SOME PORTRAITS OF THE ARTIST IN THE WRITINGS OF WYNDHAM LEWIS.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis compares the fictional heroes of Wyndham Lewis with those portraits of the artist presented in his discursive prose. Just as there are striking points of likeness between Rupert Birkin and D.H. Lawrence, Stephen Dedalus and James Joyce, so the heroes of Lewis's novels keep reminding us of their creator; all are in some sense portraits of the artist. While fiction and life are admittedly distinct worlds, Lewis's novels often come close to autobiography. His autobiographical writings, on the other hand, are usually stylised to the point of being semi-fictional. I suggest that the figure of Lewis etched in the public imagination - principally by his own discursive essays and autobiographical works - is not simply a self-portrait, but a mode of confronting an often inimical universe. By balancing the embattled personae of his non-fiction with the franker confessions he makes under the seal of fiction, a more complete picture of this extraordinary writer and artist can be achieved. The effect is to make him less a superman and more a man, crossed by conflicting sympathies and hatreds - directed towards himself as well as his enemies. Lewis the man is much more sympathetic than that repellent official portrait of himself which has been so widely accepted by his readers.

* *

Nearly all of his critics, ranging from the most hostile to the most sympathetic, have presented Lewis as a hard and severe, somewhat inhuman figure; waspish and savage, yet cold-bloodedly aloof; set apart from his age, intensely masculine and self-sufficient in his thought, unbending in his convictions; an austerely intellectual and objective artist who regarded men and their failings with a cruel, yet impartial eye. Critics and others may be excused for confusing this horrific caricature with Lewis, since he himself was ultimately responsible for it. In his discursive prose, Lewis appeared in the role of an antiromantic prophet and frequently offered himself as an image of the true antiromantic artist. The image was always archetypal; it was polemical and enlarged for dramatic impact; figures like the Vorticist, the Tyro and the Enemy are plainly larger than life. In his non-fictional writings, Lewis created a whole series of compelling public personae which many have taken for the artist himself.

Some of Lewis's most perceptive critics, it is true, have sensed the tension between Lewis's public face, his neo-classical self, and another self which contradicted it. In 1931, Edgell Rickwood noted a profound ambivalence in works like Time and Western Man,[1] and Hugh Kenner, in his first essay on Lewis in 1954, brilliantly analysed the drama played out by Arghol and Hanp as a psychodrama within Lewis between official and unofficial selves. Such attractively illuminating insights as these, however, have remained in the realm of critical speculation, wanting in the solidity of information which only literary biography could lend them. Yet during Lewis's lifetime, mainly because of his famous secretiveness, reliable information, even on such matters as place

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1. 'Wyndham Lewis', Scrutinies Volume II: By Various Writers (1931), p. 145 and ff.

and date of birth, has been impossible to gather. The maze of rumours surrounding this controversial mystery man made him quite inaccessible. The situation changed in the early sixties when the Cornell University Library acquired a vast collection of Lewis's papers from his widow, and W.K. Rose, with her help, brought out an invaluable edition of Lewis's letters in 1963. On the basis of the Cornell collection, interviews and correspondence with people who knew Lewis, I have attempted to sketch in portions of the missing background. While doing so, I have been able to present some of the questions, personal and artistic, preoccupying the novelist at the time of writing. This is not a literary biography, but the first study of the autobiographical element in Lewis's fiction, and the first one to collate elements of self-portraiture with external evidence.

By examining Lewis's major novels chronologically against the background of his discursive prose on the one hand and his correspondence on the other, I have been able to suggest areas of complexity and ambivalence, tensions between public appearance and private reality which have not been previously considered. Part I, 'The Hunter Hunted', challenges the stereotype of Lewis the savage by showing that he was also highly defensive, suspicious and timorous, unusually prone to fears of betrayal and feelings of persecution. Part II, 'The Actor, the Publicist and the Sway of Time', shows that he was not only Time's neo-classical Enemy, alone, aloof and unbending, but also a brilliant actor, ever changing roles in private life and adapting his public image to the dictates of Time. Part III, 'Revolution in a Soul', shows how Lewis later began to change inwardly, partly as a result of his secret marriage in 1929 and the reverses and sufferings which confronted him in the thirties and forties. Although he continued to insist on the essential consistency of his career, the artist underwent a transformation, the extent of which has not been appreciated.

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Part I begins with an examination of Lewis's first major public performance as the editor of BLAST (I).[1] Here he portrayed the Vorticist (principally himself) as a savage in the modern world, a cold-blooded predator who stalked and attacked Nature, digesting it into his abstract compositions. The precise artistic meaning of this image quickly became obscure, but the savage provided Lewis with the violent presona by which he has become known. In Tarr and the war-time stories (II), we see aspects of Lewis which the persona obscured. In these works, the hunter is hunted by Nature, by women and his own heterodox romantic sentiments. Tarr himself shows unusual susceptibility to Hobson, who seems to threaten him in some way which the novel does not define. Lewis's correspondence (III) shows that he himself was the victim of the same kind of ill-defined and apparently groundless fears and suspicions. In his private life, the artist felt preyed upon and surrounded by enemies. As a response, he erected a defence of personal secrecy which few people ever penetrated. Commentators have always glossed over this side of Lewis, dismissing it with the snap-diagnosis 'persecution mania'. I present it here as one of the main shaping influences in Lewis's writing, registered in his imagery, his portraiture and his own masks. The ferocity of masks like the Tyro and the Enemy is primarily defensive rather than aggressive. As well as a figure of intimidation, the Enemy was also the mask Lewis used to present himself to the public as a neo-classicist (IV). In works like The Art of Being Ruled, Time and Western Man and Paleface, Lewis no longer clothed himself in the primal savagery of the cave-artist, but in the aloof and timeless wisdom of the ancient Greek philosopher. In order to preserve the Western tradition of detached, objective intelligence and the authority of the eye, the Enemy took up a position outside the jungle of inversion, revolution and relativity which had overgrown modern letters. The Apes of God (V) defended by its author as a tour de force of objectivity and impartiality, shows another face of the Enemy. It is well known as a roman à clef, yet no previous study has actually identified many of the characters. It is only by doing so, with the help of unpublished correspondence, that we see how profoundly involved Lewis was in the very jungle he affected to despise. Instead of appearing as a work of the objective eye, The Apes of God turns into a subjective underworld of primitive

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1. The roman numerals in brackets refer to my chapter numbers.

fears and excitements in which the artist hunts down his hunters.

As an Enemy of the time-mind, Lewis identified himself with the stability of the classical world and attacked the modern cult of the actor, which exalted personal discontinuity, as an expression of the (Bergsonian) world-as-flux. The hero of Snooty Baronet (VI) is an actor, yet when unpublished memoirs and letters are used to fill in some of the biographical background to the novel, Snooty the role-player appears to represent Lewis himself. According to several acquaintances, Lewis was a renowned role-player and poseur (VII) whose outward personality seemed in constant flux. The same personal flexibility can be detected in Lewis's letters and his discursive prose. In order to survive as a writer, he had developed the skills of a publicist and, particularly after the thirties, took unusual pains to adapt himself to prevailing public moods. His adaptability is seen most clearly in Blasting and Bombardiering and Rude Assignment (VIII), two autobiographies which project quite different images of their author. The difference is related to the decade separating the two books. As Part II shows, a side of the Enemy belonged to the flux of Time.

In Rude Assignment, Lewis kept up the mask of Time's Enemy with the claim that his beliefs and artistic practices had been fundamentally consistent throughout his career. Part III challenges this claim by suggesting elements of personal disillusionment, discovery and renewal which are obscured by discursive works like Rude Assignment, yet refelcted in every aspect of his later novels. The rugged egoism of primeval he-man artists like the Vorticist appears in The Revenge for Love (IX) as solipsistic blindness, a destructive force which can only be redeemed by a woman's love. The love-theme, which vindicates the heroine rather than the hero, and the theme of growth through suffering both recur in Lewis's later novels. Together, they point to the writer's growing disenchantment with the part of the artistic superman in which he had always cast himself. By the end of the thirties, Lewis began to suffer at the hands of a truly ruthless superman, Hitler. Ironically, Lewis the actor had been deceived by another actor. Vincent Penhale in The Vulgar Streak (X) is partly a study of Hitler and shows how repelled Lewis had become by all the implications of histrionic posturing and predatory force. Penhale, like Victor Stamp in The Revenge for Love, ends his life as

a soulless machine. A third to fall is René Harding in Self Condemned (XI), an intellectual superman, or 'perfectionist', whose very detachment and cold severity constitute a tragic flaw. It is well known that the novel is autobiographical, yet no study so far has seen is as a palinode in which Lewis is rejecting the perfectionist in himself. As in all the later novels, the hero's emptiness is underlined by his wife's unfailing devotion. In the new value they assign to conjugal love, these novels mirror an important change of sympathies in their creator. The prevailing stereotype of Lewis has prevented critics from recognising its importance.

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INTRODUCTION

> 'Every man's work, whether it be literature or music or pictures or architecture or anything else, is always a portrait of himself, and the more he tries to conceal himself the more clearly will his character appear in spite of him. I may very likely be condemning myself, all the time that I am writing this book, for I know that whether I like it or no I am portraying myself more clearly than I am portraying any of the characters whom I set before the reader.'
>
> Samuel Butler, The Way of All Flesh.

Well before his death in 1957, critics like Geoffrey Grigson and Hugh Kenner were arguing against the neglect, even obloquy, into which Wyndham Lewis's writing had fallen on both sides of the Atlantic. For most of his later life, recognition had eluded the Enemy, despite the occasional prophetic reminders given to their contemporaries by T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound that one of the greatest English writers of the century was living unnoticed among them. In the last fifteen years Lewis's place in twentieth-century English letters has been more firmly established, but only in the face of the same dismissive indifference and hostility which confronted the writer in his lifetime. The Enemy still manages to divide his critics. When the reader starts to review the work of these critics, however, he soon detects a broad general agreement among them as to who, or rather what, is the object of their attention. Both friendly and hostile alike begin by sketching in the same small cluster of images before they proceed in their several directions. The sketches are often fascinating and brilliantly achieved, but almost inevitably they offer an incomplete and misleading picture of Wyndham Lewis.

In his most recent book, F.R. Leavis hastens to dispatch 'the brutal and boring Wyndham Lewis' in a sentence.[1] These bald epithets, particularly the first, evidently suffice to evoke and summarise the impressions of Lewis in the writer's mind. 'Brutal' is probably a short-hand reference to an earlier essay in which Leavis reported - at slightly greater length - 'a kind of toughness - a truculent inhumanity

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1. Nor Shall My Sword: Discourses on Pluralism, Compassion and Social Hope (1972), p. 53.

or anti-humanity ("My God, they stink!")'.[1] The parenthesis, recalling the verdict of D.H. Lawrence, is a reminder of the touch-stone which Leavis is applying: it is against Lawrence that Lewis's treatment of sex appears 'hard-boiled, cynical and external'.[2] John Harrison, author of The Reactionaries, approaches Lewis with very different criteria, yet agrees with Leavis in his central emphasis. The discovery that Lewis was 'temperamentally devoid of broad human sympathy' seems to encourage Harrison to pursue the witch of Lewis's supposedly undemocratic attitudes through one after another of his books. For him, Lewis's style is 'designed to be the artistic counterpart of his authoritarian beliefs, as hard, austere, aloof and unbending as tempered steel'.[3]

More sympathetic critics have appealed to similar images. What F.R. Leavis dismissed as brutality is celebrated by them as untamed 'energy'. Geoffrey Grigson found the Enemy a 'symbol of energy and acuteness, of the controlled explosion and the steel edge'.[4] The tempered steel of Lewis's temperament may have been unbending, but for Grigson it was a quality needed for satirical cutting. Perhaps the first to notice Lewis's 'energy' was T.S. Eliot who discerned in Tarr 'the energy of the cave-man'. This is a judgement which has been often reiterated. Hugh Kenner discovers in the same novel a 'sensuous primitive energy',[5] while E.W.F. Tomlin ascribed this 'primitive energy' to Lewis himself. Tomlin's Lewis is an 'elemental'.[6] Sometimes critics have found even the figure of the elemental cave-man inadequate to conjure up Lewis's violent force; they turn to Nature itself. In his introduction to Wyndham Lewis: Paintings and Drawings (1971) Hugh Kenner begins by recalling the 'volcanic energy' of Lewis's art.[7] (The volcano is another recurring image). Cyril

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1. Anna Karenina and Other Essays (1967), p. 162.
2. The Common Pursuit (1962), p. 245.
3. The Reactionaries (1966), pp. 88, 104.
4. A Master of Our Time: A Study of Wyndham Lewis (1951), p. 3.
5. Wyndham Lewis (1954), p. 37.
6. Wyndham Lewis (1955), p. 25; Wyndham Lewis:An Anthology of His Prose (1969), p. 16.
7. Wyndham Lewis: Paintings and Drawings, ed. W. Michel, p. 11.

Connolly compares the Enemy to a maddened elephant;[1] Noel Stock skewers him with a single phrase as 'the ferocious Wyndham Lewis',[2] a well-known literary chien méchant.

Well-disposed exponents of Lewis's work transpose words like 'hard-boiled', 'cynical' and 'external' into neo-classical terms of praise. When V.S. Pritchett applauds Lewis's 'hard-hearted genius'[3] he has in mind precisely those qualities deplored by Leavis. D.S. Savage repeats the comparison with Lawrence, but evidently prefers 'the masculine, unsentimental intelligence of Lewis'.[4] 'Masculine' is yet another recurring word, recalling the robust satirical intelligence of a Robert South or a Dr. Johnson and the best unromantic, no-nonsense English minds of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Interviewing Lewis in 1930 Meyrick Booth suggests the qualities which went with his masculinity: straightforwardness, severity, objectivity and detachment: 'His method is unusually objective', wrote Booth. 'His peculiar detachment, fierce intensity of vision and masculine directness render him an outstanding figure in modern England'.[5] Cold objectivity is usually attributed by critics to the pre-eminence which Lewis's eye is supposed to assume in his satire and criticism. For E.W.F. Tomlin, Lewis views his fellows with an 'intellectual eye'; Constant Lambert, V.S. Pritchett and many others recall that Lewis brought the severe and exacting eye of a painter to his writing.[6] Since the eye registers at a distance from its object, the eye-man is necessarily 'aloof' or 'detached'. In 1937, T.S. Eliot praised Lewis's defence of the 'detached observer'.[7] 'Detached' is susceptible of several distinct meanings, and Lewis's critics have played upon them all: detachment from romantic uplift, from fashion, mass-hysteria or party loyalties; detachment, even from his contemporaries,

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1. Enemies of Promise (1938), p. 78.
2. Ezra Pound: The Critical Heritage, ed. M. Hamburger (1972), p. 437.
3. Books in General (1953), p. 253.
4. 'Lewis and Lawrence', Twentieth Century Verse, (1937), n.p.
5. 'Our Sham Society: An Interview with Wyndham Lewis by Dr. Meyrick Booth', Everyman, iii (1930), p. 707.
6. 'An Objective Self-Portrait', Twentieth Century Verse, (1937), n.p.; Books in General, p. 250.
7. 'The Lion and the Fox', Twentieth Century Verse, (1937), n.p.

his age and his fellow men.

All of these senses are present in the image of Lewis suggested by W.H. Auden and taken up by Walter Allen, among others: the Lonely Volcano. This image cleverly resolves any apparent contradictions in the critical stereotype of Lewis by coupling cataclysmic violence with towering indifference, massive energy with stillness and distance, devastation with self-sufficient solitude. Tomlin has him as an 'unwavering' still point poised against some of the most powerful currents of the age, in an attitude of 'solitary schism' which he 'upheld without concession and without compromise over a working life of fifty years'.[1] It is interesting to note that Tomlin presents Lewis as the antithesis of those pseudo-enemies who always contrive to keep in tune with the Zeitgeist.[2] The stubborn resistance offered by Lewis to the Zeitgeist assumes a central importance for some of his exponents. Hugh Kenner notes Lewis's concern 'to paint like a force of Nature without handing his brush to the Zeitgeist';[3] D.G. Bridson has him swimming against the Zeitgeist;[4] for G.W. Stonier, Lewis was a figure like Samuel Butler who always found himself opposed to current attitudes.[5] Because of his supposed imperviousness to Time and the uncompromising, rock-like solitude of his career, many commentators have assumed that Lewis's work forms a unified, almost monolithic, whole. 'All Lewis's work is one work', writes Geoffrey Grigson.[6] In the most important scholarly book so far written on Lewis, Geoffrey Wagner sets out to discover the principle of this unity and finds it in a neo-classical 'theory and practice of satire from which Lewis never swerved'.[7] Wagner's Enemy develops without deviating.

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1. Wyndham Lewis: An Anthology of His Prose, p. 2.
2. Wyndham Lewis, p. 7.
3. Wyndham Lewis, p. 59.
4. The Filibuster: A Study of the Political Ideas of Wyndham Lewis (1972), p. 147.
5. 'That Taxi-Driver', Twentieth Century Verse (1937), n.p.
6. A Master of Our Time, p. 18.
7. Wyndham Lewis: A Portrait of the Artist as the Enemy (1957), pp. 210-211.

Taken together, all these images form a plausible and engaging caricature of Lewis, etched in the public imagination by many hands. Like any caricature, it is based on certain instantly recognisable characteristics which are indisputably present in the original, yet it plays them up at the expense of the other features often just as important; aspects of the original which intersect or interrupt the simplifying line of the draughtsman are ignored or completely shaded in. It is the intention of this thesis to show that the caricature sketched in above constitutes a gross oversimplification of Lewis's identity as an artist. There is, however, one factor which complicates the task enormously: the draughtsman ultimately responsible for this over-simplification was Lewis himself. Almost every image adduced by his critics is anticipated, often with greater colour and panache, in Lewis's own discursive prose.

One of my major preoccupations here will be to examine those portraits of the artist which confront the reader of Lewis's non-fiction. In the period of BLAST (I), we find Lewis presenting the Vorticist as a savage of the modern world who transfixes factories and shipyards on his canvases with the same barbaric force as a Magdalenian cave-artist in the Dordogne. In the period of The Enemy (IV), Lewis portrayed himself as a lone, neo-classical champion of the 'masculine' intellect and the dispassionate eye, of detachment and objectivity in art and criticism. In his autobiographies (VIII), he makes out a case for his greatness based on the image of the 'detached observer' whose works formed one work only because he stood apart from the momentary excitements of his age. While his discursive prose certainly illuminates one side of the truth about Lewis, it casts much else into shadow.

Erving Goffman has reminded us that we all present something of an ideal self when we appear before others in everyday life.[1] When the author of BLAST, The Enemy or Rude Assignment presented himself to his reading public the extent of the idealisation was unusual, for several reasons. Since he usually found himself in advance, or at odds, with public taste, much of Lewis's writing about art had to be educational. One of his pedagogical methods was to point to himself

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1. The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (1971).

as an image of the true artist; more effective than 'the artist ought to be' was the simple 'I am'. Besides, living as he did on his painting and writing, the artist was never in a position to despise the publicity value of placing an heroic enlargement of himself at the centre of his criticism. He was, in any case, an enormously defensive man and sensitive to criticism in the extreme; he was certainly not one to concede or to dwell upon personal limitations. His auto-biographies are works of self-justification, while polemical writings like The Enemy forge an iron mask of militant attack; neither are given to delicate introspections or confessional disclosures. Lewis was also a habitual poseur and particularly relished astounding, somewhat intimidating, roles; some of them survive in print as the Soldier of Humour, the Vorticist, the Tyro and the Enemy. Even Lewis's most perceptive critics have mistaken the artist for his public personae.

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Although figures like the Vorticist were personae intended to provoke, even outrage, the public, time has long since domesticated them, and criticism ingested them, as 'Wyndham Lewis', an odd phenomenon of twentieth-century letters. We can only refresh our sense that they were personae by comparing Lewis's non-fiction with his fiction and his correspondence. Taken together, the novels and the letters help to sketch in those features which the official critical caricature has not been able to assimilate. Tarr and war-time heroes like Cantleman and Beresin (II) suggest a side of Lewis totally obscured by the 'brutal' cave-man who arrested the public spotlight for a moment in 1914 with BLAST; his correspondence and the memoirs of associates (III) confirm that Lewis was uncommonly shy and suspicious, ever convinced that he was being slandered, betrayed or hunted by those around him; his famous 'masculine' severity takes on the shape of a defensive mask. Horace Zagreus (V), who is an instrument used by Lewis to vivisect and to torture several Ape-like acquaintances, shows how deeply implicated in his creations the 'Eye-man' actually was. Snooty Baronet (VI) helps to reveal Lewis the actor (VII), the private man who kept changing from one role to the next and the pamphleteer who kept adapting his public

image to momentary needs; the actor and the 'unwavering' Enemy of Time were antithetical selves. The later novels (IX, X, XI) are the work of a man chastened by suffering and apparent failure who had deserted many of the ideals proclaimed by the Vorticist and the Enemy; he had come to see human sympathy as more important than 'hard' intelligence and feminine love more important than 'volcanic' assertion.

To pursue images of the novelist into his novels is to enter dangerous territory long contested by diverse critical factions. Nor does Lewis ever specifically sanction such a pursuit as the author of Nausea does when he admits in Words: 'I was Roquentin; in him I exposed... the web of my life'.[1] Lewis consistently denied that any of his characters had originals in life. He was certainly exaggerating here, as many living originals have testified. His denials were usually the result of a canny prudence, inspired by bitter experience of the laws of libel and intensified by his monumental defensiveness. Yet it is not so easy to dismiss all the implications of 'the biographical fallacy', or those who would charge any biographical approach with the confusion of art and life. Here Lewis is more encouraging, for it was a 'confusion' to which he himself was prone.

In a letter to T.S. Eliot congratulating him on the success of The Cocktail Party, Lewis rejoiced at meeting Eliot 'disguised as a psychopathic quack'.[2] No believer himself in the Autonomy of Art,[3] he persistently assumed that the heroes of novels were 'disguised' versions of the author. In Time and Western Man, Bloom and Dedalus are presented as disguised Joyces;[4] in Men Without Art, he detects Hemingway under the disguise of a mindless soldier of the Spanish Civil War. While he is unmasking Hemingway, Lewis shows how much importance he himself gave to biographical information. He is considering the case of a reader confronted with a first-person 'I':

> But this 'I', the reader will learn, does not bear the name on the title page, namely Raymond Robinson. He is called

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1. Jean-Paul Sartre, Words, trans. Irene Clephane (1967), p. 156.
2. The Letters of Wyndham Lewis, ed. W.K. Rose (1963), p. 518.
3. See Men Without Art (1934), p. 70 and ff. for Lewis's attack on T.S. Eliot's 'scientific' impersonality and the critical theory of I.A. Richards.
4. Time and Western Man (1927), pp. 118, 120.

> Geoffrey Jones. The reader will think, 'that is only a thin disguise. It is Robinson's personal experience all right!' Now this difficulty... is very much enhanced if... Geoffrey Jones is <u>always</u> doing exactly the things that Raymond Robinson is known to have done. If Raymond Robinson fought at Caporetto, for instance, then Geoffrey Jones - with the choice of the whole earth at war to choose from - is at Caporetto too. If Raymond Robinson takes to the sport of bullfighting, sure enough Geoffrey Jones - the 'I' of the novel - is there in the bull-ring too, as the night follows day. This in fine, has been the case with Hemingway and <u>his</u> First-person-singular.[1]

He may have scorned Hemingway's pseudo-impersonality, yet Lewis certainly endorsed the close connection between Raymond Robinson and Geoffrey Jones. It was the rich autobiographical vein in Hemingway's novels which he keenly recommended to a young Canadian protégé, David Kahma, who had sent him several manuscripts: 'At this stage you perhaps should ask yourself, however, what you consider most deserving of labouring upon. Hemingway... while still extremely young got into an immense war, in shock-troops, was wounded, and turned all that into a novel'.[2] The advice he gave here reflected Lewis's instinctive practical priorities. Repeatedly, he urged Kahma to write a 'semi-autobiographical novel', a book about himself, 'not as the experiences of Kahma, of course, but of a fictional character'.[3] This formula summarises his own fictional method; Lewis's books are largely peopled by fictional Lewises.

Almost all of Lewis's heroes are artists of one kind or another, doing things their creator is known to have done: Tarr, entangled with a possessive German fiancée in the <u>quartier latin</u> before World War I; Cantleman and Beresin, both subalterns, on leave from the Front; Zagreus, visiting the plush salons of London's Millionaire Bohemia; Snooty, visiting a dime-novel authoress in Chelsea and journeying to the desert to write a travel book; Percy Hardcaster, on an 'Olympian' sick-bed; Victor Stamp, travelling in the Pyrenees during the Spanish Civil War; René Harding, exiled in Canada during the Second World War. The heroes of Lewis's novels, like the heroes of Hemingway, tread in

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1. <u>Men Without Art</u>, pp. 27-28.
2. <u>Letters</u>, pp. 454-455.
3. <u>Ibid</u>, pp. 422, 444, 505-508, 511-512.

the footsteps of their author, plotting the course of his inward life with a fidelity which no biography could achieve. Even so, there are some glaring outward discrepancies: Percy Hardcaster is a Communist; Horace Zagreus is more than vaguely homosexual and more than slightly ridiculous; Snooty Baronet is a pot-boiling Behaviourist. Clearly, Lewis believed in the most unexpected disguises.

Lewis's habit of herding living people into his fiction - all suitably disguised - is illustrated well by some rough notes for a short story which survive in the Wyndham Lewis Archive at Cornell. Several eminent artists were to give prizes at an art-students' exhibition:

> The prize-givers arrive - about ten of them. They are artists selected from outside, by the Students' Sketch Club Committee. (Describe - approximately, but duly camouflaged, Vanessa Bell, State [?] Murray, Wilenski, Kauffer etc. etc.) & the reasons for which each has been chosen. Then <u>why</u> each chooses what he or she does - such as that painted plate chosen by V. Bell, & the stupid little old-fashioned landscape by Wilenski etc. etc.). Last describe the person who is to open the club, late for his appointment, rushing towards the Museum in a taxi-cab, his mind full of anything but the work of the students). End up with Sir W[illiam] R[othenstein] & the Opener (Mr. W.L.) walking away after the opening....[1]

The short story never materialised, but the notes show how the novelist, as Professor Ellmann observes him, 'intent on his art, swallows into it other people along with himself'.[2] All are 'duly camouflaged'. And camouflaged as the Opener - who would expect to find the Enemy opening an exhibition? - is Mr. W.L. himself. Sooner or later, in all of Lewis's novels, the author makes his entry.

This thesis proposes to show that the disguised or camouflaged portraits of Mr. W.L. which occur in his fiction capture the artist more completely than those overt self-portraits pressed upon us by his discursive prose. As Oscar Wilde noted, fictional masks promote veracity:

> Man is least himself when he talks in his own person. Give him a mask and he will tell you the truth.[3]

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1. 'Subjects for Short Stories', dated November 1934, Cornell University Library.
2. <u>Golden Codgers: Biographical Speculations</u> (1973), p. 17.
3. <u>Oscar Wilde's Plays, Prose Writings and Poems</u> (1930), p. 48.

If Lewis's heroes display a superior 'truth', it is not a crude kind of photographic verisimilitude. They are 'portraits' of the artist, works of art as well as likenesses. As works of art they draw upon wayward memories, uninhibited reflections and shades of experience to which discursive prose has no access.

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PART I : THE HUNTER HUNTED

CHAPTER I : THE VORTICIST (1914): THE ARTIST AS A DETACHED PREDATOR.

'We are proud, handsome and predatory.' 'Our Vortex', BLAST, I.

In July 1914, the editor of BLAST, followed by what Augustus John termed 'his small band of bloodthirsty Vorticists',[1] suddenly thrust himself onto the stage of British public life as he raucously trumpeted a revolution in artistic values. The movement soon petered out, but the violence of that assertive entry, together with the ideals it proclaimed, furnished Wyndham Lewis with a striking persona which would serve him, more or less, for many years to come. According to BLAST, the artistic instinct was primitive; and Vorticist art, conscious of its primordial roots, was as non-representational as a New Guinean mask, as far removed from the turbulent Post-Impressionism of the rive gauche as it was from the refined academic naturalism of Burlington House. Whereas the romantic naturalist, trying to imitate the appearance of things, tamely surrendered the independence of his powers and allowed himself to be sucked up into Nature's vortex, the true artist, the antiromantic Vorticist, attacked Nature manfully with all the violence of the hunter, carving it up into digestible forms and assimilating it into the vortex of his own intellectual powers. In BLAST, the archetypal artist was a predator.

If the Vorticist aesthetic was a violent one, so was 1914, the year in which Vorticism suddenly emerged as a forcefully articulate splinter-group in English art-politics. It was a year in which many artists and intellectuals were in a mood of unusual pugnacity. Between 1910 and 1914 F.T. Marinetti visited England several times, making some impact on London's avant-garde, including Lewis. Marinetti's

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1. Chiaroscuro: Fragments of an Autobiography (1954), p. 58.

celebration of mechanical violence registered that mood of anticipation which many sensed in the air long before war itself became a probability. In much the same mood was T.E. Hulme, who provided Marinetti's English admirers with a rationale for dissociating themselves from Futurism. In this act of secession Vorticism unexpectedly found its identity. Unlike the hot-blooded, Latin and romantic bluster of Futurism, Vorticism was austere, cold-blooded and 'Northern'. Its savagery was 'detached', a quality which Lewis was to claim for himself for the rest of his life. Already, Lewis's ferocious public persona had begun to take its characteristic shape on the face of the leader of the Great London Vortex. F. R. Leavis's 'brutal... Wyndham Lewis' was in part a creation of the art-politics which prevailed in London not long before the outbreak of the First War.

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Between 1909 and 1911 Lewis's first published writings appeared in The English Review and The Tramp - some short stories and travel notes inspired by his wanderings on the Continent in the previous eight years. In these the author appears as a vague, shadowy presence, always in the background. Typically he is an onlooker, as he is in 'Les Saltimbanques'[1] where he places himself in the crowd watching a circus-performance, or a listener, as he is in 'Unlucky for Pringle'[2] where he plays the part of a rather omniscient confidant of the central character. When the next of these continental adventures was published, in 1917 in The Little Review, the narrator has moved into the foreground; he is now an arrestingly distinctive figure called the Soldier of Humour. Where the author of the earlier stories is a middle-class English traveller, bohemian enough to relish the absurd, but still ethnocentric enough to be faintly astounded by foreigners, tramps and the 'criminal tone' of the Foreign Legion,[3] the Soldier of Humour is himself a 'barbarian', with a mouth full of threatening teeth:

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1. The English Review, iii (1909), pp. 76-87.
2. The Tramp: an Open Air Magazine, (1911), pp. 404-414.
3. 'The Pole', The English Review, ii(1909), p. 261.

> I am a large blonde Clown, ever so vaguely reminiscent (in person) of William Blake, George Alexander, and some great American Boxer whose name I forget. I have large strong teeth which I gnash and flash when I laugh, as though I were chewing the humourous [sic] morsel. But usually a look of settled and aggressive naievty [sic] rests on my face. I know I am a barbarian, who, when Imperial Rome was rather like Berlin today, would have been paddling about in a coracle. My body is large, white and savage. But all the fierceness has been transformed into laughter. It still looks like visiGothic fighting machine, but is really a laughing machine. As I have remarked, when I laugh I gnash my teeth, which is another brutal survival, a thing Laughter has taken over from War. Everywhere where formerly I would fly at throats, I howl with laughter![1]

Of course, the authorial 'I' in this passage cannot be simply identified with Lewis. He himself underlined the fact in 1927, when most of the stories were collected together in The Wild Body, by referring to the Soldier of Humour as 'a fanciful... figure', a 'showman' named Kerr-Orr.[2] That is, like J. Alfred Prufrock and Hugh Selwyn Mauberley, Kerr-Orr is nothing else but a persona of the author. However, just as Eliot's and Pound's personae have been commonly mistaken for the poets themselves,[3] so this savage has been confused with Lewis. Even Eliot partly falls into the trap when he perceives in Lewis's writing 'the energy of the cave-man',[4] and Hugh Kenner follows him when he traces the same barbaric energy into the arm of 'the painting animal'.[5]

In Lewis's case the danger of confusion is magnified because his personae tend to turn up in the discursive prose as well as the fiction. In 1921 Lewis edited two numbers of The Tyro which include drawings by Lewis himself of the strangely elusive figure whose name the journal bears. The drawings show that the Tyro has the same flashing teeth as the Soldier of Humour and, as is shown in the text, the same mixture of belligerence, naivetê and good humour:

> These immense novices brandish their appetites in their faces, lay bare their teeth in a valedictory, inviting, or merely

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1. 'A Soldier of Humour, I', The Little Review, iv (1917), p. 32.
2. The Wild Body (1927), pp. 4, 232.
3. Pound took critics to task for failing to see that he was 'no more Mauberley than Eliot is Prufrock' The Letters of Ezra Pound, 1907-1941, ed. D. D. Paige (1951), p. 248.
4. 'Tarr', The Egoist, v (1918), p. 106.
5. The Pound Era (1972), p. 268.



Wyndham Lewis: a self portrait

> substantial laugh. A laugh, like a sneeze, exposes the nature of the individual with an unexpectedness that is perhaps a little unreal. This sunny commotion in the face, at the gate of the organism, brings to the surface all the burrowing and interior broods which the individual may harbour. Understanding this so well, people hatch all their villainies in this seductive glow. Some of these Tyros are trying to furnish you with a moment of almost Mediterranean sultriness, in order, in this region of engaging warmth, to obtain some advantage over you.[1]

Despite such detailed exposition, Lewis's precise relationship to these cheerfully aggressive creatures is not immediately apparent. On the one hand, he describes them as puppet-like 'satires', but on the other, at least one of them, Tyro X, plays the familiar Lewisian role of a militant misanthropist expounding the dark, internecine passions which lurk just below the surface of so-called civilised life.[2] That the Tyro can be a persona for Lewis himself is emphasised in the painting 'Mr. Wyndham Lewis as a Tyro', reproduced opposite. Again, the connections between the Soldier of Humour and the Tyro, as shown in this self-portrait, are obvious, even though the ingenuous laugh of the earlier figure has transformed itself into a metallic, toothy sneer set off by a sharply arched eyebrow. 'How odious a "blast"', Nancy Cunard - who knew Lewis well - wrote of the portrait, 'just as he meant himself to appear'[3] The justness of Nancy Cunard's comment is suggested by the fact that the same belligerent posture keeps recurring in Lewis's discursive prose, not only in the sinister figure of the Enemy, but to some extent in the embattled 'Mr. Wyndham Lewis', author of Blasting and Bombardiering (1937) and Rude Assignment (1950). Kerr-Orr is a direct ancestor of that menacing persona which confronts the reader of Lewis's essays in politics, criticism and autobiography.

It is possible to date the intrusion of Lewis's paleolithic 'showman' into the Wild Body stories with some precision. An editorial note of Pound's in The Little Review shows that Lewis almost published them when war broke out,[4] which means that the Soldier of Humour was born somewhere between 1911, when the last of Lewis's stories appeared

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1. The Tyro: A Review of the Arts of Painting Sculpture and Design, i (1921), p.2
2. 'Tyronic Dialogues: X and F', The Tyro, ii (1921), pp. 46-49.
3. Nancy Cunard to W. K. Rose, 3 May 1963 (Vassar College Library, hereafter abbreviated to 'Vassar').
4. The Little Review, iv (1917), p. 3.

in The Tramp, and 1914. Internal evidence suggests 1914, the year in which Lewis himself suddenly became a showman, Mr. Lewis 'the Vorticist'. Where the author of the stories published between 1909 and 1911 was a little-known Cubist recently returned from the Continent and very much in the background of English art and letters, the editor of BLAST was a 'star', celebrated in the press: 'At some time during the six months that preceded the declaration of war, very suddenly, from a position of relative obscurity, I became extremely well-known. Roughly this coincided with the publication of BLAST.... by August 1914 no newspaper was complete without news about "vorticism" and its arch-exponent Mr. Lewis.'[1] Those who also read BLAST would have discovered that Mr. Lewis 'the Vorticist' described himself as a 'savage' and a primitive mercenary; that he considered himself 'proud, handsome and predatory'.[2] In fact, the genial savage who is thrust forward to introduce himself as the narrator of The Wild Body is almost the same figure as the artist who thrust himself, in the guise of the Vorticist, into the foreground of English public life in 1914. The Soldier of Humour and the Vorticist are masks out of the same mould, illustrating again that interplay of roles, fictional and public, which is such a fascinating characteristic of the literary career of Wyndham Lewis. To understand the significance of Kerr-Orr's large flashing fangs and the Tyro's 'appetite' it is necessary to focus on 1914, the year of the Great London Vortex.

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The years 1910 to 1914 in Britain, and 1914 especially, seem to have been marked by a peculiar climate of violence, a heavy, ominous atmosphere in which small local storms signalled the approach of the General Deluge. Several contemporaries of Douglas Goldring share his recollection that 1914 was a year in which 'something had to happen'.[3]

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1. Blasting and Bombardiering (1967), pp. 32-36.
2. BLAST, i (1914), pp. 30, 33, 148. Hereafter, all references to BLAST in this chapter are included in the text.
3. South Lodge: Reminiscences of Violet Hunt, Ford Madox Ford and The English Review Circle (1943), p. 71.

Ford Madox Ford remembers it 'as a period of outcries, smashings, the noises of broken glass falling to the ground and physical violences. An accursed year! The whole tone of personal contacts was stained, tense - mad!'[1] The same 'inner tension,... need for stimulants' is recorded by George Dangerfield;[2] with Ulster and the Suffragette movement in mind, he recalls that state of 'nerves which made militant pressure-groups resort to violence: 'Such was the state of English nerves in those days, that violence made a stronger appeal to the public than any other form of speech and action.'[3] Inevitably, these tensions afflicted the nerves of artists and influenced the critical canons of the day. In the arts, the years immediately preceding the War were so extraordinary that Laurence Binyon, addressing the English Association in 1926, could already look back on them as a definable 'period':

> Even before that material convulsion of Europe, even before the war, there was noticeable everywhere a spirit of disquiet and perplexity stirring in the arts, most obviously manifest in plastic and pictorial expression, but visible also in literaure; a kind of fever, an almost exasperated craving for the violent, the elemental, the barbaric, for energy and self-assertion at all costs. Virility and vitality became the cant words of praise in criticism.[4]

One writer Binyon probably had in mind was J. Middleton Murry, the editor of Rhythm, a journal to which Binyon himself had contributed. As early as 1911 Murry was demanding that art 'learn to be brutal', something which 'seeks out the strong things of life'.[5] Rhythm itself, an organ of the Paris-based British Fauves,[6] suggests the likely source of some of these heady dogmas: France. If anything, intellectual life in France was even more intemperate. In The Reactionary Revolution, Richard Griffiths analyses the milieu of violence and exaggeration which prevailed among pre-war French writers of both

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1. The Marsden Case: A Romance (1923), p. 13.
2. The Strange Death of Liberal England (1966), p. 106.
3. Cited in William C. Wees, Vorticism and the English Avant-Garde (Manchester, 1972), pp. 12-13.
4. Tradition and Reaction in Modern Poetry, English Association Pamphlet, lxiii (1926), pp, 5-6.
5. Rhythm, i(1911), p. 36.
6. W. Michel (ed.), Wyndham Lewis: Paintings and Drawings (1971), p. 72.

Left and Right. Catholics like Péguy, Claudel and Bloy saw themselves as 'fighters in a violent cause',[1] viewing moderation with suspicion and contempt. Questions were debated with such vehemence that they tended to simplify themselves into black and white, and intellectual controversy was often marked by personal denunciations which did not shrink form the 'anatomical and the sexual'.[2] Perhaps appropriately, it was a Frenchman of this period, Georges Sorel, who put the classic case for the use of physical force in political life in his Réflexions sur la Violence (1906).

In Britain, few groups manifested the temper of the age more clearly than Lewis's circle of acquaintances in 1913 and 1914. T. E. Hulme, who translated Sorel's Réflexions, shared the tendency of French intellectuals to simplify issues into all-embracing, black and white categories like Romantic and Classical, Humanistic and Religious. Opposing positions he frequently dismissed as 'rubbish', 'bunkum' and 'bosh',[3] and opponents like Anthony Ludovici, who made the mistake of criticising Jacob Epstein, were commonly threatened with fisticuffs.[4] In Hulme's case this latter was no small threat; by all accounts he was an able pugilist, big and powerful, and he carried a set of vicious-looking steel knuckle-dusters carved by Gaudier Brzeska.[5] Lewis himself felt Hulme's terrible force in a famous incident in 1914 when Hulme 'transfixed' him on the railings of Soho Square.[6] Ezra Pound, whose persona in 'Sestina: Altaforte' (1909) has 'no life save when the swords clash',[7] seems to have become this persona in 1914. William C. Wees notes the change in Pound's mood as he abandoned Imagism for Vorticism: 'As he became more argumentative, Pound's tone and language became more violent and his conception of the artist's role more militant.

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1. The Reactionary Revolution: The Catholic Revival in French Literature 1870-1914, (1966), p. 74.
2. Ibid., p. 85.
3. Speculations: Essays on Humanism and the Philosophy of Art (1936), pp. 18, 33, 71.
4. 'Mr. Epstein and the Critics', The New Age, xiv (1913), pp. 251-253.
5. Miss Kate Lechmere, to whom Hulme was engaged when he was killed at the Front, showed them to me in an interview in May, 1972.
6. Blasting and Bombardiering, p. 36.
7. Ezra Pound: Selected Poems (1948), pp. 53-55.

Instead of the craftsman of language, the careful observer who transforms what he sees into precise Images, the artist, Pound now wrote, is a "savage" who "must live by craft and violence. His gods are violent gods."[1] His poems in BLAST show what happens when a 'savage' versifies. The Times is flyted as a 'slut-bellied obstructionist' and offered the opportunity of licking the poet's boot. (i, 45) Like Hulme, Pound does not seem to have demurred at the prospect of physical combat, on one occasion challenging Lascelles Abercrombie to a duel.[2] At the same time the Savage Messiah, Gaudier-Brzeska, was also 'spoiling for a fight' and 'threatened at Ford's to sock Bomberg [another Vorticist] on the jaw.'[3] Lewis himself threatened to break Augustus John's head[4] and his letters of the period are full of bellicose he-man epithets.[5] For Lewis, personal ferocity had become a conscious policy: 'What's the good of being an island', he asked John, 'if you are not a volcanic island?'[6] In the months following his schism with Roger Fry's Omega Workshops, Lewis discharged a torrent of lava in The New Age upon Anthony Ludovici, Arthur Rose and Walter Sickert. These assaults, together with all the fights, or threatened fights, and with boisterous putsches and counter-putsches against Marinetti, meant that life, as described in Blastering and Bombardiering, 'was one big bloodless brawl, prior to the Great Bloodletting'. In fact, by the time the Great Bloodletting did come, when 'War and Art... mingled', the Art of Lewis's circle was found to be 'as stern as - if not sterner than' the visage of War.[7]

Given such ebullient goings-on backstage, it is scarcely surprising that BLAST, when it appeared in July 1914,[8] should proclaim itself an

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1. Vorticism, p. 127.
2. Noel Stock, The Life of Ezra Pound (1970), p. 159.
3. Blasting and Bombardiering, p. 35.
4. The Letters of Wyndham Lewis, ed. W. K. Rose (1963), pp. 70-72.
5. See Letters, pp. 65, 68 for example, even though the published letters are less than representative in this respect.
6. Letters, p. 64.
7. Blasting and Bombardiering, pp. 35, 63.
8. It was dated June, 1914, but as William C. Wees establishes, it did not appear until July.

'avenue' for 'vivid and violent ideas' (i, 7). Its martial name, its banner-headline lettering, its splenetic posture ('Our Vortex rushes out like an angry dog', i, 149), all reflect the tense, mad, violent world described by Goldring, Ford and Dangerfield. The mingling of art and war is evident in the Vorticists' view of themselves as 'Mercenaries' (i, 30). 'In art,' Lewis recalls in Blasting and Bombardiering, 'I was a condotieri [sic]'.[1] Arghol, hero of his Vorticist play Enemy of the Stars, is a 'gladiator' fighting humanity (i, 61). Part of the condottiere's function was to be an agitator, to 'set Humour at Humour's throat. Stir up Civil War among peaceful apes' (i, 31). BLAST pours scorn on the comfortable, insulating and civilising humour of the English drawing-room and club. Humour is only acceptable if it has 'fought like Tragedy'; that is, if it can be used as a 'barbarous weapon' like the laugh of the Soldier of Humour, which is a survival from the primeval act of tearing throats. The Vorticist manifestoes illustrate perfectly that 'craving for the violent, the elemental, the barbaric' described by Laurence Binyon in 1926. 'The art-instinct', BLAST declared, 'is permanently primitive'. The Vorticist, the 'artist of the modern movement is a savage' (i,33). In one levelling historical sweep, education, refinement and civilisation itself (i,7) are shown up as the merest veneer, laid on the race in a pre-industrial era which has passed forever. By contrast with the nature-loving passéisme of the Victorian sensibility, Vorticists stood for the Present and, like primitive artists, drew inspiration from their actual surroundings, the mechanical environment of modern man. In their stress on the industrialised Present, however, the Vorticists were not alone; here London's 'Primitive Mercenaries in the Modern World' underlined their debt to Futurism and its founder, F. T. Marinetti.

In his autobiographies Lewis has obscured the debt by making it appear that he opposed Futurism from the outset.[2] Douglas Goldring, who knew him at the time, supports the impression that Lewis 'from the first regarded Marinetti with deep suspicion'.[3] More recently the view has been accepted in a qualified way by Walter Michel who at

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1. Blasting and Bombardiering, p. 8.

2. See Blasting and Bombardiering, p. 33 and Rude Assignment: A Narrative of My Career-Up-To-Date (1950), p. 129.

3. South Lodge, p. 64.

first entertains the possibility that Lewis found in Futurism 'an extremely important catalyst', but then dismisses it by denying that he had 'anything more than curiosity about the Futurist movement' and a desire 'to share in its expensive publicity'.[1] Augustus John, however, remembers Lewis falling under Marinetti's spell,[2] and this is the version which accords best with contemporary evidence. When Marinetti came to London in November, 1913, Lewis helped to arrange a dinner for him and wrote to friends like Thomas Sturge Moore[3] and patrons like Mrs Percy Harris advising them that Marinetti's lecture at the Doré Gallery would 'no doubt be worth hearing'.[4] He also wrote two articles on Marinetti in The New Weekly, the first of which praised the founder of Futurism as 'an individual crackling with good sense, so abundant as to be rare' and 'one of the personal landmarks of our time'.[5] And even in the second, which appeared on the 20th June, 1914, less than a week after his public break with the Futurists,[6] Lewis still admitted his fascination with 'a certain lyrical violence that is "Automobilism" [Futurism] at its best'.[7]

The connection between Vorticist and Futurist notions of art and the artist is not difficult to see, even though the Futurist aesthetic was sometimes stated with less precision and even more emphasis on dramatic force. In the first Futurist Manifesto published in Le Figaro on the 11th February 1909 Marinetti unleashed his sensational formula at the centre of the art-world: 'l'art ne peut être que violence, cruauté et injustice'. Futurism, he announced, would admit of no beauty without struggle, no masterpiece without aggression. Like those English artists described by Laurence Binyon, Marinetti demanded a reform of taste 'in nomine della Salute, della Forza, della Volontà e della Virilità'.[8] The Futurist Manifesto proclaimed the glorification

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1. Wyndham Lewis: Paintings and Drawings, pp. 76-77.
2. Chiaroscuro, p. 50
3. T. Sturge Moore to Wyndham Lewis, 15 November 1913 (Cornell University Library, hereafter abbreviated to 'Cornell').
4. Letters, pp. 53-54.
5. 'A Man of The Week: Marinetti., The New Weekly, i (1914), p. 328.
6. Details of the break are given in Letters, pp. 61-63. It was announced in The Observer, 14 June 1914.
7. 'Automobilism', The New Weekly, ii (1914), p. 13.
8. Opere di F. T. Marinetti, ed. Arnoldo Mondadori, ii (Verona, 1968), p. 83.

of war, 'seule hygiène du monde' - a phrase which Marinetti expanded into a treatise, Guerra Sola Igiene del Mondo (1915). Like the Vorticist, the Futurist saw himself as an agitator,[1] but an agitator pressing for war. 'Nostri nervi esigono la guerra', writes Marinetti, for whom 'uomo' is nothing less than an 'animale da preda'.[2] In fact, Futurism anticipates Vorticism by a number of years in its emphasis on the primitive in man[3] and its demand that the artist identify himself with 'the beast'. 'The beast' is a recurring theme in Marinetti's writings. In 'Uccidiamo il Chiaro di Luna' (1909) a band of Futurists allies itself with lions, tigers, panthers and lunatics and attacks the City of Gout, symbolising the Futurist desire to harness the wild, irrational energies of bestial force in order to destroy the decrepit remnants of a past civilisation. The industrial revolution had already provided the means: in the Manifesto, when the Futurists' leader cries 'Nous allons assister à la naissance du Centaure', he is referring to their cars, elsewhere called 'fauves',[4] wild beasts. These beasts rush through the streets following nothing but a scent and - in a peculiarly prophetic note for 1909 - are aware that they are running after death. On the eve of the first great war of the machine age, both Vorticists and Futurists were moved by the possibilities in modern technology for the expression of primitive passions.

As T. E. Hulme recognised, however, Italians and Englishmen were moved in quite distinct ways. It was Hulme who first unmasked Futurism as a form of Impressionism[5] in his lecture on Modern Art in January, 1914. What he meant is evident in such works as Balla's 'Speeding Automobile' (1913). Movement is conveyed by a technique of multiple exposure much the same as that used in cinema; his violinist (1912) has several hands in a blur of vibration, just

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1. Marianne W. Martin, Futurist Art and Theory (Oxford, 1968), p. 43.
2. Opere di F. T. Marinetti, ii, p. 14.
3. Futurist Art and Theory, p. 52.
4. In her authoritative book on Futurism, Marianne Martin sees this as a tribute to the Fauvist painters, which leads her to adduce Fauvism - as well as Nietzsche and Bergson - as a possible source of Futurism. Op. cit., p. 41.
5. Speculations, p. 94.

as Severini's 'Blue Dancer' (1912) has several pairs of arms.[1] The point of the technique is to achieve closer fidelity to the object, to recreate the illusion of external reality. It differs from Impressionism only in emphasis: where the Impressionists analysed colour to capture the elusive qualities of light, the Futurists analysed motion to capture moving forms. Like Impressionism then, Futurism is a heightened form of Naturalism, what Hulme called 'merely a reflection of mechanical environment'.[2] Several months later, BLAST echoed this judgement: 'we are not Naturalists, Impressionists or Futurists (the latest form of Impressionism)' (i, 7). Since Lewis was praised in Hulme's lecture there is good reason to suppose that he knew it and, as William Wees suggests, was influenced by it in his movement away from Futurism in the first few months of 1914.[3] On the other hand, Lewis always denied the influence of Hulme in his work: 'I did it, and he said it' is the order of events recorded in Blasting and Bombardiering.[4] Again, Walter Michel has given recent support to this view when he doubts that Hulme's lecture left Lewis any more than 'interested'.[5] Michel's emphasis is right in one respect: Lewis's painting was abstract by 1912, well before he became closely associated with Hulme,[6] pace John Rothenstein who ascribes Lewis's geometrical style to Hulme's theories.[7] What Hulme did influence was Lewis's theorising about art. When he called Marinetti 'a Romantic and not a Realist' in his second article in The New Weekly,[8] Lewis had moved to the Hulmean view of Futurism.

For Hulme 'Romanticism' had an arrestingly simple yet distinctive meaning: it was nothing less than the expression in art of the humanistic conception of man which had prevailed since the Renaissance. In his view, humanism had developed in a straight line from the Renaissance to Rousseau, with its faith in man as a well of infinite

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1. All the Futurist works discussed above are reproduced in the catalogue, Futurismo: Exhibition of Italian Futurism (1972), of an exhibition at the Royal Academy, January to March, 1973.
2. Speculations, p. 109.
3. William C. Wees, 'England's Avant-Garde: The Futurist-Vorticist Phase', The Western Humanities Review, xxi (1967), p. 121 and ff.
4. Blasting and Bombardiering, p. 100.
5. Wyndham Lewis: Paintings and Drawings, p. 75.
6. Ibid, p. 73 and ff.
7. Modern English Painters: Lewis to Moore (1956), p. 31.
8. 'Automobilism', p. 13.

possibilities, optimistic about his progress and confident in his ability to subdue the natural world. Humanistic art reflected this self-confidence; it was naturalistic, expansive and what Wilhelm Worringer called 'empathetic'.[1] In an act of empathy the artist blithely projects his spirit into the natural world. What less self-assured ages saw as an awesome chaos, a flux threatening man's distinctness, seemed to the humanist familiar and solid, mirroring his own firm and optimistic conception of himself. When Hulme calls Futurism 'the deification of the flux'[2] he is noting the same self-confidence; for him, it is an empathetic form of art. (Indeed it was: Futurists wanted to bring the spectator into the centre of the picture,[3] which is precisely the effect that the artist's self-projection strives to achieve.) Hulme's phrase then is implicitly linking Futurism with the 'insipid optimism'[4] of the age of Shaw and Wells. For young men like Hulme, the cosy self-indulgence of Europe's faith in progress had by 1914 become oppressively heavy and stifling, a reaction expressed by Hulme in such images as 'slush', muddy' and 'mixed'.[5] Others felt much the same. Pound characterised the age of Shaw and Wells as 'slosh'[6] and Lewis discovered that the 'atmosphere had become fuggy with all the greasy incense to Mr. Everyman'.[7] Hulme found Western humanism wanting by contrast with the refreshing, 'stark uncompromising bleakness' of Indian thought,[8] and Western naturalism decadent by contrast with the geometrical bareness and hardness of Egyptian and African art. Perhaps Hulme's chief contribution to modern British art is that he linked the Oriental and primitive styles with the new taste for the 'austere, mechanical, clear cut, and bare'[9] evident in the work of a few contemporary

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1. Hulme freely acknowledged that his central distinction between 'empathetic' and 'geometrical' art was 'practically an abstract of Worringer's views'. Speculations, p. 82.
2. Speculations, p. 94.
3. Futurist Art and Theory, p. 52.
4. Speculations, p. 93.
5. Ibid, pp. 80, 6, 7, 75.
6. The Letters of Ezra Pound, p. 296.
7. Blasting and Bombardiering, p. 102.
8. Speculations, pp. 80-81.
9. Ibid, p. 94.

British artists, thereby giving this mechanical art a vision of its traditions and its place in history. 'Austerity and bareness' were the qualities he admired in the work of Epstein and Lewis, and these, Hulme emphasised, were the 'exact opposite'[1] of Futurism.

By portraying the austere mechanical forms of painters like Edward Wadsworth, Frederick Etchells, David Bomberg and himself as a specifically Anglo-Saxon or 'Northern' form of art, Lewis was able to define his movement against Futurism. The English were 'the inventors of this bareness and hardness', he wrote in BLAST, 'and should be the great enemies of Romance. The Romance peoples will always be, at bottom, its defenders' (i, 41). This was a theme he had already touched on, in order to stir his countrymen out of their romantic sloth, in his first article on Marinetti; in the second, it became a somewhat jingoistic weapon against Marinetti: 'England practically invented this civilisation that Signor Marinetti has come to preach to us about. While Italy was still a Borgia - haunted swamp of intrigue, England was buckling on the brilliant and electric armour of the modern world, and sending out her inventions and new spirit across Europe and America.'[2] Another hint in the first article was to find its way into BLAST: the idea that English artists should attempt to find an exact expression of their 'Northern' character.[3] 'The art for these climates,' the Vorticists asserted, 'must be a northern flower' (i, 36). This is a note which cannot be found in any of the fragments left us by T. E. Hulme, but it is a central theme in the writings of Worringer, the inspirer of Hulme's lecture on modern art. In Abstraktion und Einfühlung (1907), and more fully in Formprobleme der Gotik (1912), Worringer contrasts the classical humanism of early Southern European art with the gothic formalism which flourished in the North before the Renaissance. The obvious dissimilarities in the two styles he puts down in part to the different relations of Southern and Northern artists to their respective natural environments, due principally to differences in

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1. Speculations, p. 94.

2. 'Automobilism', p. 13.

3. 'A Man of the Week: Marinetti', p. 329.

climate:

> The Northern peoples experienced within a harsh and unyielding nature the resistance of this nature, their isolation within it, and they confronted the things of the outer world and their appearance full of disquiet and distrust. No clear blue sky arched above them, no serene climate, no luxuriant vegetation surrounded them, to induce in them a world-revering pantheism. A repellent nature precluded the emergence of that secure sensuous instinct which is necessary before man can surrender himself to nature with confidence. The consequence was an inner disharmony.[1]

Whether Lewis went independently to Worringer or picked up his ideas second-hand is uncertain, yet the same conception of Northernness can be found in BLAST. The editor beseeches his fellow artists to 'ONCE MORE WEAR THE ERMINE OF THE NORTH' and actually complains that the English climate is not harsh and unyielding enough (i, 11-12)! Nevertheless, it produces sufficient inner disharmony to nourish the 'bitter Northern' humour of a Shakespeare and the 'solemn bleak' laughter of a Swift (i, 26). ('Tragic humour is the birthright of the North.' i, 38). Of course, BLAST is not idly petitioning the Deity for another Ice Age in Britain; it is a new austerity and bleakness of spirit which Lewis is calling for, that bitter spirit which led Northern man, according to Worringer, to abstract forms, rather than the naturalistic forms of the South.[2] Where Futurism, enshrining 'everything that is rubbishy puerile in the Latin temperament',[3] strove to mirror speeding forms naturalistically so that the spectator could share the artist's feverish excitements, Vorticism presented frozen, abstract forms, an art of icy tranquillity.

The Great London Vortex saw itself as the still point of the turning world. The Vorticist symbol was a cone spinning on a vertical axis. The motion of the periphery represented the chaotic multiplicity of the turning world into whose circle, as Pound expressed it, 'all experience rushes' (i, 53). At the apex, at 'the maximum point of energy', was the Vorticist: 'The Vorticist is at his maximum point of energy when stillest' (i, 148). The Vortex was still

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1. Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style, trans. Michael Bullock (1953), p. 107.
2. Ibid, p. 108.
3. 'Automobilism', p. 13.

because its artists sought not to re-enact the dynamism of the mechanical world, but to reduce it to its essential geometrical forms. Where the Futurists, creatures of the periphery, wholly accepted the 'objective world of mechanical industry', the Vorticists looked for 'the use it could be put to in art',[1] regarding it as mere raw material to be subsumed into an overriding design. Again, it was Hulme who first realised that the enthusiasm of English artists for machinary sprang from the possibilities it offered for design; he saw that their work was basically abstract, favouring the geometrical stability of a cube to that naturalism which strove to imitate the flux of natural appearance. And again, behind this contrast, lay Worringer's account of primitive, abstract art. 'Use', Lewis declared, 'is always primitive' (ii, 46). One of the defining insights of Vorticism was that the act of 'using' reality was more primitive than the act of imitating it.

Throughout BLAST Lewis keeps returning to the analogy between the Vorticist in industrial Britain and the savage in his jungle. The primitive artist, according to Worringer, is profoundly alienated from his world, suffering from a kind of agoraphobia, fear of the space which envelops him. The world is for him a chaos into which he dare not let his spirit wander pantheistically. Rather, his impulse is the opposite: to create some kind of personal permanence in the world, by shaping a non-vital, abstract order out of the formless void. Like the primitive artist, the Vorticist lives in a jungle, but a jungle built from steel: 'It cannot be said that the complication of the Jungle, dramatic tropic growths, the vastness of American trees, is not for us. For, in the forms of machinery, Factories, new and vaster buildings, bridges and works, we have all that, naturally, around us' (i, 40). The Vorticist too is alienated from his surroundings; England, he clearly recognises, is the least appealing place in Europe for the artist to live in. But precisely because it is the 'Siberia of the mind', England is the most likely place to support a renaissance of abstract art (i, 146). Elsewhere, the Worringer-Hulme thesis is even more explicitly developed:

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1. The Caliph's Design, p. 29.

> We hear from America and the Continent all sorts of disagreeable things about England: 'the unmusical, anti-artistic, unphilosophic country'.
> We quite agree.
> ...
> This is why England produces such good artists from time to time.
> ...
> The art-instinct is permanently primitive.
> In a chaos if imperfection, discord, etc., it finds the same stimulus as in Nature.
> The artist of the modern movement is a savage...: this enormous jangling, journalistic, fairy desert of modern life serves him as Nature did more technically primitive man (i, 32-33).

Where Marinetti thrilled to the fairy desert of modern life in London,[1] the Vorticist was conscious of its ugliness and vulgarity. But his was more than a mild distaste for the technological wasteland; the Vorticist experienced a real 'discord' between himself and the 'chaos of imperfection' surrounding him. The implications of this 'discord' were far-reaching and consciously revolutionary. Hulme was the champion of a new pessimistic view of the world; Lewis, the prophet of a new coldness of spirit. In the words of one of Lewis's war-time personae, the man who is 'not content with the approximations and self-deceptions of the majority', the man who faces reality, exiles himself on 'the plane of exasperation and restlessness'.[2] No longer acceptable were the escapist illusions of the preceding century: the comforting harmony of the Hegelian cosmos, the consoling pantheism of the Romantics and the human, all-too-human 'God's in His Heaven' of the Victorians. Lewis's was a violent, 'wrong-headed universe',[3] as much a chaos as the world of Worringer's primitive man. The austere note is recognisably Nietzsche's whose unflinching consciousness of the void at the heart of things makes itself felt in the pessimism of Hulme and Lewis.[4] 'The general character of the

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1. Wees, 'England's Avante-Garde', p. 119.
2. 'Imaginary Letters (Six Letters of William Bland Burn to his Wife)', The Little Review, iv (1917), p. 19.
3. Blasting and Bombardiering, p. 29.
4. Both David S. Thatcher, Nietzsche in England: 1890-1914: The Growth of a Reputation (Toronto, 1970) and Patrick Bridgwater, Nietzsche in Anglosaxony: A Study of Nietzsche's Impact on English and American Literature (Leicester, 1972), trace the influence of Nietzsche on Hulme and Lewis through their association with the New Age circle of Orage and others. Both see the new demands for 'bareness' and 'hardness' as a reflection of Nietzsche's austerity: Thatcher, p. 255 and ff., and Bridgwater, p. 133.

world', wrote Nietzsche in La Gaya Scienza, a book Lewis admired,[1] 'is to all eternity chaos'.[2] Lewis in turn attributed the Nietzschean void to Darwin's 'notion of a hopeless and meaningless struggle'.[3] If so, Nietzsche was the mediator to Lewis's generation of one of the master-currents of the age. According to John Lester, the Darwinian nightmare of 'Nature, red in tooth and claw' prophetically dreamed by Tennyson nine years before the Origin of Species,[4] continually haunted that Journey Through Despair which was British literary culture in the years 1880 to 1914.[5] Standing close to the heart of that culture, the Vorticist felt himself nearer the primeval jungle than the generations of artists immediately preceding him.

One expression of this feeling was the image of the artist as a predator. Worringer insisted that the primitive drive to abstract was not intellectual but volitional:[6] it was nothing else but an 'instinctive urge', a 'primal impulse'.[7] The impulse was to separate the art-object from the flux of being. Worringer's words convey the 'primal' force of the impulse: the primitive artist felt impelled to 'wrest', 'snatch' or 'tear' the object from its background.[8] In the same way, Lewis saw the artistic act as a strenuous act of will, 'like poisoning your business rival' as he described it in The Tyro.[9] For him too, echoing Schopenhauer, abstraction meant 'plucking' the object 'out of the stream'.[10] There is a faint analogy here with fishing. In the Vorticist period, the central image was of hunting:

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1. Rude Assignment, p. 120: 'That side of [Nietzsche's] genius which expressed itself in "La Gaya Scienza"... were among my favourite reading in those years on the Continent .'
2. The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche, x ['La Gaya Scienza'], trans. T. Common (Edinburgh, 1910), p. 152.
3. The Art of Being Ruled (1926), p. 125.
4. 'In Memoriam', LVI; the poem was published in 1850, Darwin's work in 1859.
5. John Lester, Journey Through Despair: Transformations in British Literary Culture, 1880-1914 (New Jersey, 1968), p. 37 and ff.
6. Abstraction and Empathy, pp. 15, 19.
7. Ibid, pp. 41, 44.
8. Ibid: 'wrest', pp. 37, 42, 44; 'snatch', p. 38; 'tear', pp. 21, 37.
9. The Tyro, ii (1921), p. 31.
10. Ibid, p. 34.

> We are proud, handsome and predatory.
> We hunt machines, they are our favourite game.
> We invent them and then hunt them down (i, 148).[1]

The metaphor is a recurring one in Lewis's prose; introducing his folio of drawings Thirty Personalities and a Self-Portrait (1932), for instance, he refers to himself, the artist, as a 'head-hunter'. But it is the Vorticist period in which the metaphor carries most significance. Where Pound, fresh from Imagism, proposed the more passive image of all experience rushing into the Vortex, Lewis characteristically stressed the volitional aspect of preying on external reality, of actively stalking and pouncing upon the raw materials to be assimilated into his Vorticist visions. The hunting image, moreover, was distinctively Lewis's. It perhaps needs to be emphasised that Lewis's predator was only distantly related - though the same violent Zeitgeist sired them both - to Marinetti's animale da preda. Marinetti might have called himself 'proud, handsome and predatory', but he would not have said 'we hunt machines'. The Futurist was mainly predatory in his love of war, and his machines were themselves wild beasts, extensions of his will to destroy the past. For Lewis on the other hand, the image referred to a phenomenon in the psychology of artistic creation: the Vorticist hunted machines for their austere geometrical shapes. Evidently this was not understood by some readers of the first number of BLAST. In the second, Lewis was forced to explain that the Vorticists were 'not cannibals'; their primitve head-dresses denoted 'aesthetic phenomena' (ii, 78-9). Hunting simply meant the act of seeking out a likely object and dragging it away from its natural context prior to abstraction, conveyed in imagery appropriate to a violent age.

Abstraction itself was analogous to the act of consuming, digesting and assimilating objects from the external world. BLAST proclaimed the 'voracity of Art' (i, 134). In a later Vorticist work, The Caliph's Design: Architects! Where is Your Vortex? (1919) Lewis sees London's architectural stupidity 'as relishable as a

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1. In the second number of BLAST Lewis mentions a group of artist called 'Carnivorists' (ii, 23), of whom I can find no trace. If there was such a school at the time, its beliefs would clearly be apposite here.

Limburger cheese' for the true artist, since 'a stupid form is for a painter the same food as a stupid man for a Gogol or for a Flaubert'.[1] The eating image may be partly visualised. The Vorticists wanted to feel the world's 'crude energy flowing through' them (i, 7), so that the open end of the cone can be conceived as a gaping mouth drawing all experience up into the Vortex. The essential thing is the movement of external reality into the artist. Vorticists were artists who 'devoured Nature to feed a restless Monster of Design within them'.[2] In BLAST Lewis counselled prospective Vorticists to internalise the world:

> There is Yourself: and there is the Exterior World, that fat mass you browse on.
> You knead it into an amorphous imitation of yourself inside yourself (ii, 91, my italics).

The 'likeness' of the artist is the geometrical design into which he assimilates the exterior world. The process takes place inside him because 'Intrinsic beauty is in the Interpreter and Seer, not in the object or content' (i, 7). Indeed, reality itself is 'in the artist, the image only in life' (i, 135). Just as the symbolist 'holds that human imagination actively constructs the world we perceive',[3] so the Vorticist holds that reality centres on the artist. For the Vorticist too, the artist is an heroic seer, whose own self determines the truth of things in a region beyond good and evil: 'There is one Truth, ourselves, and everything is permitted' (i, 148). The world is nothing more than food for the artist's voracious will, consumed, in the words of Max Stirner, 'to quiet the hunger of [his] egoism'.[4] The Vorticist's self-assertive egoism was not proclaimed in vacuo. It was always paraded against that submissive, empathetic art which limply surrendered to the external world: Vorticism and Naturalism were contrasted as 'masculine' and 'feminine' forms of art.

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1. The Caliph's Design, pp. 12-18.
2. 'Prevalent Design, I, Nature and the Monster of Design', The Athenaeum, (1919), p. 1230, my italics.
3. Richard Ellmann and Charles Feidelson, Jr., The Modern Tradition: Backgrounds of Modern Literature (New York, 1965), p. 7.
4. The Ego and His Own: The Case of the Individual Against Authority, trans. Steven T. Byington (New York, 1963), p. 296. William Wees makes out a good case in his Vorticism, p. 185, for discerning Stirner's influence on Lewis in this period.

Vorticism was masculine insofar as it emphasised the role of the active, shaping will in the creative process. In The Caliph's Design Lewis contrasts two possible artistic attitudes: 'These attitudes can be approximated to the roles of the sexes.... An artist can Interpret, or he can Create. There is for him, according to his temperament and kind the alternative of the Receptive attitude or the Active and Changing one'.[1] A few lines below, the case of Roger Fry is cited as an example par excellence of the receptive approach. Lewis had of course taken his leave from Fry's Omega Workshops in October 1913 after a notorious squabble which ended with Lewis publicly accusing Fry of dishonesty towards individual Omega artists. The document in which the accusation was made, a Round Robin to prominent members of the London art-world, shows how early Lewis had connected Fry with effeminacy in art. Fry's 'Idol is still Prettiness', the author, by then at the height of his enthusiasm for Futurism, contemptuously noted, 'with its mid-Victorian languish of the neck'. Lacking in robust artistic instinct themselves, the Bloomsburies had to look for 'modern talent' to do the 'rough and masculine work'.[2] In a few months these rough and masculine artists formed the core of the Vorticist group. Their masculinity resided in their plastic self-assertiveness towards 'wild Mother Nature' whose 'feminine contours' they castigated in BLAST as an 'Unimaginative insult to MAN' (i, 19). By the same token they blessed the hair-dresser as a plastic artist for attacking Mother Nature and producing clean-cut shapes (i, 25). (Not afraid to take his own medicine, Lewis had his hair cut in 1914 and shed much of his bohemian outfit for a tailored business suit!)[3] In 1912 Laurence Binyon, an associate of Lewis's had described 'sitting down before Nature' as an act of 'passivity'.[4] Characteristically, Lewis went further and associated it with unmanly weakness; it was 'the typical cowardly attitude of those

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1. The Caliph's Design, p. 63.
2. Letters, p. 49.
3. This is pointed out in an unpublished memoir by Kate Lechmere, lent to me by the author. Miss Lechmere advanced the money for the suit.
4. 'The Return of Poetry', Rhythm i (1912), pp. 1-2.

who have failed with their minds' (i, 129). By the middle of 1914 the charge of cowardice was already very significant. The same kind of significance lay in blessing the hairdresser on the eve of an age in which the patriot would be known by his short-back-and-sides. Like the Futurists the Vorticists tended to be patriots, joining up as soon as possible after the outbreak of hostilities. They were also anti-pacifists. Hulme and Lewis attacked Bertrand Russell's position vehemently,[1] and when in 1920 Clive Bell damned Lewis's exhibition 'Guns' with faint praise,[2] Lewis retorted that 'the military character of the spectacle is alone sufficient to vex and disturb him' as Bell 'had no hand in marshalling it - not even that of the non-com. barking at its heels.'[3] To a large extent, the war-like aspect of the Vorticists' masculinity defined itself against Bloomsbury. But it was also part of a Spartan assault on the easy self-indulgence involved in empathetic art. Worringer had regarded naturalism as 'objectified self-enjoyment'[4] and Lewis followed him in portraying the naturalist as a 'Pleasure-Man' who needed an ascetical 'course of egotistical hardening' (i, 132-134). By contrast, Vorticism saw itself as a severe, no-nonsense aesthetic which 'does not suck up to Life', but lets 'Life know its place in a Vorticist Universe!' (i, 148). The overtones of flirting and promiscuity in the image of 'sucking up to' are quite intended. As far as the whore Life was concerned, the Vorticists preferred to devote themselves to the frigid geometrical purity of Art.

For the 'Northern' Vorticist Life was a 'swamp' (i, 63) from which he stood coldly aloof. According to Arghol, hero of Enemy of The Stars, Life is that which soils the soul's solitude, scatters 'filth' on the superman's 'frosty' loneliness (i, 70-71). Naturally

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1. T. E. Hulme, 'The Kind of Rubbish We Oppose' (1916) in Further Speculations By T. E. Hulme, ed. Sam Hynes (Minneapolis, 1955), pp. 179-182. Lewis, in The Ideal Giant (1917), p. 22, attacks the statement 'We are the civilisation for which you are fighting', a statement he identifies in Blasting and Bombardiering, p. 185, as that of a famous Bloomsbury artist.
2. The Athenaeum, (1920), p. 312.
3. 'Mr. Clive Bell and "Wilcoxism"', The Athenaeum, (1920), p. 349.
4. Abstraction and Empathy, p. 28.

the Vorticist must have some kind of intercourse with the world, but this is strictly prostitution , defined by bodily necessity: 'Life' is a 'brothel' in which the artist discharges himself periodically; his aim is to keep himself 'pure for non-life, that is Art' (i, 148). Among the artists the Vorticist is distinguished by his spiritual purity, his 'primitive detachment' (i, 141) from the spirit of the world. He may be a predator, but he is a cold-blooded, detached one, dwelling apart in the 'silence and purity' of the mind (i, 134) - a harsh, non-terrestrial landscape of geometrical arcs and ovoids. By contrast the naturalist lives in a state of spiritual 'promiscuity' (i, 141) with the swampy, chaotic flux of Life. Empathy was for Lewis the spirit of darkness. The reverberations of this note carried far beyond the theory of art.

The Vorticist's refusal to let his spirit wander forth to embrace and mix with the polluted spirit of Life went with an assault on romantic sexuality. In Guerra Sola Igiene del Mondo Marinetti had attacked 'Amore' as a 'malattia', a sickness. His principal target was the conventional figure of romance, 'la donna, concepita come unico ideale, divino serbatoio d'amore.' In place of romantic love Marinetti wished to put healthy and natural coitus, indulged in 'contatte femminili, rapidi e disinvolti', sexual encounters swift and casual.[1] This was very much the code of sexual ethics advocated, and to some extent followed, in Lewis's circle in 1914. Most notorious in following it was T. E. Hulme, who frequently enjoyed 'quick physical satisfactions' with shop-girls.[2] Pound, though married in 1914, also took the Vorticist line on romance when he lampooned those who 'complain in delicate and exhausted metres / That the twitching of three abdominal nerves / Is incapable of producing a lasting Nirvana' (i, 48). Unfortunately, such robust antiromanticism as this all too often degenerated into antifeminism. The tendency can be seen in the First Futurist Manifesto when Marinetti proclaimed 'le mépris de la femme'. In Lewis's early writings like 'The Code of A Herdsman' (1917) women are the 'arch conjuring trick'.[3] The

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1. Opere di F. T. Marinetti, ii, pp. 250-258.
2. Alun R. Jones, The Life and Opinions of T. E. Hulme (1960), p. 119.
3. The Little Review, iv (1917), p. 6.

wife of William Burn Bland is consistently identified with the mindless herd; her twin functions are to satisfy her husband physically and to disgust him with his weaknesses.[1] At the Rebel Art Centre, founded shortly after the exodus from the Omega, these doctrines were put into practice, women being periodically outlawed. On one occasion Pound was told not to bring Dorothy.[2] On another occasion, the opening meeting, C. R. W. Nevinson said, 'Let's not have any of these damned women', only to be told sheepishly by Lewis that the money for the Centre had been put up by a woman, Kate Lechmere![3] William Wees sees the anti-feminine sentiment evident at the Rebel Art Centre as a reaction against the Omega Workshops, where women played a significant role.[4] This may be true as far as it goes, but the roots of antifeminism went much deeper, reaching into the Vorticist aesthetic. In an unpublished memoir, Kate Lechmere recalls Lewis's conviction that women should not be paid too much attention.[5] Just how much attention Lewis sometimes did pay in 1914 is revealed in a letter from his then-mistress, Mary Borden Turner:

> You have made me unhappy. You hurt me. I can't go on like this. You must be considerate and human. You must not tell me to come to John Lane's and then get drunk and go away without seeing me. You've no idea how these little episodes interfere with the current of primitive feeling. I could love you madly and give you pleasure if you'd take just a little trouble, to be courteous. You say I'm not primitive enough and I - good God. Your voice was horrid over the phone.[6]

This is what Futurist mépris de la femme looked like in practice. In fact, as is apparent in the references to primitive feeling, Lewis's sexual demeanour in 1914 was a logical consequence of an antiromantic aesthetic which portrayed the true artist as a cold-blooded savage. It is not degenerate, but ideal behaviour for a detached predator. In Tarr and the war-time stories, the Vorticist

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1. The Little Review, iv (1917), p. 19.
2. Wyndham Lewis, hereafter abbreviated in this context to 'W.L.', to Ezra Pound, n.d., ca. 1914, (Cornell).
3. John Rothenstein, Modern English Painters: Lewis to Moore, P. 28.
4. Vorticism, p. 68.
5. The memoir, mentioned above, lent to me by the author.
6. Mary Borden Turner to W.L., n.d., ca. 1914 (Cornell).

ideal is tested in the real world.

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What was the relationship between Wyndham Lewis and this elemental figure projected by BLAST, the Vorticist? On the one hand, the grammar of BLAST's assertions, 'We are...', suggests a straightforward identification. On the other hand, BLAST is nothing but one massive and elaborate manifesto, concerned to announce the principles of a revolution in art. 'We are...' therefore also carries the implication, 'The true antiromantic artist ought to be...', which means that the Vorticist is to some extent an ideal figure, an archetype compounded out of several powerful currents in Lewis's immediate artistic and literary environment, London in 1914. If at the same time he was Lewis, the Vorticist was in reality the archetypal antiromantic artist in Lewis, something of an ideal self. For W. B. Yeats, one of the functions of the mask was to embody this ideal self.[1] In Yeats's sense, the Vorticist was a mask, used by Lewis to appear before the London art-world in 1914.

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1. Richard Ellmann, Yeats: The Man and the Masks, (1961), p. 176.

CHAPTER II : TARR (1918) AND THE WAR-TIME STORIES: THE ARTIST AS PREY (i)

'He goes out on the female hunt; lodges in his trap, incidentally: now he is being slowly devoured by his prey.' 'The War Baby'.

Where BLAST had the Vorticist consuming Nature with scornful mastery, Tarr and the war-time stories[1] dramatise Nature's stubborn refusal to be assimilated passively into his designs. Tarr, Cantleman and Beresin all start out with the Vorticist's determination to teach Life its place in the universe. Each one approaches his mistress - women wear Nature's livery in these stories - with the sang-froid of the beast of prey, intending to appropriate her as a sexual object into his own system of physical appetites. In each case, however, he who lives by the law of the survival of the fittest discovers that his mate is in some unexpected way as fit, or even fitter. Far from using Nature for their own ends, Cantleman and Beresin sire children and are thereby themselves unwittingly swallowed up into the natural scheme of things. Unable to look upon feminine suffering with sufficient detachment, Beresin and Tarr betray a proneness to sympathy which exposes their animal egotism to the gravest dangers. In Tarr and the war-time stories, the would-be predator becomes his victim's prey.

The heroes of these stories in any case differ fundamentally from the ideal figure projected by a set of articles in a revolutionary aesthetic platform. As imaginative creations their psychological roots extend further, drawing not only upon Lewis's inventiveness,

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1. These are 'Cantleman's Spring Mate', first published in The Little Review, iv (1917), pp. 8-14, and 'The War Baby', published in Art and Letters, ii (1918-19), pp. 14-41. All references included in the text are to the reprints of these stories in Blasting and Bombardiering (1967), pp. 304-336.

but above all, since all three stories have an autobiographical basis, upon his own habitual consciousness of himself and the world. Like the Vorticist and the Herdsman, Tarr, Beresin and Cantleman are obvious personae of Lewis, but rather than dogmatically broadcasting the strength and the success of the Vorticist ideal, they also dramatise all of those elements of inadequacy, shabby sentimentality and complacency which fall short of it. As a result, the fictional heroes capture an aspect of Lewis largely overshadowed by the editor of BLAST: a more tentative and susceptible self, which must struggle for its existence in order to realise the vocation of artist in the world.

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BLAST had issued repeated warnings about Nature and Life. The artist who 'gets his nose nearer and nearer the surface of Life' may well find it 'nipped off if he is not careful, by some Pecksniff-shark'. That is, Life itself is something of a predator; to avoid its perils, the artist must keep at a suitable distance while pursuing it, at all times scrupulously detached. Lewis was acutely conscious of the precariousness of the artist's vocation; survival was 'all a matter of the most delicate adjustment between voracity of Art and digestive quality of Life'.[1] In part, these were straightforward warnings against the self-destruction facing any abstract artist who was tempted by the arch-heresy, Naturalism. Worringer had shown how the popular romantic concept of 'losing oneself' in empathy captured one of the profoundest fears of primitive men.[2] Lewis echoed him in BLAST when he described the African's unwillingness to 'allow his personality to venture forth' for fear that 'it would dissolve in vagueness of space'.[3] For Lewis, of course, the danger of spiritual dissolution was not peculiar to tribal Africans. The modern representational artist confronted precisely the same risk, since it is impossible to imitate Nature without 'becoming her'.[4]

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1. BLAST, i, p. 134.
2. Abstraction and Empathy, p. 24.
3. BLAST, i, p.141.
4. BLAST, ii, p. 45.

The ominous implications of becoming Nature were developed in a slightly later essay in which Lewis distinguished between abstract artists and those who 'offered their talents upon the altar of the Monster Nature; which talents [are absorbed] into the body of this mechanism'.[1] The artist then has the choice - a crucial one in Lewis's early writings - between consuming Nature or being consumed. Nor was the choice confined to the sphere of art. Any close contact with Life presented the same alternatives: masterful exploitation or self-immolation to a monstrous Nature. As 'Cantleman's Spring Mate' and 'The War Baby' show, all the hunger of Nature can be found in the female sex.

Cantleman and Beresin, the respective heroes of these stories, are among other things personae of the author. In each case, there are obvious autobiographical connections between creator and character. After Lewis joined up in March, 1916, he spent over a year training in a series of camps in the South of England before receiving his commission and accompanying his battery to France in May, 1917.[2] 'Cantleman's Spring Mate', first published in October, 1917,[3] is the tale of a young officer about to leave his English camp for the front. Not long after Lewis arrived in France he contracted trench fever and spent some time convalescing before rejoining his battery.[4] When 'The War Baby' appeared in the following year,[5] its hero was a young artillery subaltern recovering from a disease contracted at the front. In Beresin's case, the autobiographical connections extend further. He has been to a famous public school and has lived in Paris, where he gradually shook off 'the tenacious middle-class snobberies' of 'the public school idea'.[6] He 'had grown Parisian'

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1. 'Prevalent Design, I', The Athenaeum, (1919), p. 1230.
2. Letters, p. 77.
3. The issue of The Little Review in which it was to appear was withdrawn because of the censor's objections to Lewis's story. It was brought out later in the same year in London, together with 'The Ideal Giant' and 'The Code of a Herdsman'.
4. Letters, pp. 88-90; Blasting and Bombardiering, pp. 137-138.
5. In Art and Letters, ii (1918/19).
6. In Rude Assignment, pp. 112-114, Lewis tells how, under the spell of Paris, 'the bad effects' of his own public school education wore off, or were deliberately discarded'.

and 'had begun to cut a figure' before the world when the War 'harshly and suddenly burst upon him', and receiving 'a mixed welcome at his hands' (316).[1] Beresin too is ' a little literary', having succumbed, like Lewis, to La Gaya Scienza (317).[2] Not only are Cantleman and Beresin soldiers like their creator, they are also, like his primeval showman in The Wild Body stories, soldiers of humour. Cantleman's laugh is an expression of his animal being, analogous to the pig's grunt and the bird's cough (306), while Beresin's guffaw echoes menacingly around a hotel dining room affrighting the assembled bourgeoisie (319). Both wear the same grinning, 'insolent mask' with which Lewis, in the guise of the Herdsman, mocked the herd in 1917.[3]

In their attitudes to women, Lewis's war-time heroes conform strictly to the Futuro-Vorticist canon. For Beresin, a woman is 'an inferior, to be treated like all other inferiors' (329), with callous indifference. He has the Vorticist's disinclination to marry his soul to a maiden,[4] an unwillingness to let women anywhere near his higher faculties. Sharing Hulme's relish for lower-class women, Beresin settles for Tets, a buxom chamber-maid. By consigning her to 'the vulgarer sites and scenes contemptuously' he achieves a suitable aloofness and superiority: 'That she should in any way be appearing to share his finer life would have been inappropriate. He liked relegating her... to the places where coarse things prevailed' (330). Beresin emphasises his mépris de la femme by looking upon sex as something to be 'wallowed' in and his sexual partner as a 'fellow animal'. Likewise, the mate taken by Cantleman in a field near his camp is an animal; he notices

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1. For Lewis's own mixed feelings about the outbreak of War, see Blasting and Bombardiering, pp. 63-83. Like Beresin, he had only just begun to cut a figure before Mayfair when war was declared.
2. Lewis himself was indebted to La Gaya Scienza as W. Michel shows in Wyndham Lewis: Paintings and Drawings, p. 130.
3. 'The Code of a Herdsman', p. 3.
4. BLAST, ii, p. 91.

the 'animal fulness of the child-bearing hips, with an eye as innocent as the bird or the beast' (305). She is an appropriate mate for a man who strikes his fellow officers as an animal disguised as a soldier. Here they are somewhat mistaken. In Lewis's view, Cantleman is an animal precisely because he is a soldier; his uniform is a 'compliment to the animal' in him (306). Cantleman's bestiality expresses itself in war and sex quite indifferently. In both, his disposition is suitably predatory; he regards sexual intercourse as 'the devouring of his mate' (310). Beresin too approaches his love-making with an appropriate 'posture of seductive aggression', kissing Tets in order to 'keep fat'. He is a diner consuming a large ripe plum, or else a panther, 'giving the mink a preliminary lick before devouring his prey' (324-9). While writing these stories Lewis may have had at the back of his mind a passage from Samuel Butler's posthumously published Notebooks (1911) which he later cites in The Art of Being Ruled (1926), acknowledging its symbolic truth: 'I have often said that there is no true love', Butler begins, 'short of eating and subsequent assimilation'.[1] When he comes to comment on this image of love, Lewis immediately attributes it to 'the darwinian nightmare of the struggle for existence, operating on a sensitive mind'. Turning upon the same image, the sexual encounters in Lewis's war-time stories take place in a Darwinian world where dog cheerfully eats dog.

It is Lewis's central preoccupation in these stories to give shape to a view of Nature in which love and war, procreation and destruction, amount to much the same thing. The animals mating in the fields form the background to Cantleman's spring-time wanderings. Horses are finding their mares 'immensely appetising masses of quivering shiny flesh' and the sow is giving a 'sharp grunt of

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1. The Art of Being Ruled (1926), pp. 253-255. As early as 1904 Lewis was an avid reader of Butler. His taste may have been cultivated during his acquaintanceship with R. A. Streatfield, Butler's literary executor, who lent Lewis copies of Butler's works; see Letters, pp. 16-17. In Snooty Baronet, the hero poses as Butler.

sex-hunger' in appreciation of her hog. The metaphor being used is a well-worn one, except that Lewis is rejuvenating it with a literal vigour. Some animals showed their fondness for others when 'they killed and ate them' (304-5). The laws of Nature are of course brought to mind in order to illuminate Cantleman's situation; to suggest why, with the prospect of death before him, Cantleman begins to fancy his spring mate. His actual love-making is performed with the same 'impartial malignity' with which he later beats a German to death in the trenches (311). Just as mating and death intertwine in the fields, so the war awaiting him weaves itself into Cantleman's sexual desire. So inseparable are they that Cantleman's rudimentary feelings for his mate are expressed in metaphors of war. As a woman, Stella is part of Nature's 'treachery'; women are nothing but enemy agents to be 'treated as spies'. While he is seducing Stella he is consciously trying to outwit Nature; in a master-stroke of counter-attack he believes himself to be 'raiding the bowels of Nature' (310). Actually, since she has conceived, Cantleman has been ignominiously out-generalled, tricked into serving Nature's plans. Sexuality, in these stories, is itself warfare. Tets, in 'The War Baby', wears the livery of the god of war. She is 'the young lady of Mars Villa'. (Mars Villa Stands on Tewkesbury Avenue, and is so-named after the god Paynes [Pains?] - the village in which it is situated). Tests herself is some kind of retrospective embodiment of the spirit of the place. She is smouldering away with a flame, symbolising all those ancestral martial impulses which she unconsciously employs in love. Again, sensuality is expressed in images of battle: Tets is a 'retreating tank', but a slow and vulnerable one, replete with suggestive orifices: 'Her lips at all times in a lurid pout of love, set in a stagnant dream, lay at the opening of the cooing cavities of her contralto physique' (324-5). Not understanding the significance of her smouldering, Beresin is enticed by the lurid pout into an erotic ambush. The bed in which they lie is a 'battlefield', a microcosm of the Great War, except that Tets is only 'playing at dying' and her war is 'fruitful' (328). Tets too conceives, and

now Beresin begins to be 'devoured' (332) by Tets's flame. Instead of outmanoeuvring his quarry, the would-be hunter inevitably falls into Nature's trap.

Much of the interest of these war-time stories lies in the reversal by which the voracious male is himself ingested into the body of Nature. In each case, irony is generated from the discrepancy between the utterly self-regarding opportunism of the hero and the indifference of a wider Darwinian actuality. Yet there is an equally important difference between the two stories: Beresin is devoured, not simply by his involuntary recruitment into the process of generation, but by Tets herself:

> What a pass to have come to! He goes out on the female hunt; lodges in his trap, incidentally: now he is being slowly devoured by his prey. He finds himself toying absentmindedly with - what is this? A marriage ring! (332)

What snares him is his new way of regarding Tets: instead of the animal who is contemptuously consigned to the vulgarer sites, or the 'moving adult mass in the bed' whose sole function is to satisfy his raptorial lust, Tets has become a small figure sitting sideways on a seat, weeping like a child. The vision returns to him at the front:

> He saw the figure sitting sideways on the seat and crying. It was to this figure he wrote. That had been a sort of foreshadowing of the child. The moving adult mass in the bed, so much larger and more formidable, had cast up, as a parent does, the little dressed derelict crying on the platform, a temperate atom of everyday life. Tets was small and pathetic (331).

It is nothing less than sympathy - the deadly counterpart of empathy in art - which has inverted the world of the callous seductive aggressor. As a Nietzschean, he ought to have known that by giving himself over to 'the sight of one case of actual distress' he would be 'lost'.[1] The restructuring of his experience by sympathy robs Beresin of his predatory initiative. For Samuel Butler, one person eating another was a fitting image for the overmastering will by which the eater maintained his way of looking at things.[2]

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1. The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche, x['La Gaya Scienza'], p. 267.
2. The Notebooks of Samuel Butler (1926), p. 76.

The image has much the same force in Lewis's writings. By conceiving of Tets as 'small and pathetic', Beresin abandons his hard-boiled view of women, and at the same time implicitly surrenders that ruthlessly self-centred approach to the world proclaimed by BLAST. Forgetting that reality lies within, Beresin, like a romantic, capitulates to Life. In Tarr, the hero struggles tirelessly against much the same forces to maintain his Vorticist conception of reality.

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While Cantleman and Beresin are personae of Lewis, they are to some extent excused for falling short of the Vorticist ideal because they are comic figures who dramatise an important conflict without exploring its depths. The stories are nonetheless important since they suggest an organising pattern of images in Lewis's fiction of the period which helps to locate his central preoccupations in Tarr. Without question, Tarr is one of Lewis's major works. It was begun as early as 1907,[1] towards the end of 'an extraordinary love affair'[2] with his German fiancée, Ida. Judging by the sense of urgency which the problem of marriage still commands in the eventual novel, the early draft of Tarr which existed by 1910[3] must have drawn heavily on this unhappy liaison. What makes the novel particularly fascinating is that Lewis rewrote it in 1914-1915,[4] at the height of his fame as London's

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1. In the Prologue, dated 1915, to the 1918 Egoist edition of the novel, Lewis says that the novel was begun 'eight years ago' (p. ix), namely in 1907.
2. Letters, p. 18. The affair lasted until about 1908.
3. As his Letters, pp. 43 and 45, indicate, Lewis had finished a novel, other than his pot-boiler 'Khan and Company', by 1910. W. K. Rose concludes - correctly, I believe - that this was an early version of Tarr.
4. Rude Assignment p. 149. He rewrote it during the illness which prevented him from attesting until 1916.

arch-Vorticist. Autobiographical elements then, mix, and inevitably clash, with Vorticist theory; severe antifeminist sayings conceived at the Rebel Art Centre and shouted in the pages of BLAST are confronted with psychological realities; the ideal is tested against the actual. Tarr is very much a working-out, part of an attempt to come to terms with the diverse experiences of a decade.[1]

In his Prologue to the 1918 edition,[2] Lewis describes Tarr as 'one of the showmen of the author' (x). So enthusiastic is his showman that Lewis was forced to confess to Harriet Shaw Weaver, who was preparing to serialise the novel in The Egoist,[3] that Tarr was too much of a 'mouthpiece' of his own ideas.[4] At times, he is nothing else but Vorticism personified, a collation of images and dogmas from BLAST. Anastasya sees Tarr as a 'savage' (293), rightly, since he thinks of himself as 'the new animal', a successor to the superman (304). In the Prologue Lewis describes him as a 'primitive figure' who 'requires more energy than civilization provides' (x-xi). In appearance, Tarr mirrors Lewis in 1914-1915, sharing his Vorticist preference for short hair (4) and attire which produces sharp, geometrical contours: 'Tarr's white collar shone dazzlingly in the sun. - His bowler hat bobbed and cut clean lines as he spoke' (17).[5] These clean, harsh sartorial and physiological shapes, common in Lewis's drawings of himself,[6] reflect the mechanical forms upon which the Vorticist imagination habitually fed. Inside Tarr's head, the reader encounters a mind 'full of sinister piston-rods, organ-

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1. The love affair began about 1905 and Lewis began rewriting Tarr in 1914.
2. All references, included in the text, are to this edition. Lewis thought the revised 1928 edition much better because he had eliminated the carelessness of the original edition, and W. H. Pritchard, in Wyndham Lewis (New York, 1968), p. 30, follows him in preferring the later edition on literary grounds. The original edition is preferred here on historical grounds, because the 1928 edition injects later preoccupations. In chapter I, for example, where Bloomsbury artists are linked with a tirade against communism, Lewis has introduced a political perspective which was entirely absent from his thinking in 1914-1915.
3. The Egoist, iii (April, 1916) to iv (November, 1917).
4. Letters, p. 76.
5. In the first New Weekly article on Marinetti, p. 329, he refers to the attractions of the 'geometric blackness' of a bowler hat.
6. See, for example, plates 74 and 99 of Wyndham Lewis: Paintings and Drawings.

like shapes, heavy drills'(4). The paintings which emerge from such a mind display an 'invariable severity', an ascetic quality which is, as Tarr explains to Hobson, 'divorced from immediate life' (12). His artistic visions, like his passions, emerge from the 'frigid climate' of the mind (21), which has nothing to do with the bodily hotbed in which sensuality incubates. The artist's asceticism, like the monk's, has sex as its deadliest rival.

In the debate which takes place between Tarr and Hobson in the first chapter, Lewis is able to elaborate the antiromantic view of sex already incipient in BLAST. Hobson is a shabby and long-haired aesthete with 'the Bloomsbury stain' who is soon found staring with 'bright meditative sweetness down the boulevard' (7). Such self-projection into the distance, quite specifically anathematised in BLAST,[1] is meant to show that Hobson, for all his left-bank bohemianism, is nothing else but a romantic naturalist. It is an important prelude to the discussion of sexual appetite which immediately follows. When Hobson says, 'Surely, a man is his appetite' (7), he is stating the romantic position which Tarr has flatly contradicted:

> But then if it is the sex you are after, it does not say you want to identify your being with your appetite. Quite the opposite.... The condition of continued enjoyment is to resist assimilation. - A man is the opposite of his appetite (7).

In sexual affairs, the romantic is one who identifies his higher faculties - imagination is the man, according to Tarr - with his sensual desires; the lover who courts his woman without reserve, making over his whole being to an object outside of himself and thereby centering himself on the external world. That this is is no way to 'resist assimilation' is shown by the disastrous amorous career of Otto Kreisler.

Most commentators since have tended to share the view of Tarr first put forward by Pound in the Little Review that 'Kreisler is

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1. 'Everything absent, remote, requiring projection in the veiled weakness of the mind, is sentimental'; BLAST, i, p. 147.

the creation of the book. He is roundly and objectively set before us. Tarr is less clearly detached from his creator'.[1] Lewis himself thought that the book 'should have been called "Otto Kreisler", rather than "Tarr"'.[2] Hugh Kenner too, although he gives slightly different reasons, finds in the figure of Kreisler greater 'presence'; Tarr is a 'walking idea'.[3] In reality, Kreisler is much more of a walking idea. Not long after he is introduced he reveals the idea unambiguously. In response to avant-garde cafe talk about the nature of the beautiful, Kreisler turns to a girl at his side and demonstratively kisses her (80). In a later, parallel incident, Kreisler rapes Bertha while she is modelling for a picture which he is attempting to paint. Lewis does not deny the reader adequate explanation of these phenomena. Kreisler is confusing Life and Art: 'woman was the aesthetic element in Kreisler's life' (93). That is, for him beauty is in the external world, not in the artist, which is nothing but rank naturalism. Naturalism, as BLAST made plain, involves self-surrender, so Kreisler dutifully surrenders himself. Not content with a running exegesis of events, Lewis conjures up the process as it is supposed to happen in Kreisler's mind; he has only just met Anastasya in a restaurant, but it is long enough for Kreisler to decide that 'he would be her dog! Lie at her feet!.... He would humbly follow her up, put himself at her disposal, not be exigent' (95). Only an imperfect understanding of Lewis's thought could see 'presence' in such a sacrifice of characterisation to ideology, for what relationship this passage could have with psychological events which might conceivably occur within a human mind is difficult to see. It is simply Vorticist invective set in motion and insinuated into poor Kreisler's skull. Much the

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1. Reprinted in The Literary Essays Of Ezra Pound (1960), p. 425. In the most recent book on Lewis, Robert T. Chapman, Wyndham Lewis: Fictions and Satires (1973), p. 80, Kreisler is described as 'perhaps Lewis's greatest creation'.
2. Rude Assignment, p. 151.
3. Wyndham Lewis, (1954), p.33.

same can be said of those passages in which, as a result of giving himself to Anastasya, Kreisler loses all inner direction and becomes a machine: 'He compared himself to one of those little steam toys that go straight ahead without stopping; that anyone can take up and send puffing away in the opposite direction' (111). It is as a soulless machine that Kreisler rapes Bertha, careers madly about a dance-floor, fights a duel and finally commits suicide. The root cause of these events has been suggested at the beginning. Not long before he dedicates himself to Anastasya, Kreisler connects her with the lobster salad which he is eating. 'How could that be?' he asks (89). After the rape the answer is given: throughout he has been 'serving' his 'appetite' (193). Kreisler embodies the romantic folly of identifying his being with his sexual appetite.

Where Kreisler's German romanticism induces him to sacrifice himself to the external world, Tarr struggles to internalise his world. Immediately juxtaposed to the rape is a scene in which Tarr is discovered assimilating a new room: 'It was the habitual indigestion of Reality. He was very fond of reality. But he was like a man very fond of what did not agree with him. It usually ended, however, by his assimilating it' (193). This is imaginative digestion, outward reality being subsumed into the inner Reality of the artist's vortex. Nothing could be more remote from his sexual appetite. As a Vorticist, of course, a 'Panurgic- Pessimist, drunken with the laughing gas of the Abyss', he clearly recognises that the external world which claimed Kreisler is a dangerous chaos and sex - its prime prime symbol in the novel - is an enveloping 'ooze' (8-9). To 'resist assimilation' he negotiates sexual experience like an 'alligator' (9), blithely swimming through its slimy depths, still imaginatively predatory but content to dally with the filth in which he finds himself immersed. In short, he learns to confine sex to bodily satisfaction, so inwardly aloof from its manifestations that only 'one solitary thing is left facing a woman. - That is his sex, a lonely phallus' (12). Tarr's formula for survival as an artist is the stoic's indifference.

Indifference is a straightforward matter of antiromantic theory which Tarr formulates with effortless brilliance to Hobson, Butcher or to anyone who will listen. When he visits his German

'fiancée', Bertha, in order to test it, however, his 'famous feeling of indifference' (35) is soon found to be extremely precarious. In fact, as Lewis's letters between 1904 and 1908 show, the visit focuses several of the issues raised by his own engagement to Ida years earlier. The question obsessing Tarr in the second chapter, 'Ought I to marry the Lunken?'(20) preoccupied his creator for at least two years. Enmeshed in the unwonted complexity which the thought of marriage wove round him in his twenty-fourth year, Lewis was anything but indifferent. As he explained to his mother, he was 'in an impasse - a moral cul de sac' where he could neither marry Ida nor drift away without 'infinite pain'.[1] Lewis's doubts about Ida were aroused by the way her hopes of marriage lept ahead of his own commitment. 'Ida has done another rather embarrassing thing,' Lewis complained to his mother, 'she wrote to Lilly, - the gal that gives her the money, - telling about her prospective marriage, and is now given the money for another 2 years - 3 years more, in all: - it's really rather a temptation to marry her, even for this mess of potage. - But I think with this money you give me for the moment, and what I must earn in the near future whatever it may be, I should be freer and happier for the moment, and infinitely freer afterwards'.[2] It was Lewis's freedom which Ida endangered. His letters portray her as extremely possessive. Evidently sharing Bertha's conviction that a man ought to visit his fiancée almost daily, Ida often abused Lewis for his absences.[3] Behind all his objections and uncertainties lurked the same kind of threat; that in marriage Ida would annexe him:

> I couldn't, quite simply call my soul my own if I were married to her... and wish to call my soul very much my own.[4]

In chapter 3, Tarr plays the part of a young artist who wishes to

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1. Letters, p. 26.
2. Ibid, p. 27
3. Ibid, p. 37.
4. Ibid, p. 33.

call his soul his own and Bertha, the fiancée who wants to possess it.

Soon after Tarr enters Bertha's room his indifference comes under heavy assault. The purpose of the visit is for Tarr to parade before himself, and to a lesser extent Bertha, the self-conquest which he has so far achieved only in monologues with acquaintances. The parade begins when he avoids the expected kiss, instead putting his hand on her hip, deliberately focusing attention on her purely physical attractions. Tarr is craftily attempting to impose upon Bertha the views he expressed to Hobson simply by acting as if they were already realised. He emphasises the body by 'going straight to his eating place' (38). Once ensconced there, however, the room's cloying romanticisms, the pictures and statues which reflect Bertha's spirit, begin to close in on him as powerful reminders of how intractible a familiar world can be to a new state of mind. Most powerful of all is his photograph, 'calmly, with an air of permanence, taking up its position on her writing-table, just as he was preparing to vanish for good' (40). In every corner of the room there are symbols of Bertha's 'cunning efforts to retain him' (44). To some extent, Tarr is confronting the same treacherous forces as Cantleman and Beresin. Bertha, with a body 'strung to heavy motherhood' (37), represents Nature's own cunning efforts to snare male freedom in the traps of paternity and marriage. But in Tarr Lewis is much more interested in exploring the spiritual trap of a love which, like Ida's,is stiflingly possessive. Everything about Bertha supports Tarr's conclusion, suggested by Lewis's own experience and probably his reading of La Gaya Scienza,[1] that love is 'either possession or a possessive madness' (62). Again, Lewis invigorates his spiritual pathology

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1. Op. cit., p. 52: 'The love of the sexes, however, betrays itself most plainly as the striving after possession: the lover wants the unconditioned, sole possession of the person longed for by him; he wants just as absolute power over her soul as over her body; he wants to be loved solely, and to dwell and rule in the other soul as what is highest and most to be desired.'

with Samuel Butler's physiological image. Bertha's pet name for Tarr is 'Sorbert', or 'Sorbet', a corruption of the English 'sherbet' (37), which is sorbet in French. The full significance of the name only emerges later when Bertha ambiguously announces, 'Vous êtes mon goût, Sorbet' (43): Tarr too has been sized up as a morsel by his mate. In fact, he has already been appropriated into Bertha's world as 'material for "arrangement"' (43). At the time of their first meeting Bertha's romantic past seized upon Tarr, dragging him out of the objective world and into her girlhood dreams:

> Through girlhood her strong senses had churned away at her, and claimed an image from her gentle and dreamy mind. In its turn the mind had accumulated its impressions of men, fancies from books and conversations, and made its hive. So her senses were presented with the image that was to satisfy and rule them. They flung themselves upon it as she had flung herself upon Tarr (42).

Tarr is a hapless victim of Bertha's romantic mind, a ghost-like cypher caught in a 'phantasmagoria' all the more insidious because Bertha's is what passes in most minds for the 'ordinary world':

> He had just come there to see if he could turn his back on it. That appeared at first sight a very easy matter. That is why he so far had not succeeded in doing so. Never put on his mettle, his standing army of will was not sufficient to cope with it. But would this little room ever appear worth turning his back on? It was the purest distillation of the commonplace. He had become bewitched by its strangeness. It was the height of the unreal. Bertha was like a fairy that he visited, and 'became engaged' to in another world, not the real one. It was so much the ordinary world that for him with his out-of-the-way experience it was a phantasmagoria (41).

Since 'Reality is in the artist, the image only in life', Bertha's room, a symbol of all that is 'commonplace' or objectively real to minds fed on romanticism, can be nothing else for the Vorticist than a dangerous illusion. Tarr's difficulty is to keep alert his own sense of the real in the midst of a dream-world so familiarly 'ordinary' that it keeps dulling his defences. His greatest temptation is to underestimate the insatiable vortex of Bertha's illusion.

The conflict between Bertha and Tarr in chapter 3 is an internecine struggle between two antagonistic illusions, Bertha's romantic love and Tarr's antiromantic indifference. Each tries to drag the other into his own imaginative world. As Tarr recognises when Bertha 'shows signs of annexing [his] illusion': 'We are really

the whole time playing a game of grabs and dashes at each other's fairy vestment of Imagination' (60). So stealthy is Bertha in undermining Tarr's imaginative construction of the situation that he is forced to give 'a hasty glance at his "indifference" to see whether it were safe and sound' (39). Tears are her chief ruse, and when her distress at his apparent truculence begins to make artful demands on his compassion, Tarr realises that he is 'at a disadvantage because of his listless emotion' (49). The over-riding concern for inward freedom which impels Tarr to rouse 'his standing army of will' into a semblance of self-mastery underlines in the novel what Eliot called 'the thought of the modern';[1] Tarr confronting Bertha's tears anticipates by almost thirty years Jean-Paul Sartre's Mathieu in L' Age de Raison (1945) contending against être-pour-autrui, represented by his pregnant mistress Marcelle. No less conscious than Mathieu of the issues at stake in the struggle, Tarr is nonetheless more impulsively brutal, drawing Bertha 'ungraciously and roughly into his arms' (45) as a dramatic prelude to the violence which Bertha must suffer in his imagination before he can be free of her. While she is still suffering, Tarr seeks to gain control of himself by summoning such repugnant images of her as to check any further surges of compassion. She weeps 'like a drowning rat'; her 'wail' is 'like the buzzing on a comb covered with paper'; she rushes towards Tarr's face 'like the sightless clammy charging of a bat'. Later she becomes a dog whom Tarr is taking for a walk (45-6). Finally he reduces her, in a process rather like the 'depersonalization' described by R. D. Laing[2] to

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1. 'Tarr', The Egoist, v (1918), p. 106.

2. The Divided Self: An Existential Study in Sanity and Madness (1965), p. 46 and ff. The way in which Lewis's portrayal of Tarr in this scene anticipates Laing's descriptions of 'ontological insecurity' is quite remarkable. In personal relationships, the ontologically insecure person sees the other as a risk: 'The risk consists in this: if one experiences the other as a free agent, one is open to the possibility of experiencing oneself as an object of his experience and thereby of feeling one's own subjectivity drained away. One is threatened with the possibility of becoming no more than a thing in the world of the other, without any being for oneself. In terms of such anxiety, the very act of experiencing the other as a person is felt as virtually suicidal'. Tarr's 'indifference': 'Utter detachment and isolation are regarded as the only alternative to a clam- or vampire-like attachment in which the other person's life-blood is necessary for one's own survival, and yet is a threat to one's survival'.

the level of the sub-human: 'She lay there like an animal, he thought, or some one mad, a lump of half-humanity' (47). Tarr completes the solipsistic circle of his disgust by drawing strength 'from the contemplation of Bertha' (48). All that remains is for him to flaunt his detachment before her by acting a disengaged professional role, conferring upon their relationship the image of 'two partners, perhaps comfortable wine merchants, going through their books' (52). Momentarily, Tarr succeeds in subsuming Bertha into his own way of looking at things.

Lewis's fiction, however, unlike his polemical pamphlets, confronts a world which will not tamely yield itself up to the artist's imagination. Casting aside Tarr's image of two business partners, Bertha insists on her own reality so forcefully that by the time Tarr leaves her it is with a sense of failure:

> Closing the door quickly, with a petty carefulness, he crossed the passage, belittled and guilty. He did not wish to escape this feeling. It would be better to enhance it. For a moment it occurred to him to go back and offer marriage. It was about all he had to offer. He was ashamed of his only gift! But he did not stop, he opened the front door and went downstairs. Something raw and uncertain he seemed to have built up in the room he had left. How long would it hold together? Again he was acting in secret, his errand and intentions kept to himself. Something followed him like a restless dog (64).

Unlike the end of the novel, where Lewis gratuitously allows his hero the indulgence of marrying Bertha with utter detachment on the grounds that she is pregnant with Kreisler's child - a 'solution' which evades everything - Part I ends with a poise which does some justice to the complexity of real life. Here Tarr is caught up in the baffling many-sidedness of human attachments, trapped, like his creator in a moral cul-de-sac in which the alternatives of leaving and offering marriage are not only painful but unlikely to solve anything. All suggestion of reductive polemic is transcended when Tarr succumbs to Bertha's world, symbolised by her room:

> This room he was wronging, and left it in a different way. She seemed, too, so humble in it, or through it. The appeal of the <u>little</u> again. If he could only escape from <u>scale</u>. The price of preoccupation with the large was this perpetual danger from the <u>little</u>. He wished he could look coldly on mere littleness, and not want to caress it and protect it when it was human (63).

What is significant is the precise recurrence of the phenomenon which

brought Beresin's downfall; like him, Tarr is vulnerable the moment he comes face-to-face with littleness. Even with our sketchy knowledge of Lewis's feelings for his German fiancée - filtered as they are in the distorting lens of correspondence with a disapproving mother[1] - it is still possible to detect autobiographical resonances in his heroes' weakness for women en petit : Lewis's own pet name for Ida was 'the Kleiner'.[2]

Seen alongside the letters then, Tarr and the war-time stories suggest a side of Lewis obscured by the raptorial Vorticist rampaging through the pages of BLAST. They suggest a less severe and masterful self, a Lewis who was as susceptible as anyone else to the vortices of others, and to all the heterodox sympathies of romanticism. The artist who is preyed upon by Nature, women and his own romantic feelings is of course an unofficial figure, only to be discovered in Lewis's writings under the nominal camouflage afforded by fiction.

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Tarr's chance meeting with Hobson at the beginning of the novel reveals yet another kind of threat to the artist. The moment of confrontation itself is such a 'defeat' that the disgruntled mind, recoiling from the absurdity of the social conventions which keep 'their bodies shuffling and gesticulating there' (2),

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1. 'I always thought the association was unwise', wrote Mrs. Lewis to her son, 'even in the beginning, for you both. Personally, I like Ida, and apart from you, I shall always think her a good and generous-minded girl; it is her misfortune to be very tactless, and as I have told you always, it is very rare to find people of two nationalities able to live together amicably. National characterstics, however cosmopolitan one may feel oneself, are apt to assert themselves unpleasantly under the strain of daily and intimate companionship.' Anne Stuart Lewis to W.L., 27 June, 1907, (Cornell).
2. Letters, pp. 21, 23.

detaches itself from the scene rather like the 'unembodied self' described by R. D. Laing.[1] Much of Tarr's discomfort seems to be straightforward embarrassment at the awkwardness of the encounter. He is socially 'gauche' (3), sharing the 'gaucherie' and 'wooden responses' of Lewis himself in his youth.[2] Tarr's banter, when he can manage it, is 'unwieldy' (5), underlining his lack of social machinery, and indeed all machinery, 'but the cumbrous one of the the intellect' (4). Only when he is revving that, menacingly, can Tarr to some extent relax. Hobson by contrast is the epitome of social ease; he is relaxed, laughs loudly in the clubman's manner and belongs to an established coterie. So much so, that Hobson is a 'crowd' rather than an 'individual', and full of the crowd's cosy self-confidence:

> But Hobson, he considered, was a crowd. - You could not say he was an individual. - He was a set. He sat there, a cultivated audience. - He had the aplomb and absence of self-consciousness of numbers, of the herd - of those who know they are not alone. - Tarr was shy and the reverse by turns. He was alone. The individual is rustic (11).

In their turbulent meeting, Hobson stands for the solidarity of the herd, Tarr for the shyness of the solitary.

Throughout the novel, Tarr's shyness receives a good deal of attention. At times it is dismissed as an English trait (50), but more often it seems to be implicated in the very vocation of the artist. As Tarr explains to Anastasya: 'Art is the refuge of the shy' (230). Since the detached artist necessarily dwells in the spiritual wilderness of the hermit, social intercourse finds him naked and unprepared: 'The fetish within - soul-dweller that is strikingly like wood-dweller... was not often enough disturbed to have had sylvan shyness mitigated.... Sometimes Tarr's cunning idol, aghast at its nakedness, would manage to borrow or purloin some shape or covering from elegantly draped visitor' (3). His need to borrow a garment touches on one of the master-themes in

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1. The Divided Self, p. 65 and ff.
2. Rude Assignment, p. 118.

early modern literature, elaborated by Nietzsche, Wilde and Yeats, among others, that the truly profound man needs a mask.[1] For Tarr, as for Yeats, the mask is both a protective covering and a weapon of attack;[2] when his eremetical spirit shows up too plainly, Tarr becomes a clown: 'Tarr needed a grimacing, tumultuous mask for the face he had to cover. - The clown was the only role that was ample enough' (11). As a clown, a playful naïf prefiguring the grinning Tyro, Tarr is able to transform his rustic gaucherie into a curious form of aggression against Hobson. Pouncing on his own slips, he obtrudes them with a smile, 'conscious of the power of an obsessing weakness' (7) and acutely aware that any social lapse can easily be made to cut both ways. With such an offensive awkwardness at his command, Tarr can make his shyness 'emanate masterfully' from him (3). One extreme begets the other. One moment he is cloaking his nakedness, the next he is engaged in a vicious tirade which only ends when he knocks Hobson's hat to to the ground. Tarr is 'shy and the reverse by turns'.

Tarr's overbearing shyness, however, cannot fully account for the extreme bitterness of his invective, nor for the iniquitous qualities of which Hobson is accused. On the face of it, Hobson seems to be little more than a laughing, upper-crust half-wit in a fashionably shabby outfit who merits nothing but the 'autocratic scorn' (11) with which Tarr at one point looks upon him. Nevertheless, Tarr also regards him with a watchful 'suspicion' (13). The reasons for his vigilance are evident in the portrait of Hobson provided by Lewis: 'He was very athletic, and his dark and cavernous features had been constructed by Nature as a lurking-place for

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1. According to Nietzsche: 'Every deep thinker needs a mask... thanks to the continually wrong, i.e. superficial, interpretations of his every word, his every step, his every sign of life'. Beyond Good and Evil, trans. M. Cowan (Chicago, 1955), p. 47. For similar reasons, Wilde writes: 'In so vulgar an age we all need masks.' The Letters of Oscar Wilde, ed. R. Hart-Davis (1962), p. 353.
2. Yeats: The Man and the Masks, p. 176.

villainies and passions' (3). The dark hollows daubed on Hobson's imbecility suggest sinister 'villainies' and evil 'passions', yet actual manifestations of these hints are more difficult to discover. When Tarr exposes his weaknesses, it is true, Hobson handles them with 'malice' (6-7), but precisely how this represents 'the real man emerging' is not clear. Here Hobson is a 'carrion-crow' picking with obvious relish at Tarr's ulcerous secrets and yawning 'as though he wished to swallow Tarr and have done with him' (5). The same image persists in a kind of bad pun, the full significance of which only emerges when Hobson 'crowed thrice' (10): he is a turncoat and betrayer. Evidently Tarr is aware of it, accusing him of being ' a sneak and a spy', 'a cunning and sleek domestic', with a 'prying, scurvy way of peeping into [his] affairs' (15-16). But again, what is missing is some kind of dramatic objective correlative for these images; as the scene stands, Lewis is attributing to Hobson a malevolence which is nowhere realised in the world of the novel.

The only real clue to the source of the satirical animus which is directed so gratuitously against Hobson comes in Tarr's tirade against Bloomsbury. Hobson is a member of an infamous sect of sneaks and spies:

> You are essentially <u>spies</u>, in a scurvy, safe and well-paid service.... You are disguised to look like the thing it is your function to betray. - What is your position? You have bought for eight hundred pounds at an aristocratic educational establishment a complete mental outfit, a programme of manners. For four years you trained with other recruits. You are now a perfectly disciplined social unit, with a profound <u>esprit de corps</u>. The Cambridge set that you represent is as observed in an average specimen, a cross between a Quaker, a Pederast, and a Chelsea artist.... The Quakers are powerful rascals (16-17).

There can be little doubt that one of the Cambridge-educated, Bloomsbury Quakers whom Lewis had in mind here was Roger Fry. The harangue, in fact, resonates with the same sense of outrage as the Round Robin against Fry circulated in October, 1913, and written, in all probability, only a few months before the revision of <u>Tarr</u>. In the Round Robin, Bloomsbury was pictured as a socially-exclusive 'family party of strayed and Dissenting Aesthetes' while Fry himself was a 'Pecksniff-shark, a timid but voracious journalistic monster,

unscrupulous, smooth-tongued and, owing chiefly to its weakness, mischievous'.[1] Behind Hobson lurks the shadow of this same voracious monster, and Tarr, a 'showman' of his creator, is responding to his hidden, shark-like villainies. To understand the disproportionate malice which is attributed to Hobson it is necessary to look outside the novel to the portrait of Lewis which emerges from his correspondence and from the memoirs of those who knew him.

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One of the bracing qualities of Lewis's fiction is its sensitivity to the undercurrents of rapacity which can prevail in even the most intimate relationships. Inevitably Lewis strips away what civilisation teaches us to see in human intercourse, revealing social life as a deadly struggle for survival. Even his lovers confront each other from the depths of a radical egoism, each one the centre of an all-devouring illusion, restless until it has swallowed up the other. The vision which haunted the Victorians, particularly after the publication of the Origin of Species, had for Lewis the force of a premise. This premise, for all its refreshing severity, nevertheless betrays an endemic weakness, underlined by Lewis's failure to suggest anything in life and outside of art which - like Nietzsche's super-man - might tower above the hopeless struggle. There is something more amiss here than a mere limitation of vision. When spineless dolts like Hobson suddenly hint at monstrous treacheries which are quite without foundation in the action, Lewis's fiction is mirroring something idiosyncratic in his own disposition. For an age which had suddenly found itself trapped in a war made endlessly more terrible by the very rational and scientific spirit which had seemed to assure man's

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1. Letters, pp. 47-50.

progress, the pessimistic image of the Darwinian jungle may have been a natural one; yet its unrelieved sway over Lewis's early social thought was abetted, at the same time, by a peculiar bent of mind which some who knew Lewis saw as a serious warp.

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CHAPTER III : LEWIS'S CORRESPONDENCE: THE ARTIST AS PREY (ii).

'The artist would merely be preyed upon and vilified... were there not a fairly competent pamphleteer there to defend him.'
Satire and Fiction.

In his first major public appearance in BLAST Lewis was concerned with artistic propaganda, and the mask he wore for the job, itself pedagogical, necessarily obscured many of the tensions informing the life of the private man. Lewis's correspondence completes the impression left by Tarr and the war-time stories of an artist surrounded by forces antagonistic to his vocation and hostile, in some ill-defined way, to his very existence. The unpublished correspondence in particular,[1] including letters to Lewis, shows quite clearly just how harrowing such hostility could be. Lewis emerges from the letters as a man constantly harassed by malicious rumours, by plots and conspiracies mounted against him, and ever watchful for acts of betrayal. So obsessed was he by his suspicions, and so unwilling to abandon them, that many acquaintances thought him paranoid. Pathological or not, these suspicions helped to aggravate the numerous rifts which developed between Lewis and his friends in the early twenties, so that by 1927 he could portray himself, with some justification, as the Enemy. As friendships broke up, he began to cover his tracks with an almost bizarre instinct for secrecy, inspired by fears, too insistent to ignore, of persecutions too dreadful to confront. If Lewis conducted his private affairs as if they were operations of the secret service, it was because he had come to see social life as a theatre of war in which numerous enemies spied upon the artist, trying to trap him with every kind of sinister strategem. The ferocious battle-masks like the Tyro and the Enemy with which he faced the world in the twenties were fashioned primarily

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1. There are one or two respects in which W.K. Rose's excellent edition is deficient: for various reasons, the editor has not been able to do full justice to the extremities of Lewis's fear and anger.

for defence, but a defence so consistently menacing that the masks are easily mistaken for signs of sheer waspishness or wanton brutality in the man wearing them. Perhaps the most common error of Lewis's critics is to overlook the defensiveness underlying his famous satirical virulence and to confuse the artist with those elaborate, brilliantly-executed war-masks which are among his best works or art.

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Tarr, 'shy and the reverse by turns', presents a fascinating dialectic of timorous reticence and ferocious bluster which has a way of recurring in Lewis's early fiction, much as it does in the novels of Dostoyevsky, under whose influence Lewis at one stage fell.[1] The terms of the dialectic vary little: when the artist-recluse, with what in 'The Code of a Herdsman' is called a 'sacred' 'shyness that comes out of solitude',[2] confronts the the herd his shyness finally metamorphoses into mockery or outright belligerence. One example is Kemp, the hero of The Ideal Giant (1917). He is conscious of being 'too shy', yet after a good meal in which his eye has taken some time to settle full in Fingal's face, he is able to subdue his companion - another obscurely aggressive Cambridge snob - with some outrageous, self-assertive clowning. Confronted by the herdesque Hanp, Arghol, hero of The Enemy of the Stars, becomes the theatre of struggle between two opposing selves, shyness and brutality:

> This humility and perverse asceticism opposed to vigorous animal glorification of self.
> He gave men one image with one hand, and at the same time a second, its antidote with the other.
> He watched results a little puzzled.
> The conflict never ended.
> Shyness and brutality, chief ingredients of their drama, fought side by side.[3]

The recurring conflict enacted by Arghol and Hanp, Tarr and Kreisler, representing the tension in Lewis between the artist and the man of

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1. Rude Assignment, ch. xxvii.
2. 'The Code of a Herdsman', p. 6.
3. BLAST, i, pp. 80-81.

action has already received much attention, from Hugh Kenner in particular. What has been ignored is the conflict, also recurring, within Arghol and Tarr, the drama played out by shyness and brutality.

Lewis's preoccupation with this striking psychodrama is not without some reference to himself. In fact, the strange co-existence of these two selves in Lewis draws surprised comment from Robert McAlmon in an engaging account of Lewis's visit to the home of Sir John Ellerman, McAlmon's wealthy father-in-law. Lewis was apparently discovered, transfixed by nervousness on Ellerman's stairway, 'looking frightened and awkward as a schoolboy': 'This, Lewis, the vitriolic satirist, the man who advocated an explosive revolution, and who was scathingly scornful of academic art, this man had been waiting outside afraid to ring the bell.'[1] Lewis himself confessed to being 'shy' with T. S. Eliot,[2] and that he struck others as a 'shy man' is attested by Augustus John[3] who knew him even better than McAlmon did. John also experienced very early in Lewis's career the explosive force of which McAlmon writes. In replying to one of Lewis's attacks, John displays unusual perspicacity in penetrating to the threatened defensiveness which underlay his rancour and was often its actual source:

> The wall you think fit to surround yourself with at times might be a good rampart against enemies but its canvass [sic] bricks cannot be considered insurmountable to friends.... I have never wished to, I never have committed the indecency of trespassing on the privacy of your consciousness of which you are rightly jealous - but ... you have never - it seems to me - given the Idea of friendship a chance - it would appear that you live in fear of intrusion & can but dally with your fellows momentarily as Robinson Crusoe with his savages before running back to his castle. [4]

What John captures here is something more specific and at the same time more profound than 'shyness' in its usual sense as a catch-all term to explain away social awkwardness. The Crusoe-like soul-dweller was not just aghast at his nakedness as he was in Tarr, but

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1. Bringing Geniuses Together: An Autobiography, (1938), p. 39. In Blasting and Bombardiering, p. 229, Lewis recalls Sir John Ellerman's nervousness!
2. Letters, p. 137.
3. 'Elephants with Beards: The Enigma of Wyndham Lewis', Sunday Times, (5 October, 1958), p. 19.
4. Augustus John to W.L., n.d., ca. 1908 (Cornell).

he lived in a castle, barricaded behind a jealously-guarded wall, ever in fear of intrusion by enemies. That Lewis's shyness was sometimes a nervous hesitancy about possible enemies is reflected in one of Eliot's letters in which he reminds Lewis of his professed 'shyness' of Lady Rothermere.[1] And it was the suspicion of intrusive prying and spying which defined Tarr's peculiar shyness of Hobson.

For much of his life Lewis lived in wary apprehension of intruders, spies and betrayers like Hobson. According to 'No Quarter', an unpublished memoir by Marjorie Hemming of her meetings with Lewis, 'tales' of his 'suspiciousness and fear of people prying' were quite widely circulated in London by 1930.[2] Lady Sybil Cholmondeley, who sat for her portrait in the early 1930's, tells how Lewis 'always locked the door & seemed to fear intruders or in fact visitors of any kind'.[3] Moreover, Lewis's fears were such as to transform the closest friends into intruders. Naomi Mitchison, for years a loyal supporter of his work, once found Lewis glaring at her through the crack in the door with what she described as a look of 'manic suspecion' [sic]. Mrs Mitchison concluded that Lewis was a 'bit mad'.[4] John Reid, a young writer who admired Lewis's work, was shocked when, without any warning, Lewis suddenly found him untrustworthy; Lewis would 'stand at the door watching' when Reid used Lewis's phone, 'as though if left alone I wd steal something'.[5] Suspicion bedevilled Lewis's relationships; friends at one moment could become deceivers at the next; colleagues could turn into intriguers. When Marinetti and C. R. W. Nevinson published a Manifesto of English Futurism in The Observer in June, 1914, which not only praised Lewis but gave its address as the Rebel Art Centre, Lewis accused Nevinson of 'deep & shady intrigues' which, as far as Nevinson was concerned, were 'entirely & absolutely the Delusions of [Lewis's] highly suspicious NEURESTHENIC [sic] mind.'[6] Another

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1. T. S. Eliot to W.L., 31 December 1923 (Cornell). The context of this letter is discussed below.
2. 'No Quarter', p. 16. Mrs. Hemming (then Firminger) knew Lewis in the late twenties and early thirties. The ms. was lent to me by the author.
3. Lady Sybil Cholmondeley to W. K. Rose, 20 January 1959 (Vassar).
4. Naomi Mitchison to W. K. Rose, 16 March [1960] (Vassar).
5. John Reid to W.L., 30 June 1941 (Cornell).
6. C. R. W. Nevinson to W.L., 13 June [1914] (Cornell).

occasion on which Lewis felt that his eminence at the Rebel Art Centre was being usurped was when the irresistible sexual force, T. E. Hulme, finally met Kate Lechmere, the Centre's financial backer, after Lewis had been at some pains to keep them apart.[1] According to Miss Lechmere, the liaison which resulted precipitated the famous fight between the philosopher and the artist mentioned above. The cause was not so much sexual jealousy on Lewis's part as a powerful fear of betrayal, of which Lewis, like Joyce,[2] was a lifelong victim. Lewis, however, seems to have been much closer to paranoia than Joyce. So afraid was Lewis of being betrayed or maligned by the rumours of acquaintances that he enjoined a few of them, like Richard Wyndham, Marjorie Hemming and John Reid, to repeat to him any gossip they heard about him.[3] John Reid was charged with this as a primary 'duty' of friendship. Clearly, obsessive and often groundless fears of intrusion, intrigue and betrayal encumbered Lewis's intercourse, turning the most harmless of friends and admirers into dangerous enemies; just as in his fiction the most mindless puppets suddenly show a diabolical aspect and hint at malicious energies which are quite unanticipated in the text.

Lewis was a lifelong prey to the belief that he was being persecuted. If he was in a pub or a restaurant he always sat with his back to the wall:[4] 'I have enemies, you know' he explained to John Slocum.[5] Nobody was above suspicion; anybody might be a spy. In a period when he was being 'vehemently attacked in some quarters', Marjorie Hemming found him particularly hesitant about entering her flat:

> As usual he wouldn't come up unless I was alone; I had difficulty in assuring him that the pretty girl merely did some housework for me, and was just about to go home. It wasn't till the front door had slammed behind her that he looked at all at ease.[6]

Among his chief tormenters were Roger Fry and Clive Bell. As Edith

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1. Interview with Kate Lechmere, May, 1972.
2. Richard Ellmann, James Joyce (1959), p. 288.
3. Discussed in detail both below and in chapter V.
4. 'No Quarter', p. 72.
5. John Slocum to W. K. Rose, 15 September 1960 (Vassar).
6. 'No Quarter', p. 47.

Sitwell amusingly puts it, Lewis apparently believed that these two 'roosted, permanently, on the roof of his studio, in order to observe his slightest movement'.[1] It is 'the great influence of Roger Fry', he tells Oliver Brown, which has prevented his 'pictures being bought institutionally'.[2] To put this accusation in perspective, Lewis can scarcely have ingratiated himself with Fry and Bloomsbury in the Omega row, and although Bloomsbury critics like Bell and Fry did subsequently ignore his work, they also ignored other large areas of avant-garde art after 1914 just as systematically without necessarily 'boycotting' it. What is important here is the excessiveness of Lewis's reactions which made him exaggerate Bloomsbury's power, attributing to this coterie most of the reverses of a lifetime. Anyone even vaguely associated with Bloomsbury was suspect; even Eliot when he published Clive Bell in The Criterion; even F. R. and Q. D. Leavis, whom Lewis saw as an extension of Bloomsbury despite the fact that their opposition was almost as strenuous as his own. In an unpublished pamphlet variously entitled 'Say It With Leaves' and 'The Bloomsburies', Scrutiny is treated as the latest emanation of Bloomsbury. Lewis's grounds: Scrutiny originated from Cambridge and its editors had been unsympathetic to his work.[3] In 1948 Lewis ascribed an unfavourable review of America and Cosmic Man appearing in The Times Literary Supplement to a certain 'Bloomsbury gentleman',[4] and would have initiated proceedings against him for defamation had his counsel not advised Lewis that there was no proof of malice.[5] After The Apes of God, some of the blame for 'attacks' and other literary intrigues was apportioned to the Sitwells, who were apparently perpetrators of a campaign to prevent any further mention of the book in public.[6] Sydney Schiff, also lampooned in The Apes, was accused of playing a

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1. Taken Care Of: An Autobiography (1965), p. 102.
2. Letters, p. 243.
3. 'Say It With Leaves', p. 25 and ff. (Cornell).
4. W.L. to Lynette Roberts, 9 October 1948 (Copy at Vassar).
5. Clifford-Turner & Co. to W.L., 11 January 1949 (Cornell).
6. W.L. to Geoffrey Grigson, n.d., ca. 1946 (Cornell); W.L. to Felix Giovanelli, 11 November 1948 (Copy at Vassar).

vindictive 'game' against Lewis which had put him in a 'fix'.[1] The Communists were another group supposedly committed to Lewis's downfall. The man who reviewed Men Without Art in The Times Literary Supplement was a 'Communist', a member of a 'particularly bloodthirsty and persecutory' religion; Lewis was a victim of 'political intolerance'.[2] Time and again the Leftist 'book-rings' in New York were accused of 'black-listing' his work, all because of his 'anti-war writings',[3] by which he always meant books like Left Wings Over Europe (1936) and his notorious Hitler (1931). This latter book, probably the chief thorn in his side for the rest of his life, supposedly brought him under the surveillance of British agents in Canada during World War II.[4] Creditors too were capable of watching and following him, on one occasion causing him to run panic-stricken into Spencer Gore's flat: 'Announcing that he was being followed by a man to whom he owed money, Lewis dived behind a sofa and stayed there, out of sight, until Gore assured him that the street below was deserted'.[5] William Wees, cautiously rejecting the usual diagnosis 'persecution mania', prefers to view this sort of behaviour as part of Lewis's affected 'manner'[6] - as does C.R.W. Nevinson in his memoirs.[7] In fact, it was more than an affectation, as is shown by one of Lewis's early letters to his mother in which he entertains the possibility that he is suffering from a pathological condition: 'I am rather worried because I dont know whether I am being watched or whether I am becoming a monomaniac, - I suppose the latter'.[8] Some people who knew Lewis would have opted for 'the latter'. 'His delusions of persecution', wrote Edmund Wilson, 'which he could never seem to shake

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1. W.L. to Sydney Schiff, n.d., ca. 1933 (Cornell).
2. Letters, pp. 225-227.
3. W.L. to A. Barr, 25 September 1941 (Cornell).
4. Members of Assumption College, Ontario, where Lewis taught in 1943-4 tell how he arrived on one occasion claiming to have 'just shaken off some British agents'; interview with Michael O'Brien at Cornell University, January, 1972.
5. Cited in William Wees, Vorticism and the English Avant-Garde, p. 148.
6. Ibid, p. 147.
7. Paint and Prejudice (1937), p. 56.
8. Letters, p. 11.

off, were a nuisance, and I always had an uncomfortable feeling that I was dealing with someone not completely sane'.[1] These unshakable feelings of persecution helped to drive Lewis into isolation in the years 1923 to 1925.

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After the War, obviously mastered by a desire to make up for lost time, Lewis threw himself into a large number of artistic enterprises. Many of them were joint ventures, bringing him into association with members of what he later called 'High Bohemia', a circle of artists and writers all with independent means and some very rich indeed. Several of these associations flourished into friendships, but almost none of them survived the year 1925, by which time Lewis had broken with his friends, either unilaterally or after some kind of quarrel.

The Sitwells were a striking example. Lewis came to know Osbert Sitwell in 1918 when he published 'The War Baby' in Art and Letters, for which Sitwell was the literary editor. In 1919 the Sitwells invited him to do the designs for a ballet in which William Walton was to write the music, a project which was never carried out.[2] Later he contributed drawings to Wheels, Fifth Cycle (1920) and Job Le Pauvre (1923), and in 1922 he began his celebrated portrait of Edith Sitwell, not finished until about 1935,[3] the hazardous circumstances of which are amusingly but variously described by both sitter[4] and artist.[5] Relations between Lewis and the Sitwells were of course not confined to these artistic ventures. Lewis dined with them in London, stayed at Renishaw and spent time with them in Venice while he was a guest of Nancy Cunard's

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1. Edmund Wilson to W.K. Rose, 4 April 1960 (Vassar).
2. Letters, p. 111.
3. W. Michel, Wyndham Lewis: Paintings and Drawings, p. 338.
4. Edith Sitwell, 'Hazards of Sitting for my Portrait', The Observer, (27 November 1960).
5. Blasting and Bombardiering, pp. 215-216.

in 1922.[1] The friendship seems to have lasted at least until June, 1923, when Lewis wrote to Osbert Sitwell to congratulate him on Façade.[2] Walter Michel has it lasting 'for ten years after the war',[3] but in fact things cooled quickly between them once the Encyclical called 'The Apes of God', published in The Criterion in April, 1924, announced that Lewis was going to satirise a 'family of "great poets" , (each of them upon a little frail biographical family pedestal)'. Recognising the thinly-veiled reference to his family, and apprehensive of the revelations which the satire might make, Osbert wrote to Lewis warning him flatly not to get onto his 'frail biographical truck in [his] new book'.[4] Cordiality between Lewis and the Sitwells was at an end.

Numerous other friendships followed the same course. Not long after the War Lewis met Sydney Schiff, a friend and admirer of Proust's who wrote under the pseudonym of Stephen Hudson. He was comfortably off and lent his financial support to The Tyro (1921).[5] He also contributed a short story to it. During 1922 and 1923 Lewis painted a portrait of Schiff's wife, Violet,[6] again not completed until later, and Sydney Schiff bought a number of Lewis's drawings. More than patrons, the Schiffs regarded themselves as close friends of Lewis's, something they believed to be mutual until late in 1923 when Lewis suddenly broke off relations with them. Puzzled and somewhat hurt, Violet Schiff wrote to him early in 1924 asking him to explain his silence with assurances which suggest that she understood him well:

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1. One dinner given by the Sitwells which brought together Lewis, Walter Sickert and Arnold Bennett is entertainingly described in Osbert Sitwell's Noble Essences (1950), pp. 196-197, and in Blasting and Bombardiering, pp. 91-93 - which also has an account of his stay in Venice, pp. 233-234. Lewis's stay at Renishaw is described in Taken Care Of, p. 100.
2. Letters, pp. 133-134.
3. Wyndham Lewis: Paintings and Drawings, p. 97.
4. Osbert Sitwell to W. L., n.d., ca. 1924 (Cornell).
5. Letters, p. 126.
6. Wyndham Lewis: Paintings and Drawings, p. 338.

> Dear Lewis,
>
> It seems to me that Sydney or I must have offended you in some way. If this is the case I wish you would say so frankly & give us an opportunity of clearing it up. I should like to convince you that Sydney & I are incapable of any action or intention other than friendly towards you & that we have both in our different ways a genuine regard for you. The proof of this in my own case is that it has survived the shock & chill of your silence.[1]

It was the silence before a storm which broke two months later. The lampoon of the Sitwell family heralded in 'The Apes of God' Encyclical was to be accompanied by the portrait of a 'pseudo-Proust', a reference to Sydney which the Schiffs could not fail to recognise. Both of them hastened to write to Lewis asking if they could heal the breach whose existence the Encyclical clearly confirmed. His final refusal to be drawn appeared in The Apes of God (1930) in which the Schiffs were savagely caricatured as Lionel and Isabel Kein. Robert McAlmon, another friend of the early twenties who wrote for The Tyro and who held out some promise of patronage as the son-in-law of Sir John Ellerman,[2] did not discover Lewis's estimate of him until 1927 when 'The Revolutionary Simpleton' appeared; in The Apes he was Kalman. John Rodker, a third friend and contributor to The Tyro who published a portfolio of Fifteen Drawings (1919) of Lewis's at his Ovid Press,[3] found himself satirised as the Split-Man,[4] both in 1924 as Krang and 1930 as Julius Ratner. Jessica Dismorr was a fourth. She had signed the BLAST manifesto in 1915, was a member of the short lived X Group in 1919, did drawings for The Tyro in 1921, and she too gave a certain financial backing to the driving force behind these ventures. In 1925 she went the way of the others, although this time in a letter rather than in print: 'I have meant to suggest to you for some time past,' Lewis concluded in his brief epistle, 'that the moment had arrived for our acquaintanceship to terminate, and avail myself of this

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1. Violet Schiff to W.L., 25 February 1924 (Cornell).
2. In Bringing Geniuses Together, p. 56, McAlmon recalls, perhaps facetiously, Lewis's increased interest when he learnt of McAlmon's in-laws.
3. Letters, p. 105.
4. The portrait is one of the less obvious ones; nonetheless, some recognised it; for example, Nancy Cunard, in a letter to W. K. Rose, 2 August 1960 (Vassar).

opportunity of doing so'.[1] Late in 1923 Raymond Drey - yet another who wrote for The Tyro - and his wife, Edward Wadsworth - associated with Lewis since BLAST - and his wife, together with Richard Wyndham, set up a fund to support Lewis. By the end of 1924 the fund had broken up after Lewis had quarrelled with Fanny Wadsworth;[2] in 1925 he quarrelled with Drey,[3] and in 1930 all of the donors appeared in The Apes of God.

This singular spate of ruptures, almost all of them occurring between 1923 and 1925, is susceptible of various interpretations. On the one hand, the more notorious of the quarrels seem to lend authenticity, often on the level of gossip, to the caricature of Lewis as a satirist so incurably cantankerous that he invariably attacked anyone foolhardy enough to befriend him. Lewis himself, on the other hand, portrayed the years 1922-1925 as a 'period of retirement from social functions, spent mainly in writing'.[4] That is, his self-isolation in these years was the result of a conscious decision to 'go underground', as he termed it in Blasting and Bombardiering, to avoid the time-wasting trivialities of the social life: 'a great deal of lunching, and dining and cocktailing for artists, but very little work'.[5] At the same time, he felt himself under pressure to make up for the War and to develop his powers as fully and quickly as he could: 'It will be sufficient to say that I still had to learn a lot of things in my two professions. This I preferred to do in secrecy. So I withdrew into a place called Adam and Eve Mews'.[6] Judging by what he produced in the decade after 1926 his secrecy paid off. A related motive for isolating himself was implied in a piece of advice given him by T. S. Eliot,

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1. W.L. to Jessica Dismorr, 19 October 1925 (Cornell).
2. Letters, p. 141 and ff.
3. Letters, p. 162 and ff.
4. The catalogue, Wyndham Lewis and Vorticism, p. 9, of the retrospective exhibition held at the Tate Gallery in 1956.
5. Blasting and Bombardiering, p. 214.
6. Ibid, p. 213.

somewhere about the middle of 1922,[1] after Eliot had received his copy of The Tyro no. 2:

> I think the Tyro has a very good appearance indeed this time. But my very first thought on looking at the reproductions was that it is and has always been a pity that you have associated yourself with so many inferior artists. It seems to me that the idea of a group may have been allright [sic] once, but that now it is just wrong for you - that you should dissociate yourself, in the public mind, from any group and from all other British painters. I think that this way of making associates of Dobson, Wadsworth etc. gives them a certain power to damage you - i.e. you drag them up to your level and give them a kind of chance to repudiate you. (Would I think of contributing to "Wheels"? & so give the S[itwells] a lift and the right to sneer at me?) I think that you ought to emphasise your isolation.[2]

One sign that Lewis may have been moved by Eliot's advice is that he dissociated himself from those who had shared in the limelight of The Tyro at about the same time that his association with Eliot grew much stronger. Various circumstances, such as Bloomsbury's reaction to The Wasteland, drew them together in 1922 and 1923; Lewis praised Eliot's work in The Criterion and Eliot encouraged Lewis to contribute to it.[3] With Eliot's encouragement, Lewis began to produce early versions of 'The Apes of God', themselves indicative of his growing estrangement from his former circle. The chill of Lewis's silence towards the Schiffs coincided with the writing of the Encyclical, 'Apes of God', for The Criterion.

What cannot be explained, however, by the notion of 'going underground' as a conscious policy of dissociation from time-wasting and inferior artists, is Lewis's estrangement from T. S. Eliot in 1925. As early as December 1923 there had been tensions between them, aroused primarily by what Eliot called Lewis's preposterously ever-elaborated suspicions of Lady Rothermere, a financial backer of The Criterion: 'This suspiciousness', wrote Eliot, 'first took

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1. The Tyro no. 2 is dated 1921, but it did not appear until 1922. Eliot probably received his at about the same time as the Bodleian Library, in April.
2. T. S. Eliot to W. L., n.d., ca. 1922 (Cornell).
3. Letters, pp. 134-136.

the form of a shyness towards the Criterion, and now takes the form of a shyness toward her publishing your book'.[1] When The Criterion published an article by Clive Bell a year or so later, this 'suspiciousness' was directed squarely at the editor. For Lewis, it was clear that Eliot was involved in a 'passionate intrigue',[2] 'either the tool or the operator of machinations' against him.[3] No longer able to trust Eliot despite his protestations, Lewis broke with The Criterion forthwith, publishing most of his work until 1927 in The Calendar of Modern Letters.[4] Throughout the correspondence relating to this episode, and indeed earlier, Eliot was in no doubt about the fact that he was dealing with an 'unjustified suspiciousness'. Exactly the same suspiciousness can be seen at work in Lewis's disappearance from the social scene in the early twenties.

The issues which divided Lewis and his friends were often layered with great complexity. Sometimes the squabbles - if Lewis could be found to squabble with - involved money or supposedly unfulfilled obligations; at other times they were precipitated apparently by nothing more than a series of misinterpreted motives. Nevertheless, one theme seems to wind itself through them all, hastily turning the smallest oversight or careless remark into a casus belli: Lewis's inability to trust his friends. Whatever his grounds for thinking so, Lewis supposed that members of his circle were spreading slanderous gossip about him. As Robert McAlmon recalls in his autobiography, Lewis was so certain about the existence of this gossip that when McAlmon confessed that he had not heard any of it Lewis 'took the attitude that [he] was a devilishly clever deceiver'.[6]

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1. T. S. Eliot to W. L., 31 December 1923 (Cornell).
2. Letters, p. 154.
3. T. S. Eliot to W. L., 23 March 1925 (Cornell).
4. He returned to The Criterion in 1927, just before he brought out The Enemy.
5. Letters, p. 151.
6. Bringing Geniuses Together, p. 8.

Just who were suspected emerges from the letters of Richard Wyndham, who was forced to protest, against Lewis's certain disbelief, that although the Schiffs or the Sitwells discussed him in his absence nothing malicious was said.[1] One of the rumours about Lewis was supposed to taint him with the charge of dishonesty. Marjorie Hemming tells of an incident occuring about 1930 in which Lewis, obviously harassed, asked her if she had heard 'that he was dishonest': 'He went on', wrote Mrs. Hemming, 'to ask if anyone had ever said he owed her money, quickly adding that it wasn't true, and that if any woman had told me he owed her money, she had been lying. As no woman had ever told me any such thing I was able to tell him so, firmly. But he didn't take any notice'.[2] The woman concerned may have been Jessie Dismorr, at the mention of whose name Lewis was on one occasion thrown into a panic declaring, 'I've nothing against Miss Dismorr!'[3] Since most of his friendships were compounded with some degree of patronage, and given the cavalier way in which Lewis sometimes manoeuvred for support, it is possible that Lewis's susceptibility to this particular rumour was intensified by the element of truth it contained. Jessie Dismorr was only one of Lewis's friends in this period to feel that Lewis was after her money.[4] The breakdown of the fund set up by the Dreys, Wadsworths and Richard Wyndham was a most complicated mixture of misunderstandings and offended sensitivities, eliciting from all sides a rapid succession of recriminating letters, intemperate telegrams and well-intentioned attempts, by Richard Wyndham in particular, to patch everything up. Lewis, however, would not be reconciled once he had detected 'deliberately mischievous' intent behind some statements of Fanny Wadsworth's.[5]

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1. The details are given in chapter V.
2. 'No Quarter', p. 74.
3. Ibid, pp. 70-71.
4. Again, details are given in chapter V.
5. W.L. to Fanny Wadsworth, n.d., ca. 1924.

For Lewis's part then, the rifts were not just the products of excessive spleen; nor were they entirely the expression of a conscious resolution to cut away all unnecessary social and artistic ties, important as such a resolution may have been. In reality, much of the notorious virulence brought to bear in the twenties upon former friends both privately and in print was a response to suspicion, carrying for Lewis almost the force of certainty, that he was being betrayed by those who had seemed, like Hobson, harmlessly amicable, but who cloaked some malevolent purpose. One of Lewis's reasons for retiring to the seclusion of Adam and Eve Mews was to evade such deceivers by concealing himself behind an almost impenetrable wall of secrecy.

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It was in the early twenties that Lewis developed those habits of strict personal secrecy which were to shroud his private affairs for the rest of his life. After 1925 Lewis's was still a compelling, at moments dominating, voice in British cultural life, but it always emanated, like the teaching of Pierpoint in The Apes, from some hidden spot offstage. To some extent, this well-known secretiveness may have been the 'almost childish affection for mysteries and secrets' indulged by Casimir Lypiatt, Lewis's effigy in Antic Hay;[1] or possibly, it was part of an enigmatic posture, what Osbert Sitwell called 'a carefully produced sense of mystery'.[2] Most likely, however, it was as John Rothenstein suggests, 'partly pathological'.[3] When Lewis first retired into secrecy in Adam and Eve Mews his rooms, according to Blasting and Bombardiering, were surrounded by a seven-foot high wall. As well as its practical utility in keeping out the 'little men',[4]

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1. Aldous Huxley, Antic Hay (1948), p. 43.
2. Laughter in The Next Room (1949), p. 31.
3. Summer's Lease: Autobiography 1901-1938 (1965), p. 130.
4. Blasting and Bombardiering, p. 217.

the wall was an objective symbol of Lewis's defensiveness, a physical equivalent of the psychological rampart detected much earlier by Augustus John. Adam and Eve Mews set the pattern for future castles; for visitors like John Rothenstein his rooms were always difficult to find and 'might have been constructed with a professional eye to concealment and defence':

> His dwellings were sequestered and fortress-like: at Adam and Eve Mews, off Kensington High Street, where he lived when I first knew him, his rear was protected by a high wall; his room in Percy Street was difficult to find, camouflaged as it were, while 29A Kensington Gardens Studios, where he mostly lived during his last years, was approached by a narrow many-cornered corridor leading eventually to an inner fastness.[1]

Rothenstein was singularly privileged even to know the location of Lewis's fortresses, for at times his address was like a secret password only given to a few trusted friends such as Naomi Mitchison with the injunction 'but please remember to mention this to nobody!'[2] He once wrote to Robert McAlmon for a reference because he knew that McAlmon would 'communicate [his] address to nobody'.[3] A way of avoiding the problem altogether was to use the Pall Mall Safe Deposit: 'what... is SAFER', he asked A. J. A. Symons, 'than the PALL MALL SAFE DEPOSIT?'[4] For years he had an unlisted telephone number and preferred to have his studio and his living quarters in different places. About letters and their contents he was equally guarded. A letter to Eliot was headed 'Private and confidential'.[5] As early as his student days in Paris he pleaded with his mother to 'seal her letters' as 'anyone might open them';[6] and while he was in the army she was enjoined to be 'most guarded' in what she wrote.[7] Open

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1. Summer's Lease, p. 130.
2. Letters, p. 216.
3. Letters, p. 166.
4. Letters, p. 218.
5. Letters, p. 164.
6. W. L. to Anne Stuart Lewis, n.d., ca. 1907 (Cornell).
7. Letters, p. 83.

postcards were often written in French. Lewis felt so intensely vulnerable about some of his correspondence that he wrote to acquaintances like Theodore Spencer at Harvard with warnings which seem out of all proportion to the dangers they anticipate:

> It is because I know that all people are not (1) so good natured, and (2) so friendly disposed as you are towards myself that I enjoin you not to leave this letter upon your desk where it can be glimpsed by the prowling eye of the evil visitor; and not oh not to discuss it with colleagues.[1]

The prowling eye of the evil visitor was a constant threat. For fear of this eye, Fr. J. S. Murphy was required to take great care of his photograph and to return it by registered mail.[2]

Lewis's domestic life was the sanctum sanctorum, hidden behind the very last veil. Even a confidante like Marjorie Hemming was told nothing of this life; in 1930 she wrote: 'I very much admire the way you have told me nothing about your present private life & you don't want that love of secrecy broadcast'.[3] Domestic secrecy was far from a public pose. Almost nobody knew of his marriage in 1929, and even those allowed into his rooms like John Rothenstein did not meet Mrs. Lewis until years later.[4] Roy Campbell, perhaps closer to Lewis than anyone in the thirties, did not meet her until 1936![5] The persistent rumour that Lewis used to conceal his wife in another room while he had a visitor seems to be substantiated by a letter written to Lewis by John Reid in which he recalls their first meeting at Lewis's apartment in Toronto during World War II:

> You poured three cups of tea, picked [one] up and, said 'I've forgotten teaspoons are downstairs' and carried the cup downstairs and came back without it, went into the kitchenette in front of the studio and returned with 2 spoons.[6]

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1. Letters, p. 321.
2. W.L. to J. S. Murphy, 12 September 1942 (Cornell).
3. Marjorie Firminger [Hemming] to W.L., 1 October 1930 (Cornell).
4. Summer's Lease, p. 130; Letters, p. 269. Rothenstein did not meet her until 1939 or 1940.
5. 'My wife was stupified with admiration, at your fine appearance', Lewis wrote to Campbell in 1936. 'To meet you was a great event for her'. Letters, p. 239.
6. John Reid to W.L., 30 June 1941 (Cornell).

Ronald Duncan remembers visiting Lewis after the War and being met at the door by a woman of about forty whom he would have taken for a housekeeper except for the way she looked at Lewis. Lewis did not introduce her. Later T. S. Eliot informed Duncan that the woman was Lewis's wife, adding by way of explanation that Lewis was ashamed to introduce her to his friends.[1] A more characteristic explanation was the one which Lewis himself gave to Mrs. John Rothenstein when she expressed some surprise at hearing that he was married: 'Life has been somewhat of a war for me, and the warriors... have usually kept the field of battle free of females'.[2] His wife represented a particularly vulnerable side of Lewis which had to be hidden at all costs from the eye of the enemy.

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The same psychological tensions responsible for Lewis's life-long secrecy are mirrored in the images of society which dominate his writing: the jungle and the battlefield. In the diaglogue between Tyros X and F in The Tyro no. 2, F is a social naïf whom X is instructing in the ways of the world. When F complains that he is being tormented by someone lying and intriguing behind his back, X hastily silences him and in the ensuing dialogue outlines the subtle revenge meted out by society upon those who dare to voice such apprehensions:

> X: I can see that I shall have to instruct you once more on a very simple matter. Suppose, then, for instance, you utter to anyone else (a member of your circle of acquaintanceship, your little world), what you have just said to me. What will happen? They will be embarrassed, vexed and shocked if they are well-disposed. They will say: 'What a suspicious cuss you are, aren't you?' rather as they would speak to a dog.
> F: Suspicious! I have good reason to be.
> X: Hush, hush! 'Suspicious,' you understand, is the word the world has found to apply to those liable, through lack of self-control, to make a scandal. It is a word that bears with it an element of reproach. It is contrived by society as a punishment.... But to return to your 'suspiciousness.' You are supposed to take it for granted, you see, that everyone

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1. How to Make Enemies (1968), pp. 328-330.
2. Letters, p. 269.

> does you any slight damage they can. If they are competing with you in a closer sense than the general social one, they will, of course, damage you to the full extent of their ability. You are supposed, naturally, to be engaged in similar activities on your side. There are a multitude of more or less intense cross-currents as well: others battering subterraneously at you, and at each other.[1]

The two voices represent what must have been a frequent debate within Lewis between his pressing suspicions and a cynicism counselling him to silence them with the observation that society takes competitive rapacity for granted. X goes on to describe the model by which society can be understood:

> Every civilized milieu is, and always has been, engaged perpetually in a sort of subconscious, subvisible lawyer's brawl. It is the devouring jungle driven underground, the instinct of bloody combat restricted to forensic weapons. It is a nightmare, staged in a menagerie. The psycho-analysts with their jungle of the unconscious, and monsters tipsy with libido, have made a kind of Barnum and Bailey for the educated.[2]

The vision of society as a devouring jungle is presented here as a discovery of the psychoanalysts. By the time he came to write The Lion and the Fox (1927) Lewis accredited Machiavelli's prophetic genius with the revelation that men are half-beasts, 'smally or largely predatory'.[3] It was of course a view which Lewis himself endorsed, not only in The Art of Being Ruled where 'men' are 'tigers, wasps, and wolves, or parrots, geese, sheep, and asses... rather than men',[4] but also in his novels where characters are frequently totemic, some revealing themselves as beasts of prey, others as their quarry. As early as Enemy of the Stars, amidst the brilliant Vorticist imagery of Arghol's metaphysical lamentations, we find inserted the sage obiter dictum that man eats his neighbour like a mutton chop.[5] There the emphasis is slightly different; Mankind as a whole stalks the individual Self, or Personality: 'Between Personality and Mankind it is always a question of dog and cat; they are diametrically opposed species. Self is the ancient race, the rest are the new one. Self is the race that lost. But Mankind

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1. The Tyro, ii, pp. 46-47.
2. Ibid, p. 47.
3. The Lion and the Fox, pp. 81-2.
4. The Art of Being Ruled, p. 59.
5. BLAST, i, p. 67.

still suspects Egotistic plots, and hunts Pretenders'.[1] Perhaps no theme is more insistent in Lewis's writing than the herd's blood-thirsty envy of the superman. Kemp, another champion of Self against Society, experiences exactly the same antagonism as Arghol, except that the conflict is no longer a hunt but a war.[2]

The jungle was almost interchangeable in Lewis's symbology with the battlefield. In One-Way Song (1933) Lewis puzzles over the fact that while dog-eat-dog is universally accepted as the norm in international politics nobody will admit to it in the private sphere:

> In this fair world of 'gentlemen's agreements',
> A lawcourtly world, where for their fat fees fence
> Scurrilous bravos, it would be pure outrage
> So much as to suggest small wars we wage -
> With all that 'war' takes with it of boycott and debt,
> Of strategy, false news, spy-traps baited and set - [3]

Society was nothing else but a theatre of war teeming with antagonists each trying at every opportunity to calumniate, trap and defeat the artist with sabotage, boycott, espionage and any suitable form of sly ambush. The moment he stood above or apart from his fellows the superior man was 'instantly... surrounded by a howling ring of distorted masks and stabbing fingers'.[4] For Lewis it was simply a fact of life that the artist was constantly being observed, followed and vilified; he lived, in short, in a world peopled by enemies.

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Finding himself surrounded by enemies, Lewis seized on the fact and in 1927 introduced himself to the world as the Enemy. The interest of this event in the history of literary personae ought to be underlined. The Enemy was not a mere nom de plume, as the cover of The Enemy announced that Mr. Wyndham Lewis was the

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1. BLAST,i, p. 66.
2. The Ideal Giant, p. 17.
3. One-Way Song (1933), p. 60.
4. The Enemy, ii (1927), p. xi.

Enemy. It was a persona, but a persona for discursive prose. Not that there is anything unique in that alone, since the idea of a public persona such as Wilde's is a commonplace of literary criticism. What is singularly fascinating about the Enemy is that he has a name, and therefore draws attention to himself precisely as a persona. Although all authorship involves role-playing, perhaps no modern author has so obligingly distinguished himself from the role he assumed when he came to write discursive prose - a distinction, incidentally, which very few of Lewis's critics have heeded. Nor have there been many writers as explicit as Lewis about the function of his 'pamphleteer-double'[1] as the Enemy is sometimes called. It was not enough for Mr. Lewis to be an artist, the supposedly anonymous editor of Satire and Fiction informs the reader: 'The artist would merely be preyed upon and vilified... were there not a fairly competent pamphleteer there to defend him. So, Mr. Lewis became a pamphleteer as well as an artist'.[2] The Enemy was an armed sentry standing guard over the creative process, a figure who, when provoked, was capable of replying in like kind. In One-Way Song, the Enemy is described as a mask. If you understand the age, says the poet, echoing Nietzsche and Wilde, 'you can / Scarcely be other than a Man in an Iron Mask'.[3] Its metallic composition emphasises that the mask was something of a helmet, armour to protect a vulnerable nakedness, just as for Tarr it had been a device for fending off eyes which took in too much, a way of shielding an awkward modesty.

Throughout Lewis's writings, the mask was first and foremost a means of defence. In one of his notebooks at Cornell Lewis describes how people are 'all masquerading themselves'. He suddenly changes the image; the mask becomes a wall, dividing the inside of a man from the outside: 'The wall of the English. Penetrate, & not

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1. The Diabolical Principle and the Dithyrambic Spectator (1931), p. viii.
2. Satire and Fiction: Also, Have With You to Great Queen Street! The History of A Rejected Review, by Roy Campbell (1930), pp 20-21.
3. One-Way Song, p. 44.

so attractive inside, though very attractive on the animal plane'. The transition seems a natural one for Lewis, especially if we remember the wall of canvas bricks - his masks were works of art - perceived by Augustus John, and the extraordinary importance of walls in Lewis's private life. The Enemy was simply one more wall, erected in retaliation against walls of boycott:

> You can hardly blame an 'Enemy' who forestalls
> Such treatment and puts up his own high walls.[1]

In another slight variation, Edith Sitwell describes Lewis's 'outward personality' as 'his shield against the world'.[2] Whether armour, helmet, wall or shield, Lewis's favourite public masks are distinctly repellent. The vampire-like jocularity of the Soldier of Humour, the grim smile of 'Mr. W. L. as a Tyro', itself cast in gleaming iron, clearly anticipate the gangsterish chuckles of the Enemy as he reviews the youth-cult in The Old Gang and the New Gang (1933):

> Now there's a funny old Bolshie with a funny old name (it makes us English laugh fit to split ourselves to hear it spoken), namely, that is, Trotsky. And Trotsky - though he's no longer the chief Bolshie - he might almost have been one of those Society of Jesus guys. For he had just the same funny notion - yet clever in its way - of "catching 'em young." But p'r'aps he got it from the Jesus guys....[3]

While the passage is dominated by a condescension which is meant to draw attention to the distance between the high-brow author and his (putative) mass-readership, putting the low-brow reader in his place as it were, there are, at the same time, overtones of a warning in the imposture he chooses: if he is pushed too far, this 'guy' can be dangerous. Sometimes the Enemy turned into Public Enemy Number One.[4]

In the manoeuvres of the Enemy, as in all warfare, the borderline between defence and offence is impossible to define. When we scrutinise the mask which glares out at us from the editorial notes

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1. One-Way Song, p. 62.
2. Taken Care Of, p. 100.
3. The Old Gang and the New Gang, (1933), pp. 16-17.
4. One-Way Song, p. 44.

of The Enemy, its grimacing noli me tangere possesses more than a hint of malevolence. There is an unmistakable note of menace in the passage from Plutarch's Moralia with which Lewis prefaced all issues of The Enemy: 'Thine enemy, as thou knowest well enough, watcheth continually, prying and spying into all thine actions'. Here, in what he calls a 'general clue' to his journal's purpose,[1] the Enemy is being just as sinister as his own enemies; the man who was haunted by spies had turned to spying and prying himself. An Enemy can be he who attacks, just as easily as he who is attacked. It is no accident that Lewis described his pen as a lance used to hunt enemies.[2] As a man-hunter the Enemy emphasised his direct lineage from the Soldier of Humour, the Tyro and the Vorticist. All are masks showing the artist in a posture of attack: a barbarous humourist flying at civilised throats, a sharp-fanged cubist stalking the forms of the visible world, and finally, a marauding armoured satirist impailing his victims on the lance of his pen. Given the persistence of this posture in Lewis's writings, it is at least understandable that 'brutal... Wyndham Lewis' and its variants are so easily taken as the whole truth about Lewis.

Better placed perhaps than his critics, Lewis's acquaintances have had more success in discriminating between the man they knew and his violent personae. For Augustus John it was characteristic that Lewis showed the whole range of his offensive skills only with the pen, and never face-to-face. John had just received a belligerent letter from Lewis and was in the mood for bluntness:

> You say there was nothing in your note you could not have said equally - I wish only you had delivered the bare meaning in words - for the style, the manner, the form, you could not have commanded verbally - such empty insolence could only lubricate your pen - not your tongue.[3]

Doubtless there is heated exaggeration in this assertion, but its essential truth is suggested by the curious fact that although there are countless written altercations in Lewis's correspondence at Cornell, there is hardly a mention of a face-to-face quarrel in which

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1. The Enemy, i, p. ix.
2. The Diabolical Principle, pp. v-viii.
3. Augustus John to W.L. n.d., ca. 1908. (Cornell).

Lewis took part. Typically, the Enemy's blasts were long-distance artillery bombardments - he had, after all, been a bombardier - rather than close-range fire, most salvoes being delivered from some carefully concealed position well underground. Lewis's man-hunting, to revert to his own metaphor, was confined to the lance of his pen. Augustus John was not the last to notice a gap between Lewis the writer and Lewis the talker; for John Rothenstein, one was aggressive, the other defensive:

> As a writer he was aggressive; he could hardly treat of any character without showing sooner of later the incomparably deadly claws of his satire; as a talker he was largely defensive, expressing his suspicions that this person or that had plotted or was plotting to do him an injury.[1]

The Enemy was a ferocious pen-personality, as distinct from the harried man who spoke to Rothenstein endlessly of plots and suspicions of plots. A friend who had been reading Rude Assignment made a similar observation to Lewis himself; and Lewis readily admitted a 'discrepancy' in a letter to Alan White:

> He read my 'Rude Assignment'.... He remarked how 'violent' my writing was, how 'gentle' I was myself.... I do recognise a discrepancy between Mr. W.L. the writer and my own easy-going, anything but contentious, self.[2]

This was unusually candid for Lewis, even if a little kind to himself. Characteristically, Edith Sitwell described the same sort of thing more uncharitably as 'a strong vein of sentimentality underlying all his brusqueness'.[3] However the discrepancy is put, it is clear that behind the familiar embattled mask of Mr. W.L. the writer, a milder, more diffident self surveyed the world with wary circumspection.

What is fascinating is the precise inversion registered by all of Lewis's masks: an artist pursued by a possessive woman and hunted by several persecutors represents himself as a predator; a man tormented by enemies becomes the Enemy incarnate. Lewis's public masks then, embody not only an ideal self but an anti-self; a self who is the direct antithesis of the private man revealed in his correspondence and in the recollections of his contemporaries. Not that the figure of the letters and the memoirs of others is somehow a more authentic Lewis, or less of a social self, than the public personae. If anything, it was the 'private man' who was the creation of social

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1. Summer's Lease, p. 129.
2. Letters, p. 528.
3. Taken Care Of, p. 103.

intercourse, while the public masks were created in the solitude of his studio, intimate reflections of the imaginative energies required to make the outer world conform to the artist's plastic will. Above all, the Tyro and the Enemy were not simply poses whose sole function was to conceal, even though concealment was part of their purpose. As Yeats recognised, the mask was a means by which the artist transcended himself, a way of overcoming the dominant tensions of his life, of liberating him for his art. The writer had the power to become all that the talker was not. Wearing the helmet of the Enemy, the man who habitually barricaded himself behind the strictest secrecy was freed from the limitations of a life fraught with fears and suspicions, not only to plough into his foes with fearless energy, but to take up the cause of an art whose ideals transcended the battlefield altogether, an art of Olympian serenity. When the Enemy introduced himself to his public in 1927 it was as champion of the classical spirit in the modern world.

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CHAPTER IV : THE ENEMY AS A NEO-CLASSICIST.

'I have not the time-mind. I am what Spengler would call a "Classical" intellect.' Time and Western Man.

Between 1926 and 1932, after a period of relative obscurity and in a sudden display of creativity which can have few parallels in the history of twentieth-century letters, Lewis arrested the public eye as never before. In six years he published eight volumes of discursive prose, among them such important works as The Art of Being Ruled (1926), The Lion and the Fox (1927), Time and Western Man (1927) and Paleface (1929), as well as four works of fiction, including The Childermass (1928) and the massive Apes of God (1930). Despite the remarkable speed at which Lewis worked, there was nothing indiscriminate about the books he produced. They were, to use his own image,[1] a disciplined fleet, a few major capital ships supported by smaller craft committed solely to their defence and all united under the flag of the Enemy.

'The Enemy' was at once the name of the periodical[2] in which large portions of Time and Western Man, Paleface and The Diabolical Principle first appeared and a public persona of its editor and major - almost sole - contributor. Not surprisingly, there is an evident continuity between the campaigns of the Enemy and the startling salvoes of BLAST. The Vorticists had been enemies of their age and many of their grudges against it, together with their demands for a new kind of 'masculine' coldness, for sharply-defined structure, geometrical purity and aloofness from nature, all found a central place in the Enemy's assaults on the post-War scene. What is less

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1. Rude Assignment, p. 195.
2. The Enemy in fact appeared only three times: twice in 1927 and once in 1929.

fully realised,[1] however, is the extent to which the Enemy disowned his Vorticist past. As he announced in the first number of The Enemy, by 1927 the revolutionary movement in art and literature had become the status quo; and, what was worse, it had fallen under the control of fashionable 'millionaire Bohemia', the social jungle where reputations were won and lost in a mêlée of backscratching and back-biting. To maintain his freedom he chose to move outside the movement, to become its Enemy. Where BLAST largely attacked the academic naturalism of the Royal Academy, the Enemy defined himself against Joyce, Pound, Lawrence, Gertrude Stein, Picasso and Diaghilev - still naturalism, to Lewis's mind, but decked in all the modernist apparel of stream-of-consciousness, primitivism, Bergsonian flux and intuition. In his opposition to these, the Enemy cast himself as the champion of the 'male' and 'chaste' visual intelligence, a neo-classical Apollo to Lawrence's romantic Dionysus.

More radical than the other English neo-classicists, the Enemy laid his axe to the organic metaphor itself by attributing the ills of the modern world to that revolutionary consciousness of time and history in which nineteenth-century romanticism had been so intimately implicated. Partly as a result, he was forced to derive his own accounts of the artistic and philosophic processes from pre-romantic models like Berkeley, Locke or Descartes. In defining himself against the 'time-mind' the Enemy had unwittingly taken two steps backwards into the 'classical', ahistoric, mechanical world of the eighteenth century where history was a history of great men, the creative, conscious few imposing their will on the uncreative many. For the Enemy, the creative superman was the mainspring of history, a plane above the determinisms of his age; whereas, by submitting to the fatalistic idea that we are prisoners of time, the contemporary revolutionary artist sank into the puppet-like submissiveness which had always been the lot of the uncreative and the second-rate. The Enemy, of course, claimed to be one of the creative, while most of the modernists had consigned themselves to the history of the second-rate.

In reality, Lewis was not a lone classicist towering above Time.

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1. Neither Hugh Kenner nor Geoffrey Wagner distinguishes adequately between the Vorticist and Enemy periods.

Not only should he be placed alongside writers in English like T. S. Eliot and Herbert Read, but when his own writing is compared closely with the work of certain French neo-classicists of the period, notably Julien Benda and Henri Massis, much that is held to be distinctive about it begins to disappear. Clearly, the Enemy was as much subject to the stresses and influences of his age as Joyce, and, if anything, in the actual performance he is even less classically aloof, impersonal and serenely Olympian. All too easily the Enemy descends to intellectual brawling, involving himself in the very jungle he affects to despise. The Enemy's neo-classicism, like the Vorticist's severe sang-froid, was something of an ideal.

The Vorticist himself had been a neo-classicist of sorts, but where he reflected the ferocious pre-War face of antiromanticism and its demand for violent self-expression, the Enemy championed an 'objective', 'impersonal' and 'scientific' art which reflected something equally profound in the mood of an age sated with violence and ferocity. In BLAST, the artist's all-consuming will, his rapacious masculinity, expressed itself in the figure of a barbarian. Repelled by the real-life barbarities of 1914-1918, the Enemy rejected Vorticist masculinity for the calmer masculinity of the intellect which found its natural expression in the placid poise of the Chinese sage. Lewis's antiromantic archetypes were themselves submissive to history and Time.

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In 1926 Lewis began attacking what he took to be a unanimous commitment among Western intellectuals to progressive doctrines in the arts,[1] time-doctrines in philosophy[2] and revolutionary doctrines in politics.[3] As he often pointed out, the man who had once advocated killing John Bull with art was no stranger to revolution himself,[4] but it was now clear to Lewis that revolutionary thought itself had

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1. The Enemy, ii, pp. xxii-xxiii.
2. Time and Western Man, p. 244.
3. The Art of Being Ruled, p.3.
4. For example, The Diabolical Principle, p. 24 and ff.

become a tyrannical orthodoxy.[1] As he explained in his editorial in The Enemy No. 1, it was for this reason he had become an 'outlaw': 'Outside I am freer'.[2] It is important not to underrate the significance in Lewis's work of the labels 'outlaw' and 'outsider', nor to gloss over the extreme individualism they imply. When in the preface to Filibusters in Barbary he half-jokingly refers to himself as the 'Luther of Ossington Street'[3] Lewis is adducing something important in his make-up which deserves to be urged against anyone tempted to portray him exclusively as a Hulmian advocate of ('crypto-Fascist') 'Catholic' 'discipline'. Just as Tarr anticipates Sartre's Mathieu, so Lewis's Enemy-outsider seems to have been groping towards a Sartrean notion of authenticity with its rigorous rejection of Etre-pour-autrui which, considering the debt of both to Nietzsche, may not be so accidental as first appears. The Enemy outlines the advantages of his outlawed state:

> First, being in solitary schism, with no obligations at the moment towards party or individual colleague, I can resume my opinion of the society I have just left, and its characteristics, which else might remain without serious unpartisan criticism. My observations will contain no social impurities whatever; there will be nobody with whom I shall be dining to-morrow night (of those who come within the scope of my criticism) whose susceptibilities, or whose wife's, I have to consider.[4]

This positive element in Lewis's movement underground cannot be ignored. His disappearance from the salons and dining-rooms of High Bohemia was not simply a desperate retreat from the line of fire of dangerous enemies or the repressive revolutionary orthodoxy which they represented, but was informed by an instinctive aversion for the 'impurities', the mauvaise foi, involved in all social life. For Lewis, it is not Ulysses the general who tells the truth in Troilus and Cressida but Thersites the 'outcast'.[5] One of the central affirmations in Lewis's writing is that only outsiders speak objectively.

It showed Lewis's strength and skill as a writer that he could transcend the purely personal circumstances of his self-imposed

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1. Men Without Art, pp. 170-171.
2. The Enemy, i, p. ix.
3. Filibusters in Barbary: Record of a Visit to the Sous (1932), p. vii.
4. The Enemy, i, p. ix.
5. The Lion and the Fox, p. 248.

exile by transforming his isolation into a commanding intellectual virtue: Who is as candid as an Enemy? In any case, as he frequently argued, a man who tells the whole truth automatically becomes an Enemy. Whereas society instinctively respects and trusts the man who deals in Catonic truth or the 'necessary' lie, the philosopher's undiluted truth is an enemy-principle.[1] Here Lewis had in mind two predecessors. Machiavelli and Nietzsche. The author of The Prince was universally maligned in Renaissance England only because he openly said what every noble and courtier concealed in his heart.[2] 'What is it men fear beyond everything?' he asks in One-Way Song: it is an 'open person', 'One of us "truthful ones"'.[3] Here he is consciously echoing Nietzsche to whom the idea of the Enemy owes much. Machiavelli and Nietzsche were Enemies because they said in public what society will only tolerate in private. For most men, anything goes in private. Bloomsbury and High Bohemia were cases in point which were seldom far from Lewis's mind. It was from the 'social gutter' of the salon tea-party that the dirt which collected on modern writers and artists was anonymously despatched.[4] Here, in private, was where careers in the arts were made or ended. In public, on the other hand, these same mud-slingers were models of tactful indirectness and politic evasiveness.[5] The Enemy confidently heralded a new champion of straightforwardness and candour, publicly truthful to a fault, fearlessly open, although not vindictively aggressive. The Enemy was to be above the purely 'personal', as he was above the 'private'. It would be mistaken ideas that he opposed, and no heads would be cracked, except by ideas.[6]

Above all, the Enemy defined himself as the antagonist of a cluster of ideas which threatened to subvert the Western world. These ideas were characterised by 'femininity', not because they were necessarily held by women but because they were hostile to the authority of the robust, 'masculine' intellect on which Western achievement had been based. The Enemy recoiled from the kind of world which 'femininity' might produce:

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1. The Enemy of the Stars (1932), pp. 51-53.
2. The Lion and the Fox, p. 76 and ff.
3. One-Way Song, p. 47.
4. The Enemy, i, p. xiii.
5. The Enemy, ii, p. xi.
6. Ibid, p. xiii.

> This, under correction, would be more puritanic and fastidious, more excessive and emotional, than a masculine one. No make-weight of typical masculine phlegmatism would deaden it. More uniquely alive to the things of the moment; more docile and mercurial; more burdened with and swayed by the tidal movements of the unconscious - finally, more unconscious, less 'intellectual' : that is what, for convenience, I call 'feminine'.[1]

Lewis's 'feminine' is really a hold-all term which may refer by turns to action, the emotions or the unconscious, indeed anything which is not the intellect. Sometimes it is applied to 'intuition'[2] and at other times to 'sensation'.[3] Characteristically, there is something oddly self-invalidating about Lewis's prose: the idea of the 'feminine' owes rather less than it ought to the hard-headed precisions of the intellect. What is clearer is the identity of the philosophical arch-villain responsible for most of these inversions: Henri Bergson, whose durée calls men to abandon the rational life for the darker life of the senses. Among a long list of lesser villains, including Proust, Gertrude Stein and Joyce, is D. H. Lawrence, who, to Lewis's mind, takes the feminine principle as far as it will go by inviting the European to capitulate to the 'savage' consciousness.[4] The change of emphasis in Lewis's aesthetic may be judged from the fact that primitivism in Western art was now the supreme error. For Lewis, the savage no longer stood for 'primitive detachment' as he did in 1914, but for the 'hot, unconscious "soulless"' drumming of Lawrence's natives in Mornings in Mexico.[5] No longer applied to the infirm representationalism of the Royal Academy but to vigorous innovators like Lawrence, Lewis's 'feminine' had come to mean something very close to 'Dionysian'.

The Enemy confronted the Dionysian excesses of his age with the classical mask of Apollo. The 'thought' which he commends in Time and Western Man is described as 'chaste' and 'masculine'.[6] Of course, no sophisticated writer could use such a formula in 1927 without self-consciousness; it is a shade exaggerated, which suggests that in

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1. The Art of Being Ruled, p. 251.
2. Ibid, p. 243.
3. Time and Western Man, p. 27.
4. Paleface, p. 194.
5. Ibid, p. 196.
6. Time and Western Man, pp. 32, 49.

playing his self-chosen role as Enemy of the age Lewis took a certain sly delight in being deliberately provocative. In place of Lawrence's primitives - and his own barbaric Vorticist - Lewis offers the reader the great intellectual civilisations of the Greeks and the Chinese:

> So far as all that side of the argument is concerned - of ecstatic propaganda, of plunges into cosmic streams of flux or time, of miraculous baptisms, of the ritual of time-gods, and of breathless transformations - I have other views on the subject of attaining perfection. I prefer the chaste wisdom of the Chinese or the Greek....[1]

Chastity is specifically contrasted with the motion of plunging into, merging or losing oneself in a formless flux of time, feeling or action; it implies aloofness, tranquility and the firmest of oppositions between self and other, subject and object. For Lewis, thought is solitary[2] and art the 'stronghold... of the purest human consciousness'.[3] The resonances here are very much those of BLAST, proclaiming the Vorticists' efforts to'keep [themselves] pure for... art'.[4] What needs to be recognised, however, is how much more extreme the Enemy has become. The best thought and art are now products of the 'Not-Self';[5] that is, they are uncontaminated even by the 'self'. The notion of the 'Not-Self' sounds suspiciously like the idea of the artist's impersonality which Lewis at other times so decisively rejects.[6] He is especially hard on Eliot's pseudo-scientific, impersonal catalyst in Men Without Art.[7] What is ironic about this attack is that Men Without Art also contains his defence of satire - reprinted from Satire and Fiction - in which he claims immunity from the charge of wilful distortion in The Apes of God by appealing to the same scientific analogy:

> Satire in reality often is nothing else but the truth - the truth, in fact, of Natural Science. That objective, non-emotional truth of the scientific intelligence sometimes takes on the exuberant sensuous quality of creative art: then it is very apt to be called 'Satire,' for it has been bent not so much upon pleasing as upon being true.... It will only appear 'grotesque,' or 'distorted,' of course, to those accustomed to regard the things of everyday, and everyday persons, through spectacles couleur-de-rose.[8]

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1. Time and Western Man, p. 130.
2. Ibid, p. 37.
3. Ibid, p. 39.
4. BLAST, i, p. 148.
5. Time and Western Man, p. 270; Enemy of the Stars, pp. 51-53.
6. Especially in The Lion and the Fox, pp. 284-291.
7. Men Without Art, p. 91.
8. Ibid, p. 121.

Hostile response to The Apes of God drove him to adopt the kind of defence that he himself had warned against in The Art of Being Ruled; readers should be wary of those with scientific pretensions because 'in its impersonality and its "scientific detachment" [science] is an ideal cloak for the personal human will'.[1] It is perhaps characteristic of Lewis that after uncloaking the will behind science and seeing through Eliot's pseudo-scientific 'classical' 'disguise' he should try on the same costume himself. In the late twenties and early thirties the Enemy drifted towards a more extreme 'classical' position, hiding himself, especially after The Apes, behind the very theory of impersonality he had always attacked.

Nothing emphasises the new neo-classical element in the Enemy's aesthetic more than his emphatic rejection of violence in art. No doubt with BLAST in mind, he was careful to clear away any ambiguity attaching to his support of 'masculine' values by insisting that he was not advocating a masculinity of crude, predatory force.[2] Exponents of this kind of masculinity like Péguy, Berth, Maurras and Sorel, despite any classical pretensions they might have, were shown to be as much against the mind as Bergson himself.[3] Sorel's Réflexions sur la Violence was one of his favourite targets, although almost inevitably it was Nietzsche who was blamed for Sorel's napoleonics.[4] Lewis's relationship with Nietzsche was extremely complex. On the one hand, he admitted that Nietzsche was a great writer,[5] certainly more subtle than Sorel,[6] and there can be no dispute about the fact, as both Patrick Bridgwater and David Thatcher establish in their recent books,[7] that Nietzsche's influence on Lewis was profound. But despite this, possibly because of it, Lewis consistently attacked him. Unlike Bernard Shaw and more recent commentators like Walter Kaufmann, Lewis portrayed Nietzsche as an advocate, not of self-mastery,

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1. The Art of Being Ruled, p. 41.
2. Ibid, p. 252.
3. Ibid, pp. 379-386.
4. Ibid, p. 329.
5. Ibid, p. 123.
6. The Lion and the Fox, p. 94.
7. Nietzsche in Anglosaxony, pp. 133-135; Nietzsche in England, pp. 98-100.

but of mastery over others;[1] Lewis's Nietzsche was an apostle of 'tiger-like carnage'[2] who created in Europe a whole generation of supermen with 'bird-of-prey' ethics.[3] In fact, Lewis's own early personae illustrate the mood of this generation as well as any. By the late twenties, however, Lewis had begun to concentrate on the power-complexes of others, like the group which ran transition. While acknowledging that political power-complexes may be normal enough in worldly affairs, the Enemy could not tolerate their intrusion into art. Transition represented the politician disguised as the poet, which was, for him, the 'diabolical principle' itself.[4]

The Enemy's main objection to politics - expecially what he took to be transition's kind, Communism - was that they invited the spectator to become a 'dithyrambic spectator', one who rushes onto the stage to act.[5] All kinds of 'actors' were anathema to the Enemy, both men-of-action like Hemingway and Marinetti and stage-actors like Charlie Chaplin. In Time and Western Man Mussolini is a fusion of the two types.[6] Mussolini's gospel of action plunges its adherent into one discontinuous experience after another in a kind of sensational trance, thus destroying the individual continuity which is necessary for the intellect to function. Because of its tendency to break up the self into a series of disconnected selves, fascismo is a type of that 'ideal comedian's philosophy' which was taking hold of Western thought.[7] Mussolini's success merely reflects the age in which he lives:

> Butthe transition society of to-day, no doubt inevitably, is essentially an actor's world. The successful personality of the moment is generally an actor-mind (Mussolini): with all the instincts bred behind the footlights, the apotheosis of the life-of-the-moment, of exteriorality, display and make-up; and of extreme instability, fundamental breaks and intermittences, the natural result of the violent changes of, and the return of great chaotic violences into, our time.[8]

The unstable 'actor-mind' was ultimately a product of the violent

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1. The Art of Being Ruled, p. 54.
2. The Diabolical Principle, p. 113.
3. The Lion and the Fox, p. 65.
4. The Diabolical Principle, pp. 30, 124.
5. Ibid, pp. 235-238. For Lewis the dithyrambic spectator was invading both politics and the arts.
6. Time and Western Man, p. 36.
7. Ibid, p. 365.
8. Ibid, p. 365.

dislocations of the modern world itself. What Lewis seemed to fear was that personal discontinuity would encourage irresponsibility: 'If yesterday's self is not to-day's, then also the obligations contracted yesterday are no concern to to-day's self, and so on.'[1] It is for this same inclination to disown his past - in this case a past attitude - that he berates Eliot in Men Without Art. In fact, Eliot's kind of 'disintegration into a multiplicity of chronological selves'[2] is as much as assault on Western civilisation as Lawrence's attempt to capitulate to the primitive consciousness. 'Continuity,' Lewis proclaims in The Art of Being Ruled, 'in the individual as in the race, is the diagnostic of a civilised condition'.[3] The eighteenth-century resonances of 'civilised' are far from accidental. What Lewis was implicitly calling for was a return to the pre-romantic conception of a static self in a static world, repudiating at the same time that evolutionary model of the world which in the meantime had irreversibly transformed the consciousness of the West.

The Enemy's preference for the static, 'objective, material world of common-sense' over 'the "organic" world of chronological mentalism'[4] is a natural consequence of his partisanship for the eye. Everything he says, Lewis admits at the beginning of Time and Western Man, can be traced back to the eye.[5] It is not usually realised that this particular bias does not manifest itself in Lewis's discursive prose until The Art of Being Ruled, when the plastic artist is identified as an eye-man.[6] Previously, in The Tyro no. 2 (1921), for example, the eye had been accorded a very different status:

> The eye, in itself, is a stupid organ, or shall we say a stolid one. It is robust to a fault, where the ear is, if anything, hypersensitive. Everything received through the eye from the outside world has to be 'treated' before it can be presented to the imagination with a chance of moving it.... I am using the word 'imagination' to stand for that function

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1. Time and Western Man, p. 364.
2. Men Without Art, pp. 96-97.
3. The Art of Being Ruled, p. 229.
4. Time and Western Man, p. 175.
5. Ibid, pp. 7-8.
6. The Art of Being Ruled p. 391.

> of the mind that assesses and enjoys the purely useful work performed by the other faculties; the artist-principle in the mind, in short.[1]

Not only is the eye 'stupid' and 'stolid', but there is a significant distinction between its 'purely useful' function and the creative 'artist-principle in the mind'. By the time he wrote Satire and Fiction (1930), however, Lewis was proclaiming himself 'dogmatically... for the wisdom of the eye'.[2] Even allowing for the fact that it is a metaphor, 'the wisdom of the eye' represents a real shift of emphasis, from a 'subjective' aesthetic where the mind actively constructs reality - an idea Lewis rejects in Time and Western Man[3] - to an 'objective' one in which the mind passively registers the 'world of common-sense'. Where the Vorticist held that 'Reality is in the artist, the image only in life',[4] the Enemy preferred that 'sensation of overwhelming reality which vision alone gives... the reality of "common-sense"'.[5] No matter how much he attacked it in The Lion and the Fox,[6] the Enemy had moved towards the eighteenth-century conception of the mind as a mirror of reality. Needless to say, Lewis was aware that the realism of common-sense objectivity was 'naff'[7] and conscious that his defence of it flew in the face of almost all contemporary philosophical opinion. In fact, Lewis was not trying to convert philosophers, but to recreate a plastic aesthetic of the 'nobly defined and exact'[8] in a world which had been set in motion and reduced to a formless, ungeometrical flux, by what he called the 'time-school'.

The 'time-school', led by Bergson, was trying to destroy the reality of the stable, exterior, classical world and replace it with the ever-shifting, interior, psychological world. Here again, Lewis's emphasis had changed. For the Vorticist, the principle of order resided within the artist's mind; everything outside it was the flux.

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1. The Tyro, ii, p. 37.
2. Satire and Fiction, p. 53.
3. Time and Western Man, p. 408.
4. BLAST, i, p. 135.
5. Time and Western Man, p. 418.
6. The Lion and the Fox, p. 256.
7. Time and Western Man, p. 409.
8. Paleface, p. 255.

For the Enemy, order, art and civilisation belonged to the surface of life; below the skin man was a chaos of primitive hungers and fears.[1] Modern time-writers, using the method of 'telling from the inside', plunged the reader straight into this subcutaneous chaos. Lewis's principal target was Ulysses. Completely missing the containing mythic structure and the intricate balancing of character, episode and symbol, he accused Joyce of cluttering Ulysses with a mass of unstructured, undigested 'things', the minutiae of existence. Ulysses was a work of romantic naturalism or 'nature-morte', lifeless, nerveless and flabby. Partly as a consequence of his new zeal for the eye, Lewis was now disposed to admit to a form of naturalism, what he called 'scientific' naturalism, which consisted in seeing things from the outside and produced an effect of 'hardness'.[2] 'Hardness' referred both to the structural form which resulted from concentration on the surface of things and to the detached and uncompromising attitude of the scientific naturalist. The Enemy's answer to Ulysses was satire, the scientific truth about people. 'Satire', he writes in defence of The Apes, 'is cold and hard, and that is good'.[3] By contrast, Joyce's kind of naturalism was an extension of that 'soft' and romantic self-projection already castigated in BLAST. In this, Joyce was simply a man of his age. Where the Greek stood before a picture, the modern dithyrambic spectator wanted to sink into it.[4] In the artist, addressing himself to the transmutation of experience into art, this sinking or self-projecting notion amounted to an act of self-surrender, a 'feminine' act of capitulation to what Aristotle called the 'particular facts of history';[5] the mind producing 'nature-morte' lacked the creative energy, the 'masculine' will, to transform the common-places of undifferentiated life into the universal truth of art.

It was clear to the Enemy that the 'time-school' aimed to discredit the concept of free, creative will. This was being attempted by historians like Spengler, whose reality-as-history was seen as a religion of fate.[6] Lewis never distinguished between fatalism and determinism;

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1. The Art of Being Ruled, p. 260.
2. Time and Western Man, p. 120.
3. Satire and Fiction, p. 48.
4. Time and Western Man, p. 292.
5. Classical Literary Criticism, trans. T.S. Dorsch (1965), pp. 43-44.
6. The Enemy, ii, p. xxxiv.

for him, the idea that it is not we who make history but history which makes us[1] could have no other effect on those who believed it than to destroy free will altogether. Indeed, this was precisely what the sinister will lurking behind all modern time-doctrines was attempting to achieve: to keep the majority passive and dependent for the sake of 'sham' mass-democracy.[2] A truly 'scientific' history,[3] however, stripped of all the usual romantic trimmings, would show that the will of individual men is behind everything. Based on the pre-Romantic (and Hulmian) belief that man, in himself, is basically static and corrupt, 'scientific' history would be a candid chronicle of the crimes and follies that have changed the world. Lewis was well aware that both 'scientific' history and the classical mind he was defending were, vis à vis Spengler and the whole Hegelian tradition, 'ahistoric'.[4] In his inclination to be 'ahistoric', Lewis was not alone among modern writers. To some extent, Eliot's idea of 'tradition', Pound's 'culture', Yeats's and Joyce's use of myth, all stress what Eliot calls the 'presence' of the past rather than its 'pastness'.[5] In this respect, modernism, beginning with Flaubert and Nietzsche - as Georg Lukacs[6] points out - is partly a reaction against that revolutionary sense of historicity which had such an impact on the early nineteenth century. Characteristically, Lewis was a much more belligerent enemy of nineteenth-century 'history' than anybody else at that time writing in English. And again, to oppose it openly Lewis was forced to take his stand in the eighteenth century; 'scientific' history is nothing else but an endorsement of Gibbon's famous insight at the end of his prodigious labours: 'history is a record of mankind's follies'.[7] However, in his impatience with the organic metaphor on which romantic history depended, the Enemy probably had a more immediate master,

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1. Time and Western Man, p. 230-231.
2. Ibid, p. 316.
3. The Lion and the Fox, p. 32.
4. Time and Western Man, pp. 22, 307.
5. Selected Essays (1951), p. 14.
6. The Historical Novel, trans. H. & S. Mitchell (1962), pp. 204 and ff.
7. In The Lion and the Fox, p. 161, it is clear that Lewis did endorse Gibbon's conclusion.

Nietzsche.[1] For both Nietzsche and Lewis, nature was not a harmonious organism animated by a pantheistic World-Spirit in which the soul of man could find repose, but a chaos, only to be mastered by the will of the creative superman. 'Scientific' history would be a history of those supermen who - for all their crimes and follies - took history into their own hands; that is, a chronology of the deeds of rulers, leaders and creative men. Spenglerian history, on the other hand, was a history of those who had surrendered to fate: the ruled, the followers and the 'second-rate'.[2]

Prominent among the Enemy's 'second-rate' was a figure he called the 'Revolutionary Simpleton'. Artistic revolution had become fashionable in the post-War epoch, and the Revolutionary Simpleton was par excellence a creature of fashion, a follower of the orthodoxy of the moment.[3] Lewis's chief examples were Pound and Joyce. In Time and Western Man Pound is portrayed as a 'receptive' and uncreative 'consumer' of ideas.[4] With no thought of setting the fashions himself, Lewis's Pound was a 'sensationalist',[5] deriving all inspiration from the prevailing atmosphere of the moment. This of course meant that he was quite unstable; for example, he first opposed Marinetti and then became his disciple.[6] Joyce too, despite his admitted technical inventiveness,[7] was at the mercy of the flux; because of his unresisting susceptibility to outside influences, Ulysses was an 'orgy of "apeishness"'.[8] Both depended slavishly on fashion which, after all, had been created by someone else.[9] Pound and Joyce, therefore, belong to the massive ranks of the ruled.

The Revolutionary Simpleton was merely a more sophisticated version of the great majority of people who were only too willing to be ruled by somebody else. The central premise of The Art of Being

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1. La Gaya Scienza, pp. 151-152.
2. Time and Western Man, p. 17.
3. Ibid, pp. 43-44.
4. Ibid, p. 85.
5. Ibid, p. 54.
6. Ibid, p. 58.
7. Ibid, pp. 106, 109.
8. Ibid, p. 92.
9. Paleface, p. 120.

Ruled is that most people do not want to be free, but herd-like.[1] In herd-life, they find not only an identity in group-classification,[2] but, above all, repose from the exercise of free will.[3] For Lewis, this abdication of freedom to the group meant that most people became nothing more than 'automata';[4] with Henry Ford, he believed that 'Most men wish to be machines'.[5] In fairness, it ought to be kept in mind that many intellectuals of the period - not least T. S. Eliot - shared Lewis's pessimistic conception of 'the masses',[6] and especially those who, like Eliot, had also come under the influence of the Hulmian doctrine of Original Sin. But in this step from herd-life to machine-life, the Enemy probably went further than anybody else. It is here that the charge of brutality made by F. R. Leavis is hardest to deny. Lewis called his view of the masses the 'unsentimental' truth[7] which, he implied, every superior man really accepted; the Enemy had merely let 'the cat / Out of the bag'[8] like his predecessors Machiavelli and Nietzsche. Goethe's division of men into 'natures' and 'puppets'[9] was nothing else but the natural hierarchy of life,[10] and if there were few natures and multitudinous puppets, this was not the Enemy's plan, but nature's.[11] The step from the unsentimental truth about mankind to political theorising was short. Since there was so little sign that people wanted to be free, The Art of Being Ruled endorsed that principle of authority which people seemed to want so much.[12] Here

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1. The Art of Being Ruled, p. 35.
2. Ibid, p. 230.
3. Ibid, p. 143.
4. Ibid, p. 168.
5. Paleface, p. 237.
6. Raymond Williams, Culture and Society 1780-1950 (1961), pp. 287-290 analyses the meanings of the term and establishes its wide currency in the modern period.
7. Paleface, p. 79.
8. One-Way Song, p. 49.
9. The Art of Being Ruled, p. 135.
10. 'Creatures of Habit and Creatures of Change', The Calendar, iii (1926), p. 31.
11. Paleface, p. 74.
12. The Art of Being Ruled, p. 143.

again, in 1926 Lewis was not alone when he argued that liberalism and parliamentary democracy were the rubbish of a past civilisation.[1] Far preferable was a brand-new, efficient machine like Italy in which dictatorial powers were manifestly in the hands of those actually ruling and not nominally invested in the parliamentary façade of a sham democracy. It is perhaps too easy at this point in time to charge the Enemy with extreme naïveté for believing that a dictator 'with virtual powers of life and death'[2] would look kindly on artists and intellectuals. But in the year of the General Strike the idea of a stable and 'disciplined' state - for all the horrors we now associate with the idea - in which fellow-artists could get on with their work, made an understandably attractive, if tragically misconceived, alternative to an outmoded system which seemed to be stifling the creative individual.[3]

A great deal of Lewis's thought can be traced back to his concept of the creative individual. He was very much a man of his time in his championing of the romantic artist-as-hero against the philistinism of the uncreative herd. But of the men of 1914 it was probably Lewis who placed greatest emphasis on the individual talent: an emphasis unmatched by any countervailing allegiance to tradition, culture or any kind of social context. No doubt the Enemy saw himself as serving the individual artist in much the same way as Machiavelli served the individual tyrant, by shrugging off with matchless candour the competing claims of outdated social obligations. Creative thought for Lewis was absolutely solitary[4] and, in everything, true revolutionary impulses came only from exceptional individuals, never from crowds.[5] Moreover, of the men of 1914 it was Lewis who was most acute in his sense of the threat posed by the modern world to the creative few. For him, the individual was marked down for extinction,[6] especially by Communism which was attacking the principles of individual consciousness,[7] individual

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1. The Art of Being Ruled, pp. 68-84, 372.
2. Ibid, pp. 370-371.
3. Paleface, pp. 77-78.
4. Time and Western Man, p. 37.
5. Ibid, p. 41.
6. The Doom of Youth, p. 131.
7. 'Creatures of Habit and Creatures of Change', p. 31.

greatness,[1] and free will. Of these, the attack on free will was the most serious, for naturally, the creative individual's innovative power and leadership both depend on will. Above all, these were the qualities which elevated a man 'into an absolute region free of spenglerian "history"'.[2] In the importance he attached to the ability of will to lift a man into another category of being, freed from the determinisms which control ordinary men, Lewis underlined his debt to Zarathustra: Lewis's 'individual' was a kind of superman. Because he directed the flux of automatic life in which his workers discharged their machine-like functions, Henry Ford was a 'superman of the Machine Age'.[3] Such a man automatically possessed personal authority and the power to command allegiance from his puppet-like inferiors in the natural hierarchy of life; they in fact 'owe' it to him![4] The free individual was a natural leader of men.

Throughout these writings, the principal individual the Enemy had in mind was himself. He never concealed his conviction that he was writing from 'the stand-point of "genius"',[5] and rarely passed by a suitable opportunity of drawing attention to his gifts, perhaps by reminding the reader how much he had published in the year 1927-8,[6] or referring him to the reading-list of an American university where Time and Western Man had been made prescribed reading.[7] He claimed to be one of the natural leaders of the Western world;[8] but, because individual authority was under attack in the West, he was an outlaw. Nevertheless, he was able to provide abundant illustrations of his leadership in ideas. For example, when he began The Enemy there was nobody beside him, but by 1929 he was 'powerfully supported'[9] all over the world. Some of his followers dated from an earlier period. When Lewis launched his opposition to Marinetti in 1914 Pound, his 'parasite',[10]

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1. The Diabolical Principle and the Dithyrambic Spectator, p. 129.
2. Time and Western Man, p. 18.
3. Paleface, p. 237.
4. Ibid, p. 77.
5. The Doom of Youth, p. 132.
6. The Enemy, iii, p. vii.
7. Ibid, p. 99.
8. Paleface, pp. 81-82.
9. The Enemy, iii, p. vii.
10. Time and Western Man, p. 85.

tamely followed.[1] At about the same time, Joyce came under the influence of The Enemy of the Stars;[2] in fact, in Time and Western Man he expresses the hope that Joyce will heed his advice, 'for he would be a very valuable adherent'.[3] In Men Without Art, he claimed I. A. Richards and the Leavises as adherents.[4] The Enemy was careful, at the same time, to avoid any impression that he himself had been influenced. He might 'find [himself] ' in Paleface 'aligned' with the Catholic revival, [5] but he was generally quick to underline the independence of his own approach, mostly by emphasising his disagreements with important expressions of the Catholic revival like Henri Massis's Défense de l'Occident,[6] to which Paleface bears more than superficial similarities. He was also careful to avoid seeming reactionary. Unlike the Catholics, who were looking back to medieval Christendom as a model, the Enemy was no sentimentalist lamenting the passing of the old order; he wanted a new West, a new European melting pot.[7] Everything he endorsed had to be seen as a step forward, in spite of appearances to the contrary; Time and Western Man is 'one of those beginnings of progress which take the appearance of reaction'.[8] The superman's lofty Olympus above Time was not a retreat from the present, but a vantage-point from which he created the future by stirring up the flux in which lesser men moved and had their being. 'We are the creators', he triumphantly announced in Time and Western Man, 'Ezra battens upon us'.[9] There can be little doubt where the Enemy put himself in the natural hierarchy of life.

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How far was Lewis a lone and 'chaste' Olympian, above the time-flux of his age, yet creatively directing its currents? In view of the large claims made for works like Time and Western Man - Hugh Kenner calls

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1. Time and Western Man, p. 57.
2. Ibid, p. 127.
3. Ibid, p. 106.
4. Men Without Art, p. 14.
5. Paleface, p. 253.
6. Ibid, p. 256.
7. Ibid, p. 256.
8. Time and Western Man, p. 5.
9. Ibid, p. 85.

it 'one of the dozen or so most important books of the twentieth century'[1] - the question is evidently a central one.

It may be clearer now than it was at the time that the Enemy was neither alone nor quite so far above history as he made out. In the twenties, the opposition between 'classicism' and 'romanticism' was a question of intense interest among men of letters in the English-speaking world. When he was asked to deliver the Leslie Stephen Lecture at Cambridge in May of 1923, Sir Herbert Grierson chose the then-evocative title 'Classical and Romantic', a title which today has a somewhat dated and even faded appearance. On the other side of the Atlantic in the following year Arthur Lovejoy addressed the Modern Language Association 'On the Discrimination of Romanticisms'. Although it is highly improbable that Lewis was present at either of these academic gatherings, he was certainly keenly aware of the larger contemporary debate in which the voices of Grierson and Lovejoy were only two among many. Two debaters Lewis did hear were John Middleton Murry and T. S. Eliot whose famous tussle in The Adelphi and The Criterion lasted four years. It began late in 1923, just at the time when Lewis abandoned the circle gathered around The Tyro and moved into the orbit of Eliot and The Criterion. Murry started in The Adelphi by declaring himself - reluctantly at first - a romantic: one who attended to the 'inner voice' as opposed to the voice of external authority. Since Britain was a Protestant country, he argued, with a religious tradition founded on conscience, its true literary tradition was a romantic one.[2] Eliot's reply in The Criterion, initiated by his celebrated essay 'The Function of Criticism', showed strong affinities with the position adopted later by Lewis in The Enemy. Dismissing Murry's inner voice as the voice of vanity, fear and lust - the inner man was a 'rage of hunger and reproduction' for Lewis[3] - Eliot put his trust, like Lewis, in an outhority outside of the artist.[4] As the debate continued, Murry became identified with the defence of 'intuition', Eliot with the defence of Thomistic

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1. Wyndham Lewis, p. 74.
2. 'On Fear; And on Romanticism', The Adelphi, i (1923), pp. 269-277.
3. The Art of Being Ruled, p. 260.
4. 'The Function of Criticism', The Criterion, ii (1923), pp. 31-42.

'intelligence' or Hellenic 'reason'.[1] When he tilted at D. H. Lawrence in Paleface, Lewis drew up much the same lines of battle. Clearly, the place assigned by literary history for Lewis's defence of the intellect in the twenties is alongside Eliot's 'Function of Criticism' and Herbert Read's Reason and Romanticism (1926). For all its idiosyncratic emphases, the Enemy's neo-classicism belongs to a particular climate of thought, influenced by T. E. Hulme and ultimately, the école romane.

Lewis's debt to contemporary French neo-classicists has been established by Geoffrey Wagner,[2] but even he underestimates its magnitude by failing to note the way in which Lewis drifted to a more extreme neo-classical position in the years 1926 to 1930. This was a period, as Wagner himself points out, in which French neo-classicists were peculiarly influential in England, when works like La Trahison des Clercs and Défense de l' Occident were being translated into English only a year or two after their publication in French. What needs to be more fully realised is the extent to which major themes in The Art of Being Ruled, Time and Western Man and Paleface had been anticipated by Henri Massis and Julien Benda, in particular, in works which Lewis had certainly read.

Henri Massis's Défense de l' Occident was published in 1925, the English translation by R. S. Flint in 1927 - excerpts had appeared in The Criterion in 1926 - and Lewis had read it, in one form or another, by the time he came to publish the original version of 'Paleface' in The Enemy in September, 1927.[3] The very least that can be said is that there are striking parallels between the French work and the Enemy's criticism, expecially Paleface. Massis believed the 'root ideas of the West' to be 'personality, unity, stability, authority, continuity', and he too was convinced that 'the objective' and 'the

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1. T. S. Eliot, 'The Idea of a Literary Review', The Criterion, iv (1926), pp. 5-6; rev. of H. Read's Reason and Romanticism, The Criterion, iv (1926), pp. 751-757; 'Mr. Middleton Murry's Synthesis', The Criterion, vi (1927), pp. 340-347. J. Middleton Murry, 'Towards a Synthesis', The Criterion, v (1927), pp. 294-313; 'Concerning Intelligence', The Criterion, vi (1927), pp. 524-533.
2. Wyndham Lewis, p. 8 and ff.
3. The Enemy, ii, pp. 100-101, discusses the book.

intellectual' were under attack from non-Western cultures.[1] Both Eastern mysticism, which panders to man's eternal Dionysian instinct 'to lose himself in things', and the cult of instinct itself were 'everywhere denying to intelligence its primacy'.[2] Moreover, the Enemy was unfair to Massis when he characterised the Catholic revival as purely reactionary; Massis was at least equally insistent on the urgent need for Western man to define himself anew.[3] Also interesting are the connections with Time and Western Man. Spengler's idea that 'history alone is reality'[4] was as repugnant to Massis as it was to Lewis; in fact, Défense de l'Occident, as its title suggests, was in part an answer to Decline of the West. In any case, the attack on 'history', as Richard Griffiths establishes in The Reactionary Revolution, had been an integral part of the Catholic revival in France since its beginnings in the late nineteenth century.[5] By 1927, there was nothing particularly fresh in waging war on 'history'.

Geoffrey Wagner is not exaggerating when he calls Julien Benda Lewis's chief 'master'.[6] Like Eliot, Pound and Herbert Read,[7] Lewis was often generous in his estimate of Benda's work. He acknowledged the importance of Benda's defence of the intellect, his demolition of Bergson,[8] and even admitted that it was Benda who first noticed that sense of unanimity in the West[9] which he himself was determined to

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1. Defence of the West, trans. F. S. Flint (1927), pp. 1-13.
2. Ibid, pp. 151-154, 196. Although equally opposed to 'that hot, tawny brand of superlative fanaticism coming from the parched deserts of the Ancient East' (Time and Western Man, p. 130), Lewis concentrated in Paleface on the attack from primitive cultures. D. H. Lawrence's primitivism was seen as a movement to dethrone intelligence by putting instinct in its place, a movement back towards the self-extinction of the womb. (Paleface, pp. 179-184).
3. Ibid, p. 188.
4. Ibid, p. 22. See Time and Western Man, p. 264 and ff. for Lewis's attack on Spengler.
5. The Reactionary Revolution, pp. 43-53.
6. Wyndham Lewis, p. 9.
7. T. S. Eliot, The Sacred Wood (1960), pp. 44-46; Ezra Pound, 'The Island of Paris', The Dial, lxix (1920), pp. 406-411; Herbert Read, 'Julien Benda: A Critic of Democracy', The Realist, i (1929), pp. 18-27.
8. The Art of Being Ruled, pp. 247, 386.
9. The Enemy, i, p. x.

destroy. Lewis thought particularly highly of Belphégor, a book which Benda published in 1918, based on a series of uncollected essays written before the War. Perhaps Lewis's sincerest tribute to Belphégor was Time and Western Man itself. Even before the War, Benda saw himself confronting a 'conscious and organised campaign' which was being waged against 'masculine' intelligence by 'feminine' intuition, subjectivity and receptiveness to sentiment.[2] Evidently Benda's contemporaries had anticipated most of the 'feminine' artistic bêtes noires which Lewis was hunting in 1927. They too demanded that art should be dynamic, 'avoid any attempt to distinguish between things, all clean-cut separations and definite outlines, and [should] present them in their indistinctness, in their inter-penetration, in their mobility, in their fluidity';[3] for them, the artist should fuse with his subject, 'espouse the principle of internal activity' and place himself inside the flow of feelings which he is depicting.[4] Benda's benighted contemporaries too were followers of Bergson, believing with him that 'It is essential... to be no longer the spectator but the actor'.[5] Like Lewis, Benda lamented the decline of the detached spectator and those novels 'in which the author remains outside the workings of the soul he depicts'.[6] The preference for acting rather than looking had produced what Benda called the 'cult of the comedian':

> ... our contemporaries' aesthetic, in so far as it worships the representation of these regions in which speech is silent to make way for pure feeling, pure action, tends directly towards the cult of the comedian. And by the way, the cult of the comedian as pure gesticulator is to-day quite definitely established.7

Doubtless this passage inspired Lewis's account of the 'ideal comedian's philosophy' in Time and Western Man, and it may well help to account

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1. Time and Western Man, p. 292.
2. Belphégor, trans. S. Lawson (N.Y. 1929), pp. 15, 79-81, 124.
3. Ibid, pp. 6, 18.
4. Ibid, pp. 8, 55-58. These were precisely the heresies of which Joyce was accused in Time and Western Man.
5. Ibid, p. 60.
6. Ibid, p. 56.
7. Ibid, pp. 81-82.

for his about-turn - after 'The Code of a Herdsman' - on the whole matter of personal stability and continuity. However, it was probably the strong visual bias of Benda's aesthetic which exerted the profoundest influence on Time and Western Man. When Lewis's 'philosophy of the Eye' is seen alongside Benda's arguments for the primacy of sight in art, much of the distinctiveness of Time and Western Man - and it is presumably upon this that its 'importance' rests - begins to evaporate:

> 1st. The sensations of sight are naturally inseparable from the idea of the object which arouses them; they are sensation mixed with an intellectual condition, (the latter sometimes usurping almost all the field); they come under the heading of clear sensibility. Sensations of hearing, etc., during which we easily put aside the object which arouses them, constitute pure sensation, exempt, in so far as any conscious state can be, from any intellectual element; these come under the heading of clouded sensibility.
> 2nd. Sensations of sight impose upon the subject the idea of something outside of himself (judgement of exteriority); they make him aware of the limitation, the finite state of his being; sensations of hearing, etc., seem to him to come from inside; to him it seems as though by his own effort he were increasing the scope of his being; they make him aware of the infinitude of his ego.
>
> One may also say, in this connection, that sensations of sight impose upon the subject the idea of distinction between himself and the object of his vision (intellectual state, principle of severity), whereas sensations of hearing, etc., imply that feeling, so dear to our aesthetes, of a confusion between the subject and the object.[1]

How much of Lewis's devastating critique of the inner-aural-musical-sensational qualities found in the work of Pound, Joyce and Gertrude Stein (as opposed to his own external-visual-intellectual severity), is more than a brilliant elaboration, with arresting examples, of this basic insight?[2] Actually, the achievement of Time and Western Man lay not in its originality of insight, but in its encyclopaedic marshalling of Benda's 'feminine' categories, together with Spenglerian 'history', into an all-embracing critique of Time. But even here the Enemy was not alone. In La Trahison des Clercs, which appeared at about the same time as the original version of Time and Western Man (in The Enemy, i), Julien Benda deplored the tendency of modern intellectuals 'à ne considérer toute chose qu'en tant qu'elle est

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1. Belphégor, pp. 142-144.
2. See Time and Western Man, pp. 54-146 particularly.

dans le temps, c'est-à-dire qu'elle constitue une succession d'états particuliers, un «devenir» , une «histoire» , jamais en tant que, hors du temps, elle offre une permanence sous cette succession de cas distincts; surtout je veux parler leur affirmation selon laquelle cette vue des choses sous l'aspect de l'historique est seul sérieuse....'[1] Clearly, Lewis belonged to a particular current of thought, and he depended on what it turned up rather more than he pretended. It was perhaps characteristic of the Enemy, owing as much as he did to Benda, that he should later claim much of the credit for La Trahison des Clercs, and at the same time criticise Benda for not acknowledging the debt![2] When Lewis presents himself as a great innovator and leader he is offering the reader a flattering idealisation which, at times, is something close to a precise inversion of the truth.

Much the same is true for the Enemy's pretensions to 'classical' detachment. If Benda's fine restraint is compared with the Enemy's treatment of his opponents, it is at once apparent how little in practice Lewis resembled the chaste wisdom of the Chinese sage, or even the Kaltes Blut[3] of the duellist. And his critique of Ulysses in Time and Western Man, which exploits personal knowledge of Joyce's manners, class and nationality, sorts ill with The Enemy's promise to be impersonal, public and concerned only with ideas. Four years later, in order to justify his campaign against the editors of transition, the Enemy conveniently reduced 'Paul and Jolas' to 'the names of notions'.[4] The pamphlet in which this occurred, The Diabolical Principle, shows how far Lewis was prepared to carry his vendettas. He pressed on with the attack, even though - as he admits - transition had already folded up by the time he came to write the preface! Perhaps it was already too late by then to stop publication, but even so, it is difficult to believe from the stormy mixture of recrimination and self-justification

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1. La Trahison des Clercs (Paris 1928, imprint 16 Feb. 1927), pp. 124-126.
2. The Diabolical Principle, p. 121.
3. Lewis uses this image both in an interview with Louise Morgan, 'Wyndham Lewis: The Great Satirist of Our Day, Everyman, v (1931), p. 232, and in One-Way Song, p. 75.
4. The Diabolical Principle, p. ix.

which follows the preface that the Enemy was purely motivated by an impersonal desire to correct mistaken 'notions'. Ever lurking in the background of the pamphlet is a hostile review of The Enemy which appeared in transition in 1927, portraying 'Paleface' as imitative and reactionary.[1] The Diabolical Principle was only part of his answer to transition. The revised Paleface, which was published a year after the review, contains a long section where Lewis not only denies that he is reactionary, but describes himself as 'the nearest approach to a priest of the new order'.[2] That is, in order to destroy transition's portrait of him, Lewis was willing to pose, on the spot, as its opposite. Again, Lewis's mask was a defence, shaped in the heat of a literary brawl against the blows of his opponents. For all his 'classical' panache, the Enemy's principal posture was one of ferocious self-defence.

By 1931, Lewis was becoming somewhat embarrassed by the conflict between the Enemy's belligerent behaviour and his defence of classical stasis.[3] At the end of the Enemy's Interlude in One-Way Song, the poet is forced to apologise for his double:

> Ang yet this 'Enemy' counters all my song.
> His is a battle all the way along.
> With him the machete never seems to rust.
> No room with him for thoughts of the ultimate dust.[4]

The interesting thing is that the Enemy's status has been subtly changed: whereas the cover of The Enemy iii simply said 'The "Enemy" is the notorious author, painter and publicist, Mr. Wyndham Lewis', here and elsewhere after 1930 the Enemy, or 'the pamphleteer', were no longer unconditionally identified with Lewis 'the artist'. Indeed, Lewis took considerable pains to dissociate the two. In an interview in 1931 he declared that there was no connection at all between creativity and pamphleteering; his pamphlets were 'usually quite carelessly written'.[5] In The Diabolical Principle he calls them

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1. 'First Aid to the Enemy', transition, ix (1927), pp. 161-176.
2. Paleface, p. 81.
3. The Diabolical Principle, pp. 31-32.
4. One-Way Song, p. 77.
5. Interview with Louise Morgan, op. cit., p. 232.

'rapidly executed polemical essays', and even the Enemy's masterpiece shares in the shortcomings of this slapdash genre: 'Such an essay as Time and Western Man is not supposed to imitate in its form an attic temple.'[1] That is, the Enemy is the artist's irascible, excitable and careless 'bull-dog pamphleteer-double'[2] who gets embroiled in the time-wasting, but obligatory skirmishing of literary journalism. By this kind of sleight, Lewis is able to preserve his neo-classicism intact; the artist is still 'an impersonal seer', even though 'doubled with an efficient pamphleteer'.[3] There is never any doubt about which is being offered to the reader as the essential Lewis; the Enemy is merely an iron Mask, Lewis overdoing 'The man's part',[4] whereas the 'I' of One-Way Song continues to be concerned with thoughts of the ultimate dust. In reality, as The Apes of God shows, the 'impersonal seer' is as much a mask as the Enemy's menacing grin.

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At the beginning of Time and Western Man Lewis describes existence as a 'boiling and shifting world' in which all kinds of contradictory tendencies mix and struggle for supremacy.[5] In order to cohere as an individual, one must try to fix upon what is fundamental to oneself and to exclude everything which contradicts it. Time and Western Man, which was written to affirm what he calls the 'essential ME', was a part of this process of self-definition. By the 'essential ME' Lewis means all those neo-classical values of 'male' chastity, detachment and objectivity which the book so single-mindedly defends. Still, as he concedes at the outset, these values are never without domestic opposition:

> This decision [to fix upon 'my most essential ME'] has not, naturally, suppressed or banished the contrary faction, almost equal in strength, indeed, and even sometimes in the ascendant.[6]

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1. The Diabolical Principle, pp. 31-32.
2. Ibid, p. viii.
3. One-Way Song, p. 62.
4. Ibid, p. 37.
5. Time and Western Man, pp. 5-7.
6. Ibid, p. 6.

Even here, however, Lewis is not being wholly accurate; the 'contrary faction' was in the ascendant more than sometimes. The truth is that Lewis was all too rarely calm, indifferent and serenely wise, and all too often nervously self-defensive, touchy, and susceptible to momentary influences and excitements. Actually, Lewis's 'essential ME' was another anti-self; the 'impersonal seer', a new ideal self usurping the place of the bloodthirsty Vorticist as Lewis's antiromantic archetype. Pierpoint in The Apes plays this official, neo-classical self, while Zagreus represents the romantic 'contrary faction'.

In his novels, the interplay between Lewis's various selves found natural expression. The discursive prose of the Enemy, however, was such a rigidly militant one-way song that the repressed faction could only express itself perversely by projecting its energies surreptitiously outwards onto manifestly official targets. With Lewis, one senses that it was because of the power of the excitable romantic within that he attacked romantic excitement so intemperately in others like Joyce and Pound. Unlike Yeats, Lewis all too often made rhetoric, rather than poetry, out of the argument with himself.

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CHAPTER V : THE APES OF GOD (1930): THE ARTIST AS A HUNTED GOD.

'Prosperous mountebanks who alternately imitate and mock at and traduce those figures they at once admire and hate.'
The Apes of God.

In Time and Western Man the Enemy diagnosed the 'soft' and flabby romanticism of Joyce and in Paleface the 'hot' and abdominal romanticism of Lawrence. The Apes of God [1] was heralded as a timely antidote to these distempers of modern literature, an example of what could be done using the 'hard' and 'cold' approach of the classical intellect. After generations of romanticism, Lewis persistently argued, modern men were so accustomed to looking at the world with rose-coloured spectacles that they could no longer see reality at all. A satire like The Apes of God, on the other hand, although it might seem to distort reality, represented it objectively. Satire was nothing else but the plain, unromantic truth. The satirist then, should not be regarded as a misanthropic monster, maliciously reviling mankind, but simply as an artist who could see his fellows dispassionately, sub specie aeternitatis, with the impassive eye of the intellect. Nor was the true satirist out to score against his personal enemies, much less to flatter friends or publicise himself, as many modern novelists did. True satire was above the private concerns of any social circle, just as it transcended the immediate interests of Time. For Lewis, satires like those of Jonson or Swift possessed all the objectivity, impartiality and rigorous detachment of natural science.

Given the neo-classical stance he adopted in Time and Western Man and Paleface, it is not difficult to see how Lewis hit upon such a defence of satire when he came under attack in 1930. It is more difficult, however, to apply this defence to The Apes of God. Admittedly, Lewis does manage to sustain a certain air of detachment from the work, partly by taking on the persona of Pierpoint, a character who is often discussed, but who never appears onstage. Nevertheless, a more active persona can be discerned under the heavy satirical camouflage of Horace Zagreus. At times Zagreus not only resembles his creator, but acts as his advocate within the antagonistic Ape-herd, answering Lewis's

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1. All references, included in the text, are to the 1931 edition.

critics and counter-attacking the satirical effigies of his enemies. Lewis's correspondence shows that certain episodes in the novel - particularly the argument between Zagreus and the Keins - formed part of a continuing dispute between Lewis and members of his circle. That is, dressed up as the Ape Zagreus, Lewis participates in the action surreptitiously, and his demeanour is anything but disinterested. Documentary evidence also reveals the strange mixture of contempt and suspicion with which Lewis regarded many of those prototype-Apes, his former patrons and acquaintances. These Apes are not so much creations of the impassive eye as subjective reflections of a highly idiosyncratic mind. Their creator appears all too rarely as an aloof scientist, rigorously exposing Bloomsbury vice and Chelsea folly, and all too often in the curiously romantic role - reminiscent of les poètes maudits rather than Pope or Dryden - of an outcast god, torn to pieces by the slanders of his worshippers. It is not Pierpoint the absentee who symbolises Lewis's relationship with the Ape-herd, but Zagreus the partisan, whose name recalls the myth of a hunted god.

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In The Lion and the Fox Lewis repudiated the idea, with all his characteristic force, that the work of a great artist like Shakespeare could be seen as an impersonal mirror of society, nature or the external world. Rather, Shakespeare 'participated' in the tragic experiences of his characters, who 'were much more mirrors held up to his tired and baffled mind than they were the mirrors of any nature that he objectively could know'.[1] After Time and Western Man, however, where he first proclaimed himself decisively to be a champion of the visual, classical intelligence, Lewis drifted irresistibly towards the idea of art as an objective mirror of the world. By the time he came to present his defence of The Apes in Satire and Fiction, the analogy between ocular and artistic perception had taken control of his aesthetic thinking. The Apes was an example, par excellence, of what he called the 'Philosophy of the EYE'. The analogy, in fact, will

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1. The Lion and the Fox, p. 160.

not bear close inspection,[1] but its implications are plain enough: the eye is an outward-looking organ, apparently registering the external world dispassionately and impartially. Since satire records only what the eye sees, it is 'nothing else but the truth, in fact that of Natural Science. That objective, non-emotional truth of the scientific intelligence'.[2] Here, as the context shows, Lewis is specifically answering the charge that satire deals in the 'grotesque' and the 'distorted', just as in Rude Assignment he rejects the implication that the satirist is malicious.[3] Pritchard is surely mistaken then, when he detects the rudiments of a rival theory of satire in Zagreus's announcement: 'True satire must be vicious' (450).[4] It is true that the statement seems to bear the usual marks of Lewis's endorsement, even though, two pages later, Zagreus concedes that satire is better without anger. More representative is the reply Lewis himself gave in 1931 to an interviewer who asked if he hated the people he pilloried: 'Everything I do is done in cold blood. Kaltes Blut you know.... The temperament of the duellist'.[5] His thrusts may seem spiteful or vindictive, yet the satirist remains inwardly cold and detached.

In the lengthy discussion which takes place 'Chez Lionel Kein' Lewis introduces this same conception of satire into The Apes of God itself. Echoing Swift,[6] Zagreus describes satire as a public mirror of the world in which nobody recognises himself because nobody can bear to face that naked scientific truth which the Swiftean eye reveals: everybody is objectively unbearable (255-7). Throughout his disquisition Zagreus contrasts the unyielding severity of Swift with the normal run of modern authors who carefully shield the reader from the objective truth. Like Flaubert, these authors construct an

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1. One wonders how seriously Lewis took it. Surely he would have instantly conceded the brain's role in selecting and editing what the eye 'sees'.
2. Satire and Fiction, p. 48.
3. Rude Assignment, p. 54.
4. Wyndham Lewis, p. 78.
5. Interview with Louise Morgan, p. 232.
6. This is pointed out by Robert C. Elliott, The Power of Satire: Magic, Ritual and Art (Princeton, 1960), p. 231, in a useful chapter on Lewis's theory of satire.

artful façade of scientific impersonality by adding at least a touch of malevolence to all of their characters, so that there are no heroes in any conventional sense. In reality, however, some characters are less evil than others and usually, lurking beneath some particularly innocuous blemish, the reader can find what Zagreus calls a 'whimsical, half-apologetic, but very much sheltered and coddled projection of the writer himself' (262). More serious yet, behind his mask of impersonality the novelist is able to flatter patrons, attack enemies and therefore wield considerable power. Such novels are political, implicated in 'the hot and immediate interests of "real" everyday social life' (266), which are obviously incompatible with the interests of scientific truth. Since Zagreus's words here come from Pierpoint, there are sure grounds for regarding them as a manifesto for The Apes of God itself. At least, Lewis is informing the reader, here is a novel which is genuinely impartial and detached.

In The Apes, Lewis uses a device which seems to guarantee his remoteness from the world he is describing: Pierpoint, his most obvious persona in the novel, never appears. In critical discussions of the work, the identification of Lewis with Pierpoint is well established.[1] Indeed, the only thing which might cause discomfort about this identification is the fact that the trail of clues leads so obviously to Lewis. Like Lewis, Pierpoint is said to be Welsh, with an Irish mother (297).[2] He is a painter turned philosopher (129), a 'famous matador' (259) who models himself on Whistler (129) - all references to Lewis's contemporary public role as the Enemy.[3] Moreover, nearly all the doctrines attributed to Pierpoint can be traced, chapter and verse, to The Art of Being Ruled, Time and Western Man and Paleface.[4] But most important of all is Pierpoint's title 'the Great Absentee' (261),

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1. Hugh Kenner, Robert C. Elliott and W. H. Pritchard all identify Pierpoint with Lewis.

2. Lewis sometimes allowed it to be assumed that, because of his surname, he was Welsh; his mother was half Irish. See chapter VII for a discussion of Lewis's nationality.

3. Lewis turned 'philosopher', of course, with Time and Western Man, and Whistler's Gentle Art of Making Enemies was thought by some of Lewis's contemporaries - for example, Maurice Dekobra, 'The Art of making Enemies', Daily Herald, 21 May 1932, p. 8 - to be a source of the Enemy.

4. For example, Lewis's attacks on the Stein-stutter and the cult of the Child-Mind are attributed to Pierpoint, pp. 420-421.

which echoes Lewis's announcement in The Enemy i that he had left millionaire Bohemia to become its Enemy. Pierpoint's absence among the Apes is described in various ways: Kein hasn't seen him lately (247); Pierpoint doesn't see the Finnian Shaws any more (396-7). In fact, Lewis had broken off relations with the originals of these characters, Sydney Schiff and the Sitwells,[1] a few years earlier. Pierpoint's absence reflects Lewis's own disappearance from the fashionable artistic scene in 1923-4. Lewis, of course, is not simply being gratuitously autobiographical. Rather, in Pierpoint he is contriving for himself a crafty alibi: if readers recognize him as the Great Absentee, then they will find no 'sheltered and coddled projéction' of the author himself actually appearing in The Apes of God.

Of the characters who do appear in the novel, the only one inviting consideration as a possible projection of Lewis is Horace Zagreus. Zagreus, however, seems to be disqualified in almost every conceivable way. Several characters, including Blackshirt (481), call him an Ape, and he himself admits to being a mere instrument of Pierpoint. Repeatedly, Zagreus is discovered to be 'acting' or 'impersonating' Pierpoint; that is, aping his God, which makes him an Ape in the most obvious sense of the word. Other characters suggest that he is a repressed homosexual. Again, Lewis seems to give substance to the imputation when Dan, dressed as a woman at Zagreus's behest, cries: 'Oh Horace Horace - why hast thou willed me a woman! Oh!' (455). For the author of The Art of Being Ruled all forms of inversion symbolised the cultural decay of the period, so that Zagreus's fondness for young men was an indelible mark of his Apehood. In any case, his admiration for the 'genius' of one young man after another is heavily satirised, especially when it is expressed in such transports as: 'You fountain of life!' (288). Julius Ratner calls Zagreus a 'dilettante' and 'sentimentalist' (430, 455), correctly, even though Ratner too is an Ape. The difficulty of endorsing one Ape's opinion of another Ape forces Lewis towards the end to introduce a character with sufficient authority to deliver a decisive judgement

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1. Although Lewis denied that any of the characters had living models, he admits in a notebook in the Cornell collection that identification of the Finnian Shaws with the Sitwells could be easily established in court; see chapter IX. Marjorie Firminger was only one of a large number of Lewis's correspondents at Cornell to recognize the Keins as Sydney and Violet Schiff. In any case, the portraits of both families are extremely obvious.

upon the whole Ape-herd, including Zagreus. This function is fulfilled by Blackshirt, Pierpoint's political secretary, whose healthy virility stands out clearly, almost heroically,[1] against the fin de siècle decadence of Lord Osmund's pack. It is Blackshirt's refreshing realism - the Fascists clearly recognise that Dan is nothing but an idiot (481) - which finally puts Zagreus's Apehood beyond any doubt.

Zagreus is dissociated from his creator in another way. Like Marjorie Hemming, when she read the the original edition of The Apes in 1930, many of Lewis's readers would have recognised Horace Zagreus as a fictional portrait of a well-known London figure, Horace de Vere Cole.[2] Apart from the fact that Zagreus has Cole's first name, there are at least two unmistakable points of resemblance.[3] The first is physical. According to Augustus John, who knew him well, Horace Cole had a spectacular crop of white hair.[4] Likewise, Horace Zagreus is described as an albino (14, 217). Horace Cole also appears in several memoirs of the period as the notorious practical joker,[5] who, together with Virginia Woolf, Duncan Grant and Adrian Stephen, posed as the Emperor of Abyssinia and his train and ceremonially inspected H.M.S. Dreadnought.[6] Horace Zagreus, too, is a famous practical joker (506); in an exploit similar to Cole's, Zagreus is supposed to have dressed up as a Guards Officer and disarmed the sentries at Buckingham Palace (214). Clearly, as a homosexual, a romantic dilettante and above all, as an eccentric prankster with Bloomsbury connections, Zagreus would appear to be nothing else but an Ape.

Nevertheless, to see Zagreus purely as an Ape raises several problems. Augustus John touches on one of them in his contribution to Satire and Fiction when he expresses surprise that Lewis has

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1. Blackshirt falls short of true heroic status in many ways. He even seems to be aware of the fact that he does 'harm to Pierpoint's cause' (510). If only Lewis had heeded his own prophecy!
2. 'No Quarter', pp. 50-51.
3. There are also points of divergence. Horace Cole, for example, seems to have had a more orthodox interest in the opposite sex.
4. Chiaroscuro, p. 62.
5. Ibid, and Roy Campbell, Light on a Dark Horse (1971), p. 233.
6. Michael Holroyd, Lytton Strachey and the Bloomsbury Group: His Work, Their Influence (1971), p. 31.

endowed some of his Apes with 'unexpected intelligence'.[1] One character John had in mind here, according to Marjorie Hemming, was Zagreus. He is reputed to have said to Lewis: 'What a stroke of genius giving Horace Cole a brain!'[2] The observation is a telling one, underlining the ambivalence of Lewis's attitude to Zagreus: for all his flaws, Zagreus is the only intelligent character appearing throughout the book. Not only this, he is both deaf and keen-eyed. At the beginning Lewis lavishes great attention on Zagreus's eyes. Within the space of two pages, we find 'his eye calculating' (51), 'his eyes rolling' (53) or else he is 'sternly fixing his eyes', capturing other characters in his 'penetrating stare' (52). When Zagreus proclaims that he does not hear, but sees, what people say (308), Lewis is deliberately wringing out that common-sense equation of seeing with understanding which is preserved in the verb's ambiguity. That is, Zagreus's view of the Ape-world is given a certain symbolic authority because it originates exclusively from the eye. The fact that he is a 'surveyor' by profession (51, 216) confirms this authority. For the writer who is 'dogmatically... for the wisdom of the eye, rather than that of the ear'[3] Zagreus is a fitting instrument to scan and analyse the underworld of artistic pretence. But he is even more than a reliable instrument in Lewis's hands. In The Apes the satirist is God, and the fact that Horace Zagreus bears the name of a satirist, together with the name of a god[4] - at one point he is called a 'god' (50) - suggests a much more intimate connection between character and creator. Probably among the first to notice the connection was Sydney Schiff, who read 'Mr Zagreus and the Split-Man' when it was published in The Criterion in 1924. Soon afterwards, he wrote to Lewis praising it:

> The New Statesman examples of your recent excretions are healthy - evidently a Zagreus diet suits you.... Zagreus presents himself with a certain diabolical assumption of not unfamiliar origin.[5]

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1. Satire and Fiction, p. 27.
2. 'No Quarter', p. 51.
3. Satire and Fiction, p. 53.
4. The mythical significance of this name is explored below.
5. Sydney Schiff to W.L., 2 May 1924, (Cornell).

This is of course somewhat cryptic; yet if the references to Zagreus are examined against a biographical background their implication becomes clear: Schiff saw Zagreus as a portrait of Lewis himself.

It is not difficult to see what Schiff meant by Zagreus's 'diabolical assumption' in the 'Split-Man' episode.[1] He keeps Ratner waiting outside his door and, once Ratner manages to get inside, orders him around imperiously. Zagreus is found to be masked and the mask, it seems, signifies the same contempt as the locked door: 'The mask was retained to insult him - it was a more intimate, a more offensive obstruction' (331). Towards the end of the scene Zagreus keeps the insult alive by spitting in Ratner's face (344). Zagreus's attitude is made quite explicit; his contempt is consciously formulated. Not only is Ratner Zagreus's 'servant' and his 'parasite' (332), but he has no independent meaning whatsoever: 'But you were made for me,' the masked Zagreus blandly explains, 'not for yourself' (331). Zagreus is also Dan's 'master' (177, 130), even though Dan is not subjected to quite the same indignities. However, like Ratner, Dan is something less than a disciple. Francis Dallas calls him Zagreus's 'latest suffix': 'your favourite word, do you remember?' Francis adds, making it plain that Dan is only one in a long line of suffixes (53). Again, the implication of 'suffix' is that the disciple has no significance except that imparted to him by the master. Lewis's favourite image for this kind of dependent reality is the puppet; in the end, Dan discovers that he is Zagreus's 'puppet' (416). The relationship between Zagreus and Dan, as Pritchard points out, is one which recurs in Lewis's fiction.[2] It was also a recurring theme in Lewis's relations with other people.

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There were people over whom Lewis exercised a peculiar kind of dominance. There was more than a hint of it, for instance, in his

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1. Except in certain interesting respects, discussed below, this episode is substantially the same in the 1930 edition of the novel.
2. Wyndham Lewis, p. 79.

early friendship with Ezra Pound, who occasionally appears in Lewis's letters from the Front as a good-natured lackey required to chase around London executing Lewis's literary and artistic hack-work.[1] The tendency was more marked, however, with admirers and patrons, especially if they happened to be aspiring artists. W. K. Rose notes the 'master-disciple relationship' between Lewis and 'Dick' Wyndham,[2] a painter and one of Lewis's chief patrons in the twenties. The master's influence can be plainly seen in Wyndham's draughtsmanship[3]- Lewis taught him to draw[4] - but the influence was evidently not confined to art. In the exchange of letters following Lewis's withdrawal from the fund set up to support him, Lewis's letters exhibit a confidence in his own ability to bend Wyndham to a more favourable point of view with a characteristic mixture of admonition, flattery and argumentative sleight.[5] Some of Lewis's disciples were women who, according to Nancy Cunard, found him 'the dominating kind'.[6] One of them, apparently, was Jessica Dismorr, a signatory of BLAST, an artist and a patron whose discipular attentions Lewis at one time encouraged. In 1915, when she was about to go away because of illness, Lewis wrote to Miss Dismorr encouraging her to return quickly:

> I was looking forward to seeing you again; the Vortex flourishes and beckons to you. Don't perambulate your genius on distant oceans too long, but bring it safely back to us. You are one of the only people in this country who have a chance of doing fine work, one of the half dozen, in short.[7]

Here it is the almost transparent quality of Lewis's flattery which underlines his curious mastery; a faint consciousness of the façade simultaneously turns the recipient into a kind of toy. That it

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1. See Letters, pp. 79-80, for example.
2. Letters, p. 142; Lewis always referred to Richard Wyndham as 'Dick'.
3. See A Book of Towers and Other Buildings of Southern Europe: A Series of Dry-Points Engraved by Richard Wyndham With an Introduction and Brief Description by Sacheverell Sitwell (1928).
4. Lewis makes this claim in Blasting and Bombardiering, p. 233, and Wyndham freely acknowledged it; Richard Wyndham to W.L., n.d., ca. 1925, (Cornell).
5. See Letters, p. 142 and ff.
6. Nancy Cunard to W.K. Rose, 3 May 1963 (Vassar).
7. W.L. to Jessica Dismorr, 4 May 1915 (Cornell).

certainly is flattery emerges in a later letter; Lewis has dispensed with his colourful posture and touches on another matter which recurs in his correspondence with her: the suggestion that he had in mind a rather more palpable end than the encouragement of 'genius':

> I find you a dull person, and the fact that I have known you so long does not release me, in your company, from a sense of oppression. The fact that you are possessed of a fixed idea that everybody, wherever you are, is <u>after your money</u>, does not improve matters.[1]

Like those he wrote to Dick Wyndham, Lewis's letters to Miss Dismorr exhibit the scarcely-concealed conviction that he can manoeuvre and manipulate her almost at will. In one letter he is encouraging her, inviting her to visit him, and in the next putting her off casually with a string of last-minute excuses.[2] What it was like to be a follower of Lewis's is revealed in the memoir of Marjorie Hemming, who describes his relationship with her as one of 'teacher-to-pupil'[3] or 'God and disciple'.[4] Mrs. Hemming aspired to be a novelist and used to supply him with gossip about London's 'Bright Young Things' - which he required for his analysis of the contemporary scene - until she began to suspect that Lewis regarded her with a peculiarly open kind of contempt. The image she chooses is singularly appropriate:

> [Lewis] said it mechanically, as to a puppet - you don't bother to tell the truth to mere puppets.[5]

Just as Zagreus saw Dan and Ratner as puppets, so Marjorie Hemming sensed that Lewis saw her as a puppet, a mere gossip-gathering instrument in the hands of the Enemy.

Many people - particularly his disciples - shared Marjorie Hemming's conviction that, for Lewis, their friendship was not an end in itself but a means to an end. Time and again in his letters Dick Wyndham confesses to a suspicion that Lewis is 'using' him. When Lewis sends him a 'horrible letter', Wyndham becomes convinced of it:

> I can now understand realize [sic] the methods you have employed to get rid of so many friends in the past. It also made me realize that our friendship had really been only a one sided one -

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1. W.L. to Jessica Dismorr, 13 November 1925 (Cornell).
2. <u>Ibid</u>, 24 November 1919 (Cornell).
3. 'No Quarter', p. 55.
4. <u>Ibid</u>, p. 51.
5. <u>Ibid</u>, p. 112.

> your tolerating it for the sake of what you could get out of me - and now that I am hard up - and of no further use - you write this letter in order to end what was to you always an irksome tie.[1]

By 1930 Lewis had something of a reputation in London for using people, especially the rich with artistic pretensions. As one of Marjorie Hemming's letters to Lewis indicates, Wyndham was not the only admirer who believed that the master had taken advantage of him:

> ...a woman friend of Jessica Dismorr's said to me the week end before last - 'Ah - you know Lewis - do you? Well, I warn you, don't treat him as a friend & think he'll do anything for you - for he only makes use of people - & he'll throw you over'.[2]

According to John Reid, Lewis acquired precisely the same reputation in Toronto over a decade later: 'It is in fact said... you cultivate people in order to use them!.[3] The smoke was discharged from a considerable fire of fact. The disposition to use people is manifest in Lewis's earliest letters. Of Augustus John's first wife he writes: 'I may be able to make use of her, indirectly as she knows a good many people'.[4] Particularly when he needed or wanted a position urgently, Lewis rarely hesitated to pull all the possible strings. In order to get a suitable commission in the First War he wrote to Mary Borden Turner, a former mistress of his and later the wife of General Spears: 'Can you be of any use to me? Are you willing to be of any use to me?'[5] Again, what is peculiar here is neither the string-pulling nor even the strategic exploitation of an acquaintance, but Lewis's Zagreus-like 'diabolical assumption', his apparently ingenuous statement of his aims. In reality, Lewis was acting according to a consciously-formulated view of social intercourse. Dick Wyndham reminds him of their first meeting in which Lewis explained the meaning of so-called friendship:

> You said... that all friendships were merely a question of "use". The fact that a man was your friend merely meant that in some way or another he was of use to you.[6]

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1. Dick Wyndham to W.L., n.d., ca. 1924 (Cornell).
2. Marjorie Firminger [Hemming] to W.L., 10 September 1930 (Cornell).
3. John Reid to W.L., 30 June 1941 (Cornell).
4. W.L. to his mother, n.d., ca. 1907 (Cornell).
5. Letters, p. 74.
6. Dick Wyndham to W.L., n.d., ca. 1924 (Cornell).

Evidently the Vorticist's habit of consuming the external world in order to satisfy his imaginative needs could also swallow up acquaintances with the means to satisfy his worldly needs. Perhaps Lewis bore in mind the teaching of Max Stirner, mentor of the Vorticist Arghol, who blandly explained to his reader: 'For me you are nothing but - my food, even as I too am fed upon and turned into use by you. We have only one relation to each other, that of usableness, of utility, of use'.[1] A similar sentiment was distilled into the piece of advice which Lewis himself gave to Marjorie Hemming: 'People are there to be used'.[2]

This was a formula which evidently governed a great number of Lewis's relationships, especially those in which money was involved. At least until he was thirty, Lewis was supported,[3] at first by his father and then his mother, and it may have been this which established in him a habit of financial dependence which persisted for the rest of his life.[4] Whatever the reasons, when his mother died in 1920 Lewis did not look for a job - as Joyce or Eliot did when they were equally penniless - but acquired instead a whole series of supporters and patrons. Some, like Sydney Schiff who 'spent a total of £712, or at the rate of £14-16-8 per month' between 1920 and 1924, bought Lewis's work.[5] Others, including Dick Wyndham, Edward and Fanny Wadsworth, O.R. and Ann Drey, preferred to set up a 'fund' for him.[6] The arrangement seems to have worked well enough until one month in 1924 when the cheque did not arrive at the expected time. Lewis sent Fanny Wadsworth a telegram which read: 'Please send money by Wyndham's Squib to 61'.[7] With some justification perhaps, she thought this a little 'peremptory' and told Lewis so. The fund was soon

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1. The Ego and His Own, pp. 296-297.
2. 'No Quarter', p. 35.
3. His father fupported him until 1909 when he returned to London. Thereafter, apart from commissions, Lewis chiefly depended on his mother until he joined the Army in 1914.
4. Lewis's father left Mrs. Lewis in about 1893 and remarried in 1909. It would be interesting to speculate on the relationship between his father's absence and Lewis's financial dependence.
5. Sydney Schiff to W.L., 15 November 1923 (Cornell).
6. See chapter III.
7. W.L. to Fanny Wadsworth, n.d., ca. 1924 (Cornell).

dissolved.[1] What Mrs. Wadsworth divined in the telegram was to be confirmed a few years later in The Apes: Lewis held the donors in very low regard.[2] In truth, as Eliot reminded him in a letter written about 1921, Lewis despised most of his patrons profoundly.[3] Yet at the same time he believed, just as profoundly, in his right to be supported by them. (In Paleface, 'puppets' are said to 'owe' certain obligations to their superiors in the natural hierarchy of life in much the same way as his creatures inherently owe allegiance to God).[4] This curiously egocentric conviction is reflected in the fact that Lewis commonly failed to repay debts and to honour obligations or contracts.[7] Quite a few of Lewis's correspondents, like Dick Wyndham, were intimately acquainted with his financial dealings:

> Now that you have reminded me of it, and incidentally, divulged your address, may I take this opportunity of reminding you that I hold your receipt for £100, payment for the m.s. of the first book you were to subsequently publish.... No doubt the m.s. of the book in question has already been sold at least once.[6]

Doubtless Wyndham is being somewhat vindictive, but the accusation is quite in keeping with Lewis's cavalier ways, of which there are numerous examples in the Cornell collection. It is scarcely surprising that he gained a reputation for 'dishonesty'.[7] Yet in reality, what Lewis manifested was not so much a calculated dishonesty as an inability to take his financial obligations seriously. Throughout his life, Lewis mostly acted as if the world owed him a living.

Like the belief that 'people are there to be used', Lewis's financial behaviour illustrates a strong practical tendency to appropriate the world to himself. At least until his prolonged sufferings in the thirties, Lewis's was an almost solipsistic world in which other people were for him, means rather than ends, or suffixes[8] rather than

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1. The quarrel was a complex one in which Lewis's suspicions played a prominent part. His domineering tone was another factor leading to the break-down.
2. The Wadsworths and Dick Wyndham appear in The Apes in Part 6, 'Ape-Flagellant'.
3. T. S. Eliot to W.L., n.d., ca. 1921 (Cornell).
4. Paleface, pp. 77-79.
5. Examples are numerous in his correspondence at Cornell.
6. Dick Wyndham to W.L., n.d., ca. 1930 (Cornell).
7. Marjorie Firminger [Hemming] to W.L., 1 October 1930 (Cornell).
8. Mrs. Lewis believed that before his long illness in the 30's Lewis saw other people as 'adjuncts'; (Interview with Mrs. Lewis, 2 February 1971).

independently significant beings; which, of course, reduced their proper reality as persons. It is partly this same habitual solipsism which explains why so much of Lewis's early graphic portraiture searches for sub-human analogues and why, in his discursive prose, he should describe the vast majority of men as machines, or 'things', whose destiny is best left in the care of a handful of supermen - 'persons' like himself. In his fiction, the most natural metaphor for other people was the puppet; the most natural image for himself, God.

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At some point or other in the novel, most of the principal Apes are described as puppets. As the narrator confidentially informs the reader: 'This was an all-puppet cast' (81). There are one or two minor variations; Lady Fredigonde Follett is a 'big doll' (8), Betty Bligh is a 'toy-girl' (90), while Lionel and Isabel Kein appear amusingly as Punch and Judy (247, 250). The central significance of the image is clear: being altogether without creative genius, the Apes can only follow the true artist mechanically - two or three of them are called machines - copying his life-style as well as his work. Because they blindly mimic all the artist's movements, the Apes depend upon his initiative like a troop of marionettes.

For Lewis, a mechanical life not only reduces men to sub-human 'things', it robs them of their reality. In his essay 'Inferior Religions' the mechanical, though complex rhythms of the Breton fishermen in The Wild Body are shown at be as 'circumscribed' as a Euclidean theorem. These people are not self-existent 'individualities' but 'shadows of energy' whose 'mechanism is a logical structure'. That is, for the artist who can abstract the appropriate theorems from their daily actions, the fishermen are nothing but mathematical structures, or 'cyphers', in what Lewis calls 'the great Heaven of Ideas', figures who only gather meaning within the mind of the artist.[1] In The Apes of God Zagreus regards the puppet-Apes in much the same way;

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1. The Wild Body, pp. 232-236.

he looks around the room 'Chez Lionel Kein, Esq.' and can discover nothing but unreal 'characters':

> 'Sixteen characters in search of an author!' vociferated Zagreus. 'Look at them! They don't look very real, do they? ... sixteen characters in search of a real author' (293).

Like the puppet-fishermen in The Wild Body, the Apes are less real than the artist who transforms them into a significant creation. In their everyday, so-called reality they are only potentially real, characters without an author, or puppets without a puppeteer. And just as their originals were 'there to be used' by the artist in his worldly affairs, so they were there to be deployed in the drama as the puppeteer saw fit. Equally, men and characters were cyphers in the God-like artist's mind. The whole point of the situation 'Chez Lionel Kein, Esq.' is that the Schiff circle had been transformed into art already; London's sham-artists had a last found their 'real' Author in Wyndham Lewis, the Creator of The Apes of God. The supposition upon which the novel rests, as Osbert Sitwell discerned in The Criterion 'Encyclical' in 1924,[1] is that Lewis is the God of High Bohemia. Among other things, the Apes reflect the solipsistic bent of their Author's mind.

The Apes, however, have another side. As Lewis's jacket-designs for the novel show,[2] the word 'ape' refers not only to the uninventive puppet who mindlessly 'apes' the artist; it refers also to the wild beast of the jungle. The same kind of ambiguity is being exploited when the Apes are said to 'mock' the artist (121); that is, they both copy him and attack him. The two activities, in fact, seem to be complementary. The Apes are 'prosperous mountebanks who alternately imitate and mock at and traduce those figures they at once admire and hate' (123). There is a similar ambiguity again in the notion that the Apes 'feed on' the artist (288, 315). In part this means that they are parasites. In the words of Zagreus, Lionel Kein is an 'ungrateful old parasite' (311), a 'blood-sucker' who attracts men of vitality like Pierpoint; when they leave him he 'withers' (288-9). But Kein does more than suck the blood of brilliant associates, he

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1. In a letter to Lewis, n.d., ca. 1924 (Cornell), Sitwell wrote: 'But in your attack on us apes, my dear God, you have put yourself in bad company.'

2. See both the cover of the Penguin, 1965, edition, and Wyndham Lewis: Paintings and Drawings, ed. W. Michel, plate 92, numbers 677 and 678.

'devours' them; Lionel Kein is a dangerous 'man-eater' (314-15). If anything, his wife is even more dangerous. Isabel Kein's passion for intellectual domination amounts to a voracious 'appetite for people'; her ego 'grows fat' on their carcasses (254). It is in the Kein episode that the reader is made most conscious of the Apes' carnivorous palates, yet the image is introduced as early as the Prologue: Lady Fredigonde Follett, symbolically the mother of the whole Ape-pack, has a 'predatory eye' (13). The Apes of God are man-eating predators.

Some of them are sexual predators. In Paris, they 'fish' for young students in the cafes (119); in London, they prey on nineteen-year-olds like Dan. Dan Boleyn's significance in the novel can be partly discerned in his name. The biblical echo of 'Daniel', according to a note in the Cornell collection, is intended: he is 'Daniel in an Ape's Den'. In a contemporary letter to T. S. Eliot Lewis added 'Dan Bull' against the name 'Boleyn', suggesting that Dan, although Irish, is also a kind of John Bull, standing perhaps for the British reading public. In fact, he is an innocent Candide figure, being initiated by Zagreus, together with the public, into the ways of Apery. Because he is instructed to chase after various Apes in order to scrutinise them Dan is labelled an 'Ape-hunter' (134, 457-8), but like other comic heroes in Lewis's early fiction, Dan is a case of the hunter hunted. In a superb scene which recalls the attempted seduction of Joseph Andrews, Dan finds himself caught in the lair of Melanie Blackwell, who grasps him like a boa-constrictor (108). Like all the Apes, she is machine-like, 'working herself up' in a disturbingly automatic way (100) and staring with vacant lotus-eating eyes. Fittingly, the seduction is conveyed by images of eating: 'Melanie said "young man" with such utter unction that it summoned to the palate more saliva than "peaches"' (100). Desperately, Dan tries to think of ways to stop her from biting him (101), but to no avail: Melanie catches him with her 'hungry' mouth (107). Despite the strong suggestion of sexual disgust, common in Lewis's early fiction, the deflowering becomes comic by its reversal of sexual roles which, because of Dan's maidenliness, are never quite reversed. There is a parallel scene towards the end in which Dan, this time dressed as a woman, is pounced upon by an elderly naughty-nineties beau. At times the Apes display ravenous, even monstrously depraved, sexual appetites, yet the sex and the innocence of their prey ensure a broadly comic effect.

At other times the Apes take on a malice which is far from comic. The Encyclical describes them as 'insolent and vindictive' (121), full of 'malevolence', 'envy' and 'hatred' (122-4) for the genuine artist. In The Apes the artist who is most hated is Pierpoint; the Finnian-Shaws hate him 'for his lion-heart' (387), while Julius Ratner loathes his ideas even more than 'the hated flesh and blood' (401). What is particularly pernicious about the Apes is that they only reveal these feelings behind the artist's back; they are servants who mock their masters 'in their absence' (121). Pierpoint, the great Absentee, is a favourite target for gossipers like the Finnian-Shaws (354) and, above all, for Isabel Kein, the arch-gossip. The turning-point of 'Chez Lionel Kein, Esq.' is when Mrs. Kein starts to malign 'the absent' (269).

The Apes' tendency to gossip maliciously about Pierpoint had, of course, a basis in real life: Lewis believed that the Schiffs, Sitwells and others were slandering him behind his back. This is clearly implied in Dick Wyndham's letters in which the writer feels keenly obliged to repeat anything that is said about Lewis:

> Now the moment has arrived to cut the ground from under your feet, and inform you that the Sitwell family are here, and I sit at the same table with them, and I sometimes go for walks with them - and we talk about you some of the time, in fact often. But I have never yet heard anything but very great praise, admiration and and [sic] a really genuine affection for you. Of course you will say 'Oh yes, they know you are a friend of mine, so they are carefull [sic] of what they say.' But I think in a week one can find what a persons real feelings are about someone. And I do really think that they are very fond of you and I know that they really admire your work more than any other English artist.
>
> Other people (such as Carther [?] & Schiff) do not come in for quite such friendly criticism.
>
> I am afraid all this will annoy you. But still you would have been annoyed more if you had heard that I was here with the Sitwells and imagined all sorts of terrible things were being said. I promise you on my word of honour that if anything is, I will repeat it to you verbatim.[1]
>
> Twice I have been out to lunch, once to the Schiffs, once to Lady Colefax (where you were not mentioned).... At the Schiffs there were the following: a Jew called Oppenheim, a foreigner (probably a Jew) called Professor-?? who writes on Dostievsky [sic] a simpering girl (a niece I believe of the Schiffs) who played

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1. Dick Wyndham to W.L., n.d., ca. 1922 (Cornell).

> the piano - and myself.... Conversation 1. Schiff thanked me for my letter. 2. Schiff remarked that you were not painting at present as you were so busy writing (to one of the Jews). 3. A lot of talk about literature including abuse of Middleton Murry (very severe). Otherwise you were not mentioned.[1]

Lewis must have charged Wyndham, as he charged Marjorie Hemming[2] to repeat any gossip he might hear, especially from the Schiffs or the Sitwells, and plainly, Lewis expected nothing but the worst. Lewis's tortured suspicions about rumours concerning himself also emerge, perhaps slightly embroidered, in the autobiography of another contemporary associate, Robert McAlmon:

> Lewis asked me if 'they' had been telling me that his teeth were false, he wore a wig, was Jewish, and took five years off his age.... Probably he never believed me when I told him the truth, that I knew absolutely none of the people about whom he talked. At this he sometimes took the attitude that I was a devilishly clever deceiver.[3]

Lewis's distrust of McAlmon tinges the portrait of Kalman, his counterpart in The Apes. Kalman may seem 'bluff and honest', but in reality he is an 'agitator', fond of provoking conflicts between friends and 'looting between, or behind, the lines' (287-8). Clearly, the sinister malevolence which the Apes at times exhibit is related to Lewis's fears and suspicions about members of his circle. Some of them were probably justified,[4] while others were doubtless fed or engendered by that 'persecution mania' of which Lewis was widely believed to be a victim.[5]

This, of course, was the strange obverse of Lewis's tendency to 'use' people. T. S. Eliot shows a shrewd appreciation of both sides of Lewis's mind when he reminds him that he is associating with people whom he 'despises' yet 'cannot trust'.[6] The same ambivalence is present in The Apes of God. Partly mechanical puppets and partly malicious predators, the Apes faithfully reflect that mixture of

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1. Dick Wyndham to W.L., n.d., ca. 1924 (Cornell).
2. Marjorie Firminger [Hemming] to W.L., 10 September 1930 (Cornell).
3. Bringing Geniuses Together, p. 8.
4. A figure like Lewis must have provoked gossip.
5. Osbert Sitwell evidently saw signs of it in The Criterion 'Encyclical' for he ends his note of complaint to Lewis ironically with 'Perhaps, though, I am developing Persecution Mania?'
6. T. S. Eliot to W.L., 31 November 1923 (Cornell).

solipsism and paranoia[1] with which Lewis regarded his fellow men. That is, the Apes do not simply mirror the society in which Lewis moved after World War I; rather, they mirror the mind of the artist who contemplated it and shaped it, idiosyncratically, into literature. In The Apes, the 'objective' eye is much less important than the characteristic, 'subjective' responses of the whole man; the impersonal 'mind which creates' - if such an entity can be admitted - is less important than the 'man who suffers'. For this reason, the neo-classical terms in which Lewis defends his satire are wholly misleading. Like those 'political' modern authors whom Zagreus attacks, Lewis claimed a scientific detachment for his work which disguised the intensely personal and 'involved' nature of the novel's vision.

* *

Zagreus, busily in media res, more accurately reflects Lewis's manifold involvements in the drama than the remote and pontifical Pierpoint. In fact, there is evidence to suggest that Pierpoint was a relatively late addition to the work. Lewis broke with High Bohemia in 1923 and seems to have begun work on 'Lord Osmund's Lenten Party'[2] and 'Mr. Zagreus and the Split-Man'[3] in that year. In February and April respectively of 1924, 'Mr. Zagreus and the Split-Man' and the Encyclical, entitled 'The Apes of God', appeared in The Criterion and were incorporated, much as they stood, into the eventual novel. Indeed, when the episodes of 1924 are compared with their counterparts in the 1930 edition remarkably few changes are evident, but these are very interesting. In 1924, for example, there is no mention of Pierpoint, so that it appears that the Encyclical, with its wide vision of the Ape-world, is the creation of Zagreus. In 1930 we learn that it is actually the work of Pierpoint who has sent it years previously to Zagreus, who, in his turn, is merely passing it on to Dan. It is now

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1. These might be regarded as clinical equivalents of the images of the hunter and the hunted which are the subject of this Part.
2. Letters, p. 140.
3. T. S. Eliot to W.L., 26 September 1923 (Cornell).

an Encyclical addressed 'to' Zagreus.[1] The whole context is thereby radically altered. Where the 1924 version reads 'you have money', it implies that Dan has money; in 1930 it reads: 'You Zagreus have money' (122). Even more significant, there is no mention of Zagreus's first name 'Horace' in 1924, nor any reference to his white hair, both of which suggest that the idea of modelling him partly on Horace Cole - thus turning him into an object of satire - occurred to Lewis only at a later stage. Moreover, it is in a 1924 episode that we find Zagreus treating the Split-Man in the way that Sydney Schiff found 'not unfamiliar'. The 1924 Zagreus is in every respect more intelligent, dominant and, above all, more Lewisian than his 1930 counterpart. The additions of 1930 go out of their way to discredit Zagreus, and to transfer all possible credit to Pierpoint. For example, Lewis prefaces the 1930 Encyclical with an exordium in which Zagreus is heavily satirised. He addresses Dan with the most exaggerated unctuousness: 'Oh delicate moon-flower.' Also exaggerated are the terms in which he disclaims authorship of the Encyclical a few lines later: 'Several years ago I received it, it is written by a man who is in everything my master - I am nothing, he is everything' (117). Similarly, inserted into the 'Mr. Zagreus' episode of 1930 is a long passage about Pierpoint's controlling genius in which Zagreus admits to Ratner: 'It was Pierpoint... who said... all that I have said to you!' (343). Not only are such insertions unwieldy - every time Zagreus says something intelligent it is instantly attributed to Pierpoint - there are passages in the Encyclical which only make sense if it is supposed that Zagreus wrote them: 'The flourishing and bombastic role that you may sometimes see me in... is my opposite' (125). 'I am a party.... The supreme judge is constantly absent' (118). In fact, we 'see' Pierpoint in no role precisely because he is 'constantly absent'. And in general, the Encyclical claims a partiality of purpose which the novel elsewhere rejects. These anomalies, which must have escaped his eye in revision, provide a clue to Lewis's motives for changing his mind about the role of Zagreus. At least until 1924 Zagreus was apparently intended, like Tarr, to be a more or less straightforward persona of the author, a vehicle for Lewis's own

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1. In The Criterion it was an 'Encyclical Addressed To Daniel Boleyn By Mr. Zagreus'; my italics.

attitudes towards the Apes. At some time after 1924, however - doubtless coinciding with his drift towards the more extreme neo-classicism found in Time and Western Man - Lewis wanted to appear aloof and impartial rather than involved and partisan. Accordingly, he made Zagreus into an Ape by hiding him under the superimposed portrait of a notorious practical joker with Bloomsbury associates and at the same time introduced Pierpoint as an unmistakable fictional persona of himself. However, because Lewis could not entirely paint over his original plan, the 1930 Zagreus displays an odd ambivalence: he is part-Ape and part-God.

Perhaps the most significant relic from Lewis's original conception of the novel is Zagreus's Greek surname. In the Prologue, the stream of Lady Fredigonde's consciousness focuses attention on the meanings of names and on Zagreus's name in particular: 'What made him call himself Zagrooce is a mystery to me' (15). Later the mystery is recalled by Zagreus himself: 'Why was I named Zagreus?' (341). The question is left unanswered. Perhaps the most helpful clue is given when Archie Margolin, who has just been introduced to Zagreus, asks himself: 'What was a thracian god doing in this galère?' (50). The reader is referred to Greek mythology. During the twenties there was intense interest in classical and pagan religions and Lewis could expect his educated readers to be acquainted with the work of Sir James Frazer or Jane Harrison, and possibly even with N. P. Nilsson's History of Greek Religion which was published in English in 1925. Lewis himself reviewed Ancient Art and Ritual and Elliott Smith's The Evolution of The Dragon in The Calendar of Modern Letters in 1925[1] and, as The Lion and the Fox shows, he clearly knew his Golden Bough.[2] In any of these authorities a contemporary reader would have come across the myth of Zagreus, a Cretan[3] or Thracian[4] god, a son of Zeus[5] whom Zeus intended

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1. 'The Dithyrambic Spectator. An Essay on the Origins and Survivals of Art', Calendar of Modern Letters, i (1925), pp. 89-107, 194-213.
2. The Lion and the Fox, p. 135 and ff.
3. Jane Harrison, Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion, (Cambridge, 1903), p. 490.
4. W. K. C. Guthrie, Orpheus and Greek Religion (1935), p. 113.
5. Jane Harrison, Themis: A Study of the Social Origins of Greek Religion (Cambridge, 1927), p. 14.

to have dominion over the world.[1] In its finer details, the myth has a number of variants, yet one or two major elements are invariable. One of the latter is that Zagreus is torn to pieces by the Titans,[2] having been lured towards them by toys.[3] The interesting thing about these Titans is that, according to Nilsson,[4] they were the forerunners of men in Greek mythology, just as in modern evolutionary theory apes are the forerunners of men. Moreover, in terms of ancient ritual the Titans corresponded to the worshippers of Zagreus, who enacted the myth by tearing to pieces a sacrificial animal.[5] If Zagreus is himself a Titanic Ape, as he is in 1930, the myth becomes meaningless. And the only conceivable sense in which he is dismembered is when he finally subsides into the arms of Lady Fredigonde Follett. But then she is Zagreus's 'prey' (623). The mythical parallels do make sense, however, when the name 'Zagreus' is taken to refer - as it would have according to the 1924 plan - to Lewis himself, a god-like artist who was lured by his Apish worshippers with material toys and subsequently torn to pieces by their malicious slanders. By keeping the name 'Zagreus' Lewis preserved echoes of the myth of a hunted god.

* *

Even in the final, 1930 edition of the novel Zagreus is for the most part thoroughly identified with Lewis's personal interests and grievances. At times he appears as a fiercely partisan barrister putting his creator's case as forcefully as possible before the bar of the contemporary literary world. This is particularly true in the long episode 'Chez Lionel Kein Esq.' The episode is singularly interesting because with the Schiff letters at Cornell it is possible to piece together the background situation from which some of Lewis's satirical preoccupations in the scene emerge. During 1924, a few months after Lewis had gone underground, the Schiffs wrote several letters, some praising his work and others mildly protesting about what

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1. N. P. Nilsson, A History of Greek Religion (Oxford, 1925), p. 216.
2. Themis, p. 15.
3. A History of Greek Religion, p. 216.
4. Ibid, p. 216.
5. Sir James Frazer, The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion, Third Edn. (1963), i, p. 15.

they took to be criticisms of themselves in The Criterion 'Apes of God'. Lewis kept these letters, and since he had sent a draft of the 'Kein' episode to C. H. Prentice by April, 1926, it seems reasonable to suppose that their contents would have been relatively fresh in his mind when he wrote the episode, probably at some time in 1925. To some extent, 'Chez Lionel Kein, Esq.' can be regarded as Lewis's reply to the Schiffs.

Predictably perhaps, given Lewis's financial habits, one of the points of disagreement between Lewis and the Schiffs involved money. In the Encyclical of 1924 Lewis had arraigned the Apes as rich but 'unpaying guests of the house of art', the 'last people... from whom support for any art can be expected'. A few months later Schiff wrote to Lewis outlining what he had paid him since 1920 and at the same time denying that Lewis had any grounds for calling him a wealthy man.[1] Likewise, in the 'Kein' episode when Zagreus suggests that it might be money which accounts for the present estrangement between Kein and Pierpoint, Kein denies that he is rich:

> 'Do you see [Pierpoint] now, Kein?' Zagreus asked softly.
> Kein screwed up his face in a sweet grin.
> 'I haven't seen him recently.'
> 'No?'
> 'Not very recently.'
> 'Ah! - Money, I suppose?' Horace enquired absentmindedly.
> 'These beastly artists! We rich men have to put up with a great deal from those artist-fellows. They - '
> 'I don't know if you're a rich man, Zagreus,' Kein exclaimed, very upset. 'I know I'm not. - I wish I were. If I were, if - ' (247).

Zagreus remains unconvinced by these protests and throughout the scene keeps drawing attention to their true cause, Kein's meanness. Soon after Kein's guests have been ushered into the house, Zagreus points out a device in the fireplace for reducing the rate of combustion by which Kein 'reckons to save himself three bob a day' (239). At the end, Zagreus ascribes Kein's belligerent behaviour to the fact that he does not 'drink the same stuff [cider] he provides for his guests' (311). But most pointed of all is Zagreus's reply when Schiff accuses him of borrowing everything he says from Pierpoint:

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1. Sydney Schiff to W.L., 15 November 1924 (Cornell).

'I wish other things were as easy to borrow as words are,'
Horace Zagreus said, moulding Kein with a heavy eye (266).

In fact, Lewis had charged Schiff with making an 'angry refusal' to a request for money in October, 1923[1] and the scowl is aimed at him rather than his satirical effigy. Zagreus's 'heavy eye' shows how thin the border can be, in The Apes of God, between fiction and history.

Another perennial casus belli lay in the Schiffs' charge that Lewis saw them in a distorted way. Not long after the publication of the Encyclical Violet Schiff wrote to Lewis: 'I am rather in the position of a wise old man who looks at his son & says to himself "Why does he see me in so distorted a fashion when I see him so clearly"'.[2] Doubtless she had in mind what her husband had referred to in a letter two days earlier: Lewis's belief that the Apes were full of envy and malevolence towards the true artist.[3] Despite their occasional protest, the Schiffs obviously recognised the obsessive element in the Encyclical's accusations and instead of trying to refute them in any systematic way they filled their letters with repeated assurances of their continuing good will, admiration and support. Zagreus opens Lewis's rebuttal in The Apes by evoking Schiff's mentor and model, Marcel Proust.[4] Was it not said that the famous originals of many of his characters thought Proust a cad for presenting them as he did? (248) The Keins, however, defend their God by agreeing that if Proust portrayed them the result would be objective. Like a true puppet, Isabel claims to see herself objectively (255). This is just what Zagreus is waiting for: the satirised never see themselves objectively because they have 'rhinoceros hides' (255). (Violet Schiff had told Lewis that she was 'trying to acquire a thicker skin').[5]

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1. Sydney Schiff to W.L., 15 November 1924 (Cornell).
2. Violet Schiff to W.L., 6 May 1924 (Cornell).
3. Sydney Schiff to W.L., 4 May 1924 (Cornell).
4. In the Encyclical Schiff is called a 'pseudo-Proust' (131). He, in fact, knew Proust and dedicated Prince Hempseed (1923) 'To the Memory of My Beloved Friend, Marcel Proust.' His debt to Proust is discussed in T. E. M. Boll's introduction to Richard, Myrtle and I (Philadelphia, 1962), pp. 35-36.
5. Violet Schiff to W.L., 28 May 1924 (Cornell).

That is, the Keins are insulated from the naked truth about themselves by a thick layer of sentimentality. Kein's novel about Isabel, Primrose - Schiff's novel was Myrtle[1] - is 'a jumble of all the nice things anyone had ever said about her or that she had supposed people had ever thought' (305-6).

Lewis then addresses himself to the proof of 'malevolence'. Like the Schiffs, the Keins make repeated professions of continuing friendship such as 'Pierpoint will never be any different as far as we are concerned' (271). Yet the same professions are turned subtly into accusations: Kein will hear nothing against Pierpoint 'even now'; 'We can't help, even now, being concerned for him.... What I'm terribly afraid of is that he may - well really go under - a man like that depends so much upon the support of a few friends - good friends!' (299) These in turn merge into more positive defamation: 'I shouldn't mind if he were only honest. He has no sense of personal honour' (298-9). As one of Marjorie Hemming's letters shows,[2] Lewis feared that this was being said about him and, through Zagreus who has been silently 'seeing' everything, he suddenly breaks into the scene, unable to restrain himself any longer:

> 'You heard all that?' Zagreus asked Dan. 'You heard what they said? It's all fantastically untrue... they never utter anything but a pack of lachrymose lies' (299).

In the heat of battle Zagreus is little more than a mouth-piece.

Incensed, Zagreus-Lewis retaliates. Since backbiting is established lore chez Lionel Kein, he decides to throw some light on a selected skeleton or two in the Kein-Schiff cupboard. He tells the story of Kein's 'discovery' as a novelist by Eddie Keith (Edwin Muir),[3] and the way in which Kein, anxious to keep the services of such a critic, installed Keith in a cottage near his house in the country (300-4). Even if the details have a modicum of historical verisimilitude - the Muirs did at one point have a cottage near Schiff's country house[4] -

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1. Mytrle (1925).
2. Marjorie Fiminger [Hemming] to W.L., 1 October 1930 (Cornell): 'You ask me if I have heard that you are dishonest.'
3. See T. E. M. Boll, op. cit., p. 17. The review was 'Stephen Hudson', The Nation, cxxi (1925), pp. 655-656.
4. Edwin Muir, An Autobiography (1954), p. 226.

Lewis is hardly a disinterested historian. There is an undercurrent of insinuation in which the basest motives are attributed to all involved. For example, before Keith wrote his favourable review, Mrs. Keith had 'perhaps' already sensed Kein's wealth:

> Mamma - that is wifey - scents perhaps something more palpable than genius in the pages of the "new writer" - at all events croons encouragement, as ever, at the sight of the little earnest half-born face of the child-hubby. Down he squats upon his little freckled hinnie and for his sins or his fathers' pens a little earnest careful paper - all about old Li's little book (301).

The voice may happen to be Zagreus's, but the blow being aimed at Sydney Schiff was Lewis's. A more notorious example occurs towards the end of the novel when Lord Osmund's house is called a 'den of thieves' (498). Suggestions of the same motif recur throughout the episode (407-8, 502), and the scene is brought to a resounding climax when the guests, about to leave, discover that they have been robbed. The theme has an odd basis in fact. As one of his letters to Felix Giovanelli makes plain, Lewis was recalling an old scandal in which the mother of the Sitwells had been taken to court for (allegedly) pawning jewels which she did not own.[1] Like those 'social-newssheet' authors attacked by Zagreus, Lewis was not always above using satire as a weapon in a social skirmish. Far from confining his service to the lofty Apollo of intellectual truth, he too descends to those 'hot and immediate interests of "real" everyday social life' and into that Ape-jungle where the gossipers scratch and bite each other's backs.

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Couched in terms befitting the Enemy of modern romanticism, Lewis's defence of The Apes of God affects a neo-classical vocabulary which will not bear close inspection. Again, the Enemy's public neo-classical posture seems more of a disguise than a reality; just as,

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1. W.L. to Felix Giovanelli, 18 January 1949 (Cornell). This was only Lewis's version of the incident. A very different version is given by Osbert Sitwell in Great Morning (1948), pp. 161-167. According to Sitwell, his mother had fallen into the hands of an unscrupulous swindler.

in the novel itself, the remote Pierpoint-Lewis is more of a disguise than Zagreus, a supposed Ape. It is Zagreus-Lewis who dramatises the profound involvement of the private man, rankled by the slander of his enemies and not in the least afraid to retaliate in kind.

Any attempt, in fact, to make sense of Lewis's fiction in terms of 'the philosophy of the EYE' is bound to miss the peculiar turmoil in which his imagination worked. There is some burden on an art of 'the eye' - an art, as Lewis portrayed it, of pure objectivity - to represent a common world also apparent to others. Yet if the London of The Apes is placed alongside the London of Point Counter Point (1928) it is immediately apparent how little Lewis's impact actually depends upon what he called the 'civilized surface' of life. Of the two, it is Huxley's work which captures the familiar aspect of post-war literary London, a world equally recognisable in the memoirs of many who belonged to it. By comparison The Apes of God is an idiosyncratic underworld, as full of nightmarish obsessions in its own way as Raskolnikov's Petersburg. Lewis may have officially deserted the Ape-jungle by 1930, yet his fiction continues to be charged with all the primordial terrors and excitements of the hunt.

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PART II : THE ACTOR, THE PUBLICIST AND THE SWAY OF TIME.

CHAPTER VI : SNOOTY BARONET (1932): THE ARTIST AS ACTOR.

> 'Now like myself Rob is an actor - he is the artist in action.' Snooty Baronet.

In Time and Western Man the Enemy pointed to the modern cult of the actor as a sign of decay in Western civilisation. The 'feminine' time-mind, he argued, in its yearning to abandon the painful responsibilities of consciousness, was dissolving the stable and sharply-defined outline of the classical personality into a myriad of disconnected, chronological selves thrown up at random from the restless ebb and flow of the feelings. In order to champion the timeless intellect, Lewis committed himself to the defence of traditional conceptions of individual continuity and integral selfhood. This was, in fact, an implicit rejection of one of the insights upon which modernism depended - the irreducible multiplicity of the psyche - and a reversion to the pre-romantic point of view of Diderot, astounded at the protean histrionics of Rameau's Nephew. Cheerfully accepting the logical consequences of his opposition to Time, the Enemy portrayed himself as a still point, unshakably consistent and rock-like amid the fashionable romanticisms of avant-garde psychology, revolutionary morals and leftist politics, and his criticism as the lone voice of the unchanging classical intellect crying out in the sensational wilderness of the modern world.

Lewis's early novels portray an altogether more malleable, less self-sufficient figure. Where the Vorticist's sang-froid and the Enemy's lofty aloofness appear in the discursive prose as accomplished fact, in Tarr and Snooty Baronet the artist's detachment is at best an uneasy achievement, threatened on all sides by human relationships. While the Enemy could dismiss all that was feminine and merely automatic in human nature with scornful authority, Tarr and Snooty Baronet constantly face the peril of being overwhelmed in the vortices of women and puppets. For Lewis's fictional hero, survival as an independent consciousness calls for a devious compromise with the forceful shapes assumed from moment to moment by the time-flux without. To remain inwardly free, the artist learns to lead a split-existence,

such that he is bodily in the world but not of it, acting out the roles of the world of action like parts in a play. Belonging to the age of Rameau's Nephew, Nietzsche and Wilde, Lewis's artist-in-the-world knows the necessity of being an actor.

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On the surface, Snooty Baronet[1] is a satire of the contemporary book world. All the main characters are writers and all, except Rob McPhail, are satirised, including Snooty himself. Not only is he a follower of Watson the Behaviorist, but Snooty also identifies himself, at various points, with D. H. Lawrence, Chronos the God of Time, Intuition in preference to reason and Animals in preference to Men; in short, with almost all of Lewis's bêtes noires. Nevertheless, like Zagreus, Snooty is an entirely ambivalent creation. He is at once a Behaviorist puppet and the authorial 'I' of the novel; both an object of satire and the subjective instrument through which the other characters are portrayed and satirised. Almost inevitably, whenever he turns the descriptive focus away from himself and brings it to rest on Val, Humph or McPhail, Snooty loses his woodenness to become more completely the flexible consciousness of the novelist, speaking, in varying degrees, with Lewis's own voice. The extent of the identification only becomes clear after an examination of the multifarious autobiographical parallels between Snooty and his creator. New evidence shows that, like Snooty, Lewis himself visited a 'Chelsea enchantress' and novelist upon whom Val was modelled; and that one of Lewis's own publishers of the period became the model for Humph. More important still, Snooty's Behaviorist 'field work' amid the puppets of the contemporary book world casts him explicitly into the role of the objective observer and, in spite of himself, the artist. The central interest of the novel lies in his struggle to vouchsafe the freedom of the spectator among mindless but jealously possessive automata; to participate in their world without becoming imprisoned within it; to act without losing himself in action. Like Tarr, Snooty turns to

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1. All references are included in the text.

role-playing.

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Among Lewis's papers at Cornell there are several newspaper-clippings, all dating from the first quarter of 1932, dealing with contemporary developments in publishing such as the new nine-penny novels and The Book of the Month Club.[1] This was the period at which Lewis was writing Snooty Baronet,[2] and it is clear from the novel itself how he regarded the new proliferation of books to which such developments must lead: he foresaw the mass-production and circulation of the stereotype and unreal fiction of the 'mindless Many'. Humph, Snooty's agent and a writer of best-sellers himself, exists entirely in a 'dime-novel' world:

> He went on filling his pipe. I yawned again. The fact had to be faced - this was a dramatic moment in the perpetual dime-novel in the midst of which old Humph lived and had his being. We were at the point in the tale upon which everything hinges - I mean the creaky old door with which Humph was accustomed to lock up his chamber of horrors - his plot in other words - for Humph of course, like Val, was an author (we are all authors today)... (74).

In an age in which 'we are all authors' the future of the novel could not be bright. Fiction-writing was becoming everybody's cottage-industry, a trade freshly stimulated by the big-business techniques of the Book Clubs, the publishers of best-sellers and the chain Lending Libraries. Snooty aims another of his asides at the Lending Library reader when he explains why he did not begin the book in the First Person: 'You would simply say to yourself, "This must be a dull book. The hero has a wooden leg. Is the War not over yet?" and throw the

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1. 'Making Cheap Novels', Evening Standard, 30 January 1932; (The Book of the Month Club), The Times, 25 February 1932; 'The Literary Racket', Sunday Referee, 28 February 1932; 'Nine-penny Novels', The Times, 11 March 1932; 'Nine-penny Novels', The Observer, 17 April 1932.
2. Lewis had written a draft of the first part by 1 February 1932, and the novel was still in draft form by 6 April 1932, not being published until September, 1932; Letters, pp. 204-205.

thing down in a very bad temper, cursing your Lending Library' (2). Whether or not Lewis knew at the time of writing that Snooty Baronet was to be offered by its publisher, Cassells, to Boots' and Smith's Lending Libraries is uncertain.[1] But it was probably such frank disdain for their clientele which caused Boots' and Smith's to virtually reject the novel,[2] forcing Cassells in turn to drop the book from their lists within ten days of publication. The implication of the satire is that Snooty has another, more intelligent, kind of reader; it is the imaginary 'lowbrow' reader of the novel-within-the-novel who is being addressed: 'Old Valerie always got under my skin. (I am always apt to employ the idiom of those I suppose I am addressing, you understand me?)' (9). This is the kind of reader to whom the weekend newspaper critic is a kind of semi-divine oracle; Snooty is reading his newspaper on the train to London:

> Then I read the latest literary-sermon, upon the literary-page. This was very bad indeed. The officiating goodman-critic, from his week-end pulpit faced his congregation, the Well-to-do who read a book a day, telling them how to lay out the money they still enjoy at the expense of Miners, Stokers and other riff-raff. The Old Ladies of Land's End and the Worthy Widows of Caithness, pencil-in-hand to jot down his list of those authors "to be watched"... (7).

No doubt Lewis has in mind Arnold Bennett, later satirised as Samuel Shodbutt in The Roaring Queen (1936), whose 'big-scale Book-boosting' he attacked in a letter to the editor of Time and Tide during the period in which Snooty Baronet was being written.[3] The goodman-critic was one more necessary part in the new mass-production of best-sellers and nine-penny novels.

Val is among the prodigious host of women to take up writing now that 'we are all novelists'; their works are legion:

> The almost anonymous mass, nameless as far as any significant name goes, of Novels of the Year (communist if by that you understand common and not individual, the sub-activities of crowds, not persons) may at any time assume the proportions of

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1. W.L. to Neuman Flower, n.d., ca. 1932 (Cornell).
2. Ibid; Boots' and Smith's took only twenty-five copies each and refused to put it in their Libraries.
3. Letters, pp. 207-208: 'All Mr. Bennett had to do,' Lewis wrote, 'was to praise a book, and the public rushed into the shops and bought it'(April 1932). One book, it was reputed, sold a million copies after Bennett praised it.

> a biblical Plague, upon the same footing with locust or with rat (31).

Since she writes as she talks, Val's raw output can sometimes reach one five-hundred-page novel per day, and Humph has a drawer full of her manuscripts. Her genre is pornography, many of her favourite expressions being 'quite unprintable, except in de luxe editions privately printed in Paris or Milan' (10). These bawdy novels are largely autobiographical in inspiration, either about her lesbian associates, 'the chaps', or her present lover, Mort. Through an inclination to transcribe her real-life experiences too literally (like Humph, Val makes little practical distinction between literature and life), Val gets into trouble with 'the chaps' and Mort alike. Mort, for his part, continues to pay the rent of his 'Mistress Val the Chelsea Enchantress, model 1930 (great reduction in price)' (14). Inhabiting the outer fringes of the Ape-jungle with lesbians, millionaires, dime-novel writers and other gossip-column stars, many of whom she knows by first name, Val is a 'crowd' rather than a 'person', a brainless yet aimiable, nymphomaniac puppet.

Humph, Snooty's agent, is the literary puppet par excellence. His is the sphere of mindless action where literature is translated into commerce, and where the values of the market-place are brought to bear on the processes of writing. When Snooty shows some hesitation at his extravagant methods of creating publicity, Humph is quick to remind him of the practical realities of business: 'Did I suppose that by writing books I should ever get a reputation as a writer?' (132). Humph arranges for Snooty, supposedly doing research on the origins of Mithraic cults for a new book, to be captured by a bandit in the Persian desert. After a suitable period, ransom is to be paid and Snooty returned to civilisation. All of this for its publicity value! It is Humph's eye for good publicity which has created 'The Baronet' as a public figure by planting such articles as 'BARONET GOES SAMURAI' - 'that was Humph, who else would think of it?' (40) - in newspaper gossip-columns. Previously, after a critic had perceived certain rather improbable likenesses between them, Humph promoted Snooty as another Douanier. These ridiculous images are for Snooty an irksome yoke which he carries unwillingly until the violent denouement in the desert.

In many respects Snooty's own literary career is as ludicrous as Val's or Humph's. He is above all a scientist who has only turned to

literature as a means of presenting his 'specimens':

> I should prefer to make it clear at once at all events that I occupy myself only with scientific research. Such claim as I may have to be a man-of-letters, reposes only upon the fact that my investigations into the nature of the human being have led me to employ the arts of the myth-maker, in order the better to present (for the purposes of popular study) my human specimens. Henri Fabre dramatized his insects in that way (3).

The kinship in methodology between his presentation of human specimens and Fabre's insects reflects the development of Snooty's career. His research began with animals - his first book was about fish - and then he turned to writing books on Man, but without modifying his approach. The theoretical basis for treating animals and men indifferently Snooty has derived from Watson, of whom he is a committed disciple. His human contacts he treats as Behaviorist 'field work' (34) for such works as People Behaving. Snooty looks at people rigorously from the outside; the way they look is everything; manifest behaviour is for him the only reality. However, in what he later describes as the turning-point of the novel, all of this rebounds, in a moment of disturbing realisation, onto Snooty himself. He has ventured into the Strand and happens to find himself watching an automaton in a hatter's window. Using Behaviorist criteria, he can see no difference between the puppet and a member of the crowd gathered to watch it. Suddenly, the affinity stretches to Snooty himself:

> Beside me a new arrival smiled back at the bowing Hatter's doll. I turned towards him in alarm. Was not perhaps this fellow who had come up beside me a puppet too?... Of course he was, but dogging that was the brother-thought, but equally so am I! And so I was (a very thoughtful and important puppet...) (159-60).

In this moment of self-recognition Snooty sees all the implications of Behaviorism for the first time, and what he sees troubles him. But, alarmed as he is, Snooty's fresh vision makes little difference to his subsequent behaviour; although he might call it a pivotal turning-point, Snooty continues to act as a Behaviorist for the remainder of the novel. Indeed, much point is made of the fact that when he shoots down Humph in the Persian desert Snooty is merely carrying its doctrines to their logical conclusion:

> I behave as a Behaviorist and as such I claim I should be accepted, and if there is nothing else that I can do to prove it, I will at least continue to behave as you have seen me behaving throughout these pages, and as all true Behaviorists must behave. If you are a true behaviorist, and not merely a sham one, you behave as I have behaved! Put that in your pipe and smoke it, all you professors of this implacable doctrine! (309).

These are the concluding words of the novel, and it is not difficult to unmask in these sentiments the author of Time and Western Man who, only five years earlier, disposed of Watson's work at 'the last, monotonous, dogged negation of scientific or critical philosophy'.[1] Snooty's Behaviorism, in fact, owes much to that earlier critique and, to this extent, the satire depends upon its reference, not to real life, but to polemical arguments which Lewis has conducted elsewhere.

The same is true for most of his other beliefs: Snooty is an object of satire insofar as he embodies, usually in the crudest form, many of the doctrines which Lewis had attacked in his discursive prose not long before. Ideological heresies pour forth from Snooty's lips in full spate. Like Watson, who tried to achieve the 'final finishing off of "our consciousness"',[2] Snooty inveighs against Reason, declaring himself a follower of Intuition; and, with as much psychological verisimilitude as Pontius Pilate in a medieval Passion play, Snooty swears allegiance to his creator's devil, Rousseau: 'I do not reason - I intuit. To feel, I take it, is to live.... The Emile of Rousseau is my livre de chevet' (108). This puts Snooty 'on the same side' as D. H. Lawrence, with whom he is supposed to share a passion for Mithraism and bull-worship. He has just read a transparently ludicrous parody of Lawrence called 'Sol Invictus - Bull Unsexed' in which Lewis has managed to cram all the Lawrentian blasphemies he attacked in Paleface; Snooty enthuses:

> The Bull stops top-dog all through. From start to finish the Bull's on top. I mean of course in the gospel of Mithras according to St. Lawrence. D. H. Lawrence and Yours Truly however are on the same side of the argument - both of us are Nature-Cranks, if you like to put it that way (94).

Where the Lawrence in Paleface preferred primitives to civilised men, Snooty's Lawrence goes a stage further in putting men below animals. Moreover, in his study of Mithraism, Snooty suddenly discovers that his true deity is Time: 'It turned out to be a Chronologic Deity. It was an ultimate God of Time' (98). At this point, the doctrinal polarities between Snooty and his creator reach the limit of mechanical, black-and-

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1. Op. cit., p. 340.
2. Ibid, p. 340.

white antithesis, where Snooty is nothing else but enfleshed argument. Here, Lewis's satire can have little meaning except within the framework of his own criticism.

The clumsiness and exaggeration of Lewis's attempts merely underline the formidable central problems he had to face in making Snooty a convincing object of satire: how could the narrative 'I' satirise himself? or, on the other hand, how could a novel written by a puppet-author satirise anything but itself, or its puppet-author? At the beginning, Lewis immediately confronts the problem of a self-satirising author and novel. Snooty has described his own appearance without saying who it is, and then proceeds to identify himself:

> The face was mine. I must apologize for arriving as it were incognito upon the scene. No murder has been committed at No. 1040 Livingston Avenue - I can't help it if this has opened as if it were a gunman best-seller. - The fact is I am a writer: and the writer has so much the habit of the anonymous, that he is apt to experience the same compunction about opening a book in the First Person Singular (caps. for the First Person Singular) as an educated man must feel about commencing a letter with an "I". But my very infirmity suggested such a method. I could hardly say: "The taxi stopped. I crawled out. I have a wooden leg!" Tactically, that would be hopelessly bad (2).

The emphatic way in which Snooty draws attention to himself as author is Lewis's strategy for disowning the narrative 'I' from the outset. Author, genre, descriptive and narrative technique thrust themselves self-consciously into the foreground as objects within the novel, as open to ridicule as any other. Such self-consciousness, however, becomes impossibly debilitating, and it is scarcely surprising that, after one or two similar paragraphs, Lewis should abandon the project, confining himself to Snooty's unorthodox beliefs. But there is a more fundamental reason: when he confronts the other characters, the puppet-author becomes but the thinnest disguise for Lewis himself.

Snooty cannot be both satirised and satirist at once, and since he nominally holds the pen, Lewis is forced to bestow on his puppet his own devastating satirical intelligence. In his contempt for contemporary fiction and the 'goodman-critic', in his brilliant asides to the reader and in his portraits of the other characters, Snooty is anything but an animal-worshipping nature crank whose livre de chevet is Rousseau; Humph is ruthlessly reduced to a Wild Body:

> ... what is important is that Humph is absolutely like a big carnival doll - all costard and trunk, no legs to speak of. With a portentous wooden head-piece, varnished a ruddy military

pink-and-tan (Brigade of Guards), the fellow trots in (58).

The satirical perspective which so delights in abstracting the form of a carnival doll 'all costard and trunk' from the figure of Snooty's agent is hardly that of a Romantic intuitionist 'on the same side' as D. H. Lawrence! And in his panegyric on McPhail, Snooty shows what, for a Behaviorist puppet must be uncommon powers of discrimination. McPhail is '... one of the few authentic poets now writing in English'; having visited him, Snooty understands 'perhaps more fully what a most conscious artist was McPhail - I report that for posterity'.(170-1). At first glance it might seem that Snooty recording something 'for posterity' must be ironic; but, set in the context of his descriptions of McPhail, this is not at all the case:

> His somewhat cat-like, prominent green eyes indicated gladness - self-conscious and abortive, misty and entranced. Eye, like tongue, was dimmed, in the head of this poet. (What is an eye, that it should pretend to paint the impulsive satisfactions of the word-king, unexpectedly called upon to salute a fellow?) There was a cloud, an obstruction. I was still at some psychic distance, my arrival had been too sudden: as I integrated, the poet strained his eyes - eager, like a cat's in the dark, the large ears drawn back against his head (176).

Clearly, this is a portrait by an equal, a 'fellow', and implies a considerable respect for the 'word-king'; so much so, that it is difficult to believe that the panegyric is not thoroughly endorsed.

These impressions are supported by the fact that McPhail is a thinly-disguised version of Roy Campbell. Lewis showed Campbell an early draft of the novel, and Campbell evidently objected to the fact that McPhail (then Mackenty) dies in a bull-fight. In a letter where he tried to assuage Campbell's discomfort about being asked to die 'even in play', Lewis insisted on his own good will and referred to his gratitude for Campbell's recent defence of The Apes of God:

> Lastly, always remember this. At a point in my career when many people were combining to defeat me (namely upon the publication of the Apes of God) you came forward and with the most disinterested nobleness placed yourself at my side, and defended my book in public in a manner that I believe no other work has ever been defended. And you can accept it as the most hundred per cent true statement that I would consider myself as the last of the ruffians, and the most ungrateful, if I ever by act or word did anything to harm or offend you.[1]

The portrait of McPhail is clearly, in part, a direct product of Lewis's gratitude; and, as Lewis himself points out, 'the part that would generally be identified, more or less, with [Campbell] , as it

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1. Letters, pp. 205-206.

first stood, was not a picture that anyone could interpret as unflattering'. Moreover, for all this to be true, a great deal of what Snooty says of McPhail must be taken as coming 'more or less' straight from Lewis. In his letter, Lewis tried to argue himself into a position where he could endorse the portrait without identifying himself with Snooty; he continued to insist that Snooty was 'an ill-mannered and lunatic puppet' and 'one of the most objectionable puppets it is easy to imagine': 'But for Heaven's sake', he continued, 'do not consider that what my behaviorist puppet hints at is a reflection of anything that could ever possibly cross my mind'. Such a defence rides tendentiously over the whole texture of the McPhail episode and merely draws attention once again, to the unresolved ambivalence which seems to have presided over Snooty's creation.

Evidently Campbell cannot have been completely convinced at Lewis's dissociation of himself from Snooty, for in Broken Record (1934) he refers to the Charlotade in Snooty Baronet (200-3) as if it were a straightforward description by Lewis himself:

> Working with the rejoneador, Daniel Valencia, I was astounded with the ease with which some Spanish cattle follow a cape, though I can only perform capotazas. Daniel has now turned Charlot; it brings in more money, but, in spite of that, Daniel is a fine fellow.... Lewis, with an astounding eye for humanity, and though at heart a true equestrian, has absolutely no eye for cattle at all, and does not do our Daniel justice. He accuses him of fighting tame cows (which is a fine tribute to Daniel's science; if he makes it look like that) and wishes his a horn in the backside, which poor Daniel has got this year (for the first time in the rear). With Lewis I agree that the Charlie deserved it - but not the man.
>
> Valencia as a rejoneador would have made Lewis forget the Charlot, who even in the dirty 'business man's' uniform, when he looks a filthy black beetle, is yet doing loyal and dangerous work.[1]

In Snooty Baronet Daniel Valencia becomes Juanito who, 'dressed as Charlie Chaplin' confronts a 'cow... no more dangerous than a performing dog' (200-2). What is important about Campbell's passage, however, is the assumption running through it that the Charlotade was based upon an actual visit by Lewis himself; that the account of it in Snooty Baronet is largely autobiographical. For Campbell, conscious of the close relationship between the bull-fight in the novel

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1. Broken Record (1934), pp. 192-193.

and Lewis's own experience, the episode cannot be passed off simply as the creation of 'an ill-mannered and lunatic puppet'.

Indeed, this is a further reason why Lewis's attitude to his 'Behaviorist puppet' is so ambivalent: a great deal that happens to Snooty is autobiographical. Geoffrey Wagner, without actually adducing much evidence, senses that Snooty is 'semi-autobiographical'.[1] The letters and the unpublished memoirs of certain people connected with Lewis at this period suggest, with a new vividness, just how closely autobiographical Snooty is. For example, the 'filibuster' Snooty (187) travels to the Persian Desert via Marseilles; Lewis began writing Snooty Baronet just after he had returned from a trip,[2] via Marseilles,[3] to the edge of the Sahara Desert[4] (in Morocco): a trip he describes in Filibusters in Barbary (1932). Already, in changing Roy Campbell, born in South Africa, into Rob McPhail, born in China (187), Lewis has transposed the Africa of real life into the Asia of fiction. Not surprisingly, the Persian brothel frequented by Snooty (268) sounds suspiciously similar to the one encountered by Lewis in Agadir.[5] Likewise, the Arabic feast enjoyed by Snooty while he is held captive by the bandit in the desert contains many of the same dishes as the meal to which Lewis was treated by the Sheik of the Anti-Atlas.[6] Most important of all, Lewis's account of his travels, Filibusters in Barbary, was published in England by Grayson and Grayson, who, in the previous year, had brought out the cheap edition of The Apes of God. And it was Rupert Grayson, Lewis's publisher, with whom he dealt directly about these books, who was to recognize himself as the living model for Snooty's agent, Humph. Not that Grayson accompanied Lewis to Morocco; nor, according to Mrs. Lewis, was the trip or Filibusters in Barbary originally Grayson's idea,[7] even though Grayson did advance Lewis money for the book.[8] Nevertheless, in the letter

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1. Wyndham Lewis, p, 265.
2. A letter from Mrs. Wyndham Lewis, undated, received 16 May 1972.
3. Filibusters in Barbary, chapter 2.
4. Ibid, chapter 1.
5. Ibid, pp. 131-137.
6. Ibid, pp. 198-202.
7. Mrs. Wyndham Lewis to D.H. Parker, n.d. (received 16 May 1972).
8. Michael Thomas [Rupert Grayson's literary agent] to D.H. Parker, 11 July 1972.

sent by Grayson's solicitors in 1938, the grounds for the identification are substantial:

> For some time past various friends and acquaintances of our Client have been informing him that he is referred to in the book in question, but it was not until recently that he was told of the serious imputations which have been made. By means of a description of his physical peculiarities represented by the character 'Humph' in your book, our Client is subjected to an unjustified and unwarranted attack upon his character which must have done him irreparable harm.
>
> It is obvious that the author has used his personal knowledge of our Client on which to base both his physical description of 'Humph' and his occupation as a literary agent, his membership of the Brigade of Guards and his employment as a King's Messenger (see pp. 7 and 8 and 57/9) all of which apply to our Client. There are many other matters in the book which would identify our Client with the person described as 'Humph'.[1]

Doubtless 'physical description' refers to Humph's chin - 'The chap is all chin' - and Humph has indeed been a King's Messenger and member of the Guards (57-8). Characteristically, Lewis denied that any of his characters could be identified with living people.[2] Rupert Grayson remained unconvinced, and in his latest volume of memoirs, as yet unpublished, he writes of Lewis's 'usual weapon, a pen sharpened to dagger point with which he etched my likeness in a novel Snooty Baronet cutting lines jagged and deeper than scars and poisoned with acidic brilliance'.[3] And the fact that Humph, in an earlier draft of the novel (at Cornell), was called 'Roop', Grayson's nick-name,[4] suggests that Grayson was perfectly right to remain unconvinced by Lewis's denial. Like Humph, Grayson was a rich man[5] who had just started agenting[6] and who wrote best-sellers[7] (62-74). These are no doubt some of the 'many other matters' which identify Gordon Dadd's Client. By putting

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1. Gordon Dadds & Co. to W.L., 24 January 1938 (Cornell).
2. W.L. to Gordon Dadds & Co., 27 January 1938 (Cornell).
3. 'Cloak Without Dagger', an unpublished memoir by Rupert Grayson lent to me by the author, p. 156.
4. In Voyage Not Completed (1969), Grayson's first volume of auto-biography, his nick-name appears, spelt 'Rupe', in several places.
5. Ibid; Grayson's financial background is made plain here; he is the son of a leading British shipbuilder.
6. Ibid, p. 136; Grayson's father had established his son as a partner in a publishing house with a gift of £8,000, not long before.
7. Grayson wrote a series of adventure novels whose hero was a character called Gun Cotton.

Snooty into a similar relationship with Humph as he himself enjoyed with Grayson, Lewis was able to furnish his puppet with a whole ready-made satirical armoury of factual detail and personal response. Never is Snooty more closely identified with his creator than when he is describing another character.

Much the same is true in the case of Val. For two or three years before the writing of Snooty Baronet, Lewis occasionally visited Mrs. Mrs. Marjorie Hemming, a Chelsea authoress, then Mrs. Marjorie Firminger (nee McLean), who was the model for Mrs. Valerie Ritter (nee McAuliffe).[1] From these visits, Lewis picked up Val's leitmotif: 'I've got him in the bed' (22). According to 'No Quarter', the phrase originated from one of Marjorie Hemming's friends, a lesbian called Pam; when he heard it, 'Lewis seemed to like it, repeating it and nodding his head'.[2] Mrs. Hemming must have liked Lewis's approval of the phrase, as 'the bed' occurs often in those letters of hers which Lewis kept,[3] and which are now at Cornell. These letters, which sometimes tend to be a little like Val's - 'a sickly old sex-dirge' (10) - became part of the raw material for Snooty Baronet. Like Val, Marjorie Firminger put her lover, who also paid the rent[4] (21), in her novels;[5] and, like Mort, Marjorie Firminger's lover did not mind as long as his 'prowess' in 'the bed' was praised; she describes his reactions in a letter to Lewis:

> He began by getting pained about the 2nd Chapter of my new book. I told you I read him the 1st & he said he didn't mind what I wrote about him so long as I said he was good in bed. Thinking - I suppose - that he would hear of his prowess there, he said: 'Read me the next chapter' .... But he stopped me before I'd got to the end.[6]

Lewis seized on this and made Mort displeased at Val's accounts of his performances in bed (28-9). Val's literary indiscretions regarding the 'girl-bachelors' were borrowed from Marjorie Hemming's book about 'the chaps' which she privately published in Paris in 1931.[7] Mrs.

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1. 'No Quarter', p. 33.
2. Ibid, p. 27.
3. Marjorie Firminger [Hemming] to W.L., 10 September 1930; another, undated, ca. 1930 (Cornell).
4. 'No Quarter', p. 27.
5. Ibid, p. 43.
6. Marjorie Firminger [Hemming] to W.L., n.d., ca. 1930 (Cornell).
7. 'No Quarter', p. 33. The book was called Jam Today (Paris, 1931).

Hemming was apparently an inveterate giggler and innocently asked Lewis in one of her letters if her giggles annoyed him.[1] It was Snooty who replied, by likening Val to 'a dentist who giggled all the time' (9). But probably the most important trait borrowed from Marjorie Hemming was her conviction that she could help Lewis[2] sometimes by offering him money[3] (she too was trying to sublet and wanted Lewis to spend some time abroad with her in France).[4] Of course, there are equally striking differences, the most important being that Marjorie Hemming was not, in any sense, Lewis's mistress.[5] For Lewis, she was a source of gossip about the Bright Young Things, London's lesbians and, before Lewis went there himself, Berlin's underworld.[6] 'All I can do - it seems - ', she wrote in 1930, 'is to give you chit'.[7] This, however was more than enough; for like Snooty, Lewis was engaged in 'field work', collecting 'specimens' for his books. One of his best 'specimens' was Marjorie Hemming herself, dramatised with a behaviorist's eye for manifest detail, as Val in Snooty Baronet.

As a scientist of 'Behaviour' carrying out his field work, Snooty plays the part of Lewis the satirist among his dramatised specimens. Despite the satire attaching to it, Snooty's 'scientific' procedure exactly mirrors the aesthetic which Lewis had elaborated in Satire and Fiction only a year or so before to defend The Apes of God. In reply to the charge that he had maliciously distorted his originals, Lewis compared his art with natural science:

> Satire is in reality often nothing else but the truth, in fact that of Natural Science. That objective, non-emotional truth of the scientific intelligence sometimes takes on the exuberant sensuous quality of creative art: then it is very apt to be called 'satire', for it has been bent not so much upon pleasing as upon being true.[8]

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1. Marjorie Firminger [Hemming] to W.L., 1 October 1930 (Cornell).
2. Marjorie Firminger [Hemming] to W.L., 10 September 1930; 1 October 1930 (Cornell).
3. 'No Quarter', p. 89.
4. Marjorie Firminger [Hemming] to W.L., 1 October 1930 (Cornell).
5. 'No Quarter' makes this quite clear.
6. 'No Quarter', pp. 11, 22-23, 27.
7. Marjorie Firminger [Hemming] to W.L. 10 September 1930 (Cornell).
8. Satire and Fiction, p. 48.

Like the author of The Apes of God, Snooty turns his scientific intelligence on the 'conspicuous people' of Chelsea; not at all bent on pleasing, he reports exactly what he sees as a 'painful duty' (34). His subject sounds familiar to readers of Lewis's earlier satire; Snooty studies the various cells of literary London already exposed by Pierpoint and Zagreus: 'I would mark down and pursue, selected for the purpose, members of those ape-like congeries - gangs, sets, ant-armies, forces of Lilliput, number-brave coteries, militant sheep-clans - fraternities, rotaries and crews' (64). And People Behaving, like The Apes of God, is beset by misinterpretation. What are simply 'scientific' researches have been mistaken for art; his 'specimen people-behaving... have been treated as if they were characters in a novel' (66). Where criticism drew Lewis into the characteristic claim that his satires were nothing but 'objective' truth, Snooty denies that his narratives are anything but scientific observation. The behaviorist is strictly an observer, concerned purely with the appearance of things. The onlookers 'looked' the same as the hatter's automaton: 'and that word looked, that was for Snooty everything'. His interest is rigidly confined to what the eye can see: the outside of his specimens: 'What was Humph, for instance, more than an appearance? For me he was a fixed apparition. I believed that this creature before me possessed intestines of sawdust. But I knew no more of Humph's intestines... than I did of this chap's in the window' (161). Humph is no more human than this automaton because he appears to be no different on the outside: about his viscera, Snooty has neither knowledge nor concern. Likewise, Snooty's creator described the Apes of God as 'machines, governed by mere routine',[1] pictured exactly as they 'looked':

> For The Apes of God it could, I think, quite safely be claimed, that no book has ever been written that has paid more attention to the outside of people. In it their shells, or pelts, or the language of their bodily movements, come first, not last.[2]

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1. Satire and Fiction, p. 45.
2. Ibid, p. 46.

Throughout the entire body of his criticism, Lewis's preference for 'the outside of all things' as opposed to 'the repulsive turbidness of the intestine'[1] is something to which he draws consistent attention. On this preference rests his whole 'philosophy of the EYE' and his own role, in criticism and art, as 'detached observer'. At second glance, nothing could be more appropriate as a fictional persona for Lewis than a behaviorist doing field work.

Snooty the observer is Lewis the artist under a superficial covering of satirical camouflage. The McPhail episode, partly because of its complimentary reference to Campbell, cannot, without ambiguity, overdo the camouflage. Here it becomes necessary to emphasise that Snooty is an artist, capable of recognising another artist. Like Lewis, who held that 'truth has no place in action',[2] Snooty distinguishes between McPhail and the man who participates wholeheartedly in action: 'I am tracking for you the Artist, the Spectator, as against the blinded and deafened participant' (170). McPhail is an artist because he is a 'Spectator' who holds himself aloof from action, an observer who eschews all commitment. Such a conception was, of course, orthodox Vorticist and Enemy theory, and it is hardly surprising to find that, in this respect, McPhail-Campbell and Snooty-Lewis are one:

> ... the likeness in our respective ways of feeling (on a number of points) is exceedingly marked. I am astonished at the likeness.... I feel towards him as I should towards a brother. - Now like myself Rob is an actor - he is the artist in action. He purges himself daily in make-believe. I am the man-of-action incarnate. So is he. But I act at being in action. And he too! What man-of-action has not? Lord Nelson was a famous actor. Any ship's rating in his fleet was the common or garden 'man of action' was he not - such as I am not to be sure (not 'man-of-action' in that brutish sense). I am not a brute. I am conscious of my actions (182-3).

In Snooty Baronet, the distinction between the artist who is a man-of-action and men-of-action 'in the brutish sense' is quite fundamental. The artist acts without entirely identifying himself with his body in motion; he remains conscious at the same time. That is, he 'acts at being in action'; he is 'the man-of-action become conscious, and therefore actor' (183). The force of the 'therefore' is that artistic

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1. Blasting and Bombardiering, p. 9.
2. Rude Assignment, p. 128.

consciousness inevitably distances action. McPhail treats 'Action as if it were a bull' (184); he plays with it, from a great height. Both sit in the gallery of the arena of action, in control, yet like true patricians, despising what happens below:

> We are now in the company of that famous opium-eater, the big word-workman, we are together with him, in quest for the Solid, we touch it with our finger-tips, we are actually above the mêlée-to-be inhaling the same cubic feet of atmosphere as the nostrils of the actors, or were just now, the dangerous quadrupeds. We are the togaed ones laughing (of the senatorial caste, the great Freed-men) above the death-pit of the circus.... We are the ones whose thumbs are erected or depressed. We scorn the reality (183-4).

The mêlée, and his own bodily participation within it, elicit from the conscious man a mixture of humour and contempt. Inwardly, despite the roles he plays, the artist maintains the freedom of the spectator 'above the death-pit', in all his commerce with the circus, scorning its 'reality'.

The central concern of Snooty Baronet, as it was with Tarr, is to dramatise its hero's struggle to remain above the mêlée, to evade that 'reality' which in spite of all his scorn, conspires incessantly to annexe the free consciousness. This conflict, between an ideal, masterful self-isolation and a nervous susceptibility to actual people, is a pre-eminent node of interest in Lewis's early fiction. Women confront the would-be superman with a threat of the most perilous kind. Because of the threat, Tarr and Beresin try to confine sexuality to the body as something to be wallowed in without absorbing the superior powers of the soul. For this reason, Tarr prefers to direct his sexual energies towards a large German romantic by whom he is more than faintly repelled; Beresin chooses a buxom chambermaid and enjoys taking her to the places where coarse things prevail. A man of the same mould, Snooty visits Val with a certain amount of self-disgust:

> She is nothing if not shoppy, the old harlot. (But picture to yourself a dentist who giggled all the time while he was yanking your tooth out!) - Still I go for more! I go regularly. I go with irritation. I go with a sublte confusion. I even go with shame, but I go regularly: sniggering (I catch the trick) I succumb: and old Val whisks my leg off quicker than any woman I know (9).

Snooty's self-indulgence arouses a sense of shame which, annoy him as it might, is not without its titillating fascination; it is the kind of vaguely forbidden surrender which elicits a schoolboy 'snigger'.

All the enjoyment centres precisely on those areas which at the same time repel him. Like all of Lewis's early lovers, Snooty advances with a brutality to match the coarseness of his object; but as usual, the yielding of flesh responds with strange and faintly carnivorous motions of its own:

> I seized her stiffly round the body. All of her passably lissom person - on the slight side - gave. It was the human willow, more or less. It fled into the hard argument of my muscular pressures. Her waist broke off and vanished into me as I took her over in waspish segments, an upper and nether. The bosoms and head settled like a trio of hefty birds upon the upper slopes of my militant trunk: a headless nautilus on the other hand settled upon my middle, and attacked my hams with its horrid tentacles - I could feel the monster of the slimy submarine-bottoms grinding away beneath, headless and ravenous.
>
> 'Oh Listerine!' I sighed, as I compressed the billows of her rib-box, squeezing it in and out - it crushed up to a quite handy compass - expanding, and then expelling her bad breath (45-6).

The voracious, 'headless nautilus' 'of the slimy submarine-bottoms grinding away beneath' is of course a vaginal image. This monstrously repugnant, slightly horrifying presence in Val's 'nether' segment concentrates in the suggestion of physical detail that mixture of attraction-in-repulsion which keeps Snooty going to Val 'for more'. Her bad breath, which extends the sensous repugnance, prefigures the nausea which Snooty experiences at the moment of climax. For Snooty's part, such enjoyment, tinged by disgust, nicely confines the relationship to the simple satisfaction of bodily appetite.

As a purely bodily phenomenon, sex presents no threat to the artist whatsoever. For this reason, Snooty prefers Lily to Val, as Lily knows almost nothing about him. Having met Lily on a bus, Snooty visits her where she works, in a tobacco kiosk on a railway-station:

> Lily as a friend was on a different establishment from Val. This was because I'd got to know Lily differently, in an omnibus as a matter of fact.... Lily knew nothing about me as well except my names and was quite ignorant of The Baronet. I was Mr. K. - I., a struggling engineer, for Lily Tayle, cooking my own breakfast-rasher on a gas-ring in a basement flat. If the shadow of The Baronet had never crossed our path, equally the shadow of the Custom House Officer had never disturbed our contraband caresses, our illicit still of bubbling free-love (115-6).

Lily heightens the pleasure of the 'illicit' and 'contraband' precisely because she does not know that Snooty is a Baronet or a writer; their 'free-love' is free because Snooty is anonymous, operating behind the mask of the penniless engineer, Mr. K. - I. All personal involvement

thus precluded, the physical element predominates in a fully uninhibited way. Snooty, like Beresin before him, is a 'red-blooded wholehogger in a hired cab', making love to her as they rush 'irresistably up one street and down another' (123); the squalid mobility of their couch is well suited to the transience of Snooty's interest. All, however, is doomed. Lily finds out about 'The Baronet' from a newspaper article and her manner undergoes a transformation; his anonymity is destroyed at a stroke. The new respect that Lily begins to show hints of a more permanent kind of interest, which is the last thing that Snooty desires. Anything which might initiate a more intense involvement is as carefully avoided by Snooty as it was by Tarr. For example, Snooty never kisses unless he is already in bed; kissing he points out, inhibits field work.

With Val, however, sexual relationships can never be confined to their physical processes. Her standard phrase, 'I've got him in the bed', does not simply refer to her fondness for the activities of 'the Bed'. The emphasis, in fact, does not fall on 'the Bed' at all, but on the word 'got'. Attention is drawn to it by inverted commas, repetition and block capitals; one can even be 'got' without a Bed:

> It was there she had "got" Mort... (46)
>
> She had got me safely inside - I sat upon the Bed (47).
>
> ... we were lying side-by-side in The Bed, where she had got me - where she got me, and I had done her wrong (48).
>
> She can certainly claim that she has GOT ME, or once got me, UNDER THE APRICOT TREE (238).
>
> I allowed her to Get me upon an enormous triangular cushion (277).

The significance of this play on 'got' is clear: it emphasises once more the insatiable possessiveness which attends all female love-making in Lewis's early novels. Val 'gets' her lovers in her clutches, imprisons them in the Bed. She demonstrates to Snooty how she 'got' Mortimer in the Bed:

> She demonstrated with a spasm of her ten wriggling fingers, which she strengthlessly snapped to upon an imaginary Mort, how she had him in the bed.
>
> Fascinated... I saw the convulsive shadow of Mort - I saw this wraith... struggling in THE BED - clutched with ten fluttering tentacles, of muscleless flesh, remorselessly closing in upon his impalpable substance - writhing in a delicious constriction. I heard the muffled panting of this fat shadow... as he gave up the ghost. I felt the limp weight of his subsequent corpse, drained of its blood: and as she loosened her fingers, as they came airily apart, waggling dreamily from each other, as her right hand

> separated itself from her left, I could almost perceive the dead weight, of the extinct Mort, sink down to the floor, like a stricken sausage-balloon (23).

The sexual imagery of the Bed is charged with the suggestion that Mort (an appropriate name) is being mercilessly overpowered. Caught in a 'delicious' though vampire-like 'constriction', he is so 'remorselessly' gripped that the very life is being wrung out of him. Her embrace makes him pant for breath; orgasm is like giving up the ghost. The sense of total, crushing possession is achieved by the attention given to Val's fastened hands and fingers; they become 'wriggling', 'fluttering', feeding tentacles draining Mort's blood. But where Mort allows himself to be crushed in Val's fingers, Snooty is not held so easily:

> Val had been sitting, elegant and prim, within kicking-distance beneath me, but now she was leaning forward in a half-crouch - a most beady-eyed self-appointed confederate, squinting up into my face. How could I shake the old girl off? She had compressed one hand into the fist of a superwoman - a gesture that was a readily identifiable relative of the celebrated I've got him in the Bed one. But it was a more wide-awake and belligerent Mort that she had got shut-up in this latter fist-prison (29-30).

Here again, the imprisoning grip of Val's hand features heavily, but in this situation we see it alongside the psychological possessiveness of which it is only a metaphor. What Snooty resents so violently is the suffocating prison of Val's presumption as 'self-appointed confederate'; it is her attempt to close in on his affections which elicits his characteristic, Tarr-like response: 'How could I shake the old girl off?' At the point where his self-sufficiency is threatened, Snooty, like all of Lewis's early heroes, is forced into retreat. Personal involvement and autonomous selfhood are felt to be incompatible.

Val's presumption is a manoeuvre intended to effect a confederacy, emperceptibly, by pretending that it is accomplished fact. Her use of 'we' never fails to startle Snooty: 'We I observed' (39); like Bertha's photograph, it is part of Val's strategy to 'get' her man. When she finds out that he has been to China, she appears hurt that he has not sent a post-card. Snooty points out that a post-card could convey little of China; whereupon Val replies: 'It was you not China'. At this, Snooty is definitely alarmed:

> This was very bad indeed. Was it possible that a certain objectionable rite had substituted itself in Val's feeble mind for the more honourable sentiments of a bohemian high-brow 'bit' (which was her favourite word for tart)? Perish the thought! This is the point at which I drew out the pound (20).

Any hint of the 'objectionable rite' throws Snooty into momentary panic. But the pound is a master-stroke; it exorcises completely the image of the situation which Val is trying to conjure up, minimising the effect of the post-card. Snooty cleverly puts himself at the distance of a mere acquaintance who cannot neglect to pay back a pound. Well aware of the counter-strategy, Val refuses; Snooty, of course, can see why: 'I knew her so well. Val was always trying to force money on me to get me in her power' (21). Her money gives Val the whip hand, for well she knows that by contriving to raise the subject of money she is implicating Snooty in her own affairs. Repeatedly, he finds himself drawn into a discussion which can only presuppose the dreaded 'we', 'beastly money-confidences' intended to 'involve [him] in undesirable complicity' (54). But since he is poor, Val's money cannot be ignored, so that Snooty finds himself drawn into 'money-confidences' as well as her schemes to support his research. Val has it all mapped out and when she offers to take him to a villa in France, he is forced to acquiesce. Thus he exposes himself, inevitably, to the danger of the 'objectionable rite', the possibility of Val getting him 'in the Church' (248). Nevertheless, he says 'yes', and delivers himself into Val's clutches.

Snooty, in fact, only appears to submit. The realisation of even his worst fears about Val is relieved by a defiance which suggests that he is holding one last trump card: it is his Butler laugh:

> I eyed her with some curiosity. Could it be possible - was old Val after all by way of toying with the thought? Would Lady Kell-Imrie sound better than Valerie Ritter? My face slowly relaxed. My large teeth crept out - my hideous show-window of whiteguard tusks came out of my mouth in parade-order. There was a spasm inside my body. Next thing the whole apartment echoed with my Butler laugh (56).

The relaxed face falls like a curtain on any signs of displeasure; the toothy, Tyro grin becomes an impenetrable defence of guards 'in parade-order'. By the time he laughs, he is someone else: Samuel Butler. Throughout the entire visit Snooty has been acting; from the moment Val opens the door, Snooty takes leave of himself and steps into his role: 'I steadied my countenance for this confrontation. Everyone was banished from my face, I banished even myself. In their place I put Butler' (14). What makes Butler so appealing is that he himself spent ten years visiting a certain woman without giving his name; for Snooty this is 'a record... in incognito!. Butler is for

him the Anonymous Man *par excellence*, 'as becomes Genius, abstract and nameless'. The contraband freedom he enjoyed with Lily could be achieved by studying Butler's anonymity, the remarkable abstraction of his higher faculties from a sensual situation. Snooty is in fact abstracted at two removes, 'tucked up in the lion's skin of the famous author of "The Way of All Flesh"' (17). Hidden inside Butler's skin, he can even enjoy the image of an old married couple which these visits inevitably invoke since he is quite out of the reach of Val's life-sucking tentacles. Whenever some fresh assault is launched, he simply asks the question: What would Butler have done? And as a last resort, impersonating Butler gives him access to an intensely repellent smile and laugh:

> If you knew me you would be familiar with a particular smile which often visits, but does not belong upon, my face. That is my *Butler smile*! Old Val has remarked it over and over again. She has not the least suspicion of its origin, but she dislikes it extremely. All my friends dislike it extremely. I have not brought it to its fullest perfection yet: but when I have, I am confident that it will have an even more painful effect (16-17).

That Val dislikes the smile is quite in order; the 'painful effect' is its *raison d'être*. Like the portrait of 'Mr. Wyndham Lewis as Tyro', the Butler smile is a kind of armoured mask, placed between the inner man and that which threatens him. When Val has him cornered with offers of money, Snooty brings out his Butler laugh, and that effects a complete defence: 'A fire-proof curtain had been run down between us by what I had done' (52). Butler's laugh preserves his free consciousness from Val's clutches by throwing before it an opaque, fire-proof curtain . Val is cut off by the complete disjunction between Snooty's feelings and the bodily manifestations which appear before her. Like a true actor, Snooty is not identified with his actions. Playing Butler is his way of remaining aloof in a situation which might otherwise overwhelm his autonomy. As a result, Val only 'gets' his body.

Humph poses a threat of a similar kind. While he can recognise that Snooty is an artist, Humph is himself a man-of-action of the common variety, nothing but a body in action, an 'automaton' pacing around his office without meaning. A left-over from *The Apes*, he resembles a 'doll' with no legs and 'all chin'; his 'dog-eyes of desolate blank brown' betray no spark of consciousness (58-9). Nevertheless, Humph manages to mesmerise him with his chin, so that when he announces the Persian scheme Snooty is tongue-tied: 'Wild horses

could not have dragged a word out of me at that moment. My brain was simply choked with chin. I could do nothing but move my lips up and down. I could not utter a syllable' (75). The chin is clearly no ordinary organ! Actually, it is what the chin stands for which paralyses Snooty: that mindless determination which threatens to imprison him in his agent's lunatic schemes. For the second time, Snooty is being swept along against his will; this time in the remorseless vortex of Humph's purpose. Unlike Val, Humph seems to desire no complicity, but the imprisoning effect is still the same. Already the chin has reminded Snooty of a strong-box or a place for carrying dispatches. Then, in an instant of insight Snooty begins to perceive the analogy between the Chin and the Bed. Humph too wants to 'get' him totally in his power:

> I saw perfectly that I was in his power.... Yes he Had me in the Chin it could be said, to paraphrase - just as old Val Had me in the Bed. That was the fact of the matter. He had me under lock and key in this monumental feature of his person as if it had been a castle-keep (133-4).

Val and Humph, in their different ways, want to control and possess Snooty, and the connection between their attempts is made plain (Humph's leitmotif 'I've got some...' is a clear relative of Val's famous phrase). Both automata themselves, Humph and Val want Snooty to be their automaton, but Snooty swears an appropriate revenge: 'They desired me to be their automaton! I would in the end become their Frankenstein!' (153) When he agrees then, to the Persian idea, Snooty again only appears to submit. He goes with a show of willing acquiescence, but all the while plotting escape from his twofold prison.

In the final sequence, in Persia, Snooty is relentlessly hunted. Instead of neutralising each other, as he has hoped, Val and Humph quarrel, and this only intensifies their possessiveness. Caught between them, Snooty begins to fear 'being torn to pieces by these two enraged puppets' (261). Already he has identified himself, in reading Moby Dick, with the hunted fish. Now, 'the Snooty-hunt was in full swing' (268), and he is driven into hiding. Finally, the hunted remembers his promise:

> And I retired to my own room and avoided them both for the rest of the day. When I returned, the last thing at night, I heard that Captain Cooper Carter had been hunting high and low for me, and also Mrs Ritter (separately of course - each on their own initiative). My eyes shone as I heard I was being hunted. I went to sleep that night inventing man-traps for my hunters, to

> catch them in next day. One big spectacular trap for Humph. On the whole I resented Humph most. It is one thing to be hunted by a woman. It is another thing to be hunted by a man...! And I went to bed and slept very soundly under the mosquito-net indeed - except that I dreamed of hunting expeditions... in which it was I who was the hunted animal.... All the Moby Dick images, in fact. But I slept well - I knew that I was being hunted, but I knew how it would end - so I was at peace (265-6).

The fact that Snooty resents Humph rather more as a hunter is reflected by the man-trap in which he finally catches him. In a scuffle which breaks out while he is being taken prisoner, Snooty shoots his agent twice. One of the shots, significantly enough, has 'come bursting out of the centre of his chin... and split it open like a gourd' (296). Val is treated with relative kindness. After she catches small-pox in an oasis, Snooty leaves her with the bandits in place of a ransom. Snooty, for his part, settles down with a Persian Lily to a perfectly happy life at the Bosphorus.

Snooty finally escapes his pursuers and resolves his conflicts precisely as Tarr did in marrying the pregnant Bertha: he opts for a split-existence. The hero of Lewis's early fiction learns to feign submission without actually submitting, to satisfy his lusts without loving, to remain an artist while outwardly conforming. In all his commerce with the world he employs his body as a flexible barricade around the soul. The hunted artist is safe only inside his role; free, only when he becomes an actor.

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The hero of Snooty Baronet has little in common with the masterful self-sufficiency of Time's Enemy. That cool detachment which the Enemy's pamphlets take for granted is something which can only be won by Snooty in the wish-fulfillment of an ideal ending. Within the actual texture of the novel's relationships, it is the most precarious of achievements; realised, not by a Johnsonian certainty in his own identity but by an involved histrionic subterfuge which could only belong to the age of Nietzsche and Wilde. Where the Enemy boggled at the cult of the actor with the amazement of Diderot, Snooty, stalked like an animal, can only survive by acting out the part of a misanthropic

writer with a toothy grin. This repellent role is Snooty's master-defence, just as masks like the Tyro were defences for his creator; all were ramparts between the artist and a world apparently conspiring to 'get' him. As a consummate actor, Lewis's comic puppet brilliantly impersonates the concealed artist holding the strings.

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CHAPTER VII : 'ANYTHING FOR THE OCCASION': LEWIS AS ACTOR AND PUBLICIST.

'Why try to give the impression of a consistent and indivisible personality?' BLAST.

While the Enemy reaffirmed the timelessness of art and the need for coherent personality in an age of violent dislocations, the artist himself, as Snooty Baronet suggests, could only transcend the pressures of the moment by cultivating a repertoire of outward personalities flexible enough to change from one moment to the next. In his impersonations of Samuel Butler, Snooty provides a recognisable caricature of Lewis the poseur. According to the memoirs of several acquaintances, a studied air of theatricality surrounded almost everything Lewis did, his numerous poses occasionally giving rise to those sudden and perplexing metamorphoses which he himself had advocated in 'The Code of A Herdsman'. There can be little wonder that Lewis was something of an enigma to those around him. While he concealed his identity on the one hand, he gave out conflicting hints about himself on the other. For some he was an Englishman, for others an American, and for others still a Canadian or a Welshman. One of the advantages of being a mystery-man was that he was free to adapt his nationality, and sometimes even his beliefs, to the needs of the moment. After years of presenting himself to prospective patrons, publishers and supporters, upon whom he was economically dependent, Lewis had learned to portray himself as favourably as possible, and if this meant craftily passing himself off in his letters as a crypto-Catholic or a Baptist, a nationalist or an internationalist, a socialist or a conservative, all in quick succession, it was a price the impoverished artist was prepared to pay. Unfortunately, the same disposition to submit, with surprising flexibility, to the dictates of good public-relations can be observed in Lewis's discursive prose, especially after Hitler (1931). All too often the publicist's concern with momentary effects usurps the very timeless ideals of permanence and universality to which the artist's genius aspired.

* *

When Snooty Baronet visited Val he stepped into the role of Samuel Butler at her doorstep. Likewise, while Lewis visited his Chelsea authoress a year or so earlier he too played a role. Not long after she met him Marjorie Hemming was struck by Lewis's strange theatricality. In 'No Quarter' she recalls the tension of a meeting in which Lewis's 'eyes opened wider behind their spectacles and he gave a tweak to the floppy black hat, making it curve down further still. His unexpectedly theatrical gesture made me feel as if I was on the stage'.[1] The hat, pulled well down over his face, was one of Lewis's invariable props. On another occasion not long after the publication of The Apes when he was 'being vehemently attacked in some quarters' Lewis suddenly appeared like a fugitive at Mrs. Hemming's door, this time wearing a cloth cap: 'He seemed to be acting too, what with the looking round and listening and the tweaking further down of the cap'.[2] In their steep forward angles Lewis's hats came close to physical masks. According to a brilliantly satirical memoir of Edith Sitwell's, these hats corresponded to such favourite roles of Lewis's as the Spaniard and the mariner. For her, being with Lewis was like watching a series of slides; his 'outward personality' changed 'from hour to hour':

> When he grinned, one felt as if one were looking at a lantern slide... a click, a fade-out, and another slide, totally unconnected with it, and equally unreal, had taken its place. He was no longer the simple-minded artist, but a rather sinister, piratic, formidable Dago. For this remarkable man had a habit of appearing in various roles.[3]

With such a description, lifted bodily out of a novel she wrote in the thirties[4] - in which Lewis appeared as Henry Debingham - it is not easy to discriminate the embroidery from the fabric of truth: Edith Sitwell had motives for satirical revenge. Nevertheless, Augustus John who had no such motives described Lewis in a strikingly similar way. Lewis's

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1. 'No Quarter', p. 21.
2. Ibid, p. 47.
3. Taken Care Of, pp. 100-101.
4. I Live Under a Black Sun (1937); see pp. 231-234 especially.

'pose', as John called it, had several models:

> After his return from the U.S.A. the conception of a 'Tycoon' or 'Big Shot' held pride of place in his repertoire.... On a higher level still Zarathustra himself was more than hinted at, though Lewis did not follow this lead to the heights of sublimity associated with that name; and then there was Baudelaire, of course, always good for a note of sombre disillusionment and misanthropy.[1]

Nor did John see these changing poses as merely arbitrary emanations of an incoherent mind. They sprang from a 'view of life... based largely on the Commedia dell' Arte, a theatrical performance where everyone was allowed to invent his own gags or lazzi, and, provided he stuck to his role, could over-act as much as he liked'. For another observer, C.R.W. Nevinson, Lewis was 'essentially histrionic'.[2] As Mrs. Helen Rowe noted, Lewis's habit was to allow a role to suggest itself and then to follow it wherever it might lead him: 'He subjected the most commonplace actions to thorough scrutiny, and then chose a particular way to speak, laugh, gesture, sit, walk, eat, etc.'[3] Just as Snooty avoided showing himself by continually asking 'What would Butler have done?' so Lewis referred his actions to the internal logic of the role he happened to be assuming at the moment. Once he left the seclusion of his studio Lewis carefully immured himself inside the façade of a sustained posture.

As spectacular poseurs, Lewis's early heroes closely mirror their author. Trying to find a pretext to leave Bertha, Tarr looks at his watch and his action suddenly conjures up the figure of a family doctor or lawyer. Immediately he begins to cast 'his further remarks into that mould', adopting the part of a detached professional man called in to solve a problem.[4] The action of throwing away his cigar reminds Kemp of the way in which a certain fat mid-European held his cigar, so he sits for a while with his finger hooked over his nose.[5] Lewis's early heroes often delight in changing their personalities like lantern-slides from one moment to the next. For these heroes, as for

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1. 'Elephants With Beards: The Enigma of Wyndham Lewis', The Sunday Times, 5 October 1958, p. 5.
2. Paint and Prejudice, p. 56.
3. Cited in William Wees, Vorticism, p. 145.
4. Tarr, p. 52.
5. The Ideal Giant, p. 15.

Lewis, the social scene could be regarded as a continuously-running Commedia dell' Arte in which constant improvisation was a way of life. The importance of personal discontinuity had been stressed in 'The Code of A Herdsman':

> Cherish and develop, side by side, your six most constant personalities.... Leave your front door one day as B. : the next march down the street as E. A disconnected assortment of clothes, hats, are of especial help in this wider dramatisation of yourself. Never fall into the vulgarity of being, or assuming yourself to be, one ego. Each trench must have another behind it. Each single self which you manage to be at any given time - must have five at least indifferent to it.[1]

Ten years later when he wrote Time and Western Man Lewis appeared to have thrown away his Herdsman-outfit and now left his door each day dressed up as the Enemy, an advocate of the 'civilized' continuity of a single, stable ego. In fact, although he never acknowledged it, the Enemy knew the cult of the actor at very close quarters indeed. As a Vorticist he himself had asked: 'Why try to give the impression of a consistent and indivisible personality?'[2] This apparent volte-face focuses a fascinating paradox: Lewis the Enemy, champion of the classical spirit, diagnosed the unstable 'actor-mind' of Mussolini and Charlie Chaplin as an important symptom of the modern disease, while Lewis the enigma, who appeared before friends in a variety of hats, considered it a vulgarity to give the impression of one consistent and indivisible identity. 'Contradict yourself', the Herdsman counselled. 'In order to live you must remain broken up'. The Cornell collection abounds in evidence that Lewis followed his own advice. Wherever he went, Lewis the actor wove round himself a bewildering pattern of contradictions.

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One aspect of Lewis the actor is particularly highlighted by his correspondence at Cornell: the astonishing variety of national identities to which he laid claim from one moment to the next. Before W. K. Rose

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1. 'The Code of A Herdsman'; a draft at Cornell.
2. BLAST, ii, p. 91.

found his birth certificate establishing that he was born in a yacht off Nova Scotia, there were, as Edmund Wilson discovered, many conflicting rumours about his place of birth; their author was Lewis himself:

> I have always been curious to know who and what he really was. In a conversation about him with Sybil Colefax and T. S. Eliot, I discovered that he had told each of us a different story about where he had been born. He had told me, in Philadelphia; one of the others, on a boat in mid-Atlantic; and I believe that during his days in Toronto he said that he had been born in Canada.[1]

The birth place he gave depended upon the purpose for which it was given. In the publicity for the American edition of America and Cosmic Man he stressed his 'American origin'.[2] When he was seeking a job at Bard College, New York State, he began his Vita: 'Was born in America....'[3] To an Englishman such as Geoffrey Grigson, on the other hand, it was 'untrue' that he was 'a compatriot of T. S. Eliot'.[4] In a talk he gave in 1940 on the Canadian Broadcasting Commission, Lewis announced that he was born in Canada, not failing to mention his 'Canadian great-grandfather', a 'pioneer'![5] In a similar broadcast to French-speaking Canada he declared: 'La France a était [sic] pour moi une seconde mère.... Ma grand'mère était Canadienne'. Among the personal details he gave to Fr. J. S. Murphy as publicity for a summer-school in 1942 he described his nationality even more cryptically as 'English (Welsh and Irish)'.[6] In part, Lewis was merely taking advantage of that singular internationality with which circumstances had so abundantly endowed him. Given his unusual birth place and the diversity of his roots, with a Canadian great-grandfather, a (French?) Canadian grandmother, born in a yacht off Nova Scotia to an Anglo-Irish mother and an American father, with a Welsh name and

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1. Edmund Wilson to W. K. Rose, 4 April 1960 (Vassar).
2. Letters, pp. 463-464.
3. Ibid, p. 489.
4. W.L. to Geoffrey Grigson, 1 January 1942 (Cornell).
5. Text of C.B.C. broadcast, December, 1940 (Cornell).
6. W.L. to Fr. J. S. Murphy, 12 September 1942 (Cornell).

educated in England and France, it must be admitted that his scope for a certain versatility of national identity was extraordinarily wide.

At the same time, Lewis cheerfully embraced the manifold possibilities open to him, actively shaping each one into an impressive national costume to be donned as the occasion demanded. The obscurity he cultivated about himself left him free to accommodate to momentary needs. Sometimes he could be intensely pro-American. When he wrote to an American he regarded 'a marriage with the States as Canada's best bet'.[1] Less than a year before, when he had just arrived in Canada, he had written to his British publisher: 'I am glad to be out of the States. Who was it, by the way, who told you I was an American? That is so little true that in order to get a two months extension of my visitor's permit I had to be fingerprinted.... I am thoroughly sick of the Stars and Stripes and all they stand for'.[2] By the end of the year, he was only in Canada 'because his visitor's permit for the U.S.A. expired'.[3] Another year later he wrote from Canada to an English friend: 'Both I and my wife loathe this place and the States so heartily that nothing would ever persuade either of us to set foot on American soil again'.[4] Not long after the Lewises arrived back in England after the war he spoke to Alan Tate of floating 'over to N. York for a breather'.[5] Writing to Ezra Pound in the same period Lewis described North America as 'an amazingly beautiful place. I still prefer the American people in some ways to any other'.[6] Here he had in mind the supranational 'Cosmic' virtues of the American people, an idea which started to attract him in the early forties. It was a conception he expounded often, but just as often, apparently still mindful of the Herdsman's precept of self-contradiction, he expounded its opposite, the national 'rootedness' of the Englishman or the European. 'I so infinitely prefer Europe to America', he wrote to his London publisher in 1941, 'that I find it difficult to answer the stock

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1. Letters, p. 317.
2. Ibid, p. 287.
3. Ibid, p. 310.
4. Ibid, p. 329.
5. Ibid, p. 397.
6, Ibid, p. 395.

questions about how do you like the latter'.[1] Repeatedly, the future author of America and Cosmic Man offered his services during World War II as an agent of 'British propaganda' in America, perhaps 'camouflaged', he suggested with his relish for the conspiratorial, 'as a lecturer on English literature'.[2] Such examples of his British propaganda as survive at Cornell are of a rather crude order. In a talk he gave in Toronto about 1941, delightfully entitled 'Keep the Home-fires Burning', the Germans emerged as 'the most ignorant, hard-boiled, ill-read people in Europe', whereas the British were 'by nature modest' with a 'care for learning - for the fine things of literature'. By 1950 Lewis would claim in his memoirs: 'A nationalist I have never been'.[3] Here again, while Mr. W.L. the autobiographer proposed one thing, the private man was something else; the cardinal mistake of his critics has been to equate Lewis with the author of the discursive prose.[4] At the same time that the thesis of Cosmic America was incubating in his mind Lewis wrote to a South African: 'Africa is I feel sociologically a prolongation of Europe, whereas America is a substitute for Europe. I prefer Europe'.[5] The issue of an unsuccessful marriage between a European and an American, Lewis himself was so profoundly divided on the question of national roots that he could change sides with a bewildering facility. When America and Cosmic Man was about to appear Lewis found himself confronting an enquiry from Keidrych Rhys, the founder and editor of Wales, to which he was currently contributing. Lewis was never above exploiting his tenuous connections with Wales and his book on America said much to disappoint a Welsh nationalist: 'Should you come across my American book', he wrote to Rhys, 'bear in mind that it treats of the long view, not of "practical politics". The Cosmos is very distant from Camarthen, that is all I mean.... "America and Cosmic Man" really is not your cup of tea'.[6] Given the number and variety of his national masks, it is amazing that

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1. Letters, p. 296.
2. W.L. to Sir Gerald Campbell, n.d., ca. 1941 (Cornell).
3. Rude Assignment, p. 92.
4. Hugh Kenner, for example, deduces a great deal from 'The Case against Roots' in America and Cosmic Man without noting Lewis's general ambivalence on the matter.
5. W.L. to I. W. May, 29 December 1941 (Cornell).
6. W.L. to Keidrych Rhys, 26 July 1948 (Cornell).

Lewis was not embarrassed like this more often.

The protean versatility of Lewis's nationality was matched by his often chameleon-like convictions in politics and religion. There are times in his letters, especially when he is writing to a socialist like Naomi Mitchison, when Lewis leans distinctly to the Left. Her husband had just been returned as a Labour M.P. in the General Election of 1945 and Lewis was very glad to hear of it: 'I was devoutly thankful to learn the Tories had not got in. In orderly progression let us hope all necessary measures of nationalisation will be carried through, and exploitation of the people... be made impossible. Capitalism is rampant as never before'.[1] On such occasions, Lewis was a savage critic of the English class-system. Class was an 'insensate English superstition', he told Mrs. Mitchison, 'coming in between you and rational relations with your kind'.[2] Nevertheless, Lewis never failed to make impressive use of what he referred to as his own 'sheltered and aristocratic upbringing'[3] once he sensed that his old school tie might be of service. With a brilliant affectation of embarrassed carelessness, he inserted in his Vita for Bard College, New York: 'The usual "private schools", then Rugby'.[4] Before some Americans, this was the posture that Lewis preferred. And to Geoffrey Stone, a writer with former affiliations to the Right, Lewis lost no time in condemning post-war socialism: 'Why it is certain to become worser and worser for us is that we are in the midst of a socialist experiment... and we shall be squeezed more and more'.[5] Only two years after Labour's victory Lewis presented its 'necessary measures of nationalisation' as the root cause of the post-war rot. His about-face here was due partly but not entirely, to a change of mind about Labour; also important was the change in correspondent. The way in which Lewis's posture depended upon his correspondent can be seen best whenever his letters touch on religion. For all practical purposes an atheist, Lewis was never afraid

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1. Letters, p. 391.
2. Ibid, p. 258.
3. W.L. to L. Pierce, n.d., ca. 1941 (Cornell). In the draft at Cornell the phrase is scored out, but since it is characteristic of the way in which Lewis wrote of his schooling, I have cited it here.
4. Letters, p. 489.
5. Ibid, p. 427.

to take up a Christian mask if it suited him. Writing to John Burgess, a Catholic, Lewis equated 'the civilised values' with 'the Christian values': 'So, however much we are obliged to play our part in the blood-and-iron game', he reminded Burgess, 'there is, after all, the Sermon on the Mount'.[1] With Fr. J.S. Murphy, who appointed him as a lecturer at Assumption College, Ontario, during the war, Lewis put on a masterly performance: 'It must be the position of anybody I should say... that in the matter of the famous "Rights of Man", all "rights" must and only can derive from God'.[2] His skill at mimicking the cliches of Irish priestly usage was superb. He had left Assumption, he informed Murphy, 'with a renewed realization of how benevolent the will was that had opened these possibilities for him of fruitful work and kindly contacts'.[3] At the end of the letter he noted that 'poor Joyce' was dead: 'though Heaven be thanked', Lewis added, somewhat overdoing his part, 'his wife is safe & provided for in Switzerland'. Naturally, Lewis's Irish Catholic mother and the title The Diabolical Principle (shortened for the purpose from The Diabolical Principle and the Dithyrambic Spectator), were prominent among the personal details given to Fr. Murphy. However, when Theodore Spencer mentioned the possibility of a job at Colgate, a 'pre-eminently Baptist' college, Lewis had no objection to becoming a Baptist for the purpose, and conveniently discovered a Welsh Baptist in his immediate ancestry:

> The Baptist place sounds good. I am no Baptist myself; but my grandfather was a Baptist (Welsh). He married a catholic; as a result his wife eventually stopped going to Mass.... And then to complicate matters still further my mother was a catholic, also.... Which is too bad.... However, Mr. Thomas Eliot has about boxed the compass of the Christian sects, so I see no reason why I shouldn't agree to be a Baptist for a year or two.[4]

Instead, he got the job at Assumption and agreed, with the same detached resignation, to become a 'Catholic' for a year or two. Such perfunctory improvisations came easily to an artist who had learned to conduct his mundane affairs as if the world were one large Commedia dell' Arte. In his dealings with potential supporters, patrons, publishers and

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1. Letters, p. 338.
2. Ibid, p. 349.
3. W.L. to J.S. Murphy, 23 March 1944 (Cornell).
4. Letters, p. 322.

employees, Lewis had learned to adapt himself with unusual flexibility to his immediate surroundings, to become, if necessary, all things to all men. In order to sustain his precarious vocation in an intensely competitive world, Lewis had become an expert public-relations man.

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Apart from the short period he spent teaching in Canada, Lewis lived by his painting and writing which, for much of his life, meant abject poverty. For the professional artist and writer without any independent means, it was a fact of life that his livelihood depended upon being known, talked about and, if possible, occasionally in the news. Lewis clearly recognised the fact, yet, conscious of the incompatibility people felt between art and publicity, he usually proffered himself in the role of the unworldly artist 'far too busy doing things', as he informed Lord Carlow while attempting to pull strings for a government job, 'to be able to attend to problems of practical advancement'.[1] When he gave Fr. Murphy some details of his career for a summer-school prospectus, he displayed an appropriate distaste: 'It is vulgar, of course, but long contact with publishers has, without making me publicity-minded, accustomed me to those sordid arts'.[2] Lewis's distaste was genuine enough, yet, as early as BLAST, it is clear that he had hit upon a strategy for embracing these 'sordid arts' without degrading art itself: 'You must talk with two tongues', he instructed budding Vorticists:

> There is Yourself: and there is the Exterior World, that fat mass you browse on.
> You knead it into an amorphous imitation of yourself inside yourself.
> Sometimes you speak through its huskier mouth, sometimes through yours.
> Do not confuse yourself with it.[3]

It went without saying that the Vorticist must speak as himself in his art. At all other times, in order to conserve those rare higher energies

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1. W.L. to Lord Carlow, 1 February 1943 (Cornell).
2. W.L. to J.S. Murphy, 31 May 1943 (Cornell).
3. BLAST, ii, p. 91.

which might otherwise be dissipated in his daily affairs, the artist should speak through the 'huskier mouth' of the world. While this division of labour simplified the life of the artist, it complicates the task of the critic faced with Lewis's career since he must distinguish continually between the creator of Tarr or 'The Surrender of Barcelona', now hanging in the Tate, and Lewis the pamphleteer and publicity-man. The distinction is quite fundamental: where the artist committed himself to the expression of the highest truth, the publicist was free to follow the sordid usage of the world.

The tactics of Lewis the publicist are extremely well-documented in the Cornell collection. There is, for instance, an interesting draft of a letter to the publishers of Who's Who, written in Lewis's hand, which begins: 'Dear Sirs. In the absence of Mr. Wyndham Lewis I am answering your request for further particulars'.[1] A second, also in Lewis's hand, began: 'Dear Sir. In the absence of Mr. Lewis I am returning the enclosed proof-cutting to which I have added several items, particularly Mr. Lewis's latest published work'. When the appropriate edition of Who's Who eventually appeared, Lewis wrote to an acquaintance, Lynette Roberts, presumably anxious to explain how it was that society's Enemy came to be numbered among the established and the reputable:

> Oh by the way do not grieve about Who's Who. I refuse to fill in their forms. When they first sent me one long ago, I threatened to sue them if they included me.... This time, however, in my absence my wife returned a form with a correction or two and you will probably find me described as 'Adviser to the Library of Congress!'. [3]

What is evident here is not only how much Lewis desired publicity, but how much he wanted to appear not to desire it, and the lengths to which he would go in order to achieve both. What is also illustrated is the publicist's use of the lie. John Reid wrote of Lewis: 'It is a tragic fact that a man who will go down to posterity as a Servant of Truth... should today be considered a Master of the Little Lie'.[4] Edith Sitwell, another person who had observed Lewis at close quarters, considered the 'expedient lie' to be 'his god'.[5] Nonetheless,

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1. W.L. to A.& G. Black Ltd., n.d., ca. 1947 (Cornell).
2. W.L. to the Editor of Who's Who, 12 August 1948 (Cornell).
3. W.L. to Lynette Roberts, 9 October 1948 (a copy at Vassar). In his first draft letter, Lewis described himself as Adviser to the Library of Congress!
4. John Reid to W.L., 30 June 1941 (Cornell).
5. Taken Care Of, p. 99.

interesting as such judgements may be on a moral level, they have little relevance to the truth of Lewis's art since they fail to note the dichotomy between the voice of the artist and the coarser voice of a public-relations man licensed to deal with associates, patrons and admirers in any way he saw fit.

The energies expended by Lewis to manipulate his public image were prodigious. His skill was remarkable. When he asked Richard Aldington in 1928 to convince the editor of The Times that, contrary to all appearances, the Enemy was not the enfant terrible he appeared, Lewis demonstrated his cool expertise:

> I suggest that should you approach the editor of the Times on my behalf you attempt to convey to him what a very quiet, peaceable, simplehearted individual I in reality am - no 'great personality' for the love and in the name of Jesus. That is capital: nothing else really beside convincing whoever it may be, that your protégé may appear this or that but it is surprising how nice he in reality is and perfectly inoffensive.[1]

The professional savoir-faire and the conviction that 'nothing else really matters' manifest themselves repeatedly in the letters. For the cover of the American edition of America and Cosmic Man Lewis acquired a pipe 'in order to suggest Englishness'.[2] When he noticed that Augustus John's reputation had 'entered a bad patch of reaction' Lewis offered to 'correct this a little' by writing a strategic book on John's work,[3] just as in 1931 he wanted C.H. Prentice to encourage Roy Campbell to write a book on his own work.[4] He also clearly recognised the kudos to be gained from having his work translated into a foreign language. When E.M.F. Tomlin tried to convince him that the woman who proposed to translate The Apes of God into French was incompetent, Lewis brushed this small matter aside: 'What you say is that (1) she is incapable of translating 'The Apes of God', and (2) even if she could, she would never be able to find a publisher. However the fact remains that 'The Apes of God' was recommended to her, and she wants to translate it.... time goes on and I am very anxious to have a book translated'.[5] For the

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1. W.L. to Richard Aldington, 27 July 1928 (Cornell).
2. Letters, p. 463.
3. Ibid, pp. 398-399.
4. Ibid, p. 198.
5. W.L. to E.M.F. Tomlin, 22 September 1948 (Cornell).

professional writer living on the bread-line after World War II, no publicity could be bad publicity. Understanding this adage well, Lewis was rarely slow to stir up and to fan controversy about his work. In the exchange of letters to the editor following the rejection of his portrait of T.S. Eliot by the Royal Academy in 1938, Lewis played a central and conspicuous part. Even more fascinating was Lewis's ability to play a central but inconspicuous part in a controversy in which he himself was the cause célèbre. The letters show Lewis in 1930, not long after the publication of The Apes, actually engineering a public wrangle from behind the scenes. We find him gathering and multiplying 'rejected reviews' so that such resistance as his satire met in journals and newspapers could be presented as a full-scale press 'boycott'. Writing to Shane Leslie, who had been unable to review The Apes, Lewis suggested that it 'would be best of all... to print an article ... as a sort of rejected review, as in fact it would be. With it a note from you mentioning the fact that you experienced difficulty when you turned to the papers for which you were in the habit of writing'.[1] Well he understood that a storm of indignation does not precipitate itself spontaneously; and Lewis, ever quick to seize an opportunity, was a politic manager of such affairs. As a consummate controversialist and pamphleteer, he nourished a vivid sense of the moment and a shrewd sense of timing.

While the publicist's presence may be excused in newspaper-controversy and in dust-jacket blurbs, there is less excuse for his intrusion between the hard covers of what purport to be treatises of more than passing interest. Yet a large number of Lewis's books, especially his socio-political writings of the thirties, appear to be inspired by wholly contemporary issues, and beyond those, by the author's need to keep the pot boiling while he held the public eye. Apart from their indisputable historical significance, such works as Hitler (1931), The Old Gang and the New Gang (1933), Left Wings Over Europe (1936), Count Your Dead (1937), The Mysterious Mr. Bull (1938), The Jews, Are They Human? (1939) and The Hitler Cult (1939) have remarkably little to say to a reader in the seventies and, unlike Lewis's

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1. Letters, pp. 197-198.

fiction, they merit much less attention than they have received in recent years.[1] Most of these books fall somewhere between serious works of social criticism and straightforward potboilers. None of them can be considered apart from the time at which it was written.

The importance of Time in Lewis's discursive prose is well illustrated by America and Cosmic Man (1948), especially if its thesis is seen against Lewis's opinions in the thirties. He began in Hitler by praising the classical serenity of Fascism and attacking the romantic turbulence of the Communists.[2] In Left Wings Over Europe, Germany stood for the highest cultural achievement - a status it was to lose in 'Keep the Home-fires Burning' in 1941 - and German nationalism, like classical thought, stood for 'concreteness', as opposed to the 'abstract' internationalist forces of Communism and Capitalism in league against it.[3] Once Hitler signed his pact with Stalin in 1939, however, there could be no doubt about his opportunistic malevolence; Lewis wisely recanted with The Hitler Cult turning Hitler himself into 'an incorrigible German romantic'.[4] Later that year the Lewises left for North America where they spent the years of the war. While he was there, Lewis began to be drawn to the idea of a supranational, 'universal' state, at first in the form of Anglo-Saxony ,[5] a league of English speaking nations. Later, he saw the United States itself as the embodiment of internationalism and under the influence of a new enthusiasm for the liberating, 'abstract' values of America he wrote America and Cosmic Man. As Lewis himself admitted, his American book signified a complete revaluation of internationalism on his part; it represented a profound change of mind.

At the same time, America and Cosmic Man was intended to focus issues of contemporary interest to his readers. So important was its topicality, in fact, that when publication was delayed Lewis initiated proceedings against the publishers, instructing his cousel that the delay had been crucial:

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1. Notably from John Harrison, The Reactionaries (1966) and D.G. Bridson, The Filibuster : A Study of the Political Ideas of Wyndham Lewis (1972).
2. Hitler, p. 184.
3. Left Wings Over Europe: or, How to Make a War About Nothing, pp. 24-34.
4. The Hitler Cult, p. 103.
5. In Canada Lewis wrote a pamphlet called Anglo-Saxony : A League that Works (Toronto, 1941).

> This America and Cosmic Man concerns political matters which were of topical interest in the Spring of 1946, for which date the publication was timed, and the appeal of the book must become less with the continued delay in publication and consequent waning of such topical interest.[1]

It is not hard to envisage what Lewis meant by 'topical interest'. Early in 1946, against the background of a world recently torn asunder by nationalism and in the wake of the United Nations Charter, adopted at San Francisco in June, 1945, an internationalist who advocated a single world government might be taken as a prophet of the age. By 1947, however, after the Iron Curtain had descended conspicuously across the middle of Europe, internationalism began to look a quite different proposition and its advocate, even one with America as his model, might easily be mistaken as an apologist for Stalin. Indeed, it had already happened: George Orwell, apparently hearing of Lewis's forthcoming book, wrote in the summer number of The Partisan Review (1946): 'Wyndham Lewis, I am credibly informed, has become a Communist or at least a strong sympathiser, and is writing a book in praise of Stalin to balance his previous books in favour of Hitler'.[2] If delay in publication had upset Lewis's delicate timing, further delay might turn the book into a positive embarrassment.

There is of course no question of Lewis having adopted Cosmic Man in the mid-forties after a cynical evaluation of his 'topical interest' and then hastily abandoning him once that interest began to metamorphose into something else. As Self Condemned suggests, the abstract artist in Lewis was naturally attracted to the rootless, 'universal' qualities of Cosmic America. Nonetheless, Lewis the shrewd public-relations man was there too to appreciate the propitiousness of internationalism as a point of view, particularly in 1945, and to make maximum capital out of the timeliness of his conversion. Once the tide began to turn against the Cosmic idea in 1946-7, the publicist, unable to afford the unpopularity of another Hitler, was understandably jaundiced. After Hitler, and especially after 1939 he had courted public acceptance with unusual singlemindedness. So

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1. W.L. to Clifford-Turner & Co., 8 January 1947 (Cornell).
2. Lewis cites this in Rude Assignment, p. 78, with obvious chagrin.

important had it become to him that, uncertain of what might be good publicity in America in 1940, Lewis wrote to Leonard Amster, his American publisher:

> You can really make me into anything for the occasion- whatever you think would please or interest readers best.[1]

Anyone confronting Lewis's discursive prose must take into account that side of the author which could be 'anything for the occasion'. And looking at his large, uneven output, a reader in the seventies has reason to regret that erratic flair for publicity which gave the occasion, and Time itself, such excessive emphasis. For the Enemy, Time had been the muse of the mass-advertiser. Unfortunately, it was also the muse of Lewis the publicist, and nothing illustrates the fact better than his two autobiographies, Blasting and Bombardiering (1937) and Rude Assignment (1950).

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1. Letters, p. 275.

CHAPTER VIII : THE AUTOBIOGRAPHIES AND LEWIS'S PUBLIC IMAGES.

'Contradict yourself.' 'The Code of A Herdsman.'

Lewis was not one to turn from his paintings and novels in order to write autobiographies unless he had pressing reasons for doing so. Plainly, gratuitous self-revelation was not among them, since neither Blasting and Bombardiering nor Rude Assignment[1] makes any significant disclosures about his private life. Set instead against the background of public events, the autobiographies are above all about a career, about Lewis as painter, writer and thinker. As this emphasis suggests, one of Lewis's main purposes was to draw attention to his paintings and novels, to justify, to defend and, not least, to publicise them. The hand of the publicist can be detected in the flattering chiaroscuro employed by both books; with successes highlighted and failures shaded in, the images they project of their author are highly selective and remarkably precise in outline. Both are concerned to stress the originality, even the prophetic genius, of Lewis's contribution to modern art and letters. The uniqueness of this contribution is narrowed down to a single neo-classical quality: unyielding detachment from the dominant forces and pressures of the age. The peculiar emblem of Lewis's greatness, according to the autobiographies, is his obstinate impartiality amid all the claims of contemporary political propaganda, his hard-headed independence amid passing fashions and momentary enthusiasms; in short, his utter imperviousness to all the manifestations of Time.

When Blasting and Bombardiering and Rude Assignment are placed side by side, however, certain important differences of emphasis begin to emerge. Even though they are only a decade apart in the writing,[2]

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1. All references to both are included in the text; 'BB' and 'RA' are used only wherever ambiguity might arise.
2. Rude Assignment, as p. 78 shows, was begun at least as early as 1947.

the autobiographies project quite different images of Lewis, which in turn proceed from markedly different political assumptions about man and society. The direction of the change is quite obviously related to differences of political atmosphere between 1937 and 1947; one book was written towards the beginning of the Spanish Civil War, the other at the beginning of the Cold War. In both cases, the author's image has been made up with an eye to the mood and the preoccupations of the contemporary audience about to receive him. Ironically, the very claims of timelessness made by Lewis's memoirs are those which seem most completely discredited by the passage of time. The reputation of Lewis's art may have to pay a high price for the publicist's pressing concern, evident in so much of Lewis's later discursive prose, to secure an immediate audience.

* *

Critical attention has gathered in recent years around the complex question of truth in autobiography.[1] The form's peculiar deceptiveness has been widely recognised. As Albert Thibaudet points out in his book on Flaubert, while autobiography appears to be the sincerest of all genres, it can be the most misleading.[2] Like the historian, the writer of an autobiography must be selective in his marshalling of data, yet because he is the only person with access to all the facts, the auto-biographer can easily pass for an impeccable authority on his subject; his distortions, both conscious and unconscious, and all his surreptitious special pleading, may go undetected. This special pleading, often the writer's basic motive, can take several forms. Writing in 1935, A.M. Clark isolated four motives which might impel a man to write his own life: the need for sympathy, self-justification, appreciation or communication.[3] In the case of Lewis's autobiographies, Clark's list is very telling. Even so, a fifth item must be added: the need for publicity.

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1. Notably Roy Pascal, Design and Truth in Autobiography (1960).
2. Cited by Henri Peyre, Literature and Sincerity (New Haven, 1963), p. 210.
3. Autobiography : Its Genesis and Phases (1935), p. 22.

Lewis's autobiographies mirror his career, throwing the private life of their author into a deep shadow while spotlighting him as a performer in a series of public roles. Huge areas of his life remain unmentioned. Although Lewis was married in 1929, for example, there is hardly a word in either book about his wife. Blasting and Bombardiering eschews almost all information about Lewis's personal background, entirely refusing to begin with 'the bib and bottle' and 'the hero in his cradle' (1). It begins instead in 1914, the very year in which as artist, propagandist, editor of BLAST and leader of the Great London Vortex, Lewis became quite suddenly a public figure. It is in terms of such roles and functions that Lewis introduces himself:

> I will go over my credentials. I am an artist - if that is a credential. I am a novelist, painter, sculptor, philosopher, draughtsman, critic, politician, journalist, essayist, pamphleteer, all rolled into one, like one of those portmanteau-men of the Italian Renaissance (3).

The difference between this kind of panache and the self-portraiture found in the novels is quite striking. The artist who is lionised in 1914 is not at all a reticent, wary Tarr, but a 'prophet', a 'star', the 'editor of BLAST', 'high-priest' of Vorticism (32-51) or 'author of Tarr' (90). The tendency is not to present events as they are experienced inwardly by such personae as Tarr or Snooty, but as they occurred to one with a certain publicly-defined part to play before society. Each role registers Lewis as he appeared on the outside, before his public:

> As a 'crowd-master', it was not my business to succumb to the lure of a transitory military laurel (131).
>
> I felt it was due to the editor of Blast to be his own master to some extent. Once I had a 'pip' I could go on being a 'crowd-master (97).
>
> The 'author of Tarr' under this Dictatorship spent his time in a spiritual concentration camp - of barbed silence (94).
>
> I had shot into fame as the editor of Blast.... I was the arch-futurist (23).

Once in the army Lewis becomes 'anonymous' but not in any sense 'private'. Again he is identified with an impersonal function, that of 'bombardier', 'gunner' or 'officer'. The war experiences in Blasting and Bombardiering are strangely impersonal, told as they might have happened to any bombardier, gunner, officer, observer or war-artist. The section is appropriately entitled 'A Gunner's Tale'. Passing quickly over the immediate post-war years, Lewis comes to his decision to go underground.

Predictably, he turns the reader away from his high walls at Adam and Eve Mews with the sign 'strictly private' : 'Until 1926, when my career proper began as a writer, my life was a private one. What I have undertaken to write here has no concern with an existence so private that only two or three people ever saw what was done in it, or knew in fact how I spent my time' (231). Nonetheless, these years are punctuated by what he appropriately calls his 'public appearances' in Venice and at Garsington: a few short performances given in High Bohemia before he retired back into the obscurity of the wings. Except for these, and those occasions when a public personage such as T.E. Lawrence managed to scale his wall, the years up to 1926 remain strictly private. What the reader of Blasting and Bombardiering discovers is simply additional detail about the public figure who edited BLAST and led Vorticism. Anything more personal is evidently quite foreign to Lewis's purpose.

Rude Assignment is similar. It is explicitly no more than an account of the author's 'career as writer and artist' and, as is announced at the outset, only so much background information as is necessary for the proper understanding of these functions is included. Part I deals with those conditions against which any creative artist has to struggle. As such these chapters are, Lewis admits, 'impersonal'. Part II, entitled 'Personal Background of Career', sounds more conveniently autobiographical, but the reader is forewarned: 'Part II is autobiography - so much as is required to set forth the circumstances, economic and otherwise, which made it possible for me to be here at all, writing and painting as I do' (12). Unlike Blasting and Bombardiering, Rude Assignment begins with Lewis at the age of eight, but only because it was at this age that he learned to stitch together pieces of paper and write 'the first of many books of this order'. Here his 'career' began! His career as a painter developed at Rugby while his 'literary career began in France' (110-113). This section focuses rigidly upon Lewis's first acts of becoming public, and the various communicative acts of Lewis's art are already a fait accompli when the reader is invited to look at them. There is little suggestion that the art-objects produced originate from impulses located in his own peculiar personal history. On the contrary, they are shown to originate in thought, which has itself no antecedents. During his student days, for instance, Lewis simply 'began to get a philosophy'

and the characters of his early stories emanate from this philosophy: 'The human personality, I thought, should be left alone.... The characters I chose to celebrate... were all primitive creatures, immersed in life, as much as birds, or big, obsessed, sun-drunk insects' (117). Lewis, who believed 'the indulgence of an historic mood' totally unprofitable (10), never really gives the reader a satisfactory 'personal background of career' at all. The distinction in Lewis's mind between timeless Art and the accidental, historical chaos of personal Life is always sharp. Background is confined to sine qua non conditions, such as money; never is it what we expect of 'personal background'. Part III is a 'biography' of a number of Lewis's books - minus all reference to parents, gestation and birth. Neither of the autobiographies then, ventures into the dark, pre-adult or strictly private regions of Lewis's mind. Their data is what is already formed, formulated or made public.

One reason for this strong emphasis on the public figure is already clear: both books reflect that characteristic defensiveness which made their author scrupulously secretive about his private affairs. Carefully barricading what is peculiarly personal against onlookers, Lewis's autobiographies assume a defensive polemical shape. Blasting and Bombardiering is directed against the biographer of the future 'with his usual uncannily inaccurate work' (255) and his tendency of turning the lives of the famous into works of fiction. This book is to be a preliminary 'act of salvage' undertaken on behalf of Joyce, Eliot, Pound and himself. Lewis believed that no Strachey of the future would 'sit down to mug up and spit out a book about them, except to concoct a string of damaging lies, and worse, half-truths. Something has to be done about this. So here goes!' (14). Similarly, Rude Assignment is above all a 'counter-polemic', guarded about possible weaknesses and denying inconsistencies with near-fanatical energy. In such a court-room atmosphere as this, and Blasting and Bombardiering differs only in extent, it is hardly surprising that gratuitous private revelation is so completely resisted. At the centre of Lewis's concern is the defence of his career and the vindication of himself in his public capacities - as writer, painter, philosopher and critic.

Above all, Lewis wrote about his career in order to draw public

attention to it. Nowhere in his writing is the need for publicity more obvious. In Blasting and Bombardiering he establishes a pattern to which he returns time and again; firstly, to quote the most favourable reviews of his work, such as Rebecca West's review of Tarr ('A beautiful and serious work of art that reminds one of Dostoievsky'.) and then to praise the critic's perceptiveness and independence of mind:

> Miss West's generous tribute to this first book was characteristic of a critic who has never sold her pen, as others have, and who therefore to-day still occupies the position that she always has, as one of the two or three people who remain above the commercial mêlée into which writing has been led (87).

In Rude Assignment Lewis again refers to the review and to the parallel with Dostoyevsky, recalling that Rebecca West is 'one of the two or three acutest critics in England' (202). In the same book, after citing Augustus John's warm remarks about The Apes of God, Lewis reminds the reader that John is a 'great painter'. An excerpt from Richard Aldington's congratulatory letter ('You needn't ever doubt that you have added something permanent to European literature'.) is published with a certain display of modesty: 'The terms in which this tribute is couched are so exceedingly flattering that I almost hesitate to reproduce it here' (200). Clearly, although he lays claim to it, modesty is not one of Lewis's virtues. So strong is the impulse to self-vindication that Lewis overlooks the possible circularity of his tributes to favourable reviewers. At times he comes close to self-parody; after printing a rejected review of The Revenge for Love, for example, he turns to his reviewer: 'She would distort nothing, I am sure, to make it conform to her personal bias, nor omit something for the same purpose' (219). It seems that Lewis, who so consistently claimed to be coolly objective about the 'flattery of the Majority' by politicians, could be anything but objective about praise of his own work. Nevertheless, the motive behind the assurance is obvious; and by publishing or republishing such views, together with prints of his paintings and some sections of BLAST in Blasting and Bombardiering, Lewis clearly meant to publicise his work.

His self-publicity has more precision than appears at first sight. The work of a skilful propagandist, Lewis's autobiographies do not make numerous or sweeping claims for their author's greatness, but concentrate on a small cluster of related images. One of these is the image of Lewis as a great modernist originator, innovator and prophet. It is the newness of Tarr which the author of Blasting and Bombardiering is so

anxious to distill from the enthusiastic reviews; a newness which was soon imitated (88). Just who his imitators were, Blasting and Bombardiering does not say. In Rude Assignment he is a little less reticent, accusing Harry Levin - not very convincingly - of borrowing certain ideas about Joyce from Time and Western Man (56-8). Apart from providing material for imitators and plagiarists, Lewis appears in Blasting and Bombardiering as a decisive influence upon British art just before the First War. About the relative importance of himself and Hulme, for example, Lewis is in no doubt - it was he who 'influenced' Hulme:

> All the best things Hulme said about the theory of art were said about my art. This remark is altogether without conceit. The things to which his pronouncements would not apply - or to which my own pronouncements, which influenced him, would not apply - may quite well be more important. We happened, that is all, to be made for each other, as critic and 'creator'. What he said should be done, I did. Or it would be more exact to say that I did it, and he said it.
>
> In England there was no one else working in consonance with an 'abstract' theory of art to the same extent as myself (100).

At the same time, as we see in this passage, Lewis denies all suggestion that he himself has been influenced. It appears as if he always 'saw through' and 'combated' Marinetti (BB 33; RA 129), and there seems to be no question of any relationship between Futurism and the Great London Vortex. At other times, we find Lewis the innovator, teaching Richard Wyndham 'how to sketch Venetian palaces' (BB 233), or writing The Enemy of the Stars in an 'attempt to show his literary colleagues of BLAST the way' as they are 'too bookish and not keeping pace with the visual revolution' (RA 129). In Blasting and Bombardiering Lewis never fails to make it clear, and this does seem to have been the truth of the matter, that he was the 'head' of the Vorticist movement. The claim that he was 'the prophet of a new fashion in art' (32) is often extended to include prophecy in a more purely predictive sense. His painting 'The Plan of War', completed six months before it, was an ominous image of the Great War (4), and in Rude Assignment Kreisler is shown to provide an 'obvious' 'analogy with his countrymen of two decades farther on, in the 'thirties - still under the same influences as himself' : Hitler and Goebbels (151). As a social prophet, Lewis maintains this 'remarkably prophetic' (222) sense of the events to come. Left Wings Over Europe is cited as 'a fairly accurate prediction... of what Europe would look like a few months after the war' (66), and its author appears

to have 'known about' Soviet Russia from the mid-twenties. Examples could be multiplied of Lewis's claims to innovation and to unique, prophetic vision.

Quite obviously, Lewis was not alone among artists and men of letters in portraying himself as a prophet. What was distinctive about Lewis was the kind of rationale he gave for his originality and uniqueness. While explaining in Rude Assignment what was so completely 'original' about his plans in the Caliph's Design (1919) to remodel London Lewis contrasts himself with the Impressionists:

> Painters of the impressionist, or post-impressionist, schools, I have observed, never admitted any object in its own right beautiful or intelligent into their compositions. Their task, they considered, was to photograph... what was there, irrespective of its quality. What the Zeitgeist handed them was there: and Time was infallible (157).

Lewis was different from the Impressionists, and indeed from most other contemporary artists and intellectuals, in that he strenuously resisted Time, scrupulously denying himself all the fashionable excitements offered to men by the Zeitgeist. Since Time and Western Man this had been the Enemy's central and most characteristic claim: detachment from those powerful forces of the times which tend to seize and give distinctive shape to the minds of various generations. In his autobiographies as elsewhere, Lewis held himself up as a man who had transcended history by standing aloof from it.

When Cantleman makes a guest-appearance in Blasting and Bombardiering, he plunges into the London War-crowd to test his indifference to crowd-hysteria. The crowd is utterly mindless; committed only to liquid, swelling motion and somnambulic action, it enacts the birth of a 'great historical event'. The great force animating the crowd is the Zeitgeist, or 'fashion', at this point of Time taking the form of war-hysteria. Cantleman's reaction is the correct one for a relative of the Enemy, icy:

> The war was like a great new fashion. Cantleman conformed. He became a man of fashion. But he was cold in the midst of the Mêlée. In the first days he experienced nothing but a penetrating interest in all that was taking place. His detachment was complete and his attention was directed everywhere. His movements resembled those of a freelance cinema-operator (77).

The point of Cantleman's experiment with the crowd is made perfectly clear by Lewis; he himself had been cold in 1914 when others gave themselves over to the Zeitgeist: 'You have read what Cantleman felt. Well

that is pretty near to what I felt. - Great interest. Great curiosity. But no identification of my personality with that collective Sensation' (84). A glance at his patriotic Preface (1915) to Tarr is sufficient to show that Lewis had departed from strict autobiographical truth. In fact, the point being made is very largely polemical and pedagogical, and only marginally autobiographical. If anything, Lewis the 'crowd-master' tells us more about the writer in 1937 than the man who actually observed the war-crowds in 1914. Once again, fictional personae like Tarr and Snooty are much more profoundly autobiographical than the idealised Lewis presented in these memoirs: a figure who maintains, without effort, a cold rationality amid all the excitements of collective action.

As an apostle of detached self-mastery, Lewis is keen in Rude Assignment (30-33) to endorse Julien Benda's attack (La Trahison des Clercs), upon the French 'war-mongers' Bloy and Berth. Leon Bloy's L'Ame de Napoléon (1912) built a 'shrine to Napoleon' to excite war-psychosis; Berth's Les Méfaits des Intellectuels (1914) was merely an 'attack upon all those apt to interfere with the development of the war-psychosis'. Berth himself was an 'excitable little child', a clerc utterly captivated by the Zeitgeist and collective action. His writings were a 'long panegyric of action - of the sword at the expense, expressly, of the pen', like those of Nietzsche, Sorel, Peguy, Maurras and Malraux. In his attack on action, Lewis advanced an argument which he had often advanced before: the agent commits himself to a limited and slanted view of reality which denies him any access to the truth; of necessity he becomes a partisan. The true intellectual, according to both Benda and Lewis, has, on the contrary, 'always observed a proper detachment regarding matters of current controversy and to partisan passions of the moment'. In practice, resisting the Zeitgeist meant independence from all the partisan positions adopted in any current controversy.

In Blasting and Bombardiering, the greatness of the 'Men of 1914' is characterised precisely by their detachment from contemporary propaganda, their 'attempt to get away from romantic art into classical art, away from political propaganda back into the detachment of true literature' (250). Time and again Lewis returns to the opposition between politics and 'detached artistic effort', or the 'detached delights of the intellect' (255, 262), especially when he is referring

to the 'Men of 1914'. For himself, much more obviously engaged certainly, than Joyce and Eliot, or perhaps even Pound, in political treatises and commentary, Lewis claims the status of an impartial spectator of the political scene. When he describes events in Berlin a year before Hitler came into power, such as the police clubbing the Nazi crowds, Lewis sets down his impressions 'as a spectator, not as a partisan' (231). This distinction, between the spectator and the partisan, is the cornerstone of Rude Assignment. Happily for Lewis, Eliot had credited him with the defence of the 'detached observer'.[1] In Rude Assignment Lewis seizes this with relish, quotes it, and accepts the description. The image turns up repeatedly, with a few slight variations, such as 'independent observer'; it is one he never tires of reinforcing;

> At no time... have I been in the least danger of falling in love with a political Star, or becoming excited about a Party (64).
>
> The community to which I belong, the calling or callings, I have followed; such - not parties have commanded my attention (65).
>
> Politically I stand nowhere any more than a fish does (77).

Although Lewis had immediate reasons after Hitler and World War II for insisting upon his remoteness from all political stars and their parties, he was, at the same time, merely re-stating one of the Enemy's perennial themes: only impartial observation can be trusted. Holding together both of Lewis's autobiographies is the neo-classical image of the artist as impassive observer, looking upon human affairs with god-like impartiality and capturing them sub specie aeternitatis.

* *

While the autobiographies agree in presenting Lewis as an important modernist innovator and prophet, detached from his age and the petty concerns of party, there are striking differences of emphasis between them. The reader quickly perceives a difference of tone. Blasting and Bombardiering is lighthearted, at times almost playful. Especially at the beginning, Lewis teases the reader with short sentences, laboriously simplified explanations, as if he is a 'plain man' speaking plainly to the man in the street: 'A book of course can

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1. In Twentieth Century Verse (1937).

be said to have a "pattern",' he patiently explains, 'like a carpet or wall-paper. People who write about books are very fond of the word "pattern". But it's not a bad word to use about a thing like a book, which, unrolled, would be a narrow thing, like a rug or stair-carpet' (2). This is transparently an ironic pose, for despite insistences that he is writing for lowbrows, the humour of his condescension ('I hope you are a golfer?' 6) relies on satirical resonances only amenable to the highbrow reader. The informal familiarity of his address to the reader implies a rapport which is not itself at all ironic; it merely imparts a comic zest to characteristic doctrines about which Lewis is perfectly serious.

> I am not an anatomist. I enjoy the surface of life, if not for its own sake, at least not because it conceals the repulsive turbidness of the intestine (9).
>
> The function of Karl Marx - this has never been properly understood - is that of the Marx brothers; to disrupt - but comically, of course, since human life could not be serious if it tried (16).

The emphasis on the 'surface of life', the comedy of human life, diminishes the distance between Lewis and the reader; the inevitable clash between Lewis and a society about which he entertains no illusions is noticeably softened.

Blasting and Bombardiering is in fact at pains to present its author as socially successful, a celebrity, particularly sought after and 'known' in Mayfair circles. As a 'star' in 1914, Lewis seems almost at one with 'John and Mrs. Bull' as they leap 'for joy' at his widely-publicised antics; like them, he 'felt as safe as houses'. As a 'lion' he was 'on constant exhibition': 'I cannot here enumerate all the sightseers', he wrote, recalling his fame as the editor of BLAST, 'of noble houses or of questionable Finance, who passed me under review. They were legion. Coronetted envelopes showered into my letter-box' (46). Some attempt is made, actually, to enumerate the sightseers. Blasting and Bombardiering displays a kind of name-dropping quality which unmistakably emphasises the right people. In Part I Asquith (as 'Lord Oxford'!) crosses the room to have his 'usual chat' with Lewis; later the lion turns up at the opera with Lady Cunard or George Bernard Shaw. After the war, he is found with such celebrated figures as T.E. Lawrence, Nancy Cunard, Lady Ottoline Morrell, Lord David Cecil and numerous others, all appearing in Lewis's memoir

with their most impressive titles. Clearly he is trying to present himself as someone well-known to the Establishment and well habituated to the best. Representative of the name-dropping, ancedotal, at times almost gossipy tone of the book, is the passage in which we catch a glimpse of the author 'lunching with Sybil Ha$t-Davies in the Criterion Restaurant during the War, and her brother [Duff-Cooper, the War-Minister] and Diana Manners were discovered in the distance, the former in uniform. She told me there was a romance' (228). We hear a few times too about his 'aristocratic training' at Rugby; just before he met Pound, Lewis had 'the tarnished polish of the English Public School, of the most gilded cafés of five or six continental capitals' (273). In every way, the author of Blasting and Bombardiering seems to have been a most socially acceptable young man, and if not exactly at the centre of things, at least with access to the ears of the great and the powerful.

Without explicitly contradicting any of this, Rude Assignment tells of a career which had brought exclusion, poverty and personal loss. Embittered accusations about enemies, persecutions and vendettas replace the relaxed social chat of Blasting and Bombardiering. Certain unnamed 'smearers' had 'surreptitiously circulated' a 'false picture' (222) of him, composed of 'many disobliging fictions'. This 'small mountain of ever increasing nonsense' had been 'deposited by many hands, for a great number of petty reasons' (10-11). Lewis casts himself in a passive role in Rude Assignment; all the initiative is attributed to enemies who are either hidden, because of the laws of libel, or who belong to antagonistic groups such as 'the Communists' or 'Bloomsburies'. In two places Lewis hints of secret evidence to be given to the world's great public libraries and only to be revealed 'at a later date' (11, 139). In the meantime, his slanderers remain nameless. The image of Lewis as victim is intensified by an emphasis on the selfless objectivity of his art and social commentary. For his satire, which was after all only 'truth to life', he had been the object of violent abuse and branded as malicious. Such retaliation he admits, should have been expected; Yeats had warned him that he 'would be stopped' (52). For his work as 'detached observer' and for his 'politics of the intellect' he had been ceaselessly attacked, accused of despising the many and of attachments to fascism (59-65). This, we learn, was the work of many a 'little pink' who had tried to

'vilify' him for his detachment from Leftist propaganda (88). For Lewis, Communists had 'controlled the literary world for a quarter of a century' and were responsible for the 'malevolent suppression' of all interest in The Revenge for Love as well as the actual suppression of three other books (139-149). Bloomsbury, on the other hand, controlled the 'politico-literary press' and especially literary reviewing, so that reviews of his books were either suppressed, like Campbell's piece on The Apes of God, or were as ill disposed as possible. Finally, the 'frenzied warriors' who wanted World War II resented his commitment to peace and the appeasement of Germany; his 'stand against war' entailed grave 'personal loss' (210). Such suffering, it appears, was the price to be paid for impartiality.

No doubt Lewis played the part of the suffering, victimised outsider here with great sincerity. Nonetheless, when we turn back to Blasting and Bombardiering, it is immediately apparent how highly selective, even tendentious, Rude Assignment has been in its marshalling of facts and emphases. In Blasting and Bombardiering Lewis is not only a member of various groups, but usually claims to be in some way their leader. Pound's phrase 'Men of 1914' luckily provides him with a formula for linking his name with the success of Joyce, Eliot and Pound himself. Although not a 'herd' like Bloomsbury they form a group defined enough to be written of as 'we' and 'us'. Men of the future will see them as giants, their names inextricably linked:

> What energy! - what impossibly Spartan standards men will exclaim! So heroically those 'pioneers' will stand out like monosyllabic monoliths - Pound, Joyce, Lewis (254).

That the conjunction is flattering to himself occurs to Lewis too, yet he is at pains to overcome the suggestion. His own position in this modernist 'movement' is so central that he is best qualified to explain and defend it: 'I was at its heart. In some instances I was it' (255). This somewhat immodest claim to senior partnership, if not leadership, goes with his frequent tendency to denigrate his associates as individuals. He had hardly heard of Joyce in 1920, he claimed, somewhat overstating the facts, whereas Joyce had 'read everything he had ever written' although he 'pretended... not to have done so'. The implication that he looked down upon Joyce at the time, although denied, is clearly intentional: 'In very marked contrast with Joyce I was indifferent as to whether he had followed the fortunes

of Tarr and Kreisler or not. There was no arrogance at all in my indifference' (266). All the arrogance, in fact, seems to have been Joyce's; Eliot is supposed to have interpreted his excessive politeness as arrogance, while Lewis himself found Joyce 'playing the Irishman a little overmuch' already a figure in his own biography. In this way Joyce is subtly discounted as an Irish eccentric - at least as far as the 'movement' is concerned. Pound, on the other hand, is acknowledged to be a driving force. With a few strokes Lewis turns him into a heavy caricature of the 'tough guy' (275-7), a blustering American who boxed with Hemingway and was dominated in the early days by a 'desire to impress'. Himself a polished product of the English Public School, Lewis was certainly not impressed by Pound's 'singing cowboy' image. In this way Lewis surreptitiously identifies himself with the 'sophisticated post-Nineties society' which rejected Pound, looking at the 'Bull Moose tradition' he represented with a 'stony stare of infinite boredom'. Eliot's nationality, on the other hand, is scarcely mentioned; the result is a picture of quiet, unassuming gentility. His 'Gioconda smile' (282), however, is still less of a portrait than a stereotype. Eliot becomes inoffensively colourless, even a little passive; like Joyce, he is brought into the narrative as one of the great names of 1914 only to be subtly written off.

About Lewis's position in the Vorticist movement, Blasting and Bombardiering leaves no doubt; he was at all times the active leader, the 'head' or 'prophet', who emerges to 'captain the "group"': 'The "leadership" principle, you will observe, was in my bones'. This '"leadership" principle' is illustrated by the way all initiative appears to come from Lewis himself:

> I counter-putsched. I assembled in Greek Street a determined band of miscellaneous anti-futurists. Mr. Epstein was there; Gaudier Brzeska, T.E. Hulme, Edward Wadsworth (33).

The inclusion of T.E. Hulme in the middle of the list of his followers is a subtle manoeuvre, designed, as elsewhere in Blasting and Bombardiering to cast Hulme into the part of second fiddle. Apart from his claim to have 'influenced' Hulme decisively, Lewis tries to characterise him (99-107) as affable and easily dominated. Bergson his 'master' apparently 'dominated him... with great facility', while for Epstein Hulme showed 'a big doglike devotion'. Despite his severity as a writer, there was, Lewis assures the reader, 'no "severity"

about Hulme' in private life. As for his prowess as a philosopher, he 'floundered like an ungainly fish' when he argued with a 'university professional'. Such a man as this, it seems, can have been no match for the decisive Lewis, who, 'as a born leader in such affairs', was 'pressed to lead the X Group' immediately after the War: 'I founded the "X Group". After a short while I left this Group and it fell to pieces' (212). These powers also show up in his descriptions of army service. We first meet him giving orders to an unruly squad. In the army he desired a commission so that he could become a 'crowd-master', 'without interfering with anybody, or anybody interfering too much with him '. Despite this assurance, there is a certain delight in being an officer 'whom hundreds of thousands of men still living have saluted - have trembled at the sight of' (97-8). Because of his own 'aristocratic training', Lewis was naturally superior in things military to the 'large inoffensive cattle' in his charge. 'Actually discipline was the secret,' he writes, 'if they only knew it' (26); Bombardier Lewis, apparently, was the man to instill it into them:

> I shouted myself hoarse in attempting to get the rifles smartly off the lubbardly shoulders and down onto terra firma with something like one splendid bang, and then up again to something like respectable pres-ent! (21)

In Blasting and Bombardiering, personal 'leadership', authority and discipline are clearly endorsed; the alternative, as we see in the case of the 'X Group' is simply disorder.

Rude Assignment avoids almost all mention of the groups and schools in Blasting and Bombardiering. BLAST sounds like a one-man show: 'Finally I planned and launched that hugest and pinkest of all magazines, 'Blast'.... A great deal of editorial work, and again much writing, went into that. Then the war came, and that ended chapter i of my career as writer and artist' (125-6). Vorticism is mentioned only once - in a list, together with Cubism and Futurism, where Lewis claims no particular connection with it. His close colleagues and followers become his 'literary contemporaries'. There is not a hint of active group leadership. Rude Assignment severs all such connections; all effort is individual, the work of an outsider. Here he is concerned to condemn the 'excessive strictness' of groups and societies as 'unnecessary' (74), to champion the individual against authority; he is utterly opposed to the 'managerial type', 'pushing men around as if they were chessmen' (23). Personally, he has 'no taste for bossing';

on the contrary, he has always 'had an active preference for the governed in contrast to the governing' (167). In Rude Assignment freedom is the transcendent value, and Lewis's version is profoundly individualistic: 'To be free of another person, or of a group, is to be distinct from, not identical with, that person or that group' (178). With a theoretical orientation such as this, it is not difficult to see why group participation and leadership are so largely ignored in Rude Assignment. A different image was required to meet new ideological needs.

Just how fundamentally Lewis's position had shifted in the ten years between the two books becomes clear when we isolate the political assumptions upon which Blasting and Bombardiering rests. Here there is nothing but scepticism about English liberalism and democracy. The 'pathetic' softness of the British soldiers is explained entirely in terms of England's liberal traditions (25-8); they are 'big babies', 'spoilt children of Anglo-Saxon Democracy', whose '"free" institutions' and '"respect for human life"' (the inverted commas are Lewis's) ill prepares them for the realities of war. Above all, they needed 'a saving discipline', the ability to lose their individuality in a greater whole:

> Yet unquestionably the A.B.C. of their difficulties, of those of any man similarly placed, was to be found in the extinction of self - of the self in order to retain which they were dying in this ridiculous shambles! Naturally there was no one to tell them anything of this, since Democracy with a capital D was ostensibly the threatened principle, and whatever else Democracy may be, it is not a philosophy of the extinction of self or the merging of it in a greater organism (27).

How unfavourably this compares with the 'faultless bravery of the Japanese', with 'an iron racial culture directed to the confusion of the ego'! Lewis's 'scepticism regarding the reality of this Democracy' goes with a rejection of the optimistic humanism of Baldwin or H.G. Wells. He is for 'discipline and "authority"', like Mussolini or Maurras; in Blasting and Bombardiering there is, at very least, an easy acquiescence in fascism:

> When Mussolini talks about the iron disciplines of the Roman soul - or Maurras says 'Je suis Romain, je suis humain' - he is declaring himself a believer in 'authority'. He is basing himself upon the past, instead of upon the future (which is where Mr. H.G. Wells's eye is ecstatically fixed). He is denying that the average man, left to himself, has a divine spark, which will eventually enable him to become a god (as thinks Mr. Wells, and as, in the main, the Anglo-Saxon is disposed to think) (103).

Such thinking derives from the (Hulmian) doctrine of Original Sin, which puts 'Man in his place'. With Lewis, however, there is small distinction between 'an unblushing disbelief in the innate goodness of human nature' (88) and a 'hatred' for 'these masses of half-dead people, for whom personal extinction is such a tiny step, out of half-living into no-living, so what does it matter?' (108); his anti-humanism shades into inhumanity.

Nor is war a particularly heinous evil in Blasting and Bombardiering; it is simply an integral part of a 'wrong-headed universe', no better or worse. Here it is not war per se that Lewis objects to, but war for nothing. 'If England is to indulge in another war', he writes in 1937, 'it should not be completely senseless' (17-18). His feelings about it are ambivalent: 'My attitude to War is complex. Per se, I neither hate it nor love it.... When first I met War face to face I brought no moral judgements with me at all. I have never been able to regard war - modern war - as good or bad. Only supremely stupid' (85). If he is not a Nietzsche, nor is he a pacifist; things military in themselves do not outrage him. In fact, Lewis admits to 'a touch of the Junker' (28), and at moments in Blasting and Bombardiering we see what he means. The 'post-war' (until 1926) was an 'unreal' age, and by comparison the next decade had been a 'good' one:

> It's a good age, good and crude and very unsettled. I like it extremely. I'm glad I wasn't killed in the War - I wouldn't have missed this for anything. All the war hens are coming home to roost and I'm damn glad they are (15).

This period, heading for war, is 'almost real' (17); Cantleman likewise appreciates the news of the Great War because of its promise of a novel system of things. There is a side of Lewis which is indeed 'damn glad' about war.

The tough, manly 'damn glad' kind of language in Blasting and Bombardiering is importantly symptomatic of the basic attitudes found there. Italians are 'Wops', Spaniards 'Dagoes' and Germans 'the Hun'. A preference for the aggressive word accompanies an admiration for sheer physical power. Wallace, one of his followers as they 'shuffled bellicosely round to the Doré Gallery' to heckle the 'Wop' Marinetti, is 'very muscular and forcible' (33). The 'biggest men', 'rough and heavy men', 'coal-miners, Rugby footballers, heavyweight boxers and outsize navvies' are his companions in the artillery (96).

Hulme is a 'very large and imposing man, well over six foot, broad-shouldered, and with legs like a racing cyclist' (105). The taste for violence evident in Vorticism itself is still not far below the surface. As in 1914, when Lewis and Hulme preferred a helmet to a head of hair, the step from Lewis's aesthetic to an appreciation of war was not always large. Admittedly, the experience of war and his mother's death especially, which he attributed to the effects of war, cooled his Vorticist ardour. But in Blasting and Bombardiering there remains nonetheless that side of Lewis which was not 'averse to Mars and all his works' (28) and which almost welcomed the possibility of World War II.

In Rude Assignment war is unambiguously condemned. Here, it is 'not only absurd, but criminal' (137), an evil in itself: 'Nothing excuses a man, or a Party, for war-like agitation in the Machine Age, whatever reasons they may give for it' (209). That this represents a definite departure from Blasting and Bombardiering is clear enough; and considering his war-time exile in North America, it is a perfectly natural and justifiable one. What is less justifiable is the way in which Lewis conceals any suggestion of deviation by giving his previous work a subtle and surreptitious reinterpretative twist. Hitler, Left Wings Over Europe and others constitute a 'group of books against war' and are discussed in a chapter called 'Anti-War Books'. In the late thirties England was heading for a 'precipice' of war, and Lewis, committed only to peace at all costs, wanted to 'appease' Germany to save her: 'I am one of those persons who, hearing the war-drums beating in a hysterical crescendo, seeing his tribe work itself up into its customary delirium, would violently intervene, shouting Count Your Dead - they are Alive!' (65-6). This shout, part of his 'stand against war', was made in 1937, the very year in which he is so 'damn glad' about the war hens coming home to roost. And again characteristic of Lewis, his own tendency to appreciate war is ascribed to others; in Rude Assignment he could 'see that people cannot live without excitement, and war gives them that' (65). In Blasting and Bombardiering it was Cantleman, a Lewis-persona, who experienced this excitement: 'The news brought into relief a novel system of things. Everything was going to be delightfully different' (67). In Rude Assignment Lewis is mildly scandalized by those who find army life more restful to the spirit, those who find it pleasant to be an automaton, 'to move to the rhythm of a

great machine, like the Army, to obey a will alien to one's own' (180). This was the 'extinction of self or the merging of it in a greater organism' which he recommended in Blasting and Bombardiering as an antidote to flabby liberalism and of which he himself was a perfect example:

> I preserved my anonymity, in the sense in which I have already explained that principle. When I am dressed up in a military uniform I look like other people, though at other times I very easily depart from the canon, I find. One or two of my mess-mates sniffed at me suspiciously. But on the whole I was a masterpiece of conformity. - I am physically very robust. It is easy for me to go to sleep. And conformity is of course a sleep (186).

Lewis's strongest words, it seems are often reserved for unannounced attacks on an earlier self. In Rude Assignment he both assails Léon Bloy's L'Ame de Napoléon (1912) and quotes in full a letter from Roger Fry, dated 1913, in which we learn that Lewis has 'recommended' Bloy's Mendiant Ingrat! Not only this, but Lewis pours scorn upon words of Berth's which sound not unfamiliar to the reader of Blasting and Bombardiering; Berth is attacking humanist optimism:

> From our humanitarian dream we were awakened... to an heroically pessimistic conception of Life, a conception which it is impossible to reconcile with the insipid optimism of Eighteenth Century thought (32).

When Lewis so completely rejects such doctrines, and when he accuses Berth of being an 'excitable little child - going bang! bang! bang! with his toy pistol in 1913-14' who 'has learnt his lesson' (33), the intensity of his vindictiveness seems to derive partly from a self-recrimination which is never remotely allowed to come to the surface in Rude Assignment - a work totally committed to self-justification. Because of the intense polemical commitment of Lewis's autobiographies, all suggestions of guilt and self-recrimination - which disperse themselves naturally in his fiction - are repressed or projected aggressively outwards onto exterior objects. For this reason especially, when Lewis would claim to be most 'detached' from his object, he is often subjectively most deeply involved. Rude Assignment can be seen in part as a veiled assault upon a previous political position.

The author of Rude Assignment is a professed liberal, democrat and humanist-humanitarian. The autocrats of the Kremlin and Versailles, we learn, 'had not the sense to go liberal'; now Lewis is in favour of teaching Germany democracy (74) and, like other liberals of his day,

he believes that the abolition of visas would be ' a great liberal innovation' (92). As for himself, he is one with a 'great appetite for liberty' (75) whose 'career up-to-date' has been 'an epic of freedom' representing 'freedom of speech at its zenith' (104-8). Appeals to freedom of speech are numerous throughout the book, for contemporary England, unlike the 'great liberal Elysium' before World War I, is threatened by the peril of the totalitarian Left. No longer is H.G. Wells's eye 'ecstatically fixed', as it had been in Blasting and Bombardiering, upon a hopelessly unrealistic future where Everyman becomes a god; instead, Wells is one of 'the most outstanding examples' of the 'oracles', 'keepers of the public conscience', who keep the West free (73)! Maurras, on the other hand, in Blasting and Bombardiering a fellow-believer in 'authority', is listed among those 'aggressive Frenchmen' who have exalted the life of action' - a 'master' and 'god' of the benighted Berth (31-6). Lewis's political position, with respect to 'freedom' and 'authority', has been precisely reversed.

More basic ideological assumptions, mostly deriving from what Blasting and Bombardiering calls his 'unblushing disbelief in the innate goodness of human nature', tend to be obscured in Rude Assignment by a new discomfort about the 'crisis of respect for human kind' and the 'crisis of altruism' in Europe (22-3). Benda's rationalism is shown to be worthwhile because it is used 'to humane, sensible, and social ends' (39). Clearly, it would appear, such a concern refutes the charge brought against Lewis by his critics, that his writings have been 'wanting in humanity' (141) and 'betraying an inhuman streak' (176). That he is not 'Mr. Ivory Tower' like Henry James or Lytton Strachey ought to be, he thinks, self-evident; the list of prerequisites for inclusion in this building should acquit him decisively:

> Self isolationism is the first prerequisite.... An aloofness from what is regarded as the squalor of average life. Then 'aristocratic' impulses; irresponsibility; indifference to public good; contempt for 'uneducated'; pride in intellectual power; incivility to the moronic, or intolerance of the vulgar: such are a few of the distinguishing marks (101).

To show the extent to which this list applies to Lewis himself by quoting almost at random from 'The Code of A Herdsman', or selectively from Blasting and Bombardiering, is not really necessary; one need look no further than Rude Assignment itself:

> The backward mass drag down and stifle intelligence. What is socially valuable in human life should be put out of reach of the elemental inanity of man, just as we place the national treasures in a place of safety when expecting bombardment from the air (184).
>
> But in a mixed society, the sciences and the arts have to be protected against Caliban (188).

Coriolanus, it seems, has not reformed, but is simply tired of showing his wounds. Nevertheless, there is 'nothing illiberal in these observations', he writes, 'they are mere commonsense' (184); throughout Rude Assignment Lewis declares himself a strict 'liberal'.

One reason for this profession is not difficult to see: his name had been associated with fascism and its ruthless, 'illiberal' 'inhumanity'; the charges against him were interdependent. In Rude Assignment Lewis is extremely careful to show his opposition to Mussolini the man of violence and Hitler the 'sleepwalker', who had been 'doomed evidently' like his own German romantic, Kreisler, to an empty, mechanical tragedy. When he condemns those managerial types who are 'exponents of an advanced inhumanity' (23) Lewis is referring, without actually saying so, to the same political Star with whom he was supposed to be in love, an allegation he repeatedly denies. Hitler, he explains, had been 'undertaken in the interest of Western civilization' (209); and although it was said to be 'in favour' of Hitler, 'that was not the Nazi's view of the matter' (78). The charges adhering to his supposed support of Hitler are precisely those which Lewis is most anxious to parry. This defence lies very near the central organising impulse to which most of the peculiar emphases of Rude Assignment seem to refer.

Events had forced Lewis to change his mind publicly about Hitler in The Hitler Cult, and this, together with his late espousal of internationalism, is the only real reversal of direction admitted by Rude Assignment. Elsewhere, Lewis is quite insistent about the essential consistency of his thought and artistic practice. When he turns back to his old books he discovers 'remarkably little change' (221), despite odd differences in 'particulars' or a changed 'accent': 'I submit that what I am is what I was, but with a different accent on most things' (88). The arguments of books like The Art of Being Ruled and Time and Western Man are just as valid as the day they were written. Indeed, the whole project of Rude Assignment is to show an unvarying

pattern of thinking, to show the fundamental unity of its author's career:

> My writings possess this unity because they are functional and because the impulse to action faithfully corresponds, without affectation, to the dictates of the will. No deviation has occurred, the central stimulus has remained the same, although I have made use of various methods (141).

Lewis had an important strategic reason for insisting on the unity of his career. When opponents like Orwell accused him of totalitarian affinities, first with Hitler then with Stalin, it was not sufficient merely to underline those liberal-humanitarian beliefs he held in the year 1947; to refute all the insinuations about his past, he had to show that his entire career had been based on a core of unchanging (liberal) convictions. In any case, the admission of deviations in what he calls the 'central stimulus' behind his work would have been quite incompatible with the notion of the timeless classical intellect which was so central to his aesthetic and social criticism. The Communists, perfectly embodying the time-mind, might try to palliate their changeableness by pleading with Malraux: 'It is not I who have evolved, but events' (143), but no such plea could be expected from the author of Time and Western Man.

Nonetheless, the truth is that Lewis's career had been anything but fundamentally consistent, as this comparison between his auto-biographies has shown. And the reason why begins to emerge when we look at his passionate remarks about the Communists in Rude Assignment

> They are a generation of power-addicts who put a red tie on with a smirk, climb upon the back of the Working Class and propose to ride it to a new type of double-faced dominion (142).

Far from being the 'politics of the intellect' this is charged with emotional excitement. There is an excitability running through the passage which will not shrink from labels like 'crypto', 'fellow-traveller' and 'pink'. It is difficult to forget that the year was 1947, and that in his anti-Communism Lewis was now on the winning side. His enemies were 'fearing a witch-hunt this time against themselves' and Lewis threw himself into it with pious fervour; the iron-curtain mentality of the West is the background implied by every assault. It is precisely the anti-Communist hysteria thrown up by the Zeitgeist which allows such descriptions as 'persecutory hypocrites excessively partial to blood sports'. It is also pre-eminently partisan language whose rhetorical power derives from its reference

to a particular political atmosphere - something far clearer in 1973 than in 1947. Lewis too evolved with the events.

In fact the whole strategy of Rude Assignment only makes sense if we take into account when it was written. It is true that Lewis had been almost always anti-Communist; but he had also been anti-liberal, anti-humanist, anti-democratic and not particularly uneasy (to put it no higher), about war and fascism in Blasting and Bombardiering. Rude Assignment was an attempt, in conformity with the anti-war and anti-totalitarian temper of the period, to whitewash his public image of these undesirable elements. At the same time, he substituted another image, that of the individualistic outsider, the lover of personal freedom, persecuted by 'established' gangs employing tactics which sound very totalitarian; a writer whose resolute stand against war, authority and the Left brought untold personal suffering; an intellectual whose sincerity and consistency of purpose transcended Time. In this unheralded change of face lies a telling contradiction: while the autobiographies claim to be the work of a spectator who stood apart from his time, their differences plainly refer to the decade separating them. In Blasting and Bombardiering Lewis observed himself and his career through the eyes of one who leaned to the Right - for all his protests of neutrality - at the height of the Spanish Civil War; the author of Rude Assignment, writing in the year of the Iron Curtain, observed another career entirely. The subject of both autobiographies, Lewis the 'detached observer', was yet another mask, very much in the mould of Time's Enemy.

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It is unreasonable to expect a man to reveal substantially more of himself in an autobiography than he would be prepared to reveal, ultimately, in any other public capacity. The autobiographer inevitably shows some kind of public face, even the author who pursues his inauthenticities before the reader's eye with the ruthlessness shown by Sartre in Words. Such an author may often admit failures, but just as often he will conceal them, consciously or unconsiouclу editing and censoring the image of himself he sets down in his memoirs; even the sincerest will employ some cosmetic half-truths or omissions.

With an autobiographer as wary of his public, yet as dependent upon its acceptance, as Lewis was, the extent of the concealment and the touching-up was considerable. As a professional in a business become increasingly competitive, Lewis had become far too expert - for the sake of his permanent reputation - at preparing a face to suit each occasion. Unhappily caught between the need for an immediate audience and the demands of consistency of purpose, Lewis had come to resemble the politician, a figure whose subtle infiltrations into art and thought he himself had always bitterly resisted. With a politician's horror of appearing inconsistent, the author of Rude Assignment glossed over the profound personal changes which had been taking place within him since the early thirties. The extent to which Lewis came to disown his past can only be discovered in his later novels, which are incomparably better guides than his memoirs to the essential contours of his life.

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PART III : REVOLUTION IN A SOUL.

CHAPTER IX : THE REVENGE FOR LOVE (1937) AND THE REALITY OF OTHERS.

'A rugged unrevolutionary principle, founded upon sentiment, not intellect.' The Revenge for Love.

In a section of typescript at Cornell entitled 'Personal Statement' and subtitled 'Revolution in a Soul'[1] Lewis describes how, tormented in his later years by 'the rack of poverty and personal humiliation', he came to discover in his sufferings a deeper sympathy for that great majority of people who are 'pushed around'. While the statement is guarded enough, and characteristically shrewd in its marshalling of tone and emphasis, it is still, for Lewis, surprisingly personal - at moments heavy with a pathos which only narrowly avoids self-pity. These pages were probably an early draft of Rude Assignment[2] and show how near Lewis came to disclosing the profound personal changes wrought in him by years of illness, penury and exile. Instead, and perhaps predictably given the attacks, real and imagined, being mounted against him, he chose to defend and to justify himself; by giving his work an odd reinterpretative twist here and there Lewis fashioned his career into the shape of an 'unchanging pattern'; Rude Assignment reverted to the mask of Time's Enemy.

A revolution had, nevertheless, taken place, and all of Lewis's later novels bear witness to it. The Revenge for Love (1937), The Vulgar Streak (1941) and Self Condemned (1954) all implicitly qualify,

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1. This is one subtitle among a number of slight variants like 'Revolution in an Intellect', 'Revolution through Understanding', 'Revolution from Within', 'Revolution because of You' and 'The Covenant of Change (Revolution)' all of which Lewis had jotted on the cover, presumably unable to make up his mind. I have singled out one which seemed to me reasonably representative of the intention behind the others.

2. This fragment, written while Lewis was in Canada, clearly springs from the same impulse as Rude Assignment and has the same autobiographical aims: to review his career in a way which would correct misunderstanding. The final draft was not written until years later (1947-49). Nevertheless, this 'Personal Statement' is probably part of the same autobiographical enterprise.

and at times reject, the assumptions on which the earlier work was based. Hugh Kenner accurately hits on what is being overthrown when he describes The Revenge for Love as emerging 'out of a sort of act of belief in the existence of other people'.[1] It was an act of belief, as the 'Personal Statement' makes clear, largely forced on Lewis by adversity. As one after another of his books failed, Lewis was confronted, more starkly than ever, with that rash and bellicose part of himself which had led him into decisive skirmishes with Bloomsbury and the Left. In The Apes of God and Hitler, Lewis had followed his own artistic and intellectual ideals into violent engagements which neither of these enemies was likely to forget. He had been led to disaster by the foolhardy marauding of the Enemy, by the unchecked zeal, in fact, of an ideal self: that savage man-hunting artist whose eye had been so mesmerised by the 'usableness' of his High Bohemian acquaintances that he rummaged among them quite without fear or delicacy, and press-ganged into the service of his satire anyone whose foibles might help to make a point. In doing so, Lewis was merely developing what was already implicit in Tarr and the war-time stories: the Vorticist assumption that the one organising reality is the artist, within whose orbit the other characters move and exist in a merely subordinate way, as dolls, machines, animals or puppets. In The Apes the formulation is both more explicit and more extreme. As Zagreus points out, the puppet-Apes are in no sense real, but mere characters in search of the artist who created them, himself the only real man on the literary scene. Vorticist egoism had grown into outright solipsism; the artist was now God.

As God, the artist had every right to use in his creation whatever in his puppet-characters' private lives suited his purposes. The characters themselves, on the other hand, could hardly be expected to see things this way, and in the thirties, to Lewis's great consternation, a number of his puppets came to life, and in most importunate ways, started to insist on their own reality. Actual or imagined acts of retaliation for The Apes of God daily threatened his career, and even, in one case, his life![2] It is 'dangerous to get oneself branded as a

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1. Wyndham Lewis, p. 121.
2. In his pamphlet Satire and Fiction Lewis tells how an airman threatened his life!

cad' he explained to Marjorie Hemming.[1] Much 'retaliation' was harmless enough. Dick Wyndham, for example, advertised 'the paintings of Percy Wyndham Lewis for sale by the yard' in the agony column of the Times.[2] Lewis, however, took his punishment very badly. In a folder at Cornell entitled 'Subjects for Short Stories', dated 1934, he confesses his sufferings:

> I (W.L.) must for all eternity put up with anything the Sitwells may say about me in the Press, in books, or elsewhere, because of the "Apes of God" - because, in short, should I ever bring an action against them, quotations from the Apes by their counsel would so influence the jury as to make it impossible for me to secure a conviction against them. (The identification of the Sitwell family with Lord Osmund etc. would probably, by means of witnesses, be easy to effect).[3]

By this time, puppets from other books were beginning to fight back. A man called MacFie, who recognised himself in Filibusters in Barbary, forced the book to be withdrawn in 1934.[4] For fear of possible libels The Roaring Queen (1936) was withdrawn before publication.[5] Publishers who would handle Lewis's work were becoming scarce. Things had already started to come to a head in 1932 when Alec Waugh and Godfrey Winn brought suits against Lewis,[6] Waugh claiming that Lewis had accused him of homosexuality in The Doom of Youth (1932). Lewis won the case, but the book was withdrawn anyway, and a public apology made by the publisher, Chatto & Windus. He regarded this too as part of Bloomsbury's retaliation for The Apes. In the same year, Lewis was sued for the £130 advanced to him by Chatto & Windus on the second part of The Childermass.[7] And when Snooty Baronet got Cassells into trouble with the circulating libraries, they removed the book from their advertising lists, which as far as Lewis was concerned, was as effective as banning it; he writes to Neuman Flower of Cassells:

> How strange it is that I should have two books suppress [sic] within the space of two months, and both by publishers! For,

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1. 'No Quarter', p. 53.
2. Ibid, p. 73.
3. 'Subjects for Short Stories, November 1934', (Cornell).
4. Rupert Grayson to W.L., n.d., ca. 1934 (Cornell). W.L. to Rupert Grayson, 10 February 1934 (Cornell).
5. Jonathan Cape Ltd. to W.L., 27 November 1932 (Cornell).
6. W.L. to C.H. Prentice, 31 January 1932 (Cornell). W.L. to an unknown party, 26 June 1932 (Cornell).
7. C.H. Prentice to W.L., 6 October 1932 (Cornell).

> by your withdrawal of your support, you have as effectively killed Snooty Baronet as Chatto's killed The Doom of Youth.[1]

From Lewis's point of view it was scarcely coincidental that his books should meet with so much ill fortune in such a short space of time, especially when publishers like C.H. Prentice of Chatto & Windus also handled the work of Lytton Strachey.[2] Bloomsbury, with all of its enormous resources and powerful friends, it seemed,was determined to crush its lone Enemy. The idea that he had been singled out by a conspiracy in the publishing world had already taken root. By 1932, Lewis believed that his 'whole career was ... at stake'.[3]

Nor did he doubt that the Left was also implicated in the conspiratorial war of attrition being mounted against him. It was a habit of Lewis's mind to herd all his enemies into one and the same camp. Retaliation for The Apes and retaliation for Hitler could not, in any case, be sharply distinguished. As he wrote to Robert Hale in 1938, 'such "politics" as I have are not calculated exactly to sell a book, as I have learnt to my cost'.[4] The Revenge for Love itself was almost suppressed because of its supposed 'politics', and Lewis was forced to plead for his book with the publisher Desmond Flower:

> I appeal to you therefore to forget its politics.... Surely not so many serious books are written these days that one can afford to spit on and hurry out of sight a 150 thousand word novel, upon such a scale as this.... - I have for long been reconciled to working twice as hard, and if I may say so, twice as well, as the generality, and getting less out of it than some pipsqueak journalist. It would be unreasonable to expect that one criticize an orthodoxy and have that orthodoxy make things easy for me. But here is a book that it is indecent to smother.[5]

The chastened tone of the letters of this period conveys vividly now much Lewis had suffered. Not long after The Revenge for Love was published he could write with justification: 'I have been much deceived in politicians, and I will never write another line for or against any of them'.[6] By 1937 he was beginning to regret his ill-judged

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1. W.L. to Neuman Flower, n.d., ca. 1932 (Cornell).
2. Michael Holroyd, Lytton Strachey: A Biography , p. 735.
3. W.L. to Neuman Flower, n.d., ca. 1932 (Cornell).
4. W.L. to Robert Hale, 6 June 1938 (Cornell).
5. Letters, p. 242.
6. Ibid, p. 226.

defence of Hitler, and not simply on account of his books: the Left seemed to be after him in other ways. It must be remembered that for Lewis Communism was nothing less than a fanatically homicidal cult, peculiarly 'bloodthirsty and persecutory'[1] in the execution of its aims. Bizarre as it may now seem, there were times when the author of Hitler visited Sir Oswald Mosley at dead of night with his coat collar turned up - in fear of an assassin's bullet![2] The reverses and deprivations of the thirties seemed to give new substance to the feelings of persecution which were endemic to Lewis's mind. No longer could he regard his enemies as malicious but unreal puppets, or dismiss them as haunting shadows of energy whose slanders could be silenced with a pamphlet or a satire. Now they were palpably silencing the Enemy. What began with a few literary failures in 1932 had transformed itself in Lewis's mind into a sinister plot in which he himself had been marked down for revenge. By 1937, his enemies were all too real.

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Victor Stamp, in The Revenge for Love, plays an artist marked down for revenge. Not surprisingly, there is a close relationship between Victor and Lewis's criticism. Just as Pierpoint in The Apes keeps reminding the reader of Time and Western Man, so Victor keeps on reminding us of Men Without Art. But whereas the invisible and God-like figure Pierpoint condemns the Apes with his words, the inarticulate Victor is more of an incarnate Word, a man moving among men. Against Victor, and to a lesser extent Jack and the Civil Guards, the kind of bourgeois Communism which flourished in Britain in the thirties is shown up in all its romantic unreality. In The Revenge for Love Victor is the embodiment of all that is authentic, natural and

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1. Letters, p. 226.
2. Sir Oswald Mosley, My Life (1968), p. 225.

unsentimental, a rock-like point of reference in a sea of Communist illusion. As an artist who believes only what is presented objectively to the eye, he is an outcast in an art-world taken over entirely by the Left. Victor's anti-type is Tristram Phipps for whom Communism is a religious faith, a jealous orthodoxy which demands a priori precedence over the eye and ends by imprisoning perception in subjectivity. With the wild force of a cave-man untouched by the trendy ideologies of the age, Victor persists in all that is instinctive, immediate and concrete. He is the elemental Cubo-Vorticist whose impulse is far more primitive than the sophisticated moralising which passes for art in fashionable Leftist circles; moralising which dissipates its followers in exotic abstractions and perverts natural instinct. Victor's only politics are those of his art; the instinctive palaeolithic politics of self-preservation against a world quickly falling into line behind slogans wholly antagonistic to his kind of art. The reader is not at all surprised to learn that Victor also stands for Fascist Germany: a Great Power, as Lewis consistently portrayed it, concerned only for self-preservation, but surrounded by a Communist-Capitalist alliance bent on keeping it powerless and poor. In his own strong and silent way, Victor introduces into the novel many of the principles for which Lewis had been arguing for over a decade.

Victor, however, as Lewis's elemental he-man artist, is unable to comprehend the full malevolence of Communism. For him, like the cavalier author of The Apes of God, the people around him are hardly real at all, mere irrelevant shadows whose most menacing gestures can be laughed off as a practical joke. It is only through the eyes of his wife, Margot, that we see Victor as the victim of a cruel and remorseless persecution. For her, the Communists come to take on a more and more sinister kind of reality; far from being a practical joke, they constitute an imminent danger, not only to Victor's career, but to his very life. In the end, Margot is proved right; it is hers which is the right sense of reality, and in fact much of the novel is written from Margot's point of view. Increasingly, Victor comes to appear as only a symbol: the outer shell of an over-confident artist who is led inexorably to extinction, partly by the Communist machine, but partly by his own inability to take its evil seriously. What becomes clear is that Victor and Margot are dramatising a debate within Lewis himself: between that ideal, masterful antiromantic artist who blithely underestimated his puppets and the man who fell prey to the

consequences; between the fearless Enemy of the polemics and the private man who lived in fear of assassination. Not that Victor is ever rejected outright in The Revenge for Love; to the end, he retains much of the attraction of a cherished ideal (Margot's love). At the same time, what he stood for was no longer capable of wholehearted endorsement. The protestations of consistency made by Rude Assignment mask a movement of disenchantment which was well under way by 1937.

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Secret disenchantment is one of the master-themes of the novel. In his portrayal of the Communist, Percy Hardcaster, Lewis is preoccupied with the tension between inward disillusionment and the militant face which the propagandist must turn to the world. As a propagandist, Hardcaster wears the mask of the plain, blunt man, totally committed to the Cause. And just as Lewis recognised the 'discrepancy between Mr. W.L. and the writer [of Rude Assignment] and his own easy-going, anything but contentious, self',[1] so Hardcaster sees his mask as a considerable over-simplification of his feelings and something distinct from his everyday concept of himself. For the Enemy, the polemical mask was an exaggeration, a puffing-out of what he called his 'essential' self; for Hardcaster, it is a technique for summoning and stretching what commitment he has to sizeable and impressive proportions. In the course of the novel, Hardcaster slowly loses what naive belief he had in his own propaganda, along with his infantile trust in the party machine. By the end, Hardcaster is a changed man.

The change is brought about by intense physical suffering. During the long periods he spends in bed - and here there are strong autobiographical resonances - Hardcaster undergoes a harrowing ascesis; his conviction is stripped of ideological illusion, his will of its flabby egotism. At the same time, as close as he is to nihilism, Hardcaster discovers a new kind of sympathy, especially for Margot; both are victims of the revenge for love. As Marxist ideals and abstractions lose their authority for him, individual people become

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1. Letters, p. 528.

much more real. For Hardcaster, suffering has effected a Revolution from Within.

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Three years before the appearance of The Revenge for Love, Lewis published Men Without Art 'to defend Satire'; and by 'Satire' he means something as wide as Art itself.[1] Here he portrays the true artist (himself) in a way which is by now familiar: in terms of what he calls the 'philosophy of the EYE'. By this Lewis means an artist who expresses the cold, 'objective, non-emotional truth of the scientific intelligence';[2] who puts down exactly 'what's there', however grotesque it may turn out to be. This is, of course, a highly polemical and tendentious account of the artistic process, specifically directed against the charge that The Apes was a work of wilful and malevolent distortion. By 1934, however, the philosophy of the EYE had gathered a second meaning: the Eye-man is politically non-aligned, impartial in all things save his trade, loyal only to the party of Genius.[3] Such a man will be an outsider; and probably, given the state of the contemporary art world, an outcast, if not an outlaw.[4] Here Lewis has in mind the 'anti-artist currents' coming from the Marxists - people like Middleton Murry, Max Eastman and Edmund Wilson - who were subjecting art to a dogmatic, religio-moral kind of interference.[5] And, what was incomparably worse to Lewis's mind, Marxism seemed to be establishing itself in the arts as a kind of tyrannical orthodoxy; an orthodoxy which would, in the end, gladly settle for a world of men without art. The Revenge for Love[6] is a satirical counter-attack on these 'anti-artist' forces of the Left.

In Lewis's novels, there is rarely much ambiguity - on the surface,

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1. Men Without Art, p. 10.
2. Ibid, pp. 118, 121.
3. Ibid, pp. 130, 236-238.
4. Ibid, p. 171.
5. Ibid, p. 279.
6. All references, included in the text, are to the 1937 edition.

at least - about which characters are being satirised; there are one or two almost invitable clues which help us discriminate them from the outset. Foremost among these clues, as Geoffrey Wagner points out, is the state of a character's eyes. And in fact the characters in The Revenge for Love fall into two distinct groups: those, like Victor, Don Alvaro, Serafin and Jack, with sharp, 'objective' eyes which miss nothing; and those, like Tristram Phipps and Percy Hardcaster (at the beginning), for whom reality is filtered through the abstracting, 'subjective' lens of Marxist orthodoxy. Much importance attaches to the fact that Tristy's 'eyelids were as a rule half-closed as you see with a blind person... in the sunken pit of their eye sockets'. Blindness is a metaphor of withdrawal from 'objective' reality 'into "the abstract world," as he called it' (135). And when Tristy walks along the street, he throws his head back and stares into the distance, missing everything which is immediately before him. Not content with the obvious, in other words, the Communist is ever straining for the exotic, the other-worldly, the remote and theoretical. Lewis never tires of exposing the 'subjectivity' of the committed Communist. Repeatedly, he sets up scenes where Communist characters confidently fill up discrepancies in awareness between the reader and themselves with dogmatic Marxist explanations which the reader knows to be false. In Chapter 2, Don Alvaro, a 'lynx-eyed' (22) and quasi-omniscient Civil Guard in charge of the Spanish prison where Percy Hardcaster is being held, detects a false bottom in a basket of food being brought to Hardcaster by a local peasant-girl. The false bottom - a pervasive image of the treacherous universe in which the novel is set[1] - contains escape-plans, but Don Alvaro decides to let the girl take the basket to Hardcaster intact, with the warning: 'I shall be observing you all the time' (18). By the time she reaches him, 'compelled with all the potency of Spanish eyes' (19), the girl is quite undertandably upset; but Hardcaster - the juxtaposition is delicately achieved - is 'not observant in such matters' (25) and makes an obtuse remark which causes her to burst into tears. Attracted by the commotion, the other Communist prisoners have no difficulty in explaining the girl's distress:

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1. Lewis originally planned to call the novel 'False Bottoms', but his publisher was unhappy with the ambiguity of such a title.

it is a plain example of the exploitation of the peasants by the priests and the 'brute-beasts of rack-renters' (29)! Obviously, such a scene as this, purporting to be an exposé of the 'subjective' propagandist mind, is itself open to those forms of surreptitious and subjective rigging with which the propagandist is quite familiar. For Lewis, however, 'objectivity' principally consists in unmasking 'subjectivity', and the novel is studded with variations of the same basic device. When it is reported (accurately) in London that Hardcaster has been wounded while attempting to escape, the fellow-travellers assembled in the Phipps's basement discount the report as the usual 'fascist formula' for disposing of enemies. Thus the reader is initiated into the lie-world of the Left, already explored in Count Your Dead,[1] where truth is propaganda and propaganda truth; Communists believe only those 'facts' which are compatible with the preconceptions of Marxist dogma.

Lewis's favourite metaphor for this state of mind is religious belief. At one point we find Tristy's eyes 'silvered' over with an 'other-worldly' sheen. The scene is a party at O'Hara's place and Tristy is discussing a Picasso print on O'Hara's wall with the Marxist critic Peter Wallace (né Reuben Wallach). It is a 'discussion of a religious nature, of course'; Wallace is a 'Levite' engaged in a slogan-filled homily on Picasso's bourgeois sensuality. He is a 'great fountain of pure doctrine' before whom Tristy is standing 'like an early Christain' drinking deep draughts of Communist faith. When Victor proffers a heretical comment, Tristy is 'anxious to purify the air by agitating the thurible of Marxist discussion' (170-2). As a result of this heavy doctrinal bias, the discussion keeps moving away from its object, the Picasso. And when Victor brings their attention back to the actual picture, Wallace is caught out with an 'Oh, that!' (174). Neither of the Communists keeps his eye on the object; Wallace, because he is devious and crooked; but Tristy, precisely because his commitment to Communism is so fervent and sincere. This distinction, comprehensively explored in Lionel Trilling's recent Sincerity and Authenticity (1972), was one to which Lewis was extremely sensitive in practice. In Tristy we have a portrait of the inauthentic mind; he

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1. Count Your Dead: They Are Alive! or A New War in The Making, (1937) p. 264 and ff.

avoids the picture after Wallace has 'described' it because what he sees contradicts what he must believe:

> Tristy looked very miserable. He could not deny the justness of the description. The orthodoxy of the picture was not to be questioned. And yet he was compelled to sustain an opposite opinion to all that he knew to be true, for the reason that there was another conscience, namely that of that pitiable thing, the artist. And conscientious at all costs he had to be!
> 'I know Carl Einstein says that.' Tristy knew that Carl Einstein said it - and he looked deeply distressed, for this made things very difficult, and poor Tristy realized that he must be in the wrong (173).

Here we catch Tristy in the middle of an act of Sartrean 'bad faith';[1] the artist within him is being 'deceived' by the Communist. For Lewis, the 'anti-artist currents' of the Left are subtle and pernicious in their operation, perverting the artist's conscience from within by masquerading as the Greater Good. Tristy fails in a similar way towards the end when he is forced to choose between friendship for Victor and esprit de corps; predictably, the corps wins the day. Every main character in the novel is consistently associated with one particular animal, and Tristy's totem is the sheep (249). This is partly an extension of the Christian imagery, but more particularly it signifies the sway of fold-loyalty over Tristram Phipps the artist.

Victor is Tristy's antitype. Where Tristy is 'a sheep out of Wallace's own fold', Victor is in every sense an Antipodean,[2] a 'wild goat of the places of the wilderness' (171). Victor Stamp is Lewis's outsider par excellence, reminding the reader in many ways of Camus' Meursault, whom he anticipates by some five years. For both Lewis and Camus, the outsider maintains an elemental profaneness - Meursault belongs to the sea, Stamp to the wilderness - a primal authenticity which is quite proof against the pieties of bourgeois civilisation. Both outsiders inhabit intensely visual worlds; in Victor's case it is the eye of the artist which, properly dominant, casts aside the religio-moral mists of Marxism and submits everything to the irreverent scrutiny

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1. Being and Nothingness, trans. by H.E. Barnes (1969), pp. 47-70.
2. Probably to underline his 'outsideness', Lewis has made Victor Stamp an Australian. In Blasting and Bombardiering, pp. 148-149, the Anzacs in France are portrayed as outsiders in a machine age.

of full daylight. Victor is full of an instinctive scepticism which cannot 'give a damn, one way or another, for "the People"' (78). He is detached from Tristy's praise of his work and equally detached from Wallace's pontifical pronouncements on art. To him Wallace is a 'pretentious "word-slinger"'; and, like his creator,[1] Victor cannot see the point of dragging 'old Marx' into a discussion of Picasso (172-3). Victor's view of the proceedings is corroborated, independently, by a second outsider at the party; the skirt-chasing businessman, Jack. He is by no means an artist, but as a 'keen-eyed kid from the outer darkness' (118) Jack also applies the touchstone for what is real in the lie-world, the touchstone of pure seeing, unclouded by any pre-conceived belief. When Wallace calls Picasso a 'classical sensualist' and Victor again reminds them of their object by asking, 'But is it sensual?', it is Jack who delivers the ultimate judgement on the Marxists:

> But there must be something more in it than met the eye, Old Jack concluded, since its sensuality did not exactly hit you in the stomach (174-5).

As the Enemy had always taught, the only men who see reality-as-it-is are outsiders.

Not only is the convinced Communist imprisoned in his own abstractions, but the abstractions themselves are shown to predicate a hopelessly romantic view of human nature. As his name signifies, Tristram lives 'among the chilliest fields of theoretic romance'. Like a true romantic theorist - as portrayed by T.E. Hulme and Lewis - Tristy sees men as 'perfectly rational and virtuous beings' (255). Needless to say, this optimistic conception of the human race finds little credence among the novel's keen-eyed outsiders, who incline to Lewis's own view that men are basically 'corrupt, evil, untidy [and] incomplete'.[2] Like Hulme, Lewis regarded this as the 'Catholic' position, and so the Spanish prison-guards exhibit it in a radical form. The extreme ascetical pessimism of St. John of the Cross's 'nothing'[3] is never far

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1. Men Without Art, p. 225: 'But supposing you interrogate such an artist as Pablo Picasso - he is handy, he is a great artist, he is not far away. What change do you imagine you would get out of him by telling him he should not regard his pictures as the work of an artist, but as productions established upon thomistic or Marxian principles?'

2. Ibid, p. 211.

3. The Complete Works of St. John of the Cross, I, i, p. 59. It is likely that Lewis would have been acquainted with St. John of the Cross's writings through Roy Campbell, who translated his poetry. Lewis and Campbell were close friends at this period.

below the surface. In Don Alvaro's eyes, the peasant girl is 'nothing' (11), little more than an animated machine; and in every man's heart there is a false bottom. Don Alvaro's habitual gesture towards life is a spit; Serafin confronts existence with a bored and cynical fatalism. Serafin tells Hardcaster not to bother about inventing a story to cover his attempt to escape, as any story is good enough where everything would be disbelieved. Such is Catholic Spain's view of man; a view which harmonises with the natural universe in which The Revenge for Love is set. It is the self-consciously seamy, anti-romantic universe of Eliot's 'Preludes'. Moonlight on the water is 'reminiscent of the bottom of a sardine tin' (43). This is the austere, 'objective universe of things' (50), quite indifferent to the human world and sternly neutral in the face of man's longings. The Spanish evening light shines equally on the just and the unjust, levelling all distinctions between one man and another; there is a false bottom in every man's heart. When Jack tells himself that 'all men are liars' (123) he has the endorsement of 'objective' Nature.

Lewis's Darwinian idea of Nature - in some ways similar to the idea adopted by the Nazis[1] - is central in his critique of British bourgeois Communism. Victor and Margot are the prime examples in the novel of people living according to Nature, but the idea is not explicitly introduced until Part III, entitled 'Jack'. Jack is himself something of a 'force of nature' (111). A kind of Tom Jones from an eighteenth century Wiltshire village, Jack is a throwback to the world of farmyard and stable, an outsider from the rustic past. In Jack, the animal life is sound, his sex and fighting glands are in order. In every respect, he is like a dwarf bull dressed up in the apparel of a City accountant. Even Gillian Phipps, of whom he becomes enamoured, recognises that Jack is a natural man. When, therefore, Lewis explains the attraction between Tristy and Jack as an 'attraction of opposites' (107), the clear implication is that Tristy is an

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1. In Hitler, Lewis cites some of Hitler's homely farmyard parables about foxes and geese with a certain amount of approval. The Revenge for Love shows how similar to Hitler's Lewis's views still were.

unnatural man. And if fact, many of the Communists are shown to be in some sense out of touch with Nature. When we meet the O'Haras, Eileen is feeding the sparrows with lumps of bread big enough for buzzards or gulls, and Sean is staring through them 'at another problem' (143). Gillian Phipps admits that she is 'only half a natural woman', and Jack is not slow to see that she 'wouldn't let herself go because of her bunch of notions' (213-4). Despite their 'advanced' morals, there is something oddly Manichean about the Communist intellectuals. Natural impulse has been twisted by abstractions. Jill is sexually bold where she should be timorous, but inhibited where she might well be passionate. In Men Without Art, Communism is an 'inverted' orthodoxy,[1] in The Revenge for Love, Communist 'notions' invert Nature.

The life-style of the fellow-travellers embodies what Lewis in Men Without Art calls 'badtimism'.[2] Where most people pursue pleasure, the 'badtimer', unconsciously compensating for the decay of English religion, pursues a 'philosophy of pain'. The ways and manners of the Communists are seen as inversions through the eyes of Jack, the 'astonished outsider' (118), when he first visits the dank basement in which Tristy and Jill subsist. Jack is amazed by the fact that although none of those assembled, products of Park Lane and Oxford, could have been born in such a mildewed cellar, they actually seemed to be congratulating themselves for living half buried in the mud of the Thames. What is equally incredible to the outsider, seeing how young and healthy these people appear, is that they listen only to sad songs. A record which annoys Jack particularly and one they play repeatedly is called Swampy River. The swamp and the bog are images used by Lewis in Men Without Art[3] to describe the state of art and letters in England between the wars, and it is no accident that Jack puts Tristy's canvases 'on a par with that Swampy River' (115); English artistic and intellectual life were caught, like Tristy and Jill Phipps, in a gigantic, enervating bog. The Communists can only enjoy what is

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1. Men Without Art, p. 170.
2. Ibid, pp. 132-133.
3. Ibid, p. 172 and ff.

limp and languishing. As Jack puts it: 'It was a case of the blacker the brighter with this bunch'; to which Lewis adds a heavy-handed endorsement of Jack's natural, commonsense view: 'And Jack was not the craziest man in that room by a long shot' (118).

Communist 'badtimism' not only perverts a man's instinctive avoidance of pain, it also inhibits the whole gamut of his acquisitive and sexual appetites. Tristy's indifference to wealth - he seems pleased to be getting nothing for his art - is matched by his indifference to sex. Jack sees him as long-haired and sexless, missing all the inuendoes of his fervent enquiries about naked models. Jack is also stunned by the strange sex-ethics which prevail in the cellar. On one occasion, Jill greets him at the door stark naked; nor does she feel obliged to break off a passionate kiss when Tristy enters the room. She whets Jack's appetite further by getting him to take her to O'Hara's party. When, however, Jack finally tries to seduce her, Jill refuses because she doesn't 'love' Jack, not at all because of Tristy; as far as Tristy is concerned, she is free. Such goings on - standard enough in contemporary 'advanced' circles - are astounding to Jack. He himself, in his single-minded pursuit of 'skirt', is a kind of sexual capitalist. He is called a 'capitalist' at O'Hara's party but this is only figuratively true; money means infinitely less to him than women. It is in sexual matters that he is a 'man of property' (213), with an eye variously described as the eye of a prospector, a rooster and a Turk. There is nothing wrong with Jack's libido.

What is essential about Lewis's natural man is his instinctive egoism, summed up in Jack's homely motto: 'a man has to think of himself first, after all' (117). Here lay the core of Lewis's opposition to bourgeois Communism. For Lewis, Communism was a form of romantic idealism which began by seducing the white, middle-class, Anglo-Saxon intellectual into a self-abasing identification with another class, culture, nationality or race, and ended by alienating him from his own nature. The case is well illustrated by Sean O'Hara and his wife, both of whom are patriotic towards other nations. Mrs. O'Hara is actually English, but like her parents who named her 'Eileen', she is an Irish patriot. Sean, on the other hand, is Irish, but has turned his back on everything Irish except the Irish cell of the Third International. He is 'fastidious as a Jew... in his fixed resolve to identify himself with John Bull at all costs' (146), and tends to be romantic about

Cockneys. Eileen of course knows too many Cockneys personally to follow that particular cult. Nor was O'Hara immune from 'a spot of Russian patriotism, or a dash of Negro-race-nonsense' (147). For the party, the O'Haras show their patriotism by providing caviar! The satire here, concentrated into a few pages, is hardly subtle, but for Lewis the point was a central one. O'Hara and the Communist intellectuals give substance to Don Alvaro's striking prophetic vision of the class which has lost all national identity,

> merging in the international abstractness of men - where there was no longer either Spanish men or English men, but a gathering of individuals who were nothing (9).

Class, nationality and race are ineradicable parts of a man's nature. If, like the Communists, he lives immersed in abstractions which purport to transcend such things, he finally becomes an individual who is nothing.

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For over a decade the Enemy had assailed these 'anti-artist currents' in twentieth century Western culture with a huge body of criticism, at the centre of which - despite all its protestations of 'scientific' impartiality - lay a positive principle: a normative view of human nature which asserted the priority of self over others, and the priority of one's own kind over other kinds.[1] In The Revenge for Love Lewis has given us a living image of this principle; it is Victor Stamp, the artist from the outer wilderness. Victor brings together all phases of Lewis's antiromantic thought: as a Cubist full of primitive egoism and creative will, he recalls BLAST; as a sharp-eyed outsider, The Enemy. But more than anything else, Victor resembles that picture of the antiromantic artist held up polemically before the reader of Men Without Art. He is an ideal figure who makes little sense outside the lines of ideological battle drawn up in Lewis's criticism. Like the Enemy, Victor is essentially an opposite, an idealised antithesis of those who have become nothing.

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1. In his great treatises, The Art of Being Ruled, Time and Western Man and Paleface, Lewis was defending his own interests, and those of all Western artists and intellectuals, against the interests of the uncreative, the non-intellectual and the non-Western.

Where the Communist's exoticism is 'non-creative', exhibiting 'the characteristics of the traditional feminine surrender', Victor's creative energies are guaranteed straight away by his possession of that 'male insurgence and egoism' praised in Hitler.[1] From the start, the reader is presented with a 'granite chin', a collar-bone with 'he-man hollows' and eyes 'full of the light of battle' (76-7). Victor - Lewis's names are seldom accidental - is Margot's 'lord', as masterful and dominant as Nature intended. Despite all Lewis's later attacks on violence, Blasting and Bombardiering shows how much he admired big, powerful men like T.E. Hulme and the Rugby footballers, heavyweight boxers and outsize navvies who were his hefty team-mates in the artillery.[2] Victor is definitely a man of this mould, with a tall athletic frame and huge workman's shoulders capable of mighty blows. Victor is the archetypal male, full of the primal egoism of his sex. When he takes up the artist's brush, it is with a primitive energy, an 'animal energy' (90-1) to create. As Men Without Art argued, the 'artistic impulse is a more primitive one than the ethical';[3] and so Victor, at work among a group of Communists, is a veritable 'animal among men'. Like Jack, he is nothing less than a force of Nature:

> A striking picture of the Odd Man Out. For better or for worse these broad and hostile shoulders belonged to Nature, with her big impulsive responses, with her violent freedom, with her animal directness: unconservative, illogical, and true to her elemental self (290-1).

When he attacked Lawrence's primitivism in Paleface, Lewis overlooked a similar thread winding itself alternatively in and out of his own thought. 'The artist', we learn in Men Without Art, is 'in touch with natural forces of a very considerable voltage'.[4] But where Lewis diverges from Lawrence is equally instructive: for Lewis, since the natural world is 'ugly dross', the artist too must be on the side of 'the ugly'.[5]

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1. Hitler, p. 116.
2. Blasting and Bombardiering, pp. 96, 105.
3. Men Without Art, p. 108.
4. Ibid, p. 192.
5. Ibid, pp. 228-229. In fact, Lawrence was repelled by the ugliness in Lewis's work; Selected Literary Criticism, ed. A. Beal (1956), pp. 411-412.

It is precisely his strange partiality for 'prettiness'(91) which Victor must overcome when he paints his Cubist masterpiece in Part III. The painting is described as a 'flight-from-self' (94); but equally, it is a flight from the kind of Bloomsbury taste which, through the agency of Roger Fry, dominated the British art world between the Wars. Instead of throwing himself romantically into the saccharine kind of Post-Impressionist imitation he normally attempted, Victor finally discovers himself as an artist by treating the painting, in the words of Men Without Art, 'purely as a game'.[1] Symbolically, the red cubes he paints are dice, and the whole enterprise is a game of chance, a pure gamble. The creative 'flight-from-self' made by Victor is very much in the Modernist tradition, a triumph of 'the mind which creates' over 'the man who suffers'. By 'submitting to the gambler's fatalism', Victor is following his own deepest elemental instincts; the result is 'ascetic' (94) - what higher praise? - detached from Life, all stricly according to the Vorticist canon. Victor's red cubes are the purest, least compromising form of antiromantic art.

The painting scene in Part III puts Victor's artistic credentials beyond doubt. W.H. Pritchard is mistaken when he places Victor in the tradition of Lewis's puppet-like wild bodies.[2] Victor's work is only second-rate in execution, but the question of how good? is less important in the novel than the matter of what kind? Victor is a 'failed painter',[3] as Pritchard calls him, because of the age in which he lives. His Cubist picture is worth nothing only because 'of course no one would give anything for a picture of that sort to-day, unless it had a Name attached to it (and Stamp was not a name) and not much then' (95). The real point is that red cubes, even painted by a Wyndham Lewis, would fetch next to nothing in 1937. Victor's true significance can be seen in the fact that he remains stubbornly loyal to his vocation in spite of the abject poverty and the monumental indifference, even the open hostility, of the contemporary art world. Throughout, Victor's only politics are his art. In the faker's workshop - a brilliant

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1. Men Without Art, pp. 290-291.
2. Wyndham Lewis, p. 125.
3. Ibid, p. 115.

microcosmic image of the British art world of the period - Victor is the only one to stand up for the rights of the artist against the crooked sophistries of the Marxist businessmen. For him, the artist's work, which is being sold at huge profits by these middle men, is inalienably his own property. Victor hates faking and wants to add creatively to a fake Van Gogh being painted by Tristy. As a faker himself, Victor is of course no success. Significantly, the main thing wrong with his Van Gogh self-portrait is that, copying his own mirror-image, he has made Van Gogh's right eye too intelligent! Unlike Tristy and Isaac Wohl, Victor is simply an 'obtuse lump that could not be digested' (290) by the faking-machine. When the bosses order Victor to change Van Gogh's eye, Victor puts his foot through the canvas. By doing so, he is not only acting out the significance of his name 'Stamp', but he is also revealing the true nature of the archetypal Artist: as one whose wildness and freedom cannot be confined to the production-line of contemporary art. Where Tristy can submerge himself in the interests of the Communist faking-factory, Victor is moved by a more primitive impulse, the 'law' of 'self-preservation' (291) and the preservation of his kind.

Throughout the novel there are hints that Victor has another significance. Margot notes a distant resemblance between Victor and a Blackshirt she once knew, and this is quite consistent with his marked irreverence towards both Communists and Jews. The theme only comes explicitly to the surface in the workshop scene after Victor storms out; Tristy likens him to Germany, the 'Have-Not' Great Power and outlaw among nations:

> 'Victor really is like the Third Reich!' he repeated. 'He is very nationalist. His nation is Victor! And he suffers from a permanent sense of injury' (302).

Suddenly, many of the values with which Victor has been associated take on a new meaning. Lewis's 'Nature', Victor's 'elemental' 'male egoism', the law of self-preservation and the law of kind all have a precise political analogue: Fascism. Ever since he had praised 'Hitlerism' for its classical qualities,[1] this misconceived analogy between Fascism and his own antiromanticism had been incubating in

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1. Hitler, p. 184.

Lewis's mind. In an article he published in The British Union Quarterly in 1937, Lewis applauded the Fascist's defence of the individual's 'creative toil', 'the craftsman against the machine' and the 'creator against the middle man'.[1] Elsewhere in his writings of the period, Fascist Germany was portrayed as the same great, creative nation which produced Bach, Goethe, Kant, Leibniz and Beethoven; but it was a nation kept deliberately poor by the other Great Powers.[2] As in the case of Victor Stamp, the powerful middle men and usurers were trying to bring Germany into line with the rest of the world. The forging which takes place in the Marxist businessmen's factory is not only an image of the sham world of art, but it is also an image of the loan-capital - issuing bank-notes is called 'forging' in Count Your Dead[3] - to which Hitler's Germany would not submit. In Lewis's mind, Communism and Capitalism were part of the same Internationalist conspiracy against Fascism. Almost every aspect of the confrontation in The Revenge for Love between Victor and the 'anti-art' forces of the Left is mirrored in the confrontation between Fascism and what Lewis calls in his British Union article 'the theoretic ballyhoo of Internationalism'.[4]

> What they call 'Democracy' is in fact a 'Banker's Olympus'. It is operating under the instructions of 'Loan-Capital', more than anything else. Fascism is a revolt of the People. A revolt against debt. I am no Fascist. But I love Freedom. Also I hate Usury. If Fascism triumphed the credit-web that has spread itself over the earth would be broken, and the big abstract money-spinner at its centre killed. Concrete values would be put in place of abstract values. In those two words, concrete and abstract, you have the whole bag of tricks. That is why all the miscalled 'Democracies' spit fire when they see the shadow of the Spanish Phalanx creeping nearer to Malaga, or the Swastika worming its way into Finland. Its vast web of loan-slavery is threatened only by that. Communism does not threaten it. On the contrary it helps its brother spider.[5]

The Revenge for Love has been constructed on precisely these ideological

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1. '"Left Wings" and the C3 mind', The British Union Quarterly, i (1937), p. 33.
2. Left Wings Over Europe, pp. 312-317.
3. Count Your Dead, p. 290.
4. Op. cit., p. 33.
5. Count Your Dead, p. 276.

oppositions: the concrete and the abstract; the free individual and the vast international organisation. In Lewis's political writings of the period, Hitler is not a tyrant as conventionally portrayed, but 'one of the oppressed',[1] committed only to the freedom of a nation surrounded by hostile giants. Since France had a pact with Russia, and Britain with France, the European Great Powers were to Lewis evidently in league against Germany. Germany was nothing other than Europe's outsider, or outcast. 'The "outcasts" of 1936', he wrote in Left Wings Over Europe, 'are the extremists of the "right"'; and '"Fascist" thought is outcast thought'.[2] Not only this, but Fascist thought was also 'objective' thought; Communism was 'abstract' and 'subjective', while Fascism was both 'concrete' and 'objective'. In Count Your Dead, Lewis's persona, Ned, warns the British clubman Lancelot Nidwit about the consequences of British policy in Europe:

> The powers arrayed against you - against you and your French and Russian allies - are tremendously objective in their outlook. That is where they have the advantage over you. They are the "realists", as it is called. They see a strictly concrete and objective world, where you see a subjective and so an unreal one.... The brilliant, the subjective, imagination of the Jew... and the Slav, his partner, is, I believe, upon the practical plane, no match for the four-square objective "realism" of the Italian and the Teuton.[3]

Germany, in fact, followed something very similar to Lewis's 'philosophy of the EYE'; it was an outcast nation which, like the outsiders in the novel, saw reality-as-it-is. The Revenge for Love is in part a political allegory.

One implication of the allegory is particularly interesting: Victor is not only the non-aligned outsider of the piece but he is also a symbol of Fascist Germany. It is at once apparent that, given the fierce political alignment of 1937, these two roles are somewhat contradictory. Nor is the contradictiétion adventitious. In reality, Victor is merely mirroring a persistent tension running through Lewis's polemical prose during the thirties: a tension between its claims to detachment and objectivity and - a fact which Lewis's admirers would do well to face - his obvious sympathy for Fascist Germany. There seems little point in trying to resolve this tension either by following Lewis's line in Rude Assignment that he was really

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1. Left Wings Over Europe, p. 280.
2. Ibid, p. 331.
3. Count Your Dead, pp. 267-268.

only trying to avoid a disastrous war in the thirties, or by maintaining with John Harrison[1] that his writings were manifestly Fascist in their implications. It is clear, on the one hand, that despite his contacts with Sir Oswald Mosley[2] Lewis always took the greatest pains in his writing - and long before it became merely expedient to do so - to dissociate himself from all political organisations. In an age when many other intellectuals became party ticket-holders, Lewis's protestations of non-alignment deserve some respect. On the other hand, there is no escaping the 'sympathy with this great german party' which Lewis admits towards the end of Hitler.[3] The basis of his sympathy is apparent in the dual role played by Victor Stamp. Like Hitler's Germany, Lewis himself was an outcast surrounded by the powerful forces of Capitalism and Communism (Bloomsbury publishers and Marxist critics) who kept him poor by placing his work under a boycott; yet, again like the Nazis, he was resolved to fight on and to maintain his identity in the face of everything which threatened to destroy him. Victor Stamp stood for all those things which were at stake in the struggle: the German people[4] and Wyndham Lewis the anti-romantic artist. The threat of destruction, however, is not seen through Victor's eyes, but through the eyes of his wife, Margot.

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Margot Stamp has neither money nor talents - nothing but love for Victor. In this, she is the counterpart of Bertha, who is distinguished in nothing except her enduring love for that peculiarly unlovable artist-hero, Tarr. Yet the roles of the two women are strikingly different. Bertha is little more, in the final analysis, than an object obstructing Tarr's ascent of Parnassus. In The Revenge for Love, Margot stands at the centre of the novel's consciousness, and

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1. The Reactionaries (1966).
2. A letter written by Lady Sybil Cholmondeley to Lewis at this period asks: 'Have you seen Mosley? I feel sure he'd be bucked at your wishing to see him'; 7 February [1936?] (Cornell).
3. Hitler, p. 143.
4. See fn. 2 on p. 225.

the artist-hero is himself an object - albeit a highly cherished one - within her world. Love had been radically revalued in the twenty years between the two novels. For the celebrated Vorticist of thirty-two with Mayfair and the art-world apparently at his feet, love was, in Tarr's words, 'a possessive madness'; a 'malady', 'dangerous' for the artist 'to live with'.[1] By 1937, things were entirely different. Lewis was now an 'outcast' in his fifties, sharing with his (half-German)[2] wife a secluded private life to which even friends were rarely admitted. Now love was a 'pact of nature', 'one of the elemental things in life', 'a rugged unrevolutionary principle founded on sentiment' (86-7). Love and Nature are brought together by Margot's totem, the seabird. The image is introduced in one of those lyrical passages which are rare in Lewis's writing; Margot is watching over Victor as he sleeps:

> Her head of a small wistful seabird, delicately drafted to sail in the eye of the wind, and to skate upon the marbled surface of the waves - with its sleek feathery chevelure, in long matted wisps - arched downward on its neck to observe Lord Victor. The rhythm of his heaves, in his sulky imposture of sleep, certainly approximated to the ocean. She hovered over him in her ecstasy of lovesickness, her eyes full of a dizzy gloating, rocked by the steady surge of his chest. Her eyes were almost popping out of her skull in the intensity of her desire to settle - to skim down and settle: to ride there and be at rest! (74-5)

Without doubt, a scene like this in Tarr or Snooty Baronet would have been written from the artist's point of view; what is here described as a 'sulky imposture' would have been an entirely justifiable precaution against a dangerous malady. What changes the perspective is the value ascribed to Margot's love. The seabird image suggests that love is an instinct of the wild, as elemental as art itself; elsewhere, it establishes the fact that love nourishes the artist. At O'Hara's party, Margot bringing food to Victor is described as 'a peewit in the act of carrying a worm to its young' (178). This is a symbolic enactment of something which happened in Part III. When Victor finally leaps out of the love nest it is with 'a great current of unlooked-for energy'. And with his 'animal will' resurrected (85),

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1. Tarr, p. 62.
2. Letters, p. 269. Lewis was married in 1929, and according to Marjorie McLean (Firminger), Lewis visited Berlin in 1930 partly to meet his German in-laws. This may be an additional reason for his sympathy with Nazism in the thirties. Certainly, Hitler was the result of this visit.

Victor paints his red cubes. Lewis leaves the reader in no doubt about the source of this creative energy; Victor has recalled Margot's patient reassurance, the fact that he is loved: 'And as he had said loved he had sprung up....! In The Revenge for Love, masculine art is finally reconciled with feminine love.

Love is suffering, we learn from the nun looking after Hardcaster. The first thing Lewis describes about Margot is the suffering etched in her face, the 'taut lines of an extreme fatigue' and the 'painful uncertainty' about her eyes (73). It is also made clear at the beginning of Part III that Margot is not suffering on her own account, but because she is witnessing Victor's destruction. At this point, the logic of the description is given what, at first, seems a paradoxical twist: Victor is a marked man because he is loved; in the words of the novel's title, love brings revenge - on the beloved. What is intended by the title is a radical criticism not without its echoes in the seventies: Margot and Victor live in a society which will tolerate neither art nor love. The love which keeps the artist's head out of the gas-oven, also sustains the poverty which drives him into the faker's clutches and finally to his doom. It is the 'tragic scene upon which she and Victor lived and suffered' (175) and not love which is destructive. In fact, the predominant quality of Margot's love, also captured by the bird image, is its watchful protectiveness. Later at O'Hara's party, Victor is lying on the floor asleep; by his side, Margot, 'with the maternal patience of a tiny bird mounting guard over a giant cuckoo' (201). For the second time, we find the fearless male artist asleep - or feigning sleep - while Margot, full of care and apprehension, watches over him. The juxtaposition is a significant one, differentiating the two symbolic roles. If Victor, the Cubist victor over Time, is the 'mind which creates', Margot plays the 'man who suffers', anxiously confronting the perils of Time. Victor is the artist defended by Men Without Art; but it is Margot who represents the prophetic mind which saw no place for the artist in a world menaced by Communism; it is she, and not Victor, who records the threat of his destruction.

In the portrait of Tristy, seen mainly through the 'objective', masculine eyes of Jack and Victor, we see the idealistic parlour pink, hopelessly out of touch with reality, but essentially as harmless as a sheep. Through Margot's eyes, however, we see behind the religio-

moral façade which snares the intellectual Tristies to the evil will manipulating all the strings. This darker side of Communism is symbolised by Gillian Phipps, Margot's anti-type. While listening to Hardcaster describe 'the ordeal by bed-pan' inflicted on him by the Spanish nuns, Jill suddenly becomes 'dumb with a lofty horror of proud indignation, that made her bird-like beauty pass into a hawk's profile of almost malevolent passion of destruction' (168). That Lewis uses the image of the hawk to capture the malevolence underneath Jill's social face is far from accidental. Not long afterwards, Jill accidentally bumps into Margot, knocking to the floor the food which Margot was carrying to Victor; it is the hawk intercepting the peewit:

> The face of Gillian Phipps still wore the mask of a moody hawk, that it had acquired while she had listened to the account of Hardcaster's ordeal by bed-pan. And now it was as a hawk - which has surprised perhaps a peewit in the act of carrying a worm to its young - that she stared down angrily at Margot Stamp (178).

This small scene is a symbolic enactment of the title-theme: creative Love cannot act within such a world as this (O'Hara's Capitalist-Marxist mansion), without drawing upon itself the vengeance of forces of Destruction. The scene also brings into play the imagery which is so central in Lewis's fiction: Gillian Phipps, the destructive Communist hawk, is the predator; Margot's is the perspective of the prey. Unlike Victor or Jack, Margot regards the Communists with fear and dread; for her, the intellectuals are a mere front for a 'predatory Party, of sham underdogs athirst for power' (179). Jill's hawk-like mask betrays the hereditary power-thirst of the class from which she has emerged. Where for Tristy, born in a parsonage, Communism fills the gap left by the decay of upper-class religion, for Jill, born in a legation, Communism compensates for the decay of traditional governing-class power. In Jill, upper-class snobbery remains intact. Twice she crushes her Communist social inferiors in conversation by making strategic use of her origins: 'If you had been born in a legation, my dear, you wouldn't ask <u>that</u>!' Not surprisingly, Margot finds it impossible to 'commune as an equal with this Communist "lady"' (179). Nevertheless, as repulsive as Lewis succeeds in making it seem to the reader, Jill's aristocratic <u>hauteur</u> seems to hold an irresistible attraction for such diverse lower-class Englishmen as

Jack and Percy Hardcaster. And when Hardcaster makes the churlish mistake of stripping Communism of those trimmings of sentiment in which the governing class has traditionally cloaked naked political realities, Jill quickly reverts to type, unleashing a vicious attack on Hardcaster and the working class. Now Jill sees that the working class is the weak link in Communism! Her eyes are 'flashing with destructive purpose' (238) when Jack, her frustrated suitor, enters. At Jill's instigation, Jack bashes Hardcaster mercilessly in an onslaught which concludes with a 'pile driving kick' - directed at the stump of Hardcaster's recently-amputated leg. Political allegory is never far below the surface: Jack is the capitalist puppet of the now Left-wing[1] ruling class and Hardcaster's groans, 'the dark oxlike bellowing, beneath the shadow of the slaughter house, of the eternal working-class' (242). In Lewis's view, very little had changed in British politics, apart from the slogans; the ancien régime was still in power. When Tristy hears of the bashing and indignantly accuses Jill of siding with 'the kites and vultures of the underworlds of High Finance' (254), he is of course voicing Lewis's own view of the matter. All the birds of prey, whether Capitalist, Communist, political or criminal, ultimately belonged to the same family.

In Left Wings Over Europe, Lewis makes a firm distinction between the Oxbridge intellectuals and the shrewd, brutal businessmen of the underworlds of High Finance who actually run the Party.[2] In The Revenge for Love, the latter type is represented by Sean O'Hara and the forging bosses, Abershaw and Salmon. Again,bird imagery is employed to convey the instincts of the various characters. The devious Abershaw has a 'big owl-like mask' (291), while O'Hara is described as the kind of man who would catch small birds and put them to a destructive purpose (146). This, together with his crooked spine, amply warns the reader that O'Hara is somehow implicated in the revenge so anxiously dreaded by Margot. At the party, Margot's intense uneasiness is projected into a vision of O'Hara's house as an immense box of false sides and bottoms. The false bottom is not simply an image of deceit,

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1. In Lewis's mind everyone from Stanley Baldwin to Sir Stafford Cripps, was Left-wing. In this period, he is fond of citing Sir John Simon's statement 'We are all Socialists today' as proof of his contention; 'Notes on the Way', Time and Tide xvi (1935), p. 333.

2. Left Wings Over Europe, p. 321.

but of treachery. Not only are there the secret rooms which Margot finds in the hollow walls, but also, in all probability, trapdoors beneath her feet. Margot's universe is precariously poised over a huge trap. And in fact, subsequent events consistently verify her intuitions. To her horror, behind one of the false panels she finds Abershaw in the act of forging Victor's signature. Actuality, in The Revenge for Love, is no less menacing than the treacheries presaged by Margot's dread.

When Margot returns to tell Victor about the forgery he is beginning to get drunk, which merely reinforces his wild aggressiveness. He starts to speak 'a mouthful straight out of his stomach', declaring loudly that he can't 'give a hoot for this crowd' (191). Margot becomes slightly embarrassed, but elemental male egoism cannot be silenced merely on the grounds that the people in question happen to be within earshot; for Victor, these people are hardly real at all:

> 'Not say what I think? Why? Do you suppose that these people are real? Do you think they exist?' he bellowed darkly in her ear (192).

As for the possibility of the Communists harming him, that is quite out of the question in Victor's self-assured world. In any case, since he is penniless, Abershaw's forgery can be nothing more than a joke. Victor's almost solipsistic disregard for his enemies triggers a whole chain of responses in Margot. At first, she tries to draw strength from his vision; was so-called reality nothing more than a dream, as Victor - who evidently knew his Gaya Scienza - had so often told her?

> 'Aren't they real, Victor? I wish I could believe they were not real!'
> Sending her eye out upon a secret journey of inspection, she asked herself, shuddering at the question, were they real? ... Was this after all a great complicated dream she had got herself into against her volition, where all these vivid likenesses of life only existed in her dreaming mind? Were these tweed trousers and cotton shirts, buttons and fingernails a few feet away, imaginary, as she had been told so often by Victor that they were? (192-3)

But Margot quickly realises that Victor's version of the dream-world leaves out one irreducible datum, the malice of the Communists. Here was a reality which exposed the flaw in Victor's vision. If anything, it was their own reality which was under attack; people like Peter Wallace were trying to turn them into dream-objects:

> It was <u>their</u> reality, that of Victor and herself, that was marked down to be discouraged and abolished, and it was <u>they</u> that the others were trying to turn into phantoms and so to suppress. It was a mad notion, but it was just as if they had engaged in a battle of wills, to decide who should possess most <u>reality</u> - just as men fought each other for money, or fought each other for food (193).

Of course, Margot's is no 'mad notion'; the question of who is to be real in Lewis's early fiction was inevitably decided by jungle lore: eat or be eaten, prey or be preyed upon. Victor was being turned into a shadow, and no attempt to see the Communists as shadows could erase the memory of the forgers in the cabinet, nor suppress the question: 'Why should those two shadow-persons be practising the signature of a real man?' (194-5). In the next instant, with a kind of satanic ubiquity, Abershaw appears before them with the proposal that Victor join the faking factory. At first Victor wants to dispatch him with a punch in the face, but in the end, oblivious to the danger, he hesitates in a way which already implies consent. Margot's fears keep realising themselves with an uncanny inevitability. Abershaw is an emissary of 'the underworld' who has 'crept out of that False-bottom beneath all things' solely to 'entrap' Victor (198). The trap she sensed beneath her feet was now gaping wide; and by dismissing his hunters as unreal, Victor had unwittingly snared himself. As subsequent events continually demonstrate, it is Margot who is right about the reality of the shadow-world.

The debate between Victor and Margot which begins at O'Hara's party is exceptionally important. Victor's is the Vorticist position, 'Reality is in the artist, the image only in life', which subordinated the rest of existence to the firm, clean mastery of the artist's astral geometry; the true artist was no long-haired, Post-Impressionist Tristy surrendering himself to the flux, but an assertive egoist with short-back-and-sides who imposed his primitive will upon it. Various aspects of this doctrine can be traced to Hulme, Worringer, Marinetti, and Nietzsche. What is perhaps unique about Lewis is the way he applied it to people, transposing 'Reality is in the artist' into the belligerent mask of the Enemy - a figure who was not in the least restrained in what he said about people in his satire, because for him, like Victor, most of them were not very real. But at the same time there was the other side of Lewis which shows itself in his letters,

to some extent in Tarr and Snooty, and increasingly, in his later discursive prose. The same man who wrote The Apes worked in secret studios, sequestered in the most obscure corners of London - in fear of the persecutions being mounted against him. In The Revenge for Love, Margot dramatises this persecuted self. Victor and Margot are the male and female terms of a dialogue within Lewis. But whereas in Tarr the 'masculine' artist is the conscious subject of the dialogue, in The Revenge for Love he is the object. Indeed, as the novel proceeds, Victor is reduced, more and more, to a cypher in Margot's consciousness.

In the final Part of the novel, the debate about what is real narrows itself into an urgent question of survival. The Stamps have been sent to Spain to do some gun-running for the Communists. Margot feels 'engaged upon the crust of something that concealed a bottomless pit' (324) and when the Spanish border-police ask Victor twice if his name is 'Stamp', Margot is certain that they know about him. But Victor is quite beyond fear, confident in the fact that he is 'a bone-fide artist, and artists did no harm to anybody, except themselves' (325). As more and more weight is placed upon Victor's symbolic role - the artist being eliminated by the Left - the reader becomes conscious for the first time of Lewis putting the words into Victor's mouth; in the Spanish scenes, he is abstract and two-dimensional: 'No one takes me for anything but just an artist' (326). At the same time, Victor's indifference to the dangers which are obsessing Margot make him quite inaccessible to her, distancing him further from the centre of consciousness of the novel. In the brilliant dwarf scene, Victor's obliviousness makes him almost as alien as the crowd which is taking such delight in her terror; he is an unresponsive object in a world of monstrous, tormenting objects. The dwarf, who takes on the role of the forces avenging her love, is Margot's 'persecutor' (328). Once it becomes obvious to Margot that the dwarf's antics are being directed at her alone, images of persecution begin to reach a nightmarish pitch. Margot has been 'marked down' by the dwarf for mock-motherhood (329); he has 'singled her out' (332); she later explains to Victor that the dwarf has 'tracked us down' (336). While Margot is going to pieces at his side, Victor, with 'the artist's passion for the grotesque', is sketching the dwarf and laughing at it[1] with 'the he-man's appetite

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1. In Men Without Art, pp. 111-112, Lewis cites the fact that dwarfs are objects of laughter in Spain as part of his argument that the best satire is non-moral. Victor's reaction is the right one for an artist.

for the obscene' (331). When he discovers Margot's terrors, Victor treats them as a fantasy which must be expelled 'scientifically' (337). He is just as unimpressed by her fears of the mountains where they finally lose their lives. The he-man artist, no matter how sharp-eyed and 'objective', lacks all prophetic insight into the horrors of the underworld.

In this sense, Margot completes Victor; on his own, he is easily trapped by the Communists. As soon as he eludes Margot, Victor drives away in the bootleggers' car with what is supposed to be a consignment of guns. In fact, by means of Abershaw's forgery, which Victor thought so harmless, his name has been leaked to the Spanish police. His arrest is to be a diversion for the real consignment taking place elsewhere. Later, when Margot mysteriously intercepts him on the road, she arrives on the scene 'like the Egyptian symbol of the psyche' (388). She is the artist's prophetic psyche who has come aboard the fated car in a final attempt to save him from extinction. But he is already caught up in the motion of the car and cannot stop, despite Margot's frantic warnings. She cannot reach him because he has become an object, indistinguishable from the machine:

> Victor did not stop. There was no Victor there to stop. Or there was Victor - Victor who would not stop.... But why would not Victor stop? He would not stop because he <u>could</u> not. It was this machine - <u>it</u> would not stop: he was attached to a plunging twenty-ton magnet, which rushed to meet the lifted gun (402).

With the car charging blindly, higher into the Pyrenees, the revenge for love is taking its own course with tragic inevitability. Two elements of the tragedy are carefully balanced to the end. On the one hand, Victor is a symbol, and since art is a thing of the past in the Brave New World, he is 'a symbol of a life that is passed'. Margot is 'speeding through a Spanish province now in the company of a symbol. Of a hunted symbol' (398). The car, with its false bottom, is the Communist machine which has sought out and captured the artist in order to make way for an age of men without art. But at the same time, the 'male insurgence and egoism' praised in <u>Hitler</u> is easily seduced. It is his elemental self, oblivious to all risk and 'stamping' his foot on the accelerator, which carries the artist - and Margot with him - to destruction.

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In the end then, Victor is treated with a certain ambivalence. As a symbol, opposed to the romantic inversions of Bloomsbury and the Left, he is an ideal figure, a focus of all the authentic, 'masculine' artistic values for which Lewis had long been fighting. But Victor also dramatises the central defect of these values. By reducing others to unreal shadows - or like Lewis himself, to apes or puppets - the artist is radically underestimating the power of these same shadows and puppets to strike back; foolhardy solipsism is easily led to its doom. Significantly, there are no puppets in The Revenge for Love. By 1937 Lewis had suffered too much to write like a Victor again. The perspective of the novel is Margot's; people are real.

But even Margot's vision is imperfect for most of the novel. In the beginning, Victor can accuse her of loving him in such a way that she forgets the 'rotten useless bum of a man' (81); that is, the real Victor. There is a strong romantic element in her sensibility, which Lewis makes into a masterly parody of Virginia Woolf, Margot's heroine. She romanticises the fact that she is an outsider, seeing herself as a 'Hermit girl' in a Virginia Woolf novel, or a wanderer in a scene described by Ruskin. When she is confronted by the dwarf, however, her romantic illusions are suddenly stripped away. The dwarf is at once her persecutor and the twisted fruit of the love between Victor and herself: 'Out of their misery - should they give birth so something - might it not turn out to be some crooked monstrosity?' (332) The dwarf is the reality of their love, and Margot is placed in the situation of choice described by Don Alvaro on the first page of the novel. We are only free once, according to Don Alvaro: 'when at last we gaze into the bottom of the heart of our beloved and find that it is false - like everything else in the world' (3). Margot chooses love: she loves the dwarf more because it is ugly. By the end of the novel, Ruskin's Nature has lost its meaning for Margot. In the extremity of her suffering, subjectivity and romantic egoism have been purged. If love brings suffering in The Revenge for Love, then suffering in its turn purifies love. The ascetical process is thoroughly explored in the 'hero'[1] of the novel, Percy Hardcaster.

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1. Rude Assignment, p. 214.

In some respects, Hardcaster is a self-portrait[1] - if we discount the heavy Communist disguise. Lewis often described himself as a 'double personality' in which 'the pamphleteer' was 'attached to the creative artist'.[2] Hardcaster is likewise both an artist and propagandist, even though in his case the balance between the two is quite different. As an artist, he has a no-nonsense, 'non-party mind' (45) capable of seeing things exactly as they are. But this side of him is forced to co-exist with his party mind which, like Tristy, lives in the 'subjective' universe of Marxist dialectic. The two are of course in tension; so that if the propagandist is to put on an impressive show of wholehearted commitment, he needs a certain amount of 'bluff' to compensate for the nagging deficiency in his Marxist belief. Bluff is necessary to exaggerate existing commitment, to 'swell it all out to imposing dimensions'. The propagandist is to some extent an 'impostor', an actor, playing the part of the plain, blunt man even though 'We all know too much to-day to be plain blunt men' (53). As a modern man and an artist, Hardcaster realises perfectly well that the truth about himself is complex. For Lewis, like Rameau's Nephew, the personality is many-layered, and although he sometimes makes protestations of his own sincerity in his polemical prose, Lewis never forgets for a moment that the notion of the 'sincere man' is simplistic.[3] Nevertheless, since we are all 'insincere' Lewis thought it better to exaggerate what is already there than to pretend, like Eliot, to escape the whole problem by recourse to an 'impersonal' catalyst; Hardcaster's 'bluff' is described in Men Without Art as the appropriate posture for the 'extrovert activities':

> If there is to be an 'insincerity', I prefer... that 'the man, the personality' should exaggerate, a little artificially perhaps, his beliefs - rather than leave a meaningless shell behind him, and go to hide in a volatilized hypostasization of his personal feelings. That may be more 'insincere' in the one sense, but for the extrovert activites it is more satisfactory.[4]

As Lewis explains at the beginning of Time and Western Man, the polemicist never actually banishes the 'contrary faction' which exists

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1. According to Mrs. Lewis, this was partly Lewis's intention.
2. The interview with Louise Morgan (1931) cited above.
3. Men Without Art, p. 69 and ff.
4. Ibid, p. 91.

within himself; rather, he puffs out what he calls the 'most essential ME'.[1] Hardcaster is a study of the complex mixture of doubt and belief masked by the polemicist's assertive One-Way Song. This probably explains why Lewis has given Hardcaster his own little-advertised first name, Percy. His second name is no less interesting. Its significance is cryptically insinuated into a kind of conundrum which occurs in Part I. Percy has just upset the peasant-girl and is 'offended in spite of his hard-boiled "outcast" shell' (26, my italics). The hero of The Revenge for Love is a Percy who suffers, despite the fact that he is a Hard-caster, just as there was a man who suffered inside the hard-boiled outcast shell of the Enemy. Understandably enough, Lewis was not proud of his forename and he had hardly betrayed a hint of it in his publications after 1909 when his first story in The English Review was attributed to 'P. Wyndham Lewis'. It was appropriate that he should give this disagreeable, hidden name to one who, in secret, did not spare himself in self-analysis:

> He was like a painter fond of self-portraiture: and his self-portraits were not chocolate-boxes! He hit hard when he hit Percy! (420).

Hardcaster is a serio-comic portrait of the Percy inside the hard-boiled shell of the Enemy, a Percy who is hit very hard indeed by the author of The Revenge for Love, especially at the beginning.

Although there is something of the artist in him even at the beginning, it is not until he suffers that the 'subjective' world of Communist propaganda actually falls apart for Hardcaster. When we first meet him he is wrapped up in a cocoon of egoism, insulated from reality by the great Party machine. The predominant image for Hardcaster's condition in Part I is the baby. He is a big, fat, pink baby. Pinkness, of course, signifies the Party; fatness, the Russian gold which is sent to keep him comfortable in the Spanish prison; his cell was 'not Sing-Sing'. And since the sceptical outsiders like Don Alvaro are thin, with faces full of ascetic pits and hollows, fatness is also a sign of the illusion which goes with membership, with being an insider. Hardcaster is a baby in the triviality

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1. Time and Western Man, p. 6.

and childish egoism of his feelings. Lewis believed that even the British proletariat was bourgeois, and Hardcaster's strongest emotions in Part I are annoyance, embarrassment and indignation, the sheltered, bourgeois emotions brought into play when the peasant-girl, his 'bête noire', bursts into tears. For Serafin, he is 'the sulky British baby - whom he was paid, from two sides and twice over, to safeguard, succour and bear with' (38). Hardcaster is protected like a baby from the harshness of reality. When Serafin warns him that escaping may involve danger he is highly alarmed; the passage has the delicate ironical awareness of a satirist slyly laughing at himself: 'danger' was not something that the propagandist - the pen-fighter - counted on (43-4)! Hardcaster is cursing his luck when he suddenly catches a glimpse of the night outside his cell. The artist in him has momentarily burst the ideological bubble, giving him a clear, unimpeded vision of austere 'objective' Nature, 'as detached from mankind as is the cat'. He is glad when Serafin enters to be brought back to his infantile certainties:

> At the same time he was intensely relieved at the thought that his tête-à-tête with Nature was at an end.... He would now be able to exchange all these treacherous appeals to Percy the artist for matter-of-fact appeals (or commands) to Percy the man-of-action. The Social Revolution would be there once more, in place of the static make-believe and seductive deceptions of the objective universe. Thank God for the good old <u>subjective</u> world! (45).

Lewis insists on schematising the issues even at the risk of momentarily losing sight of his satirical object: the artist in Percy is being stifled by the 'Social Revolution'. At the beginning, Hardcaster is another case of Communist bad faith.

It is only in adversity that Percy the artist gets the upper hand. When he is shot escaping, Hardcaster experiences an unexpected harmony with the 'objective universe of things' (50) which allows him to see Don Alvaro for the first time 'objectively'; he sees that he is false. This is the highest kind of truth in <u>The Revenge for Love</u>: to perceive that our everyday reality is a childish sleep whose seeming certainties rest on nothing but a false bottom. In hospital, Hardcaster is sorely wasted, a symbolic expression of the new heterodox streak which has crept into his Communism. Hardcaster in his 'olympian sick-bed, above the battle' (65) is a much more sympathetic figure for the writer who spent so long between 1932 and 1937 in a hospital bed.

Here and in Self Condemned Lewis keeps returning to the same ascetical vision: suffering brings an awareness of the prodigious 'nothing' at the centre of things. For a man so close to nihilism, the ideological trimmings lose all their former authority. Nevertheless, when the funeral procession of a local anarchist being buried by the priests passes in front of his hospital, Hardcaster struggles to the window in anger and delivers a triumphant Red Front salute:

> Don Percy got up from his chair. Something must be done about this funeral - to give it an air! To disinfect it! ... There he stood, in full view of the street. He raised his clenched fist in the salute of the Red Front, frowning down at the passing procession. - A hoarse chuckle of sardonic raillery came from his rear, from where Virgilio sat, who had been a silent witness of this scene. Don Percy clenched his fist still more formidably, and raised it on high a farther inch or more (70).

This salute is a piece of pure propaganda 'bluff'. Not only does Hardcaster feel somewhat distant from everything the clenched fist signifies, but he knows that the anarchist in question died most ignominiously - from a surfeit of caviar. But Lewis's propagandist is essentially an enemy, an antithesis, whose commitment is stirred and renewed from without by the infuriating vision of the opposite faction holding the field unopposed. It is the devotional capital being made out of the funeral by the priests which demands this display of single-minded faith and summons the propagandist out of his relativism. Virgilio's chuckles dramatise those doubts and heterodox feelings which fall short of the ideal projected by the salute. As he hears them, Hardcaster stretches even more, countervailing them even further by the exaggeration of an extra inch. The salute on which Part I ends is a kind of minor Joycean epiphany of the propagandist's real vocation: to overcome the 'grey mixture'[1] of the self by being an opposite, one who raises his fist in affirmation in the face of the void.

Hardcaster's return to London is the occasion of a certain amount of backsliding. He is lionised by the intellectuals, and the attentions of the upper classes momentarily flatter him. When he is questioned about his experiences in Spain, he regresses to Percy the baby and draws all the glamour of the moment greedily to himself.

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1. Time and Western Man, p. 6.

Nevertheless, Lewis is careful to distinguish clearly between Hardcaster the 'workman', 'grand blessé' and man of action (164) - as ironic as these labels might be - and the bourgeois parlour pinks fawning on him. Alongside this greater evil, a Hardcaster was vastly preferable to Lewis. What immediately sets the workman apart is his healthy cynicism. Jill wants to make him into a hero, but Hardcaster is quite immune to that strain of bourgeois sentiment; losing his leg was nothing but stupidity. There can be little doubt where Lewis's approval lies when Hardcaster says: 'We Communists prefer to see things as they are'(232). This is not really a volte-face. The thing that justifies Hardcaster's 'We Communists' is that it means 'We of the working-class'. That is, under the bluff and the Machiavellian manoeuvring lies a core of class-loyalty which is as elemental in its way as Margot's love; Hardcaster's Communism obeys the law of kind. Lewis has no quarrel whatever with the workman-agitator who, in the defence of his own kind, will as soon turn against the Pink intellectuals as the Fascists themselves. Unfortunately, as the bashing symbolically establishes, the working-class is by no means in command of the Party. In reality, working-class Communists were outcasts, attacked by Capitalist and Communist bosses alike. When Tristy asks him afterwards why he was beaten up, Hardcaster's answer may be taken as authoritative: 'All for love!' (311) Hardcaster is another victim of the revenge for love.

At the end of the novel, Hardcaster is another person entirely. There is no hint of the earlier satire. In hospital again, he is much thinner and closer than before to the nada which distinguishes the ascetic Spaniards. His maturity of vision is reflected in the way he says 'For nothing' when Tristy asks him why he is different: 'Serafin himself could not have said nothing with more feeling for the false bottom underlying the spectacle of this universe' (305). Not only has Hardcaster lost caste with the Party, but his own aversion for the Marxist middlemen-bosses O'Hara and Abershaw is quite undisguised. Now Hardcaster is identified with the outcast lovers who have been singled out for annihilation; the bosses send him to the Pyrenees with Margot and Victor. It is only when Margot and Hardcaster are finally brought together that the 'love' in the title gathers its full meaning. Both see the world as an empty box of tricks in which,

as Hardcaster puts it, 'It's better to have a Cause to live for, than have nothing to live for, after all' (368). Despite the capital, a Cause is the very opposite of an abstract ideology; it is a primal loyalty to one's own kind which holds firm in the Dark Night[1] of suffering. In The Revenge for Love, love is always an affirmative choice whose alternative is 'nothing'. Of course, Hardcaster's Cause is the working-class, where Margot's is Victor, but the understanding which Hardcaster and Margot reach in their conversation in Part IV shows that there is no basic difference between political and domestic love. The unity between the two is symbolically expressed in Hardcaster's new-found sympathy for Margot. Adversity has thrashed away the infantile husk of egotism which prevented him from 'seeing' other people like Josefa de la Asuncion. Now he is anxiously concerned for Margot and Victor, and extremely angry when he hears that Victor has been sent into Spain as a 'blind' for the real consignment. His concern takes him back to where he was at the beginning of the novel, a Spanish prison. The cyclic effect shows up even more starkly how much Hardcaster has changed. This time he has no illusions whatever about 'abstract justice'. Ideological politics is now a game played with complete cynicism; so Hardcaster protests anyway, as if it were all real. In prison he receives news of the death of the Stamps, which 'only deepened his detachment'. For his cell-mates Hardcaster selects an appropriate mask; it is 'the mask of THE INJURED PARTY (model for militant agents in distress)' (422). Even more than the salute, this mask is an affirmation forged out of the depths of detachment; the propagandist must keep up a militant face before the eyes of the world, no matter how little it corresponds with his feelings. Nevertheless, this is not the same Hardcaster who saluted on the balcony of the Spanish hospital. The novel ends with the voice of Margot in his ears, accusing him of the tragedy:

> It was denouncing him out of the past, where alone now it was able to articulate; it was singling him out as a man who led people into mortal danger, people who were dear beyond expression to the possessor of the passionate, the artificial, the unreal, yet penetrating voice, and crying to him now to give back, she implored him, the young man, Absolom, whose life he had had in

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1. The terminology of St. John of the Cross seemed appropriate for an outlook which Lewis consistently connects with Spanish characters.

> his keeping, and who had somehow, unaccountably, been lost, out of the world and out of Time! He saw a precipice. And the eyes in the mask of THE INJURED PARTY dilated in a spasm of astonished self-pity. And down the front of the mask rolled a sudden tear, which fell upon the dirty floor of the prison (422).

In fact, Hardcaster is not at all objectively to blame since he knew nothing of the plot against Victor. Rather, Margot's is the voice of a new kind pf conscience recriminating him with the fact that love is ultimately a matter of individual people. The long sentence with its stress on 'Absolom' captures a spontaneous and uncontrollable movement of pity for the owner of the voice; '<u>self</u>-pity', as W.H. Pritchard implies,[1] is an afterthought, part of an attempt to distance it. As much as anything, the tear comes from a shocked realisation of incalculable loss, which is not at all self-indulgent. It is nothing less than a tear of sympathy momentarily betraying the hard-boiled outcast mask of the propagandist.

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Percy's tear symbolises the whole Revolution in a Soul which Lewis decided not to disclose in <u>Rude Assignment</u>. Instead, like Percy, he maintained the same hard-boiled mask; it is the mask of consistency, propped up with the protestation that 'with people capable of sincerity no radical change is possible'.[2] <u>The Revenge for Love</u> explores not only the uncertain mixture of doubt and belief on which the polemicist takes his embattled stand, but also the erosion of ideological belief which is the product of intense suffering. In the thirties, Lewis had followed his own ideals, just as Margot followed the ideal artist, into the jaws of disaster; his ideals had been turned against him, used by his enemies to destroy him economically. Yet quite unexpectedly, amid apparent failure and terrible physical suffering, Lewis came across something more enduring than idealism.

As one after another of his books began to fail in 1932, he

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1. <u>Wyndham Lewis</u>, p. 130.
2. <u>Rude Assignment</u>, p. 99.

became seriously ill. The illness, variously described as a bladder ailment and the ulceration of an old venereal scar,[1] lasted until 1937. These were years, as Lewis described them, of 'long spells in bed and much mental anguish'.[2] At the same time, an entirely new element began to make itself felt in the letters of the period. When he was about to undergo a dangerous operation in 1934 he wrote to a friend asking him to take care of his 'very much loved wife, Gladys Anne'.[3] Glimpses of Lewis's domestic life are rare, even in the massive Cornell collection, but such as there are show how much Lewis's attitude to love had changed since he wrote Tarr or even Snooty Baronet. For the ambitious art-student in Paris, for the Vorticist or the Enemy - committed to a spiritual subsistence in the icy landscapes of the mind - feminine warmth was a threat to be reckoned with. Women like Bertha or Val were nothing but jealously possessive sub-beings, with whom reciprocation was quite out of the question. By 1937 the artist's situation had altered. As Mrs. Lewis herself noted, where Lewis had always seen other people as 'adjuncts', years of illness taught him dependence.[4] The artist who had always seen Life as a treacherous quagmire now found in it a new solidity: belief in a person upon whom he could rely. Margot is in part a portrait of Lewis's wife,[5] and Hardcaster's tear is a tribute to the unexpected discovery of that reality in the void. In all of Lewis's later novels, a woman's love is the most real thing in a world of shams.

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1. Letters, p. 217, and W.L. to Coburn Gilman, 12 February 1933 (Cornell).
2. Letters, p. 219.
3. Ibid, p. 217.
4. Interview with Mrs. Lewis, 2 February 1972.
5. Ibid.

CHAPTER X : *THE VULGAR STREAK* (1941): THE ACTOR AS DECEIVER.

'I have been much deceived in politicians.' *Letters*.

From 1931 to 1937 Lewis's literary criticism and his political writings formed a coherent structure founded on the perception of an analogy between his own predicament as an antiromantic artist in Left-wing Britain and the predicament of Hitler's Germany in a Left-wing Europe. Already by 1937 this structure, symbolised by Victor, was being undermined by a shrewd suspicion that Victors were capable of a blind and terrifying madness. When Lewis came to write *The Vulgar Streak* (1939-1940), the madness had already overrun Czechoslovakia and Poland, laying waste, at the same time, to the very foundations of his previous position. Strangely, the novel itself is by no means a work of disillusionment. New values - some of them already implicit in *The Revenge for Love* - rise unexpectedly out of the ruins of Lewis's literary career. Most spectacular of all is his new interest in the deprivations of the English working class. In order to gain acceptance in society the novel's working-class hero, Vincent Penhale, is forced to pose as a gentleman, an imposture which leads him to crime and suicide. Lewis's exposé of class inequalities is ingeniously combined with a vigorous assault on the European cult of will responsible for the careers of dictators like Napoleon, Mussolini and, conspicuously, Hitler. After a decade of illness and adversity Lewis appeared to have regained composure in the discovery of new loyalties much further to the Left of the political spectrum.

As an important element in the novel, Lewis's political conversion deserves attention, but not so much attention as the hapless author of *Hitler* felt impelled to give it in his letters to friends and publishers. Much more significant is a conversion to which Lewis never refers. Tarr, Snooty and Penhale are all actors, but where the early heroes could play-act with detached superiority, the effort of maintaining his part leaves Penhale an empty shell; where they discover freedom by teaching their bodies to posture and gesticulate before the world in hollow fulfilment of its demands, Penhale discovers confusion, loss of

identity and despair. In Snooty, role-playing is the mark of the conscious artist; in The Vulgar Streak, it is the mark of the deceiver. One reason for this reappraisal is clear: in the years between Snooty Baronet and The Vulgar Streak Lewis had been deceived by Hitler, one of the great actors of the age.

The deception was to haunt Lewis for many years to come, yet the painful humiliation it brought, like his illness, gave him access to a new perspective. Already the rigorous egoism which characterised Lewis's early supermen had been tested in The Revenge for Love against the thing it had always ruthlessly exploited: a woman's love. Now that he himself had fallen victim to a superman more rigorously ruthless than a Tarr could ever have dreamed of, Lewis began to see exploited loyalty in a new light. In The Vulgar Streak, April Mallow's devotion, for all its sentimentality, is the most substantial thing in the novel; beside April, Vincent's cynical posturing is hollow, his sexual conquest meaningless. Mépris de la femme was by 1941 a thing of the past. Underlying all the changes taking place within Lewis in his later years was a revaluation of feminine love.

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In The Revenge for Love, the bourgeois Communism of the rich party-bosses and their modish dupes, the MacSpaundays, is sharply distinguished from the visceral Communism of Percy Hardcaster whose deepest convictions are rooted in familial loyalty to his own class. Hardcaster's pathetic moans on the floor of the Phipps's basement flat stand for the sufferings of a class which had always been trodden on by the class above it. The scene introduces something new in Lewis's writings. Apart from the ominous apocalyptic images of the General Strike used so aptly to frame The Apes of God, Lewis had previously betrayed no flicker of interest in the lot of the British worker and had consistently attacked the notion of a class-struggle as subversive of intellectual authority. He had always been something of a revolutionary, it is true, bent on exposing the vicious hypocrisies of Establishment values. Yet he had always been even harsher on the ruled. In BLAST, 'the Poor' were dismissed in the opening manifesto as 'detestable animals'; in works like The Art of Being Ruled and Paleface

the great mass of men were written off as puppets. By 1937, however, his spokesman Ned was asking Lancelot Nidwit to consider 'with all the powers of sympathy' at his disposal the plight of those millions of Englishmen born into industrial serfdom.[1] By 1938 this same theme began to turn up in Lewis's letters to Naomi Mitchison,[2] and in The Mysterious Mr. Bull class was shown to be the key by which John Bull could be understood.[3] In a letter to the editor of the New Republic written in 1940 he insisted that the artist, in order to survive, must cast off the role of highbrow clown to a handful of socialites and 'come to terms with the people at large'.[4] Convinced now that the class-system was to be called to account for the grim circumstances in which he found himself, Lewis began to search for remedies. At some time during the war he went so far as to draw up elaborate plans for an attack on class-consciousness in England. In a pamphlet called 'People's Colleges: or Laying the Ghost of the Gentleman' he advocated turning the great English Public Schools into grammar schools, and Eton, Oxford and Cambridge into national museums to be replaced by a series of regional colleges open to all, within whose walls - designed by a Corbusier - a truly classless society would be born. The plan is constructive, almost visionary in scope - in the tradition of The Caliph's Design - and Lewis may be forgiven his occasional lapses into 1984, such as the notice to be pinned inside each student's 'cell': 'No Uplift. No Snobbishness. No Sex in school. No Collecting. No Seriousness'.[5] The pamphlet, which was never published, did not say who would bring about such radical reforms. It did not need to. The author had already stated his belief in The Mysterious Mr. Bull that only the Left could command the moral stimulus to change England; and besides, 'All the best brains were on the Left'.[6] In the late thirties and early forties Lewis appeared to be drifting decidedly towards the Left out of a newly felt sympathy for the English working

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1. Count Your Dead, p. 40 and ff.
2. Letters, p. 258.
3. The Mysterious Mr. Bull, p. 269.
4. Letters, p. 272.
5. 'People's Colleges' (Cornell).
6. The Mysterious Mr. Bull, p. 234.

class. The quality of that sympathy becomes apparent in The Vulgar Streak.

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In the first draft of a letter to H.G. Wells, Lewis described the second of the two patterns woven into the novel:

> At the same time I would strike a blow against the class-nonsense, that weakens us in England so much. A fearful superstition, that condemns ninety per cent of Englishmen to bring their contribution to our common life under an absurd handicap.[1]

Another correspondent is told that it is 'the educational system of the English Middle Class as organised by Dr. Arnold in the last century' which 'comes under fire'.[2] The impression conveyed by this imagery of direct attack is substantiated in the novel itself. Vincent Penhale's 'case' is authoritatively (and conveniently) analysed by a psychiatrist towards the end as a tragedy in which class is the villain. Indeed, it is the 'class-nonsense' which first induces Penhale to impersonate a gentleman and which, in order to support the illusion, draws him into crime. His accomplice implicates him in murder and the newspapers expose his imposture; having lost everything, he commits suicide.

In order to portray the class-bitterness which could drive a man to such extremes, Lewis provides a scene in which Penhale confesses his proletarian origins to Martin, a middle-class friend. It soon develops into a stormy harangue decrying all the disadvantages of being born into the English working-class:

> In that free land, to which we both belong, I was born unfree, because I was born of working people. I was born so that I could not lift up my eyes without circumspection to look in the face a member of the master-class. That educational system, so cunningly devised for the underdog, saw to it that I should continue to speak with an accent that branded me as an inferior. As a man of no class - as a man of the 'lower class'. You on

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1. Letters, p.332.
2. Ibid, p. 280.

> the other hand, issue from the ree [sic] - the 'monied' - classes. I issue from the ranks of the 'under-privileged'. Coming as I do from that great majority of Englishmen who are born beneath something like a feudal curse... who have to address as sir, as the stigma of their inferiority, all who are 'educated' - who are 'gentlemen,' as they are taught to think of them; I, coming from that dark and tongue-tied multitude, you coming from that privileged minority, I was obliged to lie, in order to gain your confidence. To make our friendship possible, upon terms that would preclude patronage, I was obliged to deceive you (29).

This, indeed, would seem to give ample reason why a man should want to hide all trace of his working-class origin. But at the same time a question begins to form uneasily in the reader's mind: Given all the effort which has gone into the concealment, why should Penhale disclose his secret now? No motive is given; we merely learn that Penhale has 'made up [his] mind to do so this morning and decided [he] might as well take this opportunity of coming clean, as they say in mystery stories' (27). Moreover, Lewis himself seems to be aware of the problem: Penhale's confession is a sudden and arbitrary contradiction of his supposed character: 'This confession goes against the grain. It is difficult for me to make it - because I am violating what has become second nature by this time' (30). And later, when Martin asks his friend directly why he has confessed, Penhale can only manage the cryptic reply that that would involve another confession! Clearly, far from answering a difficulty, Lewis merely raises another: Why should he have risked an episode which is not only gratuitous but which violates 'what has become second nature' for his protagonist? It can only be concluded here that, as happens all too often in works like The Childermass, Lewis is prepared to jeopardise psychological consistency for a device which allows him to elaborate an ideological argument. In this case, the argument seems to have been lifted bodily, without too much modification, from The Mysterious Mr. Bull. Almost every point made by Penhale in his tirade against the English class system is a close repetition of this earlier polemic:

> The 'gentleman' is a 'freeman'. He who is not a 'gentleman' is no better than a slave. The social machinery operating in a discriminatory way against what is not 'quite-quite', or what is just plainly 'awful', and possessing no g's nor aitches (for speech is where the branding occurs at birth - upon the tongue; the social death warrant is uttered every time the poor victim opens his mouth to speak) this machinery is as effective as a branding. ... I would for my own part far rather have been born

> a straight slave... than have been born a member of the British working-class. To possess economically no rights, to be subject to laws that are only in name the same for the 'man' and for the 'gentleman'; to be barred like a leper... from all polite society, through which alone money can be made.[1]

The close similarities of emphasis and metaphor between this and Penhale's outburst betray in the confession episode a lack of the imaginative pressure necessary to mould speaker and speech more harmoniously together. And like Tarr, when he is made to paraphrase BLAST, Penhale often registers not so much as a living presence with his own proper, three-dimensional reality, but as a mouthpiece who embodies certain doctrines only insofar as he says so. The 'class-nonsense' comes under the fire of rhetoric rather than psychological acuteness.

The same flaw runs through the long episode in which the Penhale family is gathered together at the funeral of Vincent's father. The intention is to show a family divided by class. When Vincent arrives with his 'swagger wreath', the rest of the family is startled and hushed. Whenever he speaks, they are reduced to impotent silence, 'cowed' by his 'classy humanitarian invective', by the 'Public Schoolboyish delivery - by the command of master-class accent displayed' (135). And beneath these reactions, as Vincent points out, there is hatred, engendered by an intense conservatism which cannot accept his escape from their working-class mess. His presence occasions bitter arguments. Yet here again, the presentation becomes over-explicit; the arguments are not only generated by the class-divisions between Vincent and the rest, but they are all, directly and explicitly, about the class system. Again, an excessive thematic directness strains at the fabric of the novel's naturalism; Vincent is led into utterances which an ex-working-class boy would scarcely have made to his family; at one point he exclaims: 'Who would be one of the poor!' (134) Such outbursts are doubtless intended to show Vincent's 'classy' cynicism and detachment about his old milieu. Instead, the use of the phrase 'the poor' implies a deeply-embedded set of middle-class norms which rather betrays his middle-class creator. The same is true when Vincent offers to teach them the 'proper' way to speak; and when he realises that he, too, has a vulgar 'streak of them' in his make-up (144). The fault is not simply that Vincent feels nothing for his family and their way of life; it is rather that Lewis, with the 'proper' and the 'vulgar' at his instinctive sociological poles, seems unable to imagine working-

class life as constituting a positive culture. His working-class characters exhibit a stereotype 'coarseness' and 'vulgarity'; Vincent's sister, refusing a glass of whisky: '"No, thank you all the same. My bowels is acid." She tapped her mouth, and produced a miniature belch' (142). The state of Lewis's knowledge about the working class is sharply defective; Vincent (who should have known) is disgusted by the universal drunkenness of old working-class women! 'Alcohol, he told himself, as he had many times before, was de rigeur for an old working-class woman, in this damp and lowering island slumland' (144). Lewis's imaginative sympathy recoils from the supposed grossness of 'slumland' manners. As a result, it tends to fall back on such Victorian musical-comedy stereotypes as the idea that working-class people put aitches on everything when confronted by their betters; Vincent's mother, for example:

> Her accent in the presence of this odd son of hers tended to be a caricature of the way of speech of royal princes and princesses, conferring loftily in their palaces, as imagined by their subjects. Generally aitchless, her aitches suddenly abounded (as aitches, she felt, would probably abound in palaces), forcing an uncalled for aspiration upon any word beginning with a vowel - eddy became heddy, or interfere, hinterfere (120).

W.H. Pritchard's ear is surely defective when, with this kind of thing in mind, he praises the novel's 'extraordinarily resourceful rendering of manners and speech'.[1] On the contrary, the funeral scene fails to carry its point precisely insofar as the Penhales' 'manners and speech' engage the attention so obtrusively; their class engulfs their individuality; in every respect, they are the work of an outsider, arrested by their foreignness. Certainly Lewis was no Hardcaster moved by the sufferings of his own people.

Unlike Hardcaster or a writer like Walter Greenwood, author of Love on the Dole, Lewis had not been born into the working class. Nor had he ever felt remotely compelled to live among the down and out as Orwell had. In truth, Lewis's expressions of solidarity with the outsiders of the English class system were always qualified by the pains he took to let it be known that his own origins were far from humble. When Marshall McLuhan suggested an autobiographical key to The Vulgar

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1. Wyndham Lewis, p. 132.

Streak, Lewis replied, evidently a little offended, that there were no vulgar streaks in himself: 'The old-school-tie's the genuine McCoy'.[1] This kind of instinctive shudder at the prospect of being mistakenly identified with the working class puts The Vulgar Streak in quite another category, in terms of sympathetic commitment, from a work like The Road to Wigan Pier, despite Orwell's own occasional lapses into squeamishness at working-class manners. By comparison, Lewis was engaged in something altogether more remote and theoretical. This is not to say that his attack on class was in any way insincere, or mere ideological window-dressing to catch the eye of readers, critics or supporters, even though he did use the novel to court figures like Orwell and H.G. Wells.[2] In the thirties, Lewis had changed his position on the Left and the working class, and if this was a conversion of the head rather than the heart it was still remarkable in a man approaching sixty. There is another reason, in any case, why class remains a problem 'out there' in the novel: Lewis's interest was more profoundly engaged on a problem rather closer to home. In The Vulgar Streak his new-found sympathy with the Left is less important than his disenchantment with the Right.

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The second stated 'pattern' in the novel is elaborated with much the same directness, the same sense of deliberate exposition. Vincent, Lewis informed his publisher, was 'intended to be a sort of Julien Sorel' who 'comes to realize that the same mal de siècle which afflicts Herr Hitler - the worship of force and action - afflicts him too'.[3] From the outset, when April calls him 'a modern' there are hints that Vincent illustrates a case, signifies a contemporary condition; with April we wonder: 'What did Penhale stand for?' (22) It is not long before the answer is given; 'Vincent', we are reminded, means 'conqueror'.

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1. Letters, p. 367.
2. Ibid, p. 307. Lewis instructed his publisher to send complimentary copies to Wells, Orwell and Naomi Mitchison.
3. Letters, p. 305.

The attention which Lewis draws here to the significance of Vincent's name is extremely important as it points to the connection between Penhale and the conqueror who appeared in The Revenge for Love: Victor and Vincent are the names of Lewisian supermen. Both are elemental he-men, towering physically above those around them and warlike in disposition. Victor's eyes are full of the light of battle; Vincent has the face of a soldier. Only the sphere of their activities differs: Victor overcomes Bloomsburyish taste to create his red cubes, while Vincent's conquests, like Julien Sorel's, are confined mainly to the bedroom. Like all of Lewis's early heroes, Penhale is a casual sex-hunter by preference - his totem is the owl, who does his mousing by night (43). He begins by regarding April as another scalp, and operating on her with a professional cynicism which allows him to judge when she is ripe for the kill. Confronted with such an experienced campaigner, April is easy prey: 'What a nice name Vincent was!' she is soon thinking. 'It meant conqueror and she had to confess that Vincent had made a conquest of her all right' (42). Vincent's lovemaking, like Victor's art, is squarely in the Futero-Vorticist tradition.

Equally, each of them represents the extreme Right in a political allegory. Just as Victor in the faker's factory stands for Hitler's Germany trapped in a Capitalist-Communist conspiracy, so the course of Vincent's conquest runs parallel to another, more sinister triumph taking place offstage: Hitler siezing Czechoslovakia. While Vincent is flirting with April, allowing his screen-star assets to flower, a newspaper seller rushes past announcing the fall of Budapest to the Nazis. The juxtaposition is often quite pointed; when the crisis appears to be a false alarm, the English tourists decide that they will 'stop in Venice and give the Wilhelmstrasse another chance to climb down - and Mr. Penhale further oppurtunities to deploy his seige trains about the person of the lovely April' (68). By the time news of Neville Chamberlain's unfortunate speech, 'Peace in Our Time', reaches them, we realise that April's Munich is near at hand. In a few pages we discover an exhausted, but triumphant, Vincent leaving April's room at 6 a.m. The intertwining of the two conquests amply anticipates the ending, where everything that Penhale 'stands for' is minutely elucidated.

The end of The Vulgar Streak makes it plain that Lewis's attitude to supermen of the Right had changed entirely since 1937: whereas

Victor was a sympathetic figure, Vincent is held at a distance, coldly interrogated and unambiguously condemned. Like his confession, Vincent's 'heart-to-heart' talk with Dr. Perl the psychiatrist is another gratuitous device to allow room for an authoritative analysis of his 'case'. Class, Perl informs him, is not 'the whole picture'; he is suffering from an excess of will. So powerful is Vincent's will, in fact, that it acts as a 'sort of personal dictator' inside him. The full implications of this hint are quickly developed; his is precisely the same condition at Hitler's and Mussolini's: 'Mussolini and Hitler what are they, but extreme, and curiously disagreeable, expressions of this morbid Will. Devils they are not, so much as diabolical machines of empty will' (183). Perl handily summarises the mal de siècle: will - along with its first cousin action - is the bane of the modern European and North American. Vincent is not slow to see that he suffers from the mal de siècle and admits to Martin, in a second confession-scene near the end, that he is 'all made up of action'. Nor is the reader spared a repeated explanation of his affinities with Hitler and Mussolini:

> The arch-type of that sort of man who is all action ... is to be found in Berlin - or that bloody little Jack-in-the-box up in his balcony, at the Palazzo Venezia. That is obvious enough. Our epoch finds its highest expressions in those dynamical puppets - with little names full of a stupid percussion, like Hitler. Our time will go down branded with those six letters (233).

By this time, the authorised exegesis of Vincent's career seems sufficiently established; but Lewis, apparently, will settle for nothing less than an outright 'proof'; Vincent has deteriorated once more into his creator's mouthpiece:

> I have proved ... upon my little personal stage, that force is barren. Conceived in those hard terms of action-for-action's sake nothing can be achieved, except for too short a period to matter. I have proved that, have I not? (235).

His suicide enacts the proof that force is barren, emptying its exponent of all essential inner life. Already Perl has explained how Vincent's will has consumed all his energies, rendering him empty. Now, all that remains of the compulsive conqueror is an empty body hanging from the ceiling with a note pinned to its chest which reads: 'Whoever finds this body, may do what they like with it. I don't want it. Signed. Its former inhabitant' (420).

Victor Stamp and Vincent Penhale plot the course of Lewis's attitudes

to Hitler's Germany in the late thirties. Stamp was conceived in the same sympathy which runs through all Lewis's political books from Hitler to Count Your Dead (1937); Penhale reflects his renunciation of Hitler in 1938-1939. The cool and trenchant analysis offered by Dr. Perl corresponds to Lewis's apparently unruffled recantation in The Hitler Cult. In his second book on Hitler, Lewis turned him from oppressed hero into oppressive villain at a single stroke: instead of a classicist, a reflective Tarr, he was now a romantic, an empty, mechanical Kreisler. That is, having given Hitler the wrong label, Lewis simply relabelled him and transferred him to another compartment without the least reference to the larger framework of his own criticism. In The Vulgar Streak, as in The Hitler Cult, Lewis seemed to be carrying on much as before - if under a new political banner - having regained balance after a minor slip. Nonetheless, there are clear signs, in the novel and elsewhere, that his volte-face on Hitler was one of the turning-points of Lewis's life.

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After Munich, Lewis was understandably keen to lay conspicious stress on his conversion without actually referring to it. When he wrote to friends and publishers he drew attention to two aspects of Vincent Penhale's tragedy, both of which point implicitly to his own new political orientation: Penhale's class and his dictatorial will. For much the same reason, both of these themes are firmly underlined in the novel itself. Indeed, it seems clear from a letter he wrote to his publisher in 1941 that Lewis himself was worried about the novel's tendency to enforce and over-elaborate narrow, one-dimensional meanings:

> You may think that I have kept pretty close to a theme in The Vulgar Streak: even the title rather implying that: which is true enough. But the book has not that didactic bareness that always distinguishes a propaganda book, or a purely political book: or even a play of strict social import, such as the Médecin Malgré Lui.[1]

It is possible to accept this frank, though slightly tendentious

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1. Letters, p. 295.

estimate of The Vulgar Streak mainly because its heavily articulated social criticisms and prophecies do not exhaust the novel. What saves the book from the charge of didactic bareness is another pattern entirely, to which Lewis, in his letters, never refers.

As in Snooty Baronet, there is a close relationship in The Vulgar Streak between both senses of 'acting'. The artist and comic-hero of the earlier novel negotiates life by acting a role, which is his peculiarly detached and dualistic mode of action-in-the-world. Likewise, Penhale's role-playing is his own form of action; and, like Snooty, he has resorted to it in order to free himself from a social 'predicament' which threatened to engulf him: 'My acting is a form of action' he informs Martin, 'not of make-believe. I have attempted, haven't I, to act my way out of a predicament' (234-5). It is his skill as an actor which allows Penhale to sustain the part of a gentleman so faultlessly. By now he has almost become his part, yet there remains a certain air of theatricality about him, especially when he is paying court to April. Vincent's act gives Martin 'the sensation of being seated upon a stage in a theatre, rehearsing with the actor-manager some stock farce' (87). In fact, it is through Martin that the reader is reminded that Vincent is merely acting, that his action is imposture. During the courtship, Martin's simple and honest sensibilities are repeatedly outraged by the discrepancy between Penhale's cynical motives and his outward charm. No matter how good an actor he is, Martin concludes - upon hearing that April will soon be 'ripe for the kill' - Penhale lacks a gentleman's feeling. After the seduction, Martin inwardly declines 'to have anything more to do with Penhale's vainglorious theatricals' (93). Such commentary, undistinguished in itself, nevertheless has an extremely important function in the design of the novel; it establishes a perspective outside the hero. Here, there is a distinct contrast between the presentation of Penhale and Lewis's earlier actors. In Snooty Baronet he is the first-person narrator; and the narrator of Tarr is closely identified, to say the least, with the hero's point of view. In The Vulgar Streak the actor becomes the object of a rigorous and many-sided exploration; he is portrayed, for the first time, from the outside.

The portrayal of Penhale the actor owes its strength and subtlety partly to the fact that he is seen from various points of view, each

at a different level of awareness about his past, purposes and motives. Numerous questions and half-suspicions, generated by hints of inner discord, play and focus on his surface appearance. What is within remains more or less mysterious; his secrets are held back, even from the reader, and only gradually revealed, as the action develops, to those around him. In fact, the reader is quite deliberately kept guessing about Penhale, for most of the novel's course no better informed than Martin Penny-Smythe. From the beginning, Martin knows that Penhale is an actor and in Chapter IV hears his 'confession' about his working-class origins. As a result, he knows too why Penhale is courting April Mallow and is privy to his cynical designs upon her. But even for Martin, there is another, darker secret about him. In the first chapter, the two men see a Guardi picture in a 'sinisterly darkened lofty apartment', heads together, apparently planning a crime. Martin notes Penhale's extraordinary responses:

> But his tall friend eyed bleakly the painted scene: the only sensation of which he was conscious was <u>fear</u>. He felt personally involved in the plots of these masked and nameless beings of distintegrating pigment, as if they had been plotting against him. His eyes dilated and a careworn expression came into his face (11).

As happens often in the novel, the observer is left baffled by the strange signs and motions on Penhale's face, quite unable to interpret them. Untypically, the reader is given access to Penhale's consciousness; but only to learn that he is feeling both 'personally involved' in the plots of the masked figures and afraid: ' as if they had been plotting against him'. All this only deepens the mystery about Penhale. A little later, just before he is marched off by two men, apparently under arrest, Penhale again becomes suddenly afraid and recalls the Guardi scene. Together with the astounded onlookers, the reader is confronted by an enigma. No less enigmatic, given his social background, is Penhale's apparent wealth. As Martin points out on one or two occasions, penniless children rarely have rich aunts who leave them money. The unsavoury Halvorsen, hovering in the background, continually hints at something shady; and when the English Fascist Dougal Tandish, with an insinuating air, asks Penhale for change of a fiver on the grounds that shop-keepers are becoming wary of phoney notes, these suspicions gather strength. Finally the truth emerges;

Penhale is a counterfeiter. Along with Martin then, the reader follows a gradual process of penetration into the mystery about Penhale; through all the surface appearances surrounding him, through layer after layer of illusion, ending in the discovery that, at bottom, it is all based on counterfeit.

The same process is repeated, at another level of awareness, from April's point of view. Unlike Martin, April does not know that Penhale is an actor because in Venice he had given it out that he was an artist. Nevertheless, April's intuitions are sharp and accurate. From the beginning she catches hints of the theatre:

> There was however, apart from his manner, something else, vaguely discordant: namely his face - his head. Its kind of beauty demanded the footlights perhaps and the accessories of a more picturesque epoch . And he held it, he held his head, just a shade too much like a courtier out of a coloured plate in a history-book. There was a smiling suavity that seemed to come out of a book, like a recipe for distinction (13).

Again, the beholder cannot fathom the complex information mediated by Vincent's face. All that his appearance tells her is that something is slightly amiss. Repeatedly, we find her pondering Vincent, the 'dark horse' who is paying her such flattering attentions. At times, sifting all the impressions of him which have registered in her intense but conventional mind, April is almost ready to conclude that Penhale is a 'cad'. On the other hand, perhaps everything could be explained by the Bohemian life he claimed to have led. All these doubts and indecisions are sharply intensified in the arrest episode, which is seen, to a large extent, from April's point of view. Suddenly she becomes aware of Penhale's fear of the two men who appear in the hotel; his eyes appear 'enormous', staring ahead with a 'vicious warp'. At the same time his face blanches and his tan looks as false as make-up: 'He had become so pale that his tan looked unreal of a sudden: a make-up upon the face of a corpse, or some ghastly sun-tan out of a bottle upon the face of a sick actor who has to play a hearty part' (51). All at once Vincent's tan, associated with Venice, his wealth and charm, looks like a false surface, something painted on like make-up; a mere façade, concealing a chaos of secret fears. Again, he reminds her of an actor, but one whose healthy part, like the tan, no longer seems convincing. For the first time, April begins to see through the act and catches an obscure glimpse of the sickness which

lies beneath. It is not until the end, however, that she penetrates to the reality about Penhale:

> She now saw the reality standing in front of her. A man, who, six months ago, had been a stranger, who was now her husband, and who... subsisted by criminal means. The very sofa she sat on had been purchased with forged notes (211-2).

All along, everything about Penhale has been false, dependent on counterfeit money and ultimately, on an empty illusion.

The thematic significance of this slow but relentless stripping-away of Penhale's façade is by now perfectly clear; throughout, the process has organised itself around a central image: the actor as an empty sham. His inner emptiness or hollowness is established mainly by contrast with April; near the end, for example, when Penhale and his wife embrace, his 'wilful, watchful, mask, its eyes closed, against which he pressed her head as he spoke, started to writhe and to break up' (208). Against April's human 'head' Penhale's is but a 'mask', an objectified 'it'. The effect of the juxtaposition is to suggest that April is more real than her husband. The same point is made in a number of ways. Stress is laid on the fact that her loyalties are genuine and enduring. By contrast, Penhale cannot understand why she supports him when everything has turned against them; nor did he suspect that for April his origins would have made no difference. There can be little doubt here where Lewis's approval lies. Despite all her grossly sentimental, dime-novel day-dreams about herself as a World War I field-nurse and Vincent in a dashing naval uniform, April is at least felt to be sincere in her love. When Penhale kisses her for the first time, her responses are conventional and unimaginative, but suffused with real feeling:

> Her cheek felt a pressure for a moment, and two living things were moving upon it, against each other, and then they were gone. But she was being drawn in, and softly and warmly battened down: hands were pressing her body against... oh, oh, she caught her breath.... When the kiss had lasted a long, a very long life-time indeed, she shuddered and drew her mouth away; then she pressed it back again, then again she withdrew it: then she put it down beside his ear and whispered "darling!" and he whispered "darling!" back. Vincent and she were in love with each other. Now for the rest of time she would be his, only his! This was what life had been for (49).

Such romanticism places April squarely among Lewis's Mindless Many, but at the same time it establishes beyond all doubt the spontaneous genuineness of her commitment to Penhale. Against April's exultant

'darling!', Penhale's feinged 'darling!' is like a meaningless echo. Her inward life sharpens the emphasis on Penhale's façade.

The contrast extends to Maddie, Penhale's younger sister and, in many ways, April's anti-type. Where April is presented as a subjective being, from the inside, Maddie exists as a kind of beautiful object, scarcely real at all. Following her brother's example, Maddie is trying to learn to act like a member of the upper class. And just as Penhale's behaviour gives hints of theatricality, Maddie (previously a model) always gives the impression of somebody posing. Her pose draws great attention to Maddie's face too:

> Pale and monumental, Maddie sat staring in front of her and waiting. In view of her past profession, her attitude might have most aptly suggested that she was posing - say for a period-portrait of a defunct Infanta: of which august original she had the pasty cheeks, the vacant, haughty eye. She gazed ahead, in expressionless calm, except for the faintest pained contraction of the brows (145).

Her face has the cold perfection of a work of art, 'pale' and 'monumental' like a Renaissance portrait, or else as 'statuesque' and 'wooden' as a piece of sculpture. At the same time it is lifeless, full of 'expressionless calm', 'impassive' and 'bloodless' (105), more like an artifact than living flesh. The underlying metaphor is the mask. Maddie is a 'mask of a girl' (106), whose mask is nevertheless frequently breaking up, becoming a 'mask of grief' (166). Much emphasis is given here to the similarities between Maddie and her brother. His face is just as much a mask as Maddie's; and when he hears of their father's death 'Vincent's face was strikingly like his sister's. It became wooden' (105). There is, in fact, an obvious symbolic unity between the brother and sister who are so close that they give the impression of a married couple. Maddie is above all the work of Vincent's hands, his own work of art. Throughout, Vincent's advice about who to associate with and his efforts to teach her upper-class speech have moulded her into a kind of second self. Maddie, we are told, is a 'key' to Vincent; she dramatises Vincent at an earlier stage, where upper-class speech and manners are not yet second nature:

> Maddie had not sufficiently mastered the arts of careless ease of those who had never had to think about class - about accent and deportment. She so remained aloof in her ivory tower of classic physical perfection, where she could be a girl of few words, and those words picked beforehand, without haste, so that no grammatical slip might escape her (107).

Everything about Maddie is consciously studied, imitated from external

models. So much so that her true self is utterly absorbed into the artifice, irreversibly cut off and withdrawn into her 'ivory tower'. To April, she is so 'reserved' and 'shy' that she 'scarcely seemed to be there at all' (149). Her eye is 'vacant' (145), and even Vincent, at one point, calls her 'barren' (166). What Maddie presents to the reader is the process which leads to inner vacuity; the tragic self-destruction which comes of Vincent's kind of art. In her, we see a clear, almost static, image of Penhale's essential hollowness.

Penhale is surrounded by images of his own hollowness. On occasions, he actually admits that he is an empty shell and a complete sham; during the confession, he explains to Martin the consequences of his acting:

> In my composition is a great deal of the actor, which was just as well. I possess also a singularly good ear. But still I am a sham person from head to foot. I feel empty sometimes, as if there were nothing inside me. I lied to you at once when I first met you. I began building up a false image of another man than myself. Of someone who was not there. For I am not here. It is not I who am here. And ever since in my intercourse with you I lived inside that empty shell that I began to manufacture (30).

The description is compelling and anticipates the tragic image of the empty body, rejected by its former inhabitant. In a parallel scene, towards the end, Penhale makes a similar confession to April: 'one falsity leads to another, it is all of a piece. I am just as sham as the sham notes I lived on. The more I lived upon them, the more sham I became' (215). The counterfeit notes are part of the imagery of emptiness and falseness gathering around Penhale; they are 'all of a piece' with his sham accent, his sham courtship and everything else. But they introduce too, an element of severe condemnation: Penhale's imposture is not only empty and false but criminal.

London and Venice, where the novel's action is set, are also 'of a piece' with Penhale, façade-worlds built on crime. According to Penhale, fifty per cent of London's stately homes are occupied by confidence-men who never pay rent. In great style they move in with expensive furniture, all on hire purchase and, in a few weeks, simply disappear. The property owners all accept the system and merely double their rents. Fashionable London, 'with its gilded portals, dazzling footmen, and be-medalled door-keepers', is a 'fantastic House of Cards'. That it is Penhale who attacks all this is ironical; he

himself is a spectacular victim of 'the crazy system that produces such a world of façades' (153). Venice is an even more elaborate reflection of Penhale's façade-world. Never does the city seem to be any more than a canvas backdrop to the action. From the first sentence of the novel, the waters of the Grand Canal are 'grand with the denilunar wavelets of Venetian art'. A few sentences later Martin sees the scene as 'a <u>décor</u> in a performance of the M-m-merchant of Venice' (9). And inevitably, as the Guardi in the shop-window shows, behind and beneath the impressive, two-dimensional beauties of Venice lurks a darker, more sordid element:

> In the shop window hung a large photogravure, in colour, of a picture by Guardi. The picture represented a scene in Venice when this extinct show-place - a godsend to Thomas Cook - was alive with passion and intrigue. It revealed what underlay the formal beauty, which to-day alone remains, like a splendid ball-dress once worn by a mistress of great princes.
>
> A sinisterly darkened lofty apartment, into which a crowd of small masked figures had just poured themselves, gathered in a dark palaver. They had gone aside, into this empty room in some tarnished palace, to set up a dark whisper. Then later, when the maskers had dispersed, probably in a moonlit salizzade or streetlet, a long dagger would flash, a little masked figure would fall, crumpling up like a puppet. Expectant and intent, they crowded their masked faces together (11).

Behind the formal surfaces of the showplace lie the passion and intrigue, the dark conspiracy and crime in which Penhale feels personally involved; Guardi's Venice and the hero are clearly of a piece. Modern Venice provides a similar image. Not long after Penhale confesses to his friend that he has always been on show, Martin sees a woman throwing slops into a canal and is led to reflect on the nature of beauty: 'Odd to have an architectural paradise established upon a sewage-farm. ... Nature made one pay for one's illusion! By associating beauty with bad smells' (35). Throughout the novel, beauty, whether personal or architectural, is never more than a surface illusion; a hollow trick by which nature manages to conceal all underlying sordidness, except for the bad smells which keep the wary observer guessing.

This is not an attack on art, but on artifice, the art which seeks to deceive. The two are clearly distinguished, despite Penhale's efforts to confuse them. All along, Penhale claims to be an artist, yet these claims often appear as merely part of his façade, a way of hiding the fact that he is an actor. He hates to be thought an actor

and, 'rather than describe himself as an actor, he put "artist" on his passport' (96). In this novel, 'artist' and 'actor' are mutually exclusive. When Penhale is caught with Halvorsen in the counterfeiter's den, he plans to use his artistic temperament to explain his presence in such unlikely company:

> The artistic temperament is a damned convenient thing. No one should be without one. It is, as everyone knows, romantic. And amoral. That's a good word too. It finds the coiners-den a rather thrilling place to visit, does the artistic temperament. Consequently it gets itself sometimes into all sorts of scrapes, poor harmless little thing! It keeps strange company: and Vincent Penhale was no exception to the rule, as is proved by his friendship with that desperado Halvorsen. You get me? (195).

In reply to his claim, 'I am an artist', Halvorsen contradicts him with the truth: 'A damned double-faced play-actor!' (194). Everything points to the same conclusion. Towards the end, in Penhale's flat, his 'towering easel' throws a 'giant shadow' of condemnation; it is an 'easel that served no purpose, except to impress' (205). In The Vulgar Streak, the actor is a deceiver, a sham, and not a true artist at all.

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It is not hard to decipher Lewis's own involvement in this exploration of Penhale the actor. He himself had suffered at the hands of a deceiver. Late in 1937 he wrote: 'I have been much deceived in politicians, and will not write another line for or against any of them'.[1] It was a promise which he could not keep, and two years later he published a second book on his arch-deceiver, Hitler. In The Hitler Cult, which should be read alongside The Vulgar Streak, Lewis frankly admits that he was 'taken in' by Hitler in 1930, quite unable 'to detect Tamerlane beneath that platitudinous exterior - that plebeian protégé of the Junker Papen, with the humble cut of whose German sports-jacket, and with whose disarming toothbrush moustache, we are all now so familiar'.[2] He was deceived too by the 'Kind Hearts are More than

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1. Letters, p. 246.
2. The Hitler Cult, p. 37.

Coronets' look in Hitler's eye, so that he missed 'the calamitous vanity and thirst for power concealed beneath so much modesty and mildness - such exemplary commonplace'.[1] Hitler, too, is partly an illusion, magnified by 'a trick of lighting'; like Penhale, he inhabits a world of 'artifice' and façade, as two-dimensional as a Hollywood 'set'.[2] He is also an actor, like Charlie Chaplin playing 'the part of despot', but unlike Chaplin,'has played the part with considerable enthusiasm';[3] his statements have all the mock-sincerity of the actor:

> I will take a typical passage of heroic affirmation. 'We were fighting for an ideal so lofty that it was worth the last drop of our blood'. Did Hitler ever believe that? Was he ever sincere... when giving expression to such sentiments? Yes. As an actor Hitler believed it: and he was only sincere when he was acting - acting romantic and rather stupid parts. ... The National Socialist agitator was the favourite role of that melodramatic pro, Adolf Hitler.[4]

Like April Mallow, the author of Hitler had mistaken an actor's sincerity; an actor, moreover, who had seemed to be an artist; whose 'dream' appeared 'full of an imminent classical serenity'.[5] As it turned out, Hitler, like Penhale, was only an 'artist type' which 'does not make him an artist, in any effective sense; for, as has often been remarked, no great artist conforms to the "artist type"'. What it does mean is that Hitler is 'volatile, nervous, prone to emotional excesses. ...in the habit of threatening suicide'.[6] Hitler is a bad artist, who came to learn duplicity at an early age:

> These artistic proclivities, anyway, are a major fact in the life of Hitler. The bad artist is a very embittered man as a rule. ... He was trampled on by everybody. He learnt young, as he tells us, duplicity.... He is certainly very deceitful to-day.[7]

There is evidently more in the resemblance between Penhale and Hitler than excessive will.

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1. The Hitler Cult, p. 40.
2. Ibid, pp. 46, 64.
3. Ibid, p. 80.
4. Ibid, p. 116.
5. Hitler, p. 184.
6. The Hitler Cult, p. 78.
7. Ibid, p. 75.

The connection between the histrionic deceptions of Penhale and Hitler - despite its obvious importance - was not one to which Lewis ever alluded in his letters to friends and publishers. Publicly disowning Hitler's mindless volition was one thing, but admitting that he had been fooled completely was an extremely painful thing to do. The frank admissions he made in The Hitler Cult were therefore somewhat remarkable, especially for a man as naturally defensive as Lewis. But The Hitler Cult was generally a salvage operation, part of whose purpose was to show that business was continuing as usual. A truer indication of the bitter feelings aroused in him by his mistake about Hitler is provided by an early draft of Rude Assignment at Cornell which contains a lengthy justification of Hitler. 'When I come upon a chapter headed "Adolph Hitler a Man of Peace", I feel very foolish', Lewis wrote, 'knowing all we do, such an announcement is painfully absurd'.[1] That this had been difficult to write can be seen from the previous page of the manuscript, where 'I am ashamed' and 'my lack of understanding', together with several other attempts to find the right words, are all scored out. Finally he omitted the chapter altogether. The deception visited upon him by Hitler, and his own excessive credulity, consistuted a chapter of his life which Lewis wished ardently to erase. There are several small signs that he tried to do so. When he sent his list of published works to Who's Who in 1947, for example, he made no mention of Hitler; instead, he specifically instructed the publisher to give the date of publication of The Wild Body (1927) as 1931, the year in which Hitler was published. An even more telling instance occurred in 1944 while he was staying at the apartment in St. Louis of a close supporter and admirer, Felix Giovanelli. When he discovered a copy of his Hitler there, Lewis became, according to Giovanelli, 'uneasy'. After the Lewises' next stay at the apartment Giovanelli found the book missing from its 'hiding place', and in its place, Lewis's inkwell. Giovanelli then heard nothing from Lewis for months and could only re-establish the relationship with great difficulty.[2] For the rest of his life, Hitler was to be an irremovable thorn in Lewis's side. It was the powerful sense of shame he felt at having taken the most warlike figure of the

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1. Draft of Rude Assignment (Cornell).
2. Felix Giovanelli to W.L., 22 May 1944 (Cornell).

century for a man of peace which impelled Lewis to avoid the theme of Hitler the deceiver so completely in his numerous letters about The Vulgar Streak. His strongest impulse was to bury Hitler altogether.

As The Vulgar Streak shows, however, Lewis could not bury Hitler without at the same time burying the principles on which the book rested. Victor Stamp had been a symbolic expression of the unity in Lewis's mind between his defence of Fascist Germany and his defence of a 'severe' and 'masculine' form of antiromantic art. Victor's tragic end prophesied the end of that 'male insurgence and egoism' which Lewis had admired when he first saw the Nazis in Berlin in 1930; his extinction also pointed in the direction of a world of Men Without Art. When Hitler suddenly turned into a monster before his eyes, Lewis was forced to take a hard second look at the whole philosophy of art which Victor represented. Following hard upon years of illness, the shattering realisation of his 'painfully absurd' mistake about Nazism sparked off in Lewis a revaluation of everything he had stood for. Symptomatic of Lewis's new way of looking at things was his abandonment of the masculine point of view.

Even while he was writing The Revenge for Love, Lewis already had strong premonitions that Victor was leading him to disaster and these were expressed, in the course of the novel, by an increasing identification with Margot. Looking at Victor through Margot's eyes represented something quite new in Lewis's fiction, a process of self-examination from a point of view outside the artist. It was a turning-back on himself in which feminine love, for the first time, was being seriously weighed in the balance against all the implications of male egoism in art. When Munich, the Russo-German pact and the invasion of Poland turned his premonitions into certainties, Lewis deserted Victor altogether. By the time he wrote The Vulgar Streak, Victor had become an empty Vincent whose tragic end seemed always predictable, and love was unchallengably the supreme value in the novel. The sexual predator - Tarr's ideal, the alligator - was now systematically exposed as an exponent of barren force. Nothing underlines the change in Lewis more than his presentation of women. No longer were they like Bertha and Val, always threatening to assimilate the artist into a subjective, romantic dream. Margot and April may be equally romantic, but their devotion is nevertheless the most substantial thing in a world of façades.

Beside April, the cynical role-player, cast as hero in Tarr and Snooty, is nothing but a hollow sham, a deceiver.

There had been a strange poetic justice about the Hitler episode which epitomised all the reversals taking place in Lewis's later novels: Lewis the actor had falled victim to another actor. The effect was spectacular. The creator of Tarr and Snooty now beheld the actor, not as he saw himself, but as he appeared to Bertha and Val. Cast into the role of a trusting April, the author of Hitler had been forced to see where the elaborate histrionics of Tarr and Snooty inevitably led. Each of these early heroes abstracted himself from his situation by achieving a split-existence whereby his body was left to deal with the world's demands while his mind was free to observe the proceedings from a suitable distance. Penhale's disowned, hanging body signals the abrupt end of this tradition in Lewis's writing. Instead of the artist's detachment, Penhale's acting issues in personal disintegration, loss of the inward life which distinguishes the true artist; it produces only hollowness, the experience of himself as an empty shell from which suicide is the only possible escape. Not only does Lewis abandon the actor's point of view, but he hands him over to be slowly and mercilessly stripped of his deceptions before the eyes of the other characters; in the end, to be exposed as a charlatan and a criminal. The Vulgar Streak marks a profound change of sympathies.

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CHAPTER XI: SELF CONDEMNED (1954): THE PERFECTIONIST REBORN.

'What I call a "perfectionist"... is an apriorist, working in the void.... I am speaking here, of course, of my earlier role as artist.' Rude Assignment.

BLAST dedicated itself to the timeless, classless 'INDIVIDUAL', the self-realised superman who 'ceases to belong to any milieu'.[1] With such early INDIVIDUALS as Tarr and Zagreus in mind, Hugh Kenner characterises Lewis's protagonists as Men from Nowhere, men who have realised themselves by disowning their roots, their families, their past. Yet it is precisely because they have ceased to belong to any milieu that the lives of his later protagonists, Vincent Penhale and René Harding, end in tragedy. In The Vulgar Streak and Self Condemned, the rootless INDIVIDUAL becomes a tragic over-reacher.

The hero of Self Condemned is an English history professor who has disowned History and in Part I leaves with his wife for Canada. Harding is a latter-day Faust who trades family, country, career and position for an abstracted state of angelic perfection, a purer form of enlightenment which will rigorously exclude the world, the flesh and fallen human nature. His archetype is Lucifer. In Canada Harding discovers instead a closer union with his wife and a deeper sense of integration with humanity; Part II is an epiphany of René, the man reborn in suffering to a new self-knowledge, a new harmony between mind, body and the world. In Part III he rejects his wife and attempts, once more, to live amid abstractions. The attempt kills his wife and he himself ends his days, like Penhale, a vacant shell. Self Condemned plots the fall of a 'perfectionist'.[3]

Various hints in works like Rude Assignment suggest that René Harding is a portrait of the perfectionist in Lewis himself, an aspect of himself which Lewis was in the process of identifying, distancing and

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1. BLAST, i, p. 7.
2. Wyndham Lewis, ch. 1.
3. Harding is called a perfectionist several times in the novel.

rejecting. Professor Harding is a study of an earlier self: the author of The Caliph's Design who scorned London as a monument to the Past and erected a perfect City to replace it upon the tabula rasa of his own mind; the author of Time and Western Man who, in his enthusiasm to 'create new beauty',[1] reduced History to an empty fantasy of the time-mind and dismissed historians, along with naturalists in art, as slavish imitators of the dead. Especially after he taught history himself in Canada during World War II, Lewis revised these valuations. For Lewis the historian, meticulous fidelity to time and place became an ideal which influenced the writing of Self Condemned, the most naturalistic of his novels. 'Naturalism' is not strong enough. What distinguishes the novel is an unexpected sense of solidarity between the writer and his environment, an implicit revaluation of that context of everyday life which the Vorticist saw as a chaos. No longer was Lewis the perfectionist who exhorted his followers in BLAST to isolate themselves, like saints, in spiritual purity, to regard art as the only retreat from the brothel of life. Self Condemned is written from the point of view of one reborn, like René, to a new conception of life.

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Of all Lewis's novels, Self Condemned is the most obviously autobiographical. With W.K Rose,[2] we can easily trace the events which inspired the novel through the vast number of letters which Lewis wrote during World War II. In 1939, he and his wife left England for North America on a voyage closely resembling the one taken by the Hardings in Self Condemned. The Hotel Windsor in Toronto where the Lewises lived for three years provided the model for the Hotel Blundell, together with most of its characters and experiences; both hotels, for example, were destroyed by fire. Certainly, as W.K. Rose notes, the novel captures the experience of exile 'as it felt' to Lewis.[3] Informing the bleak spiritual landscape of Self Condemned is

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1. Time and Western Man, p. 99.
2. 'Exile's Letters', Canadian Literature (1968), pp. 64-73.
3. Letters, p. 263.

the same sense of renascent hope-in-aridity which D.H. Lawrence records of New South Wales in Kangaroo; Harding's Canada, like Somers' Australia, maps the author's most intricate responses to the land of his exile.

Yet if anything, the discrepancies between fact and fiction are even more interesting. Professor René Harding leaves for Canada to turn his back on a highly successful career as an historian. Ushering in an age of existentialist heroes, Harding throws up fame and financial security because he no longer believes in the subject he professes. For him, the voyage to North America means a wrench from position, with the bad faith that implies, and passage to an austere New World of unstained moral idealism. Lewis's motives for leaving England, so far as we can determine them, were sharply opposed to these. His own career having reached its nadir by 1939, Lewis's purposes in the New World were necessarily quite concrete. One of his immediate objects was to introduce himself to his (wealthy) American relatives so that he could begin writing his father's life, hopefully with some assistance from the family.[1] Pursuit of the dollar was a reason he always gave readily when anyone questioned his presence on the North American continent during the war. And indeed, when the vast majority of his prodigious attempts to find commissions and academic jobs failed, it was principally lack of money, together with the U-boats in the Atlantic, which kept him there until the war finished. There was, however, another motive for leaving Britain in 1939 which is clearly hinted at in many of his most defensive letters[2], but which was so sensitive that Lewis himself could never name it: his fear of the repercussions of Hitler in a country at war with Fascist Germany. Although he had renounced the book as a misinformed guess, Lewis did not suppose that his enemies would allow him to forget it. Neutral America promised security from any recriminations which war-hysteria might engender.

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1. W.L. to unknown party, 7 April 1938 (Cornell).
2. See for example Letters, p. 323. Eric Kennington had mentioned the 'detachment' of a young artist to the war. Lewis took the remark as an allusion to his own absence from England and wrote: 'As to what you say about my patriotism, I do not understand what you mean'.

René Harding's departure from Britain in 1939 was an act of disembodied asceticism bordering on self-laceration; for his creator, it might have been even more perverse to remain there.

If the hero of Self Condemned is sent to North America with quixotic purposes of his own, it is because he has to obey novelistic laws of symbol and theme rather than the less exalted necessities of life. When Harding turns his back on relatives and the academic world, the events are assimilated into a larger allegorical design. Like The Heart of Darkness, Lewis's novel is a psychomachia, but one which explores the opposite hemishpere of the soul: Self Condemned carries the reader into a terrain of blinding arctic light. By renouncing career, family, academic history and the world in all its pomp, Harding is trying to jettison his own lower, physical existence and ultimately, human nature itself. His fall, like Lucifer's, comes from over-reaching towards a purer form of light.

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Self Condemned[1] opens with a breakfast-table scene in which René Harding is explaining to his wife, Hester, the process of renumbering the hours of the day by reference to the stars to effect daylight saving. The movement of his swift, abstract intelligence is instantly associated with imagery of light and an upward gaze, suggesting a sense of affinity with the stars themselves. The association with light and the upward gaze are to persist. Hester's response is in sharp contrast; she stares at her husband with little comprehension. Her own thoughts reflect a rather more earthbound concern with the effects of time: 'She renamed ages: as her husband spoke of renaming the hours of daybreak and the sunset, she shuffled about the years of life, calling thirty forty and vice versa' (3). Soon her blank gaze becomes 'an amorous and inviting light' which almost causes Harding to embark 'upon a didactic account of the periodic nature of sexual desire in the animal kingdom' (4). Hester comes quickly then to be associated with human life on the specifically instinctual level. This symbolic opposition

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1. All references are included in the text.

between the motifs of abstraction and light on the one hand, and desire and the bodily on the other, strengthens throughout the first chapter. Harding's inclination to furrow up his forehead like Descartes (with whom he shares a christian name), goes with a preference for the dressed state which takes a certain exception to Hester's provocative nudity. Following the pattern of all Lewis's abstracted heroes, Harding prefers to regard love-making as purely bodily function: 'his glands emptied', after intercourse, 'and his head clear as a bell, this hairy faun in a jack-knife jump sprang into his own pillowless bed... without a shadow upon his conscience' (32). As something demanding intense involvement, however, love partakes of 'the absurd' and as such is something for the 'Yahooesque mass'. Harding's deep concern is for the lack of light in the London apartment, and by symbolic extension, the darkness beginning to enshroud Europe.

It is clear that this symbolic opposition between intellectual and physical reflects nothing so much as Harding's own consciousness. It is within Harding that Hester is 'automatically classified under the heading "Erotics"'; this puts her 'in danger, from the start, of being regarded as a frivolous interloper by his dominant intellectuality' (41). The two are rigidly separated, so that it troubles René that Hester could not be made to leave Erotics in the bedroom. Much point is made of the fact that his study is in another, lockable apartment across a passageway. Hester then is not really seen by him as a separate person with her own reality: 'But this was a very distracted man. He seldom saw his wife in full focus, but behind, or through, something else. He did not often completely withdraw himself from the intellectual problem he had in hand' (7). The bedroom apart, we are assured, 'Nothing would have induced him to live with a man of Essie's disposition and mediocre intellect' (31). As he expands imaginatively upon entering the grand house of his brother-in-law, he catches sight of Hester, a mere figure at his heels, a somewhat embarrassing spectre from another reality. But his detached, abstracted view of Hester occasionally flares into a positive animosity. When Hester tries to take worldly advantage of an erotic success he is at first 'faintly amused', and then he smiles, 'almost contemptuously' (35-6). This callousness is the reflex of a threatened intellectuality which has the effect of insulating him from emotional responsiveness, so that his

personality is split in a deeper and more serious sense. Harding is about to take his leave of his favourite sister:

> This parting had been so unexpectedly painful. He had had no anticipation of anything unusual, owing to his careful insulation from the centre of emotional awareness. As he had explained to his sister, he was able to fasten himeslf down to the unemotional daily routine: but suddenly, without any warning, floodgates of realization would fly open. The insulation would break down. In order not to be at the mercy of his emotions, he had been obliged to effect a division of his personality into two parts: he had created a kind of artificial 'unconscious' of his own, and thus locked away all acuity of realization (140).

The abstracted, compartmented mind is therefore a precarious lid upon potentially explosive, repressed 'realization'. It is what Lewis called a 'callous self so well insulated from the compartment of the imagination that he was able to pass as a somewhat unemotional man' (140). As in the case of Percy Hardcaster, the clue to René Harding's dual personality is provided by his two names: he is both callous and responsive, unemotionally hard, yet susceptible to sudden imaginative and transforming insights. His Anglo-Saxon surname reflects only the 'callous', highly-organised shell of the man; when he visits his French mother we catch our first glimpses of René.

Since Lewis's own mother died in 1920, René's farewell to his mother cannot be autobiographical in any narrow sense. But once again, it is precisely what Lewis invents which draws attention to his allegorical scheme. Mrs. Harding stands for Motherhood; she is an image of René's ancestry, his membership of a family, a race and a species. When the scene begins, we find René sitting at her feet, crouched and called repeatedly <u>petit</u> and <u>pauvre</u> like an infant, all of which suggest vividly the process of birth:

> The dominant figure, a very old lady, reminiscent of an ancestral miniature, in her faded dignity. ... The <u>pauvre petit</u> of the above-mentioned exclamation was René Harding, who, crouching upon a low boat-like stool at the feet of the aged woman, looked unusually the reverse of <u>petit</u>. But she was his mother (15).

The insistence on the word 'ancestral' throughout the chapter and the function of Motherhood portray René's rootedness in human nature and in time most directly, so that when his mother rejects René's plan with a gentle, ironic question, 'You are not by any chance a fool, my son?' he feels uprooted from Nature itself:

> Nature had given its answer. The judgement of his mother uprooted him, as it were. He had to accept detachment from all that his family had meant for him (27).

René is simply handed as a fait accompli what all of Lewis's early heroes fought for, but here the intimate playfulness of Mrs. Harding's question establishes a wisdom which quite transcends 'detachment' and all its variants. When his callous self returns to shatter the filial intimacy which has prevailed throughout the scene, we find Harding 'looking abstractedly over her head', his eyes 'still distracted' (26). Dramatically, his mother's presence reduces abstraction and distraction to the same thing. Nothing could be further from the inward freedom and energy which Tarr sought as he strove to wrench himself from Nature in Bertha's room. In Self Condemned, detachment is the very antithesis of self-awareness; separation from Nature issues in a vacant, disembodied distraction, self-alienation and fragmentation of the psyche.

Having taken leave of family and mother, and symbolically, of Nature, Harding takes leave of the World. The repetitiveness of these episodes suggests a pilgrim's progress through the World in its various guises. Recalling the offensiveness of two of his brother-in-law, Harding reflects on their representative nature: 'These two very average sensual men could be said, couldn't they, to represent Everyman: so this might be taken as the world's reaction to what he had done' (112). His first brother-in-law is a City man; he is rich, conventionally cultured and, like the faker-bosses in The Revenge for Love, leftist in his political sympathies. Reacting warmly at what he takes for revolutionary idealism, he gives Harding a cheque for £1,000. This does not, in fact, assuage Harding's contempt when he becomes 'serious': 'The last thing that he desired was a serious discussion with this auriferous Nobody' (62). His second brother-in-law, who sees himself as a representative of the Art World, is an upstart and a fake, and his demand for 'the real story' behind René's resignation nearly precipitates a brawl. As a publicity agent, he sees Harding's descent from Professor to Mister as a sharp fall in status; for him, Harding is simply unemployed. Harding's contempt is boundless, and he turns towards him the mask of an Enemy, meeting 'the intruder with a dark scowl' (67). The third brother-in-law is a caricatured prototype for the aggressive Marxist parson of The Red Priest, Augustine Card. The Rev. Kerridge confronts Harding with an argumentative opponent, a Marxist Rugby housemaster who imagines himself to be Dr. Johnson. In the conflict generated, Harding insists that his own view of history is

above 'politics', and his general formula for dealing with the World emerges, as he leaves his sister the next day: 'You must abstract' (135).

His departure from the Academic world is more complex. It allows Lewis, using Harding's old Oxford friend and disciple, Rotter, as a mouthpiece, to sketch in his view of history and thereby the rationale behind his resignation. Glimpses have already been provided. The block of flats in which the Hardings live, containing 'a typical set of tenants' is clearly a microcosmic model of European civilization and is significantly in the process of falling down. It is permeated with a sense of absurdity which disturbs René: 'This building, so replete with absurdity, produced in him a malaise, which he endeavoured to conceal, although he would say to Essie, "Is it not unusually absurd? Or is it just the average human mean?"' (11). Further, it has wild cats in its cellar: 'for civilization never continued long enough to keep the wild cats out - if you call it civilization, René Harding would shout' (14). That is, civilization is presently dominated by the irrational, the absurd; 'politics' is in the hands of criminals, a fact with which historians are acquainted, but which they suppress. Harding's view of history, dealt with in detail below, is in Rotter's view that of a perfectionist who is opposed by men as a whole: 'The uncreative majority - oppose the designs of the perfectionist. Any kind of real perfectability, any tampering with their cosy averagism, their beer and football, their Scotch and golf, their "pools" and crime fiction, any tightening up of their slack mindlessness, any challenge to part with a fraction of their animality, is resisted by men' (83). We recognize this instantly as consistent with that 'callous', 'objective' self with which Harding confronts his wife, his mother and the world. By taking this view to its logical conclusions as René does, Rotter argues, 'a man steps out of life' (96). For him, Harding is both a Jansenist and a superhumanist; but perhaps the most significant image is provided by Mrs. Harradson, the maid: 'It's that Lucifer, nasty ole man. Walking the earth, nasty ole man!' (10). The use of 'Lucifer' rather than 'Satan' points to Harding, whose aspiration to the non-bodily, to an abstracted state symbolised by light, is a kind of Luciferian over-reaching which denies human physicality, and ultimately, human nature itself.

Part II describes the life of the Hardings in a hotel room in

Momaco (a thinly disguised Toronto), until the hotel is burnt down. The beginnings of a change between husband and wife are evident before their ship reaches Canada. Hester's distress at leaving England momentarily penetrates his imagination: 'The realization of what this would be for poor Hester struck him now for the first time. He always forgot that Hester was a human being, because she was so terribly much the Woman' (147). This 'momentary glimpse of a human reality' strikes the keynote of Part II, 'the beginning of a new way of thinking about Hester'. Hester becomes René's 'Muse, in succession to History', and even more significantly: 'He was going to Canada in order to fornicate with Hester' (148). The act of unity with Hester is charged with a symbolic significance; Canada is to be the background of the movement towards integration of a fragmented psyche. This indeed happens, imperceptibly. The sheer hostility of an 'ice-box' environment, penury and utter imprisonment from Momaco society enforce a deeper mutuality of response against common sufferings. What has been implicit during these years of exile suddenly invades René's consciousness: 'This barren life has dried out of me a great deal that should not have been there. And you have become integrated in me. This tête-à-tête of ours over three years has made us as one person. And this has made me understand you' (239). A sudden movement of 'realization' overpowers him, reducing him to tears. This scene witnesses the rebirth signified by his forename; it is the very high-point of René's integration and self-knowledge; as such, it provides the perspective from which Lewis invites us to regard René, both before and after. In all of Lewis's novels after The Revenge for Love, the hero discovers the regenerating force of conjugal love in the midst of the world's hollowness: 'They remained for a long time clasped together in something like a religious embrace. René was thinking this being and he were vowed to one another, in a sacrament of which good fortune and good times had no knowledge' (239-40). An interest in the analogy between René's mind and the Room intensifies this sense of integration: 'And the Room: that became something else. For anyone from the outside to come into that, was like someone walking into one's mind' (178). In the Hotel Blundell, bedroom and study are one and the same room.

Just as the Room is a macrocosm of René's mind, so the hotel is 'a microcosm of what was without - one of the Ward, the City, the Province, the Nation, the Continent' (189). And ultimately: 'The

hotel is the world' (190). Before long, the suffering which produces René's integration with Hester is complemented by a growing acquiescence in the world: 'René, as they settled down, willy-nilly, in this shell, began soon to develop a consciousness of solidarity with the environment' (189). But is is only after he has been beaten and kicked brutally in a bar-room argument that René is truly 'in harmony with the hotel' (232). For René as for Hardcaster, suffering is a necessary induction into a violent world: '"We have had our baptism of fire, have we not, in the violent life of this hotel. It is an astonishingly violent place, but no more violent than the world of which it is so perfect a microcosm"' (231). Significantly, this 'baptism' of suffering - another reminder of Harding's spiritual rebirth - immediately precedes his sudden 'realization' of Hester. To a large extent it is the figure of Affie, hotel manageress and hence its symbolic representative, who focuses all the meanings of the microcosm. She is the Hardings' favourite figure, despite her compassion, even preference, for criminals and her patronage of rotten janitors. Under her spell, the Hardings are attracted among the 'followers of Aphrodite' whom Affie 'encouraged'. She herself is almost the spirit of the hotel, 'like an aged messenger of Aphrodite, with a supernatural passe-partout, bringing for preference aphrodisiacs from Aphrodite, and possessing supernatural access to everything in the hotel' (240). In the fire that consumes the hotel (an allegory of World War II) Affie is murdered by the hotel's owner and actual fire-bug (the role of the politician behind the scenes). It is not until she is dead that Affie's full significance emerges for René. He discovers her body:

> Here was something that was not in conformity with a waking reality. It was what was absurd in himself, that suddenly he had been confronted with. Sudden death presents its card with a leer. He thought now that he had seen a smile on Affie's face. ... She had understood the Absurd (289).

This reconciliation with the Absurd in himself is an acceptance of his own humanity, the self-illuminating vision of an integrated consciousness. Luciferian aspiration has been held in check, if only temporarily; he feels 'the light not losing its intensity, but getting patchy' (212). When the Hardings move from the Hotel Blundell, the old tendencies are reasserted.

Part III is clearly differentiated from Part II at the outset.

The fire 'divided their life at Momaco into two dissimilar halves. The second half had a quite different coloration from the first' (307). The Hardings are introduced into Momaco academic society. In a discussion with Momaco's Professor of Philosophy, René undergoes an experience which forces him immediately across the room to the window. By its effects, there can be little doubt about the significance of this impulse towards the source of light. Once home, he isolates himself from Hester with the explanation: 'When I am attempting to contact my Muse, someone intrudes' (326). Integration with Hester, his former Muse, is shattered as the division about the question 'Momaco or London?' grows more intense. To Hester, René has 'gone over to the side of the enemy' and 'made his peace with Momaco' (310). Soon the old compartments manifest themselves:

> Up to the period of the fire he had informed her, from day to day, of everything he was doing, or intending to do. As castaways upon Momaco they had lived together, in an idyllic communion in which it was unthinkable that they should hide anything from one another. Now he would consult her on nothing of serious moment (347).

This return 'to a compartmenting of their married life' is inevitably reflected in the manner of René's retirement to another room: 'Finally, he kept the door of the small room locked, "to keep out the maid", but this also kept out Hester' (348). Hester's response is to 'steal' from René to buy clothes in substitute for the withdrawn love. She becomes, in a real sense, René's former conception of her; a friend notices: '"She <u>is</u> like an animal. There is something <u>shut off</u> about her, as if attempting to communicate in spite of some handicap"' (349). Nothing captures Harding's regression better than the way he now looks at Hester: 'objectively' (362).

The shock delivered by the sight of Hester's mangled body after she has thrown herself under a truck, violently penetrates his emotional being. As he faints he tries to seize the severed head to carry it away with him. His wife's spectre returns repeatedly to him both in hospital and during his convalescent stay in a monastery. But as time passes he gradually returns to normal 'objective' thinking, and finally, with schizophrenic implausibility, he sees Hester's suicide as 'an act of insane coercion'. Her head, he believes, she has 'steered... to safety' to 'pull [his] heartstrings' (392). René ends his days, a mere shell of the former man, in a large American university quite

unnoticed by those around him, themselves filled with 'a little academic stuffing' (407).

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Few writers of autobiographical novels ever have scruples about altering and shaping historical facts in the interests of thematic design. Actually, as Roy Pascal[1] points out, a novel like Sons and Lovers or A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man is not as a result any less faithful to its author's life, but more profoundly so, since the shaping process reflects the writer's attempt to interpret his past in terms of those images of himself which seem to him most significant. The word 'perfectionist' does not turn up in Lewis's work until 1947. Writing to Mrs. K.H. Webb of Hutchinson's he announced that the hero of his next novel was to be a perfectionist.[2] That novel was Self Condemned. As usual, Lewis denied that he knew any such person himself, yet it is clear from Rude Assignment - which he began writing for Hutchinson's in the same year - that Lewis was currently exploring his own perfectionist tendencies as a way of making sense of his past. The same self-exploration was already under way a decade earlier when he described himself as 'a man of the tabula rasa', a 'pure revolutionary' like Godwin.[3] Lewis developed this image at greater length in The Mysterious Mr. Bull. Here he showed that he was not only in the process of defining the tabula rasa man within, but he was also trying to isolate him as a source of trouble. The tabula rasa man, he argued in 1938, is always beaten by 'the organic', 'the Old Adam', human nature.[4] These passages point to an interesting difference between Lewis and the hero of Self Condemned: by 1939, the year in which René deserted human nature for his tabula rasa ideals, Lewis was already conscious of the dangerous folly of doing so. The connection between Lewis and Harding can only be restored by tampering with chronology. Whenever Lewis refers to himself as a perfectionist in Rude Assignment

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1. 'The Autobiographical Novel and the Autobiography', Essays in Criticism, ix (1959), pp. 134-150.
2. Letters, p. 410.
3. Ibid, p. 246.
4. The Mysterious Mr. Bull, pp. 231, 260.

he is recalling a much earlier period around World War I; he is writing of The Caliph's Design (1919):

> What I call a 'perfectionist'... whether in art or politics, is an apriorist, working in the void, and with a propensity to ignore the conditioning factors. - I am speaking here, of course, of my earlier role as artist.[1]

Likewise, the perfectionist in Self Condemned represents Lewis in his earlier role as an abstract artist, a Vorticist architect who surveyed the outline of London which the past had bequeathed and deemed it absurd. That is, while the novel obviously reflects the outward events of Lewis's life in the years of World War II, it refers in a metaphorical way to his entire career: Harding's impatience with London in 1939 symbolizes the Vorticist's desire, expressed at the end of World War I, for a city planned entirely in the void. In terms of Lewis's inner history, René Harding is a study of the artist as a much younger man.

Professor René Harding's attacks on his fellow historians recall Lewis's attacks on Spenglerian history a quarter of a century earlier in Time and Western Man. Unlike historians since Hegel who had seen historical events as an 'organic' interplay between ideas and material determinants, between men's conscious purposes and the unconscious forces moulding those purposes, perfectionist antihistorians like the Enemy and René Harding posited a dualistic model of the historical process which looked back to Descartes and the eighteenth century. According to the antihistorian, all human affairs take their form from the conscious planning and plastic will of those exceptional individuals who impose themselves upon their age; for René and the author of Time and Western Man, history is an account of a few supermen, both good and evil, who shape the destiny of the vast, uncreative mass (83-8). The creative few correspond to the brain, and the uncreative many to the mechanical limbs, of the body politic; one thinks and wills, the rest automatically respond. The idea that the historical flux which the superman created, the puppet-life of the many, could be itself creative, is dismissed in Time and Western Man as a symptom of a huge conspiracy mounted by politician-historians to discredit will; likewise, René Harding believes that his fellow historians are politically 'interested'. Both the Enemy and Professor Harding are anti-history in the same way.

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1. Rude Assignment, p. 154.

The difference between Time and Western Man and Self Condemned is that the novel introduces a perspective outside the dogmatic anti-historian and critical of his position: it is Rotter, who reminds the reader of R.G. Collingwood's critique of eighteenth-century historiography: 'A truly historical view of human history', Collingwood believes, 'sees everything in that history as having its own raison d'être'; moreover, it involves 'accepting without demur the fact that man's actions are in general irrational' (92). This is precisely what Harding cannot accept; his rationalism amounts to a tragic blindness comparable to King Lear's. In Self Condemned, the rationalistic antihistorian is not just an Enemy, but a tragic Lucifer responsible for his own fall.

By the late thirties Lewis had begun to retreat from the extreme neo-classical position he held in the twenties. When he wrote Time and Western Man, the Enemy prescribed his own type of classical, 'ahistoric' mind as a corrective to the time-mind. Ten years later, when he wrote to the editors of Twentieth Century Verse, 'My mind is ahistoric', the emphasis had become much more apologetic. Now he was admitting to a limitation, a kind of naïveté: 'I have learnt my lesson', he confessed a few lines later.[1] In The Mysterious Mr. Bull he went even further: 'The organic and the historic', he now saw, inevitably 'gets the upper hand, after a brief eclipse. ... Everything always ends with the discomfiture of the theorist'.[2] Now the 'theorist', the disembodied Pierpoint subsisting in the purity of the mind, was a tragic victim of his own 'ubermensch religious dreaming'.[3] The same omnipotent Caliph who advocated flattening London in 1919 and re-inventing it with a few clean strokes of his pencil was moved twenty years later by the need to cut the garment of political planning to the cloth of human nature.[4] Ubermensch planning-in-the-void and ubermensch history were things of the past. His admiration for supermen of the machine age like Henry Ford had diminished; no longer was

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1. Letters, p. 246.
2. The Mysterious Mr. Bull, p. 262.
3. The phrase occurs in a letter to Mrs. Gerty Cori, Letters, p. 378, in which Lewis is attacking theoretical revolutionary planners.
4. Letters, p. 294.

superman the mainspring of history. 'We are of course in agreement with Count Tolstoi', he told his students at Assumption College, Ontario, in 1943, 'that the individual like Napoleon, although he has a most important function to perform [in history] , is not the decisive factor'.[1]

If Lewis himself no longer belonged, as Harding did, to the Party of Superman, it was partly because his period of teaching in Canada brought him face to face, possibly for the first time, with the difficulties of explaining historical events and assessing the importance of individuals taking part. The experience helped him to transcend the antihistorical dogmatism of Time and Western Man and to develop a more flexible and balanced approach to the past. In the autumn of 1943 Lewis gave the annual Heywood Broun Memorial Lectures at Assumption College. These lectures, entitled 'The Concept of Liberty from the Founding Fathers of the U.S.A. Till Now', formed the basis of America and Cosmic Man. Here, Lewis stressed the importance of the historical context surrounding great innovators like Jefferson and F.D. Roosevelt: 'Until you know something of the medium - the political and social atmosphere - in which these great figures live and have their being, it would be useless to attempt to delineate them for you'.[2] Although he would have denied it, the Enemy was now meeting Hegel and Spengler at least half way. At the same time, Lewis was never one to engage in an activity without exploring its ideological roots; teaching history inevitably led him to historiography. By a strange irony, the first historiographer he took to was a Spenglerian, Arnold Toynbee.[3] Lewis was reading Toynbee's A Study of History and R.G. Collingwood's Idea of History (1946) while he was writing Self Condemned,[4] and it is obvious both in the novel and elsewhere that he profited from them. They gave new perspective to his ancient, neo-classical grudges against the time-mind and thereby helped to exorcise Professor Harding from his thinking. Collingwood also suggested stimulating parallels between history and art. In

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1. Lecture Notes, (Cornell).
2. America and Cosmic Man, p. 29.
3. The Writer and the Absolute (1952), pp. 18-18. Here Lewis's approval of Toynbee's relativism emerges. Toynbee's debt to Decline of the West is pointed out by E.H. Carr, What Is History? (1964), p. 43.
4. Letters, p. 544. That he was reading Collingwood is clear in the novel.

The Writer and the Absolute (1952), Lewis compared the great novelist to Collingwood's 'scientific' historian:

> The truth of the great novelists is different from and more personal, certainly, than that of the contemporary 'scientific' historian. But in each case a meticulous fidelity to life is of its essence. To ask it to falsify nature would be to destroy it.[1]

Repeatedly in his later works we come across signs that Lewis had changed directions: where the militant Vorticist had scorned the imitation of life, Lewis the history lecturer preached meticulous fidelity to it. His reappraisal of the past implied a more naturalistic conception of art.

Naturalism had been Lewis's bête noire since he blasted the Royal Academy in 1914. In Time and Western Man he brought his ammunition to bear on the 'lifeless' naturalism of Ulysses, which he took to be 'periodicity' for its own sake. The same impatience is displayed by René Harding in Self Condemned during his voyage to Canada when he flings Middlemarch into the sea:

> This sodden satire, this lifeless realism, provoked him into saying, 'Why am I reading this dull nonsense?... The historic illusion, the scenes depicted, and the hand depicting them, could be preserved in some suitable archive; but should not be handed down as a living document. It is a part of history' - with this he dismissed it (156).

The last phrase shows that it is René Harding the perfectionist rather than the author who holds this opinion. Here Harding is revealing once again his affiliations with the Party of Superman which encourages artists to 'banish from the visual arts the external world as it usually appears to men, and relegate such masterpieces of the past as those of Van Eyck or Memling to the status of the photograph' (315). There is no better indication of where Lewis now stood on the question of representational art than Self Condemned itself. It is the most naturalistic of all Lewis's novels, drawing constantly on a large archive of documentary materials which he had started to collect in Canada thirteen years before. Notebooks of newspaper-clippings, detailed sketches of the Hotel Windsor, glossaries of local slang and expressions heard on the radio, reveal what W.K. Rose calls 'a Flaubertian penchant for truth of time and place, as well as a Flaubertian sensitivity in getting at it'.[2] Although Self Condemned cannot

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1. The Writer and The Absolute, p. 15.
2. Wyndham Lewis at Cornell: A Review of the Lewis Papers Presented to the University by William G. Mennen (Ithaca, 1961), p. 15.

be compared with Ulysses, the Canadian section contains many pages whose main purpose is to accumulate lived detail in order to recreate a particular place and a particular period: pages describing advertisments, the windows, the birds, the radio-programmes, the maids, the neighbours, hotel staff and so on. These details of day-to-day life are 'periodicity' and 'history' in their meticulous fidelity to life. Hugh Kenner's comment fails to countenance the new sense of importance which Lewis attached to history: 'René Harding exposes himself to this Siberian force by what he considers to be an act of secession from the human conspiracy to pretend that the world is a neutral and often diverting peepshow'.[1] Many critics, especially those captivated - like Kenner[2] - with Lewis's outstanding genius as a Vorticist, overlook the fact that Lewis himself announced the death of abstract art in 1940.[3] 'Today I am a super-naturalist' he wrote in Wyndham Lewis the Artist: from 'Blast' to Burlington House (1939).[4] As usual, such announcements were overstatements, but a broad movement from abstraction to naturalism can be readily discerned by anyone running his eye over the excellent chronological selection of Lewis's paintings and drawings provided by Walter Michel. This drift away from the geometry of imagination to the appearance of the world can be seen, in part, as a logical consequence of the artist's famous philosophy of the EYE. But much more important was an instinctive change in Lewis's way of looking at things, inspired by the new value he found in the exterior world. Super-naturalism was an expression of that profound change of sympathies evident in all of his novels after The Revenge for Love.

By the end of World War II, the Enemy had plainly mellowed. No longer relying for his impact upon the bitter Northern rhetoric of satire, he was quick to point out the dangers of excessive coldness in the writing of a young Canadian protégé who submitted a manuscript to him in 1948: 'Human sympathy is not its strong suit', wrote the ageing satirist, 'it is forbiddingly chilly. If the reader feels no sympathy

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1. Wyndham Lewis, p. 153.
2. It is only fair to add that Kenner pays great respect to Lewis's later style in his introduction to Wyndham Lewis: Paintings and Drawings, pp. 11-40.
3. In The New Republic; see Letters, pp. 271-272.
4. Wyndham Lewis the Artist, p. 59.

for the characters, or interest in them, then the narrative factor obviously is immaterial'.[1] In a later letter he reminded his disciple that the reader must 'mimetically identify himself' with the characters of a novel.[2] It is evident how far Lewis had moved since he attacked empathy in art and the dithyrambic spectator who wished to empathise with it. To keep the reader at a suitable distance from his own early work, the author of The Apes of God had made a special point of stopping at the outer shell of each of his puppets, to give an effect 'of hardness, not of softness'.[3] In fact, Humph in Snooty Baronet is the last puppet in this tradition. Where puppets occur in the later novels, the impression is one of softness; Mrs. Harradson in Self Condemned:

> A door, from behind which the hum of a vacuum cleaner had for some time been heard, opened, and one of London's Dickensian charladies stood there without moving for a moment, a small bird-like figure with a white crest, which bobbed backwards and forwards, and an irascible eye. ... In the present case a telegram appeared out of the shadows impolitely near her little beak. She seized it, and, with considerable suspicion, holding it between thumb and forefinger she re-entered the breakfast room (5).

This is still the old external technique, unmistakably Lewisian in its exploitation of the analogy between the human and the near-human, between the charlady and something partly toy-like and partly parrot-like; yet it has none of the earlier satirical preoccupation of capturing puppets in the act of trying to make themselves human, nor any of the polemical point involved. On the contrary, the insistence on smallness emphasises the indulgently sympathetic quality of the humour underlying the passage. The difference between Mrs. Harradson and a puppet like Isabel Kein is not at all one of technique. Mrs. Kein was the creation of an alienated Enemy-God who had thrown up a wall of 'hard' hyperegoism between himself and the nightmarish absurdity of the human condition; Mrs. Harradson is the creation of a man reborn, like René, in the baptism of exile to a new sense of solidarity with the sufferings of the uncreative herd.

It is the spiritually reborn René of Part II who is closest to his creator's point of view. His reconciliation with Hester, the Hotel Blundell, and by symbolic extension, the human race, reflects the experience of renewal-in-suffering recorded by Lewis while he and his

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1. Letters, pp. 442-443.
2. Ibid, p. 454.
3. Time and Western Man, p. 120.

wife were entombed together in a room at the Hotel Windsor, in the Methodist 'ice-box' of Toronto.[1] Lewis left us no diaries, but his 'Personal Statement', subtitled 'Revolution in a Soul', takes the reader into that underworld of janitors and charladies which is such a feature of Self Condemned. Here he tells the story of a janitor on a dollar a day who was forced to continue working although he had broken his arm on the job only days before. The story illustrates what he terms 'the calamities of Peace' to which his mind had been 'opened to the fullest extent' during World War II in Canada. In contemplating these calamities - worse than the disasters of war - he underwent a transformation:

> If I have changed in my attitude it is because I am always conscious now of the ill-starred lives of that eighty per cent of us who are pushed around, and whose hearts-desire is denied so often and so relentlessly that early in life they learn to shun hope altogether, as something that is not for them.[2]

That 'eighty per cent of us' is the voice of Lewis-rené which pervades his war-time letters from North America. Time and again the writer presents himself as 'only one of the multitude of victims' of the war;[3] he has lost much, but 'that is nothing to what many people have lost and will lose'.[4] There is a sentence which he uses three times, each to a different correspondent, and which sums up his changed attitude: 'I see now that I thought... too much about our tribe... not enough about "le genre humain" of the revolutionary song'.[5] Exile had opened up the Enemy's mind so that it could now embrace le genre humain, just as exile brought Harding into an integrating embrace with Hester which reconciled him with his own, and all, human nature. The symbol of a conjugal embrace was more than appropriate, since Lewis-rené is never more obvious than at those moments which reflect his shared life with his wife in the Hotel Windsor. One such moment was when Mrs. Lewis's dog died:

> By coming to Canada - in the middle of a world-war... my wife has had to pay as well as myself. So this small creature,

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1. This was one of Lewis's favourite ways of referring to Toronto; see Letters, p. 303.
2. 'Personal Statement', (Cornell).
3. Letters, p. 297.
4. Ibid, p. 286.
5. Ibid, pp. 324, 334.

> which stood for all that was benevolent in the universe, sweetened the bitter medicine for her. Like the spirit of a simpler and saner time, this fragment of primitive life confided his destiny to her, and went through all the black days beside us.... Such are the reflections which beset her.1

The sympathy is not, of course, for the dog, but for the 'reflections' of its owner. In another letter he wrote: 'All along I have recognized that millions of people everywhere are suffering in the most terrible way - that my misfortune is merely typical of a universal misery. For my wife's sake even more than for my own (for I feel responsible for what is happening to her) I have incessantly exerted myself to find some solution'.[2] What is significant is the way concern for those abstract 'millions of people everywhere' resonated out of a concrete sense of responsibility and concern for his wife. When Tarr walked out of Bertha's room into the streets of the rive gauche, it was because he felt the need to wrench art away from pity, compassion and every shade of human sympathy; the love-scene in Part II of Self Condemned enacts the discovery of their compatibility in another hotel room separated by an ocean and two wars from the world of Lewis's first novel. These two scenes chart the revolution which had occurred in the artist's soul.

* *

Lewis was over seventy years old when Self Condemned appeared, and old men are never changed utterly. Even in the letters of his last years, alongside the energetic manoeuvring to get Ezra Pound released, the reader finds the same old rancour, the inveterate backbiter unable to resist an occasional dig at friends like T.S. Eliot and supporters like John Rothenstein. Alongside the sympathetic portrait of Mrs. Harradson there is the satirical portrait of 'The Bishop's Fool' in Rotting Hill (1951), which was closely based on someone who had shown - and continued to show - Lewis friendship.[3] In The Demon of Progress in the Arts (1954) is a sustained attack, in the best style of the Enemy,

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1. Letters, p. 376.
2. W.L. to J.J. Sweeney, 30 April 1942 (Cornell).
3. Agnes Bedford to W.K. Rose, 26 May 1960 (Vassar).

on Herbert Read, another old acquaintance. Clearly, Lewis still possessed an unregenerate 'callous self' - he would not have been himself without it - just as René Harding did when he returned to the Jansenist abstractions of the academic life.

Lewis himself returned to London - as Harding almost did[1] - and wrote America and Cosmic Man in which he showed how much of the perfectionist still remained. In a chapter entitled 'The Case Against Roots' Lewis contrasted the New World with the Old: 'Everything that is obnoxious in the Family is encountered in the latter: all that man gains by escape from the Family is offered by the former. The United States is full of people who have escaped from their families, figuratively'.[2] Indeed, the movement from Old World to New 'resembles death in many respects - but death for the devout; a rebirth, and reunion, in a better world'.[3] This was a second meaning of René, inseparable from the first, capturing his creator's hope in America: 'It has seemed to me that in the West, and especially on this Continent, there is an awakening which amounts to an Enlightenment. ... I believe that this war, or perhaps the next, will make the continuance of the monstrosities in question impossible' (321). With the allegorical destruction of Europe by war - the Fire - René's indifference to roots had for Lewis much to recommend, as well as to condemn, contained within it. There was a side of Lewis which would not abandon the idea of a Cosmic Superman who could reach up beyond family and race to a more universal plane of being. His own imagination still reached effortlessly beyond Earth to that tabula rasa plain upon which he constructed the Magnetic City of The Childermass; in 1955 he revisited it, adding Monstre Gai and Malign Fiesta. There is no telling what forbidding, non-terrestrial landscapes might have accompanied these works had Lewis's sight remained intact until his death in 1957. As it was, he went blind in 1951, so that Self Condemned was written in the dark. Harding's dissatisfaction with the light in London may have been a tragic flaw, but it was one with which his creator could sympathise.

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1. At Cornell there is a long draft-ending to Self Condemned in which Harding is brought back to London.
2. America and Cosmic Man, p. 167.
3. Ibid, p. 28.

If Lewis's feelings towards his self-condemned hero were ambivalent it was because the new man, after his painful exile, looked back over his long career and, confronting himself as the tabula rasa man of the twenties, still found much to value in the old. In Part III of Self Condemned, the confrontation resolves itself into a question: Momaco or London? Momaco, where Harding is once again truly at home among his brilliant conceptions, stands for the abstract, the imaginative, the planning intellect and the executive will of man, the world as it ought to be; London, for which Hester is pining, stands for the organic, the historic, the absurdity of the human condition, the world as it is. They stay in Momaco, but the result is disastrous. For all his ambivalence, nothing could be clearer than Lewis's final verdict on perfectionism: Harding is indistinguishable from the academic marionettes around him.

With the fall of yet another Lewisian superman, Self Condemned shows its family resemblance to all of Lewis's later novels. In the end, it is Hester's point of view which prevails, just as, in The Revenge for Love, it is Margot rather than Victor who has the right sense of reality; in The Vulgar Streak it is April, in The Red Priest Mary, and not their ubermensch husbands, who embody the highest truth. Throughout all four novels we find the same juxtaposition: the woman, with her steady self-possession and loyalty, representing what The Revenge for Love termed a rugged unrevolutionary principle founded upon sentiment, not intellect; the man, striving to realise himself by acts of intellectual, volitional or physical force and discovering only emptiness. We do not have to identify the man as Lewis or the woman as his wife in order to realise that in the ultra-privacy of the artist's domestic life and in the inner sanctum of his mind a profound transformation had occurred which inspired him to see such figures as the savage Cubo-Vorticist, the callous sexual hunter, the brilliant actor and the detached intellectual in an entirely new light. Like Yeats, Lewis dismissed his old circus animals in the end for a new beginning in the foul rag-and-bone shop of the heart.

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