

TRAGEDIES.

DEATHS IN FOUR INCIDENTS.

(Paz (Bolivia), April 9.)—A biplane of 300-h.p. was off speed here on April 3 and crashed.

Bombardier, his passenger, and nine other persons were killed as a result of the accident.

London telegram gave the details. Apparently the pilot was killed.

WAL BALLOON.

New York, April 9.—A balloon yesterday picked up the wreckage which had been blown from Pensacola by five men aboard, on trace of the five men has been reported.

DEATH.

(Paris, Sunday, April 10.)—Lieutenant Elms and Air-Commander Carbonelle were flying over Bruges to the front in the war their planes, and both men were killed.

(Paris, Sunday, April 10.)—A plane flying from Alsace to Vesoul, and the two men aboard were killed.

ROBEY'S MATINEE.

Robey's concert for the New York, held at the Coliseum, was in every respect the best he has ever arranged.

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UNION VICTORY.

Unanimity of two opponents.

DEAN SWIFT WITH A BRUSH.

THE TYROIST EXPLAINS HIS ART.

What is a Tyro? Every one who has seen and heard of Mr. Wyndham Lewis' fantastic exhibition of paintings at the Leicester Galleries is asking this question.

The fact is Mr. Wyndham Lewis has created a new race.

"A Tyro," explained Mr. Lewis to a "Daily Express" representative yesterday, "is a new type of human animal like Heracles or Punchinello—a new and suff-



A TYRO. Essentially drawn for the "Daily Express" yesterday by Mr. Wyndham Lewis.

ciently elastic form or "mould" into which one can translate the artificial observations that are from time to time awakened by one's race.

"Satire is dead today. There has been no great satirist since Swift. The reason is that the sense of moral discrimination in this age has been so blurred that it simply wouldn't understand written satire if it saw it.

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

"Hence the Tyro. "Teeth and laughter, as you see, are the Tyro's two prominent features, and I will explain why. Do you remember the remark of a celebrated Frenchman on all Englishmen? 'They have such handsome teeth,' he said, 'that they are all like death-masks.

PUPPET NOVICE.

"Well, there you have it. The Tyro, too, is raw and undeveloped; his vitality is immense, but purposeless, and hence sometimes malignant. His keynote, however, is vacuity; he is an uninitiated, but artificial puppet, a 'novice' to real life.

"At present my Tyros are philosophic generalisations, and so impersonal. "Is this a new departure in art? No, not quite. You must remember that Hawthorne didn't die so long ago.

Something old, something new—Something borrowed, something blue.

These have been the rules for bridal dress for several generations.

The pure white wedding dress held sway without question until when the touch of blue sometimes appeared.

The modern girl, however, is not superstitious, and she proves it by wearing green.

Pale green bridal dresses were the vogue at the exhibition of the Tyro of America recently, and at least, betrayed no fear of colour.

TRANSPORT MEASURES.

WORKERS TO CONFERENCE WITH EMPLOYERS.

At the invitation of the Labour Party, an important conference of the Transport Workers' representatives of the industry will be held at the Labour Club on Thursday.

In transport circles a meeting has been arranged for one of the most important present industrial crises.

It is understood that Mr. Robert Williams, and Mr. J. H. Whittier will be the principal representatives of transport workers, and will be confined to the road transport.

THE SPEAKERS.

CHANGE POSTPONED AFTER THE RETIREMENT OF MR. BARBER.

"Daily Express" London correspondent. In consequence of the retirement of Mr. Barber, which was to be announced at the election of a successor, the meeting has been postponed.

Sir Frederick Barber will be a candidate for the post of a hundred supporters, and will therefore be nominated Whittier.

DEPRESSING.

SPECIALIST URGES THE VALUE OF NASAL OPERATIONS.

Considerable surprise is expressed in medical circles by the fact that Edwin Smith, the Harley Street specialist, has announced on Saturday that "operations on the nose are a warning sign."

The inquest was held on the body of Penlow, aged forty-five, who was drowned in the River Thames. It was stated that she suffered from a nasal condition which had caused her to be unable to breathe.

International News from the Wyndham Lewis Society Autumn 2022

LEWIS LETTER 39

The Daily Express, 11th April 1921, p 5. Listed as Michel 492, but not actually reproduced in Paintings and Drawings, nor, apparently anywhere else.

EDITORIAL

This issue of *Lewisletter* commemorates the centenary of the *Tyro* magazine, yet does so in a most un-Lewisian way. It has developed along more fluid lines, whereby the boundaries between one section and another have become blurred and frequently overlap, much like the shifting landscape of the Flatlands in *The Childermass*. This is perhaps appropriate for the use of caricature that Lewis's tyros embodied, as Lewis used his own image as a vehicle for broadcasting his aesthetic and philosophical ideas. Therefore, the general appearance of *Lewisletter* is not as regimented as it usually aspires to be (not that it ever does). This hopefully complements the informative discussion about the *Tyro* magazine held by the Reading Group on Zoom in January this year. As far as I know the only reproduction of the picture is in the *Daily Express* archive. A copy was kindly sent to us by Jo Cottrell in preparation for the Reading Group meeting in January 2022.

The Oxford University Press will be publishing the first instalment of *The Collected Works* in January 2023 - *Time and Western Man*, edited by Paul Edwards. Yet it comes at a price - a cool £191 for a single volume! I thought this was one of Amazon's bizarre marketing ploys when I saw it advertised online, but no, this is the actual price, as stated by the OUP. This is surely beyond the reach of most individual readers, virtually limiting the updated versions of Lewis's books to the Academy and whatever of its libraries can afford to invest - and in these straitened financial times just how

many universities are going to fork out what will be an estimated ten thousand pounds for a complete set of books? The general reading public that Lewis aspired to reach is excluded from a full appreciation of his work, especially potential doctoral students.

Effectively, we are left with the cheaper versions which lack the most recent expert editing and commentary offered by the OUP, but at such a high price.

The Trust is still recovering from the accumulative affects of Covid and therefore has nothing to report. There are also no book reviews, at least nothing on Lewis until either the OUP project comes to fruition (and the prices for the books come down), or anything else Modernism-related. Also, there are no book reviews this issue.

In my last editorial, I forgot to thank Michael Shallcross, as well as Judith Hendra and Christopher Martin, for their contributions. So once again, thank you and please forgive the oversight. For this issue, I would like to thank Judith again, for the second part of her interesting feature (mistakenly labelled as a 'review' in *LL 38*) on the Baker Collection of Lewis works, Richard Warren for his humorous contribution and Rob Cowan for his memoir of the founding of the Wyndham Lewis Society, which serves as a timely reminder that the next issue will celebrate the Society's Fiftieth Anniversary. Any further reminiscences would be most welcome, as would other contributions.

ROBERT MURRAY

MEDIA NEWS

Once again Lewis finds himself the target of the *Guardian* and its continuing grudge against him. An article by Helen Sherwood, “‘Fit of pique’: Lost Vorticist Masterpiece Found Under Portrait by Contemporary’ was published on 21st August 2022, picking up on a story that was simultaneously widely reported on the internet, including the Smithsonian Institute website. Research by Rebecca Chipkin and Helen Kohn, two graduates of the Courtauld Institute, revealed that Helen Saunders’ 1921 painting *Atlantic City* was painted over by Lewis for his portrait of Iris Barry, *Praxitella* in the same year. The article suggested that this was done out of spite, but there is much more to the story than Sherwood suggested. In response to the piece Alan Munton wrote the following, which appeared in a revised and edited form in the *Guardian* on 26th August ([Portrait of Wyndham Lewis Needs Revision](#)):

Harriett Sherwood’s account of how Wyndham Lewis painted a portrait over an abstract painting by Helen Saunders is seriously misleading (‘A fit of pique’: artist’s lost masterpiece was painted over by a friend, 20 August). Yes, she was a significant artist, whom Lewis promoted in his *Blast* magazine in 1914 and 1915. But the remarkable discovery that her *Atlantic City* is below Lewis’s *Praxitella* of 1921 does not mean that he painted it there because he was annoyed. Saunders’s painting style changed in the 1920s, becoming less abstract, and one wants to ask how

Lewis got hold of this canvas. Surely Saunders must have given it to him? It’s reasonable to suggest that she no longer wanted it. And Lewis was often short of money to buy canvases.

They had been close, possibly lovers, but that ended after the First World War, and not because Lewis had a “fit of pique”, in the unlikely of Barnaby Wright, the deputy head of the Courtauld, which is so enthusiastically endorsed by this article.

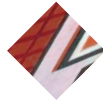
What actually happened was that Saunders began to follow Lewis about, sending innumerable telegrams and letters and making visits. Saunders’s mother tried to help Lewis deal with this problem, and Saunders eventually agreed to desist. Far from being piqued, Lewis was deeply sympathetic towards her difficulties. All information is readily available in Paul O’Keeffe’s 2000 biography of Lewis. Misleading accounts of supposed emotions should not be attributed to one of the finest British artists of the twentieth century.

More was to follow. For further details, see below. There has been a plethora of academic papers on Vorticism and related subjects on the Academia website (academia.edu), including Jo Cottrell’s undergraduate paper, ‘[Into the Female Vortex: why Jessica Dismorr and Helen Saunders can be considered as central figures in the Vorticist movement](#)’, which complements the discussion.

From the Right and their continuing attempts to stage a literary *coup* through co-opting Lewis’s work to suit

their political ends, a scholarly edition of Lewis's *Hitler* appeared in 2021, courtesy of Antelope Hill.

The Tyro was mentioned in the BBC Radio Four series *1922: The Birth of Now in January*. Thanks to Alan Munton for the notice.



ABEBAYWATCH:

There is comparatively little to report on this front. Abe-Books only have twenty pages of items for sale and many of those were the usual computer-generated namesakes. It is perhaps better to ignore the ridiculously inflated prices for books on the e-Bay and Amazon sites, not to mention more reprints from New Delhi and doctoral theses by Geoffrey Wagner, Sheila Watson and others. The various gew-gaws bearing Lewis's image also seem to have disappeared, but there has been a disturbing trend recently for selling 'disbanded' articles by or on Lewis, these being sold without the rest of the magazine in which they initially appeared. This has become unfortunately more common, including one - a review of Richard Aldington's book on TE Lawrence - ripped from *The Hudson Review* of 1956 and being flogged for a tenner. The same goes for a review of Lewis in the *Book and Magazine* from 1989. The price is £11.30p.

Most interesting were four catalogues for summer exhibitions at the Mercury Gallery, London, for 1969 and 1971 to 1975 inclusive, each one of which

featured works by Lewis. These were £12 each on Abe-Books. This is not the same as the catalogue from the Mayor Gallery, London, mentioned in *LL 37*, which is still available.

Lewis was featured in an exhibition, 'Ezra Pound: The London Years' held at Sheffield University in 1976. The catalogue for this, featuring a forward by Lewis bibliographer Philip Grover (450 printed) was on sale for £10 on AbeBooks. Lewis also appeared in an exhibition of The Fine Art Society's collection of some 300 modern art paintings and in the catalogue, *A Selection of Paintings Sculpture and Works on Paper*, edited by Richard Nathanson, and published by Nathanson and The Fine Art Society (London), in 1977.

A collection of Ezra Pound's contributions to *Blast* has been published as *Ezra Pound en BLAST I & II* by Buenos Aires Poetry in 2022. This is an enterprise that specialises in publishing translations of various British poets, Ezra Pound and Raymond Williams.

Does Lewis feature in Nigel Vaux Halliday, *Zwemmer, More Than a Bookshop. Zwemmer's And Art in the Twentieth Century* (London, Philip Wilson, 1991)?

Lewis is included in *British Art 20th Century British Art From Private Collections*, edited by Peter Davies and published by Osborne Samuel in 2014, as well as in *Fifty 20th Century Artists in the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art*, edited by Christopher Johnstone and published by National Galleries of Scotland (date not given), which was available for less than £3.

Probably justifiably missed when it was

first published in 2012 is another master-race-work by Kerry Bolton, *Artists of the Right*, published by Counter-Currents (US).

What was once the feature 'Vortex Corner' is now an unstoppable tide of items, notably from France. Also from AbeBooks, and previously unnoticed, as far as I know, is a publication from the Pompidou Centre (Pandora Editions, 1982) of *Wyndham Lewis et le vorticisme*, a 188-page book consisting of a biography and examples of the Vorticist manifesto, as well as a translation of the 'Futurism, Magic and Life' essay. Also featured are essays by TS Eliot, Ezra Pound, Rebecca West, Marshall McLuhan, Richard Cork and Hugh Kenner. The price is £10.69p. Also included is an essay by Gérard-Georges Lemaire 'director' of issue no. 4 of *L'ennemi*, noted in *Lewisletter* 38 (without an evident date of publication). There are sequels to this that include Lewis - no. 9, 1988 - 'Un thé au Bloomsbury', which, in separate parts, includes Lewis in the description of Bloomsbury life and an explanation of Vorticism (£10.69p) and *FT Marinetti* (Centre Pompidou, 2008 - £7.98p).

On e-Bay a copy of *Blast* 2 is on a 'Buy It Now' offer for £562.39p - the Black Sparrow reprint is £129.53 (if you buy two, you save £1.30p!)

The Michael Ayrton-edited catalogue-cum-critical guide *Word and Image* I and II, with the 1920 self-portrait (Michael 423) on the cover (National Book League 1971), which, according to Wikipedia, 'explored Lewis's and Ayrton's literary and artistic connections', is offered for £12.95p.

The cover of the German edition of *Hoffmann: spionagethriller* by Brian Abercrombie (apparently written in German, as there are no details of a translation), features two reflected halves of Lewis's *A Reading of Ovid*. There are several cheap copies available on AbeBooks.

Advertised as an 'anti-fascist classic', *The Jews: Are They Human?* is on sale for £325 on e-Bay. Much cheaper is John Galsworthy's study *Apes, Japes and Hitlerism*, available on the same site for £38. An 'acceptable', jacket-less copy of *The Vulgar Streak* is available for £131.49.

Lewis is also included in the collection *Marrakesh, The Red City: The City Through Writers' Eyes*, edited by Barnaby Rogerson and Stephen Lavington and published by Eland (London) in 2003.

Nancy Cunard is described as a 'muse' to Lewis in a new biography, *Five Love Affairs and a Friendship: The Paris Life of Nancy Cunard, Icon of the Jazz Age* by Anne de Courcy (Orion, London, 2022).

There is currently a roaring trade on all sites in back numbers of *Lewisletter* and *Enemy News*, prices varying from £3.15p to £15. Unfortunately, book-sale sites do not allow images of items to be copied and pasted which is a bit of a cheek considering the virtual pirate goods they often promote.



ARTICLES:

JUDITH HENDRA

MR. B.H. DIAS AND MR. WYNDHAM LEWIS

'I have asked A[gnès] B[edford]. to go through files of N[ew] Age, Egoist etc. and collect anything of interest, and to submit result to you for expurgation'. (11 November 1922).

Pound was writing from his new home in Paris to Cher W., in other words Pound's friend Wyndham Lewis. The next line was an inside joke: ('Dias remarks, if there are any good ones, can be transferred to me'.) As Pound slyly insinuated, his London-based amateur researcher, the pianist Agnes Bedford had plenty of quotable material to choose from. Pound's immediate purpose was to persuade the *Little Review* to run a special 'Lewis number'. The project fell apart, evidenced in the sizable gap in Timothy Materer's invaluable collection of Pound and Lewis's correspondence between 11 November (reference 114.TLS-2) and Pound's letter of 6 September 1923 where he attempts to interest Lewis in contributing to their friend T.S. Eliot's literary review *The Criterion*. (115. TLS-1)

Pound as B.H. Dias makes his appearance in the *New Age* on 22 November 1917. Pound immediately establishes his mission is to direct the public towards *worthwhile* contemporary art, including artists the public may struggle to appreciate (Lewis and others). Describing a show at Heal's Gallery Dias disregards he can't show the

pictures (this is the *New Age*, not the *Illustrated London News*) and taking the reader virtually by the hand accompanies her or him around the exhibition. Dias uses humour to make his point. His tone is scathing. He makes an ambiguous reference to the art-world star Picasso: 'With this allowance and due pleasure therefore deducted, we find the familiar patchiness, blurriness, stickiness; or, in detail, we discover that No. 52 is a sticky blurr, No. 53 a blurr (greasy); 54, a blurr (muddy); 55, blurr pure and simple; 56, blurr (sticky); 57 is a sectionised blurr, a rather soggy, sectionised blurr leaning to the left and to Picasso; 58, a still muddier blurr...'

Dias spends the rest of the column reviewing a small show of sculptures by Jacob Epstein. We expect Pound to avoid feeding Epstein's critics: nonetheless, Pound-as-Dias complains the show at the Leicester Gallery is repetitive and some of the work is shop-worn. However, he picks out Epstein's bronze head of his wife and praises it to the skies: 'a masterpiece of no school and no period...a beautiful bronze demanding no dogma for its acceptance'.

'Dogma' implies Pound's open mindedness. The tone is confident. His mantra is art has a future. He is almost correcting the Lewis who wrote in *Blast 2*: 'We are not only 'the last men of an epoch!' [...] We are the first men of a Future that has not materialized. We belong to a 'great age' that has not "come off"...We move too quickly for the world. We set too sharp a pace'. ('A Review of Contemporary Art', *Blast 2*, 1915) Pound's essay 'Affirmations VI: Analysis of This Decade' published in the *New Age* a

few months earlier than *Blast* (11 February 1915) confidently names the British practitioners who exemplify modernism: Ford Madox Hueffer for the *mot juste*; himself for his qualitative analysis in literature; and the visual artists Lewis, Edward Wadsworth, Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, and Epstein. Pound singles out Lewis using a string of pithy compliments: 'great faculty of design [...] not bounded by Continental achievement,' 'synthesis of modern art movements, the sense of emotion in abstract design [...] A sense of dynamics'. Pound's 'not bounded by Continental achievement' precedes Lewis in *Blast 2* specifically distinguishing himself from Picasso and a couple of years later Pound writing in *Three Cantos* '.... and the new world about us: /Barred lights, great flares, new form, Picasso or Lewis'. A letter to John Quinn from 1916 flips hierarchies: it seems to Pound Picasso alone among living artists is 'in anything like the same class' as Lewis. (*The Letters of Ezra Pound*, 10 March (1916).

In a long letter from Weymouth dated 12 April 1916 'Gunner W. Lewis' asks his friend Pound 'what is to be done about the pictures?'. We assume Lewis entrusted Pound with a number of drawings from Lewis's next question: Would Pound be willing to store them? Lewis mentions a future exhibit where he visualises a role for Pound. And so on, including a reference to *Kermesse* the huge painting Quinn recently purchased along with a number of drawings. Pound was temporarily in charge of 70 pounds representing a substantial portion of the *Kermesse* purchase money. (Lewis's letter Materer ALS-2; Pound's ALS-4 {April

1916}) Lewis finally received his commission and was shipped off to France. 'Our advance party sails this afternoon, and we are standing by...Au revoir. A bientôt! Yrs. W.L.' (Materer 69 ALS-2 22/5/17. Cosham).

Lewis saw several months of intense action. His letters to Pound picture life under fire from the point of view of one who sedulously avoids clichés. Lewis discovered war was all too close to the mechanized world he imagined in *Blast 1*. Pound was in frequent touch with Quinn over the 'Exhibition of the Vorticists', which was supposed to open at the Montross Gallery in New York and after renegotiations opened at the Penguin Club in January 1917. Quinn was the show's godfather, underwrote the shipping and framing costs, and loaned thirty-seven works by Lewis he bought in 1916. (Paul O'Keefe, *Some Sort of Genius: A Life of Wyndham Lewis* (p.178) Pound wrote to Quinn in March 1916 saying he had a dozen of Lewis's drawings at his flat awaiting shipment: 'the thing is stupendous. The vitality, the fullness of the man!...No one has any conception of the volume and energy and the variety...In all this modern froth--that's what it is, froth, 291, Picabia, etc., etc.,etc., Derain even and the French--there isn't...one trace of this man's profundity'. (To Quinn 10 March (1916)

In July Lewis wrote to Pound from the military hospital where he was recovering from trench fever mentioning Quinn and authorizing Pound to spend two pounds of Lewis's money to purchase copies of Lewis's *Timon of Athens* portfolio at 2/6 each. (Materer: 73 ALS-2.) Lewis intended

the drawings to appear as illustrations and had to settle for the portfolio Max Goschen published in 1912. Pound brought several copies for himself. Later he presented a portfolio to the Victoria & Albert Museum. The V&A catalogue records the donation: 'reproductions of drawings for illustrations to "Timon of Athens" 20 on 16 sheets. Presented by Ezra Pound, Esq.' Pound refers to Lewis's implacably severe *Timon* drawings in B. H. Dias's 'Art Notes' for 20 February 1919. He speculates about Lewis's artistic future vis a vis his current show of war drawings (at the Goupil Gallery): 'just as there was a complete passible world of violent or impassive forms suggested by his "Timon" every one of Lewis's drawings series (citing three) 'appears to be the beginning of some exposition which might go on indefinitely for the rest of the artist's life'.

Lewis returned to England in November on compassionate leave to be with his sick mother. Pound lobbied John Quinn to get Lewis a commission with the Canadian War Records Project and Lewis and Pound's mutual friend the military officer Lionel Guy Baker wangled a series of leaves and talked to influential people in London. In early January Lewis told Pound: 'I have located a dandy gun-pit: 2 weeks and perhaps 3, and I shall have got my material together'. His (Canadian) major loaned him two copies of the *New Age*, 'with contemporary psychology by you in them, which he praises: but says he feels all the time you are rather a cox-comb'. (Materer 98.ALS-2 9/1/18). Once he was home Lewis selected an outsized canvas and began painting *A Canadian Gun-Pit*. He understood he was obligated not to paint anything his patrons

might interpret as 'Cubist' and worked 'like a galley slave' to complete his vast canvas (the finished painting measures 304.8 x 363.2). Pound doesn't say if he dropped by Lewis's Notting Hill studio. In February (1919) he mentions seeing the finished work hung among hundreds of exhibits in the 'Canadian War Records Exhibition' at the Royal Academy. The public reception left Lewis cold and he told Quinn, 'I can only see in it what I could have made, and frankly hate the sight of it.' (O'Keefe p. 209)

Lewis showed fifty-five drawings at his one-man show 'Guns by Wyndham Lewis' at the Goupil Gallery. Pound-as-Dias tiptoes around the subject of Lewis's painting: 'The Gun-Pit' [sic] 'one of the few outstanding works at the Canadian War Records exhibit'; and pleases Lewis by saying the drawings are an advance, 'or else the painting is a retrogression from the drawings, one of which appears to be a more personal study for the left lower corner of the big picture'. He devotes a full paragraph to the drawing, praising Lewis's skill delineating the various figures as they go about building and moving ammunition: 'all display the different, the quite different mechanical or physical strain of their attitudes...The layman will be hard put to tell you just why each figure expresses such a strain: the per-kilo, per-foot pressure in each instance. That is to say, the strain is exposed with great economy of means'. ('Art Notes' 20 February 1919) Lewis's catalogue note describes the process prosaically as one of assigning roles. 'The No 4 for instance is the man who lays the gun and nothing else. It is No 2 who fires the gun, by jerking a lanyard, wire or cord...' (*Guns by Wyndham Lewis with foreword by Wyndham*

Lewis. London. William Marchant & Co., The Goupil Gallery, 1919) Pound turns to a more generalized view, voicing his approval. He endorses Lewis's choice of medium, knowing the standard for artists is canvas and paint, and praises the loose handling that in essence provides a primer in the art of drawing. Throughout Pound understands Lewis's commitment to drawing. 'The drawings in this exhibit could, most of them, hang in one's study without palling', he says meaning it as a compliment.

As Mr. Lewis implies in his preface to the catalogue, there are two ways of regarding 'war paintings': firstly, as paintings (vide Mr. Lewis' remarks about Uccello); secondly, as illustrations of war (vide Mr. Lewis' remarks about Goya); as 'paintings' Mr. Lewis' drawings are about the most successful war show we have had. There are fragmentary drawings like the detail of mechanism of the camouflaged gun, a mere study; there are intermediary states, and there are fully finished works like the drawings of gun-pits; works which can be submitted to all the criteria. These works are signally free from the violence which characterised Mr. Lewis' pre-war productions....It also appears to me a sign of resource that a man known chiefly as a revolutionary inventor of forms, and what his adherents termed 'forms in combination', should now appear as a narrative painter with an apparently unlimited subject-matter ... Those who ragged Mr. Lewis five years ago for his cubism, futurism, vorticism (sic), and so forth, will vainly seek for the old points of attack in these drawings.

The artist conceded he caught the art public unawares: '...surprised at finding

eyes and noses, in this exhibition, (the public) will begin by the reflection that the artist has...abandoned those vexing diagrams by which he puzzled and annoyed...' And justifying his move from abstraction: 'I have attempted here only one thing: that is in a direct, ready formula to give an interpretation of what I took part in, in France'. Pound's attitude to 'isms' is unclear from his statement that the critics 'ragged' Lewis. That may be the reason for Pound's second thoughts: had he said enough to hold off Lewis's critics? A week later Ezra Pound writes to the editor of the *New Age* accusing B. H. Dias of treading on eggs. (27 February 1919)

Mr. Wyndham Lewis is one of the five or six painters in this country whose work has any significance, or who would take any sort of rank among the French 'Independents.'... Neither Mr. Dias nor anyone else is qualified to speak of Mr. Lewis' work unless they have seen both the Baker collection and the collection of fifty 'drawings' (mostly in rich colour) which I sent to New York for the Vorticist Exhibition, at which they were all of them sold, the best of them being now in Mr. John Quinn's collection.

B. H. Dias continues the faux dialogue on 13 March. 'Mr. Pound mistakes both my tone and my attitude'. Dias cannot in fairness review work that has not been publicly exhibited. 'I have as a matter of fact, seen the Baker collection', a point that recurs in a later 'Art Notes'. 'I am, however, quite willing to admit that Mr. Lewis is one of the dozen, or perhaps even the half-dozen English painters whose work merits international attention'. Dias surveys the current crop of Continental artists: 'Klimt, who

imitated Beardsley in gilded and gaudy colours', 'there was somewhere a person called Kandinsky'. He volunteers candidates for an ideal British Academy: Nicholson; Augustus John; William Orpen ('purely on the strength of past work'); Walter Sickert; and suitably purged, Edward Wadsworth, Frederick Etchells, and William Roberts; '...after these gentlemen it seems to me we must chronologically reach Mr. Wyndham Lewis, peer, at the most moderate estimate, to any of the foregoing'.

The Baker collection refers to a cache of drawings purchased by Captain Baker collection because Baker spoke to him about acting as his conservator. Dias mentions Baker and his Lewis holdings again on 27 March (1919). He returns to the subject in September when Dias is able to say the *New Age's* 'representative' has seen the collection in South Kensington, by which he means the Victoria & Albert Museum. Pound was familiar with a portion of the reviews the collection carefully, taking it one item at a time and adding some brief comments of his own. (For Pound's list please turn to Part I of this article 'B.H. Dias and the Baker Collection'.)

A roundup of exhibitions in December (1919) allowed Pound to indulge his doppelgänger instincts (with no bad luck intended). Dias mentions an item at the Goupil. 'Wyndham Lewis' portrait of Ezra Pound rises with the dignity of a classic stele to the god of gardens amid the bundles of market-garden produce at the Goupil Gallery "salon": Pound's delightful way of saying the portrait is larger than life-size. Unfortunately Lewis left the painting in a taxi. An illustration from a

photograph in A. David Moody's biography shows Pound's fur-coat-clad torso, one hand in his pocket. His pillar-like neck rises from his untidy coat collar and supports a long narrow head dominated by Pound's beaklike nose and fiercely frowning eyes. (vol. I ill. 43) Dias's subjects for the 11 December column include Wadsworth, who 'has had the temerity to exhibit a plaster model of a Vorticist building' that should by the standards of the profession be outside a painter's prerogative. Wadsworth's inspiration is, Dias slyly suggests, Lewis's pamphlet *The Caliph's Design*, published in October to an appropriate 'stir and hullabaloo'. (Full title: *The Caliph's Design: Architects! Where is your Vortex?*) 'Given the "Timon," Mr. Lewis' exhibition of artillery drawings and the collection of his work at the South Kensington, the public has now a chance to judge Lewis as an artist, not merely as a volcanic and disturbing "figure"'. Dias mentions the portfolio published by the Ovid Press in 1919. The portfolio consists of fifteen engravings of drawings hand printed by Ovid's owner and Pound's friend and fellow poet John Rodker. Dias doesn't say one is a portrait drawing of 'Mr. Ezra Pound'.

The nudes I, II, and III of this portfolio give interesting points of comparison with the Matisse lithographs, or the Gaudier studies, or the John etchings now at the Chenil Gallery. In the second nude of the Lewis portfolio we find a very great vigour of design, a bolder treatment of the anatomy as design. And certainly qualities perhaps less analysable which neither Gaudier nor Matisse has presented. In the 'Group' (soldiers) we have Cézanne's structure made angular, and, I think,

cleaner cut. 'The Pole Vault' gives the transition from the Timon to the Gun Drawings.

Regarding the Matisse reference: Pound's earlier review of the Matisse-Maillot joint show at the Leicester Galleries calls attention to Matisse's superior colour sense. Dias continues with the general observation Lewis 'becomes increasingly more menacing to the earlier British standards of acceptability'. Once his fellow artists dismissed him as a "mere man of letters". Now says Dias, deferring to the Lewis of *Caliph's Design*, he is, 'needless to deny, our most searching and active art critic'. He encourages readers to dig into their pockets: 'the pitiless analysis of Picasso and of contemporary fadism in the "Caliph's Design" ("Egoist," 3s. net) are worth very serious consideration'.

B.H. Dias's last substantive mention of Lewis is the 20 January issue (1920) where he reviews Lewis's current drawings show at Frank Rutter's Adelphi Gallery. (Visitors could buy a copy of Pound's *Quia Pauper Amavi* printed on hand-made paper for 10/6 at the bookstore.) Dias's review kicks off with Pound as his most quotable. The drawings at the Adelphi

...should finally and ultimately wipe out the last trace of 'husky man-in-the-street' jabber about 'these new men doing stunts because they can't do anything else.' I write this recalling the genial statement made to me a few weeks ago at Burlington House, sic: 'Aw! nobody would know anything about 'em, nobody would see anything in it, if it weren't for a few critics tellin'

'em'-the 'popular psychology' in this case being apparently, 'Don't go to anyone who know anything about it'.

Pound commends (a), Lewis's draftsmanship; (b), the artist's return to a modified naturalism; and (c), the sheer 'focusing of mentality upon the matter in hand'. In these respects Lewis is unmatched by John and Matisse. The artist 'shows none of his more abstract compositions, yet his control over the elements of abstraction was hardly ever greater than in some of these present drawings, and his independence of the actual never more complete than in his present subjugation of it to his own inner sense'. Lewis has the 'consummate ability to define his masses by line and to express the texture of soft substance without sacrifice of an almost metallic rigidity of boundary'. The column singles out a Crucifixion scene by Stanley and Gilbert Spencer at the New English Art Club, described thus by Dias: 'Christ looking like a Café Royal drunk... being hoisted upon his cross by four huskies in pants'.

Pound/Dias skipped the Group X collective at the Mansard Galley. The catalogue entry for Lewis listed seven self-portraits (O'Keefe p. 217). In June Pound wrote from Paris nudging Lewis for material for a prospective show of work in Milan, 'small sketches would do if show the gut'. Would Lewis please send them? Getting into the Continental spirit he signed off 'a vous E.'. (Materer 102.ACS) The Pounds got back to London in July to find Orage had cancelled Dias's column. In September Pound rounded up his London friends for the benefit of Homer Pound: Lewis is painting, Eliot wastes his time at a bank, Yeats and Ford Madox

Ford are semi-retired to Oxford and Sussex respectively. In other words there wasn't much to interest Pound in London. In December Pound and Dorothy began packing up their flat.

In April he wrote to Lewis from a temporary address in Paris. 'Can't see that TYRO is of interest outside Bloomsbury' referring to the launch of Lewis's *The Tyro: A Review of the Arts of Painting, Sculpture and Design*. W.G.A. (otherwise unidentified) reviewed the issue sympathetically in the *New Age* in Dias's place. The cover features Lewis in the guise of a Tyro distinguished by his rictus grin and comic headgear. Inside Lewis appeals to those practicing 'kindred phenomena' to the visual arts in letters, science, or music: '(they) will be welcomed and sought for in its pages'. He had Eliot, Rodker, and Robert McAlmon writing for him. Pound wrote off his participation: 'having long sought' a place where he had 'A freedom from the whole arseblarsted lot' he was 'not inclined to re-enter'. (Materer 106 TLS-2) Pound held out the prospect of a Lewis number and maybe a book bringing us back where we started. *The Tyro* folded after a second issue.



OUT OF THE WOODWORK: THE ORIGIN OF THE WYNDHAM LEWIS SOCIETY

ROB COWAN

Could Glasgow's tenements be

rehabilitated for the people who lived there, as an alternative to the usual practice of demolishing the buildings and dispersing their communities? A job doing research into such questions of housing policy had brought me to Glasgow in 1973.

The previous year, as a student of town planning in Leeds, I had discovered Wyndham Lewis. Wanting to find out more about this figure whom I had come across in books on Eliot and Pound, I read *The Apes of God* and was hooked. But a year later, though I had many fascinating conversations about the latest housing and planning legislation, I had still not met anyone who had heard of Lewis.

This seemed odd. I eavesdropped on conversations at Glasgow bus stops. Was Wyndham Lewis mentioned? Never. I raised the subject delicately in city pubs. People asked: was he the one who wrote *The Day of the Triffids*? I confessed that he was not. In that case, they did not know of him. I had still not met anyone who had heard of Lewis. I had heard of neglected authors, but this was ridiculous. How could anyone fail to notice such a volcanic presence? I was sure there must be some people, somewhere, who were as excited by Lewis' work as I was. I began to think about what might happen if they got together. What would a roomful of Wyndham Lewis enthusiasts look like? Would it be a threat to public order? There were grounds for hoping so.

'Wanted: books by Wyndham Lewis. Write to Box 3.' When I read that small ad in *Nuspeak*, the magazine of the Scottish Arts Council, one day in

September 1973, I knew that it was time to start fishing. But what should be the bait?

That night I wrote a letter to Box 3. I did not have any Wyndham Lewis books to spare, but I explained what was currently in print and where second-hand Lewis books might be found. I signed the letter: Robert Cowan, Secretary, The Wyndham Lewis Society.

A couple of weeks later I received a letter from Tom Kinninmont, acting editor of *Nuspeak*. It was he who had placed the small ad: not because he had much hope of finding Lewis books, but to fill a space (he had written all the other small ads as well). He explained that he was a student at Glasgow University, writing a PhD on the novels of Wyndham Lewis. (He was also, I discovered later, an accomplished amateur fire-eater and sword-swallower.) 'I am delighted to discover that there is a Wyndham Lewis Society,' he wrote. 'I have found my interest in Lewis a solitary occupation in Glasgow.'

We met in a city centre pub on 19 November 1973. It was, in effect, the first meeting of the Wyndham Lewis Society. I told Kinninmont how pleasant Glasgow would be when Wyndham Lewis had replaced football as the city's most popular topic of conversation. He was sceptical. He could imagine a Wyndham Lewis Society taking off in London, but not in Glasgow. I was more confident: after all, the society was only three weeks old and its membership had already doubled.

Kinninmont and I met every week after that. A chance to recruit some more

members came a few months later, when an article in *The Listener* about J.R.

Ackerley mentioned Lewis and gave his date of birth incorrectly. I wrote a letter for publication, correcting the error and explaining how Lewis himself had caused the confusion by giving the incorrect date to *Who's Who*. 'Why Lewis should have given a false date of birth is a mystery,' I wrote. 'It is possible that he did not know in which year he was born. In a letter to his mother written in his twenties he asks her his age; perhaps 40 years later he had forgotten again.' I signed the letter as secretary of the Wyndham Lewis Society.

The letter, published in the 16 May 1974 issue of *The Listener*, brought half a dozen letters from readers wanting to know more about the society. I wrote back inviting them to join for a modest subscription. As none of them lived within easy reach of Glasgow, I neglected to tell them of the even more modest attendance at our regular meetings.

I printed headed paper for the society on my small hand press and kept an eye out for other opportunities to get letters published in the literary papers. Each one brought in more subscribers. Kinninmont's enthusiasm and enormous energy were kindled: we decided that the society should publish a newsletter and organise an event. The first issue of the *Lewisletter* appeared in December 1974.

At that time the Tate Gallery, which owns a number of works by Lewis, had none of them on display. We wrote to the director: the Wyndham Lewis Society was planning a symposium, to be addressed by the leading figures in Wyndham Lewis criticism. Would the Tate please provide a

lecture room and exhibit all its Lewis works to coincide with the event?

A few days later the reply came from the Tate's director: yes, it would. We wrote to Julian Symons, who generously agreed to chair the event. Kinninmont and I visited Mrs Lewis ('Froanna') in Torquay: she was delighted to hear about the society and promised to come to the symposium.

A letter from me to the *Times Literary Supplement* (12 July 1974) about the forthcoming symposium brought a response from a Glaswegian. In 40 years as a Wyndham Lewis enthusiast, Frank Fitzpatrick, a civil servant, had never met anyone who had heard of Lewis. Now he discovered to his amazement that there was a Wyndham Lewis Society based only a couple of miles from his home. Paula Fitzpatrick was equally surprised to find that her husband's lonely passion was shared, and many productive meetings were lubricated and sustained by her prodigious hospitality. (In April 1976 the fourth number of the *Lewisletter* announced that, now that I had moved to London, Frank Fitzpatrick would take on the secretaryship of the society 'for the time being at least'. In the event he held the post, conducting its business with great efficiency and acting as the centre of the worldwide Lewis network, for 18 years.)

The cost of organising the symposium was beyond the society's slender means and the Tate would not let us charge for admission, so Kinninmont and I rented a stall for three consecutive Sundays at Glasgow's famous flea market, the Barras. There we sold second-hand books,

clothes and bric-a-brac that we had collected from friends. I learned the commercial truth that neckties priced at one penny will not sell, as people think they must be horrible, but that at five pence they will be regarded as a bargain. (It was no doubt similar valuable experience that enabled Sir Isaac Wolfson to rise from his beginnings as a stallholder at the Barras to become the chairman of Great Universal Stores. Wolfson devoted part of his enormous fortune to endowing colleges in Cambridge and Glasgow. Why did he choose to support education, he was once asked in an interview, when he himself had done so well without any? 'Just think what I might have achieved if I had been educated,' he replied.)

The week before the symposium, the *TLS* Commentary column announced the event and reviewed the first two issues of the *Lewisletter*. As usual I picked over it for errors, in the hope of getting yet another free mention of the society. The result was a letter, published on 16 May 1975, which informed the no doubt bemused readers of the *TLS* that Lewis' *The Role of the Line in Art* (all copies of which were destroyed by enemy action in the 1939-45 war) was printed on white, not yellow, paper and that the original title of *Sol Invictus* (a spoof D.H. Lawrence book which a character in *Snooty Baronet* finds in a bookshop) was *The New Testicle*, not *The Last Testicle*.

The society's first symposium took place on 26 April 1975 and turned out to be everything we had rashly promised. More than 70 Lewisites emerged from the woodwork to take part. The speakers included Geoffrey Bridson, who described his relationship with Lewis in producing

The Human Age for radio, and Paul Edwards.

We almost lost the 75-year-old Mrs Lewis when she arrived at Paddington earlier than scheduled; Cy Fox, who later did so much to care for her in her final years, tracked her down to a friend's flat. My lasting memory is of 20 of us going in search of a pub at the end of the day, led by the figure, bent with age and determination, of the redoubtable Froanna.

I still have one of the books I sold at the Barras. 'Have you read it?' the buyer asked me. I said that I had not but had always meant to. 'Borrow it,' he said. 'I'll pick it up next week.' He never came.



NOTES AND VORTECES I

The *Guardian* initially failed to reply to Alan Munton's letter quoted above, but Alan contacted the arts editor, Alex Needham, making the following further points:...

The problem with Harriet Sherwood's discussion of how Lewis painted over a work by Saunders is that it is misleading, incomplete, and based on a strange remark about Lewis suffering 'a fit of pique' one-hundred-and-one years ago. is an invention by someone who couldn't possibly know it was true; yet it is quoted in the article headline and repeated in the first paragraph.

Barnaby Wright may be second in charge at the Courtauld, but he couldn't possibly know Lewis's state of mind in 1921: I've been reading the *Guardian* for decades, couldn't: I've been reading the *Guardian* for decades, but I didn't realise you did mysticism!

The impulse behind Sherwood's article is the perception that Lewis was difficult. I spoke to several people who knew Lewis when I was researching him in the 1970s, and they all said that he was wonderful company, witty and interesting. (One of these was Julian Symons, and you didn't get past him.)

The letter was published, complete with the Hulton Picture Library photo of Lewis, but the matter has since assumed a greater significance, one that lies far beyond the petty 'woke war' that the *Guardian* tried to provoke. They published Trustee Biddy Peppin's reply to Alan's letter on 30th August, which inadvertently, led to a lively exchange of e-mails between Alan, Paul Edwards and Biddy Peppin. On 28th August, Biddy wrote to Alan:

I've just seen your letter in yesterday's *Guardian*. While a 'fit of pique' may not be behind Wyndham Lewis's over-painting of Helen Saunders's *Praxitella*, I question your claim that 'What actually happened was that Saunders began to harass Lewis'; this sounds dangerously like a classic male put-down and fails to acknowledge the strength of their previous artistic partnership. He dumped her presumably because he had discovered a new muse – hence the extent of her hurt at his rejection. The main evidence of Saunders's

'harassment' of him is in his letter to her parents (he was careful to keep a copy), and it would have been in his interest to exaggerate this account.

On 29th August, Paul Edwards attempted to clarify matters:

The suggestion that Lewis painted Praxitella on Saunders' Vorticist canvas *Atlantic City* in a 'fit of pique' was surely no more than that - a suggestion. Over a hundred years after the event, and in the absence of real evidence, how can any account of it be anything but speculation? (If, as Bidy says, Saunders and Lewis had not been in contact since 1919, it's difficult to guess what can have brought on this sudden 'fit'). The discovery of the identity of what lies underneath is a wonderful achievement by Rebecca and Helen.

It naturally raises the question of whether Lewis's action was 'a deliberately hostile act', as Bidy believes, or not. He destroyed some of his own paintings, and we know that he had a poor opinion of his Vorticist canvases: he asked Saunders to paint one of them out. Others (if they are indeed his) underlie the portrait of Edith Sitwell he started in 1923 and his *Portrait of the Artist as the Painter Raphael* (like *Praxitella*, of 1921). Both the *Richmond Noble* and *Nordic Beach* were painted by Lewis over earlier paintings possibly by other artists. There is no evidence that these actions were malicious. So the question must remain open.

The 'malice' interpretation of Lewis's

actions plays into the 'nastiest man in Britain' narrative often seized on and used to interpret his work. How will it affect interpretation of *Praxitella*? Inevitably that will become the painting that blotted out a lost masterpiece of British modernism and contributed to the occultation of a female artist. Its exposure of the cost of the classicism it exemplifies will be seen as a simple expression of aggressive misogyny by the artist. ...

... It is fair enough that, in an exhibition devoted to Helen Saunders, *Praxitella* should appear as a 'footnote'. I fear that, instead, a speculative narrative of its 'caddish' creation will now define it.

(the late 1922 drawings of Saunders suggest a temporary rapprochement).

Alan pointed out his previous mistake of thinking that there was only one portrait, from 1923, when in fact there were three from 1922.

On 30th August, Bidy replied:

At one level this is a 'storm in a teacup' in that there's no question that *Praxitella* is one of the strongest and most interesting of Lewis's post-Vorticist paintings. It's also undeniable, in the light of his subsequent history and comments, that Lewis was not prepared to recognise the strengths of his fellow-Vorticists, or acknowledge their varied contributions to the movement or their influence on his own work. ...

... The loss of so many Vorticist oils by all the painters involved, including Lewis, is a tragedy. The partial

rediscovery of one of them, and the circumstances surrounding its obliteration, are of much greater interest than just a 'footnote'. Did Lewis have a 'fit of pique'? Did Saunders give Lewis the canvas, and if so, when and why? Was the over-painting the calculated destruction of an important work by a rival artist? Was it a proclamation that Iris Barry was Lewis's 'significant other'? Was it a statement that Vorticism was finally dead and buried?

Here's a further suggestion. On June 26th 1920, Lewis was sent a letter by Alfred Saunders guaranteeing that his daughter would not contact Lewis ever again. So (given that Lewis could have afforded a new canvas), was the obliteration of *Atlantic City* a metaphor for the definitive 'wiping out' of Saunders from his life and art?

In my view, questions like these are worth asking, and the limited amount of circumstantial evidence is worth re-visiting, even if existing perceptions of Lewis's 'caddishness' are revived in the process.

And just to put the cherry on top, Helen Saunders was one of the choices of the Courtauld Director Ernst Vegelin van Claerburgen in a feature by Vanessa Thorpe in the *Observer*: 'The *Observer* asked Vegelin to pick out a few of his favourites from the walls of the Courtauld. Among them are several beloved works, together with a blast of anarchy from the avant-garde vorticist movement created by a British female artist with a reputation that is on the ascent'.

(www.theguardian.com/education/202/nov/06/rubens-manet-breugel-curator-picks-the-gems-from-the-reopened-courtauld-gallery) The work in question was *Composition with Figures, Black and White* (1915).

Both Bidy Peppin and Jo Cottrell have contributed essays to the catalogue of the current exhibition at the Courtauld.

The *Guardian's* refusal to review the Salford exhibition was an act of what I called 'childish petulance' in 'below-the-line' comment I made in response to an article on bad art reviews (www.theguardian.com/books/2022/oct/04/she-paints-with-the-brush-in-her-ass-the-artists-sharing-their-worst-savagings#comment).

This prompted a considered 'below-the-line' response from 'hureharehure', which showed that the *Guardian* was not as anti-Lewis as would first appear:

A quick search indicates that the Graun has published several recent-ish reviews and features arguing it's a mistake to let his writings and views entirely overshadow his artwork: 'Lewis the painter and draughtsman is another matter. A number of his portraits are classics of incisiveness' that will 'surely endure.'

(<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2000/aug/27/biography.art>)

'Wyndham Lewis's thorny persona means grudges are being held beyond the grave and we still don't recognise the extent of his talent.'

(<https://www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2008/apr/17/wyndham>)

[lewisoverlookedscour](#)).

‘As a writer he has been widely attacked because of his extreme social and political views but, as an artist, he was considered by Walter Sickert to be “the greatest portraitist of this or any other time”’

(<https://www.theguardian.com/culture/gallery/2008/jul/12/art>)

A single missing review is not in itself the entirety of the context here. A single absence of anything very seldom is.

A very good point, but I still believe that the *Guardian*’s negative attitude towards Lewis, whether historic or recent, is not just harmful to his reputation, but to the whole process of informed scholarship. I recently discovered the review of Paul Edwards’ ground-breaking study *Wyndham Lewis: Writer and Painter* (‘The Wyndhams of Our Mind’ - very droll - from 2000) in which George Steiner, of all people, believed that Lewis’s *The Jews: Are They Human?* was a work of anti-Semitism, rather than one of the philo-Semitism it actually was, a mistake that was so obvious that the only reason for the mistake being allowed to stand must have originated in the *Guardian*’s own ‘fit of pique’

(www.theguardian.com/books/2000/aug/27/biography.art).

Would a book with such a clumsy title be published by a major publisher - George Allen and Unwin - if it actually were conceived as an attack on Jews? I suppose that no-one among the backroom-staff at the *Guardian* wished to contradict the great intellectual, but the question has to be asked whether Steiner had actually

read the book if he could not see the evident good will (albeit clumsily expressed) shown towards a people that he had never, in any case, condemned collectively for any economic, or indeed cultural, chicanery. What is annoying is that the *Guardian* persists in making such basic mistakes, often using them as an excuse to culture-cancel Lewis. At least his most disapproving of Australian critics never stooped that low.

Speaking of which ...

FAIR DINKUM FOR LEWIS DOWN UNDER: PART THREE – ‘A SATURDAY AFTERNOON NOVELIST’

In this final part of a survey of reviews of Lewis’s work in the Australian press, courtesy of the Trove website (trove.nla.gov.au) we now come to the post-1945 era. The easy familiarity with Lewis that the Australian reviewers regularly displayed before the war provided ready support for his case against the Royal Academy over the Eliot portrait controversy, but it also led to some misconceptions that persisted long after his death - as in a review of the Scottish poet Hugh MacDiarmid’s autobiography *The Company I’ve Kept* in *The Bulletin* magazine of 18th March 1967 by the English-born poet Norman Talbot, who wrote: ‘If Pound revered Mussolini, Wyndham Lewis revered Hitler, Eliot revered Dante, and so on’ (p. 50). By this

time, many reviewers were using their actual names, rather than the initials that previously often granted them an anonymity that they didn't often deserve for their unique perspective on Lewis's work. Yet even in his lifetime, Lewis was subject to some bizarre opinions, as seen in this review of *Self Condemned in The Age* (Melbourne), 16th October 1954:

SOME NEW NOVELS — Wyndham Lewis and Erich Remarque

A generation ago Wyndham Lewis and Erich Maria Remarque were novelists considered fashionable to read, Remarque in the broadest sense, and Lewis among the literary clubmen. Neither has developed into a master, but a hungry generation has not trodden them down. Both are practising novelists today. In competition with much younger men. Both have published new novels which will be read and checked against the lively memories of their best and most influential work.

Lewis, of course, has never been more than a Saturday afternoon novelist, an original and restless mind which expressed itself in a dozen different forms of paint or prose. He has never dedicated himself to the novel, nor mortgaged his future on it. As its desiccated, uninviting title suggests, this is a novel of ideas, but it is worse than that. It is a curious mixture of social satire, pulpit punching, melodrama, travel talk, genuine wit and spurious tragedy. It is like an interminable game, which begins as football, turns into tennis and ends up as lacrosse.

Mr. Lewis is a tireless and hard hitting performer in all these codes of rules, but since the reader must play as his opponent he ends feeling not only exhausted but rather unfairly treated. ...

[A summary of the plot follows] ...

It is unfair, of course, to boil a novel down to a rag of plot and then hold it up to derision, but Mr. Lewis is really asking for it, because his writing changes direction, purpose and even style so skittishly. The opening part, for instance, is done in the manner of the social satire we remember, and filled with the puckish Lewis wit ... No, I cannot believe that Mr. Lewis was wise to take another slap at the novel, but I do not condemn this shambling, jerry-built structure out of hand. Read Part I for the detail, and you will find in it more hard, clear and scarifying wit than in half a dozen nicely-turned little novels together....

Remarque is the opposite: the professional novelist working hard and carefully at a job he has learned and is much too careful ...

By G.H.

Thank you, Sir Les Patterson. Presumably 'G.H.' hadn't read *The Doom of Youth*, in which Lewis so vociferously indulged in one of his bee-in-the-bonnet rants against Remarque (who was still in his early thirties and an incredibly successful writer) that it was a miracle, given Lewis's predilection for attracting lawsuits, he wasn't sued for libel. One possible reason why Lewis was so easily and wrongly

compared to one of his nemeses was because *All Quiet On the Western Front* was translated from the German - including the evocative title (originally *Im Westen Nichts Neues*) - by an Australian, Arthur Wheen. As for being a mere 'Sunday novelist', Lewis at least achieved the incorporation into popular culture that he attempted previously in the Tyro episode of his career. Another review of the same book, in *The Sydney Morning Herald* of 24th July 1954, by L.V. Kepert, entitled 'An Angry Highbrow' all-too easily conflates the character of René Harding with its author, claiming that ...

Harding eventually wins through to a sort of arrangement with life, and the chopped-about story wanders through to the end. With the best will in the world it is impossible to call this work the product of genius. In its bizarre way, it is occasionally brilliant. But mostly it is chaotic and uninteresting. Perhaps it is not the times that are at fault, after all, but the author.

Re-issues of some of Lewis's novels after the War invited a re-evaluation of his literary reputation. Murray Tonkin was author of *Thunder in the Tiers: A Novel of Early South Australia*, a well-regarded novelist, who, judging by the dates, must have been quite young when he wrote his review - 'Communists in Love' - for the second edition of *The Revenge For Love* (Metheun, 1952) for his local paper - *The News* (Adelaide), on 19th December 1952.

The joint review begins with a view of *All My Enemies*, a Cold War spy-thriller, by Stanley Wade Baron ('a dreary story'). Tolkin is retrospectively impressed by *The*

Revenge For Love (His prose is hard and incisive, his approach unsentimental'), but two reviews of *Tarr* show that the bare-faced cheek still remained. First, John Hetherington in *The Herald* (Melbourne), 3rd November 1951, in a joint review that very briefly dismisses Geoffrey Grigson's study of Lewis (and accompanied by a photograph of Lewis I have never seen before):

STILL GOOD, BUT ...

Wyndham Lewis ... is a man of uncommon vigor and adventurousness of mind. Putting aside his other work for the moment, *Tarr* is a tremendous testimony to his mental vitality and experimentalism. Many of his literary images may baffle you, some of his characters may irritate you. but his novel will never quite bore you (though at times it will go perilously close to the edge). ...

... After reading *Tarr*, re-issued by Methuen as the first of a series of re-prints of Lewis's novels, one can only feel, with all deference to the [favourable] critics of 1918, that few novelists can afford to have their work disinterred from the tomb it has lain in for a quarter of a century and put on public display. ...

... However, the timeliness or otherwise of *Tarr* is not the real point. I found it often stimulating, sometimes exciting, but in many places ill-organised and written in a confused style, which suggested that the author had dashed his ideas down at a furious pace and hurried the pages off to the publisher without bothering to re-read them.

Geoffrey Grigson's study of Lewis in *A Master of Our Time* is less of a critical analysis than a disciple's panegyric upon the work of the master.

J.H.'s presumptuousness is nothing, however, compared to this (unknown) reviewer in the *Examiner* (Launceston) of 10th November 1951, who has a very skewed view of Lewis's career. Still never let the truth get in the way of the hype:

COLLECTING ENEMIES WAS MR. LEWIS'S HOBBY:

Percy Wyndham Lewis is a painter and a writer. He has been a painter and a writer in London and Paris for 40 years. He has also been a fire-eater for 40 years. His hobby has been the collection of enemies. Now his novel, *Tarr* (Methuen), the last explosion of the 1914-18 war, has been reissued. If it no longer dynamite, it is still dynamic. The first sign that there was something odd about Lewis (born 67 years ago in Maine) occurred when a school mate at Rugby found him painting the head of a large dog and cried out in horror, 'You frightful artist!' His house-master took appropriate action; Lewis was packed off to the Slade School, where he caught an inspiring glimpse of the huge gold earrings of Augustus John, at the dawn of his career as artist and patriarch. John did something more inspiring; he bought one of Lewis' first pictures. Paris followed, where Lewis studied philosophy under Bergson, and Munich, where he studied painting in a studio run by a Turk. He returned to London, an arrogant young man in an outsize sombrero and Quartier Latin clothes made for him by a horrified

Brook St. tailor ...

... Back in London, Lewis made futurist furniture for the Omega Workshop; chairs that stuck to the seats of purchasers' trousers, candlesticks that once picked up could not be put down owing to the uneconomic use of futurist glue. It was not enough to quench his creative ardour, which, in 1914, issued in the famous, enormous, pink paper, heavy-type, high explosive magazine *Blast*. A futurist manifesto calculated to awaken, startle, frighten, but hardly to enlighten. Before its echoes had died away, the Great War had carried its founder off to other kinds of high explosive. Returning in no peaceable mood, he launched a magazine called *The Enemy*. ...

There then follows a list of the enemies Lewis made and a continuation of this embellished account of his career. The story about the 'horrified Brook St. tailor' is a repeat from a feature, 'Blast Leader Finds New Patron', in the *Sydney Sunday Herald* of 21st October 195, whereby the BBC commission of *The Human Age* is celebrated as having extended Lewis's writing career. The anonymous piece also featured a caricature of Lewis in the guise of a somewhat stern-looking icon, one who occupied the space in the minds of Australia's critics.

Lewis continued to be frequently mentioned in the Australian press, used in the image of both the sage and a rebel. An exhibition review in the *Sydney Sunday Herald*, of 4th December 1949, quotes from *The Listener* ('No one can look with pleasure at a picture worth forty thousand pounds. The way for people to learn

about pictures would be to go where they are being painted . . .), while a review of a local *avant-garde* artist, in *The Port Phillip* (Victoria) *Gazette*, Vol. 2, no. 3, of Autumn 1956, reinforces the rebel stance: 'The series of large and colourful paintings by Leonard French, one of this town's more significant "expressionists" is worth seeing. ... Mr French is a literary artist, and something of a Vorticist, although his work lacks the violent overtones, the perennial iconoclasm, the stubborn and angry rebellion of Wyndham Lewis, an English painter of whom Mr French, to some extent, would seem to be a mild antipodean counterpart.' [There is an illustration of what purports to be a Vorticist painting.]

Of course, not all of Lewis's books reached Australia, which explains why some seem to receive more attention than others. Given the influence that the Catholic Church in Australia had on cultural and political matters it is disappointing that there appears to be no reviews of Lewis's last novel, *The Red Priest* (1956), or of the otherwise well-regarded *America and Cosmic Man*, but Trove is not comprehensive, frequently changing what it displays, including many of the Lewis reviews I first came across. For example, I came across two favourable reviews of *The Jews: Are They Human?* before the War, which I hadn't seen before, and there was a review of *Men Without Art* in the *Sydney Bulletin* of 23rd January 1935 which, uniquely albeit briefly, compares Lewis with the German author Hans Fallada (at least it wasn't Remarque).

So there are comparatively few reviews of Lewis's post-war critical works, at least

ones that are available online. This review of *The Writer and the Absolute* (in the *Melbourne Age* of 11th October 1952), 'Wyndham Lewis on Cults and Creeds' by 'R. K.' is prefaced by the opinion of another critic, one who has an actual name attached to the initials:

'Wyndham Lewis' writes F. B. Millett, 'is an enfant terrible of fiction whose forte is the hypocrisies and the degeneration of contemporary Bohemian and social circles. But his colossal egotism, his verbosity, and his magnification of persons and evils that are actually microscopic tend to defeat his satiric good intentions.'

The truth of this observation is brought out in the new book ...

Who F. B. Millet was remains a mystery, as there appears to be no trace of him on Trove. R.K. continues:...

In the first two parts of the book he examines the modern situation from the angle of the writer. And sorry reading it makes. With the draining of wealth and power away from Europe to two vast countries neither of which is European, he feels the approaching nemesis of the race. In these portions he uses the term 'Absolute' - which has, in the past, been mainly reserved for God to express absolute power as it is seen in omnipotent forms of society. It is not the writer's relation to the Absolute in the philosophic sense, but his standing as a member of society in the political sphere. Nor can it be said that a great deal of new thought is advanced.

The third part of the book is Lewis's view of George Orwell, which was given particular praise.

By this time, with news of Lewis's blindness filtering through *Down Under*, there is an increasing valedictory tone to much of what Australian critics wrote about Lewis. In response to Lewis's essay 'The Sea-Mists of the Winter', even the acerbic John Hetherington showed a sympathy that was not previously evident in their often eccentric, sometimes inaccurate, but usually well considered opinions:

From his obstreperous youth he has retained the courage which at one time might have been mistaken for panache. He still has his dictaphone. But, alas! you cannot paint by dictaphone.

ADDENDA

Recent searches through Trove have revealed two - possibly three - items that I do believe have never been previously noted. Firstly, William Rothenstein ('More Rothenstein', *The Bulletin*, 10th January 1940) is quoted: 'If ever the Fascist Party came to be in power in England, I imagine Wyndham Lewis would be chief State artist; as Poet Laureate Ezra Pound' (*Since Fifty: Men and Memories, 1922-38*, Faber, 1940). The book has been re-printed by the redoubtable Gyan Press of New Dehli, costing £25.70 and is also available for free on the US National Library's Internet Archive site.

Secondly, just to show that Australian critics did not reserve their barbed wit just for Lewis, is a review of a memoir, *Half My Days and Nights* (London: Heinemann,

1941) by Hubert Nicholson, the Yorkshire poet, novelist and journalist. Entitled 'For Your Dustbin Half-Full Is Still Far Too Much', in the *Sydney Daily Telegraph* of 24th May 1941, the (anonymous) reviewer was not impressed:

Hubert Nicholson bored me profoundly with half his days and nights. But I'm astonished that he didn't write about the other half as well. He's not a reticent bloke. His sex life began at seven ...

... The publisher's blurb to this trivial piece of exhibitionism sets out the names of 'Some People Encountered in this Book.' But I warn you not to expect to learn anything new or intimate about Auden, Chesterton, Day-Lewis, Wyndham Lewis, Shaw, Cecil Beaton, Anton Dolin, Sir Thomas Beecham, Ironfoot Jack, the Emperor of Abyssinia, and others.

Nicholson's memoir was re-published in 1983 by Bloodaxe Books.

This bizarre image, perhaps inspired by that 'puckish Lewis wit' mentioned above, accompanied the review of *Left Wings Over Europe*, from the *Sydney Daily Telegraph* of 26th September 1936, quoted in *Lewisletter* 38.

Finally - and a matter of amusement, albeit through fanciful conjecture. What was Lewis really up to in his days as an 'underground man'? Taking



revenge on the namesake who continues to haunt him in the pages of the lists of online book-vendors? The *Sydney Bulletin* of 17th July 1929 had this to report:

The *Sun-Herald* service sent the following cable from London last week:

Mr. AP Herbert of *Punch*, abandoning his customary humor, turned serious to tell his readers the story of an outrageous swindler, still at large, and masquerading as D. B. Wyndham Lewis, the noted humorist. The impostor, who had deluded the actor Malcolm Keen, leading actresses and several Guardsmen, induced Mr. Herbert to allow him to sleep in his house, after telling a plausible story about owning a private aeroplane, in which he invited the ladies of a theatrical company to fly. The *Evening News* now states that the imposter described himself as an Australian in order to victimise the London business representative of an Australian weekly newspaper.

The first the *Bulletin* heard of this interesting gentleman was ... when it received from its London office this cable:

man named Wyndham Lewis is in London stating he is editorially representing 'Bulletin'. Do you know him?

The *Bulletin* replied the next day:‘

Wyndham Lewis has no authority to represent Bulletin in any capacity.’ Later advices showed that Wyndham Lewis had been very busy. Among other

things he was the son of the proprietor of the *Bulletin*. Just what he got out of some of his exploits isn't obvious. 'Under the pretext of writing editorials for the paper, he spent whole afternoons and evenings in theatrical dressing-rooms, but has never re-appeared as promised with the typescript of the articles. Of course, on hearing from this end, the *Bulletin's* London office advised theatres, advertising agents, etc and notices disclaiming Mr. Wyndham Lewis were published. He is, it is hardly necessary to say, quite unknown to this paper. All the same, it looks like a fair thing to thank him for the compliment of picking the *Bulletin* as his magic key in London. And it is still more of a compliment to the *Bulletin* that the key worked so well.

So perhaps there is a link between Lewis and Oz which is more than just literary-critical. Why the noted humourist and Independent MP for Oxford University should take on *Punch's* editorial duties in objecting to the 'imposter' (the actual editor was Sir Owen Seaman) is unclear. Herbert visited Australia and would have been well-known there through *Punch*.

NOTES AND VORTECES II

Caricature also applied to Lewis' outside the physical, to his reputation as an artistic rebel. In his novel of 1956, *Anglo-Saxon Attitudes*, Angus Wilson creates a caricature of Lewis in the remembered character of Gilbert Stokesay, portrayed as a man of irrefutable modernist tendencies - '... he bored and disgusted



you then, yes, and you thought he was a great man with his *avant-garde* poems and his contributions to *Blast*, his talk of Nietzsche and Marinetti ...' (Penguin edition, p. 146). There is doubtless more to say on this than can be contained in a mere news snippet, so I will come back to it in a later issue.

Wilson did not specifically mention Vorticism – unlike a much later reference to a character in Chris Petit's grisly detective story *The Butchers of Berlin* (Simon and Schuster UK, 2016). This features an extensive, but distinctly unflattering literary caricature of the Irish writer and Lewis enthusiast Francis Stuart as 'Francis Alwynd' (Petit and Iain Sinclair interviewed a very old and barely articulate Stuart in Petit's film *The Falconer* (1991), one that encapsulates the ambivalence of his position as an Irish neutral living and working in wartime Berlin as a university lecturer and part-time radio propagandist):

'... He and Metzler had previously published an avant-garde magazine.'

'How do you know?' /

'There are still books that list Metzler's work. As Lipschitz said, no-one bothers to read any more. Paperwork becomes a monument to itself. *Blitzen* magazine ran for two issues, in deliberate imitation of the earlier Vorticist *Blast* magazine.' (pp. 388-89)

Like Stuart's own *To-morrow* magazine, as well as *The Tyro*, there is a virtue to being short-lived, nearer to the ideal of what an 'avant-garde' magazine should be like.

Wyndham Lewis during his wartime sojourn in Canada as a model for a literary character? At the time I was putting this issue together I was reading Francis Stuart's *The High Consistory*, a generally acclaimed novel from 1981. The main character, Simeon Grimes – a typical Stuart name, consisting of an exotic first name and a prosaic Irish surname – despite being autobiographically based, is a painter, rather than a writer. Grimes is chasing commissions for portraits in Canada (in Nova Scotia) and the United States. Sounds familiar? He has a bit of a bad reputation because he spent the war in Berlin, after being provisionally invited to paint Hitler's portrait – which was indefinitely postponed for obvious reasons. The difference with Lewis is that Grimes is well remunerated for work that is also undertaken with little enthusiasm for subjects whose high opinion of themselves does not render them necessarily appealing. Stuart did himself visit Canada during the latter stages of his long career and as an enthusiastic reader of Lewis would have been aware of *Self Condemned* and the controversy over the *Hitler* book.

Following on from Michael Shallcross' article in the last issue is another reference to Lewis from *The Fall*. According to the sleeve-notes to what is regarded as their greatest album, 1982's *Hex Enduction Hour* (Sanctuary Records, CMQDD 1059), written by Daryl Easlea, its public relations release quoted 'Vorticist and [Mark E.] Smith hero Wyndham Lewis'. At the time the album sleeve was criticised for being deliberately confusing in its apparently amateurish execution and not sufficiently commercially-oriented, featuring as it did

Smith's scrawled slogans, including, as Easlea notes, the *Blast*-like: There is 'Hexenkessel rozzer kidder: "Hail Sainsbury's!"' and 'Cigs Smoked Here'.

There was a doubtless unintended reference to Vorticism in 'The Sunday Blast' in a sketch in the March 21st 1967 episode of the BBC radio comedy show *Round the Horne*. An ear-blink it may be, but it was a reminder that the cultural upheavals of the 1960s did not occur in a vacuum.

Someone who does mention *Blast* is Lewis-fan (as noted before) Luke Haines on the title track of his 2006 album *Off My Rocker at the Art School Bop*: 'Pop op art some Viennese Aktion / Cut a dash with De Stijl and Blast ... Pop op art with El Lissitzky Tadasky / Cut a dash with De Stijl and Blast ... Lose yourself at the art school bop'

'There's Pre-Raphaelite, Vorticist, French Impressionists ...' - 'Oh, stop showing off!' is Gene 'Genie' Hunt's typical reply to Detective Inspector Alex 'Bolly' Drake when his investigating team stumble across a horde of valuable paintings in a villain's lair in the fourth episode of the second series of the BBC tv retro detective series, *Ashes to Ashes* (2009). The painting at the back of the pile looks like a scaled-down version of *Kermesse*, which must mean that some enterprising prop-master must have commissioned what appears to be an accomplished forgery, albeit one that never existed on that scale. The other works didn't look either Pre-Raphaelite or French Impressionist, but if the 'Vorticist' dummy was at the back of the pile, how did Bolly spot it as such? Doubtless a mistake in the

script or the continuity.

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The Tyro is a sequence of fantasy novels by Carol Holland March. Volume One: *The Dreamwalkers of Laretta* was published in 2016.

A 15-minute comedy short, *The Tyro*, by Rami Hilmi is seeking crowdfunding for its completion (The Tyro - Short - a Film and Theatre crowdfunding project in Gosport by Mery Bernabei (crowdfunder.co.uk))

A Wikipedia entry on the English writer John Collier, noted for his short stories and Hollywood screenplays, includes Lewis among his admirers, along with Anthony Burgess and Paul Theroux, despite no apparent evidence for this.

CIRCUMNAVIGATING THE MEAT-SPHERE: TYROS AND OTHER CARICATURES

ROBERT MURRAY

The term is derived for the Italian caricare - to charge or load. An early definition occurs in the English doctor Thomas Browne's *Christian Morals*, published posthumously in 1716: not thy self by four-footed manners unto

monstrous draughts, and Caricatura representations. ... Thus, the word “caricature” essentially means a “loaded portrait”. Until the mid-19th century, it was commonly and mistakenly believed that the term shared the same root as the French ‘charcuterie’, likely owing to Parisian street artists using cured meats in their satirical portrayal of public figures. (From Wikipedia)

As seen on the front cover, a Tyro’s appearance in the popular press (when, unlikely as it may seem nowadays, the *Daily Express* was a journal that occasionally promoted modern art) reflected Lewis’s desire to bring modern art to the masses. The Tyros appeared at a time when Lewis started to publish articles in the popular press - in addition to the *Daily Express*, there were pieces in the *Sunday Express*, the *Daily Mail*, and the *Evening Standard*, in 1921-22. Although he must have known that this was an impossible task, by entering the popular environment - ‘the intelligent, hardened and fertile crust that mankind produces’ (in his ‘Note’) - allowed him to plant the ‘a few large seeds’.

In the first issue of *The Tyro*, in 1921, and on the cover of the second in 1922, Lewis’s infamous Tyro figures were conceived as a satirical ploy. Lewis portrayed himself as the would-be innocent who has inadvertently stumbled across the cultural world and who threatens to re-shape it, even across the boundaries of times, genres and even gender, through the sheer force of his creativity. Iain Sinclair, in *London Overground*, noted in *Lewisletter 37* (albeit without its sub-title *A Day’s Walk around*

the Ginger Line – sorry for the omission), describes a publicity photo of the late Angela Carter:

Can it be the same woman on the back of *Several Perceptions* (1968)? Left profile, big Wyndham Lewis hat, spectacles. Bloomsbury fierce. Watch out, boys. (p. 108)

As a caricature - a ‘loaded picture’ - at least partly created by the writer herself, the image (despite not being readily available online) had an intimidating effect in much the same way as Lewis’s Tyro portraits were intended to.

This popular environment encouraged the use of caricature in order to provide a ready portrait, one that pre-empted the clichéd portrayals of the denizens of Bohemian London - as seen in X. Marcel Boulestein’s *Post Georgian* picture in *The Blue Review* in July 1913 (see *Enemy News*, 32, Summer 1991) and Edmund X. Kapp’s somewhat unflattering sketch from 1914. The caricature of Lewis as a dissolute bohemian, rather than a disciplined artisan, persisted in a drawing by Bohan Lynch in an unspecified journal, but available to view online- www.fulltable.com/vts/aoi/1/bohun/07. This is accompanied by the caption ‘Mr Wyndham Lewis, in despair of achieving his meaning in paint or prose, embarks upon vers libre’ and the whole of the opposite page features an example of this, ending with the frustrated cry ‘Blast the lot!’. Through what little the public already knew about modern art, he was a figurehead for any confused image they had of what this stood for, which was primarily perceived to be for

entertainment. The figure in the *Daily Express* ameliorates the fierceness shown by the Cept and the Brombroosh, revealing something of a genuine smile, rather than a grimace, the sideways glance at the reader implying they are both part of a conspiracy against the shallow and materialistic society that Lewis despised - except that he knew that the Great British Public would never understand such matters.

Lewis exploited his reputation as an *enfant terrible* of modern art and letters, and the Tyro sketch is ironic because he was anything but a 'tyro', certainly in terms of his artistic abilities, and he was no novice in the business of art, knowing the value of publicity. The second issue of the magazine was full of advertisements for the sort of art-commerce - galleries and bookshops, as well as the Dutch art magazine *De Stijl*, that Lewis wanted to be part of himself. The popular press was the ideal medium to express Lewis's sense of simultaneous cultural superiority and the acknowledgement of his own involvement in the truly vulgar commercial art market. The Tyros were intended to be vulgar, a reflection of the modern popular culture that journals like the *Daily Express* promoted in a way that focused on its parochially English character, rather than the European modernism that lay at its heart.

Lewis noted the almost literal application of the carnivorous in the work of fellow-painter, Francis Bacon. The figures he describes are tyros with more flesh and motivated by a greater urge to scream at the world:

Liquid whitish accents are delicately dropped upon the sable ground, like blobs of mucus - or else there is the cold white glitter of an eyeball, or of an eye distended with despairing insult behind a shouting mouth, distended also to hurl insults. Otherwise it is a baleful regard from the mask of a decayed clubman or business executive - so decayed that usually part of the head is rotting away into space. ... These faces come out of the blackness to glare or to shout. I must not attempt to describe these amazing pictures - the shouting creatures in glass cases, these dissolving ganglia the size of a small fist in which one can always discern the shouting mouth, the wild distended eye. ('Round the London Art Galleries', in *The Listener*, 17th November 1949; reproduced in [Wyndham Lewis Late Writing Project: Art Criticism in The Listener, 1946-1951: Electronic edition \(unirioja.es\)](#))

Note Lewis's readiness to place Bacon's tyro-successors in a 'civilian' environment appropriate for the sort of dissection of society that he outlined in the unfinished novel 'Hoodopip'. Bacon's figures express the same trauma that Lewis's tyros did over the upheaval of the First World War, the sheer horror of existence, an enforced participation in 'the moronic inferno' of modern life. Lewis knew that the Tyros were eventually nothing more than cultural scarecrows, ultimately reduced to empty shells of another failed artistic ideal.

However, at the same time, Lewis was experimenting with both figurative and abstract approaches. The series of self-

portraits featured in Michel (Plate 53) are real-life masks that, like the Tyros, Lewis could use as a defence against and attack on the world. By 1920, Lewis started to lose his looks; Lewis was quite handsome when young, but age and illness took its toll so he initially may have wanted to preserve his youthfulness through inhabiting the hollow bodies of the Tyros. He is starting to look his age (forty in 1922), so he exploits his physical decay by projecting an image that could be seen as somewhat sinister, something to perhaps ward off those who would caricature him as an ineffectual 'greenery-yallery'-type bohemian (especially seen in the Bohan Lynch portrait). Michel 423 bears a resemblance to Orson Welles' portrayal of the corrupt cop Hank Quinlan in his 1958 classic *A Touch of Evil*.

A portrait by a caricaturist called 'Naylor' further proves the point, as Lewis looks like an identikit intellectual – an American professor of Literature, a French film critic, or the British Minister for the Arts that he ideally saw himself (www.cartoonstock.com/directory/l/lewis.asp). Incidentally, can the firm which is charging seven quid for a copy of the image be allowed to do so, since the image belongs to the Wyndham Lewis Trust – or do the normal laws regarding copyrighted images apply? If any copyright laws have been infringed in this case, then what is to be made about another – a 'fun interpretation' (in other words, unrecognisable) of Lewis's 1937 'Red Portrait' of Froanna, produced for stickers, t-shirts, hoodies, mugs, phone-cases, laptop sleeves by one 'Madra', on behalf of the firm 'Tee Public' (www.teepublic.com/en-gb/sticker/

[5559877-froanna-the-artists-wife-after-wyndham-lewis](#)). A few other parody portraits are one offer, better executed, it has to be said (eg Grant Wood's *American Gothic*), but this implies that the meat has finally turned rotten.

After his Tyro period, Lewis was no longer in control of his image, as much as he was not in control of this grotesquerie. In a drawing from 1929 he used the motif of an enlarged eye to show that it was the most important part of the artist's body, as seen in the drawing 'Ape' (Michel 1125, used for the dust-jacket of *Rude Assignment*). However, the eye itself was not immune from caricature. As Paul O'Keeffe noted in *Some Sort of Genius*: 'When it was originally executed it prefigured the cartoon drawn by 'Trier' [ie Walter Trier] for Lewis's *Lilliput* article of July 1939, 'The Life of the Artist': a tiny figure painting at / an easel, the smocked torso surmounted by a single gigantic veined eyeball with an upper lid and lashes giving it a fringe of "hair".' Both images were shortly to acquire belated, but cruelly ironic, significance.' (pp. 538 and 539)



With uncanny prescience, we have a final word from Richard Warren ...

CHANNELLING THE BAILIFF

RICHARD WARREN



Is it just me, or has the UK ex-Prime Minister grown to embody Lewis's monstrous satirical creation, the Bailiff of *The Childermass*? The physical resemblance (down to the bobble hat / bonnet) is striking, judging by Michael Ayrton's illustrations for the 1956 edition. But beyond that, Boris these days seems to be *channelling* the Bailiff - manipulative narcissism, the obscure and obscuring language, the fluid, convictionless posturing:

'Slowly driving out the decorous pomp of his magisterial manner, a half-baffled grin develops ... A thick light of servile buffoonery illuminates his face. Then the mask of Punch-like decorum and solemnity is reinstated.'

Boris to a tee. When we consider the PM's clowning and his Just William haircut, we can reflect that, according to Pullman, to his admirers '... the Bailiff's as simple as a child'. As for the Bailiff's extended and barely controlled flights of waggish oratory, what better tribute than Johnson's celebrated freestyling on the virtues of the 'hairdryer shaped' and 'Picasso-oid' Peppa Pig? Note too the similarity of the elevated lecterns in the Downing Street briefing room to the Bailiff's array of booths, centred on a Punch and Judy stall painted with obscure classical symbols that would surely appeal to the PM's scholarly pretensions.

Paul Edwards finds the Bailiff 'the only fully convincing representation of the modern totalitarian demagogue in fiction'. 'Representation' here is by emblem, by analogy. But the [then] Prime Minister seems to have taken things literally, and by stepping into the persona, as if pulling on fancy dress, has paid Lewis a fine compliment.



Boris



Bailiff

The back-cover feature is a drawing by David Levine for a review of W.K. Rose's Letters by V.S. Pritchett for Time magazine, May 28th 1964.



Wyndham Lewis; drawing by David Levine

LEWISLETTER 39

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