England on having the most fecund and inventive draughtsman in Europe'.

And I think it is only with the final cataloguing and exhibiting of these drawings that the public, the limited public which has already seen Mr. Lewis' war show and his 'Timon', will be in a position to judge Mr. Lewis, if not in entirety, at least with some adequate data.

He emphasises the drawings must be seen as a corpus 'because no one drawing by Lewis is convincing in the degree that two dozen of his drawings are convincing'. Hence Dias has decided to compile a list. Pound does so item by item, often adding a comment or comments to help readers to a better understanding of Lewis's achievements and aims. Had Pound been around today he would have enjoyed the luxury of being able to go into the Victoria & Albert's online catalogue and see the collection whenever he chose. However he would have undoubtedly pointed out the limitations (those thumbnails!) and criticised the V&A for not putting Lewis's work on display.

The following is Pound's list as it appears in 'Art Notes' for 25 September 1919. The numbers in parentheses refer readers to equivalent items in the V&A catalogue or items that can't be matched. Items in the Baker collection are identified with the credit line: 'Given to the V&A by the family of the late Capt. Lionel Guy Baker, in accordance with his expressed wishes, 1919'.

CACTUS: 'three green figures, mood lyric, horn-player and figure leaning on pole'.

EARLY MORNING: 'two dark figures, tropic sun, simplicity but skill in the conveyance of bright light unsurpassed so far as I know'.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS: dramatic interest, black and white. (1)

GOSSIPS: shows the Rowlandson attitude of mind, depiction of character, blue ink and green.

MOONLIGHT: musicians in the mode of the horn-player in 'Cactus', the hollow moon, sylvan profusion.

COMBAT: massiveness of the two central figures, energy not to be found in Piccasso {sic}, wholly different from Blake, who is the one English predecessor of Lewis in presenting dynamic energy, as is Rowlandson the one British forbear {sic} of Lewis in social satire. (2)

THEATRE MANAGER: very early Lewis (drawn in 1909); it has Daumier for its grandfather, but I doubt if Daumier has done anything better.

AT THE SEA-SIDE: calm blue.

Ninthly and tenthly, two satires on the human animal, the cat in man (and woman); the chicken in man (and woman). There is super-irony in the cats. (3) (4)

PROSCENIUM: note the spectators. (5)

BABY'S HEAD: excellent, and contains nothing that cannot be grasped by even the most general public.

GROUP OF Two (Demonstration), among the best of Lewis' developments in his vitreous mode. (6)

THREE PHILOSOPHERS, in the mode of 'Gossips.'

Late head, 'A GREAT VEGETARIAN'; early head, Vitreous FIGURE, delicacy of colour. (7) (8)

A FEMALE: obviously of the thinner and 'lower' classes. (9)

MARKET WOMEN, DIEPPE: The Queen Vic. type and another selling apples. (10)

THE DOMINO: two figures, cat formula, discover a mask.

COMBAT 3: thin, insect-like figures at prise, part of the combat series, with thin piston-energy in contrast to the weight-energy of the other 'Combat'. The chief piece of the collection, four Titan figures against dull flush crimson-to-vermilion background. (11)

SECOND MOVEMENT, depiction of animal, aimless exuberance, yellow figures.

THE COURTESAN: shows Wyndham Lewis' mastery in the use of chalks, soft effects in rich colour, scale and modus of colour very different from his vitreous gamuts.

PASTORAL TOILET: on the other hand, illustrates his peculiar and personal use of inks; half satire and rural disinvoltura.

RUSSIAN MADONNA contains parody of all pseudo-Italian oldmasterism in the little background landscape.

THE LABOUR DEPUTATION should be reproduced broadcast for popular education.

Notes:

(1) V&A title: Two Missionaries (?) undated
(2) V&A: Combat No 3 undated
(3) Not identified.
(4) V & A: Chickens
(5) V&A: The Audition c 1912
(6) V&A: Demonstration
(7) V&A: The Psychologist (with a previous title The Great Vegetarian)
(8) V&A: Le Penseur
(9) Not identified
(10) V& A: Market Women, Saturday, Dieppe (1917)
(11) V&A: Combat No 2 undated
Additional drawings: The V&A lists three

Pound does not mention. They are: SUNSET AMONG THE MICHELANGELOS, Watercolour 1912; ANTHONY undated; BIRD 1917.

The collection is online at :http://collections.vam.ac.uk/search/?listing_type=list&offset=0&limit=15&narrow=1&extrasearch=&q=Given+by+the+family+of+the+late+Capt.+Lionel+Guy+Baker%2C+in+accordance+with+his+expressed+wishes%2C+1919.&commit=

Alternatively access the collection at https://collections.vam.ac.uk. To see the Baker catalog entries and thumbnails enter Lionel Guy Baker in the search box.

CHRISTOPHER MARTIN

Caroline Maclean, *Circles and Squares: The Lives and Art of the Hampstead Modernists* (Bloomsbury, 2020) ISBN 978 1 4088 8969 5 (hb. £30.00); 978 1 4088 8968 8 (pbk.)

Hampstead in the 1930s is a vibrant cultural nexus, we learn from Caroline Maclean's book, which highlights significant meetings, alliances, and fault lines, in a flowing narrative of connected intimacies, events, and modernist artistic endeavours.

Barbara Hepworth invites Ben Nicholson to Happisburgh in Norfolk, to join Henry and Irina Moore, Ivon Hitchens, and Barbara's husband John Skeaping.
Ben, Barbara and Ben's wife Winifred, two painters and a sculptor, become a love triangle, and try for a Christian Science solution, to stay friends and maintain connections.John Skeaping and Barbara find the Mall Studios, where painter Cecil Stephenson already has a space. Barbara and Ben exhibit together at the Bloomsbury Gallery.

Architect Wells Coates and engineer Jack Pritchard plan the modernist Isokon building of flats and an associated furniture business, and another love triangle develops, when Coates becomes involved with Pritchard's wife Molly.

Walter Gropius, Moholy-Nagy and Marcel Breuer, in flight from Nazism, bring Bauhaus ideas to Britain, working with Isokon, architect Maxwell Fry and film mogul Alexander Korda. Breuer and architect F.R.S. Yorke create the Isobar, the Isokon's restaurant, bar and meeting place with a 'club feel'.

Geoffrey Grigson remembers Herbert and Ludo Read's parties at the Mall Studios, a place of 'extraordinary entertainment' where 'people of different nationalities and generations mixed'.

The 'ambassadorial' Paul Nash launches Unit One, a collective of eleven painters, sculptors and artists, which has a group exhibition, and its catalogue text is written by Herbert Read, who also introduces Surrealism to Britain.

Henry Moore moves towards abstraction, is interested in morphology, uses found objects, asks Read to write a monograph on his work, joins the Artists International Association, its *Artists against Fascism and War* exhibition featuring work by Moore,

Nicholson, Piper, Leger, Zadkine and others, and helps raise funds for the Artists Refugee Committee.

Jean Hélion pushes Myfanwy Evans towards editing *Axis*, Britain's first journal devoted to abstract art, designed by future husband John Piper, with some financial help from Edward Wadsworth, who is also a participant of Unit One. Nicholson, Gabo and architect Leslie Martin edit *Circle*, a manifesto for abstract-constructivist art. Hitchens invites Nicholson to join the Seven and Five Society, and when the latter takes it over, the re-branded 7 & 5 accepts only abstract art.

Picasso's *Guernica* is brought to the Whitechapel Art Gallery, organised by Clement Atlee and Roland Penrose, arriving in London on 30 September 1938, the day the Munich agreement is signed.

Poet and editor Geoffrey Grigson launches *New Verse* from Keats Grove, publishing Auden, Spender and MacNeice. Auden and his friend the painter William Coldstream work for John Grierson's G.P.O. Film Unit, notably on *Night Mail*, with verses by Auden and score by Benjamin Britten. Auden, Britten, Spender, Piper and Moore are all involved with the Group Theatre, set up by artist Robert Medley and dancer Rupert Doone, who is interested in 'the choreographic use of space'.

Mondrian relocates from Paris in 1938, coming to live opposite Ben and Barbara for two years. They are friends and admirers, and Mondrian stays in touch with Winifred too.
Sculptor Alexander Calder comes with his wire circus for his exhibition at the Mayor Gallery, and gives a circus performance in Cecil Stephenson's studio, next door to Ben and Barbara's. He stays for six months, just missing the arrival of Mondrian, whom he had known in Paris. With World War Two looming, Ben and Barbara leave to join Adrian Stokes and his wife Margaret Mellis in St Ives. Many of the other makers of modernism in Hampstead also disperse.

In 1933 Paul Nash notes that so many early 20th century art movements had originated in Paris, whereas in England there was only the 'half-remembered "Vorticist" movement'. Nash has hopes that Unit One might be another, and it happens that Wells Coates and a friend pack volumes by T.S. Eliot, Marianne Moore and Wyndham Lewis for a long journey across Canada. Grigson, in *Axis*, describes Henry Moore as a mix of Mondrian and Brancusi, with a touch of D.H. Lawrence, and like Wyndham Lewis in his ability to 'synthesise, mix life and mind'. Grigson also asserts that Moore and Lewis are the only artists 'in control of enough imaginative power to position themselves between surrealism and abstraction'. The idea of pure abstraction is pushed particularly by Nicholson, an ardent follower of Mondrian. Jim Ede, Assistant at the Tate, would point out that 'abstract' was an unnecessary label as all art is abstract, 'in so far as it is art at all'. Ben himself, it might be added, later finds the term unhelpful.

This book is a lively dance, almost a conga, through Hampstead in the 1930s, with a cast of diversely gifted artists seen in its pages through some misty monochrome photos and sans serif

chapter headings so evocative of publications of that decade.

MICHAEL SHALLCROSS

***Have a Bleedin Guess*, by Paul Hanley (Pontefract: Route, 2020); and *Excavate: The Wonderful and Frightening World of The Fall*, edited by Tessa Norton and Bob Stanley (London: Faber & Faber, 2021)**

I am all in favour of a young man behaving rudely to everyone in sight. This may not be good for the young man, but it's good for everyone else.

> Wyndham Lewis, 'The Vorticists' (*Vogue*, Sept. 1956)

Who is not irascible / He is no genius.

> Mark E. Smith, 'A Figure Walks' (1979)

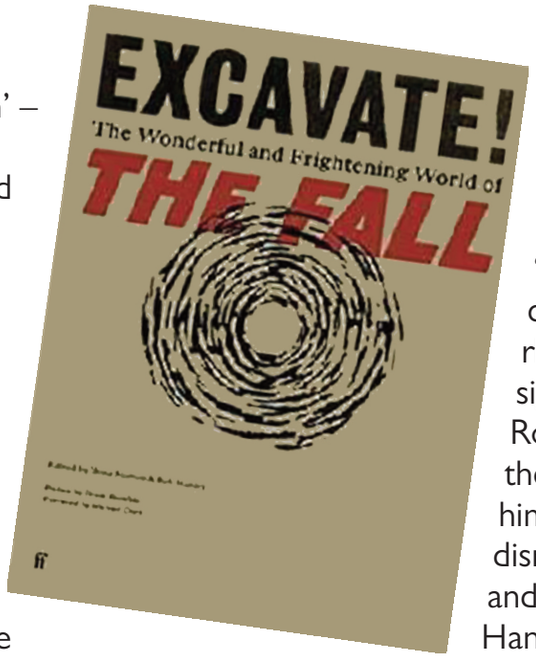
Like Wyndham Lewis, Mark E. Smith, leader of the *sui generis* Manchester music group, The Fall, was not a man given to effusive praise of other creative artists. However, he made a striking exception in the case of his fellow advocate of 360-degree spleen-venting. Smith considered *BLAST* 'one of the best magazines ever made', and quoted from it directly in a press release for the group's landmark 1982 album, *Hex Enduction Hour*: 'BLAST First (from politeness) ENGLAND'. Shortly before his death in 2018, Smith agreed to give a one-man show as part of the Imperial War Museum's major Lewisian retrospective, but had to cancel due to poor health. As former Fall drummer, Paul Hanley affirms in *Have a Bleedin Guess*, his excellent book on the making of *Hex Enduction Hour*, throughout the intervening thirty-six years Lewis remained '[o]ne of the few artists that Mark consistently cited as an influence'.

While there is a clear commonality between Smith's enduring contempt for 'middle-class

hipsters', as guitarist Craig Scanlon puts it, and Lewis's withering attitude towards 'bourgeois bohemians', the roots of his identification are deeper and more complex than a mere itch to *épater les bourgeoisie*. Perhaps a more suggestive correspondence lies in the pair's mutual tendency to thrust spokes into the wheels of their own polemics. Lewis's injunction to the reader of *BLAST* 2 to programmatically 'contradict yourself' – to always 'give the impression of two persuaders, standing each on a different hip' – was well heeded by Smith. As Hanley observes, he was 'often wilfully contradictory from one pronouncement to the next', producing lyrics in which he 'ends up arguing with himself, and is equally convincing on both sides'. For

both men, this insistence upon irresolution produced a refinement of self-consciousness that undercut their cultivated air of savagery. While Lewis's authorial surrogate, Kerr-Orr, declares himself more knowledgeable 'about myself than people generally [are]. For instance I am aware that I am a barbarian', Smith divined his Lewisian prophecy 'that yobs [are] going to rule the earth' from the consciousness that 'I'm half one myself'.

These cohabiting personae – the satirist and self-ironist – come together on 'Hip Priest', arguably the centrepiece of *Hex Enduction Hour*, in which Smith's lyrics shift evasively between first-person self-aggrandisement – 'all the young groups know / they can imitate, but I teach' – and third-person rejoinder, delivered in an implicitly mocking falsetto: 'He-ee-ee-eeee is no-o-ot… ahhhhh-ppreciated'. While this refrain evokes Lewis's similar obsession with the lack of due esteem that he was accorded by his peers, it also mirrors his knack for simultaneously puncturing his own presumption, in accordance with his satirical principle that either [e]*veryone* should be laughed at, or else no one should be laughed at'. Think of *The Apes of God* (1930), in which Pierpoint's godlike 'Encyclical' apes Lewis's own sentiments, but at one remove, and with a grandiosity that suggests a certain authorial arching of the eyebrow. As Hanley observes, Smith uses comparable devices as an 'attempt to [emerge] from the song unscathed, with clean hands', by 'deflect[ing] the idea that he's giving anything away'.



Hanley argues that Smith's strategic sowing of doubt over 'whether [a] song is expressing [his] views, or the narrator is a character' enabled him to evade contemporary censure over the racial slur that disfigures the album's opening track, 'The Classical', a bludgeoning, buoyant 'fuck-you-very-much' satire, as Smith described it, which foregrounds the Lewisian vaunt, 'I destroy romantics'. Another press release for the album drilled home the shared aesthetic allegiance, pronouncing the record 'UNSUITABLE FOR ROMANTICS', while exclaiming 'HAIL THE CLASSICAL'. In the context of the early 1980s, this rhetoric enabled Smith both to signal his contempt for the 'New Romantics' who then dominated the British charts, and to align himself with Lewis's bygone dismissal of Futurism as 'romantic and sentimental' in *BLAST*. As Hanley points out, the New Romantics were initially described as 'Futurists' in the music press, thus inspiring Smith's rejection of a 'Futurist world' in the later album track, 'Just Step S'Ways'. If Smith therefore seems simultaneously to be fighting battles both contemporary and past, local and universal, Hanley reflects fascinatingly that this lyrical dualism is

complemented by the 'bi-tonal' musical quality of 'The Classical', which is played 'in two keys at once'.

In a further integration of lyrical and musical disorientation techniques, Hanley notes that while recording the minimalist epic 'Winter', Smith deliberately engineered a situation in the studio whereby the rhythm track and the melody would become misaligned towards the end of the song, thus producing a dizzying 'timeslip [that] brilliantly mirrors his lyric's blatant disregard for the conventions of linear time'. Similar temporal mischief is foregrounded in *Excavate!: The Wonderful and Frightening World of The Fall*, a beautifully designed, compendious miscellany of essays and ephemera relating to the group, edited by Tessa Norton and Bob Stanley. The collection includes a 1992 feature on Smith by Michael Bracewell and Jon Wilde, first published in *Frieze*, which is one of the few journalistic articles to adequately register Lewis's influence on Smith. Later in the collection we encounter Stuart Bertolotti-Bailey's 2005 article for *Metropolis M*, 'Wyndham Lewis', an extended parody of the *Frieze* article, which consecutively inverts all the details of Smith's biography presented by Bracewell and Wilde, to reveal crosscurrents with Lewis's biography. This often results in a confounding of linear time: where the earlier article had informed the reader that the youthful 'Smith's campaign bore marked similarities to the *Blast* phase of Wyndham Lewis and the Vorticist assault on inter-war Bloomsbury', the later article demurs that in reality 'Lewis's campaign bore marked similarities to the *Live at the Witch Trials* phase of Mark E. Smith and the Fall's assault on the post-punk new wave'.

Bertolotti-Bailey's mischievous conceit promotes a sense of the dynamic at hand not so much as a one-way traffic of influence, but rather as a cyclical recurrence of archetypes. Smith would certainly have approved this interpretation of the pair as cultural exceptions working in parallel. The central thesis of *The Apes of God* – that modern society rewards inferior pasticheurs over true innovators – was one to which he also subscribed. Another aphoristic dispatch from 'The Classical' – 'there are twelve people in the world, the rest are paste' – might have come directly from the narrator of Lewis's 'Code of a Herdsman', who anathematises 'the multitude of unsatisfactory replicas' that threaten to suffocate the culture's few original minds. As Hanley notes, 'the "paste" theory' was a favourite Smith gambit: 'Paste, in this context, is the substance that costume jewellery is made of', thus suggesting 'that the world is full of imitators of the truly talented'.

While Hanley's book emphasises the connection to Lewis visually by parodying the cover of *BLAST*, a more subtle allusion can be found on the cover of *Excavate!*, the design of which is borrowed from the rear sleeve of the 1984 Fall album that lends the book its subtitle. On the album sleeve, the 'o' in 'World', is made to resemble a vortex: a gesture not only to Lewis's pre-war art collective, but also to Smith's fascination with the trap-door of existence, as evoked by Lewis's interwar notion of the 'immense false-bottom underlying every seemingly solid surface'. While both men extracted much highly original creative material from this

premise, it led them to a somewhat vexed relationship with the exterior world itself. When combined with their shared view of the culture around them as a travesty of the 'real', both occasionally displayed a solipsistic reluctance to credit other consciousnesses with an external reality. As Smith frankly acknowledged, '[w]hen you're mired in the shit of the times you start to question not only people's tastes but their existences'.

As with Lewis, this extreme ontological scepticism often seems to inform Smith's ethically questionable approach to those with whom he despotically collaborated and summarily discarded. Nonetheless, in a further crosscurrent with his irascible predecessor, Smith appears to have mellowed into a more sympathetic middle-age – 'all the fierceness […] transformed into *laughter*', to again quote Lewis's Soldier of Humour – as he adopted the role of benevolent dictator to the young charges in the group's final iteration. Despite Hanley's own battle scars on this front, his book is a model of critical balance. While he never shirks from addressing Smith's glaring character flaws, he consistently conveys admiration of his singular genius through subtle, suggestive close readings of the lyrics, combined with keen insights into the musical composition. Indeed, considering that Hanley was one of the architects of the album to which the book is dedicated, he retains a remarkable degree of objectivity. As he points out in one of the book's many endearingly wry footnotes, due to his dual role as creative participant and retrospective critical spectator his 'narrative, by necessity, veers between "they" and "we"'. Despite Smith's perverse insistence that the musicians with whom he worked were intrinsically incapable of such critical consciousness, this is a skilled tightrope act that Lewis would have well appreciated.

REPLY

ROTTING HILL: MORE THOUGHTS ON LIMINALITY

DAVID A. WRAGG

In *LewisLetter* 37 (Summer 2020) Robert Murray uses the world 'liminal' in connection with Lewis's *Rotting Hill*. This word has a variety of meanings and contexts, all of them problematic when read deconstructively. Even a glance at the WIKIPEDIA entry under 'liminality' indicates a plethora of possible articulations, and as such the term joins those other weasel words 'modernism', 'postmodernism', and, if only by implication when the other two signifiers are invoked, 'meta-modernism', into which Lewis's work has become critically embedded.

In the case of *Rotting Hill* 'liminality' invokes place, narrative content, and literary aesthetics. The physical reconstruction of Notting Hill to which the text bears witness has a notable liminal antecedent. Lewis's much earlier interest in the 'wild' bodies of Brittany invokes a place already colonized by metropolitan culture; the others of modernity are literary figures within it. In literary terms (and the idea of the 'literary' cannot be separated from the observer's ocularcentrism) the 'wild' body

occupies a kind of 'edgeland', where a boundary between perceptive and enunciative conditions remains blurred. (It's worth pointing out here that a physical edgeland – the place which is neither town nor country – contains only notional boundaries, made problematic by the spectator's changing temporal perceptions as the area is explored. Both town and countryside are both absent presences to the spectator's perception). I agree with Murray when he claims that 'the liminal can be a state that rejects the individual as much as it can provide a place of refuge or escape' (*LL* 37, p. 28) provided we bear in mind that Lewis's sense of the 'individual' was always predicated on difference: the observing eye of the narrator in the early Wild Body narratives is made explicit by the introduction of Ker-Orr. Lewis's problematic mediation of this scenario is inferred when Murray mentions the 1911 Pringle as a '*flaneur* [sic] wandering around an area waiting indefinitely for a programme of reconstruction that will never happen.' (28) And while the contingent bohemian 'micro-community' identified in Jonathan Raban's *Soft City*, represents an alternative to the rationalities of reconstruction, it depends on these for its differential identity.

If 'liminality' is paradoxically central to modernism's anti-normative literary practices (where the 'wild' body refuses incorporation into urban developments, such as the grand plan of Corbu's *Ville Radieuse*) the problem of its definition is linguistic: a term that signifies an absent presence is itself crossed with liminality. It becomes self-referential as a signifier of a generality which is also particular and therefore divided against itself, even as it functions as a definition. In Saussure's terms it occupies both syntagmatic and paradigmatic axes when the one relies upon the other for meaning to take place. Freud came upon the descriptive-analytical dilemma when he defined the unconscious as a series of representations, best grasped in the disguises of the aporetic dreamwork. The *object* of liminality is *essentially* temporal, except that the essence of the Freudian unconscious is that it has no essence as such because the dreamwork confabulates sequences which may have little to do with their ostensible selves.

In literature the liminal is sometimes fairly explicit. A couple of obvious examples would be Dashiell Hammett's Maltese falcon (the object is a fake, and a symbol of Sam Spade's attempts to locate its criminal significance), or Conrad's aporetic 'heart' of a 'darkness' in which the meaning of Kurtz's activities apparently resides. In both cases the texts are concerned with what can be revealed to the reader's progress though the narrative. In short, in entering ideas of liminality to a discussion of *Rotting Hil*l Murray inevitably relates Lewis's text to long-standing modernist dilemmas. This is a useful reminder of the liminality of 'modernism' itself, even if Murray's essay loses the plot (so to speak) when he claims: 'Yet *Rotting Hill* does have a liminal centre.' (29) In fact, the condition of liminality is *suspended* between centres and margins, and as such represents a kind of unstable mobility, in the same way that walking through an edgeland constantly changes one's perspective on the boundaries it creates and subverts.

What some might take to be a fairly trivial

post-structuralist point has ramifications for critical practice across Lewis's oeuvre. (The word 'oeuvre', itself a quasi-neologistic multiple translation, is also liminal, when it defines a writer's total output as a sequence of particular elements.) If *Rotting Hill* has a 'liminal centre' so does Lewis's *Praxitella*, which fuses the colour used by Picasso in his blue period with the blocky linearity of Ingres. Yet my word 'fuses' is wrong because this is precisely what liminality cannot do. As a concept, 'liminality' is better described by Gregory Ulmer's notion of the 'puncept': the cognitively dissonant idea of immediacy and double meaning, whereby conditions are "fused" 'without producing an amalgam'. (Irony works in a similar way, in that it's predicated on the aironic which it necessarily tries to subvert.) What metaphysical philosophy looks for in language is transparency, so that thought becomes visible to itself. ('Visible' here is itself a metaphor.) The pun shreds transparency by dividing meaning across more than one use of language: for the pun to work, it must mean itself and not itself. Puns are contingent on contextual language and what one might think of as accidental conjunctions, or a situation in which signifiers are not fully present to themselves. In such a case typologies proliferate: what are the conceptual relations between puns, allusions, figures of speech and so on which permit language to signify at all?

The famous duck-rabbit image is an 'illusion' which demands two *simultaneous* views of the object as the eye moves *between* one construction and another. To *see* Ingres or Picasso in *Praxitella* involves a somewhat different application of liminality when we deal with the question of influence, where the importation of a particular into another particular produces a 'composite' of more than one visual ingredient. Lewis's own mediation of Vorticist visual prescriptions extends the idea of liminality further: when *The Artist's Wife*, (1940, M958) mediates Picasso it unsettles a definition of modernist individuality by recycling some of the principles of visual Vorticism deriving from the *written* text of *Tarr*, where good art is supposed to be about the 'outside' of things and 'nothing you cannot see', except that (and especially if we consider Lewis's use of the Dostoevskian double) the characters of Tarr and Kriesler are halves of a whole that do not add up to a coherent modernist 'philosophy'. Again, liminality has no centre.

The situation I am describing helps us to steer clear of the dreaded binary oppositions which used to litter critical texts dedicated to typologizing the complex relationships between modernism and postmodernism (depth: : surface; objective Truth: :epistemological relativism; the real: : hyperreality; the art object: : art as process, and so on). So how do we make sense of Lewis's extended use of binary oppositions? There is much more at stake in Vorticism, putatively founded on an Art: Life opposition, than what Murray describes as the 'hyped-up rhetoric of *Blast* and its promotion of a hard classical aesthetic.' (26) Lewis's use of binaries seems at first glance to attempt to heal a breach in the publication's own polemics: if 'we' are on one side, everything and everybody with 'negative' values ('Life') can be grouped together on the other without resolution. (And one might add that manifestos of

the Futurist kind are shouty anyway – it's one way of essaying a mastery of threatening modernity, like singing loudly in the dark.) But since the *Blast* publications are constructed from difference, invaginated (Derrida) by other texts and contexts, a unitary identity is impossible to specify. If Lewis is *Blast*'s mouthpiece he speaks in tongues. At this point the idea of liminality shades into the complexities of intertextuality, within and beyond *Blast*, and the issue of how multiple voices can be said to constitute boundaries around themselves as their identities purport to represent an oppositional modernist movement.

In these circumstances the scrupulosity demanded of recuperative criticism (never mind 'high' theory) can become an albatross. The unanswered question is itself rhetorical: what did Lewis really understand about what he had let loose for future scribblers on the subject of modernism? The ruined London of *Rotting Hill* - indeed the rot that Lewis finds in the weave of modern society generally - knows no boundaries: epistemologically, tears in the fabric of post-war England pose deeper questions for art's capacity to represent them. As Murray suggests, we are back here with Lewis's inadequate response to modernity found as early as the Wild Body's version of automata, whose countervailing identity - the genuinely 'wild' body whose value can only be grasped in absentia - is kept under strict liminal control. ('Absentia' is another liminal word – imported from legal Latin.) Against the grain of his own desire for the ordering of nefarious forces, (wrongheaded art, bogus philosophy, inadequate governance) Lewis had long before *Rotting Hill* opened up chasms of knowledge and identity which could not be filled. To my mind there is no such thing as 'resolute cynicism' (27) in Lewis's work because of its post-Nietzschean entrapment in the pitfalls representation. Murray's use of Colin MacInnes's account of the Notting Dale race riots then acquires a further context when 'liminal… urban violence' (ibid.) provides its own gravitas for a post-war social reconstruction that has more recently come to symbolize the rot in Party political machineries, centred on London's urban metropolis. What we now construe as 'rot' has been reconfigured as 'fake news', blatant political dishonesty, a discredited electoral system, the maintenance of sham opinions, and voices crying in the wilderness of post-moralism. Lewis's rotting hill is a high point in post-war ambivalence about the reconstructive im/possibilities of art.

Modernism was centrally concerned with its own construction, often running alongside its socio-political ambitions. The would-be post-liminal idyll we find in aspects of German Expressionism, where libidinal or unconscious urges expressed in paint reconfigure Romantic subjectivism through creative freedoms and a Zarathustrian aesthetic overcoming of modernity's limitations, were utopian (and in some ways a blueprint for 1960s counter-culture, which saw hippies degrade into yuppies). Lewis's version of the wild body as creaking man machine will have none of this; the 'authenticity' of experience lies in critical distance, where aesthetic compensation can be found only in linguistic flourishes, whose *ne plus ultra* arrives in *The Apes of God*, some two decades before *Rotting Hill* was published. Reconstruction for Lewis seems to have

involved unresolvable tangles with the liminal, whether in linguistic experimentation, social commentary or, as Murray refers to it via Francis Stuart's *The Pillar of Cloud*, 'personal redemption.' (25), though *Self-Condemned* would put paid to this last. An abiding problem in so much of Lewis's work is that opposing forces remain opposed, and no amount of critical legerdemain can heal the wounds.

Yet this kind of closure is too bleak. In shuttling between biographical details and *Rotting Hill* as text – as hermeneutic challenge - Murray's use of liminality keeps at bay the closures of despair. The impulse behind this aspect of *Rotting Hil*l is Dionysian, again derived from the repressed 'wild' body; the other of 'rational prescriptions and explanations.' (28) The autocritical potentials of Lewis's work seem to me to be too important to overlook. Howsoever one wants to figure it, *Tarr* stages a conflict between opposing forces (mind: :body, outer: :inner, and so on) and this can be seen again in *Rotting Hill* when the others of narrative perception are also a source of potential renewal. Their vibrancy leaves the author in a state which is neither realism (society as a ' "rabbit warren on top of a coalmine' " (26)) nor throw-back to a kind of Kantian transcendental idealism, even if Nietzsche's adiaphoria can be read as a sign of weakness or of strength. This point is crucial to the underlying sense of Murray's reading because without it *Rotting Hill* submits to its own gloomy prognostications about the world we now inhabit, seventy years after publication. Indeed, since liminality is both a *state* and a *process* it argues for a grasp of the given - Lewis's still point of the vortex, if you will - while holding out hope for transformation. Liminality *negotiates* a collision between the centripetal and the centrifugal without taking sides. It is neither Vorticism nor Futurism, neither observer nor redemptive 'wild' body (the other of Lewis's all-purpose cockneys in *Rotting Hill*), neither result (if Tarr had actually produced a painting) nor expression (where painting is hidebound by theory), but somewhere, and somehow in between. Whether this is a critical failure or a triumph of insight remains moot.

An 'artistic 'version of Duck/Rabbit. Reproduced under Creative Commons CC BY-NC_SA 4.0.a

LICE

NO MORE, FRIENDS, OF THE ABUSES MADE OF HUMANITY'S GREATEST TOOL OF GALVANISATION.

WASTELAND

OR

"WHAT AILS OUR PEOPLE IS CLEAR!"

THE ADVENTURES OF THE CONVEYOR, DR COEHN, AND THE RDC'S PLOT TO MAKE THE HUMAN RACE DESTROY ITSELF

DEATH BLOW TO INADEQUACIES IN PREVAILING...

SATIRE

- REDUCING HUMANITY TO 'GOOD' AND 'BAD' MORAL CARICATURES, GLOSSING OVER IMPLICIT BIAS IN OSTENSIBLY PROGRESSIVE VOICES WHILST IMPEDING THE PERSUASION OF REACTIONARY VOICES.
- RELIANCE UPON SELF-SERVING NARRATIVES OF MORAL SUPERIORITY, RATHER THAN NARRATIVES OF PERSUASION AND MORAL GROWTH.
- COWARDICE, WITH THE FEAR OF BEING MISINTERPRETED PREVENTING NECESSARILY NUANCED TREATMENTS OF COMPLEX ISSUES.
- INDULGENCE IN THE EMPTY USE OF TRANSGRESSIVE OR MISANTHROPIC HUMOUR – SAYING NOTHING.
- RESISTANCE TO INTROSPECTION, WHEREIN LIES ITS POTENTIAL TO BETTER OUR CONDITION.

LYRICS

- SUBSERVIENCE TO THE CIRCULARITY AND BREVITY OF THE TRADITIONAL SONG STRUCTURE! THE LYRICIST IS STIFLED, FORCED TO REPEAT THEMSELVES, AND MUST RELY ON ABSTRACT, BROKEN POETICS FOR THEIR MESSAGES.
- INEFFECTUALITY, AT ODDS WITH THE LYRIC'S RISE TO BECOME OUR MOST WIDELY DISSEMINATED FORM OF CREATIVE WRITING.
- DEFICITS IN FULL CHARACTERS AND PLOTS, LIMITING ITS TREATMENT OF HUMANITY.
- EGOTISM, DRIVING A DESIRE TO HAVE ONE'S WORK ACCEPTED AT THE EXPENSE OF INVENTION.
- RESISTANCE TO EXPERIMENTATION, WHEREIN LIES ITS POTENTIAL TO BETTER OUR CONDITION.

WE ELEVATE THE SATIRICAL SONG LYRIC TO THE HIGHEST REALMS OF DRAMA

AN UNNATURAL AND URGENT VOYAGE THROUGH LIVING PROSE

TRAGEDY – SCIENCE FICTION – COMEDY
ABSURDISM – MAGICAL REALISM – GROTESQUES

EXPLORING THE HIDDEN INIQUITIES OF THE HEART AND PRESENTING ITS TRANSFORMATION

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Edited by Robert Murray
36 Station Avenue
Southend-on-Sea
Essex
SS2 5ED
robertedmurray@gmail.com

Society Secretary:
Jo Cottrell
wyndhamlewissociety@outlook.com

Design: peterozycki@gmail.com