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POLITICAL TRAJECTORIES IN THE PAINTING OF P. WYNDHAM LEWIS

2 VOLUMES

PH.D. THESIS

UNIVERSITY OF DURHAM

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL ADMINISTRATION

1989

THOMAS ANDREW NORMAND

VOLUME 1

Text.

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21 DEC 1990

DECLARATION

I, Thomas Andrew Normand, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 100,000 words long, has been written by me. That it is a record of work carried out by me, and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

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For my parents

Alice and Andrew Normand

with much love.

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A B S T R A C T

Thomas Andrew Normand: Political Trajectories in the Painting of P. Wyndham Lewis 1900-1950

This thesis presents an analysis of the political dimension to the paintings of Percy Wyndham Lewis (1882-1957). Through an exegesis of the discreet and latent "voices" in Lewis's paintings the ideological parameters of his thought world are disclosed. These imperatives are examined for their display of political predispositions, for values and attitudes, which reveal a loading towards specific socio-cultural standards. In so far as these standards can be identified with historically relevant political programmes they become manifestos for political actions. Or, at the very least, they can be seen to exist as critical and prescriptive social insights.

Importantly, the focus of this examination and interpretation remains the visual image and its related texts. A key aspect of both the methodology and argument within this thesis, insists that the visual image is the bearer of meaning in both its subject matter and technique. Values are communicated not only in reference to the thing displayed, but, in the manner of the display. Hence, an analysis of the intellectual and formal strategies employed by Lewis in his painting becomes a central concern of the thesis.

Finally, the thesis rounds on the actual nature of Lewis's politics as revealed in his approach to art. While it is accepted that the mediation from the political to the painted throws up many and substantial barriers, the thesis insists that a political reading of Lewis's creative work is not only appropriate but necessary. In offering just such a reading the author hopes to transcend the boundaries between the disciplines of Art History and Sociology.

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For typing this thesis, and staying most of the time (fairly) even tempered, I would like to thank Dawn Waddell. And, of course, I would like to thank Carey Normand, for everything.

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CHAPTER I: Introduction - Holding the Mirror up to Politics

If, as Wyndham Lewis himself admitted, "all art must be a political expression to some extent", [1] then much of what follows might be considered redundant. For words exhausted in proving a truism are clearly a superfluous excess. But here, as so often in his writings, Lewis's resigned speculation masked a deliberate provocation. Concentration on the relationship between art and politics, particularly amongst modern artists for whom the integrity of the painting was sacrosanct, was an uncommon activity. And to insist on the political dimension to the exclusion of other elements, was clearly perverse.

Of course, the ambiguity of the phrase "to some extent" hid a multitude of possible interpretations. Was the political dimension a core and source of the work of art, was it one element among many, equally important, component parts, or was it simply a mildly disturbing, vulgarly insistent visitor on the periphery of a private activity? What makes this question interesting is the context in which it appeared. In the first quarter of this century the pervasive and dominant readings of artistic activity were formalist. Advanced artists, and critics, in all parts of Western Europe, had abandoned a discourse orientated towards, say, the mimetic dimensions of art, the moral, educative or even evaluative qualities of artworks, to concentrate on the image as a thing in itself,

discreet and autonomous. France, it might be said was the first nation to consciously indulge this process, evidenced in the theory of late romantics like Gautier and Baudelaire.[2] And France was followed, at varying distances of years and decades by Germany, Italy, Britain and eventually perhaps most conclusively, by the United States of America.[3] Within this intellectual paradigm, this overarching discourse, the political dimension to creativity was usually the last to be acknowledged,if it was acknowedged at all. Politics was, and is, a worldly activity, pragmatic and functional, with values largely opportunistic, and therefore, inconstant. By contrast the aesthetic dimension was enobled by a concern with the esoteric, spiritual and metaphysical aspects of human Being. Art was the bearer of transcendent "truth". Lewis's introduction of the vulgarly political into this ideal world, was like releasing the satyrs upon some innocent and unsuspecting nymphs.

Perhaps the significance of this development is better understood when the history of formalism, as an ideational currency amongst modern art and artists, is opened out. An important reference point here is the philosopher and aesthetician Immanuel Kant's Critique of Judgement.[4] Kant was probably the first significant thinker to isolate the aesthetic, ie. "judgements of taste", from all other dimensions of human activity. Interestingly he does this by what seems to be a sleight of hand. Kant's theory was teleological, that is to say he understood all

phenomena in relation to its functioning within and towards a "purposive whole", he understood all constituating elements in relation to their telos or end product. Logically, then, any aspect of human activity must be understood in tandem with its promotion of a given end or purpose. However Kant argued that judgements of taste were, in fact, free from concepts. "Purposiveness" he suggested "can be without purpose", and specifically it was the aesthetic object or experience which existed without reference to any design or cause. Aesthetic judgements were here of a singular and exceptional order, they were free from worldly perceptions.

Moreover the aesthetic experience was to be understood as entirely subjective. Objective principles or standards of taste dissolve when confronted with the experiential contact between individual and artwork. For example Kant wrote:

> "It is quite plain that in order to say that the object <u>is beautiful</u>, and to show that I have taste, everything turns on the meaning which I can give to this representation, and not on any factor which makes me dependent on the real existence of the object".[5]

Conditions in the object, arcane and ethereal, provoke an empathetic and harmonious disposition within the self which allows for judgements of taste. This, in turn, makes available the claim that an object is beautiful.

Given the intense subjectivity of this interaction, it is surprising that Kant should claim that aesthetic judgements also have an objective status. In the first instance Kant insisted that aesthetic judgements were free

from concepts, ideas and associations. In the opening section of The Analytic of the Beautiful he wrote:

> "The judgement of taste is...not a cognitive judgement, and so not logical, but is aesthetic". [6]

and continued:

> "Taste is the faculty of estimating of an object or a mode of representation by means of a delight or aversion apart from any interest". [7]

Taste and aesthetic judgements are "disinterested", free from any communicable, organising concept. Hence beauty is its own truth, but a truth without any concrete content. Kant insisted that:

> "Everyone must allow that a judgement on the beautiful, which is tinged with the slightest interest, is very partial and not a pure judgement of taste. One must not be in the least prepossessed in favour of the existence of things, but must preserve complete indifference in this respect, in order to play the judge in matters of taste". [8]

This disinterested, non-conceptual status of aesthetic judgements, however subjective, is precisely the condition which, for Kant, evoked their universal and objective status. A final quote:

> "This definition of the beautiful is deductible from the foregoing definition of it as an object of delight apart from any interest. For where one is conscious that his delight in an object is with him independent of interest, it is inevitable that he should look on the object as one containing a ground of delight for all men. For, since the delight is not based on any inclination of the subject....but the subject feels himself completely free in respect of the liking which he accords to the object, he can find as reason for his delight no personal conditions to which his own subjective self might alone be party... The result is that the judgement of taste, with its attendant consciousness of detachment from all interest, must involve a claim to validity to all men, and must do so apart from universality attached to objects, ie. there must be coupled with it a claim to subjective universality. [9]

Here judgements of taste were a public property, disinterested pleasure in the object being a resource of the "sensus communis".

Broadly, then, Kant established aesthetic judgement as part of the subjective sense perceptions of humanity. In itself it was free from any history, system of ideas, form of knowledge or conceptual structure. It was a purely disinterested pleasure, an intuitive awareness of the beauty and therefore the truth of the subjective emotion engendered by the experience of the object. This subjective insight, it was argued, was a common property of the entire worldly community, it was universally understood, though it could never be literally stated. An object, we may experience as beautiful, we will know it to be so, but it will be impossible to articulate the qualities which make it so. In conclusion, the comprehension of beauty is a category which is intellectually unknowable, but remains a universal fact of being.

Whatever the internal difficulties of Kant's Critique of Judgement, historically, it set the conditions wherein the discourse of aesthetic evaluation could be circumscribed by purely formal considerations, for two important points have emerged here. Firstly that the artwork, and judgements regarding the value of artworks, have been bracketed off, marked out as a special category with references which are entirely exclusive. Consequently it became more difficult to evaluate art in

terms of moral, ethical, social or political categories. These were, quite simply, not the province of art or art criticism. Secondly an assumption is made that judgements constructed by an individual have a universal and, hence, authoritative character. In one sense this gave a disproportionate power to the emergent figure of the professional art critic, whose very occupation was the trading of judgements based on evaluations of the technical "manner" of the object.

Such processes are always more keenly observed through empirical instances. In Britain the flashpoint of a contest between an emergent formalism and more traditional procedures of evaluation occurred, most prominently, in the famous libel trial of 1878. When Whistler sued Ruskin over remarks made the previous year, he was asserting the autonomous integrity of the artwork above all other considerations. Whistler's characteristically extravagant gesture embodied the idea that the work of art was an inviolable statement, precious and sacrosanct, and open to judgements only regarding its internal properties. The most fundamental paradigm of the Aesthetic Movement was established here, and this was the most significant precursor to the modernism which Lewis was self-consciously goading in his insistence on the political dimension to art. Of course the targets of Lewis's subtle hostility were neither Whistler nor his collaborators, but his own contemporaries. Specifically, in this instance, the heirs to Whistler's legacy, Roger Fry,

Clive Bell and their circle of Bloomsbury aesthetes. The theory of "significant form" which Bell developed in Art was a gross distortion of Kantian aesthetics. But this reductive theory carried all the principal elements of formalist method. Objects here were emptied of content and were evaluated only in terms of their internal construction:

> "...lines and colours combined in a particular way, certain forms and relations of forms, stir our aesthetic emotions". [10]

Importantly here the universalising dimension so prominent in Kant's theory was revised:

> "All sensitive people agree that there is a peculiar emotion provoked by works of art". [11]

The category "sensitive people" being a culturally significant sub-category, or more properly, an alternative to Kant's "sensus communis". [12] Modernism, however, had become bound, in Britain as elsewhere, to a system of values insisting upon the primacy of technical and formal study in the evaluation of art works. A process which Lewis certainly objected to, but which had become a dominant currency in the discourse of culture and art in the first quarter of the twentieth century.

Aesthetic theory and art criticism, however, cannot be divorced from the broader project of Modernism itself. In a sense the processes outlined above were constitutive agents in the reshaping of culture conjoined to the development of industrial capitalism. Modernism

established a framework wherein dislocated artistic practices could assert a set of evaluative criteria independent of the idea of commodity and the machinations of the market place. In many ways this was the motive behind the project of the avant-gardes. Of course the Modern Movement, like the avant-gardes, was quickly absorbed into the very systems they set out to bypass. But the establishment of an evaluative independence, or "distinterestedness", succeeded in creating a persuasive rhetoric within which the discussion of cultural activity was consigned. This rhetoric has formed a powerful axis within the discipline of art history itself, successively shaping the terms of reference within the discipline, and framing its critical perceptions. Consequently art historical method has generally reflected and reiterated the devices of formalist aesthetic theory and art criticism. Asking questions relating to the internal construction of the image, the relation of an image to other works by the artist, the relation of the image to historical precedents by other artists. Often this is augmented by discussion of subject matter, iconography, and the broader "meanings" of subject matter, iconology. Always, however, there is the insistent belief that the subject of art history is the internal life of the work of art. And the work of art is an autonomous element existing within an exclusive environment.

Recently, reflections on art historical method have been characterised by scepticism and overt criticism. [13]

Increasingly the idea of an independent art history, like the idea of an autonomous art, with an internal logic and development of its own, has been reassessed. This has been occasioned by two factors. Dissent within the discipline concerning the often redundant, self referential insights which traditional methods provoked. That is to say an increasing dissatisfaction with the products of art historical enquiry, particularly in the narrowness of their focus. And, the increasing encroachment of other disciplines into art historical method. It is characteristic of the "new art history" that the inclusion of cultural history, semiotics, varieties of structuralism, and those methods gathered under the umbrella "post modernism", have all contributed to the field of study. In many ways this has produced a considerable challenge to the discipline, for it is forced to re-evaluate its procedures and reconsider its intentions. This type of challenge can, and has strengthened the academic standing of art history, but it also produces weakness. The intense empirical edge of art history can often be blunted in the cloud of cultural history. While the competing, unresolved and often contradictory methods of post-modern theory can produce confusion rather than results. Adding one more discipline to the list of interlopers might then seem undesirable, but a sociological perspective can afford considerable advantages to art historical studies.

Of course sociological procedures have often been inconscient elements of art historical analyses. Most obviously studies of the nature of patronage and, more recently, studies of the workings of the academies, have included concepts and methods which have a sociological bias. Clearly it is impossible to examine the influence of organisational and institutional bodies, functioning as social mediators to the specific creative practice, without reverting to sociological categories. Similarly the more pertinent study of the nature of the art market, and the role of the dealer within the marketplace, necessarily includes study of financial structures, networks of appraisal and criticism and group interaction which are overtly sociological concerns. It might also be argued that the phenomenon of the avant-gardes, their emergence, internal dynamics and relationship with the official culture is a study on the margins of art history and sociology. Where the procedures of art history have removed themselves from the study of the internal construction of the individual object or artist, they will constantly touch upon these areas. But the key area of this interdisciplinary method is the most problematical. For whereas art history has principally been concerned with the study of autonomous objects, independent individuals and circumscribed developments, sociology has focussed on integrated structures, interrelated classes and unified, if diverse, processes. Academically this gives rise to the famous dualism "art" and "society". An

historically determined dichotomy which is intellectually worthless, for it makes the assumption that these are discreet phenomena when they are clearly interdependent, as Lewis himself insisted. It is in exploring this area, the essential unity of artistic and social practices, that the richest finds are often to be made.

At this level the interface of sociological and art historical procedures can be broken down into three convenient categories. Firstly there is the general inter-relationship between artistic practices and social forms. This would include not only the study of social structures and mediating organisations as outlined above, but an analyses of the expressions of consciousness articulated in art works and their relation to the practical society. Secondly there is the complex relationship of the individual artist to the social world. Naturally, the complicating factors here include the difficulties in imputing motives to individuals, accounting for personality traits and psychological characteristics, and assessing the significance of social forms in the construction of individual types. Finally, and entirely imputed in the above, the relationship of the artistic practise to overarching ideological characteristics embedded in any social form. Here the principal obstacle remains the difficulty in concretising the concept of ideology. For any social system will include competing ideologies which are not only separated by classes, but exist within classes and across classes. [14] In this sense

the opening out of a sociological framework in conjunction with art historical methods probably imposes more problems than it solves.

However there are clear advantages to such a programme. Here, art history will be rooted in its context. The false duality between art and society can be overcome as the relationship between socio-cultural structures and artistic processes are evidenced. And the precise interaction of social formations and individual constructions can be displayed. Most pertinently, it becomes possible to see how "all art must be a political expression", to distinguish the appearance of artistic autonomy from the reality which Lewis continually confessed. The reality of the artworks intimate consanguinity with its social world.

However desirable the logic of such a project, it is impossible to ignore its problems. Chief amongst these, particularly where the project involves the study of an individual artist and his work, is the problem of individuality and agency. The idea of individualism, particularly creative individualism, is itself linked to the recent history of Western societies. [15] Certainly the notion that a free consciousness drifts at will amongst a chaos of phenomena and experience would not have been available to, say, Velasquez, or Leonardo, or the makers of Egyptian hieroglyphs. Despite the historicity of this concept it remains an important factor in contemporary

understanding. For Lewis, the individual was everything and his enitre life's work was a means of recovering and understanding his individuality. Moreover, within art history this type of atomism has been endemic and is very often a guiding principle behind the idea of the monograph. But within a sociological framework it is the interaction between social being and consciousness which must be brought to the fore.

Naturally within a complex social totality a multiplicity of values, ideals and attitudes are available and inform the actions of individuals. Dominant idioms may shape the ideational atmosphere of a particular social configuration and become merged with an overarching value system redefined as practical truth or common sense.[16] Consciousness then is not occurring in a vacuum, but is always responding to sets of material conditions. That is to say, is responding to relations of production, to organisational structures, to political systems, to intellectual and cultural practices. Consequently, dominant idioms are not natural, but essential elements of a material, social environment. In a sense then, individuals repeat and reconstruct the orthodoxies of thought permitted within a specific configuration. But individuals also act as agents. There exists a dialogue between social form and participant agent wherein the individual acts upon the social world. Not simply reiterating its values, but reinventing them, projecting changes and developments. Hence in any given historical

instance an individual is shaped by a pre-existing social world, but simultaneously reacts upon that society, provoking change through agency. [17] Importantly the parameters of agency, and hence the possible types of actions which an individual may engage in, are established within the social configuration itself, functioning as available forms of discourse, and practical closures to action, and establishing boundaries to agency. [18]

Difficulties multiply within such a construct. Theoretically it is almost impossible to calculate the nuances and possible alternatives existing within the ideational parameters of complex societies. This of course insitigates the problem of accounting for the range of types of action and agency. And, the points where competing frames of reference intersect, creating contradictions. Moreover, given these circumstances it is difficult to evaluate the extent and influence of individual action, while always this equation must be balanced against significant controlling factors within the social configuration itself.

The range and depth of these variables can produce considerable trepidation, but it is at this point that the procedures of historical analysis become significant. Where sociology might provoke important questions regarding the relationship between consciousness and social being, these questions cannot be resolved purely in terms of theory. [19] Indeed it is in the empirical study of specific historical

instances that the complex interchanges between the individual and society can be fully realised.

Empirical study brings back into focus the individual as agent. But here the individual is no longer an atom circulating freely in a vacuum. Now the individual is recongised as an agent shaped by a specific history and responding, often critically and subversively, to that situation. Responses can be seen to take place within a context. This context exists as a socio-economic formation, a cultural history, a political nexus, an occupational paradigm and a practical life experience. Responses, in the shape of values and attitudes are located, and, in diverse ways bear the markings of their location. A procedure acknowledging this complex interaction can reveal the precise relationship between social form and individual action, or the creative act. Which is only to repeat Lewis's own insight:

> "It is not easy to establish the frontier at which an art begins and at which life leaves off. And this is of course largely on account of the fact that life does not leave off when art begins; and that art, on its side, does not disappear altogether even in the very midst of life and of ACTION". [20]

Though Lewis here has substituted art for individual agency, it is only because, for him, individuality was creative agency.

Nevertheless, in terms of method empirical study cannot assume, unilaterally, a crisis-free and unproblematical structure. In the first instance were empiricism to produce nothing but a series of dead facts

then clearly its use as an interpretative and analytical tool would be severely limited. For it would only repeat the inherent value systems within the world it examined. Simultaneously, empirical method should eschew any a priori frame of reference, any theory which will determine the outcome of the study. In fact the method demands the examination and analysis of a particular historical instance, and, an explanation of the particular sets of conditions which make the phenomenal form of that instance possible. In other words it is a history built upon a set of predicates which are themselves historical, and can themselves be empirically demonstrated. To make this point plain, the history of an individual's aesthetic responses to his cultural environment is predicated upon specific conditions. The shape and nature of the social world, relationships of power and status within that world, the cultural uniform of the specific society, the history of ideas like "individuality", "aesthetics", "art". These conditions have a history and this history can be disclosed. Analysis of individual responses, then, the history of agency, is fashioned against this empirical background. In consequence the problem of an a priori explanatory theory is removed, while the difficulty of simply reflecting a value-laden empiricism is bypassed, where the historical conditions are subject to a sufficient critical analysis.

Accepting this, which is only to accept the need for an empirical rather than a theorietical or abstract validation

of history, a key problem emerges. Empirical studies of the development of institutions and organisations, or of groups and movements, are clearly possible for these things have an objective dimension. They create constitutions, establish rules, make decisions, apply pressures at specific social sites. An individual actions, however, are more circumspect, often shrouded, or cloaked in privacy. The difficulty emerges here, of imputing intentionality to an individual's actions. At the very least this implies privileged insight. That, at a temporal distance, and through the fog of history, it is possible to know precisely why an individual behaved as he or she did, and, of course, that an analysis of documentation has a status and authority that is other than subjective. The problem of intentionality is intensified in Lewis's case. He insisted, in the second number of Blast, that:

> "You must talk with two tongues, if you don't wish to cause confusion... You must be a duet in everything".[21]

by which he meant that creative insight would emerge from contradition and conflict. This was accentuated very often by his narrative and polemical strategy, where Lewis would deliberately contradict himself or create ambiguities in order to avoid being tied to a specific position. Clearly, ascribing motives and intentions under these circumstances creates extra difficulties.

In part this difficulty is resolved by the very abundance of written material Lewis provided. Besides the visual documents of the paintings themselves, there exists

a mass of published material. Lewis's publications embrace the entire gamut of his experience. He offered analyses of contemporary painting, philosophical and sociological speculations, aesthetic and artistic theory, besides the various novels and volumes of biography which were designed to publicise and justify his attitudes. Despite the strategy of internal contradiction which often inhabited these works it is possible to discern in them a remarkably consistent set of values. Furthermore, there is the relationship of his published material, to the public postures he adopted in response to specific cultural crises. Lewis's intentions can be gauged by juxtaposing the key elements of his art and theory against the background of his beliefs and actions. This background, in its turn, sits in a culturally and historically specific landscape. Hence it is possible, using empirically verifiable procedures, to tease out the purposes and motives of Lewis's art.

Such a project remains extensive and awesome. Consequently the narrowing down of the focus, to present a finite picture, makes considerable sense. Political trajectories in Lewis's painting were possibly the most pertinent and revealing aspect of all his activities. Certainly this excludes other important dimensions, and marginalises even more. For example, the issue of Lewis's attitude towards religion is peripheral here, the thought world of his novels largely unexamined, his ruminations on

literary history banished. These were important constituent practices in the formation of his world view, but it is possible to provide a more concentrated analysis by a close examination of the political dimension. An exegesis of the political implications of Lewis's painting avoids the redundancy of a purely formalist reading of the works. And, escapes the closed referentiality of a developmental or sequential history. More fundamentally the political dimension to painting has, in the twentieth century, largely replaced other significant historical roles, for example, religious iconography and the celebration of royal and national majesty. While in Lewis's own case politics were a central, if often discreet, aspect of his practices.

It is important to stress that, in this instance, politics does not enter art as a primary dimension of the work. Political formations, because they remain an eminent dimension of a lived experience, were an inconscient element of an artist's thought world. They enter into art elliptically, as it were, an unavoidable fact of social existence. Of course there have been obvious examples of art as raw political expression in the twentieth century. Socialist Realism in the Soviet Union, some aspects of Surrealism in continental Europe, the Social Realist movement in America in the early 1930s, and most pertinently the Artists International established in Britain in 1933. But it is not the idea of art as a conduit for politics that is under study here. What is to be examined, is the

means by which a set of cultural attitudes can be moulded into a political or proto-political position and find their expression discreetly, in the form and content of a work of art. In this instance politics are never the motive force for the art work, they remain, however, a key dynamic, for the work itself is wrapped in an indissoluble political configuration. Obviously this is to take the broadest view of politics. For here political activity moves beyond the organisation of political parties, and participation in electoral processes. The political represents the entire organisation of social life, and the multiple and complex ways which individuals collaborate in social activities. Though these forms of activity may well, and often do, relate back to specific party political practices, they more often are revealed in values and attitudes which display latent political predispositions.

Such a display is, naturally, mediated in works of art. Paintings, after all, "live" in terms of line and colour and form, and the interaction of these abstract phenomena. Moreover it is largely in relation to these phenomena that the quality of a work of art can be gauged. Yet, just as manifest content is never neutral, neither is abstract form. Form itself is the bearer of value and an expression of the artist's volition. Form, as much as content, is there to be dissected in order to comprehend the politics and political history of a painting. And it too can only be properly analysed empirically, for theoretical speculation alone has

a tendency to generate a self-sustaining circularity of argument.

This thesis will examine political trajectories in the art of Wyndham Lewis. Through empirical examination it will delineate, dissect and analyse the political dimensions which flood his painting. Sometimes as undercurrent, sometimes a mere ripple, more often a genuine spate. It will begin, and constantly refer to the paintings themselves as a primary resource and the bearers of a politicised vision. In opening out this vision, revealing its structure and nature, the thesis will refer back to the multiplicity of texts Lewis undertook to complete his creative project. Only a few of these texts were overtly political. More often, like the paintings themselves, they would mask their political intentions in a network of diverse projections. The specificity of Lewis's painting will be located, both in the artistic milieu he inhabited and in the historically constructed aesthetic ideology he inherited. Finally, Lewis's paintings will be contextualised within the socio-cultural totality he was bound to, a social totality which established the frontiers of his actions and informed the ideational matrix of his painting.

Always, Lewis will be regarded as an active agent, thought not an autonomous or "free" agent. His actions were shaped, directed and bounded by the social configuration he inhabited, and reconstituted through his agency. It is where Lewis pushed at the limits of these frontiers that

he was most interesting. And, as we shall see, it is because he insisted on pushing to extremes, in offering opposition, that he was an extraordinary artist. Moreover it was because Lewis's art was itself a subtle extremism, and partial negation of official values, that he was the first to recognise the central contention of this thesis:

> "It is somewhat depressing to consider how as an artist one is always holding the mirror up to politics without knowing it".[22]

CHAPTER I: Footnotes

1. Wyndham Lewis, The Art of Being Ruled, New York, 1972, p. 406.

2. See, in relation to this point, George Plekhanov's essay "On Art for Arts Sake", in David Craig, ed., Marxists on Literature, London, 1975. He cites Gautier's biographical note on Baudelaire, praising the poet for upholding "the absolute autonomy of art and for not admitting that poetry had any aim but itself, or any mission but to excite in the soul of the reader the sensation of beauty, in the absolute sense of the term", p. 272.

3. I am thinking here of the zenith, reached in the 1950s, by that paragon of formalist criticism, Clement Greenberg.

4. Kant's Critique of Judgement was published in 1790, all the following quotations come from the translation by J.C. Meredith, Oxford, 1980.

5. Kant, trans. Meredith, ibid, p. 43.

6. Kant, trans. Meredith, ibid., p. 41.

7. Kant, trans. Meredith, ibid., p. 50.

8. Kant, trans. Meredith, ibid., p. 43.

9. Kant, trans. Meredith, ibid., p. 50-51.

10. Clive Bell, Art, London, 1921, p. 8.

11. Clive Bell, Art, ibid., p. 6.

12. For a more complete critique of this point see R. Williams, The Bloomsbury Fraction in Problems in Materialism and Culture, London, 1980.

13. Witness the concern in the recently published The New Art History, A.L. Rees and F. Burzello, eds., London, 1986. And the revisions demanded in Hans Beltings The End of the History of Art?, Chicago, 1987.

14. These areas have been examined in detail, at the level of pure theory, by Raymond Williams in Marxism and Literature, Oxford, 1977. And to some extent empirically, though in relation to literature in Williams Culture and Society, London, 1958.

15. See R. Williams, Keywords, Glasgow, 1976, pp. 133-136.

16. See Williams, Maxism and Literature, op.cit., pp. 55-71 and pp. 108-114.

17. We might take Williams' suggestion as categoric here:

> "any procedure which categorically excludes the specificity of all individuals and the formative reference of all real relations, by whatever formula of assigned significance, is in the end reductive".

Marxism and Literature, op.cit., p. 198.

18. The italian philosopher Lucio Colletti characterised this relationship in this manner:

> "The distinguishing feature of consciousness is, as we know, that while it is part of social being and is therefore internal to life, at the same time it reflects on the latter and embraces it mentally within itself".

Lucio Colletti, From Rousseau to Lenin, London 1976, p. 11.

19. For a detailed argument on this proposition see E.P. Thomson The Poverty of Theory, London, 1978.

20. Wyndham Lewis, Art in a Machine Age, in W. Michel and C. Fox, Wyndham Lewis on Art, London, 1969, p. 268.

21. Wyndham Lewis, Blast 2, Santa Barbara, 1981, p. 91.

22. Wyndham lewis, Blasting and Bombardiering, London, 1982, p. 4.

CHAPTER II: One Synthetic and Various Ego

Early in 1915 Wyndham Lewis completed his first major oil painting. [1] This was the large, and striking work now know as The Crowd (Fig. 1). [2] Here was an uncompromisingly modern painting on a monumental scale. A testament both to Lewis's aspirations for presidential status within the English avant garde, and to the uniqueness of his artistic vision. Significantly this canvas also gave evidence of a critical depth to Lewis's creativity. For, in The Crowd, he began to explore a series of themes and issues which were partly philosophical, partly sociological, and partly political. In consequence the formalist orientations of the Modern Movement were disrupted, and Lewis began to introduce into modern painting a value system which was at once consentient and dissenting.

In purely formal terms The Crowd exhibited a number of technical innovations which demonstrated Lewis's affiliations with the European avant gardes of the pre-war period. Flat bands of raw colour here created an abstract maze-like pattern which described the complex grid of an anonymous urban cityscape. These neo-cubist armatures are combined at one point, in the lower left quarter of the painting, with lettering. The inclusion of the half-formed word "ENCLO" was a devise which made reference to the Cubist practise of accentuating the flatness of the picture plane by allowing titles, words and letters to traverse the

surface of the canvas. Hence invoking a tacit acknowledgement of the autonomy of the painting. A similar technical devise had been employed by Futurist artists, for example in Severini's Nord-Sud-Metro of 1912, and to a lesser extent in Boccioni's States of Mind 1: The Farewells, 1911. [3] Closer to home Lewis had clearly borrowed the geometric and stylised figures, the insect-like masses who crawl through this city, from similar examples in the work of David Bomberg and William Roberts; these geometric cyphers, who represent the teeming urban crowd, bear a remarkable resemblance to the Cubistic figures in Bomberg's Vision of Ezekial, 1912, and Robert's Study for the Return of Ulysses of 1913 (Fig. 2). Furthermore, the standing figure in the centre of the canvas is almost a direct transcription of the pose employed in Jacob Epstein's "primitivist" sculpture Cursed Be the Day Wherein I was Born (Fig. 3), begun in 1913.

Despite these, perfectly legitimate, borrowings from the contemporary scene, The Crowd stands as a considerable and important statement in modern English painting. The uncompromising abstraction, the heavy and rigid geometries, the colouration, by turns acidic and deadeningly visceral, all point to an alert modern intelligence exploring the most advanced avenues of contemporary artistic practise. Yet at a deeper level in The Crowd Lewis was offering a largely critical response to many of the directions which the Modern Movement had taken. Indeed the sub-text of The Crowd was an indictment of contemporary culture itself.

At least three interrelated themes construct the ideational matrix of The Crowd. Firstly, there is the concept of the urban cityscape as a metaphor for modern life, depersonalised, regulated, produced by and reproducing standardised patterns of thought. Secondly, the notion of the urban crowd as an undifferentiated mass devoid of individual personality and displaying a common tendency to incognant, instinctive actions. And thirdly, the idea of revolution as romantic revolt, consequent upon the massing of individuals within the city, and dependent upon the crowds susceptibility to unreasoned, emblematic rhetoric. This last idea was given a curiously literal symbolism in the flagbearers who seem to act as leaders within the crowd. Significantly two of these leader figures carry the red flag of socialism, while the other the tricolour of French republicanism.

In the case of the first two themes, these could easily be read as a painterly study of sociological issues with a distinctly radical bias. The themes are, after all, alienation in the first instance, and the standardisation of life, determined by modern industrial society, in the second. However it was in the third area that Lewis revealed the true nature of his critical intervention. For Lewis's painting of The Crowd was to all intents and purposes an impeachment of the crowd. It revealed, above all, his contempt for that distinctly modern phenomenon, the masses. Especially where those masses carried with them the emblems of their democratic ambitions, the flags of

republicanism and socialism. Hence Lewis depicted a teeming mass of insect-like figures mechanically pursuing utopian aspirations unaware of the larger mechanism, in this case the city itself, which sets the parameters of all their actions. The tragedy of this vision was compounded in the description of individuals as uniform mechanisms. For, at the point where the individual demanded self-fulfilment through mass action, the personality itself disappeared. The individual has become an undifferentiated atom within the crowd. Here was that sceptical view of human potential which formed the very foundation of Lewis's creative project.

Lewis however was, in 1915, a committed modernist who chose a neo-cubist form of expression to examine these issues. This was exceptional, and somewhat contradictory, for the Modern Movement had generally, in a rather vague and romantic manner, been supportive of mass action and radical politics. [4] Futurism, in some ways the touchstone of Lewis's own modernism, had shown a particular affection for the rioting crowd. Indeed. F.T. Marinetti in the Founding and Manifesto of Futurism had proclaimed:

> "We will sing of great crowds excited by work, by pleasure, and by riot; we will sing of the multicoloured, polyphonic tides of revolution in modern capitals..." [5]

Clearly the tone here was one of exultation, yet despite some overlaps in the political disposition of Marinetti and Lewis, [6] it was undoubtedly the case that Marinetti's mystical homily to the crowd was the direct opposite of Lewis's negative and sceptical vision. In many ways then

Lewis stood within the Modern Movement but was not, in any conventional sense, of the Modern Movement. It was this contradiction which made The Crowd, and Lewis's work generally, a unique and disconcerting phenomenon. For Lewis's painting was aesthetically consistent with Modernism, but in all other ways, dissident.

Lewis's dissent, however, was not a crude politicising in paint. The system of values he began to explore in The Crowd ran deep into the philosophical and cultural c ritique he had developed in his early life, and was to stretch out into that vast, intense body of work which has become his legacy. His scepticism, littered with dead-ends and pitfalls, has produced one of the most astonishing and richly-layered bodies of visual material in modern English art.

"During those days, I began to get a philosophy: but not a very good one..." [7]

Lewis was a few months short of his thirty-third birthday when he painted The Crowd. [8] This made him a comparatively late starter given the age-profile of avant garde figures on the continent. His artistic apprenticeship had been long and stumbling, plagued by false starts and crises of confidence. Perhaps the clearest evidence of this was his indecision as to the nature of his future career for Lewis had already begun to develop his talent for writing. [9] Indeed it was in his

fictional writings of the pre-war period that much of the theoretical framework for his painting first emerged.

Biographical details of Lewis's early life remain sketchy, [10] but several markers can be laid down which help map his intellectual universe. After an unpromising academic career at Rugby School Lewis began to attend the Slade School of Art in 1898. Importantly he was trained in drawing by Henry Tonks. [11] Tonks taught on the classical model, encouraging precise, anatomically correct drawings from the nude. An early drawing by Lewis Male Nude, Standing (Fig. 4) of 1900 shows the fruit of this tuition. A crisp, taut, controlled line provides a classical moulding for the figure, while the musculature is alive and active. Taken as a whole this drawing was, of its kind, exemplary. Certainly this was something that Tonks was aware of, writing in 1918, after Lewis had abandoned his classical training in response to modernism, Tonks recalled:

> "I have a very clear remembrance of those exact and delicate figure drawings you did while you were at the Slade and which were reproduced in the 'Slade' and I assure you I was most disappointed you did not develop on these lines." [12]

The fears Tonks expressed here were undoubtedly premature for Lewis was, and remained, an exceptional draughtsman. In a significant degree it was this early commitment to the role of line in art which became the formal standard of his critical intervention in post-war culture. [13]

On leaving the Slade in 1901 Lewis began to travel on the continent leading what was largely a bohemian

lifestyle. In 1902 he travelled with his friend Spencer Gore [14] to Spain to study the work of Velazquez and Goya. During 1903 he took a studio in Paris and began to mix with other exiled artists. By the October of 1904 he was copying the work of Frans Hals in Haarlem. And, between 1904 and the December of 1908, he spent time drawing and writing in Hamburg, Paris, Munich, and the coasts of Spain and Brittany. This was an extended period of apprenticeship for Lewis and it is significant that it was spent studying the works of the Northern European tradition. For Goya's painful satires and the extraordinary portraiture of Velazquez and Hals informed Lewis's predisposition towards an intellectualist art which contested the relationships of Existence and Being.

By far the best record of Lewis's activities during this period is to be found in his letters to his mother. [15] These letters which are, in their tone, confessional, pleading and braggardly, show the young Lewis seriously involved in developing those skills first encouraged by the `Slade'. He was working almost exclusively on figure drawing. In 1906 he wrote from Paris:

> "I have joined an evening class, and draw every evening from the nude. In the day I draw in my room.
> I shall be infinitely thankful if I can get a little money for models, I must try a dealer or two soon." [16]

and later in 1907,

> "I will do a dozen extremely careful heads in pen and ink - to which I may add an etching or two: with these I might at once get some portraits to do since they will be extremely good." [17]

Two points emerge from these statements. Lewis was, in 1907, content to work within the conventional and highly conservative tradition of figure drawing. And, he harboured an ambition to become a portrait painter, traditionally the most bourgeois and predatory of artistic careers, relying almost exclusively on the painter's ability to flatter and idealise contemporary society figures. [18]

Such modest ambitions demonstrate a high degree of humility and caution in Lewis's attitudes during this period. This was further reflected , in some degree, in his tastes in literature. During 1904 he wrote to his mother from Paris:

> "Can you send me a little packet of books that I want to lend to Miss Bruce?... I wanted -
> Porphyrion by Lawrence Binyon
> Sonnettes by S. Butler
> The Vinedresser by Sturge Moore." [19]

That he would recommend such a pronouncedly Victorian and English selection of books to Kathleen Bruce, the sculptor, suggests an immature intelligence and one which had yet to come to terms with the emerging modernism.

Paris was, however, important to Lewis [20] since it provided the crucible wherein the various elements of a modernist culture were made available for him. By the February of 1905 he was writing to his mother,

> "I am going to a conference tonight to help get Gorki out of prison, whereat Anatole France is going to speak. I've seen a lot of remarkable things, but one can hardly recount them all; I've been for example to see Russian dances...and I have also entered Maxims...tell me about the `Whistler' show and the French Impressionists, if you read about it in the papers..." [21]

Furthermore his experience of bohemian life in Paris introduced him to the works of the Russian novelists, and more importantly to the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche and Henri Bergson. The writings of these figures form a crucial axis in the construction of Lewis's world view. Indeed Nietzsche was the key to Lewis's later intellectual development. And, it was the shadow of his writings which informed the discreet content of Lewis's art and theory. The first mention of Nietzsche in Lewis's written archive occurs in a letter, again written to his mother probably during 1907, he was discussing the character of a group of people he had recently met at the home of his mentor and fellow artist Augustus John:

> "John has a very disagreeable set of people round him just now, and the average morality, taste, sensibility or whatever one calls it of the average English medical student who has read Nietzsche prevails among these persons." [22]

The reference to Nietzsche here was both negative and prudish, suggesting that Lewis had not completely shed a Victorian sensibility. It may be that Lewis had not read Nietzsche at this period, [23] or that he had only incompletely examined his work. During this period Lewis had certainly been introduced to the work of Bergson. It is known that he had attended some of Bergson's lectures at the College de France in Paris during 1903 [24] and that he had been briefly impressed by Bergsonian theories. Interestingly one of the very few surviving drawings from this period, Two Nudes (Fig. 5) of 1903, has abandoned the classical poise of his earlier Slade work and shows two,

sketchingly drawn, naked women, dissolving into comically misshapen mannequins. It may not be too speculative to suggest that Bergson's insistence on the fluid and continuous character of time, and his conception of experience as an intuitive entering into the "flux" of phenomenal reality, provide the ideational matrix of this vitalist drawing.

Speculation, however, remains the only appropriate method for assessing and evaluating the trajectory of Lewis's thought during this period. Besides Nietzsche and Bergson, Lewis's own testimony claimed a knowledge of the work of figures like George Sorel and Charles Maurras. There is some evidence of Sorel's violent political philosophy, and Maurras's authoritarian classicism, being influential on Lewis's thought during the Vorticist period. But at this point in his development there was no clear relationship. More important were the writings of Nietzsche's intellectual mentor, Schopenhauer. And Lewis was fascinated with the work of the Russian novelists, especially Dostoyevsky. [25] But before 1908 there is no written record, other than his letters to his mother, and friends like Sturge Moore, to testify to the exact procedures by which he constructed his intellectual universe. More fundamentally, there is virtually no archive of Lewis's painting and drawing from the period when he leaves the Slade, until his return to England in December 1908. The dearth of a visual archive is almost exclusively due to his relationship with the painter Augustus John.

"We watched in silence this mythological figure..."[26]

Despite Lewis's professed knowledge of all that was modern in European philosophy, literature and art during his period of travel on the continent, the model he first chose to emulate, as an artist, was the curiously eccentric Augustus John. Certainly, within the closed and limited British context John could be regarded as an adventurous `modern'. His earliest paintings reveal a clear influence of Puvis de Chavannes [27] while his decorative colouring, laid down in flat undifferentiated blocks showed an affiliation with Post-Impressionist theory. Moreover he had, some time in 1907, visited the studio of Picasso where he was introduced to the paintings of the `Blue' and `Rose' periods and to some of Picasso's `primitivist' figure studies. The influence of Picasso's Saltimbanque series can be seen in John's French Fisherman (Fig. 6) of 1907. However John's romantic bohemianism tended to prejudice his painting. Works like A Family Group of circa 1908, and Blue Pool of 1910, demonstrate John's persistent tendency to invoke a subject-matter which was both prosaic and sentimental. The fantasy of a pre-industrial, libertarian idyll was the continuous theme of his painting prior to his success as a portrait painter. Significantly it was also a chosen way of life for John, and his well documented periods of itinerant travelling in full gypsy regalia have all become part of a pervasive mythology. John's lyric fantasies represent one of the clearest cases of a

'modernist' painter, retreating, in his subject-matter, into an idealised and wholly unrealisable whimsy. In consequence his claims to any status within the Modern Movement must remain equivocal, though certainly within the generally conservative atmosphere of British painting John's approach would be positively avant garde. [28]

Nevertheless it remains surprising that the young Lewis should have been, for nearly ten years, in awe of John's talent. Clearly if he was fully conscious of the vitalist theories of Nietzsche and Bergson, the psychological depth of the modern Russian novelists, and the dubious radicalism of contemporary French political theorists, then Johns's pastoral affectations would merely have seemed risible. Moreover an interested student's enquiry into contemporary French painting, freely available in Paris, would have placed John's romanticism firmly in its place. Lewis however seems to have had a preoccupation with John, both as as a personality and an artist, which made it impossible for him to be objective about his true merit. This, for Lewis, unhealthy and oppressive relationship with John has a history which can be traced in Lewis's letters of the period 1904-1910.

Lewis had first encountered the spectacle of John at the Slade School of Art. The year 1898, when the sixteen year old Lewis undertook his training at the Slade, was the same year John graduated from that institution. There he had gained a formidable reputation for his skill as a draughtsman, and, although he was himself only twenty years

old was regarded as the most promising alumni the Slade had every produced. Half a century later Lewis was to recall his first encounter with John:

> "Now undoubtedly John came nearer to the Michelangelo ideal than anybody else. One day the door of the life class opened and a tall bearded figure, with an enormous black Paris hat, large gold ear-rings decorating his ears, with a carriage of the utmost arrogance, strode in and the whisper "John" went round the class. He sat on a donkey - the wooden chargers astride which we sat to draw - tore a page of banknote paper out of a sketchbook, pinned it upon a drawing board, and with a ferocious glare at the model (a female) began to draw in an indelible pencil. I joined the group behind this redoubtable personage. To my great surprise a squat little figure began to emerge upon the paper. He had forsaken the "grand manner" entirely, it seemed. A modern Saskia was taking shape upon the banknote paper: drawings that followed all came out of the workshop of Rembrandt van Rhyn. Needless to say everyone was tickled to death. They felt the squalour of the Dutch, rather than the noble rhetoric of the cinquecento, was, and always had been, the thing. John left as abruptly as he had arrived. We watched in silence this mythological figure depart." [29]

John had visited Amsterdam during the autumn of 1898 [30] and was clearly intent on imposing his newly developed consciounsness of Rembrandt's work upon the impressionable Slade students. The breathless and awe-struck reactions which Lewis recalled of this meeting sets the scene for Lewis's relationship with John for the following eight years.

Lewis's first actual meeting with John probably occurred early in 1902 [31], prior to his trip to Madrid with Spencer Gore. From 1906 when Lewis was living in Paris and travelling in the coastal villages of Normandy his letters to his mother become littered with references to John and his families. [32] John had by then befriended

Lewis who was now a frequent visitor to John's many, chaotic households. However the first, and perhaps most telling reference to John occurs in a letter to his mother, from Paris, circa 1904:

> "I wrote asking you for some shirts and the book of John's torn-up drawings, - the album, you know, with the drawing I had found and stuck together: also place among them the separate drawing of an old man's head that John did at Lullworth and gave to me; - but only send the drawings if you think it's quite safe, as I shouldn't like to lose them. Make a very firm package." [33]

Here was an obsessive, indeed neurotic pleading which demonstrated Lewis's infatuation with the example of John. He was, after all, asking for the careful packaging of a number of drawings which John had destroyed, and which he himself had resurrected.

An immature and dependent relationship emerges in the letters of this period, John providing an example of artistic excellence and personal assurance which Lewis found difficult to emulate. A letter of 1907 to his mother places considerable emphasis on John's patriarchal character and exceptional presence:

> "John is taking a studio in Montmartre, where he thinks of installing two women he has found in England: and I think John will end by building a city, and being worshipped as sole man therein, - the deity of Masculinity...
> John has now ordered a complete typical Welsh outfit, and will be more extraordinary than ever for the populace astounded." [34]

John's authority, as artist, partriarch and personality, was a crucial factor in the development of Lewis's creative project. He provided, in the first instance, a figure whom Lewis could seek to emulate, a testing ground for his

intellect and an example for his art. More importantly, however it was in Lewis's rejection of John's romantic and bohemian value system, that his mature theory began to take shape. There can be no doubt that this was a traumatic maturation for Lewis. Clear evidence of his difficulties are to be found in a letter, again to his mother, written in 1908. He was at this time staying with John and his family in Normandy,

> "I can't do a stroke, not a stroke of work here. - If I stay here it will be time lost utterly. - What to do? I don't know.
> It's a very enervating climate, I can hardly lift up my arm for quite half a day: All John's family are ill also, - more or less.
> Now this summer I must do something or hang myself..." [35]

John was undoubtedly the cause of Lewis's desperate frustration for, slightly later in this same letter he confessed:

> "I want also to do some painting very badly, and can't do so near John... Also I had thought to write chiefly: I feel that if I were left alone, I could both write and paint just now: but near John I can never paint since his artistic personality is just too strong..." [36]

At this stage Lewis's anxieties were prompted by his inability to compete with John at a technical level. All the internal evidence of the letters points to an ambition to emulate John's achievements within the context of figure drawing and portrait painting. Yet John's work of this period, despite its technical flair, tended to be mawkish and sentimental. This suggests that Lewis's understanding of modernist aesthetics was limited and incomplete, and, more fundamentally, that the awesome personality of John

was repressive, constraining Lewis's real potential for development as an artist.

Insofar as a pattern of thought emerged in Lewis's activities of this time, it was one illustrative of a considerable ambition cramped by a dependent relationship on the example of John. Lewis had showed unusual foresight and intelligence in moving to the continent and especially to Paris. The narrow and insular nature of the Edwardian art world in Britain could show a young artist only limited horizons. Paris certainly made available to Lewis an entire galaxy of modernist attitudes and practices. These he seems to have digested in some small degree, though his own retrospective judgements suggest a complete and integrated understanding of modernist epistemology at this stage. [37] This seems unlikely given his professed desire to paint and draw "extremely careful" [38] portrait heads at this period, a particularly unmodernist, not to say conservative, activity. Having Augustus John as a mentor during this period certainly could not have helped Lewis develop that combative avant garde profile for which he became renown after 1912. John's own 'modernism' was equivocal and regressive, while his self-conscious bohemianism was a simple veneer covering a not too unconventional Edwardian manner. Lewis seems to have been unaware of this for the letters suggest that he failed to objectify the figure of John [39], and to see the shallowness and posturing of his modernism. In consequence, for a period of some eight years, Lewis's artistic and

intellectual development was repressed. [40] The emerging theory and practise of his art being constantly blocked by the overpowering presence of John. [41]

There were two important effects of this relationship. Firstly, Lewis's despair at his inability to compete with John as an artist has resulted in a near absence of any visual archive for these early years. From 1901 , the year of Lewis leaving the Slade, until 1909 when Lewis began to complete some drawings with pen and ink on paper, there is less than a handful of sketches. [42] The ideational orientations of Lewis's art during this period can, therefore, only be conjectured. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, it was in breaking with John, sometime during 1908, that Lewis began to construct a competent modernist theory. This theory was to mature into Vorticism and provide the baseline for a further critique of the Modern Movement itself. Interestingly Lewis's break with John was not completed within the arena of painting. During 1908 Lewis returned to his other career, writing, and here, in his fiction began to develop a highly personal aesthetic. These early stories, collectively known as The Wild Body, include the first concrete indications of Lewis's cultural attitudes.

There was, however, one final legacy of Lewis's relationship with John. John provided Lewis with a model for the artist's role. This was less frivolous a fact than it may, at first sight, seem. However shallow John's own posturings were, however contrived and ridiculous, they

were viewed as a form of opposition to dominant codes of practice in Edwardian England. The negational dimensions of, not so much John's actual artistic practice, but, his social conduct and artistic strategies, were not lost on Lewis. John's "radical" bohemianism was certainly only symptomatic of his displaced status within a diversified bourgeois class. However Lewis adopted this role and exaggerated it, ultimately transforming it into a supra-critical posture which became his much vaunted "Enemy" persona. The extremism and cultural dissent which was characteristic of Lewis's later theory and practise had, as a primary model, the example of John. Nevertheless, it was only after he extinguished the luminous presence of John that Lewis began to fully realise his cultural project.

"The chasm lying between being and non-being." [43]

Wild Bodies, marginalised "primitive" types, carnival excess and the precarious netherworld of the lodging house. These were the motifs which haunted Lewis's early short stories. Thematically they chart a comic invention, at once philosophical and sociological, which outlined the burlesque drama of existential being, human "civilisation", and the nature of selfhood. The Wild Body series represented the first stage in Lewis's personal and intellectual maturation. Above all they were

characterised by an inversion of the sentimental aestheticism of John, and, principally because of John's overpowering presence as a painter, expressed through the medium of literature [44].

The English Review, then under the editorship of Ford Hermann Heuffer, was the first journal to publish Lewis's writing. A short story entitled The "Pole" appeared in the edition of May 1909. [45] Heuffer, who bravely waited until the year 1918 before legally changing his German baptismal name to Ford Madox Ford, [46] provided an interesting reminiscence of his first meeting with Lewis:

> "He was extraordinary in appearance... He seemed to be Russian. He was very dark in the shadows of the staircase. He wore an immense steeple-crowned hat. Long black locks fell from it... He had also an ample black cape of the type that villains in transporting melodrama throw over their shoulders... He said not a word... His dark eyes rolled. He established himself immovably against the bannisters and began fumbling in the pockets of his cape. He produced crumpled rolls of paper... All the time he said no word. I have never known anyone else whose silence was a positive rather than a negative quality.... I had the impression that he was not any more Russian. He must be Guy Fawkes." [47]

This recollection, which if it was not entirely apocyrphal was certainly exaggerated, nevertheless corresponds to other descriptions of Lewis from this period. [48] The brooding-bohemian-anarchist pose having, as its context, the neo-romantic, self-conscious estrangement of the continental avant gardes. Ford himself had disdainfully pointed this out, "his costume was the usual uniform of the Paris student of those days." [49] However, the "crumpled rolls of paper" were, in fact, Lewis's story The "Pole" and Ford was sufficiently impressed by it to include it in The

English Review. The "Pole" was followed by Some Innkeepers and Bestre in the June edition of 1909, and by Les Saltimbanques in August 1909.

These publications were Lewis's first worldly success, and they followed immediately upon his return to London in December 1908. Between 1909 and 1911 Lewis published a number of short stories [50] which were parallelled by only a few pen and wash drawings. These stories, and some of the sketches accompanying them, grew out of Lewis's travels in Brittany and are the first real evidence of an individual creative capacity. Lewis had travelled the coast of Brittany as a tourist and an observer, noting the characteristics of the "types" who inhabited the coastal villages. He was fascinated with the "primitive" aggression of his characters, their rawness and doltish attitudes. His observations were made with the unsympathetic wonder of an anthropologist who has turned to fiction. Indeed, these qualities of distancing and incredulity concerning the actions of his fellow human beings were to become a key aspect of Lewis's aesthetic strategy.

The stories of The Wild Body series can be divided into three broad subject areas. Firstly there is an impressionistic sociology. Lewis, quite consciously reflects upon the customs and mores of rural, peasant life. He was especially fascinated by marginalised figures and "primitive" or uncivilised types. The "Poles" of his first short story were the dispossessed inhabitants of Breton boarding houses. They were, as Lewis explained "of no

particular nation" [51] and had descended into the quiet, tolerant charity of a Breton pension. Lewis described these figures in a comic manner which was simultaneously external to the subject, and slightly incredulous:

> "A young Polish or Russian student, come to the end of his resources, knows two or three alternatives. One is to hang himself - a course generally adopted. But those who have no ties, who take a peaceful pleasure in life, are of a certain piety and mild disposition, borrow ten pounds from a friend and leave their country for ever... They do this dreamily enough and of late years almost instinctively... They make the best of the way to someone of many pensions that are to be found on the Breton coast... They pay two or three months board and lodging, until the ten pounds is finished, and then, with a simple dignity all their own, stop paying. Their hosts take this quite as a matter of course." [52]

The "Poles" were bearers of a serene pessimism and Lewis's interest in these figures was probably a reflection of his early readings of Schopenhauer. [53] The notion of the "will" driving an individual through existence, but also being a "will" to "nothingness" was epitomised in the "Poles" detached acceptance of his condition. Moreover, the refusal of the "Poles" and their Breton hosts to engage in purely commercial conduct, signifies a distrust or usurpation of modern "civilised" practises which at once marginalised the participants in this transaction and rendered them "primitive". These qualities seem to have had a very positive resonance for Lewis who takes them to be a prerequisite of the specialised role of the artist.

This concern with the artist figure existing on the margins of "civilisation" became the overt concern of Lewis's story Les Saltimbanques, the itinerant circus families who travelled the Breton coast. Lewis's

descriptions of these groups asserts the qualities of "otherness" and "estrangement":

> "This was the family whose lot it was to dress itself up every day...and knock each other about and tie their bodies up in knots before an astounded congregation of country people.
> The merriment of the public that their unhappy fate compelled them to provoke, was nevertheless a constant source of irritation to these people. Their spirits became sorer and sorer at the recreation and amusement that the public got out of their miserable existence. Its ignorance as to their true sentiments helped to swell their disgust. They looked upon the public as a vast beast, with a very simple but perverse character, differing from any separate man's the important trait of which was an insatiable longing for their performances." [54]

Here was a largely sympathetic response to the plight of Les Saltimbanques which put emphasis upon the separation of artist from public. These circus figures represented a particularly primitive and circumscribed form of creativity, a particularly exaggerated and literal example of artistic "suffering". The resentments these figures expressed, with regards to the insensitivity of the public were the mirror image of the artist's dislocated relationship with the broader public under the conditions of modernity. Lewis, at this level, clearly affiliated himself with that contemporary "structure of feeling" amongst modern artists which declared an empathy with the dislocated and dispossessed, who nevertheless were bearers of some rarefied "truth". There was still here a residual association with John's gypsy-bohemian affectation, and indeed with Picasso's sympathetic studies of Saltimbanques from the period circa 1904. Also, the idea Lewis expressed in this work cannot be divorced from the romantic notion of

the artist as a specialist "seer" , cognisant with abstract "truth" because of his separation from the civilised public.

Partly in consequence of this disjuncture between the "civilised" and the "primitive", which was for Lewis merely a reconstruction of the modern relationship of the public to the artist, Lewis also showed a fascination for those moments when the veneer of civilisation slipped away. Carnival was a recurring theme of his early fiction. Particularly those moments of excess and abandon which accompanied the dionysian rituals of peasant street festivals. In March 1906 Lewis wrote an excited letter to his mother from Munich:

> "The Carnival ended yesterday: I temporarily enjoyed myself excessively, and was a great success: several women asked me to accompany them without my having so much as looked at them.. It is an incredible thing the Munich Carnival." [55]

And, among his earliest recorded writings, in a scrap of diary known as the Quimperlé manuscript or A Breton Journal, [56] which is dated August 17, Monday, 1908, Lewis wrote of a Breton carnival:

> These fetes are essentially orgies. It is the renunication and dissipation at stated times, of everything that a peasant has of disordered, exalted, that in us that will not be contained in ordinary life; all that there is left of rebellion against life, fate, routine in the peasant. All these people bring all their indignations, all their revolts, and bewilder'd dreams, and sacrifice them here, pay their supreme tribute to fate, instead of keeping jealously their passions and reveries hidden in their hearts, they come here and fling all to the winds, leave themselves bare, make a bonfire of what the intelligence tells us is most precious." [57]

Two clues emerge here which help locate Lewis's intellectual orientation. He was in the first instance

concerned with those moments where a more primitive or primordial nerve was awakened. Where the release of an intuitive, creative energy was facilitated by the stripping away of social and moral conventions. Peasant life, for Lewis, stood closer to this primitive creativity than civilised urbane society. Moreover the root of this specialised creativity was sexual, the notions of the "orgy", of "dissipation", of something "exalted" all indicate an aesthetic predisposition which equates creative release with sexual release. Secondly, there is a clear association, in this piece of writing, and elsewhere in these early texts, with a vitalist theory which traverses vitalist philosophy from Nietzsche to Bergson. In particular the quotation above seems to have a direct relation to the thesis proposed in Nietzsche's Birth of Tragedy.[58]

The Nietzschian dualism, expressed in The Birth of Tragedy as an opposition between the Apollonian and the Dionysian, is a direct parallel to Lewis's implied duality between the "civilised" and the "primitive". True, Lewis's view of the peasant fete and carnival was closer to Nietzsche's vision of the debased form of the Dionysian feast which occurred in Roman and Babylonian societies:

> "In nearly every instance the centre of these festivals lay in extravagant sexual licentiousness, waves of which overwhelmed all family life and its venerable traditions; the very wildest beasts were let loose here, including that detestable mixture of lust and cruelty which has always seemed to me the genuine "witches draught".[59]

but Lewis was observing something he considered to be a debased form of creativity. This creativity was fascinating for Lewis however, because it was a popular expression of repressed artistic desires. Nietzsche's own thesis on The Birth of Tragedy stressed the importance of Dioynsian abandon as a mechanism through which artistic insight could be made available:

> "For we must know that in the rapture of the Dioynsian state, with its annihilation of the ordinary bounds and limits of existence, there is a lethargic element, wherein all personal experiences of the past are submerged. It is by this gulf of oblivion that the everyday world and the world of Dionysian reality are separated from each other. But as soon as this everyday reality rises again in consciousness, it is felt as such, and nauseates us; an ascetic will-paralysing mood is the fruit of these states. In this sense the Dionysian man... (has)...seen into the true nature of things." [60]

For Nietzsche the Dionysian experience was an aesthetic experience, or rather an experience which made available aesthetic truth, and Lewis's early interest in carnival was, similarly, a device which helped him locate the margins of his aesthetic.

This first broad subject area of Lewis's Wild Body stories, the impressionistic sociology he provides of the Breton peasantry, was linked to developing ideas of civilisation and marginalisation, creativity and the artist. A second subject area relates to these broad themes, but concentrates primarily on the psychology of artistic creativity. In consequence a sub-theme emerged which pursued the psychology of individualism. The clearest statement of these concerns was made in the essay Some

Innkeepers and Bestre, which was also, coincidentally, Lewis's second published story.

In Bestre Lewis provided a portrait of a Breton innkeeper, he sketches an imposingly vulgar peasant figure:

> "Bestre keeps a boarding house for Parisiennes and other strangers in one of the remotest fishing villages of the Breton coast... He is a large man, grown naively corpulent: one can see by his movements the gradual and insidious growth of the stomach has not preoccupied him in the least."[61]

The comic intentions of Lewis's descriptions are clear here. Bestre's body is an independent entity, the "insidious growth of his stomach" was unnoticed. This Cartesian separation of mind from body formed a crucial axis of Lewis's burlesque comedy in these early stories, and indeed was a key co-ordinate of his later satire. More importantly Bestre's "art" was constituted by his ability to impose an aggressive, idiosyncratic form of confrontation simply by his very presence:

> "Sunburnt, with a large yellow-white moustache, his little eyes protrude with a cute strenuosity of expression. When he meets anyone for the first time his mouth remains open, with his cigarette end adhering to his lower lip; he assumes an expression of expectancy and repressed amusement, like a man accustomed to nonplussing and surprising people..."[62]

It is clear that Lewis regarded this as a surrogate art and Bestre as a surrogate artist. The uncompromising fact of his physical presence functioning as a device which shifted consciousness out of the everyday and conventional, and into the realm of the fantastic. Following Bestre's confrontation with a "distinguished painter" a confrontation in which he triumphed simply through the

mechanism of his intransigent, numbing stare, Lewis comments:

> "Has Bestre discovered the only type of action compatible with artistic creation...in a certain degree compelling others to accept your rules?" [63]

This type of action, combatative, disruptive, uncompromising, provides an early outline of Lewis's psychology of the artist. Crucially it is intimately bound to a rigorous individualism. An individualism which has, at its core, the demand that "self" is created through a continuous opposition to "the other". One final quotation will emphasise this point, and link it to Lewis's emerging notion of the "artist". In the "Some Innkeepers" section of the Bestre tale Lewis wrote:

> "Some of these men have made of innkeeping an astonishing art... I have seen the public turning away in rage and loathing from a certain landlord's door, but still he refused to modify one jot his manner and technique of hospitality; and after years spent in its lovely reception rooms the house was sold to some mediocre person who brought custom flooding back; and he, the true artist, in the ruin of his fortunes, went down into an inhospitable grave." [64]

Here "the true artist" is given a psychology at first unconventional, and then acerbic and inflexible. This type of personality, despite the drawback of an "inhospitable grave", allows this figure the status of an individual, separate from the mass. Such aggressive independence was for Lewis the mark of the artist.

This leads to the third, and most important, level of meaning in The Wild Body stories, the implied meta-theory of the artist's role and duty. When Lewis described the art of the circus performer and the activities of the carnival

he was describing a debased form of art. Similarly when he examined Bestre and the innkeepers he was describing degenerate artists. Bestre's actions were, after all, only "compatible" with "artistic creation". Lewis's fascination with these figures occurred because they were the bearers of some of the characteristics of the artist. They allowed him to mark out and define the artists role within the conditions of modern civilisation. In consequence Lewis began to construct at this moment, and this is why the stories of The Wild Body are so vitally important, a highly specialised, rarified notion of art and the artist. While this notion was occasionally refined by Lewis it was never superseded nor deconstructed. More fundamentally it informed the baseline of his entire life's work.

Lewis, in company with his fellow modernists, took the artist's role to be both oppositional and negational. A denial of contemporary cultural standards and the values determined by economics and commerce. Of course this attitude was the very basis of avant gardism as a phenomenon. And again, this conception of art and the artist had its source, for Lewis, in the writings of Nietzsche. In the Birth of Tragedy Nietzsche had insisted:

> "...we have our highest dignity in our significance as works of art - for only as an aesthetic phenomenon is existence and the world eternally justified." [65]

and also,

> "Only in so far as the genius in the act of artistic production coalesces with the primordial artist of the world, does he get a glimpse of the eternal essence of art." [66]

Two points emerge here, firstly in a secular world devoid of faith and emptied of morality and meaning the problem of existence itself becomes paramount. A nihilistic consciousness might collapse into varieties of defeatism and cynicism, but Nietzsche offered the phenomenon of the "aesthetic" as an eternal justification for life. Moreover this "aesthetic" postulated not only the creation of individual works of art, but the individual as a work of art. A "life" as a constant reiteration and becoming of "self". This for Nietzsche was the only possible "solution" to nihilism and was indeed the "highest dignity". Lewis's combative vision of the artist, an idea testified to in his entire career, had its roots in Nietzsche's prognosis. A second, related point stresses the unique and indeed sanctified notion of art itself. The "essence" of art is "eternal" for Nietzsche, and here he most clearly allies himself to the formalist German aestheticians Kant and Schiller, claiming both a transhistorical and transcultural "value" in art. Idealism of this sort was the near invisible presence in Lewis's intellectual make-up of this early period. Never formally stated it was an undercurrent which constantly fractured the surface of his writings. Perhaps the closest Lewis came to differentiating the "true artist" and the value of art from its bastardised forms exemplified in The Wild Body, occurred in his Breton diary. Differentiating the artist from those participating in the carnival Lewis wrote:

> "The artist, in his defiance of fate, has always remained a recluse, and the enemy of such organic

> participation of life, and often lives without knowing this emotion felt in the midst of its wastefulness."[67]

Here Lewis indicated his sympathy with Nietzsche's specialised conception of art and the artist role, but he moved from the Nietzschian position in two ways. Nietzsche had argued in The Birth of Tragedy that artistic consciousness was developed through participation in Dionysian excess, the artist came to understand the essence of creativity by transcending, or emerging from, the Dionysian state. Lewis in the above suggests an a priori separateness of the artist from "life". The artist is somehow marked out from the mass, an independent and privileged figure. Further the artist here was a stranger to the "emotion" which the mass felt in the midst of their activities. The claim here signalled the artist as the bearer of an objective, intellectual insight into the activities of the group. By virtue of his exclusiveness, and knowledge of "self", the artist stepped on solid ground above the fog-filled marsh of ordinary "life". This was the first, crude, expression of Lewis's "external" aesthetic. An approach seemingly based on the intellect and bound by reason, but always underpinned by a romantic, elitist conception of the artist.

In writing these first versions of The Wild Body stories Lewis had crossed more than a geographical frontier. These observations on his continental travels were first steps in the construction of his particular aesthetic, and his unique responses to modernism. In these

works he left behind the feeble ideological baggage of John's oppressive influence, formulated his responses to Nietzsche's titanic presence by accepting the role of artist as "overman", and the construction of the "self" as the duty of the individual, a duty which logically implied a belligerent campaign not only with his peers, but with the ghost of Nietzsche and with those legions of long deceased minds which comprised the intellectual history of western civilisation. More immediately he had constructed a dissident form of modernist practice. For, where modernism was aligned to the humanist and the sensual, Lewis's aesthetic postulated a hegemony of the comic, the misanthropic and the "external".

Of this triumverate it was the comic which came into sharpest focus during the years prior to 1911. The comic was in the first instance, a means of deconstructing the sentimental seriousness of John's lyric fantasies. Furthermore the necessary detachment of the observer from the observed, a prerequisite of comic spectacle, allowed Lewis a privileged position vis-a-vis the entire human race. Folly and absurdity became the very meat of his solitary banquet, and of course the "self" grew fat on the deflation of the "other". Finally, and more positively, the comic was a means of artistic revelation and redemption. Again this was an important idea gleaned from Nietzsche's The Birth of Tragedy. In a discussion of Hamlet's tragic despair Nietzsche wrote:

> "Here, in this extremist danger of the will, art approaches, as a saving and healing enchantress; she

> alone is able to transform these nauseating reflections on the awfulness or absurdity of existence into representations wherewith it is possible to live: these are the representations of the sublime as the artistic subjugation of the awful, and the comic as the artistic delivery from the nausea of the absurd.[68]

Lewis, whose aesthetic project was never wholly negative, undoubtedly saw comic árt as both a reminder of, and delivery from, the absurd. The positive polarity of Lewis's project at this time was its corrective pessimism, reversing the optimism of modern humanism while simultaneously delivering contemporary thought from abject nihilism by invoking the redemptive art of the comic.[69]

This was a complex position for Lewis to construct, and it is clear that during this period there remained an intellectual equivocation. However despite the literary impressionism of much of his technique, and the thematic overlap with conventional modernism in his subject matter, Lewis's comic reflections do propagate an alternative insight. The confluence of his externalising aesthetic with his comic observations of the mind/body duality[70] point to a mature aesthetic strategy, an aesthetic strategy, which after 1909, was transferred into Lewis's activities as a painter.

"a greater imaginative freedom of work"[71]

Lewis's return to drawing, which followed his return to London in the winter of 1908, was a clear signal of his

growing confidence and maturity. The stories of The Wild Body series had been a crucible wherein his aesthetic, and his persona, took shape. Through this cathartic metamorphosis the contest with John was resolved, and the parameters of his cultural project mapped out. There followed, between 1909 and 1912, a period of consolidation and further experiment within the broader framework of modernist practice. This immediately preceded that acceleration into avant garde activity which occurred in 1913. Lewis's period as leader of the Vorticist group was a watershed in his career, determining both his responses to modernism, and his post-war scepticism. The roots of the Vorticist aesthetic however, lie in the various works on paper, usually sketches with pen and ink wash, which were conceived immediately prior to the 1913 breakthrough.

Thematically these sketches pursue the motif of the wild body through the comic, into burlesque, and towards a critical interpretation of modernism. Café (Fig. 7) of 1910-11, reproduced the "primitive" type of the wild body stories. Interestingly this sketch, which characteristically is mixed media being a pen and ink drawing with watercolour wash and black chalk, illustrates a number of competing formal devices. The sketch has two signatures and two dates. It is probable that Lewis completed the bulk of the work, the two central figures and the doorway to the café in 1910. The 1911 addition in that case would have been the figure in the lower right corner. Stylistically this would make sense since the cruder

geometries of this figure seem to belong to the technical experiments of the period immediately preceding Vorticism. One other interesting innovation is the lettering of the word "CAFE" on the doorway itself. Lewis may well have been aware of this cubist practise at this period, but the lettering here clearly had an illustrative rather than a formal purpose. More important is the attitude and demeanour of the figures themselves. The principal male figure languishes in the grotesque opulence of his physique much in the manner of Bestre himself. The larger female figure is strident and numbingly authoritative. The facial features in both of these figures are square, unrefined and straightforwardly vulgar, like the bodies themselves. In one sense Lewis was rejoicing in the barbarism of these figures, their primitive renunciation of the tasteful and the civilised. In another, comic, sense he was distancing himself from them. Externally he would study the absurd tragedy of human being and human existence, and realise the ridiculous comedy of the human mind irrevocably trapped inside the treacherous human body. This was not a snobbish indictment of the primitive type. More generally, it was a reflection on the human spècies betrayed by the limitations of the bodily organism. The key to this comic perception lies in the eye of the male figure in Café. In his critical essay Our Wild Body Lewis had written:

> "Gazing at a body for which the owner obviously had the greatest contempt, and ostentatiously slights and disregards, and a face from which all expression has vanished leaving an atrophied and cadaverous pall of flesh, one is positively startled on becoming aware in

the midst of all this desolation, of an abnormally vivid and disarming eye."[72]

The eye here represented the passage to the brain and the mind. Intelligence, the seat of being and selfhood, was realised in the eye. The comic perception was to juxtapose the assertiveness of the eye to the defeated body. A comedy whose roots were decidedly philosophical.

In 1910 this was a significant step for Lewis. Not least because of the distance it placed between himself and Augustus John. Comparing John's French Fisherman 1907 with Lewis's Dieppe Fishermen (Fig. 8) of 1910 the contrast becomes immediate. Subject, location and theme are almost identical in these works. Indeed it is probably that Lewis was reflecting upon his time spent with John when he worked upon this sketch. Clearly Lewis's work mirrors the wild body motif, but also it parodies and ridicules John's painting. John's fisherman was a crassly sentimental figure. Barefooted, ragged, cap in hand, it was designed to reflect a tragic and suffering child of nature. Its romanticism, as an image, was of the mock heroic type. Mirroring the vainglorious, unequal contrast between man and the elements, man and nature. It feeds off the most mawkish of sentiments. A nostalgic, simple primitivism for the cultured Edwardian bourgeois to cherish. Lewis's group of five fishermen, the harbour and their boats sketchily drawn in the background, are the mirror opposite of John's figure. Tiny heads on giant bodies, they are comic stereotypes. The sheer bulk of their physique is contrasted with the smallness of their intellect. Nothing

could be less heroic or nostalgic, and Lewis here has successfully turned John's sentimentality into farce.

As Lewis's comic sketches developed there emerged a formal mix with the techniques of modernism. A work like Architect with Green Tie (Fig. 9) of circa 1909, simultaneously experiments with characteristically modernist techniques, while remaining within the thematic parameters of the wild body concept. In this work Lewis was not deliberately parodying modernist primitivism, but attempting to resolve the polarities of a comic aesthetic and radical artistic experimentation. This dichotomy was a crucial aspect of Lewis's formally unresolved output during this period.

Architect with Green Tie was an ironic piece. The dense geometries of the physique and features of this figure reflects the puzzled expression in the eyes. Similarly the flat, low forehead compounds the sensation of vacuity and hebetude. A kind of confused blundering anguish suffused the entire figure. Here Lewis's comic vision, derived from an aesthetic based on the principle of exteriority, had given him a clear critical purchase on the ineptitude of his peers. However, even given this new found confidence Lewis could not stand apart from the radical artistic innovations of his contemporaries. Technically Architect with Green Tie showed a distinctive affiliation with both the Easter island totems, and primitive monolithic sculpture. These had been the aesthetic bedrock of primitive cubism and of the most radical formal

experiments in contemporary art. Lewis's ambition, coupled with his Nietzschian desire to construct the "self" through an heroic confrontation with the greatest of his peers, demanded a response to this aesthetic radicalism. By 1909 Lewis was developing an aesthetic which would be aesthetically progressive while remaining locked into the philosophical and comic themes of The Wild Body.

Lewis was certainly anxious to incorporate modernist techniques into his work during this period. In a letter of September 1909 he enquired of his friend T. Sturge Moore "...Did you see any Picasso or Matisse paintings in Paris?" [73] Yet there remains no concrete evidence of Lewis actually seeing any of the more innovative works of these artists for himself in that year. [74] Ironically it may well have been Augustus John who first informed Lewis of Picasso's recent work. In Chiaroscuro, John's fragmentary autobiography, John tells of how:

> "...one day brought to my studio a rather silent young man of about my own age. His name Picasso.... He examined my drawings attentively and, on leaving, invited me to come and visit him at his studio on Montmartre. When I did so, I was at once struck by his unusual gifts. A large canvas contained a group of figures which reminded one a little of the strange monoliths of Easter Island... He was...steeped in the past and no stranger to the Musée Ethnographie. His explorations have led him to stylistic exercises which at first sight disturb or even horrify, but which, on analysis, reveal elements derived from remote antiquity or the art-forms of primitive peoples." [75]

The evidence of this passage indicates that John had seen Picasso's work of circa 1906-1907. This would have included the primitivist figure studies and almost certainly the monumentally impressive Demoiselles d'Avignon, a canvas

left incomplete in 1907, but still bearing all of the most significant formal and ideological breakthroughs of modernist practice in painting. Given the close and intense relationship between John and Lewis during the years circa 1907, it is impossible to believe that John would not have discussed Picasso's practices with Lewis. Consequently in 1909 Lewis was incorporating a "primitivist" method into his drawings and gouaches. Architect with Green Tie was a prime example of this method, as was The Theatre Manager (Fig. 10).

Yet both these early, seminal works were imbued with contradiction and paradox. The "primitivism" of Architect with Green Tie was of an incomplete and equivocal kind. Its equivocation was bound to its substratum of narrative content and its clear comic intention. The Theatre Manager illustrates even more difficulties of this nature. Here, a group of actors are assembled, backstage, around the manager of the theatre. Immediately a narrative is established for this work. A narrative, moreover, which was linked to the music hall paintings of Lewis's contemporaries in the Camden Town group, and by extension to Degas's paintings of backstage rehearsals.[76] The realism of these themes was contradicted in Lewis's work by the primitive drawing of the figures, the totemic mask-like features in the assembled heads and the early cubist facture of, particularly, the background curtains. The implicit humour of the scene itself was a further perplexing factor which rendered this work even more contradictory and unsatisfactory. Lewis in

these works was passing between competing systems of irreconcilable themes and aesthetics. This accounts for the transparent failure of these pictures as works of art. By attempting to incorporate both a narrative discourse with a more abstract existential speculation, to align a realist aesthetic with modernist techniques, and, to confront the figurative tradition with totemic symbolism by offering a qualified "primitivism". Lewis had become trapped in a destructive whirlpool of intellectual and technical experimentation.

The roots of his difficulties during this period are to be found in his precise responses to the idea of the "primitive". Responses to primitivist aesthetics by mainstream modernists were almost wholly positive. Picasso and Braque, for example, had by 1905, incorporated the forms of African tribal sculpture into their proto-cubist works. German Expressionism, especially that of the Die Brucke group, and even more especially the work of Kirchner, showed an early influence of tribal art. While, more pertinently, Jacob Epstein's sculpture was deeply influenced by Assyrian and African models even in the first decade of this century. It was not simply that African work provided a new resource in terms of an aesthetic grammar. The forms it allowed for were certainly novel and exciting, but more importantly African works were seen to carry new and significant meanings. Epstein himself has noted that

> "There is a profound and genuine reason for a sculptor's interest in African art, for new methods and problems are presented in it different from those of

> European art. African work opens up to us a world hitherto unknown....[77]

There existed a sense in which the primitivism of African sculpture was seen to touch upon the primordial root of the "creative" which the modern artist must tap. In this sense "primitivism" allowed the artist to break with the academic values of craftsmanship, moral purposiveness and ethical enlightenment, while simultaneously producing an aesthetic directly relevant to contemporary conditions in Europe and to the modernists' perception of artistic integrity. Primitivism then, by expressing the hidden fact of art's sublime function, a function bound to associate notions of mystery, terror, awe and wonder, was seen to be expressing a "truth" unrealised in civilised, "enlightened", society. In "primitivism" the ethereal, intuitive, anti-rational world of the subconscious was released. And this was viewed as an equivalent to the release of the very essence of artistic creativity.

Lewis's subscription to this view was only partial. In The Wild Body stories Lewis fed upon the "primitivism" of his subjects. But in these works the relationship between the "primitive" and the artist was contingent. The Nietzschian dimensions of Lewis's thought insisted that the artist enter into the primitive or Dionysian aspects of experience in order first to understand, and then to transcend them. It was in the transcendence of the brute physicality of human existence that the artist established his, or her, privileged status. Indeed this type of transcendence was the very essence of being an artist.

Clearly then, for Lewis, there can be no true equivalence between "primitivism" and artistic creativity. And, much of Lewis's vitriol against his fellow artists, especially after 1913, was precisely because of their romantic and sentimental attachment to the idea of the "primitive". Lewis's adoption of his "external" aesthetic was designed in part to avoid any imitative and empathetic relationship with the primitive. But, more importantly, to reflect the unbridgeable chasm between himself as artist, and that other dimension of the mass.

The complicated nature of his attitude towards the "primitive" was reflected in the equivocal voices of his early sketches. Both The Theatre Manager and Architect with Green Tie show a desire to emulate the radicalism of primitivist technique, while simultaneously creating a comic parody of the human figure and human actions. Modernism was for Lewis a seductive formal inventiveness which must be absorbed and conquered, but which should also be made responsive to his particular comic scepticism. This unresolved tension between the desire for the modern, and the demands of the comic technique permeates Lewis's pre-Vorticism work.

Stylistically the drawings and gouaches of the pre-Vorticist period can be divided into three broad categories. These styles developed simultaneously and tended to overlap each other, but it is still possible to treat them as separate entities. There was firstly the comic caricatures with exaggerated musculature and tiny

heads. Important examples of this style include Courtship (Fig. 11) of 1912, Nijinski of 1914 (Fig. 12), and the ironic gouache Sunset among the Michelangelos of 1912. These formalised cartoon figures, immediate successors to the wild body theme, were linear diagrams of human puppets in action. Drawn with a heavy, solid line, roughly, shaded they were a kind of hieroglyphic equivalent to the generalised idea of the human figure. The abstracting technique here was highly idiosyncratic, having no direct relationship to any of Lewis's continental mentors, and represents a wholly original, if not particularly fruitful aspect of Lewis's early work.

The second stylistic category includes works like Figure holding a flower (Fig. 13) and The Starry Sky of 1912, the lost drawing entitled the Laughing Woman from circa 1911, and the gouache The Celibate dated 1909, though possibly its real origins were slightly later. Here Lewis began to incorporate a distinctly cubist facture into his work. The line in these works, though still heavy and aggressive, shifts from the softer ovoids of the first category into an angular and geometric manner. The figures are now dressed in a fragmented armature. While the introduction of the intersecting cantilivered line, for example in the top right hand corner of The Laughing Woman sketch, demonstrated a clear orientation towards cubist diagramatics. In this second category the primitive cubist technique was still compromised by the narrative and

philosophical dimensions of the pictures. This was not altogether the case in the third category.

Smiling Woman Ascending a Stair (Fig. 14) of 1911-12, and the gouaches entitled Lovers and Dancers (Fig. 15), both of 1912, have a more obvious formal integrity. These works, the immediate predecessors to Lewis's Vorticist abstractions, incorporate a more rigorous cubist facture with a distinctive vitalism which was almost certainly a response to Futurist rhetoric. Though, thematically, these works were still the bearers of Lewis's distinctive polemic, stylistically they had, more completely, come to terms with a radical modernist technique. The figures were now fragmented geometries seen against a fractured background of intersecting lines. Certainly these works lack the cohesiveness of Picasso's cubist works depicting the human figure, for example his portrait of Ambrose Vollard, 1911, which contained a masterly integration of figure and ground. But Lewis's failure to identify the figure with its environment was less a casualty of technique, than a refusal to entirely compromise his intellectual insight to the exigencies of form. Nevertheless a work like The Lovers of 1912 placed Lewis in the vanguard of radical experimentation in the arts.

These three categories were not part of a linear development leading inexorably to Vorticism. All the internal evidence of the pictures demonstrated a number of hesitations, confusions and contradictions in Lewis's theory and practice during this period. Clearly the pull of

modernism, seen as a primitive cubist technique was irresistable for Lewis. It represented a direct confrontation with the orthodoxies of the Edwardian art world, and a means of forging a significant identity for himself. Moreover it represented a form of radicalism whose implicit promise contained the idea of art as a unique bearer of metaphysical enlightenment. This not only allowed the artist a privileged insight, but it conformed entirely to Nietzsche's secular dictum that, "only as an aesthetic phenomenon is the world and the existence of man eternally justified." [78] However that brand of modernism represented by the mainstream cubists had collapsed into redundant and repetitive still-life studies. This was not surprising given the enormous technical problems that Picasso and Braque were trying to resolve. The still-life was, classically, the genre in which plastic experiments were established and worked through. Yet Lewis would see this obsession with the still-life as a fatal compromise with the metaphysical duties of art. In consequence as his modernist technique developed, his thematic range expanded rather than contracted. It was this concentration on metaphysical themes which infused his particular modernism with formal contradictions. But it was this same prejudice towards the philosophical which distinguished his artistic practice during the period circa 1912.

"Laughter is only summer-lightning. But it occasionally takes on the dangerous form of absolute revelation."[79]

Thematically the early works on paper broadened and deepened Lewis's tragi-comic perceptions. A work like Courtship, for example, pursued the philosophical theme of the mind/body dichotomy into the arena of farce. These two strutting, graceless figures coyly display their grotesque anatomies in a ritual of invitation and pursuit. Typically these pneumatic figures are surmounted by tiny heads. The nature-bound animalism of their ritualistic dance demanding the subjugation of the intellect. Here, the primitivism of Lewis's technique was a correspondent to the primitive ceremony he described. There was a humour in this work, but it was a mocking humour. Not quite satire but certainly a form of censure. During 1910 Lewis had written to Augustus John:

> "I believe with a Calvinistic uncompromisingness that one cannot be too hard on the stupidities of one's neighbours."[80]

and this censorious tone emerged in the comic dimensions of these early works. It was a theme repeated in a sketch like Chickens again of 1912, which emphasised the corporeal dimensions of these ritualistic encounters and rendered the human figures absurd by giving them chicken heads,[81] the posture and display necessitated in pre-copulatory rituals being equated with the ridiculous struttings of the cock bird in pursuit of the hen.

Absurd ritualisitc ceremonies emerging from commonplace encounters were a favourite theme of Lewis's

comedy. At one level they mocked the lyrical idylls which were a favourite theme of John's, and the informal, sensual encounters in Matisse's work, for example his Luxe, Calme et Volupté of 1904-5. [82] But more importantly they demonstrated the inevitability of the mind's subservience to the desires of the body. The mind, as a thing trapped inside the primitive mechanism of the body, unable to resist the demands of the senses and the sensual, was the tragic root of Lewis's comedy. [83] Time and again this theme emerged in the early work. Post Jozz and Second Movement, both from 1913, extend the theme from the ritual of courtship to the ritual of dance. The significance of the dance motif was its signalling of the abandonment of intellectual control. These naked figures cavort together in an awkward display of ritualised ecstasy. In this state the individual has clearly abandoned the "self" to nature. And, of course, for Lewis this was a grotesque folly.

Ultimately Lewis's objectification of these ceremonies demonstrated the foolish vanities of the participants. But, as participants, the mass of humanity was locked into these irresistable demands of nature. Consequently when Lewis deepened this theme it was in order to illustrate the ludicrous relationship between human kind and the natural world. Figure holding a flower, 1912, was a prime example of this mode. Here a heavily stylised figure reclines in a mock arcadian landscape and contemplates a rather sorry looking flower. There is a sense in which the body of the figure is intimate with the landscape, while the head,

though above the horizon, is in communication with the flower. But the drawing is a grotesque. The figure a clumsy manikin who performs a comic burlesque with the flower, here representing nature. Lewis was proposing a radical disjuncture between human kind and nature. The mass of humanity however submitted to nature in the form of an attachment to the sensual dimension of the body. Corresponding to this failure of the intellect was a sentimental attachment to the natural world. An intimacy which human kind could neither resist nor transcend, and which had its apotheosis in the ethos of Romanticism. [84] Although Lewis's theory was undoubtedly influenced by the romantic philosophy of Nietzsche, he was already rejecting the Dionysian in favour of the Apollonian. Indeed, for Lewis Dionysian excess was only a means of achieving the authority of the Apollonian. Clearly then his comic representations of the human figures were designed to show those failures of the "will" which trap individuals in the variants of Dionysian ecstasy. These works of 1912, Figure Holding a Flower, Two Figures, Centauress, The Starry Sky, were all symbolic representations of the absurd attachment of human beings to nature. Their meaning was twofold. Firstly they represented a disjuncture between human kind and nature, this corresponded to the disjuncture between mind and body, and was represented by the clumsy awkward organism of the human body itself. Secondly they signalled human fallability. Failure to achieve consciousness of the tragic conditions of being,

and failure of the collective will to rise above that tragedy. This was symbolised by the burlesque and ritualised encounters between man and woman, man and nature. Indeed these works were totems to failure.

Lewis simply could not believe that human kind failed to realise the tragedy of existence. The absolute nature of existential isolation. These early works were comic reminders of this fact. But Lewis's vision of the artist, as a privileged purveyor of unique and inviolable truths, demanded a response from his peers which acknowledged this fact. Instead, in surveying the contemporary scene, [85] Lewis discovered in his fellow artists an expression of the sentimental romanticism which infected and debilitated the larger mass of humanity. In consequence a further theme of this period was a number of ironic, gentle satires on the contemporary art world. Typical examples of this theme were Lewis's Penseur of 1912, a sketch which transfers the humanist anxieties of Rodin's famous sculpture into the constipated mental dilemma of a fragmented totem. Similarly Lewis's Man and Woman (Fig. 16) of 1912 turns Picasso's series of Harlequins and Saltimbanque families into a group of bizarre, posturing marionettes, while Matisse's arcadian fantasies centred on music and dancing were constantly pillioried by Lewis at this period. His Musicians (Fig. 17) of 1913 was almost certainly a satire on Matisse's monumental and celebratory Music of 1909, while works like Cactus, 1913 Indian Dance, 1912, and The Dancers, of 1912, all transform Matisse's voluptuous sensualism into

a crude and vulgar elementalism. [86] This was a distinctly polemical theme in Lewis's work, allowing him to castigate his contemporaries for philosophical and intellectual weakness, and to forge his ego on the embers of his peers. Though these drawings may be unsatisfactory in themselves, as satires they were signals of an emerging sense of self. [87]

The divergent themes of humour, satire and philosophical speculation became infused with a more consistently modern technique in works like The Laughing Woman, [88] 1911, and Smiling Woman Ascending a Stair, 1911-12. Here Lewis's primitive types gain a distinctly cubist demeanour. Angular fragmented figures, painted in monochrome, were staged against an architecture of geometric forms. Roger Fry's first Post-Impressionist exhibition of November 1910 had sharpened Lewis's consciousness of the significance of modernist innovation. While the furore caused by this show, and its sequel in October 1912, would make Lewis alive to the polemical possibilities of technical experimentation. However in a work like Smiling Woman Ascending a Stair Lewis demonstrated, yet again; his equivocal attitude to modernism. For Lewis was still primarily concerned with the figure and its role as bearer of existential imperatives. The theme of laughter, for instance, formed a crucial axis in Lewis's developing comic theory. During the course of an interview published in The Daily News and Leader Lewis spoke of Smiling woman ascending a stair, "That

picture is a laugh though rather a staid and traditional explosion. The body is a pedestal for the laugh." [89] Clearly the stylistic innovations, though important, were secondary to the theme itself, the idea of the total composition bringing forth the revelation of the laugh.

Laughter was, for Lewis, the final cataclysmic assertion of the Wild Body. The ultimate betrayer of nature's assertiveness. Though there were no concrete theoretical statements contemporary with these laughing totems, Lewis went some way towards explaining their meaning in his essay Inferior Religions of 1917. This essay, published in The Little Review in September 1917 was written to accompany a proposed edition of Lewis's Wild Body stories. It reflected principally on the nature of laughter and its potential as revelation.

In this essay Lewis presented his wild body characters as puppets, and by extension the figures who inhabit the drawings of 1912 were the visual equivalents of these performing marionettes. The precise rituals these puppets repeated were signals of human failure. Above all the failure of the ego to triumph over habit and convention. Of course, by 1917, Lewis had considerably refined his comic theory, hence he opened Inferior Religions with a disclaimer:

> "To introduce my puppets, and the Wild Body, the generic puppet of all, I must look back to a time when the antics and solumn gambols of those wild children filled me with triumph." [90]

But the principal, epistemological base of his theory remained intact. The notion of the tragic failure of human

kind, especially where it pertained to the failure of the intelligence, and the will, in human action was the consistent foundation of Lewis's tragi-comedy. For "action" and the idea of "life" were synonymous with Lewis, and his puppets existed below "life". They failed to aspire to self and were trapped inside nature. Lewis tells us:

> "Were you the female of Moran (the first Innkeeper)...you would be just below the surface of life, in touch with a nasty and tragic organism." [91]

And he compounds his comic philosophy by explaining:

> "A comic type is a failure of considerable energy, an imitation and standardising of self, suggesting the existence of a uniform humanity, - creating, that is, a little host as like as ninepins; instead of one synthetic and various Ego". [92]

Ritual encounters, repetitive performances, theoretical gesturing, all were the signals of failure. They were the commonplace exhibitions of a stultified humanity locked inside the absurdity of pseudo-assertive posturing, imitations of living egos. Laughter functioned as the release of a primitive ego, and the exposure of this failure.

In Inferior Religions Lewis stated that the "most gigantic spasm of laughter is sculptural, isolated and essentially simple." [93] This was clearly the theme of Smiling Woman Ascending a Stair. But these grinning, laughing, sneering figures who inhabit Lewis's drawings and gouaches in the pre-Vorticist phase were the bearers of Lewis's private revelation. Whatever their formal debt to modernism, they remained bound to Lewis's unique theory. Laughter, where it was not simply a social convention,

revealed the fact of humanity's base attachment to nature. Being spontaneous, irresistable and primitive, "like the mind sneezing" [94] as Lewis said, it disclosed the impossibility of a human kind separate from nature. And of course this rendered all distinctly human aspirations absurd. Equally, the romantic attachment to nature simply became grotesque. Laughter then was an equivalent to tragic insight, it illustrated the limitations of being. In consequence Lewis can safely list the characteristics of laughter in Inferior Religions, these included:

> "Laughter is the climax in the tragedy of seeing, hearing and smelling self-consciously.
> Laughter is the representative of Tragedy, when Tragedy is away.
> Laughter does not progress. It is primitive, hard and unchangeable." [95]

As a climax to Lewis's comic drawings, the laughing figures insisted upon a negative vision of humanity. Laughter was the symbolic, and comic proof of the tragic limitations of the human species.

During 1912, and certainly by 1913, Lewis's vision hardened. Partly because he grew in confidence with regard to his perceptions and qualities, but also because he began to incorporate a consistent formalist inventiveness into his work. The compositions Lovers, and The Dancers, of 1912 are clear evidence of this development. Again the themes here concern ritualised and primitive encounters. The two sets of lovers are locked in a salacious and lascivious embrace, the dancers cavort in a naked, barbaric rhythm. Lewis's fascination with the base and carnal aspects of human activity, the primitive within the civilised,

remained as a moral imperative. But formally these works are much more satisfactory than the unresolved experiments in the previous works. Lewis began to successfully integrate a distinctly modernist technique with his tragic-comic themes. The fragmented two-dimensional patterns in the backgrounds of these works owe a clear debt to cubist facture, while the energised rhythms of the composition are dependent upon the example of Futurism. Lewis's success in incorporating these techniques into his work is without question, but even here he remained at a distance. Both Lovers and The Dancers while incorporating modernist techniques refuse to wholly endorse a modernist value system. In fact Lewis extended his negative view of existence and humanity by creating a more comprehensive vision of tragic failure. In these works Lewis's comic characters were turned into dehumanised mechanisms. The rituals of their existence were no longer organic, but automatic and determined. At this point the ontological notion of tragedy was replaced by a socially specific concept. Lewis located his tragic vision both within the cultural forms of modernity, and within its productive form, the machine. Consequently the relationship between human kind and nature was submerged as the relationship between human kind and the modern, social world surfaced.

Now this development was due, in part, to the rhetoric of the Futurist Marinetti, whose proclamations concerning the necessity of modern art pursuing modern themes were familiar to Lewis. However, it was also a logical step in

Lewis's personal development for it allowed him to be contemporary in both art and thinking. Giving his vision a radical cutting edge, at once part of the modern movement but also distinctive from it. For the dehumanised, mechanical tragedy which Lewis explored had no clear correspondent in contemporary art. [96]

Yet these works were also the first steps in the development of an abstract formalism in the period after 1912. Lewis's development of Vorticism grew out of a work like The Dancers, and never seriously departed from the ideational matrix established during this period. Despite the potential for a purely formalist reading of Lewis's Vorticist works, [97] their true value lay in the integration of a genuinely modernist method, with a uniquely sceptical vision.

"One synthetic and various Ego."

Above all it was a sense of self which Lewis created in these early works. The underlying condition of his entire project was the forging of an identity, separate and inviolable, which marked him out as a creator. His individualism and uniqueness were to be established in the unending contest between himself and others. Moreover the most worthy representatives of existential assertiveness were those contemporary artists who pursued an aesthetic at

the very edge of human understanding. In consequence Lewis believed it necessary to establish his sense of self in contest with the most advanced of his peers. This meant the construction of a world view at once as radical as his contemporaries, but profoundly different.

Lewis was surely following Nietzsche in this prospect. Certainly Lewis attacked Nietzsche and offered some cogent criticism of his philosophy. [98] But this was no more than a bright pupil's reaction to his master. More important were the number of backhanded compliments given to Nietzsche in Lewis's Vorticist literature. [99] For it was in Nietzsche's view of the self, and the role of art, that Lewis discovered his personal becoming. Lewis later admitted that Nietzsche's The Gay Science was one of his most important influences in these early years. [100] This, Nietzsche's last book of aphorisms published in 1887, reset a number of familiar themes. In particular the notion of the will to power, which asserted the individual as creator of the substantial world, and was the first postulate in the creation of Nietzsche's Over-Man figure. And, of course, the idea of Art as a redemptive and positive force, the only means by which existence could be given justification and the true mark of the conqueror of life. Here Nietzsche asked, "what preserves the species", and replied:

> "The strongest and most evil spirits have so far advanced humanity the most; they have always rekindled the drowsing passions..." [101]

While later he instructs,

> "Believe me, the secret of the greatest fruitfulness and the greatest enjoyment of existence is to live

> dangerously! Build your cities under Vesuvius. Send your ships into uncharted seas! Live at war with your peers and yourselves!" [102]

The evidence of Lewis's early development, and his later life, shows that he took this demand quite literally. And it was a demand for the creation of a complex and extraordinary Ego, a belief in the absolute sanctity of the individual.

It appears that Lewis gleaned at least some of this idea from a figure who is often seen as a precursor of Nietzsche, the German writer Marx Stirner. Stirner's most famous work Der Einzique und sein Eigentum, which is properly translated as "The Unique and its Property", but was published in English in 1907 as The Ego and His Own, was certainly known to Lewis. In Lewis's Nietzschian play of the Vorticist period Enemy of the Stars the principal character Arghol throws Stirner's work from his window. [103] And several lines in this play reflect Stirner's thesis, especially the declamatory "Anything but yourself is dirt". [104] For above all Stirner's book was a eulogy to the Individual, he wrote:

> "Ego sum Ego... For me nothing is above Me... My object is neither good nor bad, neither love nor hatred, my object is my own - and it is Unique, even as I am Unique." [105]

While Lewis's discovery of self contains none of the Messianic hysteria of Stirner, it was nevertheless just as certain and committed.

Nietzsche however remained the key figure in Lewis's construction of an identity. Principally because Nietzsche placed the accent on the idea of the artist, and art as the

arena where self-enlightenment could be discovered. The Gay Science asserted that "One thing is needful":

> "`Giving style' to one's character is a great and rare art! It is exercised by those who see all the strengths and weaknesses of their own natures and then comprehend them in an artistic plan until everything appears as art and reason..." [106]

This demand was a kind of revelation for Lewis. It allowed him to overcome the insecurities which had plagued his early work, and, it provided the stimulus to reject the dominant model of John. More importantly it required the aggressive assertion of an individual identity, which became compatible only with the construction of a vigorous philosophy, and startling artistic archive.

To this end Lewis formulated a number of oppositions to contemporary European thought. This took the form of manufacturing dichotomous relationships with established categories. The mind and the body was the single most pervasive opposition, since Lewis insisted that "the mind, perverse and gorgeous", [107] was the place where self was first created. The body of course was the enemy of the mind, and its betrayer. In consequence it became attached to the idea of the other, which was by extension the mass of primitive types who exist within the confines of the body, are bound to nature, and live unrealised or merely surrogate lives. These dichotomies while, in reality, indivisible, nevertheless existed as dualisms in constant conflict. Hence the mind and body, man and nature, the individual and the mass, art and life, were, like the Apollonian and the Dionysian necessary polarities

in the creation of a "synthetic and various Ego". The ego, the very encapsulation of self, was the badge of absolute independence. It was the aggressive assassin of the other, symbolically asserting its authority over equals and inferiors alike. The Ego was the mark of the irresistably unique. Ironically it was also the extension of that most uniform of bourgeois political categories, the individual.

CHAPTER II: Footnotes

1. Certainly Lewis had completed oil paintings prior to 1915. In 1911 he sold a work titled Port de Mer to Augustus John. John himself described this as being "so interesting and example of your work" (undated letter from John to Lewis, Department of Rare Books, Cornell University). This painting is, however, now lost. What was certainly a major oil painting Kermesse was completed in 1912 and exhibited in London in both 1912 and 1913. During January 1917 this work was shown at the Vorticist Exhibition arranged by the collector John Quinn in the Penguin Club, New York City, it too is now lost. Other works The Laughing Woman, 1913, Christopher Columbus, 1914 and the important Plan of War, 1914, are all lost and our knowledge of them is scanty. The Crowd then must be considered Lewis's first major, and extant, oil painting.

2. The Crowd was first exhibited in the second London group exhibition of March, 1915. It was then titled Revolution and was bought by Lewis's close friend Captain Guy Baker. In his humorous and conciliatory autobiography Blasting and Bombardiering Lewis wrote; "Baker had a small collection of my pictures which he bequeathed to the South Kensington Museum at his death. The Regular Army produces a few such freakish intelligences as his, and when it does it is a most attractive hybrid..." (Blasting and

Bombardiering, London, 1982, p. 209). This painting is now in the Tate Gallery, London.

3. Of course by 1915 this was becoming a common practice amongst modern artists. Not only the Cubists and Futurists but any number of German Expressionists, Russian Constructivists and avant garde experimentalists were employing this device. I mention these figures because Lewis would have had first hand experience of their work, both these paintings were shown at The Exhibition of Works by the Italian Futurist Painters, Sackville Gallery, London, March, 1912.

4. See, in reference to this point, Theda Shapiro Painters and Politics, New York, 1976.

5. F.T. Marinetti, The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism, 1909, in Umbro Apollonio Futurist Manifestos, London, 1973, p. 22.

6. Marinetti, like Lewis, had associations with Fascism in the 1920s and 1930s. Marinetti's were, in fact, much closer than Lewis's, he was an outspoken and aggressive supporter of Mussolini. Marinetti's Fascism should be seen as an aspect of his romanticism. The appeal of Fascism for Lewis was intimately bound, as we shall later see, to his classicism.

7. Wyndham Lewis, Rude Assignment, Santa Barbara 1984, p. 125. The complete quote is "During those days, I began to get a philosophy: but not a very good one, I am afraid. Like all philosophies, it was built up around the will - as primitive houses are built against a hill, or propped up upon a bog. As a timely expression of personal impulses it took the form of a reaction against civilised values. It was militantly vitalistic.". Clearly the references here are to Nietschian and Bergsonian vitalism.

8. Lewis was born on 18th November 1882, on his father's yacht which was then anchored off Amherst, Nova Scotia, Canada. He held a Canadian passport all his life.

9. Throughout his life Lewis pursued two careers, as painter and writer. His first written works of any consequence were a number of Shakespearian sonnets penned while he was a student at the Slade.

10. Lewis's biography has been written by Jeffrey Meyers, The Enemy: A biography of Wyndham Lewis, London, 1980.

11. Henry Tonks (1862-1937), first trained as an anatomist. He was a teacher at the Slade from 1892 and Slade Professor of drawing and painting from 1918-1930.

12. Letter from Henry Tonks to Wyndham Lewis dated 25th January 1918 and held at Cornell University Library, Department of Rare Books.

13. The role of line in Lewis's work was one of his clearest formal links with classicism of the authoritarian kind. This point will be developed later in the text.

14. Spenser Gore (1878-1914) attended the Slade from 1896-1899. An English Post-Impressionist painter specialising in landscapes and figures in interiors after the Camden Town Group manner. He died from pneumonia in 1914. Lewis published a touching obituary for Gore in the first edition of Blast.

15. Lewis had a deep attachment to his mother who, during this period, was staying in various residences in the south of England. The family had been deserted by the father in 1893.

16. Lewis to his Mother 1906-7, W.K. Rose (ed.) The Letters of Wyndham Lewis, Connecticut, 1963, p. 29.

17. Ibid., Rose, Letters, p. 32.

18. Certainly the successful portraitists of the Edwardian era exhibited this quality in abundance. Perhaps the definitive example would be the sumptuous portraits of John

Singer Sargeant (1856-1925). A mantle which was taken up by Ambrose McEvoy (1878-1927) and Augustus John (1878-1961).

19. Op.cit., Rose, Letters, p. 16. T. Sturge Moore, the brother of the philosopher George Moore, was an associate and friend of Lewis.

20. In a letter dated April 19th 1949 Lewis wrote to Theodore Weiss, "I did not go from Public School to University: Paris, where I went soon after Rugby, was my University", op.cit., Rose, Letters, p. 488.

21. Op.cit. Rose, Letters, p. 17. 1905 was the year of a major Whistler retrospective exhibition in both London, and later, Paris. Lewis was clearly demonstrating an interest in near contemporary, though still nineteenth century, art.

22. Op.cit., Rose, Letters, p. 36-37.

23. Paul Edwards in an interesting Appendix to his essay Wyndham Lewis and Nietzsche: How much Truth does a Man require? in Wyndham Lewis Letterature/Pittura, Palerno, 1982, edited by G. Cianci, notes that Lewis's copies of Nietzsche's Genealogy of Morals and The Joyful Wisdom (The Gay Science) came from the Oscar Levy edition. This edition was first published in 1910.

24. In the letter to Theodore Weiss of 1949, cited above (see note no. 20) Lewis continued, "Paris...was my University. There I followed Bergson's lectures at the Collège de France and shared the philosophical studies of friends of mine then at the Ecole Normale." op.cit. Rose, Letters, p. 488.

25. See Wyndham Lewis, Rude Assignment, Santa Barbara 1984.

26. W. Lewis, Rude Assignment, op.cit., p. 127.

27. Puvis de Chavannes (1824-1898) French decorative artist, often regarded as a Post-Impressionist with "classical" sympathies and precursor of Symbolism.

28. See Charles Harrison's, English Art and Modernism, London, 1981, pp. 13-44, for the context of John's work and the aesthetic attitudes of his immediate peers. Also, Dennis Farr, English Art 1870-1940, Oxford, 1978.

29. Wyndham Lewis, Rude Assignment, op.cit., p. 127.

30. Michael Holroyd, John's biographer reports that John, along with his artist friends Benjamin Evans and Ambrose McEvoy, attended a Rembrandt exhibition at the Stedelijk Museum in the September or October of 1898. John, Holroyd notes saw this as "...a great event... As I bathed myself in

the light of the Dutchman's genius." M. Holroyd, Augustus John I: The Years of Innocence, London, 1974, p. 67.

31. In Rude Assignment Lewis notes "The exact date of my first visit to John's studio I do not remember, but it was shortly after I left the Slade, I think. William Rothenstein....was taking me there." op.cit., p. 128.

32. John at this point had at least two families. One to his legitimate wife Ida Nettleship who bore him five sons and died in 1907. The other to his companion and model Dorelia McNeill whom he met in 1903. Lewis's letters contain numerous descriptions of the resultant chaos in John's household.

33. Rose, Letters, op.cit., p. 11.

34. Rose, Letters, op.cit., p. 31.

35. Rose, Letters, op.cit., p. 38.

36. Rose, Letters, op.cit., p. 39.

37. See, in reference to this point the chapters "How One Begins", "Early Life and Shakespeare", and "The Puritans of the Steppes", in Rude Assignment, op.cit.

38. Rose, Letters, op.cit., p. 32.

39. This may be contrasted to his attitude towards John's other friends and associates whom he constantly condemns in these early letters, e.g. "John has a very disagreeable set of people round him just now..." Rose, Letters, op.cit., p. 36.

40. Lewis was himself aware of this, in Rude Assignment he notes "I remained, beyond the usual period, congealed in a kind of cryptic immaturity." op.cit., p. 126.

41. I should stress that this was in no way engineered by John whose attitude towards Lewis was in the main, tolerant and friendly.

42. Walter Michel's catalogue raisonné Wyndham Lewis: Paintings and Drawings, California, 1971, lists only three extant drawings by Lewis from this period. These are the sketch Two Nudes, 1903 previously referred to, Hellas 1900-1905 a small Rembrandtesque sketch which refers to Shelley's poem of that name, and Street Scene, 1900-1905, a rather conventional sketch of what seems to be a London street; this latter work is unsigned. Two other works are listed, Study of a Girl's Head, which was exhibited at the New English Art Club in 1904, and An Oriental Design, c. 1900-1905.

43. In his essay The Meaning of the Wild Body Lewis wrote "It is the chasm between being and non-being, over which it

is impossible for logic to throw any bridge, that, in certain forms of laughter, we leap." in The Complete Wild Body, ed. B. Laforcade, Santa Barbara, 1982, p. 157-8.

44. The stories of The Wild Body were published separately during the years 1909-1911. Their generic title at this period was Our Wild Body referring to a critical essay on Lewis's anti-Bergsonian concept of the "comic" published in The New Age in May 1910. In 1927 Lewis returned to these early short stories, completely revised them and published them collectively as The Wild Body, Chatto and Windus, London, 1927. All references here are to the Black Sparrow Press edition The Complete Wild Body edited by Bernard Laforcade, Santa Barbara, 1982, which collates both the early and revised texts.

45. The English Review, II, May 1909, pp. 255-265.

46. Ford Madox Ford was founder and first editor of The English Review which was established in 1908.

47. Ford Madox Ford, Memories and Impressions, London, 1979, pp. 208-209.

48. See, for example Augustus John Chiaroscuro, London, 1954, p. 50 and Ernest Hemmingway A Moveable Feast.

49. Ford Madox Ford Memories and Impressions, op.cit., p. 209.

50. These short stories appeared in the following order:

`The "Pole"' in The English Review II, May 1909.

`Some Innkeepers and Bestre' in The English Review II, June 1909.

`Les Saltimbanques' in The English Review II, August, 1909.

`Our Wild Body' in The New Age, May 1910.

`A Spanish Household' in The Tramp: An open air magazine, June-July, 1910.

`A Breton Innkeeper' in The Tramp: An open air magazine, August 1910

`Le Père Francois in The Tramp: An open air magazine, September 1910.

`Brobdingnag' in The New Age, January, 1911.

`Unlucky for Pringle' in The Tramp: An open air magazine, February 1911.

51. Wyndham Lewis, authors note to The "Pole", in B. Laforcade (ed.), The Complete Wild Body, op.cit., p. 209.

52. Wyndham Lewis, in B. Laforcade (ed.) The Complete Wild Body, op.cit, p. 209.

53. Lewis cites an early interest in Schopenhauer in Rude Assignment, "But for me Nietzsche was, with Schopenhauer,

a thinker more immediately accessible to a Western mind...", op.cit., P. 128.

54. Wyndham lewis, in B. Laforcade (ed.), The Complete Wild Body, op.cit., p. 237.

55. Rose, Letters, op.cit., p. 28.

56. The Quimperlé manuscript consists of a few pages of sometimes near indecipherable jottings held at Cornell University. It has now been published as A Breton Journal in The Complete Wild Body, B. Laforcade (ed.), op.cit. pp. 193-198.

57. Wyndham lewis, The Complete Wild Body, B. Laforcade (ed.), op.cit., p. 194.

58. The Birth of Tragedy was Nietsche's first published text (1872). In Rude Assignment Lewis claimed that "La Gaya Scienze... (was)...among my favourite reading during those years." op.cit., p. 128. His affiliation to The Joyful Wisdom is important but there are clearer associations during this period with the aesthetics expressed in The Birth of Tragedy.

59. Nietzsche The Birth of Tragedy, translated by Wm. A. Haussmann, London, 1909, p. 30.

60. Nietzsche, ibid., p. 61.

61. Wyndham Lewis, The Complete Wild Body, B. Laforcade (ed.), op.cit., p. 228.

62. Wyndham Lewis, The Complete Wild Body, B. Laforcade (ed.), op.cit., p. 228.

63. Wyndham Lewis, The Complete Wild Body, B. Laforcade (ed.), op.cit., p. 231.

64. Wyndham lewis, The Complete Wild Body, B. Laforcade (ed.), op.cit., p. 221.

65. Nietzsche, The Birth of Tragedy, op.cit., p. 50.

66. Nietzsche, The Birth of Tragedy, op.cit., p. 50.

67. Wyndham lewis, The Complete Wild Body, B. Laforcade (ed.) op.cit., p. 194-195.

68. Nietzsche, The Birth of Tragedy, op.cit., p. 62. Nietzsche's italics.

69. In his 1917 essay Inferior Religions Lewis offered the Nietzschian aphorism "Laughter is the Wild Body's song of triumph" (Wyndham Lewis, The Complete Wild Body, B.

Laforcade (ed.), op.cit., p. 317) as a cryptic notation of this intention.

70. The clearest example of Lewis's comic intentions being located in the mind/body dichotomy occurred in his critical essay Our Wild Body. There he noted:

> "One sees many an Englishman with an alert, masterful and intelligent face, and one is taken aback and extremely perplexed to find beneath it a grotesque, undignified, stupid, dawdling, `allure' in the rest of the person."

(Wyndham Lewis, The Complete Wild body, B. Laforcade (ed.), op.cit. p. 255. In the later revision of this essay The Meaning of the wild Body (1927), Lewis was more concrete and to the point:

> "First, to assume the dichotomy of mind and body is necessary here...for it is upon that essential separation that the theory of laughter here proposed is based."

(Wyndham Lewis, The Complete Wild Body B. Laforcade (ed.), op.cit., p. 157.

71. W. Lewis in A Review of Contemporary Art published in Blast No. 2, the full quotation reads, "The whole of art today can undoubtedly be modified in the direction of a greater imaginative freedom of work, and with renewed conception of aesthetics in sympathy with our time." Blast, The War Number, Santa Barbara, 1981, p. 46.

72. W. Lewis, The Complete Wild Body, B. Laforcade (ed.), op.cit, p. 255, my italics.

73. Lewis to Moore, letter in Cornell archive dated September 1909. Part of a lifelong, though intermittent, correspondence with T. Sturge Moore the poet, and brother of philosopher George Moore. Struge Moore was as important to Lewis as John, though John's influence on lewis the painter was paramount. See Jeffrey Meyers, The Enemy op.cit., p. 26-29, and, John Holloway,"Lewis and the Patriarchs" in Wyndham Lewis: a revaluation edited by Jeffrey Meyers, London, 1980.

74. Lewis is known to have visited the salon of Gertrude Stein, with Roger Fry early in 1913. An amusing description of this visit is contained in Ernest Hemmingway's account of his Paris years A Moveable Feast where he claimed Stein nicknamed Lewis "the measuring worm" because of his meticulous examination of her pictures. At Stein's house Lewis would have encountered the finest private collection of contemporary Parisian modernism. However there remains no concrete evidence of Lewis's knowledge of contemporary modernism prior to that date, though as an art student in Paris during these years he must have had some kind of familiarity with the moderns.

75. Augustus John, Chiaroscuro, London, 1954, pp. 46-47.

76. Lewis exhibited at the first and second Camden Town Group exhibitions in the June and December of 1911. His friend Spencer Gore was a key figure in the group along with Harold Gilman. Lewis respected both these artists and indeed wrote obituaries for them. As painters they were more conventional than Lewis, developing a tasteful Post Impressionist style. As followers of Walter Richard Sickert, the extraordinary figurehead of the Camden Town Group they emulated their illustrious masters concern with lower middle class interiors, and the music hall, as a subject matter. Sickert had been a pupil of Whistler's but rejected his influence in favour of Degas's. Prior to Roger Fry's first Post-Impressionist exhibition of 1910, Sickert's subdued impressionism held sway amongst the younger generation of English moderns.

77. Jacob Epstein, Let there be Sculpture, London, 1942, p. 189.

78. Nietzsche, The Birth of tragedy, op.cit, p.

79. W. Lewis, The Complete Wild Body ed. B. Laforcade, op.cit. p. 158.

80. Rose, Letters, op.cit. p. 45.

81. While visiting Spain with Spencer Gore in 1902, Lewis wrote to his mother, "The Prado is a very wonderful place: we got shown yesterday the room of Goya drawings." (Rose, Letters, op.cit., p. 7.) Goya's satire was a model for Lewis since it combined the intellectual with a political and social vision and moreover it did so while still being of the highest artistic quality.
82. To this we might add Cézanne's many Bathers, and Picasso's work of circa 1904, the "Blue" and "Rose" period.

83. Interestingly this corresponded to Lewis's own physical condition. Throughout his life he was plagued by debilitating illness. The first, and in many ways most serious, was a venereal disease contracted in 1908. This recurred in 1915 and he claimed then to have treated it himself. His biographer suggests the treatment "made him an invalid, on and off, for six months", and "led to very serious and painful complications...in the 1930s" (Meyers, The Enemy op.cit. p. 70). In the early letters Lewis was constantly complaining to his mother "I've been in bed for a day or so with a bad cold...and have been feeling rather exhausted on account of it; had a sore throat and cough for the last few days", (Rose Letters, op.cit, p. 6), "I'm feeling rather ill again today" (Rose, Letters, op.cit. p. 7), and "I had a bilious headache for three days, I suppose a bilious one... For the last few days I have been blessed with an extremely bad cold in the throat and head, and a feeling of general weakness..." (Rose, Letters,

op.cit., p. 19). Clearly the body's treachery , distinct from the mind's fruitfulness, was not only an ontological tragi-comedy for Lewis, but a personal reality.

84. Lewis maintained a consistent antipathy towards the nature mysticism of the Romantics, a value system which he insisted overlapped with, and contaminated the modern movement itself. His rejection of Romanticism became a crucial axis in his philosophical system after 1914.

85. Lewis first articulated his critique of his contemporaries in A Review of Contemporary Art which he published in Blast. This review was designed, in part, to promote Vorticism's claim to avant-garde status, but also as a corrective to modernism's value system.

86. Matisse had in fact exhibited Le Luxe, The Red Studio, and La Dance, among other works, at Roger Fry's Second Post Impressionist Exhibition of English, French and Russian Artists in the Grafton Galleries during October 1912. Picasso also showed here, a number of his works up to and including his Cubist period.

87. Fry's two Post Impressionist exhibitions, the first of which Manet and the Post Impressionists had been at the Grafton Galleries during the Winter of 1910, were the most important exhibitions staged in London in the first decade of this century. They introduced to a conservative art

world, and public, the key figures of the Modern Movement. Naturally Lewis's desire to assert his talent took the form of a guerilla combat with the principal figures represented in these shows. A combat in which he needed to be seen as more radical and intellectually rigorous than they.

88. The Laughing Woman discussed here was probably a sketch for the lost oil The Laughing Woman exhibited at the Contemporary Art Society in April 1913. The sketch itself is now lost though reproduced in Walter Michel's catalogue raisonné from a photograph once in the possession of Lewis's wife, Anne.

89. The Daily News and Leader, 7 April, 1914.

90. W. Lewis, The Complete Wild Body, ed. B. Laforcade, op.cit., p. 315.

91. W. Lewis, The Complete Wild Body, ed. B. Laforcade op.cit. p. 317-318. Bernard Laforcade notes that Lewis who probably wrote this essay in 1917 while in army training has here confused the "Roland" character of A Breton Innkeeper with this "Moran", see above, p. 311.

92. W. Lewis, The Complete Wild Body, ed. B. Laforcade, op.cit., p. 316.

93. W. Lewis, The Complete Wild Body, ed. B. Laforcade, op.cit., p. 317.

94. W. Lewis, The Complete Wild Body, ed. B. Laforcade, op.cit., p. 317.

95. W. Lewis, The Complete Wild Body, ed. B. Laforcade, op.cit., p. 317.

96. The closest parallel would be Epstein's Rock Drill 1913-15, but this work was created in a spirit of sentimental melancholy "Here is the armed, sinister figure of today and tomorrow. No humanity, only the terrible Frankenstein's monster we have made ourselves into". (Epstein, Let There be Sculpture, op.cit., p. 56). Lewis's pessimism was ontological and his vision a revelation of that pessimism. In this sense it was distinct from Epstein, and the romantic machine aesthetics of the Futurists.

97. Lewis himself often encouraged just such a formalist reading. In Blast 2 he wrote, "A Vorticist, lately, painted a picture in which a crowd of squarish shapes, at once suggesting windows occurred." A sympathiser with the movement asked him, horror struck, "are these not windows?" "Why not?" the Vorticist replied. "A window if for you actually A WINDOW: for me it is a space bounded by a square or oblong frame, by four bands or four lines,

merely." (Blast 2, op.cit., p. 44). More clearly in his introduction to the Tate Gallery retrospective exhibition of 1956 Lewis wrote, "It was my ultimate aim to exclude from painting the everyday visual real altogether. The idea was to build up a visual language as abstract as music." (W. Lewis, Tate Gallery exhibition catalogue Wyndham Lewis and Vorticism, London, 1956, p. 3). Such an interpretation is however ingenuous and misleading.

98. Lewis's "sociological" book The Art of Being Ruled, of 1926 contains a particularly powerful chapter on "Nietzsche as Vulgariser", New York, 1972, pp. 120-127. By this time Lewis's opposition to Nietzsche was firmly rooted in the former's anti-Romanticism, but it was also a necessary opposition to an important influence, part of the aggressive establishment of Self discussed here.

99. Nietzsche was cited favourably in the editorial of Blast no. 2., and Lewis produced a number of Nietzschian texts during this period, eg. his play Enemy of the Stars published in Blast no. 1, and his first genuine novel, Tarr completed in 1915 but not published until 1918. See in relation to this Tarr: A Nietzschian Novel by Alistair Davies, published in Wyndham Lewis: A Revaluation, ed. J. Meyers, London, 1980, pp. 107-119.

100. In 1950 Lewis wrote of Nietzsche "...that side of his genius which expressed itself in "La Gaye Scienza"...

(was)... among my favourite reading in those years" Wyndham Lewis, Rude Assignment, op.cit. p. 128.

101. Nietzsche, The Gay Science in The Portable Nietzsche, translated by Walter Kaufmann, New York, 1968, p. 93.

102. Nietzsche, The Gay Science in The Portable Nietzsche, ibid., p. 97.

103. Lewis mistitles the work "Einzige und Sein Eigentum" in the text, but he clearly refers to Stirner in Enemy of the Stars, Blast No. I, Santa Barbara, 1981, pp. 55-85.

104. Enemy of the Stars, Blast No. 1, ibid, p. 70.

105. Stirner, sited in G. Chatterton-Hill The Philosophy of Nietzsche, London, 1912, pp. 240-241.

106. Nietzsche, The Gay Science, in The Portable Nietzsche, op.cit., p. 98-99.

107. Wyndham Lewis, The Enemy of the Stars, in Blast No. 1, op.cit., p. 77.

CHAPTER III: The Artist is the Ideal Giant

Vorticism was a crucible. Into it Lewis poured the diverse, half-formed ideas of his early work, mixed these with the aesthetic dispositions of the Modern Movement. And insisted on creating a compound redolent of his singular, explosive, intellect. Of course the politics of the avant-garde suited Lewis, since here the refusal to conform was conventional and uncompromising individualism an orthodoxy. These matters were, for Lewis, not merely a fashion, but an insistent and necessary philosophy. In consequence during the Vorticist period Lewis manoeuvered himself into a position of clear dominance within the most "radical" faction of the English avant-garde. The public break with Roger Fry and the Bloomsbury aesthetes, in 1913, the publication of Blast in 1914, and the Vorticist exhibition at the Doré Galleries in 1915, all contrived to create a vital, publicity conscious avant garde group with lewis as its dominant ego. It followed, however, that given Lewis's commitment to the Self as a continuous opposition to the Other, even within the Vorticist group he was a dissident patriarch. His combative personality resulted in a number of conflicts and secessions within the group, most notably William Roberts and David Bomberg. While his Vorticist work, stylistically related to those of his colleagues, particularly Edward Wadsworth, were

intellectually of a different order. In fact Lewis's vorticist paintings and drawings remained bound to the theory of the tragic and the comic he had developed during his Wild Body phase. In this sense their formalist syntax was always qualified by a specific theoretical grammar. This theoretical element was never a common property amongst the Vorticists as a whole, who tended to experiment with the Vorticist style simply as a novel and "advanced" technique. [1]

In addition to the elements of politicing and social aggrandisement the Vorticist period produced some important personal relationships. Ezra Pound, whom Lewis had first met in 1909, became a key collaborator during this time. Their relationship, by turns amicable and fractious was lifelong and formed a crucial co-ordinate in the construction of Lewis's intellectual paradigm. [2] Similarly it was during this period Lewis first associated with T.S. Eliot, and published, in Blast, The War Number the first examples of Eliot's poetry to appear in an English journal. [3] These figures along with Yeats whom Lewis met in 1909, and Joyce whom Lewis was to meet during the summer of 1920, [4] he considered to be his peers. The intellectual giants of the new age, and worthy contestants in the creation of an original modernist edifice. Significantly they were all literary figures. And this indicates two important factors of Lewis's Vorticist phase. Firstly, he could find no painters in England of sufficient stature and competence to consider as

equals. Hence his fascination with continental modernism. And secondly, even at his most formalist and abstract Lewis remained a literary, or at least ideas orientated, painter. This last point was compounded in a relationship of fundamental importance for Lewis, which emerged during 1914. His association with the poet, critic and speculative philosopher T.E. Hulme was to deepen his interest in aesthetics and philosophy, and help Lewis systematise his thought.

Beyond the biography and friendships of this period, there lay the crystallisation of a unique and extraordinary theory of art. For, in the brief period of Vorticism, from 1913 to 1916, Lewis resolved the contradictions and equivocations of his earlier postion. In particular he developed a thoroughgoing critique of orthodox modernist aesthetics. He absorbed, amended, and reconsituted the practices of his contemporaries. Importantly, he did this in terms of a philosophical system based on a negative vision of human Being. Consequently he produced a dissenting modernism, defiantly opposed to the incipient optimistic idealism of the Modern Movement itself. Lewis's theory was no less ideal, but it was an idealism bound to a resigned scepticism. While this premise constituted the meta-theory of Lewis's painting at this stage, a more practical theoretical component was created in the Vorticist works themselves. Here, in these works, the philosophical vitalism of both Bergson and Nietzsche was contested. The aesthetic predispositions of Cubism, and

more especially Futurism, were undermined. And the legitimacy of a purely formalist aesthetic was indicted. At the moment of Vorticism, lewis attacked the fundamental romanticism upon which the Modern Movement was based. He attempted a cultural cauterisation of those wounds he had identified on the body of civilisation, and strove to produce an art prescriptive of "healthy" society.

These desires reveal both the depths of Lewis's pessimism, and the scale of his ambition. During the period of Vorticism they were gradually compounded into a systematic theory, such that, in the post-war years Lewis was able to maintain a singular and far-reaching aetiology and agency

"A Gallery of Sunsets"

Significant dimensions of Lewis's critique of modernity can be witnessed in his portfolio of drawings Timon of Athens. Timon of Athens, the Shakespearean tragedy, was illustrated by Lewis in 1912. Intended to accompany a published edition of the play, these works were eventually produced separately as a portfolio of printed drawings in December 1913. [5] These drawings are of immense importance, for they were the immediate precursors of Lewis's mature Vorticist style. Here the ponderous, hesitant stylisations of his previous works hardens into a clear aesthetic programme.

There can be no doubt that Lewis was responding to Cubist techniques on the one hand, and Futurist ideas on the other. Moreover, his responses were certainly equivocal. He accepted the technical advances of the analytical cubist method, incorporating, in these works, the cubist armature of line, cubist fragmentation, and cubist "dissection" of the objects displayed. Similarly the Futurist concern with vitalism, dynamism, and chaos of action were all significant aspects of these drawings. It is possible to add that the insistence on a shallow pictorial space, and the piling up of images on top of one another, such that no horizon existed in the drawings, were all clear responses to Cubo-Futurist method. The internal logic of the Timon of Athens portfolio, however, contained an immanent critique of Cubist, and more particularly, Futurist aesthetics.

Act I from this series, a watercolour painted in the umber and brown colouring of Cubist still-lifes, depicts the hall and banqueting room for Timon's house. The vaulting and chambers are suggested by a series of intersecting, curved lines. Stylised, muscular figures compete and overlap in a chaos of action and ceremony. Timon's generous table is clearly visible in the top centre portion of the drawing, while the candles, centre and bottom right symbolise the opulence of the feast. Here are the servants, senators, sycophants and false friends of Timon's circle. The faces of these creatures, sharp, mask-like, grimacing, revolve in a dynamic disorder. The

image is a kind of theatrical psycho-drama, a fantastic theatre of grotesque skirmishing.

This drawing has no centre. Viewing it, the eye moves freely from one explosion of action to the next, assisted by the parabolic lines which intersect the drawing and pull the eye through various points in the action. This fractured vision was undoubtedly influenced by the fragmented picture plane of Cubist works. However a more significant source was surely the dynamic interaction of Futurist "lines of force". The type of action described throughout the Timon series relates directly to the notion of "simultaneity" examined by, principally, Boccioni. In the introduction to the Sackville Galleries Exhibition of Italian Futurist Painters of March 1912, Boccioni thundered:

> "The simultaneousness of states of mind in the work of art: that is the intoxicating aim of our art."[6]

and later continued;

> "This implies...the dislocation and dismemberment of objects, the scattering and fusion of details, freed from accepted logic, and independent from one another."[7]

Here the aim was to create, what Boccioni called "dynamic sensations" manipulated and articulated by the use of "force lines".[8] Of course these were simply an extension of the projecting cantilevered line of the Cubist still-life, but here exaggerated into a symbolic, dynamic interaction.

Lewis viewed this as a rich visual resource in 1912, and further light can be thrown on its importance by comparing the Alcibiades (Fig. 18) drawing from the Timon series with Carlo Carra's Funeral of the Anarchist Galli, (Fig. 19), 1911, which was illustrated in the Sackville catalogue. Carra's painting represents a crowd in riot following police intervention in the funeral procession of a revolutionary anarchist. It depicts a swirling mass of figures in riot, overarched by flagpoles and banners which create a pyramid-like composition while further compiling a series of dynamic, interrelating "lines of force". The centre and base of this pyramid composition contains an empty ill-defined area which becomes the centre of the viewer's attention. Indeed the viewer is seduced into this area, and this is one of the few futurist compositions which successfully "places the spectator at the centre of the picture". [7] Bergsonian theory abounds in this rhetoric. In particular the two elements later identified by Hulme form a crucial theoretical axis. Firstly Bergson's conception of reality" as a flux of interpenetrated elements unseizeable by the intellect". [9] And secondly, the belief in the artists ability to "intuitively" enter into this flux and comprehend its catastrophic actions. This anti-rationalist notion of depicting the "true" reality by describing the dynamic sensations of its interpenetrating parts became a central feature of Futurist theory. It was certainly present in Carra's painting, and Lewis's Alcibiades reflects a

similar dynamism. The pyramidal composition is evident and draws the viewer towards the central figure, Alcibiades the warrior-hero of Shakespeare's play. A series of intersecting lines and forms in the upper third of the drawing correspond to the flags and banners of Carra's painting, and are similarly creative of a "dynamic sensation". Overall the work is the bearer of significant Futurist emotion.

Yet as the Timon series progressed, through the more strictly linear, near abstract compositions of Act III and Act IV (Fig. 20), a deadening of Futurist emotion and dynamism becomes evident. In particular the use of dense black lines in these illustrations, complemented by black masses representing the shaded areas of the design, serves to impose upon the implied dynamism both gravity and authority. These compositions rather then being open and free-flowing, the stated aspiration of Futurist theory and practise, are locked into the specific parameters of the design. Increasingly in the Timon series it was the static authority of the design itself which overtook the open-ended vitalism of the Futurist inspiration. Consequently it was at this early stage that Lewis began to reject Futurist theory.

Essentially it was Bergson's anti-rationalism that Lewis was deprecating. Although the energetic and publicity conscious Marinetti was a constant threat to Lewis's personal ambitions, the contingent vitalism of Bergson's theory of art was intellectually repugnant to

Lewis. Bergson was, for Lewis, the Romantic incarnate. His insistence on the continuous, fluid and unstructured nature of time and experience demanded that all knowledge collapsed into relativism. Science, philosophy, and all forms of rational knowledge were merely artificial systems by which human kind imposed order upon the chaos of experience. Denying these systems Bergson argued that the only appropriate mechanism for "genuine" understanding of the complex reality was the intuitive perceptions of the creative artist. While Lewis could agree with this vision of the privileged role of the artist, the underside of Bergson's theory remained entirely unpalatable. For if reality could only be understood "intuitively" then there was no longer a role for the intellectual. Correspondingly this idea opened the door for any number of dilletante artists, fake philosophers and psuedo-mystics. The romantic faith in spontaneous insight inevitably meant, for Lewis, a kind of democratisation of culture. And this process led to a lowering of standards and a lessening of art's sublime authority. For, where there was no stable centre to social and political life, there could be no overarching system of value and ethics that art might reveal.

It would be wrong to suggest that Lewis's rejection of Bergson was complete in 1912, or even 1913. Residual influences from vitalist theory remain in Lewis's work despite an increasing concern with a classical stasis. Composition (Fig. 21) from 1913 is a watercolour which

was directly related to the Timon series. Pound informed the American collector John Quinn that this work was "of the later or second phase of the Timon stuff".[10] Certainly it bears a clear similarity to the most abstract work in the Timon portfolio, the Composition of 1912. In the 1913 Composition the Vorticist fragmentation of the picture surface is accompanied by a typically Vorticist compositional thrust, dynamically traversing the diagonal from bottom left to top right of the design. The fractured and broken imagery creates an expressive, distinctly Vorticist pattern though the influences of both Cubism and Futurism remain clear. Its distinctive quality however is the massing of black bands which serves to deaden the dynamism of the composition and still the emotional excitement of the design. Tension within Lewis's philosophical position regarding vitalist theory was reflected in the paradox of this predominantly dynamic design being incarcerated by those constraining black figures. This tension was the hallmark of Lewis's mature Vorticist abstractions, and the foundation of his concern with the idea of a modern classicism.

Timon of Athens was, nevertheless, a series of drawings in which Lewis's specifically visual responses to the Modern Movement was articulated and developed. However this portfolio was significant in another respect. Surely Lewis's selection of the Timon tragedy as a subject worthy of illustration is a pointer to some peripheral aspects of his theoretical position in 1912.

Timon was an unfinished play, and remains an infrequently produced work. Heminges and Condell's first Complete Editions of Shakespeare's Works, 1623, described the text as coming "from foul papers left unfinished". [11] Its subject, the tragic betrayal of the noble and generous Timon by his materialist, dishonourable and shallow society of friends, would be particularly recondite for Lewis. Contemporary decadence, defined as democratisation, standardisation and liberalisation, produced precisely that shallow, materialistic society which Lewis, as artist, despised. Timon's subsequent misanthropy

> "And grant, as Timon grows, his hate may grow,
> To the whole race of mankind, high and low!" [12]

and,

> "I am sick of this false world; and will love naught," [13]

were exaggerated, almost comic, versions of Lewis's own disillusion. Certainly in his study of Shakespearian heroes, The Lion and the Fox, Lewis's commentary on Timon suggests that his demented complaints border on the absurd. Nevertheless the attraction of a figure "opposite to humanity" [14] was determined by Lewis's own tragic vision of human Being which developed during the Vorticist period.

The Timon portfolio was important for a number of reasons then. Firstly it was a clear articulation of Lewis's responses to Futurist, and particularly Bergsonian, theory, overlaying Bergson's vitalism with a classical stasis emblematic of his personal desire to undermine the nascent relativism of contemporary thought and culture.

Secondly, the Timon series illustrates the means by which Lewis arrived at Vorticist abstraction. Recognisable figures, acting in environments, gradually become absorbed into the pattern of the environment itself. Consequently in the more developed works, Composition of 1912, and Composition of 1913, the figures are portrayed as abstract cyphers acting within an abstract environment. Lewis has extended the Wild Body theme into a mechanical comedy. The human grotesque, in the modern age, is viewed as a mechanical grotesque interacting with the environment after the manner of an absurd mechanistic dance. Hence the twin themes of the tragic and the comic extend into Lewis's Vorticism and remain as the discreet, partially hidden, content of the Vorticist abstractions. Finally, the Timon series was important because it marked the point at which Lewis fully defined his concept of the tragic and began to ally this to a faith in classicism. This process was completed through his association with the poet, critic and philosopher T.E. Hulme.

"Hulme of Original Sin"

The discourse of modernist art theory seldom searched for its metaphors and analogies amongst the book of Genesis. Yet in the early years of this century T.E. Hulme was to introduce the dogma of Original Sin as an epistemological baseline for a modernist aesthetics. As a

predicate for developments in the Modern Movement the dogma was to have significant, if limited, ramifications. Most notable perhaps was its application in the work of T.S. Eliot. [15] Hulme's specialised use of this doctrine, however, was to have a deep and lasting effect on Lewis's work.

In the development of English modernism Hulme's role is often underestimated. This is because his speculations on philosophy and aesthetics were largely derivative, and were at the time of his death, [16] an incomplete system of thought. Hulme, however, was an active agitator and propagandist for the Vorticist group. He was, in particular, a vociferous supporter of Jacob Epstein's early work. [17] And, in his short life, contributed a number of important essays to the body of pre-war aesthetic theory. [18]

Despite the brevity of Hulme's active working life it is still possible to speak of a development having occurred in his approach to art theory. Put concisely, Hulme moved from an interest in the neo-romanticism of Henri-Bergson [19], to a preoccupation with the cultural and psychologistic determination of style which characterised the work of Wilhelm Worringer. It was largely as a response to, and extension of, the latter theorist's work that Hulme began to concentrate on the doctrine of Original Sin. This dogma he came to regard as a necessary component of modern aesthetic theory. Certainly the application of this idea to the theoretical discourse was unique to Hulme at this

period,[20] and would surely have provided the basis for any substantial contribution he might have made to the discipline of aesthetics.

Clearly, in the context of modernist art theory the dogma of Original Sin was unorthodox, and, in a way, heretical. Indeed, it was Lewis himself who pointed this out:

> "Hulme's discovery of the doctrine of Original Sin...contradicted the unpleasant idolatory of Man. It refuted the modernist uplift. It denied that Man was remarkable in any way, much less "like a god", or capable of unlimited advance."[21]

Hulme's heresy was directed against the mainstream modernist canon, and what he took to be its orthodoxy, the convention of a broadly "humanist" ideological framework. Humanism, as Hulme understood it, had been the cultural and intellectual inheritance of the Renaissance. This system of ideas, which in the contemporary world had become hegemonic, had successfully placed Man at the centre of his world. Moreover, it had created a weltanschauung which understood human kind to be the controller and co-ordinator of nature. Imbuing human kind with a creative potential which stretched beyond Hulme's belief in the finite capability of the species. Rational knowledge, exemplified in the ability to control and manipulate the environment through the twin mechanisms of science and art, had contributed to the decline of a "religious" orthodoxy. The "religious" attitude, for Hulme, was characterised by the experience of a sublime fear, engendered in humanity, when confronted by an awesome, hostile and fantastic

universe. That is to say the "religious" attitude was negative and to some extent debilitating, promoting a consciousness of the irrepressible "otherness" of nature. This was not, of course, the attitude of Renaissance art and culture, Hulme wrote:

> "At the Renaissance, there are many pictures with religious subjects, but no religious art in the proper sense of the word. All the emotions expressed are perfectly human ones. Those who choose to think that religious emotion is only the highest form of the emotions that fall inside the humanist ideology, may call this religious art, but they will be wrong." [22]

The self-confidence of Renaissance humanism was understood, by Hulme, to have denied the inbuilt limitations of the species and promoted an attitude which assumed unending human potential. This belief system spread through the culture of Renaissance Europe to contaminate the economic, political and social structures of the contemporary world. In effect it promoted a vice which Hulme regarded as the ultimate sin and sign of weakness, the vice of liberal, democratic humanism.

For Hulme, the attitude of the Renaissance intellectuals had contributed to a number of crucial distortions and confusions in modern life. The ideology of humanism:

> "blurs the clear outlines of human relations by introducing into them the Perfection that properly belongs to the non-human." [23]

moreover:

> "it distorts the real nature of ethical values by deriving them out of essentially subjective things, like human desires and feelings." [24]

Here was the core of Hulme's objection to humanism. For clearly Hulme saw the advent of humanism as the rejection of an external, and absolute, moral authority. This caused the disintegration of all hierarchical values, the dissolution of authoritarian structures, and the failure of ordered society. Social, and particularly cultural forms had come to reflect these developments in terms of the disordered, chaotic and self-orientated art which was the neo-romantic art of the mainstream Modern Movement. Consequently for Hulme this art had failed to come to terms with the "true" nature of Man.

In his essay "Humanism and the Religious Attitude" Hulme established a dichotomy between the humanist approach which refused:

> "to believe any longer in the radical imperfection of either Man or Nature",[25]

and the "religious" approach, which insisted upon the corrupt nature of Man. Hulme asserted, as an <u>a priori</u> category, the finite nature of man:

> "What is important, is what nobody seems to realise... That man is in no sense perfect, but a wretched creature."[26]

The need, and desire, to re-establish such a concept led Hulme back to the book of Genesis, for only in the most fundamentalist dogma were individuals forced to acknowledge that:

> "Ethical values are <u>not</u> relative to human desires and feelings but (are) absolute and objective."[27]

More importantly the acceptance of the dogma of Original Sin necessitated a commitment to the belief that:

"Man is by nature bad." [28]

Only in accepting this fundamentalist belief could civilisation, culture and art be rescued from the chaos of subjectivism and relativism. For having accepted that Man was, unequivocally, sinful and without grace, it followed that:

> "he can only accomplish anything of value by discipline - ethical and political. Order is thus not merely negative, but creative and liberating. Institutions are necessary." [29]

Here was the cornerstone to Hulme's position. In rejecting the entire disposition of humanism, Hulme hoped to establish a modern classicism. But it was a classicism far removed from the Greek, or even the Roman, archetype. Hulme's classicism required the establishment of a continuous thread between a civilisation's politics, its culture and its art. The dominant characteristic of this civilisation would be its authoritarian structure. And the classicism which accompanied it would emphasise, in both philosophy and art, the virtues of discipline, order and stoicism. The foundations of such an authoritarian system would be the acceptance of the fundamentalist dogma of Original Sin.

Two points were important in this curious pseudo-philosophy. Firstly Hulme's acceptance of the "religious attitude", and of the dogma of Original Sin, was not an acceptance of the Christian faith. [30] Within Hulme's

vision there was no redemption and no salvation. There was no Christ. His understanding of religion was linked to that realisation of terror and sublime awe which, Worringer had argued, produced the volition for primitive and geometric art. [31] It was therefore a religious attitude and not a faith. Secondly, and consequent upon this first point, this was a supremely tragic vision. Hulme clearly desired to undermine the optimism of humanism and to force his contemporaries to come to terms with human kind's "radical imperfection". Obviously, he regarded this understanding as fundamentally necessary for the continuance of civilised life. However of this consciousness he was forced to write:

> "It is the closing of all the roads, this realisation of the tragic significance of life, which makes it legitimate to call all other attitudes shallow." [32]

Despite the forlorn nature of this admission, Hulme was never an abject pessimist. Like Lewis, his vision of the tragic was always circumscribed by a stoical, sometimes sardonic indifference. This indifference amounted to a strategic distance placed between himself and the object of the tragedy he described, the broad mass of humanity. Hulme's authoritarianism then was completed in his elitism, which amounted, in effect to a radical conservatism. This proto-political position was to deeply influence Lewis's theory and practice.

Typically, the association of Hulme and Lewis was not based on friendship or even mutual respect. As personalities they both tended towards the truculent.

Sharing a self-absorbed egotism Hulme and Lewis regarded each other with suspicion and hostility. They acknowledged, however, a shared system of values. Both Hulme and Lewis becoming committed to a specialised, authoritarian notion of classicism, based on a belief of Man's corrupt nature. Hence Lewis was subsequently to write:

> "With Hulme I am in complete agreement regarding...the conception of Man as a static animal." [33]

And, despite the animosity between the two as individuals, this overlapping of philosophic and artistic interests was an exceptional feature of, particularly, Lewis's intellectual history. Lewis, in humorous vein, reflecting upon this some twenty years after Hulme's death, wrote:

> "It was mainly as a theorist in the criticism of the fine arts that Hulme would have distinguished himself... And I should have undoubtedly played Turner to the Ruskin." [34]

Characteristically, Lewis adds to this:

> "All the best things Hulme said about the theory of art were said about my art... We happened...to be 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." [35]

Lewis was being disingenuous here, for, in fact, the relationship between the two was much more complex. In a sense what they shared was a radical conservativism, based on an elitism which flowed from a neo-Nietzschian and sub-romantic vision of the intellectual as privileged "seer". This ran contrary to the emerging liberalism, and the democratic appetites of the pre-war period. In consequence their ambitions took the perverted form of a

desire to create an authoritarian classicism, which would be based upon a dogma regarding the "true nature of man". This vision, Hulme insisted, would be expressed symbolically in art. Lewis, as an artist with philosophic ambitions, shared this commitment. Hulme's opportunity for further development was, of course, curtailed in 1917, but Lewis was, in a sense, to make it his life's work to secure this vision. And, in its first form, this was secured in Lewis's Vorticist work.

During 1914, when Lewis and Hulme first met, the latter was completing and refining his programatic theses on the desirability of an abstract, geometric modernism. Such an art might symbolically represent a "classical" consciousness in the specialised sense used by Hulme. That is to say it would be a modernism which aspired to the "classical" Egyptian or Byzantine tradition, employing artistic devices which stressed the authority of a single world view, representing, also, the radical disassociation between man and the external universe, hence producing an irrevocably tragic vision, thereby creating symbolic emblems of human kind's subjugation to its tragic fate.

Hulme had developed these themes by extending Worringer's thesis from Abstraction and Empathy. For example he wrote:

> "There are two kinds of art, geometrical and vital, absolutely distinct in kind from one another. These two arts are not modifications of one and the same art but pursue different aims and are created for the satisfaction of different necessities of mind." [36]

Thus far Hulme had not significantly moved from Worringer's position. The above quotation was simply a restatement of Worringer's notion of the "absolute aesthetic volition" which he understood to be the basis for differing styles in differing cultures. However, Hulme was to insist that:

> "While a naturalistic art is the result of a happy pantheistic relation between man and the outside world, the tendency to abstraction...occurs in races whose attitude to the outside world is the exact contrary to this." [37]

Moreover:

> "...a necessary presupposition of the tendency to abstraction...is the idea of disharmony or separation between man and nature." [38]

Here Hulme was introducing a novel innovation, for the idea of "disharmony" and "separation" were not, in essence, sociological or psychological, as in Worringer's thesis. Within Hulme's pantheon these categories were uncompromisingly ontological. They relate here to that absolute and necessary alienation of man from essence which Hulme takes as axiomatic within his philosophical programme. It was, of course, precisely this absolute separation which he saw revealed in the religious metaphor of the Fall. [39]

Given this set of conditions Hulme's reflections on modern art were highly selective and began to take the form of a programme. This programme lay emphasis upon the desirability of an art which would, in stylistic terms, give expression to the tragic consequences of the knowledge of ontological disharmony, while, more positively, recover a civilised culture from the ruins of this despairing truth

by raising the standard of the classical. At all times Hulme was aware of the need for this new classicism to be contemporary, hence his affection for the machine aesthetic. He wrote of the modern English scene:

> "there seems to be a desire for austerity and bareness, a striving towards structure and away from the messiness and confusion of nature...you will find artists expressing admiration for engineers' drawings, where the lines are clean, the curves all geometrical, and the colour, laid on to show the shape of a cylinder for example, gradated (sic) absolutely mechanically." [40]

To a large extent it was precisely these aesthetic themes coupled with Hulme's philosophic, and proto-political principles which Lewis was to inscribe in his Vorticist work.

The passion for machinery which inhabited the Vorticist aesthetic was not, primarily, based upon a desire to reflect the forms of the contemporary world of machinofacture. Certainly in some works by Wadsworth, Radiation (Fig. 22) and Rotterdam [41] for example, there was a clear parallel between the forms and themes of the woodcuts and the modern industrial environment. But this was no more than a quasi-sociological reflection of the urban world which demonstrated Wadsworth's residual debt to Futurism. Lewis, undoubtedly the key figure in the Vorticist group, had in his Timon series developed the abstract geometric technique as a formal means of contemplating the tragedy of Being. His abstract passages, cyphers for alienated figures interacting in a hostile and alienating environment, confessed to the entire panoply of

tragic-classical-authoritarian values which Hulme was theorising. Hence Lewis's interest in the machine aesthetic far outstripped Futurism's rhetoric. For Lewis the machine aesthetic was a formal means of forcing the conciousness of the tragic upon an audience conditioned to the euphoria of humanism. It was the modern equivalent of a return to the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, and the re-experiencing of the Fall.

Hulme recognised this in Lewis's work, and was pleased by Lewis's mechanical abstractions. In Modern Art and its Philosophy he noted:

> "Take for example one of Wyndham Lewis's pictures. It is obvious that the artists only interest in the human body was in a few abstract mechanical relations perceived in it, the arm as a lever and so on. The interest...in all the detail that makes it vital...is entirely absent." [42]

Most probably Hulme was here referring to Lewis's Portrait of an Englishwoman (Fig. 23) 1913 [43] which was published as an illustration to Blast number one. This watercolour is striking, in the first instance, because of the distance it places between the Lewis of 1913 and the Tonks-inspired Lewis of the first decade of the century. But also because it marked a clear separation between Lewis and even the most radical of his English contemporaries. Nothing so uncompromising or strident existed in the paintings of Bloomsbury nor amongst Lewis's colleagues in the Vortex. But this "portrait" , an upper torso and head of a woman, bent reading, shows a clear alignment to the theoretical matrix of Hulme's speculations. The "portrait" was no

longer to be concerned with the identity, psychology and personality of the individual sitter. Rather the "portrait" was an abstract statement concerning the abstraction "human kind", and its manifest destiny. It was a reflection on, and programmatic manifesto for, the anti-vitalist determinants of a modern classicism.

Hulme's anti-romanticism, his implied anti-Bergsonianism, and his demands for an ideas-orientated art propagating the virtues of a stoical and authoritarian classicism, all found a resonance in Lewis's work. By 1914, when Lewis and Hulme met, they had simultaneously developed a modernism which was, in many ways, a mirror image of the Modern Movement. But Lewis's Vorticist works were not completely subjugated to Hulme's theory. Indeed during 1914 he was warning his colleagues of Hulme's inadequacies:

> "Seriously get rid of this hautise of the Hulme-Kebblewhite combination. They are pretty boring folk: Epstein is the only individual in that little set who does anything or has any personality."[44]

While the theoretical matrix developed by Hulme was important to Lewis during this period, it was largely as a significant undercurrent to his actual practise. Lewis's practices were however, more obviously a specific response to developments within the arena of painting.

> "Vorticism, in fact, was what I, personally, did and said...."[45]

Vorticism existed, at least for Lewis, in order to reconstitute and amend the contingent formalism of the Modern Movement, and introduce a political and philosophical dynamic into art. This, principally, was what separated Lewis's Vorticism from that of his colleagues. For Lewis's work was theoretically located in a diagnostic and prescriptive system, designed, in essence, to provide modernism with an intellectual and philosophical base worthy of its sophisticated technical innovations. In this sense Lewis's Vorticism was not anti-formalist.[46] Rather it desired to provide formalist experiments with a rigorous metaphysics, making it directly relevant to contemporary reality. His own experiments of the Vorticist period he regarded as exemplars of this necessity.

The diagnostic element of Lewis's Vorticism was most clearly articulated in his critical summaries of contemporary art developed in Blast. Particularly in the sections entitled "Vortices and Notes" in Blast 1, and "A Review of Centomporary Art" in Blast 2. Targets for Lewis's censure included those individuals and movements to which he was most indebted. Picasso and Cubism were subjected to searching criticism, Expressionism and particularly Kandinsky's work was relegated to the second rate. But the most forceful critique was reserved for the work of the Futurists. Naturally in England during this period Futurism was the contemporary art movement with the highest public profile. But Lewis's reactions to Futurism

were much more than an attempt to upstage Futurist rhetoric, and contribute his own theatrical peformance to the "Melodrama of Modernity". [47] Lewis's disavowal of these developments in art were, rather, a sincere attempt to realign the ethics of the Modern Movement to the system of values he shared with Hulme. That was towards the tragic and the classic, the prescriptive end of his programme exemplified by his own Vorticism.

In the subsection "Relativism and Picasso's Latest Work" from "Vortices and Notes" in Blast 1, Lewis notes:

> "In the experiments of modern art we come face to face with the question of the raison d'etre of Art more actuely than ever before..." [48]

For Lewis, the problem with Picasso's work was that despite its sophisticated technical merits it remained an art "without a purpose" [49] The constant repetition of the still-life theme in Cubist work was a negation of the metaphysical duties of art. Lewis could not see in these works an intellectual viability, and this fact undermined their technical merit and artistic value. This theme constantly insinuates itself upon Lewis's discussions of Picasso, though in fact he cannot always hide his admiration for the Spaniard's work:

> "The word CUBISM at once, for me, conjures up a series of very solid, heavy and unusually gloomy Nature Mortes... I admire some of these paintings extremely. Only we must recognise that what produced these paintings was a marvellous enterprise and enthusiastic experimentation, and that if we are to show ourselves worthy of the lead given us...we must not abate in our interrogation." [50]

However the critical point concerned subject-matter and Lewis found the still-life wasteful and irrelevant:

> "However musical or vegetarian a man may be, his life is not spent exclusively amongst apples and mandolins." [51]

These themes, constantly repeated in Cubist work, Lewis felt rendered Cubist painting merely tasteful and decorative. Even more harmfully they produced a fashion for the merely novel in art, and this opened the way for any number of dilettantes. Hence:

> "The most abject, anaemic, and amateurish manifestation of this Matisse "decorativeness", or Picasso deadness and bland arrangement, could no doubt be found...in Mr. Fry's curtain and pincushion factory in Fitzroy Square". [52]

"Amateurs" like Roger Fry and his Bloomsbury circle were, for Lewis, the enemies of art and the artist. And where art had deteriorated into a series of novelties and "inventions", without intellectual insight, these figures could gain unmerited power and status.

Interestingly Lewis failed to credit Cubism with those philosophical concerns which were a hidden aspect of its practice. The attempt to conceptualise a complex and irreducible reality. The confrontation of the problem of articulating that three-dimensional reality on the two-dimensional canvas, in such a way that the thing "known" as well as the thing "seen" may be understood. And, the overarching problem of a changing artistic consciousness regarding external reality. Lewis, in fact, tended to see these aspects of Cubism simply as extensions

of Impressionist method [53], and probably also as too Bergsonian to merit any authority.

But if Cubism was to be castigated because it lacked metaphysical and intellectualist concerns, Expressionism was censured for its cascade of romantic metaphysic. Kandinsky in particular was made to confess to being "ethereal, lyrical and cloud-like". [54] Although the "only PURELY abstract painter in Europe" [55] he was:

> "committed...to avoid almost all powerful and definite forms...he is, at best wandering and slack."[56]

There was a sense here in which Lewis propagated the Vorticist aesthetic by accentuating the qualities of structure and authoritative composition as distinct from the ethereality of competing movements.[57] But more important than this typical avant garde politicing was the element of personal contest. Assertion of a specific, Lewis-inspired vision of the integrity of art was a surrogate assertion of Self. And this contest with the most able of his peers, was the most worthy of gladatorial combats. Given the masculine and egotistical nature of these goals it is not surprising that Futurism, and in particular Marinetti, should have been the focus of most of Lewis's attention.

Throughout both editions of Blast a continuous debate with the theory and practise of Futurist art was maintained. The Keynote of this multifaceted critique concerned the neo-romanticism, Bergsonianism, and celebration of chaos which underpinned Futurist theory. Futurism was viewed

as the most blatant symptom of modernism's perverse appeal to anarchic libertarianism, which was, in turn, an extension of the belief in the perfectability of human kind and naturally entailed the democratisation of all social structures. Paintings like Carra's Funeral of the Anarchist Galli, Russolo's Rebellion, and Boccioni's The Rising City were, for Lewis, an "identification with the crowd" and therefore constituted "a huge hypocrisy". [58] Such a tendency, to rejoice and participate in the uncivilised emotions of the masses, could only suggest charlatanism and a signal failure to comprehend the duty of the artist. [59] Moreover the techniques of Futurist art were, Lewis argued, shallow and derivative. Echoing Pound's criticism of the Futurists Lewis noted:

> "Futurism, as preached by Marinetti, is largely Impressionism up-to-date". [60]

Hence Lewis's Vorticist declarations were careful to distance Vorticist precepts from those of Futurism:

> "AUTOMOBILISM (Marinetteism) bores us. We don't want to go about making a hullo-bulloo about motor cars.... The futurist is a sensational and sentimental mixture... The Vorticist is at his maximum point of energy when stillest. The Vorticist is not the Slave of Commotion, but its Master." [61]

This idea of mastery, of taking control, of ordering and of imposing authority upon a chaotic reality became the motor of Lewis's Vorticist work. It occurred, in the first instance, through the metaphor of the depicted image.

But this was also a visual equivalent to a maturing political philosophy.

Lewis himself was acutely conscious of the ways in which his Vorticist work should be distinguished from the modernism of his peers. He would counter the hysteria and sentiment of Futurism by creating a series of "cold and hard" images devoid of any celebratory connotations. His work would negate the vapid character of the Cubist still-life by creating a fragmented imagery which contained an internal, "classical" vitality. Furthermore his Vorticism would take the key element of modern life, the machine, and make it symbolic of this metaphysic. He would create a machine aesthetic which reflected, castigated and overturned the contemporary decay.

These were extraordinary aims for they stood at an intellectual extreme and on a point of negation. Extending far beyond an artistic ambition, Lewis was attempting to manufacture through his art a social and political reappraisal. Indeed the most fascinating and original aspect of Lewis's theory during this period was his consciousness of the interaction between artistic style and social content. Towards the conclusion of "A Review of Contemporary Art" he wrote:

> "The whole standard of art in our commercial, cheap musical comedy civilisation is of the basest and most vitiated kind. Practically nothing can be done, no Public formed, until these false and filthy standards are destroyed, and the place sanified."[62]

Lewis's faith in the reforming powers of art were such that he seemed to believe Vorticism would be the instrument of this cleansing.

Thus far it is clear that Lewis's Vorticism was intellectually loaded with a number of pertinment sometimes competing aesthetic and theoretical programmes. The metaphysics of Hulme's anti-humanism, his modern "classicism" and his desire for the "austerity and bareness" of a machine aesthetic were fundamental trajectories of Lewis's abstractions. These were coupled with Lewis's opposition to the tasteful, the decorative and the "romantic", which became expressed in the subtle satires of his Vorticist composition. For example part of Lewis's comedy was to take the fragmented mobile imagery of Cubist and Futurist work and lock these forms into a static composition. Furthermore Lewis would, in his Vorticist abstractions, adapt the decorative and sensual colour tones of Fauvist work and create a series of raw, often visceral and certainly garish tonal relations. These characteristics had the effect of deadening the emotional content of these abstractions, and also of alienating the spectator from the imagery. In this way an aesthetic distance was manufactured which forced the spectator to become conscious of the "otherness" of the image, and its functions as both satire and didactic revelation. Finally Lewis was creating, also, a modernism. One which had its roots in the tragic physicality of man's relationship to external reality, but which expressed itself through the

most radical of aesthetic practices, an intense semantic abstraction.

Success in these ambitions, however, was only partial. Principally because Vorticism itself was such a short lived phenomenon. Emerging late in 1913, it had all but disappeared from Lewis's repertoire by 1916, with a high point emerging during the period 1914-1915. Indeed by 1915 Lewis was already predicting that, "A great deal of effort will automatically flow back into more natural forms from the barriers of the abstract". [63] And clearly his taste for a purely abstract painting was limited. This was quite natural given his "classical" ambition for a public art made relevant to a series of specialised mores and values.

Nevertheless some worthy paintings remain which are signals to the rigour of this extraordinary period of abstraction. The oil painting now called Workshop (Fig. 24) 1914-15, and the gouache entitled New York 1914-1915 being principal examples of Lewis's Vorticist style. Both these works rely on a fragmented geometric abstraction only peripherally related to the idea of a machine aesthetic. In fact the preponderance of Lewis's Vorticist works were abstractions of maze-like city scapes. Most notable in these works are the colour combinations. Workshop juxtaposes a series of visceral browns with bands of pink and a small area of midnight blue. New York is predominantly in midnight and light blue with patches of crimson. Almost certainly these dissonant colour combinations were designed to satirise the decorative

sensualism of Matisse's art, and the fact that the works depict aspects of a geometricised cityscape would further condemn Matisse's taste for the arcadian landscape. Simultaneously, of course, these colour combinations agitate and alienate the spectator, successfully creating that aesthetic distance which afforded intellectual insight.

Perhaps the most successful of Lewis's Vorticist abstractions is the small gouache, Red Duet (Fig. 25) from 1914. This arrangement of crimson and mauve rectangles is broken by a series of black and grey splinters. It can be read as depicting two forces in conflict. These are arrayed, for all the world, like armies lined on a battlefield and certainly the theme of conflict and combat was a favourite subject for Lewis.[64] Moreover the lost canvas Plan of War [65], from 1914, indicates Lewis's interest in the theme of battle, a not unusual preoccupation given the date of its execution. Red Duet however is a prime example of Lewis's method of arriving at an abstract statement. Gradually the referential images in the work become absorbed into the overall strategy of the composition. Figures were increasingly reduced to their barest elements, becoming only small totems for former personalities. While the action and the environment became one continuous and undifferentiated aspect of the overall design. Most likely Lewis was here contemplating the absurdity of two armies arranged for battle. And certainly the assembled troops appear to resemble one of Lewis's favourite metaphors

for the automatic responses of unthinking humanity, they are arranged "like rows of ninepins". [66]. Towards the top left portion of this composition there appears what are probably cyphers for a series of flags. Notably these are red in colour and they presage the more literal symbolism of the red flags in The Crowd. In fact the themes of Red Duet are repeated and developed in The Crowd. Moreover in this monumental work Lewis can be seen to be both rejecting the pure abstraction of his Vorticist mechanics, and creating a cataclysmic conclusion to "the melodrama of modernity". For these reasons it is worth returning to this uncompromising image.

"The Crowd" and "The Crowdmaster"

The Crowd was the Vorticist canvas which synthesised and completed Lewis's intellectual preoccupations prior to 1915. It was the final statement in his metatheoretical construction of the idea of Self and the significance of Art, and signals the end to his period of artistic apprenticeship, and a beginning to his life's work proper.

All the philosophical and theoretical commitments of Lewis's early period are embedded in this work. In the first instance it was clearly a reaction to Futurism in both formal and intellectual terms. The Futurist attitude to the idea of the city, the crowd and revolt had been made clear by Marinetti:

> "We will sing of great crowds excited by work, by pleasure and by riot..." [67]

In the Founding and Manifesto of Futurism the crowd and the riot were viewed as functionaries of a kind of mystical cleansing. Purging an ossified bourgeois class of its putrescent and stultified culture. Moreover, this was seen as a process which the Futurists not only identified with, but led, as visionary idealogues. Such neo-romantic avant gardism had its source in a reductionist interpretation of Bergson's notions of the nature of time and cognition. These processes, energised by the "elan vital", were understood to be fluid and continuous, and for that reason could only be conceived of empathetically. Hence, the absorbtion of the Futurist artist into the chaotic experience of the rioting crowd. The idea of this experience became embedded in Futurist rhetoric and painting. Consequently paintings like Carra's Funeral of the Anarchist Galli, 1910-11, and Russolo's Rebellion (Fig. 26) 1911, became the visual equivalents of this vitalism. It is important to stress that this justification of riot remained, despite its revolutionary connotations, intrinsically conservative. Chaos was not a means to an end, but an end in itself. And this attitude belongs properly to a structure of feeling perhaps best described as romantic nihilism.

Lewis undoubtedly found the stimulus for his painting of The Crowd in the challenge presented by Futurist theory and practice. However, his own attitudes, as they developed through his encounter with modernism, necessitated a significant shift away from the mystical

vitalism of the Futurists, towards a more rigorous, though equally conservative, intellectualism. In the second number of Blast Lewis had made his opposition to Futurism clear:

> "Futurism and identification with the crowd is a huge hypocrisy".[68]

For Lewis the hypocrisy lay in the idea that these artists had invested in the crowd some kind of magical insight into the true nature of existence and experience. Distancing himself from this attitude, Lewis also removed himself from any position which demonstrated a faith or commitment in the potential of the masses. Later in the second number of Blast he noted:

> "There is yourself: and there is the Exterior World, that fat mass you browse on."[69]

The crowd then was not something to be exulted, but a force to be analysed and dissected. Much less than identify with this force Lewis saw it as an alien and dangerous mechanism, fed by platitudes and driven by an obsessive and unreasoned commitment to action for its own sake.

The first level of meaning in The Crowd then is its implied attack on Futurist belief. Lewis's Crowd contains none of the romantic drama and dynamism expressed in, for example, Rossolo's Rebellion. Examining Lewis's painting we see the figures reduced to simple mechanical dolls acting out the theatre of revolt. These figures exhibit neither consciousness nor individual will. They are the simple automata who reflect the mechanical structures of

their environment, the modern city. Ultimately they are imprisoned by the city-machine itself, and the pattern of their actions only reflects their impotence in confronting the larger polity. Lewis began to posit here a profound scepticism which undermined not only the romantic posturings of Futurist art, but the fundamental humanism of the Modern Movement, including his fellow Vorticists. For Lewis has proclaimed here his basic intolerance of humanist values and mass action. In The Crowd Lewis offered a satirical manifesto directed against those individuals and groups he would later call "Revolutionary Simpletons".[70] When painted in 1915 however it constituted a frontal assault on the Futurist glorification of the rioting crowd. And the regulated, mechanistic actions of Lewis's crowd caricature and deride the agitated, hysterical dynamism of Futurist aesthetics.

Deeper levels of meaning in this painting touch upon a series of philosophical and political attitudes. These extend far beyond the puerile art politics of the avant gardes where one group would attempt to outstrip the next by determinedly invalidating the precepts of previous theory. Lewis was beginning here to construct an art which would more subtly articulate his developing world view. Central to his concern was the relationship of the individual to the collective. For Lewis began at this period to fully assert the primacy of the artist and the creative individual above that of the mass. Indeed the

opening pages of the first number of Blast screamed this idea,

> "WE NEED THE UNCONSCIOUSNESS OF HUMANITY - their stupidity, animalism and dreams. We believe in no perfectibility except our own....Blast presents an art of individuals."[71]

In constructing this elitist view Lewis was clearly himself guilty of repeating the romantic concept of the artist as privileged "seer". He was also offering a simplified version of Nietzsche's philosophic testament. Most specifically, however, Lewis here demonstrated his intellectual alliance with the speculations of Hulme.

The figures in Lewis's Crowd are demonstrably "limited" in the sense that they are restricted in physical and intellectual potential. Here Lewis was repeating, in plastic form, one of Hulme's favourite themes. For, whereas humanist optimist, the belief that human kind has unlimited potential, depends upon the pliable and infinitely dexterous nature of the human organism, Hulme's radical pessimism demanded a negative attitude towards the human machine. Indeed Hulme's pessimism demanded that any objective examination of human action should realise the strictly limited nature of human capability. In The Crowd Lewis has aesthetically transcribed this theory in his depiction of these rioting figures.

There is also a more abstract debt to Hulme in Lewis's Crowd. It is obvious that the rioting crowd exhibits a commitment to social change through revolutionary action. Emphasis was laid on this idea by

the loaded symbolism of the red flags and the republican tricolour. Historically these social movements have been motivated by demands for increased democratisation, social justice and equality. Clearly these ideas embody both humanist principles and a persistent optimism. In Hulme's terms they were motivated by a belief in the "perfectibility" of human kind. Lewis's depiction of the rioting crowd as a mass of mechanical marionettes blindly following anonymous leaders who command authority through slogans and symbols, reflects Hulme's horror of the political implications of faith in human potential and progress.[72] They were also, of course, a direct expression of Lewis's own distaste for this type of mass action.

Hulme was a major source for the developing system of thought which underpins this painting, and his ideas are clearly crucial co-ordinates when it comes to differentiating Lewis's position from that of his colleagues in the Vorticist movement. However, Lewis does not offer a simple transcription of Hulme's theory into paint. Hulme had asserted that human kind was incapable of any "perfectibility". This implied in political terms,a demand for some form of authoritarianism, but Hulme never registered any statement concerning his ideal polity. Lewis in the first number of Blast, had asserted belief "in no perfectibility except our own". This important dimension, belief in the value of the superior creative individual, was a key element of Lewis's artistic theory and like

Hulme's philosophy spilled over into the political arena. Part of the discreet content of The Crowd was this relationship of the individual to the collective. In a literary work closely related to this painting Lewis began to explore this complex issue. It is possible to glean some of his conclusions on this topic through an examination of this incomplete short story, The Crowdmaster, which was published in the second number of Blast.

The Crowdmaster is a narrative recording the reactions of a retired Lieutenant in the Indian army, Blenner, to the amassing of the "Amazing English Crowds" as the consciousness of impending war becomes a reality. Lewis began by describing the crowds in London, and his description gave these groupings a curious physiognomy. For the crowd was described as being thing-like, it was one anamistic mass, each individual becoming homogenous with its shifting bulk. Moreover the crowd takes on a sinister personality which was separate and distinct from those individuals who composed its atoms.[73] Consequently the opening paragraph of the story reads:

> "Men drift in thrilling masses past the Admiralty, cold night tide. Their throng creeps round corners, breaks faintly here and there up against a railing barring from possible sights. Local ebullience and thickening: some madman disturbing their depths with baffling and recondite noise."[74]

Interestingly, in this story, the police are given a special role amongst the crowd:

> "The police with distant icy contempt herd London. They shift it in lumps here and there..."[75]

In many ways these words are a literal description of Lewis's Crowd, and this latter image may well account for the more clearly articulated, helmeted figures who occupy the lower left portion of the painting.

The most important aspect of the crowd described in The Crowdmaster, however, was the means by which each individual submitted to the authority of the whole,. Here, loss of individuality through participation in the crowd was described by Lewis as a kind of death,

> "Death is, however, only a form of crowd. It is a similar surrender.... The crowd is an immense anaesthetic towards death." [76]

Submission and surrender to the crowd provoked a loss of identity, will and consciousness. The death of individuality which was here compared with actual, physical death. However Blenner, the protagonist in Lewis's story discovers the potential for personal renewal through absorbtion into the crowd:

> "The only possibility of renewal for the individual is into this temporary Death and Resurrection of the Crowd." [77]

There is a shadow here of Nietzsche's notion of personal renewal which he first explored in The Birth of Tragedy, the idea of personal resurrection through a cathartic encounter with the tragic drama. For Lewis's crowd became the crucible wherein consciousness of individuality can be made possible. It only became possible, however, for those special individuals who could master the crowd. The

fictional Blenner was made aware of this through observing the reactions of the mysterious Multman, who:

> "...appeared the only conscious atom of the Crowd. A special privilege with him: to be of the Crowd and individually conscious."[78]

When Lewis wrote, in the first number of Blast, "We need the unconsciousness of humanity - their stupidity, animalism and dreams," it was in order that the special individual could, through absorbtion in the mass, realise his exclusivity. Becoming the "Crowdmaster" was, then, understood as a form of creative liberation.

Lewis's painting of The Crowd parallels the polemical insights of this story. The crowd was rendered a primitive mechanism whose behaviour apes that of its controllers and its environment. Each individual consciousness becomes absorbed into the mass and, in consequence, a curious death of the ego follows. Lewis suggests that this condition was, for the bulk of the populace of any modern city, a permanent state. Through the painting Lewis existed as master of the crowd, by virtue of being outside it, observing, he has announced the "special privilege" of his individual artistic consciousness.

Perhaps the most striking aspect of Lewis's view of the crowd and the city was that, despite his conservatism, his attitudes were not, in any conventional sense, regressive. Lewis was never a sentimental "golden age" theorist. Moreover his view of the crowd and the city was not, like his fellow conservative idealogue T.S. Eliot,

imbued with melancholy and regret. Indeed it was precisely in his acceptance of modern urban life that Lewis was closest to his contemporaries in the Modern Movement. The uniqueness of Lewis's modernism, however, lay in the fatalism with which he accepted the blaring fact of modernity. In this sense Lewis struck a dissonant chord in his depiction of modern urban life in a Vorticist canvas like The Crowd. For here he gave expression to a powerful fantasy based upon his personal scepticism. This fantasy both ridiculed the progressive "pretentions" of humanity, and successfully articulated the negative dimensions of the human condition. In an embryonic form then, Lewis was beginning to castigate those social processes which he was to systematically attack in his sociological and political tracts of the 1920s and 1930s. The social processes of democratisation and standardisation. Consequently it is possible to view Lewis's Vorticism as a subtle metaphor for the idea of social control. The rigid geometries and imprisoning modules of Lewis's canvases in this period, schematically describe a world where action is delimited by the objective fact of its intrinsic absurdity and common purposelessness. The Crowd can be successfully read as an aesthetic translation of these contorting themes.

However, in a canvas like The Crowd these issues were to become focussed in the implied debate between the individual and the collective. It should be remembered that the historical context of this painting consisted of the progressive stabilisation of an ideological hegemony

which saw the individual as a subordinate atom within a collective whole. Most particularly the sociological theory of a figure like Emile Durkheim, constructed the notion of society as logically prior to and constitutive of the individual. Clearly also Marx's political economy had radicalised this notion and gave it a practical dimension in the forms of socialism and communism. Even within the context of contemporary liberalism the ideas of increased democratisation and enfranchisement were placing an accent on collective goals and responsibilities. Lewis, who saw these developments as the surging of a sub-romantic humanist optimism, countered this tide with an undertow in the form of his radical fatalism. Here, he both accepted the grotesque fact of the modern, with all those social processes he so disliked, while simultaneously creating a current which swept him into the privileged vortex of creative individualism. The Crowdmaster was the emblem of that privilege, and The Crowd the irresistible tide which Lewis attempted to dam.

Such a conceptual framework certainly allies Lewis to a figure like Hulme. But it places a considerable distance between him and his colleagues in the Vorticist movement, none of whom exhibited the same degree of intellectual rigour and personal intensity. Furthermore it is perfectly clear that these obscure theoretical aspects of the Vorticist aesthetic were of little interest to figures like Wadsworth, Epstein and Bomberg who tended to experiment with Vorticism as a newly available formal

grammar. Lewis too, it is true, often saw Vorticist art in formal terms.[79] But the movement of Vorticism remained, for him, an important crucible wherein the complex mixture of his mature aesthetic system was first created. And The Crowd, the most intense artistic expression of that complex intellectual compound.

"The Ideal Giant"

Short-lived and incomplete, Vorticism was the least representative of Lewis's artistic styles. Just as it grew out of his Wild Body comic-grotesques, so it persisted in those themes. But the organic absurdity of the mind/body dichotomy became translated into a mechanical absurdity. And the machine aesthetic entailed a series of intrusive sub-themes. The most persistent of these sub-themes was an incipient formalism. Geometrical abstraction, based on mechanical forms, allowed for a reading of these works which linked them to the technical experiments of the Modern Movement. This was not Lewis's primary purpose. The mechanical grotesque was a radicalisation of the organic grotesque, and contained all the irony and wit of those earlier inventions. To demonstrate that human life was determined by independent, unresponsive mechanisms was to parallel and extend the comic insight of the mind's betrayal by the body. In this sense a discreet comedy lay behind Lewis's Vorticism. But it was overtaken by that formalist rhetoric which

allowed "bareness and hardness", "Coldness and immobility", to stand as motives in, and for, themselves. Lewis was not immune to this rhetoric. However he always insisted that art was a legitimate means of philosophical speculation, and this was the most important aspect of his Vorticist work.

Naturally then the link with Hulme formed a crucial axis in Lewis's programme at this period. As did the purgative rhetoric of Blast and the emerging faith in "classicism". All of these allowed Lewis to imbue his Vorticist mechanics with depth, meaning and value. They provided his work with intellectual relevance. Yet the most important aspect of Lewis's Vorticist period, the fact which lay behind the phenomena, was the final resolution of the ideal role of art, and the status of the artist. The resolution of these issues was to place Lewis firmly within an elitist and individualist orbit, while having significant repercussions for his social and political position.

Part of Lewis's personal aesthetic, developed during the Vorticist period, consisted in a dualism which separated "art" from "life". The exclusivity of art, its inviolable quality located in its revelatory power, was of the profoundest importance for Lewis. Early statements inferring this idea occurred in the first edition of Blast, for example:

> "This idea...reminds one of the sententious pronouncement one so often hears: "Life is the important thing!". It is said with an air of trenchant and final wisdom, the implication being:

> "You artists are so indirect and intellectual, worry your heads about this and about that, while life is there all the time..." [80]

Here the "popular" views of the majority were caracatured and castigated. The implication being that people in general have no consciousness of the rareified truths which art may disclose, and have no ambition to contest these truths. Consequently they will fall into the material world of the "here and now". More appropriately perhaps, they will allow the Wild Body to spread and take control. Undoubtedly Lewis saw this subjugation to "life" as a kind of suicide, he noted:

> "This is the typical cowardly attitude of those who have failed with their minds, and are discouraged and unstrung before the problems of their spirit: who fall back on their stomachs and the meaner working of their senses." [81]

To this attitude Lewis was quite uncompromising, "`Life' is a hospital for the weak and incompetent. `Life' is a retreat for the defeated." [82] But typically, this insight did not simply allow Lewis to assail the majority. It was also a mechanism for the censure of his peers. "In Northern Europe", he noted "for the last half century, the intellectual world has developed savagely in one direction - that of Life." [83] Consequently the barbaric descent into "Life" can be seen here as representing the degeneration and decay of society as a whole. A decadence which was omnipresent, infecting not only the "unthinking" majority, but the contemporary intellectual world, and particularly, of course, Futurism. Here was a total

social and political collapse whose most pertinent symbol was the collapse in artistic values.

Vorticism, in Lewis's case, existed in order to reverse the process of artistic decay. And the formal aspect of its external, static and mechanical "deadness" became the motor of this reversal. When Lewis argued that art was the opposite of "life", he also insisted that art was synonymous with the idea of death. The most explicit, contemporary, expression of this idea was articulated in his first published novel Tarr.[84] Tarr, the artist hero of the novel speaks for Lewis when he declares:

> "This is the essential point to grasp: Death is the thing that differentiates art and life. Art is identical with the idea of permanence. Art is a continuity and not an individual spasm: but life is the idea of the person."[85]

For Lewis the material and corporeal aspects of "life" denied the objective, timeless perfection of great art. This was one measure of his "classicism". His absolute belief that "Deadness is the first condition for Art: the second is absence of soul, in the human and sentimental sense."[86] Hence the "external" geometrical coldness of the Vorticist works. A deadening of emotion engineered to counteract the uplifting sentiments of his contemporaries.

Through these aesthetic strategies Lewis hoped to recover the authority of art as a revelatory civilising force. Clearly he saw intellectual pursuit as the pinnacle of civilised aspiration. He valued culture above all other dimensions of human activity. Implied in this

exaulted status for art then, was an assertion of the titanic stature of the artist. Just as art must always remain separate from the contaminating dynamics of "life", so must the artist remain distinct from the degenerate fact of society. The social world was consistently viewed as a place where cowardly, inconsequential and unthinking masses lay in wait to threaten the artists privilege. Tarr explained that:

> "It is the artist's fate almost always to be exiled among the slaves: he gets his sensibility blunted."[87]

In particular the insistent claim of the crowd, for some kind of "freedom", was a threat which must be resisted:

> "You can't have "freedom" both ways and I prefer the artist to be free and the crowd not to be "artists".[88]

These beliefs threw Lewis back into his Nietzschian manner. For the intellectual privilege claimed by the artists here was a direct parallel to Nietzsche's claims for the "overman". Particularly for the Zarathrustian figure astride his mountain tops. Interestingly Lewis reflected this metaphor in his 1917 play The Ideal Giant:

> "The solitary test is the only searching one. The fine personality loses in every case by association. The problem in life is to maintain the Ideal Giant. The artist is the Ideal Giant..."[89]

The irony was that in adopting this posture Lewis was merely repeating the most extreme of romantic, bourgeois sentiments. Furthermore his elaborate attempts to become an artist distinct from society threw him deeper into social

and political debate, since his freedom and status as Giant was always contingent upon a contest with the crowd. The political consequences of these beliefs were then considerable, even perhaps, debilitating.

Yet the sincerity and insistence of this value system cannot be denied. Lewis consistently showed an uncompromising faith in art, and was positively sacrificial in his commitment to the venerable duty of the artist. Indeed in a letter to his mother, from an army training camp, Lewis even declared his willingness to die for this pantheon:

> "...I don't want to get killed for Mr. Lloyd George, or Mr. Asquith, or for any community except that elusive but excellent one to which I belong." [90]

The vessel in which these ideas crystallised was the crucible of Vorticism. During the Wild Body period Lewis discovered his sense of self, and reasoned that the ego was the flaming symbol of existence. At the moment of Vorticism he decided that creative art, and the outsider status of the artist, was the objectification of ego. Art became a totem which had to be constantly tested, defended and preserved. In the profoundest sense all of Lewis's subsequent politicising was an elaborate protection of the sanctified concept, Art.

CHAPTER III: Footnotes

1. The most thorough and systematic account of Vorticism is Richard Cork's Vorticism and Abstract Art in the First Machine Age Vols. 1 and 2, London 1976. See also W. C. Wees Vorticism and the English Avant-Garde, Toronto, 1972.

2. Ezra Pound is usually credited with having named Vorticism, see e.g. Meyers The Enemy, op.cit. p. 63. Certainly as the title of the new movement it seems to have been added as an afterthought to Blast I appearing only in the opening and closing pages of the publication, see Wees Vorticism and the English Avant Garde, op.cit., p. 61-63. Also Lewis himself wrote, late in life "...Vorticism. This name is an invention of Ezra Pound. When he writes me from his prison in Washington he addresses me as `Old Vort'. What does this word mean? I do not know." Rose, Letters... op.cit., p. 567. Lewis completed two major portraits of Pound, one in 1919 (now lost) and one in 1939. He was a great supporter of Pound as an artist (and Pound of him) and although often castigating him for his romanticism rated him a greater poet than Eliot. He continued to support and assist Pound throughout the poet's post-world war II incarceration.

3. Lewis published Preludes and Rhapsody on a Windy Night in Blast, The War Number, July 1915.

4. Lewis, on holiday with Eliot in 1920, travelled to Paris where he met and drew Joyce. Lewis is now considered to be "the principal model for Shaun" in Joyce's Finnegan's Wake see David Corbett Lewis in Finnegan's Wake in Enemy News: The Newsletter of the Wyndham Lewis Society, No. 14, Summer 1981, pp. 10-14.

5. The publisher Max Goschen had originally contracted to produce the edition of Timon illustrated by Lewis. For unknown reasons this project was abandoned and Lewis published the portfolio separately. It was produced under the auspices of a ficticious company named, by Lewis "The Cube Press".

6. Boccioni, Exhibition of Works by the Italian Futurist Painters, catalogue, Sackville Gallery, London, March 1912, p. 11.

7. Ibid, p. 12.

8. Ibid., p. 14.

9. T.E. Hulme, Bergson's Theory of Art, in Speculations, ed. H. Read, London, 1960, p. 146.

10. Sited in Michel, Wyndham Lewis, Paintings and Drawings, op.cit., p. 356.

11. B. Hodek, ed., The Complete Works of Shakespeare, London, 1966, p. xviii.

12. Wm. Shakespeare in Ibid., p. 674.

13. Wm. Shakespeare in Ibid., p. 678.

14. Wm. Shakespeare in Ibid., p. 663.

15. For a discussion of this association see Peter Ackroyd's biography of T.S. Eliot, London, 1984.

16. Hulme was killed, while serving in an artillery company, late in 1917. He was then thirty-four years old.

17. Herbert Read reports that he found, amongst Hulme's papers, an outline of "a book on Jacob Epstein and the Aesthetics of Sculpture", see the introduction to Speculations: essays on Humanism and the Philosophy of Art, by T.E. Hulme, edited by Herbert Read, London, 1960. Epstein himself describes his relationship with Hulme in his autobiography Let there be Sculpture, London, 1942, pp. 59-63. He also quotes a long review of his work written by Hulme in 1913 and published in The New Age, ibid., pp. 63-68.

18. These were collected and published as Speculations in 1924. Edited by Herbert Read they were republished in 1960;

all references to Hulme's work comes from this later edition.

19. Hulme discussed Bergson in two essays "Bergson's Theory of Art" and "The Philosophy of Intensive Manifolds" see Speculations, ibid., pp. 141-214.

20. Again Lewis notes, "Hulme is mainly distinguished as a `thinker', for having heard of the theological doctrine of Original Sin. No one else in England at the time had ever heard of it... Original Sin is such an original thing to have taken any notice of", Blasting and Bombardiering, op.cit., p. 101.

21. Ibid., p. 102.

22. From his essay "Humanism and the Religious Attitude" i2 Speculations, op.cit., p. 9.

23. Ibid., p. 48.

24. Ibid., p. 48.

25. Ibid., p. 47.

26. Ibid., p. 71. Hulme repeats this theme, in varying forms, throughout the essay, continually linking it with the dogma of Original Sin. For example

"man...is...essentially limited and imperfect. He is endowed with Original Sin", p. 47.

27. Ibid., p. 47.

28. Ibid., p. .

29. Ibid., p. 47.

30. Hulme wrote: "I am not, however, concerned so much with religion, as with the attitude, the "way of thinking, the categories from which a religion springs", ibid, p. 46. Lewis, in Blasting and Bombardiering noted that "the doctrine of Original Sin has its uses quite outside of Christian dogma", op.cit., p. 103.

31. Worringer's doctoral thesis was published as Abstraktion and und Einfühling, Munich, 1908. Hulme heard Worringer lecture in Berlin during 1912-13. Hulme admits that "Modern Art and its Philosophy" is "practically an abstract of Worringer's views". Speculations, op.cit., p. 82.

32. Hulme, Speculations, ibid., p. 34.

33. Lewis, Men Without Art, London, 1934, p. 206.

34. Lewis, Blasting and Bombardiering, p. 100.

35. Lewis, ibid., p. 100.

36. Hulme, "Modern Art and its Philosophy" from Speculations, op.cit., p. 77.

37. Ibid., p. 86.

38. Ibid., p. 87.

39. It is as well to clarify what may appear to be a logical inconsistency between Lewis's and Hulme's position here. Lewis's comic grotesques of the Wild Body series had been designed to reveal the absurd tragedy of Man's bondage to the natural world, while assuming a privileged status within nature. Hulme was however insisting on a "separation between man and nature". However, Hulme's "nature" here was that of a philosopher. It really means the metaphysical universe. The Fall then was a symbol of that tragic expulsion from Essence, which consequently bound man to "nature" defined as corporeal reality. Hence Lewis's comedy of the Wild Body was inspired by the failure of human kind to accept the consequences of the tragic fall into materiality. In this sense his work was not only logically consistent with Hulme's vision, but a continuous extension of this dominant theme. In fact the confusion only arises where Hulme is seen to be an interpreter of Worringer, rather than a theorist and propagandist in his own right. And, of course, it should

always be remembered that human kind and Man are generic terms for the masses. The artist/intellectual was always regarded as an exception within this programme.

40. Hulme, op.cit., p. 97.

41. Radiation was published in the First edition of Blast and Rotterdam in the second, Blast, The War Number.

42. Hulme, Speculations, op.cit., p. 106.

43. Portrait of an Englishwamon was interesting not only because of its subject and style, but because it gained for Lewis something of an international reputation. This work was illustrated in the avant-garde Russian arts magazine The Archer in 1915. It then entered the collection of John Quinn, and was consequently one of the most widely appreciated of Lewis's abstract works.

44. Letter to Beatrice Hastings, sub-editor of The New Age, Rose, Letters op.cit., p. 63. Mrs Kibbelwhite was a society figure who held regular salons where Hulme and others would discuss the theory of art and poetry. These were particularly important in the development of Imagism.

45. Lewis made this statement in his controversial introduction to his Tate Gallery retrospective Wyndham Lewis and Vorticism in 1956, London 1956, p. 3.

46. Indeed Lewis often emphasised the formalist aspects of Vorticist painting. In his introduction to the Tate Gallery retrospective noted above he wrote: "The idea was to build up a visual language as abstract as music" ibid., p. 3.

47. This was Lewis's own description of the "Art-games" of the European avant-gardes. It occurred as a subsection to his Vortices and Notes, and particularly attacked Futurist theatricality. Blast 1, op.cit.. p. 143.

48. Lewis, Blast 1, op.cit.., p. 140.

49. Lewis, Blast 1, op.cit., p. 140.

50. Lewis, Blast, The War Number, op.cit., p. 140.

51. Lewis, Blast, The War Number, op.cit., p. 41.

52. Lewis, Blast, The War Number, op.cit., p. 41. This was really the basis of Lewis's hatred for Fry and his circle. As an individual Fry represented everything that was decadent in modern art, yet despite this he held phenomenal power within the art establishment. Hence Lewis's many libellous encounters with Fry from the "Round Robin letter" of 1913, to The Apes of God. The most vitriolic and uncompromising of Lewis's attacks on Fry is to be seen in an

unpublished (and perhaps unpublishable) manuscript The Bloomsburys, 1934, held in the Lewis archive at Cornell.

53. See, for example, Lewis's comments on Impressionism and Cubism in Blast, The War Number, op.cit., p. 39-40.

54. Lewis, Blast, The War Number, op.cit., p. 40.

55. Lewis, Blast, The War Number, op.cit., p. 40.

56. Lewis, Blast, The War Number, op.cit., p. 40.

57. In part this also explains Lewis's grudging appreciation of the work of Picabia in this review "Picabia, in France, reducing things to empty but very clean and precise mathematical blocks...stands apart from the rest," Blast, The War Number, op.cit., p. 41. Clearly Lewis saw here an artist, with similar motives, and there are clear parallels between Picabia's objectifying humour, his machine imagery, and Lewis's preoccupations.

58. Lewis, Blast, The War Number, op.cit., p. 42.

59. Lewis argued that the artist "CANNOT have to the full the excellent and efficient qualities we admire in the man of action unless he eschews action and sticks hard to thought". Blast, The War Number, op.cit. p. 42.

60. Pound had claimed that Futurism was "only an accelerated sort of impressionism", Blast 1, op.cit., p. 154.

61. Lewis, Blast 1, op.cit., p. 143.

62. Lewis, "Long live the Vortex" in Blast 1, op.cit., p. 7.

63. Lewis, Blast, The War Number, op.cit., p. 46-7.

64. For example see Ritualistic Challenge of 1912, Combat of 1913 and even the confrontational, screaming Two Soldiers from the Timon illustrations. In his contemporary literary work Lewis reflected this theme in his play The Enemy of the Stars, Blast 1, pp. 51-85, and the duel sequence in Tarr.

65. Plan of War was also illustrated in Blast 1.

66. One example of this theme occurred in Blast 1. Lewis noted "According to the most approved contemporary methods in boxing, two men burrow into each other, and after an infinitude of little intimate pommels, one collapses. In the old style, two distinct, heroic figures were confronted, and one ninepine tried to knock the other ninepin over" op.cit., p. 141.

67. F.T. Marinetti Founding and Manifesto of Futurism, op.cit., p. 22.

68. Lewis, Blast, the War Number, as note no. 58.

69. Ibid., p. 96.

70. Lewis developed these themes in his philosophical tract Time and Western Man, London, 1927.

71. Lewis, Blast 1, op.cit., p. 7.

72. In this context it is important to note the possible relevance of Gustav Le Bon's influential text The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind published in 1895, and translated into English in 1876. Le Bon offered an important psuedo-science of crowd behaviour which anticipated many of the concerns of Hulme and Lewis. However a direct determinant factor is difficult to establish, Lewis makes only a few passing references to Le Bon in The Art of Being Ruled, 1926, and none of these make direct reference to the above title. For a discussion of the possible influence of Le Bon's work on Lewis's The Crowd see M. Durman and A. Munton, Wyndham Lewis and the Nature of Vorticism in Wyndham Lewis: Letteratura/Pittura, Palermo, 1982, pp. 113-14.

73. Again, it should be noted that there is a clear parallel here with Le Bon's analysis of crowd psychology, op.cit..

74. Lewis, Blast, The War Number, op.cit., p. 94.

75. Lewis, Blast, The War Number, op.cit., p. 94,.

76. Lewis, Blast, The War Number, op.cit., p. 94.

77. Lewis, Blast, The War Number, op.cit., p. 98.

78. Lewis, Blast, The War Number, op.cit., p. 99.

79. Lewis clearly offered a formalist analysis of one of his Vorticist canvases in Blast, The War Number, see Ch. 2, note 97.

80. Op.cit., p. 44.

81. Lewis, Blast 1, op.cit., p. 129.

82. Lewis, Blast 1, op.cit., p. 130.

83. Lewis, Blast 1, op.cit., p. 132.

84. Lewis most probably begun Tarr some time in 1911. It was subject to constant revisions and completed during

1915. The Egoist published it in serial form from April 1916 through to November 1917. It was eventually published as a novel in 1918 and revised and rewritten in 1928. Lewis himself admitted to its inspiration being the Russian novel, particularly Doestoevsky. Its subject is bohemian life amongst groups of painters in Paris. The figure of Tarr is a voice for Lewis himself and some of his developing aesthetic theories were articulated here. The references here are to Lewis, Tarr, London 1968.

85. Lewis, Tarr, op.cit., p. 279.

86. Lewis, Tarr, ibid, p. 279.

87. Lewis, Tarr, ibid, p. 217.

88. Lewis, Tarr, ibid., p. 214.

89. This was Lewis's first separately printed work, published privately in 1917 in a limited edition. The reference here is from Wyndham Lewis, Collected Poems and Plays, ed. A. Munton, Manchester, 1979, p. 131.

90. Lewis entered the army in March 1916 following an illness wjhich lasted several months during the winter of 1915-1916. He enlisted as a bombadier and was several months in training camps. It was May 1917 before he was sent to France, and by December 1917 he had been

commissioned as a war artist. This letter is reproduced in Rose, Letters, op.cit., p. 81.

CHAPTER IV: Only Your Hatred is Creative

Philosophy, Sociology, Ethnology, literary and artistic criticism, and ultimately, political theory. These were the disciplines around which Lewis built his theoretical ballustrade, in order to ensconce and protect the civilising values of art. Considering his poor academic record at Rugby School, [1] and later his intensely visual training at the Slade, it was extraordinary that Lewis should have contested the entire panoply of modern scholarship and theory in order to resist the "decay" in contemporary civilisation. Yet it remains symptomatic of Lewis's thought that he would see all aspects of a social system as intimately linked. And that breakdown at one level, be it economic, political, or cultural would create disarray and chaos in all other aspects of social life. Ultimately undermining, what was for Lewis the essential indicator of a society's worth, the practices of artists and intellectuals. [2] Hence, throughout the 1920s, Lewis increasingly began to concentrate his energies on a series of polemical and didactic texts, castigating the decline in contemporary social standards and quality of intellectual life. [3] These works, haphazard, often badly written, and always highly idiosyncratic, occasionally contain the kind of blinding insights which establish Lewis as a theorist of

genuine merit. More pertinently they remain the chief indicators of the thought world which inhabits the paintings of this period.

While, in Vorticism Lewis stood at the centre of a modernist canon, experimenting with the most radical of techniques and manipulating the vissicitudes of an English avant-garde movement. Throughout the post-war period he stepped outside the pathways of orthodoxy to create a singular intervention in the conventions of the art world. In doing so he did not reject the ethos of his radicalism. He simply exaggerated the element of dissent which had been an incipient part of his connivance with the Modern Movement. Moreover he gradually brought to the fore those elements of his theory and practice which distinguished him as a protagonist for a "classical" modernism. His insistence on the specialised role of the intellectual began to gain prominence, and was paralleled by his distaste for the contemporary intelligensia whom he generally took to be either superficial or fraudulent. This distrust of his peers was further complicated by his ongoing antipathy to any value-system which suggested a Romantic or broadly humanist disposition. Hence the epistemological base of the majority of modernist practise in art, philosophy and literature, remained for Lewis a shifting sand of sentiment and emotionalism. Most fundamentally he began to demand a social structure which was both ordered and authoritative, producing an absolutely static, "sculptural", system which

would counsel for the artist and intellectual, and against the "mob".

The development of Lewis's "Enemy" [4] persona throughout the 1920s was, then, a conscious rejection of degenerating standards and practices in the social world. Above all it was a self-conscious reaction to the "treason" [5] of his fellow intellectuals who, Lewis argued, had connived in the democratisation of culture and the concomitant debasement of all values. Hence Lewis extended his neo-Nietzschian commitment to the establishment of the self as a continuous opposition to the Other, into a social, and indeed political, dynamic. He chose to oppose the orthodoxies of cultural practise in post-war England, and create a concentrated critique of contemporary decline and malaise. In part this was done through the mechanism of the polemical texts. But, more, subtly, Lewis developed an artistic style at this period which employed all the devices of opposition and contradiction available to him. In effect he returned to his pre-Vorticist themes and studied the idea of painting as an extended comedy. Though now the comedy became more vitriolic and malicious as Lewis employed the most characteristic "outsider". [6] art, the art of satire.

"Explosion of Laughing Elementals"

April 1921 saw an exhibition by Lewis of Tyros and Portraits at the Leicester Galleries in London. This

exhibition was accompanied by two editions of an independent journal known as The Tyro, the first published in April 1921, the second in March 1922. The Tyro figures, in particular, were extraordinary in their uncompromising depiction of a class of sneering, grinning sciolists. They were also extraordinary in their uniqueness within the context, not only of British art, but European art during this period. For these figures were vicious satires upon the intellectuals and cultured opinion formers within Lewis's own set. Stylistically too these works had few parallels within European painting. The closest would be the tortured figures of the German expressionists, in particular Ernst Ludwig Kirchner. But Lewis's work contains nothing of the self-conscious anguish and psychosis of the German school. In marked contrast his work tended to the comically disinterested. In this respect it carried some of the values of Dadaist work particularly that of Marcel Duchamp and Francis Picabia. But the targets of Duchamp's irony lay outside of the Modernist groupings. He was in essence a mocker of official, high culture. Lewis in "solitary schism" from all these groups established in the post war period a style of painting which formally, and in terms of its content, identified the Modern Movement itself as a dimension of official culture and attempted to expose and ridicule its failure to develop any substantial value system.

Of the forty-five [7] works on display at the Tyros and Portraits exhibition, the most telling was surely the

monumental Tyros: A Reading of Ovid (Fig. 27), 1920-21.[8] The painting reveals two gigantic and grotesque figures. The one on the right, his head cantilevered on an elongated cylinder of a neck, reads from a book. His features are set crisp and hard in the pattern of a diabolical, yet absurd, mask. Two of his features predominate, a toothy sneer and an alert, active eye. Curiously, this eye is seen complete, despite the fact that the head is in profile. Functionally it both stares out of the painting towards the spectator, while presuming to read from the open book. The second figure looks directly at the spectator, his features too are mask-like. Yet inside this set countenance there is an evident weakness. The eyes plead like a wounded animal, the mouth contorts into a slack and unconvincing grin. These features are almost imbecilic, yet their pose suggests enthusiasm and a degree of self-consciousness. Moreover they appear simultaneously embarrassed and flattered by the spectator's attentions. Appropriately, then, they behave in the manner of a youthful tyro. They are awkward and ridiculous.

These characteristics are compounded in the clothes they sport. The suits of these tyros are comically composed of an excess of geometrical creasings. They are overlarge and suggest inappropriate and gawkish limbs. For all the world these figures are simple, carved puppets in ill-fitting clothes. But it is the hats they wear which are most effective, for these convert the merely ridiculous into the truly absurd. The hats are patterns of hard-edged

geometries which sit low on the forehead. They are shallow and indicate that the tyros possess only a rudimentary intelligence. The figures then are comic images of unbounded enthusiasm tied to a severely restricted intellectual, creative and visionary capacity.

Here was a clear satire on contemporary manners and pretensions. Holding up to ridicule human folly, particularly the folly which Lewis identified as the conceit of wisdom and knowledge amongst his unworthy peers. The Tyros Reading Ovid were revealed to be mere sciolists, pretenders to knowledge, assuming the virtues of classical wisdom, while objectively marooned within their naive elementalism. In this sense Lewis had created a comic style resurrecting the neglected satires of Hogarth, Rowlandson, or, as Lewis would have it, Jonathan Swift. [9] Yet the targets of Lewis's satire here were quite specific, and can be broken down into three distinct, though related, areas. Firstly Lewis was offering a generalised satire opposed to his age. That is to say directed against the cultural orthodoxies of his time as these were manifest in the works of his peers. Secondly Lewis was attempting to undermine the dominance of the English aesthetes whom, he assumed, controlled and manipulated the art-world. Determining the parameters of taste and acceptability in "advanced" art, and operating to his personal detriment. Specifically the targets here were Roger Fry, Clive Bell and that coterie of Bloomsbury intellectuals whom Lewis had already offended in 1913. They represented, for Lewis, a

clear symbol of the triumph of second rate sensualism over the genuinely intellectual.[10] Finally, these were satires which implied a necessary reorientation of intellectual life and cultural norms. Their underlying theme consisted of a demand for the regeneration of the entire socio-cultural system. In these senses the tyro satires were both censorious and purposive.

Lewis left evidence of his multiple intentions in constructing his Tyro paintings and drawings in the various notes, interviews and letters which discuss the works. Unlike his contemporaries, engaged in degrees of aestheticism and formalism Lewis insisted on the narrative element in these works. His foreword to the catalogue of the Leicester Galleries exhibition declared:

> "These partly religious explosions of laughing elementals are at once satires, pictures and stories. The actions of a Tyro is necessarily very restricted; about that of a puppet worked with deft fingers; with a screaming voice underneath... It is the child in him that has risen in his laugh, and you get a perspective of his history."[11]

These "stories" which reveal the "perspective" of the Tyro's history point directly to his "child" like quality. Lewis was declaiming the moral and intellectual immaturity of his age:

> "Satire is dead today. There has been no great satirist since Swift. The reason is that the sense of the moral discrimination in this age has been so blurred that it simply wouldn't understand written satire if it saw it. People are, in fact, impervious to logic, so I have determined to get at them by the medium of paint. Hence the Tyro."[12]

The crusading dimension of Lewis's Tyros follows logically from his crypto-Romantic belief in the artist's superior

insight. However they also indicate a commitment to a public dimension in the artist's works, a necessary, concomitant to what Lewis would call the "classical" approach to art. That is to say, a belief that the artist should inform and enlighten and reveal the real processes of life. [13] Complaining then that "the sense of moral discrimination" in this age had effectively vanished, was more a criticism of his fellow artists and intellectuals than the public. "People are....impervious to logic" precisely because the cultural framework of civilisation has disintegrated. And the evidence of this disintegration was the failure of Lewis's peers to renounce the sensual, exotic and internalising aspects of their activities. Indeed the determination of the intelligensia to indulge emotional and irrationalist fantasies only revealed their immaturity and failure to come to terms with the needs of civilisation. Hence:

> "The Tyro, too, is raw and undeveloped; his vitality is immense, but purposeless, and hence sometimes malignant. His keynote, however, is vacuity; he is an animated, but artificial puppet, a "novice" to real life." [14]

Lewis's Tyro figures were, then, not the blind, anonymous puppets of The Crowd, but precisely those figures who should carry the moral and ethical conscience of the age, the cultured intelligensia. The tragedy Lewis believed himself to be castigating was the fall of the intelligensia into the manner of the mob. Consequently he compared them to children, "raw and undeveloped", novices "to real life".

This was a broad, and particularly after 1920, a recurring theme of Lewis's theory and practice. At a primary level in the Tyro works it stands out as an all encompassing generalisation. "At present my Tyros are philosophic generalisations" [15] Lewis tells us, and:

> "These immense novices brandish their appetites in their faces, lay bare their teeth in a valedictory, inviting or merely substantial laugh. A laugh, like a sneeze, exposes the nature of the individual with an unexpectedness that is perhaps a little unreal." [16]

These works can then be read as a development of the Wild Body theme. A general satire on human pretensions being consistently undermined by human frailty. The laugh, like the sneeze, exposing the comic duality of mind and body. With the physicality of the body itself constantly betraying the metaphysics of the mind, and revealing the absurd presumptiveness of human endeavour. Without doubt the baseline of Lewis's pessimism can be traced back to this knowledge of the absurd quality of all human action. And an ongoing commitment to the thesis Hulme had outlined during the pre-war period remains undeniable. But the comic dimension of this absurdity was of fundamental significance to Lewis, and he used this weapon, very deliberately, against his peers.

The second, and perhaps the most important dimension of the Tyros was their castigation of the contemporary art world. In an interview with a Daily Express reporter on the occasion of the opening of the Leicester Galleries show Lewis commented "Art today needs waking up. I am sick of these so-called modern artists amiably browsing about and

playing at art for art's sake." [17] While in a letter to the American collector John Quinn, Lewis wrote:

> "I am doing a book of forty of these tyro drawings...this satire is a challenge to the art for art's sake dilettantism of a great deal of French work today (and the Bloomsbury Bell-Grant-Fry section of the English)." [18]

Hostility to "good taste" and the "arts for art's sake" mentality was not a new theme in Lewis's art, but with the Tyros he makes his opposition clear. The works themselves are hard, angular, aggressive and malicious. A Reading of Ovid in particular depicts not only the two monumentally grotesque figures, but does so using a colour system which is deliberately ugly and offensive, indeed "tasteless", ranging from a screaming terracotta red, to the acid yellow of the right-hand figure's handkerchief. This was typical of Lewis's protest against the mannered sensualism of modernist aestheticism. Indeed he boasts of these features "unnecessary as it would appear to point out these Tyro's are not meant to be beautiful...they are, of course, forbidding and harsh". Such a lack of sensual appeal in Lewis's works, the deliberate alienation of the spectator from the canvas, stood in clear opposition to that dimension of the Modern Movement which attempted to seduce the viewer into the internal vivacity of the painted surface, to concede intellectual cognisance to the emotional and "spiritual" dimensions of the image. Again, in his foreword to the Tyros and Portraits catalogue Lewis noted:

> "There are several hostile camps within the ranks of the great modern movement... The best organised camp in this country looks on several matters of moment to a painter today very differently from myself. The

> principal point of dispute is, I think, the question of subject-matter in a picture; the legitimacy of consciously conveying information to the onlooker other than that of the direct plastic message." [19]

Given the artist's "classical" duty to set the standards of civilised society, Lewis naturally assumed the role of guide and pedagogue. He was therefore proud to balance a concern with the plasticity of the medium, with a concern to inform. But underlying this concept was his absolute hostility to the implications of a sensualist approach to painting. Certainly he was willing to concede to European modernism some integrity of purpose and substantial insight. However he saw in the English moderns, particularly the "Bell-Grant-Fry section", only a failure to realise the potential of the new experiments, and a signal decline into whimsy. For Lewis this represented an aesthetic regression with far-reaching social consequences, for here was a return to the amorphous condition of Demos. Of course to characterise an elite grouping of Bloomsbury intellectuals as objectively belonging to the mass, and as representatives of the thought world of the "child-like" mob, requires a thesis of considerable ingenuity. Lewis himself completed this thesis in his prime work of social theory, The Art of Being Ruled, but the thesis exists, implicitly and cogently, in the Tyros.

Lewis's descriptions of specific Bloomsbury targets at this period, match perfectly the satirical images of his Tyro paintings and drawing. Significantly the first edition of the Tyro magazine had contained an article, by Lewis, on Roger Fry's Role as Continental Mediator. In

this, Lewis complains of Fry's power within artistic circles, and his sponsorship of late-Victorian aestheticism. He further describes Fry as a "spoilt child" with a "distaste for reality" [20] More potently, in a letter to the editor of The Athenaeum dated March 12, 1920, Lewis had described Clive Bell as "a grinning, effusive and rather servile Islander, out on his adventures among French Intelligences". [21] Emphasis here upon the naive, Islander figure vainly attempting to interpret the French mode, offers a direct parallel with the absurd Tyro's enthusiastic response to Ovid. However the most powerful image of the Tyronic Bloomsburies occurred in Lewis's novel Tarr. [22] Tarr, the eponymous mouthpiece of Lewis's own views, regails Alan Hobson, a character based on the critic Clive Bell. The tenor of Lewis's abuse repeats the satirical invective of the Tyros, he accuses the entire class of intellectual which Hobson/Bell represents:

> "The Cambridge set that you represent is, as observed in an average specimen, a hybrid of the Quaker, the homosexual and the Chelsea artist. You represent, my good Hobson, the dregs of anglo-saxon civilisation... Your flabby potion is a mixture of the lees of Liberalism, the poor froth blown off the decadent Nineties, the wardrobe-leavings of a vulgar bohemianism" [23]

and he rounds this off with a final insult:

> "You are systematising and vulgarising the individual: you are the advance copy of communism a false millenial middle-class communism. You are not an individual... You should be in uniform and at work, not uniformly out of uniform and libelling the Artist by your idleness." [24]

These passages are important because they expose the entire target of Lewis's satire. Tracing through the degeneracy

of a particular, culturally significant, set of individuals, into a political schema which Lewis regarded as anathema to the specialised idea of Art and the Artist he advocated.

Intellectuals belonging to the "Cambridge set", the educated bourgeoisie, a group homogenous with the dominant class in a liberal democracy organised around a capitalist economy, exhibited aspects of decay and corruption which Lewis deprecated. The tripartide profile of the "quaker, the homosexual and the Chelsea artist" all point to a group "diseased" by pacifism, decadence and dilettante philandering. Above all it was the lack of any vitality in this group which Lewis despised, Hobson in Tarr continually "yawns", his demeanour is described as "vague" and "puzzled". [25] Lewis here was pointing to a systematic failure amongst contemporary intellectuals to generate a creative culture which was both challenging and authoritative. Seeing contemporary culture as a falling back into the amoral mire of the merely sensual, Lewis could recognise in his peers only a desire to popularise creative insight and cultural standards. In consequence Hobson becomes "the advance copy of communism". He is regarded, by Tarr as having levelled down, flattened, the hierarchy of artistic achievement which was implicit in Lewis's vision of Art. Naturally then, Lewis returned to his favourite metaphor, "Hobson, he considered, was a crowd". [26]

Tarr's reflection here points to that continuous thread, so important in Lewis's theory, between the decline

in cultural standards and the emergence of democracy in the form of the crowd, mass or "herd". This development, Lewis regarded was contingent upon the complicity of intellectuals in abandoning the rareified ethical dimensions of creative practise. Nowhere was the decline in intellectual, cultural and therefore social standards clearer than in the Bloomsbury aesthetic theory of "significant form" as developed by Roger Fry, and popularised by his protege Clive Bell in his book Art. [27]

The enormous popularity of Bell's slight aesthetic treatise remains a testament to the cultural significance of Bloomsbury attitudes, and in particular their unmerited importance in determining the parameters of artistic discourse in England. In essence Bell offered in Art a reductive neo-Kantian formalism. Basing his theory on a superficial psychology of perception Bell began to construct his "hypothesis" with an a priori assertion which combined the feeblest of aesthetic insights with the most arrogant of presumptions:

> "...there is a particular kind of emotion provoked by works of visual art, and that this emotion is provoked by every kind of visual art...is not disputed, I think, by anyone capable of feeling it. This emotion is called aesthetic emotion..." [28]

Hence the basis of aesthetic understanding was rooted in "emotion", though this concept remained undefined and undefinable within Bell's theory. However this "emotion" was instantly knowable to "anyone capable of feeling it". The appeal here was to the "sensitive individual". It was a form of aesthetic theorising which was philosophically

insecure not to say intellectually untenable, but simultaneously seduced its readership into the closed order of the aesthetically enlightened. Bell used these introductory speculations to formulate his problem:

> "This emotion is called aesthetic emotion; and if we can discover some quality common and peculiar to all the objects that provoke it, we shall have solved what I take to be the central problem of aesthetics".[29]

Given the paucity of his argument Bell's arrogance was almost risible. Nevertheless on the very next page he produced the answer to this "central problem of aesthetics":

> "Only one answer seems possible - significant form...lines and colours combined in a particular way, certain forms and relations of forms, stir our aesthetic emotions...these aesthetically moving forms, I call "Significant Form"; and "Significant Form" is the one quality common to all works of visual art."[30]

Intellectually Bell's argument proceeded no further than these few assertions and reflections.[31] However these ideas gained widespread approval as the currency of artistic discourse, in England, during the first half of this century. It was in particular the reductive aspects of this theory, coupled with its reliance on the suspect category of the "emotions", which Lewis objected to.

Effectively Bell had reduced the appreciation of art to the appreciation of arrangements and combinations of masses, lines and colours. These were the unique aspects of the visual arts which gave meaning and power to all imagery. Functionally, this approach instigated the primacy of an abstracting decorative style which relied upon pleasing design for its impact. In practise this was precisely the style of the Bloomsbury artists themselves, most notably

Roger Fry's amateurish daubings, for example the "cubist" Essay in Abstract Design, 1915 (Fig. 28), and Duncan Grant's decorative arrangements like Abstract Kinetic Scroll of 1914 and Still Life with White Jug and Lemon of 1914-1919. [32] Lewis had of course previously objected to these theories and the objects they gave rise to. His split from the Omega in 1913 must be understood as a rejection of the naive aestheticism of Fry and his circle. Indeed he makes this clear in the `Round Robin' letter which publicised this event:

> "As to its tendencies in Art, they alone would be sufficient to make it very difficult for any vigorous art-instinct to long remain under that roof. The idol is still Prettiness, with its mid-Victorian languish of the neck..." [33]

While this letter applied specifically to Fry's Omega workshop, its sentiments were still alive in Lewis's Tyro satires. However, with the Tyros the critique went deeper and was more far-reaching.

Lewis consistently demanded an art which contained an intellectual rigour and went beyond the pretty and decorative. There is a significant sense in which his art was consistently concerned with ideas, particularly the philosophical issues of existence and being. Where Fry and Bell had stressed the emotional impact of painting they had undermined this aesthetic platform. More pertinently they had encouraged a tasteful sensualism which denied the moral and ethical dimensions of painting, and laid emphasis on "spontaneous creativity". Despite the contingent elitism of, particularly, Bell's contribution to this aesthetic

theory, Lewis saw this sensual and emotional approach as a regression into naive amateurism. Functionally it opened the doors of creative activity to the dilettante and the opportunist. In consequence the theory of "significant form" was, for Lewis, a representative of the insidious encroachment of commonality, an avant-garde of the "crowd".

In his Tyros Lewis was at pains to accentuate the naivety of the Bloomsbury aesthetes and the vision they represented. A Reading of Ovid was a graphic account of the artlessness, absurdity, and simplemindedness of the most powerful brokers of culture in England. [34] By extension it was also, implicitly, a preparatory manifesto of Lewis's developing modernist classicism.

"Mars with his mailed finger"

Lewis's revision of modernist practice was signalled in the Tyro satires. But the decision to reconstruct the modernist vision in terms of a "classical" aesthetic was certainly occasioned by the cathartic experience of the First World War. Of course Lewis had already created an incipient "classicism" in his Vorticist works, especially where these had been influenced by the theories of Hulme. But following the war an urgency emerged in his concern to create a pedagogical art with a strong intellectualist bias. This necessitated the revision of the modernist tendency towards pure formalism. The Bloomsbury aesthetes became the primary targets of this revision because they

were the most reductive practitioners of this tendency. However it became necessary for Lewis to open out his attacks to encompass the entire galaxy of modernist practice. The war was the catalyst for this change. Writing in 1950 Lewis noted:

> "The war was a sleep deep and animal, in which I was visited by images of an order very new to me. Upon waking I found an altered world and I had changed, too, very much. The geometrics which had interested me so exclusively before, I now felt were blank and empty. They wanted filling."[35]

This was, of course, a retrospective judgement on his own career. But, in 1919, Lewis was perfectly conscious of the need to turn his art towards a series of pertinent metaphysical, sociological and political issues. To confront, as he put it, "the flesh and blood, that is life".[36]

As always with Lewis he did this surreptitiously, and initially through a critique of the shape of orthodox modernism. Certainly the most cogent statement in the construction of this critique was his pamphlet, The Caliph's Design, first published in 1919. In many ways this pamphlet reiterated some of the discontent with modernism which Lewis had previously explored in Blast. For example in his "Authors Preface" Lewis suggested that:

> "The spirit that pervades a large block - cube, if you like - of the art of painting today is an almost purely Art-for Art's Sake dilettantism."[37]

and went on to complain:

> "When accepted, modern painting is accepted as a revolutionary oasis in the settled, dreary expanse of twentieth century commercial art: a place where bright colours, exciting and funny forms, a little knot of

> extravagant people, are to be found; and that it is amusing sometimes to visit."[38]

These were important and far-reaching criticisms of modernist practice in 1919, especially where they came from a figure who was objectively viewed as an insider. But Lewis was already constructing a sociological explanation for these failures.

The difficulties as Lewis saw it, were threefold. This unholy trinity consisted firstly of the nature of the contemporary art going public, who sought only sensation and instantaneous stimulation. Secondly, the emergence and dominance of the commercial system of dealership, especially where these were responsible for creating and breaking reputations. And finally, the intrusion, into the spectacle of the Modern Movement, of the "Amateur". In The Caliph's Design Lewis set out to indict these groups for having undermined the vitality of Modernism:

> "So you get this contradiction of what is really a very great vitality in the visual arts, and at the same time a very serious scepticism and discouragement in the use of that vitality. How far is this the result of the obtuseness and the difficulties set up by the scratch-public on which painters have today to rely? How far is this the result of a combination of the speculative agility of the dealer and of the agility among artists that is the flagrant result of the dissemination of second-rate wit?"[39]

These conditions, Lewis insisted, encouraged the emergence of an unremarkable, valueless art, a formal imagery consisting entirely of sensationalist design and decoration. Concerning even the Cubist paintings of Picasso and Braque he suggested, "Entertaining as some of these things are, I can see nothing of permanent interest deriving from them".

[40] By 1919 then the sense of frustration and disillusion was complete.

The solution to this disillusion, as proposed in The Caliph's Design seems gratuitously simple, but remains the basis of Lewis's post-war development. It was a solution which uniquely compounded Lewis's commitment to a specialised role for Art and the Artist, with his "classical" contention that art should have a public dimension. That is to say that art should exist as a form of communal consciousness, the signifying epitome of a value system expressing the ultimate goals, achievements and standards of civilised society. He wrote:

> "The energy at present pent up (and rather too congested) in the canvas painted in the studio and sold at the dealer's, and written with a monotonous emphasis of horror and facetiousness in the Press, must be released and used in the general life of the community...You must get Painting, Sculpture and Design out of the Studio and into life...."[41]

"Life", here, was perhaps the most complex concept in Lewis's discourse at this time. Most obviously Lewis was referring to the material world. Art, he demanded, should cease to concern itself overridingly with formal issues and technical experiment. Introverted formalism was always, for Lewis, a negative and redundant force. Simultaneously, however, Lewis was suggesting that art, while maintaining its unique role as an image making system, should intercede in the discussion of moral and ethical codes, the construction of values, and the intellectual conscience of its age. The formal characteristics of art, then, should be the bearer of metaphysical and socio-cultural insights.

This system of thought owed much to the aesthetic theories of Alois Riegl and Wilhelm Worringer which Lewis had access to through his pre-war association with Hulme. Moreover this was also the basis of Lewis's claim for an intellectualist dimension to his art. An interesting newspaper article from June 1922 demonstrated Lewis's pleasure in revealing the coded reasonings of his paintings. C. Lewis Hind, writing in The Pall Mall Gazette describes a visit to Lewis's studio:

> "...as the drawings took their place one after the other upon the easel.... I felt that there was another word at the back of my head that pushed the analysis still further. Each, if I may say so, gave me an intellectual rather than an aesthetic or emotional pleasure...the missing word reached my lips and I cried "Why, this is intellectual painting".
>
> Wyndham Lewis looked very pleased. Not an everyday emotion with him. I had said the right thing."[42]

These values, the concern with ideas, the commitment to a public discourse on the metaphysics of being, and the construction of a civilised ethics were the key trajectories of an art which might concern itself with "life", or rather lived issues, the actualities of contemporary existence. All concerns which Modernism, in Lewis's view, had singularly failed to confront.

With "life" however, there lay in Lewis's theory, a deeper and more sinister instrument. Lewis's vision of existence was unremittingly tragic. This tragedy was occasionally relieved, and indeed revealed, by the notion of the comic. Consequently Lewis's discussion of "life" in his work, notably in the Tyros, and more particularly in the portraits of the 1920s and 1930s, was consistently bound

to a negative vision of existence. Lewis's post-war work most often makes an appeal to the idea of death in life, the failure of human consciousness to appreciate the objective fact, and folly, of existence. His appeal for an intellectualist, "classical" art, masked an appeal for a regressive authoritarian negation of what he was to call "the modernist uplift". [43] Clearly then his demand that the artist should come out of the studio and enter "life", enter the "community", was not an optimistic appeal for "social" art. Lewis was confident that when the artist entered "life" he would witness only the asinine folly of an absurd humanity, and would be encouraged to abandon the naive romanticism of the Modern Movement and mimic the censorious "classicism" of Lewis's own practise.

Although this pessimism was an incipient element of Lewis's early theory, it became fully active only after the experience of the war. The ultimate insanity of destruction on a universal scale crystallised Lewis's stoical cynicism. Here was human kind indulging the final malign paroxysms of the Wild Body, here was the absurd human machine giving totemic expression to its breakdown in a fractured, apocalyptic dance.

Despite the violent rhetoric of the Vorticist years Lewis was less than welcoming to the fact of war. In a letter of 1917 he writes:

> "All this is very trying for a man fighting battles in which he does not take the faintest interest..." [44]

and to Pound, concerning his role as a bombadier, he confessed:

> "...When I was registering a Battery on a church the other day...I was glad that it was a presumably empty ruin that I was guiding the boost upon. I am truly not sanguinary except when confronted by an imbecile: not, thank God, from lack of stomach. Too much sense. Alas, too much sense." [45]

His belief in the artist as a civilising force inevitably meant that he could not welcome the violent cataclysm of war as Hulme had done, and was even further from the romantic commitment to destruction that characterised the Italian Futurists. Consequently Lewis made a great effort to get out of the fighting and was eventually rewarded with a commission, as a war artist, in December 1917. [46]

The major work from his period as a war artist is undoubtedly A Battery Shelled (Fig. 29) [47] from 1919. The only other oil painting of significance painted by Lewis during this period was A Canadian Gun Pit [48], finished late in 1918. A series of sketches, chiefly detailing episodes in the life of bombadiers and their gun batteries, completed Lewis's contribution to the archive of artistic material which related to the allies' activities during the First World War. Lewis did not regard these works amongst his finest achievements. In a letter to John Quinn, whom he hoped might buy some of these war sketches, he apologetically informed him "they were done under conditions quite unfavourable to art production". And further he confessed:

> "...I should pass them without squinting, if the Next World were a place where men were judged by their merit as artists, and I were getting my works together to face my judges." [49]

But there remains much of interest in Lewis's war work, and the impressive painting, A Battery Shelled, is certainly a revealing work.

The radical experiments of the Vorticist years were turned on their head by the demands of war art. The express aims of the commissioning agents had been to create "a pictorial record as complete as possible of the various sites and stages of the war". [50] Naturally, experimental art of any kind was discouraged and David Bomberg, in particular, fell victim to this logic. Lewis, whose work no matter how abstract was consistently concerned with the interaction between man and environment, was less disrupted by the stylistic demands of the Canadian War Records Office, or, the Ministry of Information. Nevertheless a clear tension was evidenced in the war works. Lewis was forced to create works which, if not entirely representational at least contained elements of naturalism and description. A Battery Shelled with the stylised naturalism of the three figures occupying the left portion of the canvas, and the descriptive landscape of the gunners' battery, was more straightforwardly narrative and representational than anything Lewis had previously produced.

The painting depicts a field position complete with shelters, craters, stockpiled ammunition, broken trees, the characteristically tortured landscape of a battlefield. Here the gunners, bombardiers and their officers, engage the everyday chaos of attacking and being attacked, shelling and

being shelled. The more complete figures, in the left foreground look almost disinterested, as the helmeted soldiers in the middle distance repeat the ritualised, mechanical scurrying to shelter. Lewis has used something of his Vorticist style to describe this scene. The billowing smoke from the shelled battery is shown as a series of tilting, piston-like towers, the craters run in hard edged, mechanical waves, the shelters are consistently described as a fragmented Vorticist architecture. Above all the figures, particularly the less naturalistic ones in the mid-distance, resemble the mechanical robots of his Crowd, they are simplified fragments of anatomy, human beings reduced to the fundamental mechanics of movement. Technical compromise, however, remains the most significant element of this composition. The painting reads, quite clearly, as a battle scene in a particular war, within a particular history. In a sense Lewis had emptied his art of its universalising aspects. More fundamentally the naturalism of the primary figures to the left of the canvas, betrays Lewis's compromise with the aims of those authorities who had commissioned the work. A Battery Shelled, then becomes a marker in Lewis's resistance to modernist experimentation, partly forced, partly welcomed.

Though, technically, there was evidence here of Lewis's shift from a radical modernism, intellectually A Battery Shelled was consistent with his developing theory. In the second edition of Blast Lewis had trumpeted, "Murder and destruction is man's fundamental occupation". [51] His

belief that the negative polarities of the human psyche were irrevocably dominant, was entirely consistent with his vision of the crowd as an unthinking herd. Modern warfare, in a sense, was an obvious activity where logic and reason failed to prevail. It was the final revenge, combining the grotesqueness of the wild body with the absurdity of the machine world. Lewis's painting of the war, and indeed his drawings, while adhering to the conditions laid down by the commissioning agents, still contain elements of his conclusions on the metaphysics of being. The essentially comic notions of ritualised acting, the repetitive dance of the primitive, instinctual self, and the collapsing of that self into the unthinking unanimity of the mass, all of these features characterise Lewis's narratives in his war work. In A Battery Shelled the group of three figures occupying the right centre of the painting exhibit these features. Indistinguishable as personalities, their attempts to escape the bombardment force them into a twisted, mechanical ceremony of primordial abandon. They regress to mere intuition, they return to "nature". These same characteristics can be seen in Lewis's drawings from this period. Drag Ropes (Fig. 30), of 1918, displays the performance of men presumably manoeuvring a field gun. The contortions of their bodies are repeated like a row of exclamation marks. Each single "will" becomes subsumed in a collective rite, as ridiculous as it seems pointless. Throughout the war work, whatever their descriptive merits and value as reportage, there lies

this undercurrent of insistent criticism. For Lewis saw in the war clear evidence of a further regression from civilisation. A regression which entailed the subsumation of the individual into the sameness of the "herd", and hence the abandoning of self. And a regression which necessitated a return to "nature" the damning category which was for Lewis the tragic, elemental condition of unenlightened human kind.

Evidence of this critical component in Lewis's war work can be highlighted when it is placed in the context of war paintings by his contemporaries. Principally because most war painting was created under the auspices of the government's commissioning agencies, there was little scope for the moral indignation and outrage that characterised the poetry of, for example, Sassoon and Owen. Poetry, being in essence a private medium allowed space for considerable, uncensored commentary. Official war painting, however, was subject to direct censorship. Most notably Bomberg fell foul of censorship concerning technique in his Sappers at Work [52], while Paul Nash suffered the ignominy of having work censored for being against the national interest. [53] Understandably then the archive of paintings detailing the war effort tends towards the heroic, the soberly descriptive, or, the mildly plaintive.

Lewis's colleagues from the Vorticist group quickly adjusted their technique to suit the requirements of the authorities. Roberts amended his geometries to create a mildly expressionistic journalism, while Nevinson's Futurist

inspired work rapidly disintegrated into the almost jingoistic realism of War in the Air. An individual figure like Stanley Spenser only slightly compromised his eccentric realism to offer a document of the war in Macedonia. While the almost pagan romanticism of Paul Nash developed into a lament for the destruction of nature propagated by warfare. With the possible exception of Nash a moral edge to war art was singularly amiss. Nash produced a series of images, We Are Making a New World and The Void (Fig. 31) being important examples, which condemned the war by pointing to the desolation created in the battlefield. This was a surreptitious device whose moral censure consisted of an implied disapprobation of the blasphemy directed against nature. Nash's painting then was a kind of lament which was contingent upon his romantic belief in a correspondence between landscape and deity. This work was the closest that any of Lewis's contemporaries came to a moral condemnation of the war. Of course, Lewis's work was similarly compromised, but his pre-war reflections on human folly surfaced in his war work, and were sharpened on witnessing the assinine absurdity of international conflict. This, almost treacherous, insight, was the hidden content of Lewis's war art. For as the puppets in Lewis's drawings gyrate in the rituals of battle, they participate in the final disintegration of self. They make a mockery of human pretensions to civilisation. And finally reveal the pathetic illogicality of all optimism.

The war both confirmed and deepened Lewis's stoical, but still tragic, pessimism. More positively, it confirmed his resolve to reorientate the entire intellectual predisposition of the Modern Movement. In Rude Assignment Lewis noted:

> "...when Mars with his mailed finger showed me a shell-crater and a skeleton, with a couple of shivered tree-stumps behind it, I was still in my "abstract" element".[54]

and later continued:

> "The war was a sleep, deep and animal, in which I was visited by images of an order very new to me. Upon waking I found an altered world: and I have changed, too, very much. The geometrics which had interested me so exclusively before, I now felt were bleak and empty. They wanted filling".[55]

The experience of the war then forced Lewis into a critical negation more fundamental and far-reaching than any of his contemporaries could conceive of. This became the basis of his outsider "Enemy" posture, and a pre-requisite of his abandoning modernist experimentation in favour of "classicism". An oblique "classicism" had appeared in the Tyros but this new approach was to find a fuller expression during the 1920s in Lewis's portraiture.

"A Sort of Immortality"

Partisan studies of Lewis's portraiture have tended to eulogise his technical and formal skills. This has often been at the expense of any historical examination concerning the significance of the portraits. Certainly Lewis was a great painter of portraits. Despite the

cynicism of some of his earlier statements of portrait painting, [56] Lewis clearly recognised, towards the end of his life, that the portraits were perhaps the most important part of a "...grand visual legacy...". [57] But historically, the portraits were important because of the ways in which they challenged the paradigm of the Modern Movement in painting. For Lewis, quite uniquely, offered in the early portraits an imagery which was modernist in its formal language, yet a far reaching critique of Modernism in its ideational associations.

Lewis turned to portraiture in 1919. He had, of course, experimented with portraits before this period. Some of the pre-Vorticist figure studies might be classified as portraits, as may the 1914 Portrait of an Englishwoman. However, these works were not, properly speaking, portraits since they do not concern themselves with the identity of the sitter. If it is accepted that the genre of portraiture is intimately bound to the notion of identity, then Lewis's period as a portraitist began in 1919 with the portrait studies of, particularly, Ezra Pound, and was compounded by the major commissions of Edwin Evans and Violet Schiff between 1922 and 1924. With these works Lewis achieved a considerable success in both painterly and financial terms.

But consider portraiture as an option, within the galaxy of avant-gardist opportunities, in 1919. Portrait painting makes a direct appeal to vanity. The matrix of conceits which it assembles would include egoism,

self-importance, ostentation and the pompous belief that generations in the future may take succour from the awesome presence presented in the portrait. Moreover, portrait painting, as a profession, is usually undertaken by artists seeking the financial security which other genres seldom provide. In these senses portraiture is the most bourgeois and predatory of all the arts. Consequently, this category of painting was almost universally ignored by the Modern Movement. [58] Even as late as 1919 the principal trajectories of Modernism would remain Dadaist, Constructivist and neo-Cubist experimentation. It was extraordinary then that Lewis, in the pre-War period one of the most aggressive of avant-garde figures, should revert to a pre-Modernist, indeed conservative, tradition.

At least part of the explanation for this unusual step was to be found in Lewis's polemical text, The Caliphs Design. Where Lewis had insisted it was necessary to "get Painting, Sculpture and Design out of the studio and into life", [59], he was implicitly repeating two of his most important, and interrelated, principles of this period. Firstly, Lewis had clearly recognised the central dilemma of Modernist theory and practice. The more painting became bound up with a formalist dogma, the less relevance it had to anything outside of itself. At its worst this studio orientated art deteriorated into mere decoration and pointless whimsy. Lewis himself had witnessed this process through his association with the Omega Workshop, and the eventual dominance of the aesthetic of "significant form" in

the English art world. Indeed he saw the reduced aesthetic of modernism as being directly responsible for that amateurism and dilettantism he so actively despised. Modernism, then, had become, for Lewis, an arid and redundant system of values.

Secondly, Lewis who admitted he was "Much more concerned with ideas than....with people", [60] was pressing his claim for a philosophically orientated painting which would contest contemporary polemics, ethics and the metaphysics of being. Lewis, then, was temperamentally unsuited to a pure formalism. His concern was to recover the intellectual dimension of painting, and to disclose how the element of the visual could again become a critical activity, engaged in the fundamental exegesis of the lived and the actual. Portraiture, as a genre, gave him access to the study of the human figure in its unequal struggle with existence. [61] It allowed him to analyse the principles and precepts of Being, and to present his didactic conclusions on these themes. In these respects Lewis's portraits, which at their best extend beyond simple flattery, belong to that order of portraiture which was established by those artists he professed to admire, Velasquez, Goya and Franz Hals.

An examination of the portraits themselves, however, provides a more comprehensive explanation of Lewis's "sortie" into portraiture. Take, for example, an early portrait Praxitella (Fig. 31), [62] completed in 1921. It would be true to say that this painting used a number of

modernist devices. Large areas of flat, undifferentiated colour, particularly in the background and in the dress of the sitter. The faceting and fragmentation of the figure, a technique clearly learned from cubist portraiture. And, the use of colour which was not descriptive. This was particularly the case in the metallic blues of the face and hands of the sitter, and the crimson of the lips. Moreover, Lewis clearly incorporated the mechanistic motifs of Vorticist painting in this portrait, piston like neck and fingers, etc. Praxitella, then, was a virtuoso performance in Lewis's particular brand of modernism. Yet this picture carried a number of ambiguities and contradictions. This portrait was executed in the "grand manner". The figure is monumental, the pose authoritative and static. The overall presence of the figure produces an effect which is majestic and awe-inspiring. Lewis here has returned to the classical. He adopted a genre, and used a compositional format which was quite the antithesis of Modernism. The effect of this puzzling contradiction would not be lost on Lewis. Indeed it embodies the very meaning of the painting. For here is a portrait designed to reveal the schism between modernist humanism and classical indifference, or, at the very least, to create a logical disjunction between the ideologies of the vital and the static. Lewis here was beginning to probe the soft centre of Modernist theory. He constructed, through a series of visual contradictions, a developing critique of the Modernist affirmation, producing a work which used the language of the modern to reproduce

the ethos of the classical. The irony in this expedient was itself an important disruptive device in Lewis's artistic practice.

But this critique of orthodox modernism continued in this portrait at a deeper level. For all its classical solidity the figure in this portrait is clearly ridiculous. It is, after all, a two-dimensional cartoon describing some awkward marionette. This portrait reveals a human being who is tragically inert. The figure is shown to be impotent in relation to those forces which confine and confront it. In this sense the portrait grows into a broad philosophical manifesto opposed to the optimism and vitalism of mainstream modern painting. For, in describing human Being as intrinsically limited and the victim of Nature, Lewis was consciously condemning the romantic humanism of his contemporaries.

Lewis's first steps in portraiture then can be seen as a deepening of the ontological themes in his early work, and, as an emerging critique of Modernist ideology. They were, without doubt, the more serious dimension of the satirical Tyro works. And like the Tyros Lewis displayed in his early portraits a disgust with the superficial and presumptious optimism which informed the actions of his contemporaries. With Lewis this disgust hardened into a cry for the regeneration of a classical order in all aspects of life, thought, and particularly, art. And this desire became the focus of Lewis's portraiture.

It becomes possible then to see the early portraits as the logical, visual counterpart of an emerging system of ideas. That they are related to the satirical Tyros is clear. With the possible exception of the portrait of Violet Schiff, all the early portraits bear a tyronic attitude and demeanour. But while the Tyros help to explain the ideational background to the portraits, it would be wrong to reduce these latter works to mediated satires. In many ways the early portraits contain more depth and subtlety than anything being produced in England at that period.

An example would be the portrait of Edith Sitwell (Fig. 32) begun in 1923 but for various well-documented reasons not completed until 1935. [63] Here Lewis obeyed many of the conventions of the genre. The paraphernalia which surrounds the figure tells us much about her social position. The globe surely refers to worldly ambitions, the row of books informs us of Sitwell's literary pretensions, while her clothes and jewellery, which are characteristically extravagant, speak of a self-conscious bohemianism. Beyond this however the portrait ceases to refer to the sitter. It is almost impossible to identify the features shown with those of Edith Sitwell known from photographs, or even from Lewis's own sketches. This face is rather bland, and the countenance is mask-like. Indeed the eyes, being closed, give the sense of a death mask. In a painting like this Lewis was referring once again to a system of values which exist outside the conventions of portraiture. For here

Lewis is concerned with the issue of mortality. Or rather, with the curious type of immortality which he saw as the objective of a classical system.

Lewis best expressed this theory in his Essay on The Objective of Plastic Art in Our Time, written in 1922. Quoting Schopenhaeur favourably he wrote:

> "(This is)...a splendid description of what the great work of plastic art achieves. It "pauses at the particular thing", whether that thing be an olive-tree that Van Gogh saw; a burgher of Rembrandt or Miss Stein. "The course of time stops". A sort of immortality descends upon these objects. It is an immortality, which, in the case of the painting, they have to pay for with death[64] or at least with its coldness and immobility."

Despite the fact that Lewis talked here consistently of death, he was in a sense attempting to energise the classical. Certainly this theory is anti-modernism, shortly after the above quotation Lewis wrote:

> "We might compare this with a Bergsonian impressionism, which would[65] urge you to leave the object in its vital milieu."

But here Lewis penetrated further than ever before into a critical opposition. Not only does Lewis contrast an aesthetic based upon "coldness and immobility" to one underpinned by the deification of the vital, but, by implication, he required that aesthetic contemplation become an intellectual process rather than an emotive paroxysm. In essence Lewis was invoking modern painting to return to the classical canon, creating order from chaos, constructing images of crisp perfection. The Portrait of Edith Sitwell is one of these images. Sitwell sits in an atmosphere so cold, still and airless that the pervasive

sensation is one of death, or at least of the absence of temporal reality, and Lewis here has offered, in embryo, a visual manifesto of that quasi-philosophical programme he was to articulate in Time and Western Man.

The publication of Time and Western Man in 1927 bore witness to Lewis's intervention in the world of contemporary philosophical speculation. It was a book which examined the hegemony of what Lewis called the "time-cult", and condemned the systems of thought this epistemology instigated. As always with Lewis he was much more convinced of what was wrong and misleading in this system, than he was of the appropriate measures for amending and repairing the damage it caused. Time and Western Man developed into an extended critique of the intellectual climate of western thought, where advocacy of a purgative and regenerating system was only insinuated. Here, as in nearly all his work, the palliative to contemporary decline was implied rather than stated.

Lewis remained in no doubt however as to the cause of this decline in philosophical thought. He introduced the polemic by stating that the book was;"a comprehensive study of the "time"-notions which have now, in one form or another, gained an undisputed ascendency in the intellectual world". [66] Moreover he informed his readership that "the object of this book is ultimately to contradict, and if possible defeat, the particular conceptions". [67] But in fact Lewis was tilting at an old enemy, the single representative of that galaxy of beliefs he had actively

opposed since the period of Vorticism and his association with Hulme. For the "time-cult" had flowered through Bergson, and "via Bergson" Lewis wrote:

> "it has reached, philosophically, our distressed contemporary Western arena, contributing beyond doubt to our ever-deepening confusion of mind".[68]

Here all the old terrors, implicitly voiced in the paintings and the aesthetics, re-emerged in philosophy. Bergson equalled vitalism, equalled romance, and fell into sensualism. Sensualism, the denial of the intellect, inevitably led to confusion, amateurism, the disintegration of standards and principles.

The vast bulk of Time and Western Man was an extended polemic directed against those intellectuals Lewis took to be in connivance with this process. Artistic figures like Pound, Stein and Joyce were condemned for their undisguised romanticism, and their insistence on repeating the paradigm of "time-worship" in the formal language of their art. Naturally Joyce's "stream of consciousness" technique imitated by Gertrude Stein was viewed as a principal representative of this folly. Philosophers like William James, Samuel Alexander and Alfred North Whitehead, viewed by Lewis as propagators of the Bergsonian world view, were subject to a rigorous analysis and critical review. Indeed, the main trajectories of Lewis's polemic were directed at Alexander's Space, Time and Deity, published in 1920, and Whitehead's Science and the Modern World of 1926.[69] Further to this Spengler's Decline of the West was the subject of the entire second part of Time and Western Man

and similarly dismissed as a "chronological" philosophy dependent upon an understanding of history as a continuous unfolding of experience in "time", existing without a spatial, or "classical" dimension. Lewis, for example was careful to note that Spengler insisted "We ourselves are Time", and that "Time is a counter-conception to Space".[70] What was important for Lewis was that these systems fell into varieties of vitalist philosophy, and hence, were romantic. His final condemnation consisted of the aphorism:

> "Spengler's violent power-doctrine applied to History is still Nietzsche, and Alexander and Whitehead are still Bergson".[71]

What is significant, however, is the one basic point which underpins the various studies in Time and Western Man, Lewis asserted:

> "Fundamentally all the tide of thought today, however broken up into the complexity of a confusing network of channels, is setting towards the pole of sensation".[72]

And he goes on to complain, in what was by this time a genuine cry of despair; "There is nothing concrete left...".[73] For Lewis, witnessing the intellectual world disintegrate through the "deification of the time-cult", was tantamount to seeing all structures, cultural, social and political, fall apart.

Of course the greatest threat posed by "time-worship" was the threat to art. Bergsonian vitalism created a climate in which a reductive relativism became the primary standard of taste and judgement. It accepted, indeed created, chaos in all thought and action. This, for Lewis

was the principal contributor to breakdown in the arts, he wrote:

> "Many painters, indeed, have no repugnance, it would appear, for the surging ecstatic featureless chaos which is being set up as an ideal, in place of the noble exactitude and harmonious proportion of the European, scientific ideal... What I am concerned with here, first of all, is not whether the great time-philosophy that overshadows all contemporary thought is viable as a system of abstract truth, but if in its application it helps or destroys our human arts." [74]

Naturally Lewis saw it as a negative phenomenon since the reductive dynamic of time-orientated vitalism was the progenitor of romantic involvement with the mass and therefore the enemy of art. Hence:

> "The intellect works alone. But it is precisely this solitariness of thought, this prime condition for intellectual success, that is threatened by mystical mass doctrines". [75]

By extension then Lewis was implying the need for a reactive aesthetic which would propagate "classical" values, particularly a concern with space, solidity and structure.

Despite the extended analyses of philosophical systems sponsoring a neo-Bergsonian belief in the irreducibly experiential nature of reality. That is to say reality as a continuous process, a continual experiential becoming which "contains" time rather than being measured by time, and despite Lewis's idiosyncratic critique of these metaphysical propositions in his reflections on Alexander and Whitehead, Time and Western Man was, in essence, a further skirmish in Lewis's ongoing dispute with the character of Modernism.

Significantly, he understood Modernism, as a system of values, to have a specific philosophical root. It was not merely an abstract artistic phenomenon, but a belief system which contained a world-view. The parameters of this world-view Lewis took to be the disruptive and destructive ones of philosophical relativism and intellectual subjectivism. Because Lewis was an Idealist he believed that disruption in the intellectual community propagated decay and chaos in the social world. Beyond the analyses in Time and Western Man then, lay the concern to expose contemporary intellectual irresponsibility and sponsor an alternative system of values. In contrast to the determinant factor of "time", Lewis offered the stabilising, concrete concept of "space".

Notions of spatialisation, concretisation, and above all "exteriority"[76] were primary in Lewis's construction of his classical manner. These were conditions, aesthetic, philosophical, social, which created permanence and stability. Moreover they were the opposites of the time engorged myths of romantic modernity. In one of the most revealing passages in this text Lewis wrote;

> "So, as you proceed in your examination of these doctrines, it becomes more and more evident that, although it is by no means clear that you gain anything...it is very clear that you lose. By this proposed transfer from the beautiful objective material world of common-sense, over to the 'organic' world of chronological mentalism, you lose not only the clearness of outline, the static beauty of the things you commonly apprehend; you lose also the clearness of outline of your own individuality which apprehends them. You are told by Professor Whitehead that for the charm of the world of classical common-sense, the ordered and human world, you should substitute the naivete of the romantic nature-poet."[77]

All of Lewis's chronic fears were here, the idea of an imminent and irresistible loss of the classic outline, of static beauty, categories not simply aesthetic, but social. And, concomitant with this, the rise of a class of minor intellectuals encouraging patterns of thought at once reductive, subjectivist and animal.

Where the thesis of Time and Western Man feeds back into the thought-world of Lewis's portraiture, is precisely in the concepts of "spatialisation" and "exteriority". Lewis noted that "The time-doctrine...is directed to belittling and discrediting the "spatialising" instinct of man", [78] his portraits were designed to reinvigorate this classical instinct, with all its extra-artistic imperatives. Interestingly when Lewis began to develop his portraiture in 1919 he first executed a number of very precise figure drawings. These works range through the studies of contemporary artists particularly the various heads of Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot and James Joyce, into more detailed drawings of actual or potential patrons like Richard Wyndham, John Rodker and Sidney Schiff. [79] They were accompanied by a variety of sketches of friends and acquaintances and a number of life drawings from the nude figure. In the first instance, of course, these works were a kind of exercise. A re-learning of the principles of figure drawing in preparation for his "sortie" into the world of portrait painting. In this sense Lewis was re-discovering the craftsman Tonks had first helped shape. But underlying the fact that these drawings were created as

a kind of preparation for a career move, was their role in completing the authoritarian "classicism" of his portraits. There exists a sense in which the precise linear outline of these figure drawings stands as a token to Lewis's commitment to the ideas of absolute stability, the ordered world of the "visual", and, the concrete fact of human kinds unchanging materiality. Existence occurring more in space than in time, and therefore was "static", immutable.

Line, in Lewis's work, was of paramount importance, it was the very basis of his designs and carried, like all his activities, a philosophical proposition. Eugenie (Fig. 34), of 1922, for example was not so much a sketch of a female head in profile, as a pattern of lines which described and delimited the visual fact of this being's existence in space. The line was the final authoritative statement, conclusively asserting the most substantive aspect of Being, its fixedness. Certainly there are drawings where Lewis's line was highly animate, sometimes even decorous. For example, in Seated Woman (Fig. 35) of 1920, the vigour of the design is undeniable, and while the line remains crisp and powerfully authoritative, the virtuosity of Lewis's drawing has, in a sense, taken on a life independent of his thought world. More understandably in the portrait drawings specifically designed to appeal to patrons, the sentimental and prim sketch of Lady Rothermere from 1922, for example, Lewis has clearly suppressed the more didactic elements of his style. But where the bulk of these sketches are read in conjunction with the thesis of

Time and Western Man it can be seen that Lewis was articulating a world in active opposition to the propositions of the "time-cult" philosophers, intellectuals and artists. His was a world where the perimeters of action were defined absolutely, where substance remained unaltered by subjective experience, and where the permanence of relations in space took precedence over mutations through time.

Such a notion is of fundamental importance in understanding the polemical aspects of his portraiture. Line imposes order, authority and control on the fluid subjects of life. It therefore described for Lewis, the essence of Being. The existence of a subject, absolutely static, in space, bound only to the material fact of outline. What occurred in these portrait drawings is something quite literal, "the course of time stops", indeed Lewis sees this as a basic accomplishment of art, in the second edition of his Tyro journal he wrote:

> "You may know Schopenhauer's eloquent and resounding words, where in his forcible fashion, he is speaking of what art accomplishes. 'It therefore pauses at this particular thing: the course of time stops: the relations vanish for it: only the essential, the idea, is its object'." [80]

But in creating these fixed bounded, timeless images Lewis was negating the intellectual orthodoxies of his peers. He was, as it were, deliberately instigating a one-man counter culture.

The portrait paintings took this development one step further. If the key idea in the portrait drawings was fixity, immutability, then the most important additional

emblem in his early portraits in oil, were the ideas of externality and "deadness". The portrait of Edith Sitwell in particular conjures only with her exterior, with the visual fact of her existence. This, of course, relates to Lewis's many statements on the artists primary concern with the "outside" of things. For example in Blasting and Bombardiering he was to write:

> "I enjoy the surface of life, if not for its own sake, at least not because it conceals the repulsiveness of the intestine... Give me the outside of all things, I am a fanatic for the externality of things." [81]

But concentration only on the "exterior" substance of existence, forced attention away from the fluid, interior, subjective world of the time philosopher. It denoted a classical concern with the solid and permanent against the neo-romantic concern with the inconstant and variable. By extension this aesthetic demanded also social fixity. In this way Lewis's portraits were a phenomenon containing ideational schemas beyond the paradigm of the genre.

Both the specialised classicism of Lewis's portraits, and the extra-artistic dimension of his work was signalled in his essay The Dithyrambic Spectator, published in The Calendar of Modern Letters in April 1925. Here he argued, taking Egyptian art as his example, the necessary existence of a fixed social world with stable institutions and a rigorous belief system as a predicate for the development of a worthy art. And the most important element of Egyptian art, for Lewis, was the "deadness" of its imagery, "the living death that is represented by Egyptian culture is the very place for the sculptor and

painter to thrive in." [82] Hence, Lewis insisted, "the embalmer was the first artist"[83], and the portraitist was his contemporary equivalent. Lewis was suggesting that through the unsympathetic, objective, "exterior" approach to the subject, the portraitist exposed the actual conditions of life. And "life" here was that "death", perfectly expressed in the embalmer's art, of human "fixedness" in relation to history and change.

Lewis was free to develop his theoretical concerns in portraits like Praxitella and Edith Sitwell since these were not, in any serious sense, commissions. It might be expected that the ideological impetus of Lewis's portraiture would break down where a properly commissioned work was being undertaken. Surprisingly, this was not the case, and compromises in the early commissioned portraits were minimal. The portrait of Edwin Evans (Fig. 36), which was left unfinished in 1922, [84] is an interesting example. The figure here exhibits that same monumentality and hardness which was becoming typical of Lewis's portraits. Mechanistic aspects of the torso, and particularly the legs, reveal his overriding concern to impose a modern iconography upon a classical vision. While the manner in which Lewis gave equal value to organic and inorganic elements, the face and the hat for example, demonstrated his desire to intensify the experience of absolute objectivity. In a quite extraordinary manner Lewis successfully transposed the programme and vision of his experimental portraits into his commissioned work.

Consequently Lewis's "sortie" into portraiture was a logical step for a heretical figure who wanted to bring art back into "life". Since the vacuous formalism of the Modern Movement was to be opposed, and the panoply of "destructive" values which supported modernism was to be broken apart, then the reintroduction of a critical perspective on human existence, through the study of the human figure was a natural development. Clearly then Lewis's reorientation of picture making was not a simple regression. The subtlety of Lewis's portraits lay in the manner in which they evoked contradiction, forced the Modern Movement to critically examine its theory, and pointed the way to a solution. For Lewis that solution was an energised classicism, a stoical intellectualism and a curious tragic realism. It was these elements which made Lewis's portraiture exceptional and unique. Indeed these can not be considered portraits, in the conventional sense, at all. These works were visual manifestos, the bearers of a significant intellectual negation the true dimension of which was fully articulated in Lewis's most cogent book of social theory The Art of Being Ruled.

"Only Your Hatred is Creative"

The Art of Being Ruled was a partly polemical, partly didactic, description of Western society. Or rather, a description of society as Lewis viewed it. Naturally this makes it a complex, eccentric and logically convoluted work.

But here Lewis had moved from his concern with aesthetic theory, and his concomitant critique of contemporary philosophical paradigms, to create a kind of sociology. The Art of Being Ruled articulated, in all its complexity, contemporary social processes and phenomena. More fundamentally, it was an elaborate description of what Lewis called "the willed sickness of modern man".[85]

Lewis's theory, in these respects, was always holistic. He believed that all social processes contributed to the nature of the whole and that "decay" in any one element necessarily contaminated all other elements. Consequently in his discussion of feminism he noted:

> "It is impossible today to discuss feminism intelligently without discussing sex inversion. Similarly (1) the disintegration of the family unit, (2) the cult of the child, (3) doctrinaire dilettantism, (4) the war on the intellect - all these subjects are intimately connected".[86]

He was also, however, an idealist, in the pure philosophical sense, and hence believed that contemporary "decay" was "willed". It was sponsored and generated by the mental states of individuals. Because Lewis was an intellectual elitist, "the life of the intelligence is the very incarnation of freedom",[87] he saw the "sickness" being generated by intellectuals. In this sense he approached a "first cause" for contemporary decline. Intellectuals in the modern world had abandoned their exclusive roles as arbiters of truth and value and consequently set in motion a cultural deterioration. There followed subsequently a "war on the intellect" in which only the mediocre, the sensationalist and the "popular" survived. Contemporary

progress, for Lewis then, was always the tragic progress towards the ruinous "religion of Demos and the dithyrambic action of the crowd." [88]

These were common themes in Lewis's theory, and the private thought-world of his art, but in The Art of Being Ruled they were developed into an analysis of the entire social world. And, here, the full weight of his enmity was revealed. Corresponding to the decline in intellectual standards, described in Time and Western Man and previously satirised in the Tyros, there occurred, in Lewis's opinion, the advent of "inferior" intellectual systems and types. Chief amongst these was the intrusion into the intellectual world of the feminist, and her counterpart, the homosexual. Lewis argued that:

> "Of all the tokens of the flight of the contemporary European personality from the old arduous and responsible position in whose rigours it delighted...there is none so significant as the sex-transformation that is such a feature of post-war life". [89]

Through a logically tortuous argument Lewis suggested that contemporary feminism, itself conditioned by the "fashion" for romantic sensationalism, propagated a fashion for "sex-inversion". As Lewis said, "The 'homo' is the legitimate child of the 'suffragette'". [90] Feminism, as a political dynamic gave precedence, as Lewis saw it, to intuitive, emotional and therefore chaotic forms of thought and government. To use his pre-war metaphor it aspired to the Dionysian rather than the Apollonian. But liberal democracy itself was precisely this for Lewis. In propagating control by the mass, the crowd, liberal

democracy conspired in the defeat of civilisation and culture. Feminism therefore was a constituating element of this downward spiral. Feminist polemics were emblematic of the insistent downgrading of classical intellectualism. The "fashion" for homosexuality, or "inversion" as Lewis preferred to call it, was simply male authority becoming subsumed by feminist rhetoric. A process which paralleled the social process of a cultured elite being subsumed by the mass-mind of democracy. Men were transformed into women, the "shaman" as Lewis punningly named him, as the individual descended to the mass, as authority became subservience, and as order collapsed into chaos.

This situation, the result of an extensive social process, where men came to imitate women, to project feminine values and attitudes, necessitated a further "lamentable" development. It generated "the cult of the child" and hence the proliferation of amateurism. Here was Lewis's logic of this development:

> "But people are becoming <u>in reality</u> more childlike... In the levelling, standardisation, and pooling of the crowd-mind...it is the masculine mind that tends to approximate the feminine... This is inevitable, seeing that the masculine is not the natural human state, but a carefully nurtured secondary development above the normal and womanly. But women have always retained much more of the childlike in their mature life than men have... So it is that, as the man's mind is slowly emolliated, and his personal will called into play less and less frequently, as he loses initiative...and as all the intensive machinery of education and publicity sees to it that he shall not have to think; as he sinks to the more emotional female level, it is natural for him also to become more truly childish".[91]

In effect men come to imitate women who are, in fact, children. As an artist Lewis was particularly sensitive to

this development as it affected the art world. And for Lewis it affected all aspects of the arts. His critiques of his contemporaries, Pound, Joyce, Stein were all informed by his feeling that intellectually they connived in the destruction of classical masculine virtues. More significantly his assessment of the contemporary art world was consistently bounded by his loathing for the child-like "naive" vision which was, throughout the 1920s, becoming a kind of orthodoxy. The most pertinent examples of this would be Fry's emotionalist aesthetics and, by 1928, Ben Nicholson's admiration for the work of Alfred Wallis.

Indeed the art of the "primitive" was viewed as an extension of the "cult of the child". Lewis's most elaborate exegesis of this "cult" occurred in his book Paleface, published in 1929. A work which, incidentally, contained some of his most overtly racialist statements.[92] But most importantly here Paleface offered an extended critique of "primitivism" as it affected literature, notably in the work of D.H. Lawrence. Not surprisingly Lewis again identified this "fashion" with the "Bergson-Spengler School" and as the logical extension of sentimental romanticism. In the arts, Lewis would identify this with Picasso's use of African artefacts, and Fry's responses to both the Byzantine and African traditions, where the "primitive" was seen as a kind of intuitive "direct" approach to nature and life. An echo of a colonialist attitude which was as much misapplied as misdirected. Lewis castigated this cult only by

implication in The Art of Being Ruled where, as an extension of the child-cult, it asserted the primacy of intuition above the authority of the intellect. It was a further fall into the feminine, into the crowd, into one vast, standardised, cultureless mass.

From the convoluted, idiosyncratic social critique that is The Art of Being Ruled two salient points emerged. Firstly, that the "capitalo-socialist" state, as Lewis termed it, was collapsing, through internal pressures, into a featureless decay. Without a centre, devoid of authority, emptied of ethical standards. The modern world was valueless, corrupt and inferior, and Modernism only reflected this fact. And secondly, that the remnants of intellectualism, authority, classicism, "right-thinking", were everywhere constantly downgraded. As Lewis put it;

> "A sort of war of revenge on the intellect is what, for some reasons, thrives in the contemporary social atmosphere".[93]

The constitutive and constituating elements of this "war" were Lewis's subject in The Art of Being Ruled.

Importantly, Lewis's discussion here was not abstract and speculative. In many ways he was responding to an actual political situation as he understood it. The Art of Being Ruled was published in 1926, Time and Western Man in 1927. These were years of economic depression and incipient crisis. General elections were held in Britain in 1922, 1923, 1924 and 1929, this last returning a Labour government, whose economic programmes were determined by the Bloomsbury intellectual John Maynard

Keynes. 1926 had, of course, been the year of the general strike and trade union militancy was clearly fired by the central issue of unemployment. Everywhere conservative values were subject to successive compromises where the will of the masses became a determinant of social policy. Lewis understood these social crises to be reflections of a more fundamental breakdown in cultural authority. Hence his constant, detailed, gyrating analysis of cultural trends and the history of ideas as they affect the contemporary socio-political situation. And, of course, his increasing castigation of his fellow intellectuals, as bearers of a flawed knowledge.

Both the portraits of the 1920s, and the Tyros, carry this theme. A Reading of Ovid in particular was a satire of womenly-men. They fawn, in sensual delight, at the presence of the observer. Their entire demeanor signals their instinctual responses to life. They were the decadent, debased, mock-intellectuals of the contemporary period. The very emblems of the "willed sickness of modern man". Where the Tyro studies had identified the problem, the portraits had attempted to find a resolution. The ordered classicism, the "externality", the frozen deadness of his early portraits were tokens to authority, rigour and control. They were the available alternative to romantic sensualism, and the symbol of a potential renaissance of "civilisation" [94].

Ultimately, however, Lewis remained pessimistic with regard to the fate of the contemporary world, particularly

in regard to his proposal for a revival of classical values and attitudes. Writing in 1934, in a book of criticism titled "Man without Art", Lewis began to explore the nature of his "classicism". He wrote:

> "The "classical" has a physiognomy of sorts...it has a solid aspect rather than a gaseous: it is liable to incline rather to the side of Aristotle than to the side of Plato: to be of a public rather than a private character: to be objective rather than subjective: to incline to action rather than to dream...to be redolent of common sense rather than metaphysic: to be universal rather than idiomatic: to lean upon the intellect rather than upon the bowels and nerves." [95]

Here we have a set of dualisms, or dichotomies rather, which were not, elsewhere, encountered in British modernism. Lewis was acutely conscious of a need for a modern classicism which would stand in opposition to the dominant romanticism he so despised. This "classicism" would be characterised, in art, by an objective, intellectual, stoical,ultimately a cold and hard style of painting which structured its meanings around the critical study of contemporary life, and an exploration of that scepticism which underpinned Lewis's social outlook.

Lewis, however, remained aware that any <u>pure</u> classicism was impossible given modern conditions. Later, in this same text he wrote:

> "But "classic" expression, in an unimpeachable form, is to be found nowhere in a period such as ours, for the audience is lacking. There is a greater audience today for art than in any period we could label "classic", but it is far less select. So the more components an artist may possess of those qualities described as "classic", the more isolated he is likely to be..." [96]

and again:

> "To be impersonal, rather than personal, universal rather than provincial, rational rather than a mere creature of feeling these, and the rest of the attributes of a... "classic" expression, are very fine things indeed: but who possesses more than a tincture of them today? It would be mere affrontery, or buffoonery, in an artist of any power, among us, to lay claim to them - to say, "as an artist I am a "classicist". With all of us - and to this there is no exception - there are merely degrees of opposite tendency, at present labelled "romantic"." [97]

This last sentence may help to explain why Lewis can come to paint himself as a tyro, in the 1921 canvas Self Portrait as a Tyro. But more importantly the frustrations illustrated in these statements point to to underlying reason for his development of a satirical technique in the tyros. Lewis was propagating opinions which were extreme and heretical. Moreover, he offered an art for which there was no informed audience, for classicism demanded a strict unity of purpose and ideology among its public. The Romantic orthodoxy collapsed into degrees of emotion, sentiment, subjectivism and ultimately chaos. Hence there was no room for classicism. But what a classically orientated artist could do was to satirise the conceits, absurdities and follies of conventional society, and thereby highlight its misguided inadequacy. This was precisely what Lewis began to do in 1921 with the ridiculous grinning tyros. But Lewis was offering satire with a philosophic, prescriptive purpose, for he was implicitly attacking a composite cultural attitude. His satires were directed specifically against those figures who had betrayed their critical role as artists. The immediate targets in the tyros being those individuals associated with the

sentimental aestheticism of Roger Fry, and the bourgeois-bohemians linked to the Sitwell group. But in attacking these figures Lewis saw himself as attacking a deeper sickness in contemporary society. For the impoverished standards and amateurism of these artists was merely a symptom of that decadence which had negated all genuine cultural values. A decadence which had extended into the social arena and was witnessed by the standardisation of social life, the lowering of ethical values, the emergence and development of democracy, and by the decline in the status of the artist.

Clearly there was a broader project implied here. For Lewis, who held initially a commitment to a rareified conception of art and the role of the artist, has allowed his concerns to spiral outwards. Firstly into a philosophic and cultural criticism, then into a form of sociological theorising. But, underpinning this project, was not a simple conservatism nor a regressive ideology. Neither was it a pure elitism nor artistic arrogance. It was, rather, a sublime consciousness of the tragic condition of human existence, which merely masqueraded as comedy and classicism. In The Lion and the Fox, 1927, a book on Shakespearean heroes which naturally contained didactic political insights, Lewis said this of Darwin's Origin of Species:

> "...it is a book that forces civilisation to face about and confront the grinning shadow of its past, and acknowledge the terrible nature of its true destiny." [98]

This is surely an accurate description of the intent in Lewis's art of the 1920s.

But this intent spiralled outwards into philosophy and sociological speculations. And in many senses this was Lewis's undoing. For his ideational universe, as established in the polemical texts of the 1920s, gave expression to misanthropy, misogny, homophobia, racialism, a paranoid fear of the "masses", and an undisguised loathing of the contemporary intelligensia. In his fictional work The Childermass, of 1928, the figure of the Bailiff stands accused "...only your hatred is creative", [99] and in many ways this was precisely Lewis's own condition. It was his negative perceptions of human potential, human desires and human prospects which were the spur of his creativity. It was disbelief that made him create. It was his enmity that was his most powerful emotion, and that made him an "enemy" to his peers. This enmity became the mediated content of his creative practice, and provoked his fatalistic misanthropy. More tragically still it sponsored his disastrous political profile of the 1930s.

CHAPTER IV: Footnotes

1. Lewis attended Rugby from January 1897 to December 1898, immediately prior to entering the Slade at the age of 16. According to his biographer Jeffrey Meyers Lewis "...did not stand out in house or school games...nor participate in the Debating Society or the Newspaper: he was distinguished by his invisibility". Meyers The Enemy, op.cit., p. 7.

2. Something of Lewis's ongoing commitment to this belief can be gleaned from an unpublished draft, probably of a lecture, held in the Lewis archive at Cornell University. Titled The Artist and Society and most probably written in the early 1940s, "What can be said today, in England, is that no true "society" exists for the Artist to relate himself to. And the Artist...is in the final stages of dissolution. So within an easily foreseeable future there will be no artist either - unless the state steps in, and becomes "society"".

3. These separate texts were originally conceived as one monumental, epic work of censure to be entitled The Man of the World. As a project this was unpublishable (see Meyers The Enemy op.cit., p. 105). Lewis broke the work into its constituent parts and they were published separately throughout the 1920s. The texts of interest here were

published, chronologically, as follows: The Tyro, a journal reviewing the arts ran to two editions in 1921 and 1922. The Art of Being Ruled, Lewis's major work on social and political theory, 1926. The Enemy, a journal of the arts chiefly publicising Lewis's most recent works and theory ran to three editions between 1927 and 1929. The Lion and the Fox, a critical study of the Shakespearean hero, 1927. Time and Western Man, a critical exegesis of contemporary philosophical theory castigating in particular the influence of Bergson, 1927. Paleface, a study of the fashion for the art of the "primitive", 1929. These, chiefly theoretical works were complemented by two fictional pieces, the fantastic Childermass of 1928, and the satirical Apes of God, of 1930. During this period Lewis also revised the Wild Body stories and published The Wild Body as a single volume in 1927. He also revised his first published novel Tarr which was republished in 1928.

4. Lewis produced three volumes of a magazine titled The Enemy between 1927 and 1929. These contained many of his most developed writings on aesthetic theory, philosophy, and social criticism. Most notably Enemy 1. January 1927, here published under the heading The Revolutionary Simpleton. The uncompromising integrity of the Enemy persona was reviewed by Lewis himself in this biographical prose poem One Way Song first published in 1933.

5. Lewis greatly admired Julien Benda's La Trahison des clercs, 1927, with its attacks on the intellectual's contemporary betrayal of their role as cultured elite and concomitant concern with popular politics. This thesis has a significant reverberation in Lewis's own The Art of Being Ruled, 1926, where Benda's text Belphegor first published in Paris in 1918 was discussed at considerable length.

6. "Outsider" in the sense Lewis himself used it in his introduction to the first issue of The Enemy,Lewis wrote; "By name this paper is an enemy...there is no `movement' gathered here (thank heavens!), merely a person; a solitary outlaw and not a gang... I have moved outside...Outside I am freer". The Enemy No. 1, London, Jan. 1927 p. ix. This is not the existential outsider and anti-hero who falls prey to the breakdown of an overarching moral system. Rather Lewis steps outside a reduced moral order in order to vitally assert the possibility of an alternative, more cohesive system. Ultimately, this becomes a socio-political system. The parallel with Pound is clear, though Pound's advocacy of fascism simply seemed absurdly romantic to Lewis. The other clear parallel is with Eliot who retreated into high Anglicanism in order to reassert a moral authority. What is important is that Lewis's outsider's satire was not a retreat, but a response to the here and now of the social world.

7. The vast majority of these works were in fact portraits and portrait drawings (to be discussed later), only five actual Tyro pieces were exhibited. The two most important were A Reading of Ovid and Mr. Wyndham Lewis as a Tyro, these were accompanied by A Tyro about to Breakfast, A School of Tyros and Tyros Breakfasting. Lewis completed some further Tyro drawings for his magazine The Tyro.

8. Lewis demonstrated considerable pride in this work in a letter to the collector John Quinn, dated 2 May 1921 he noted; "The "Tyros Reading Ovid" is one of the paintings I took longest over... It is quite a satisfactory painting: it would make a good altarpiece" (John Quinn Memorial Collection, New York, Public Library).

9. Lewis was a great admirer of these figures. His introduction to the catalogue of the Tyros and Portraits exhibitions justifies his art by noting that "Swift did not develop in his satires the comliness of Keats, nor did Hogarth aim at grace". Foreword to Tyros and Portraits at the Leicester Galleries, cited in B. Laforcade, ed., The Complete Wild Body op.cit., p. 353. Elsewhere, in an interview with the Daily Express on the occasion of the opening of the Leicester Gallery Show Lewis opined, "There has been no great satirist since Swift", (Daily Express, April 11, 1921). The byeline to this article was "Dean Swift with a Brush. The Tyroist explains his Art".

10. In a work titled Studies in the Art of Laughter of 1934 Lewis wrote; "...satire is the "truth" of the intellect, whereas the "truth" of the beauty-doctor is that of the average romantic sensualism". Wyndham Lewis in Enemy Salvoes, ed. C.J. Fox, London, 1975, p. 43.

11. Foreword: Tyros and Portraits, Leicester Galleries, London, April 1921. Also reproduced in Laforcade, ed. The Complete Wild Body, pp. 353-355.

12. Dean Swift with a Brush, The Daily Express, April 11, 1921.

13. In Men Without Art, a book of criticism published in 1934 Lewis wrote; "The "classical" has a physiognomy of sorts...it is liable to be of a public rather than a private character: to be objective rather than subjective: to incline to action rather than to dream... "Lewis, Men Without Art, London, 1934.

14. Dean Swift With a Brush, The Daily Express, April 11, 1921.

15. Ibid.

16. Foreword to the Leicester Galleries catalogue, and Laforcade (ed) The Complete Wild Body, op.cit., p. 354.

17. Dean Swift With a Brush, op.cit.

18. MS. John Quinn Memorial Collection, New York, Public Library.

19. Foreword to the Leicester Galleries catalogue, and Laforcade (ed), The Complete Wild Body, op.cit., p. 353.

20. Wyndham Lewis, The Tyro, London, 1921, p. 3.

21. Rose ed., The Letters of Wyndham Lewis, op.cit., p. 117.

22. Tarr was first published in 1918, though it had been serialised in The Egoist from April 1916 to November 1917. During the 1920s Lewis revised the first edition and created a work more compatible with his mature system of thinking, this was published in 1928. The editions consulted here are the serialised version, and the revision of 1928.

23. Wyndham Lewis, Tarr, London, 1968, p. 23.

24. Wyndham Lewis, Tarr, ibid., p. 24.

25. Wyndham Lewis, Tarr, ibid., see pp. 9-25.

26. Wyndham Lewis, Tarr, ibid, p. 18.

27. Art was first published in 1914, by 1921, the year of the Tyros it was already in its fifth edition.

28. Clive Bell, Art, London 1921, pp. 6-7.

29. Clive Bell, Art, ibid, p. 7.

30. Clive Bell, Art, ibid., p. 8.

31. The central, philosophical, problem with Bell's thesis has been demonstrated by R. Meager in his article Clive Bell and Aesthetic Emotion, Meager writes; "...he defines his terms with vicious circularity so as to make the theory vacuous: that, in his theory, a work of art is by definition a work with power to evoke aesthetic emotion; aesthetic emotion is by definition that feature in works of art which evokes aesthetic emotion". R. Meager in The British Journal of Aesthetics, vol. 5, no. 2, April 1965, p. 123.

32. Abstract Kinetic Scroll, was in fact a long canvas covered in a rhythmic collage of oblong shapes, it took the form of a scroll which was to be unwound to the music of Bach. The key aesthetic criteria here were the notions of rhythm, abstract sound and abstract sensation. Touchstones, naturally, of the emotions. The redundancy of this technique was revealed in Grant's Still Life with White Jug and Lemon of 1914-1919. The canvas existed in 1914 as a

rhythmic design of coloured oblong shapes. In 1919, tired of this vacuous image Grant added a Jug and a lemon. Presumably to give the work "relevance".

33. Rose, ed., The Letters of Wyndham Lewis, op.cit., p. 49.

34. Lewis's feud with the Bloomsbury faction was lifelong. It extended beyond the personal battles into his painting, and was everpresent in his theory. The Department of Rare Books at Cornell University holds an unpublished, and probably unpublishable, manuscript by Lewis entitled The Bloomsburies. It was written in 1934 and roundly condemns, not to say libels, all Bloomsbury pretensions.

35. Wyndham Lewis, Rude Assignment, op.cit., p. 139.

36. Wyndham Lewis, Rude Assignment, op.cit., p. 139.

37. Wyndham Lewis, The Caliph's Design, ed. Paul Edwards, Black Sparrow Press, Santa Barbara, 1986, p. 9.

38. Wyndham Lewis, The Caliph's Design, ibid., p. 12.

39. Wyndham Lewis, The Caliph's Design, ibid., p. 9.

40. Wyndham Lewis, The Caliph's Design, ibid., p. 14.

41. Wyndham Lewis, The Caliph's Design, ibid., pp. 11-12.

42. C. Lewis Hind, The Pall Mall Gazette, June 28th, 1922.

43. Lewis was to use this phrase in his discussion of Hulme remembered in his autobiographical Blasting and Bombardiering, first published in 1937. He wrote "the doctrine of Original Sin...contradicted the unpleasant idolatory of Man... It refuted the modernist uplift. It denied that Man was remarkable in any way, much less "like a god", or capable of unlimited "advance"" Wyndham Lewis, Blasting and Bombardiering, London, 1982, p. 102.

44. Lewis, in Rose (ed), The Letters of Wyndham Lewis, op.cit., p. 91.

45. Lewis, in Rose (ed), The Letters of Wyndham Lewis, op.cit., pp. 94-5.

46. For a detailed background to this see Meyers, The Enemy, op.cit., pp. 70-87.

47. A Battery Shelled, measures 6ft by 10ft 5 inches. It was commissioned by the Ministry of Information for the War Records project. It is now in the Imperial War Museum, London.

48. A Canadian Gun Pit, 10ft by 11ft, was commissioned by the Canadian War Memorials committee and is now in the National Gallery of Canada, Ottowa.

49. Lewis, in Rose (ed), Letters of Wyndham Lewis, op.cit., p. 110.

50. A concise catalogue of Paintings and Sculpture of the First World War 1914-18, Imperial War Museum; introduction to the first edition, 1924. And cited in Charles Harrison, English Art and Modernism, London, p. 120.

51. Wyndham Lewis, Blast 2, The War Number, op.cit., p. 16.

52. Bomberg's work was initially rejected by the commissioning agencies. He was forced to rework the piece to their satisfaction.

53. In an exhibition of his war work in 1918 Paul Nash pointedly displayed a drawing with an official censored notice defacing the piece. This followed its rejection by the authorities.

54. Wyndham Lewis, Rude Assignment, op.cit., p. 138.

55. Wyndham Lewis, Rude Assignment, as note no. 35.

56. For example in 1937 Lewis complained, "...Then, at the end of my money, I made a sortie into the portrait world.", Wyndham Lewis Blasting and Bombardiering, op.cit., p. 215.

57. "In my portraits what is lacking is numbers. I wish I had done fifty MacLeods and Spenders. However it will show what a grant visual legacy a man can be responsible for...", Wyndham Lewis introduction to Wyndham Lewis and Vorticism, Tate Gallery, London, 1956, p. 4.

58. There are, of course, a few exceptions. Most notable perhaps are Picasso's Cubist portraits of 1911, and his famous portrait of Gertrude Stein done in 1906. The motivation for such portraits was principally the desire to flatter dealers and wealthy patrons. Portrait painting here was in no sense a profession.

59. Wyndham Lewis, The Caliph's Design, op.cit., p. 12.

60. Wyndham Lewis, Blasting and Bombardiering, op.cit., p. 8.

61. It is significant here that Lewis's portraits fall outside of one of the central tenents of the genre. Lewis was not primarily , or particularly, concerned with the social role, or social status, of his sitters.

62. This is a portrait of Iris Barry, Lewis's mistress from 1918-21. It is currently held in Leeds City Art Gallery.

63. See, in reference to this J. Meyers, The Enemy, op.cit.

64. Wyndham Lewis, "Essay on the Objective of Plastic Art in Our Time", Tyro No. 2, Cass Reprints, London, 1970, p. 30.

65. Ibid., p. 31.

66. Wyndham Lewis, Time and Western Man, London, 1927, p. 3.

67. Wyndham Lewis, Time and Western Man, ibid., p. 3.

68. Wyndham Lewis, Time and Western Man, ibid., p. 8.

69. Key ideas in Alexander's Space, Time and Diety include the conception of "self" or "conscious experience" as contingent upon "duration". That is consciousness exists in relation to past and future knowledge of self, or memories and anticipations. The "self" is continually becoming in "time" rather than bounded in space. Hence Alexander's contention that philosophers must "take time seriously" as the essence of reality. Similarly Whitehead, who in Process and Reality, 1929, had insisted that "...Philosophers have

disdained the information about the universe obtained through their visceral feelings, and have concentrated on visual feelings", argued in Science and the Modern World that understanding was gleaned through a "kinesthetic organic sensation". Lewis's hostility to these theories was essentially temperamental rather than purely technical and philosophical.

70. Wyndham Lewis, Time and Western Man, op.cit., p. 268.

71. Wyndham Lewis, Time and Western Man, op.cit.., p. 287.

72. Wyndham Lewis, Time and Western Man, op.cit.., p. 156.

73. Wyndham Lewis, Time and Western Man, op.cit., p. 170.

74. Wyndham Lewis, Time and Western Man, op.cit., p. 129.

75. Wyndham Lewis, Time and Western Man, op.cit., p. 37.

76. Lewis continually asserted his commitment to the "exterior" of things, the purely visual and concrete. In the course of his discussion of Hulme in Blasting and Bombardiering he noted;

> "We were a couple of fanatics and of course I am still. We preferred something more metallic and resistant than the pneumatic surface of the cuticle. We

preferred a helmet to a head of hair. A scarab to a jellyfish."

Wyndham Lewis, Blasting and Bombardiering, op.cit., p. 104.

77. Wyndham Lewis, Time and Western Man, op.cit., p. 175.

78. Wyndham Lewis, Time and Western Man, op.cit.; p. 449.

79. Richard Wyndham was a wealthy dilettante who had contributed to a fund (shortlived), organised by Dorothy Pound, to help alleviate Lewis's chronic poverty. John Rodker published Lewis's second portfolio of drawings Fifteen Drawings through his Ovid Press in 1919. And Sidney Schiff a wealthy amateur novelist helped fund Lewis's Tyro magazine and was a major patron especially at the Tyro's and Portraits exhibition. Besides these Lewis drew a number of flattering portraits of society figures like Nancy Cunard (with whom he had an affair), Violet Schiff , Lady Diana Cooper, Ronald Firbank, Sacheverell Sitwell, etc., etc., (see Michel's catalogue raisonne).

80. Wyndham Lewis, Essay on the Objective of Plastic Art in Our Time, in Tyro, No. 2, Cass Reprints, London 1970, p. 30.

81. Wyndham Lewis, Blasting and Bombardiering, op.cit.., p. 9.

82. Wyndham Lewis, The Dithyrambic Spectator, in The Calendar of Modern Letters, April 1925, Cass Reprints, London 1966, p. 98.

83. Wyndham Lewis, The Dithyrambic Spectator, in The Calendar of Modern Letters, April 1925, ibid., p. 101.

84. This portrait of Edward Evans the music critic, was commissioned to commemorate his services to modern music in Britain. It was never completed principally because the sum requested by Lewis was never realised by the purchasers. In the end Evans accepted the portrait in its unfinished state.

85. Wyndham Lewis, The Art of Being Ruled, New York, 1972, p. 400.

86. Wyndham Lewis, The Art of Being Ruled, ibid., p. 269.

87. Wyndham Lewis, The Art of Being Ruled, ibid., p. 432.

88. Wyndham Lewis, The Art of Being Ruled, ibid., p. 400.

89. Wyndham Lewis, The Art of Being Ruled, ibid., p. 233.

90. Wyndham Lewis, The Art of Being Ruled, ibid.., p. 244.

91. Wyndham Lewis, The Art of Being Ruled, ibid., p. 186.

92. For example Lewis tells us in Paleface that

> "...whiteness is in a pigmentory sense, aristocratic, perhaps - the proper colour of a "gentleman": and blackness irretrievably proletarian".

Wyndham Lewis, Paleface, London, 1929, p. vi.

93. Wyndham Lewis, The Art of Being Ruled, op.cit., p. 242.

94. Of course this renaissance was contingent upon the other relevatory aspect of the portraits, their function as insight into the tragic condition of human being.

95. Wyndham Lewis, Men Without Art, Santa Barbara, California, 1987, p. 155.

96. Wyndham Lewis, Men Without Art, ibid., p. 155.

97. Wyndham Lewis, Men Without Art, ibid., p. 157.

98. Wyndham Lewis, The Lion and the Fox, 1927, cited in D.G. Bridson, The Filibuster, London, 1972, p. 12.

99. Wyndham Lewis, The Childermass, London, 1965, p. 315.

CHAPTER V: Some Form of Fascism

Late, in the decade of the 1930s, Lewis was to produce his most accomplished work as a painter. Subtly unorthodox, cerebral and censorious, this work was all the more remarkable because it was completed in a portraiture that bordered on the naturalistic. Undoubtedly the climax of this work was the portrait of T.S. Eliot (Fig. 38), completed in 1938. [1]

Without doubt the portrait of Eliot was in the first rank of Lewis's work. Compositionally, and in the technique of its execution, the painting was exceptional. Even more extraordinary, however, was the actual portrayal of the poet. For, in this multi-layered study of his subject, Lewis managed to describe an anatomy, condemn a culture-set, and triumph over the inconstancy of his peers. This portrait, in one of its aspects, was a kind of contest for Lewis. [2] Here it became possible to expose the faltering will of the intelligensia and the decline into sensualism and escapism. Even with the neo-classical, religious authoritarianism of a figure like Eliot, surely a contemporary closest to Lewis in attitude and theory, there was the ever-present condemnatory accusation of declention, embedded in the portrait. Emblematically the first line of attack was the setting, the background to the poets presence. Lewis has transfixed Eliot between two panels

emblazoned with the fantastic designs characteristic of his mythological visions of the 1920s and 1930s. Clearly visible in these abstract panoramas are a boat in the left hand panel, and, to the right, an absurdly decorous bird. Such motifs are both extravagant and whimsical, and their juxtaposition to the austere and orthodox Eliot was surely an irreverence, with an ironic intention, which would not be missed by the sitter. Indeed this irony was accentuated in the exaggerated dandyism of the display handkerchief. But these seem trifling incidents within the portrait. More significant was the painting of the face and head. Here the hair has been tightly moulded around the crown. The flesh, which has been pulled across the face, is almost translucent, revealing the contours of the skull, while Eliot's lips are taut and pursed, as if sculpted and symbolically silenced. Above all, the poet's physical demeanour reveals the drama of the portrait. The body has collapsed, the shoulders fallen, the head bowed in submission. Eliot has been broken, he sits supine and defeated. And the final conclusive proof of this fall lies in the eyes. The eyes of this figure are regressing into a dream world, they are fading from consciousness, it is as if the figure was becoming comatose. Here, the subject has been robbed of individual personality and wilfulness.

The portrait was a subtly profound work. It functioned as a consummate statement on the poet's actual, physical presence, but also described both the defeat of Eliot by the greater "will" that was Lewis, and symbolically cast Eliot

into the mass of cultural backsliders. In these senses it was a triumph for Lewis, but a hollow one.[3] Throughout the 1930s Lewis suffered from recurring bouts of illness, often debilitating him for months on end, causing him extreme hardship, and even threatening his life. During 1934, for example, he was forced to write to the publisher Nicholas Waterhouse:

> "Here I am once again in a nursing home - it is an emergency, as on Sunday I began having a bad bleeding. Now tonight the surgeon...thinks that it may be necessary to slit a little hole in my bladder to pull out a dried clot of blood. So just in case anything went wrong, I send you this, asking you to settle up my immediate medical fees...and to look after in any way you are able...my very much loved wife, Gladys Anne..."[4]

Lewis must have been very desperate indeed, for though he was no stranger to begging money, the touching and affectionate mention of his wife was a near unique phenomenon.[5]

Recurrent illness meant only sporadic work was completed during the 1930s, with the bulk of the major paintings being finally completed in 1937 and 1938. Despite the illness, however, Lewis also published an extraordinary number of pamphlets, novels, plays, a book of autobiography, an extended autobiographical essay in verse form, and a variety of texts on social and political issues.[6] In effect he dissipated his energies and became tied up, largely in political theorising, which proved both intellectually debilitating and personally disastrous. Indeed he recognised this fact, writing in 1943 he noted:

> "Much valuable time - which would have been far better employed in other ways - has been spent by me, during

> the past ten years, arguing about contemporary politics..."[7]

Yet the political dimension of Lewis's world-view is one of the keys for understanding the thought-world of his paintings. And the paintings all were, in the final analysis, political in substance, if not in shape. The Eliot portrait and indeed the major works of the 1930s, were all bound to Lewis's obsessive, largely wasteful, political rhetoric. Sometimes the references to politics in these paintings were direct, more often they were subtle and oblique. But political involvement was the final twist in the vortex of Lewis's spiralling theory. A logical nadir to his lofty insistence on the value of the personal will, the artist's integrity, and "classical" individualism in an age of democratisation. Politics was the necessary outcome of Lewis's specialised commitment to Art, at once both inevitable and, as it turned out, shameful.

"As near dead as possible"

While the portraits of the late 1930s were to be the apex of Lewis's career as a painter there lay, beneath these a series of fantasy works which explored the netherworld of the subconscious. The prevailing themes of these paintings were, as always, ontological. In the first instance these themes can be divided into two categories, works like The Convalescent (Fig. 39) of 1933 and The Mud Clinic of 1937, examine that critical moment where the mind is betrayed by the body. The body, in

sickness, slips back into primordial nature and consciousness is undermined by the demands of the physical self. Clearly these works relate, in part, to Lewis's own recurrent illness during these years. In his letters he was constantly making references to the absurd dysfunctioning mechanism of his body, and the enforced disruption to his creative work caused him even greater pain. A painting like The Convalescent remains autobiographical, a letter to A. J.A. Symons from 1933 notes:

> "nevertheless I will venture to say that I am ill - that I am assured that I run a good chance of recovering - and that if I am lucky enough to do so I believe I shall then be in perfect health. But that cannot be for many weeks. - The moment I am a convalescent I will let you know..."[8]

Clinics, invalidity, illness and convalescence were recurring themes in these works, but they also functioned as subtle metaphors. Lewis consistently regarded the dysfunctioning mechanisms of the social world as the greatest barrier to his creative life. Time and Western Man, The Art of Being Ruled, and the various political texts of the 1930s were all designed as panaceas for the greater sickness that was society. In this sense the mind/body dichotomy which had underpinned the earlier burlesques of The Wild Body series were extended during the 1930s to explore the disharmony between the social world and the informed intelligensia. A disharmony which provoked breakdown in both components.

A second group of themes emerged in other fantasy works of the 1930s. Creation Myth, Group of Suppliants,

and One of the Stations of the Dead, from 1933-37, Queue of Dead finished in 1936, and Inferno of 1937 all examined a subterranean existence carried out without consciousness. These were the fictional journeys of pre- and post-life. But they also incorporated, for the mass of humanity, actual life, lived intuitively at the level of natural desires and motives. In these works Lewis's lifelong, almost pathological, concern with the categories of "life" and "death" were acted out. And it is clear that Lewis consistently regarded "life" where it is bound to nature and material existence as an equivalent of death, a "death in life". True "life" took place at the level of the intellect, the enquiring, active, creative mind. Hence the majority of those around Lewis himself, the thoughtless masses of democratic society, were either "unborn" or in Lewis's construct "dead", or "near dead", living only at the level of intuition.

This theme was one of the bases of Lewis's political interjections of the 1930s, and a painting like Group of Suppliants (Fig. 40), with its queue of staring, grinning marionettes, doll-like in their hebetude, carried an elaborate critique of contemporary society. The germ of this political critique was given its first expression in The Art of Being Ruled, particularly in those sections which deal with the nature of "freedom". For Lewis one of the most consummate absurdities of contemporary life was that individuals, while ostensibly desiring "freedom" were content to slip back into standard patterns,

standardised ideas and standardised actions. These "fashions" which he takes so much time to explore in The Art of Being Ruled, the child cult, feminism, homosexuality, the deification of the amateur, were all examples of a flight from responsibility which while posing as individual freedom, were objectively the manifestation of the herd instinct. Lewis, very early in The Art of Being Ruled outlined this theme:

> "For their instinct to be so fallible, where, it would seem, so much is at stake for them - for them to proclaim so ardently that they wish to be "free" and nature's children, and yet, in effect, to carry through great movements that result in an absolute mechanisation of their life - can only mean one thing. It must mean that they do not really know what they want, that they do not, in their heart, desire freedom or anything of the sort. "Freedom" postulates a relatively solitary life: and the majority of people are extremely gregarious. A disciplined, well-policed, herd-life is what they most desire."[9]

The strains of Nietzsche still resonate through this passage, particularly the reference to the "solitary life" as a juxtaposition to the "herd life". However this idea forms the basis of Lewis's sociological and political insights. Elsewhere in The Art of Being Ruled Lewis wrote:

> "The mass mind is required to gravitate to a standard size to receive the standard idea, the alternative is to go naked: the days of made-to-order and made-to-measure are past... In the interests of great scale industry and mass production the smaller the margin of diversity the better".[10]

There was a clear parallel here with the type of critique of political economy which Marx had developed in Capital. However what intrigued Lewis was not the processes of alienation or dehumanisation in the work place, but the manner in which standardisation revealed certain truths

about individuals and their capacities for "freedom". A capacity which, in Lewis's theory, was innate rather than socially constructed. In referring to this he sites, not Nietzsche, but Goethe:

> "Goethe had a jargon of his own for referring to these two species whose existence he perfectly recognised. He divided people into Puppets and Natures. He said the majority of people were machines, playing a part. When he wished to express admiration for a man, he would say about him, "He is a nature"... today there is an absurd war between the "puppets" and the "natures", the machine and the men. And owing to the development of machinery, the pressure on the "natures" increases. We are all slipping back into machinery, because we all have tried to be free. And what is absurd about this situation is that so few people even desire to be free in reality". [11]

Clearly this was an extension of Lewis's romantic elitism, but what makes it more interesting than this conventional avant-garde attitude, was the insistence on its being a social process which was all-inclusive. The necessities of such social change forced all individuals into the standardised pattern and resistance, including Lewis's own, was only ever token.

Nevertheless the chief symbol of resistance to standardisation, even if it were only a token resistance, was the striving for individual creative freedom and the true "life" of the intellect. The alternative was "death", the condition which the mass of people were magnetically drawn towards:

> "For in the mass people wish to be automata: they wish to be conventional: they hate you teaching them or forcing them into "freedom" they wish to be obedient, hard-working machines, as near dead as possible - as near dead (feelingless and thoughtless) as they can get, without actually dying." [12]

These beliefs, philosophical, sociological, ultimately political, construct the thought-world of Lewis's fantasy pictures in the 1930s. The beliefs themselves were largely a fantasy, born of Lewis's personal isolation, and even more pertinently the marginalisation of the artist and the "aesthetic" within the processes of capitalist enterprise. But they remained real for Lewis, and clearly they were one highly specialised interpretation of contemporary social developments which were symptomatic of the ebb and flow of group interests within industrial capitalism. Yet they remain the basis of a painting like One of the Stations of the Dead (Fig. 41) which is a fascinating work from this period, and typical of the images Lewis called "semi-abstract".[13] The painting is almost surreal in character and has an atmosphere which is dark, brooding and threatening. It depicts a group of highly stylised figures within what appears to be an underground cavern. Certainly the brown and umber colouring indicates a subterranean world. The idea of some kind of passage is implied, not only in the title of the piece, but by the river which appears in the top left hand corner of the work. On this, a boat glides offering the promise of transit. The focus of the work, occupying the central band of the composition, is the group of figures. These figures are drawn as the simplest geometries, circles, ovoids, rectangles. They do not possess character or identity. Their faces are featureless, though sometimes the residue of an unseeing eye is present. The most sinister feature

of these figures is that they appear to emerge from, or retire into, what must be sarcophagi. These figures are quite obviously, neither the natural anatomies of Lewis's portraiture, nor, the grotesque absurdities of his satire. Here is represented an extra dimension of Lewis's art. The construction of a mythological imagery which dramatises the dialectic between being and non-being.

One of the Stations of the Dead was a symbolic depiction of the transition that occurs in death. The central ideas which emerge from this canvas include the notion of transit, the loss of individual identity, and finally the disintegration of consciousness. Lewis's imagery in this painting leans towards an established classical mythology. The passage implied here must be associated with the journey over the River Styx. [14] Indeed this picture, seen in conjunction with the other semi-abstract works of the later 1930s, forms part of a body of work which explores the mythology of the afterlife. Clearly these works have their source in the mythology of classical Greece, and, to some extent, in Dante's Divine Comedy. [15] Yet Lewis's mythology possessed neither the richly layered symbolism of the Greek model, nor the ultimate promise and optimism of Dante's vision. These images are unremittingly tragic, flowing back to Hulme's theopneustic castigation of humanity, and Lewis's own ruminations on "life" and "death" in The Art of Being Ruled.

Evidence for this interpretation of the work can be presented in an examination of the symbolic figures Lewis created in his underworld. Comparing these figures to those represented as tyros it is obvious that they lack the characteristic which the tyro's possessed in abundance, a sense of self. The tyros are the very embodiment of, an admittedly naive, ego and instinct. The figures of the underworld are insensible. Here vanity, desire, the will itself, has been anaesthetised. These figures hover, uneasily in a comatose and supine subjugation to their fate. It is, in particular, the eyes which reveal the dimensions of this stupor. Within Lewis's system the eyes always signalled intelligence and consciousness. [16] They reflected, often ironically, the grotesque absurdity of a disciplined mind trapped inside a mechanical body. That dualism, however, of mind and body, is no longer present in the figures which inhabit <u>One of the Stations of the Dead</u>. The eyes of these figures are not alert and active, but dissolve into a condition beyond anaesthesia and beneath existence. The contradiction of the mind body dichotomy disappears as these figures, quite literally, decompose.

Lewis was depicting here an artistic fantasy world layered with symbolism and references to classical authorities. But he was also depicting what was for him a reality, for these figures were the emblem of the "mass of people", they were "as near dead (feelingless and thoughtless) as they can get, without actually dying".

This was a theme which Lewis pursued, most terrifyingly, in his painting Inferno of 1937.

Inferno (Fig. 42), along with other works in the same vein, was exhibited at the Leicester Galleries, London, in December 1937. It was only Lewis's fourth one-man show and he was then fifty-five years old. In the foreword to the catalogue Lewis discussed this painting which was, he claimed, "still wet" when hung:

> "As to the manner of conveying the tragic, and the tragi-comic impression. The canvas entitled Inferno will be plain sailing, I assume. In this composition (an inverted T, a vertical red panel, and a horizontal grey panel), a world of shapes locked in ethereal conflict is superimposed upon a world of shapes, prone in the relaxations of an uneasy sensuality which is also eternal."[17]

Lewis was being disingenuous in describing the work in this manner. For the canvas, some sixty by forty inches in size, was a monumental and horrifying drama of fallen humanity. The central, red, panel displays a contorting, falling mass of figures in conflict. They collapse from this fiery caldron into a pit of grey, grinning, puppet-like torsos. These figures are by turn muscular and emaciated. The eyes, characteristically, are wide, staring, and empty, the mouths invariably a fixed grimace. It is impossible to see these figures as individuals, as persons. They are marionettes without strings, collapsing in a cacophony of dislocated limbs. Simultaneously they appear to crawl over each other, as if embroiled in some post-mortem orgy. Lewis has taken here a standard theme from his socio-political theory and dressed it in the garb of classical and renaissance iconography. These characters in

Inferno bear the demeanour of Lewis's "mass of people", devoid of individuality, regressing to the irresponsible realms of pre and post "life", returning to nature. They are the masses from his Crowd, now ejected from the here and now of the cityscape, and hurled into an historical netherworld where their true characteristics are revealed naked and raw, where their inconscient desire for the merely animal will be requited. This, for Lewis, was a kind of hell and the iconography of Dante was again appropriate. But this was, in Lewis's account, a curious tragi-comic reality which had nothing to do with the afterlife. It was simply a fact that people desired an irresponsible herd-life, and Inferno was that special hell which Lewis saw the whole of contemporary humanity being condemned to, the hell of life without consciousness and robbed of creativity.

Technically this body of work had much in common with surrealism, and Lewis was a self-confessed admirer of that precursor of the surrealist movement Georgio De Chirico. [18] But Lewis had dismissed the Surrealist movement as early as 1927 when he suggested these artists were merely "the intellectual wing...of the communist party in Paris". [19] In fact surrealist art arrived late in England. While sympathetic artists like Paul Nash were conscious of surrealist activities from the early 1930s, and indeed a work like Harbour and Room of 1932-36, by Nash, reveals a clear parallel with the dream imagery and illogical juxtapositions of objects so characteristic of

some surrealist art, little surrealist activity occurred in England prior to 1935. True, the Mayor Gallery in London displayed some surrealist works as early as 1933, and occasional exhibitions by Surrealists were shown there. But it was not really until David Gascoyne's Short Survey of Surrealism, published in 1935, that the movement was given significant publicity in England. As a movement amongst English artists it naturally fell into competition with the tasteful constructivism of Ben Nicholson and his circle as a competing avant-garde.

Lewis however remained aloof from these contests, and though his fantasy works of this period superficially resemble surrealism he was dismissive of any meaningful affinity. During 1939 he published a curious, reflective and conciliary treatise entitled Wyndham Lewis the Artist. The introduction to this text contained a chapter headed Super-Nature Versus Super-Real in which he categorically disassociated himself with the surrealist groupings. Uniquely Lewis associated surrealist art with staid academicism, he wrote:

> "Under the shadow of Politics, the great movement in the arts celebrated in these pages, bankrupt or refugee, is expiring. "But surrealism - that is a very advanced movement, is it not?" you may demur... Yes, but that is anti-movement. That is merely the road back (Via "advanced" subject matter) to the portals of Burlington House and Mr. Russell Flint... No: surrealism is not the last of a new movement, but the whimsical and grimacing reinstatement of the old - and of the bad-old at that, the "academic"." [20]

Lewis asserted, quite idiosyncratically, that surrealism was a degrading art which was only concerned with the "real", the "matter of fact". He insisted that:

> "Such...is the surrealist ideal. Matter-of-fact nature really, the photograph. Even real watches are stuck on to the pictures by Dali, lest his painted versions should not be real enough. All the interest is in the queerness of the reality chosen... It is psychological, rather than a pictorial, interest that is at work " [21]

There was certainly an atmosphere of defensiveness about these writings, but there remained an important distinction between Lewis and the English surrealists. Lewis insisted that he was a "super-naturalist" which was "the opposite to the super-realist". And by this he meant that his concern was with essences of an ontological order. That is with the timeless, objective, "outside" of human being as opposed to the "Freud infested", irrational subjectivism of the surrealists. "Super-nature is not super-real" he noted, "it is nature transformed by all her latent geometries into something outside the "real" - outside the temporal order - altogether". [22]

The relationship of Lewis's fantastic works of the 1930s to the emergence of an English surrealism, was then, only superficial. Intellectually Lewis remained locked in to his own pessimism and stoical nihilism. Works like One of the Stations of the Dead and Inferno, for all their classical resonances, remain bound to that tragic vision of the mind/body dichotomy and the socio-political insights which emerged from this consciousness.

"Puppets and Natures"

The main body of Lewis's work in the 1930s pursued the theme of "natures and puppets" exploring the distinctions between a cultural elite and the "animal" mass. However, Lewis was nothing if not eclectic in his studies, and a series of paintings from the 1930s continued the satirical aspects of his graphic work and developed an interest in myth and history. His satires continued in works like Two Beach Babies (Fig. 44) of 1933, and Nordic Beach, 1933-36. These were small oils on canvas which repeated themes he consistently explored in his drawings, for example Sea Cave of 1938 and the earlier Beach Scene, a gouache from 1929. Two Beach Babies is an archetypal example of this theme. Two figures, indistinguishable in the simple ovoidal designs of the faces, languishing in the sensual delight of sun and sand. Again, the theme here is the characteristic one of regression. Regression into the child-like delight in bodily satisfactions and animistic play. The mood here, however, is much lighter than in death-filled fantasies like Inferno. These were comic satires, entirely humorous, though self-consciously repeating the admonitions of the "child-cult" Lewis had explored in The Art of Being Ruled. Of more interest were the series of historical paintings Lewis executed through the 1930s. These were not classical "history pictures", but a curious mixture of history, fantasy and myth. Lewis was a voracious reader, and encyclopedic in his study of the human race and human culture. [23] A number of canvases from the early and late 1930s pursued his fascination with

selected cultures. Chief amongst these were Inca and the Birds 1933, Sheiks Wife 1933-36, The Surrender of Barcelona 1936, Landscape with Northmen and Newfoundland of 1936-37. The important thing about these works is that they share elements of satirical invective with the mainstream canvases, describing the elemental, regressive and animistic behaviour of human beings. They pay also a silent homage to cultures which had developed benign authoritarian structures and a commitment to intelligent circumspection. Certainly this was a byproduct of Lewis's wide reading in history and anthropology. He would commonly and frequently cite the examples of Egyptian and early Chinese civilisation in his theoretical texts. [24] They were examples of societies held in check by rigid institutions. Intellectually they aspired to the spatial order rather than the temporal.

It is known, also, that Inca and the Birds (Fig. 45) was a fantastic description of an important Inca rite of passage, which was described in William H. Prescott's History of the Conquest of Peru. [25] Prescott's evocative and enlightening text tells of an important, symbolic rite in the establishment of the sun-god-sovereign:

> "The Inca asserted his claims as a superior being by assuming a pomp in his manner of living well calculated to impose on his people. His dress was of the finest wool of the Vicuna, richly dyed, and ornamented with a profusion of gold and precious stones. Round his head was wreathed a turban of many-coloured folds, called the Ilantu, with a tasselled fringe...while two feathers of a rare and curious bird, called the coraquenque; placed upright in it, were the distinguished insignia of royalty. The birds from which these feathers were obtained were found in a desert country among the mountains; and

> it was death to destroy or to take them, as they were reserved for the exclusive purpose of supplying the royal head-gear. Every succeeding monarch was provided with a new pair of these plumes, and his credulous subjects fondly believed that only two individuals of the species had ever existed to furnish the simple ornament for the diadem of the Incas". [26]

Lewis's painting Inca and the Birds, has a clear affinity with this scenario to the extent of illustrating the two exotic birds in the centre-right of the canvas. The stylised figure of the Inca and his attendants is set against an architectonic background typical of Lewis's work during this period. Again quite typically the colours are earthen and visceral, accentuating the materiality of the action. All, that is, except for an intense crimson band in the top, left-centre of the painting. This identifies the figure it adorns as the Inca himself, for as Prescott notes "Round his head (the Inca) was wreathed a turban of many-coloured folds...with a tasselled fringe, like that worn by the prince, but of a scarlet color". [27] To a great extent then Lewis offered an imaginative transcription of Prescott's history, tinged here only with a moderate satire as the Inca displays the characteristic ovoid features of the thirties puppets. But Lewis's interest in Inca civilisation was as much political as symbolic and emblematic. For the civilisation which Prescott described contained many of those features Lewis sought to sponsor in The Art of Being Ruled and the political texts of the 1930s.

The Peru which fascinated Lewis was both rigidly authoriatrian and benignly judicious. Prescott wrote:

> "The people were still further divided into bodies of fifty, one hundred, five hundred, and a thousand, each with an officer having general supervision over those beneath, and the higher ones possessing, to a certain extent, authority in matters of police. Lastly the whole empire was distributed into sections or departments of ten thousand inhabitants, with a governor over each, from the Inca nobility who had control over the curacas and other territorial officers in the district. There were also regular tribunals of justice, consisting of magistrates in each of the towns or small communities, with jurisdiction over petty offences, while those of a graver character were carried before superior judges, usually the governors of rulers of the district. These judges all held their authority and received their support from the crown...there were important provisions for the security of justice. A committee of visitors patrolled the kingdom at certain times to investigate the character and conduct of the magistrates; and any neglect or violation of duty was punished in the most exemplary manner...so that the monarch seated in the centre of his dominions, could look abroad, as it were, to their most distant extremities, and review and rectify any abuses in the administration of the law".[28]

The sense of hierarchy is complete here, social relations exist spatially and are concrete. They embody order, and a kind of justice which to the pessimistic misanthropy and "classical" conservatism which Lewis displayed, would be the best possible of political environments. It was an environment also which sponsored rigid social divisions and a clear place for the artist:

> "Every Peruvian of the lower class was a husbandsman, and...was expected to provide for his own support by the cultivation of his land. A small proportion of the community, however, was instructed in mechanical arts, - some of them of the more elegant kind, subservient to the purposes of luxury and ornament. The demand for these was chiefly limited to the sovereign and his court...".[29]

These passages were almost a perfect correspondent to Lewis's own political and social theory. They describe authority and order, they allow a privileged position for

the artist, and even more fundamentally they give prime authority to the intellect:

> "It was the Inca nobility, indeed, who constituted the real strength of the Peruvian monarchy. Attached to their prince by ties of consanquinity, they had common sympathies and...common interests with him. Distinguished by a peculiar dress and insignia, as well as by language and blood, from the rest of the community, they were never confounded with the other tribes and nations... After their individuality as a peculiar people... They possessed, moreover, an intellectual pre-eminence, which, no less than their statutes, gave them authority with the people. Indeed, it may be said to have been the principle foundation of their authority". [30]

Prescott's personal assessment of Inca civilisation would have appeared entirely appropriate to Lewis as he witnessed the "disintegration" and "decay" of liberal democracy in Western Europe;

> "Thus, by degrees, and without violence, arose the great fabric of the Peruvian empire, composed of numerous independent and even hostile tribes, yet, under the influence of a common religion, common language, and common government, knit together as one nation, animated by a spirit of love for its institutions and devoted loyalty to its sovereign". [31]

Here was a civilisation which could be seen to embody, in part, the political, social and intellectual desires of Lewis, it stood as an exemplary alternative to contemporary Europe.

By the 1930s Lewis was consistently declaiming the need for real change in society. Generally this was framed against a protest regarding the decay in "Anglosaxon" civilisation, and would incorporate specific complaints about the standardisation of cultural products. A manuscript entitled Lecture on Freedom, probably from the late 1930s, bemoans the collapse of literary standards:

> "I am not alone in believing that the Cinema as it exists today, is a disaster for White Civilisation. It is a disaster for taste and intelligence. In a less spectacular way, the Book World is following suit. With the recent mass organisation of the Book Trade, we are heading for a situation which will be identical with that with which we are familiar in the cinema. A Book will mean the same thing as a Film - its presence in the book-shop windows will be a guarantee of its conformity with the same standards as confer fame and fortune upon Clarke Gable and Dolores del Rio". [32]

The manuscript continues to place the blame for this cultural decline on the very processes of democracy:

> "That these conditions are the inevitable result of Universal Sufferage and Universal Education, as we have practised them in Anglosaxony, is undeniable". [33]

And the final coup de grace reveals not only Lewis's conservatism, but the system of values which would allow him to see, in the Peruvian civilisation of the Incas, a worthy society;

> "With the vanishing of the great landed society in England we have no bulwark, of inherited taste and intelligence, to stand against this tide... [34]

Lewis's historical and mythological canvases then were subtle reflections of these developing political commitments.

There is a temptation to reduce these diverse canvases to mere fancy. Works like Inca and the Birds, The Surrender of Barcelona, Departure of a Princess from Chaos and especially Landscape with Northmen and the melodramatic Newfoundland seem obtuse and whimsical. Lewis himself called these works, and the designs contemporary with them, "fragments I amuse myself within the intervals of my literary work". [35] But these paintings contain elements of satire which link them to the mainstream theme

in Lewis's project, the censorial description of humanity in action as puppets engaged in a melodramatic play. This would certainly be the case in Newfoundland, and to some extent in the more sober Landscape with Northmen. Moreover these paintings also pay a discreet homage to those artists whom Lewis most admired. The Surrender of Barcelona (Fig. 46), yet another history painting linked to Prescott's writings, [36] has an obvious resonance with Velasquez's inimitable war painting The Surrender of Breda. Simultaneously, in a painting like this, Lewis will return to his satirical invective. The array of armoured soldiers in the foreground of the canvas being archetypal puppets, men who behave, indeed resemble and manifestly are, machines. This of course, flatly contradicted Velasquez's display of distinct personality, and human magnanimity. Typically, Lewis was at once admiring of the qualities he saw in this art and, more broadly, these cultures, and admonishing of their frailty.

However, despite the intersecting, often contradictory, themes in these paintings, there remains a distinct sense in which Lewis was evoking the promise of stability implicit in a mind-culture. Inca and the Birds, in particular, was an oblique reference to a culture and society, where authorities were sacrosanct, "intellectual" values predominated, order was guaranteed, and the artist was offered a special role within a stable hierarchy. Social relations were such that those who were "natures" could aspire to fulfillment, while the "puppets" would find

contentment within a "well ordered herd life". Here was the "classical", spatial, division of the social world. Authoritative, stable, and like the fundamental human essence which Lewis envisaged, unchanging. Clearly, in these historical and myth-orientated paintings there was more than a trace of fantasy and wish-fulfillment. But fundamentally they subverted the equivocations and compromises of Lewis's actual political world. And in all their subtlety they propose an alternative freely available, indeed ascendant, in European politics during the 1930s, the alternative of fascism.

"Holding the Mirror Up to Politics"

Actual political trajectories in Lewis's drawing and painting were consistently avoided. Indeed he insisted, in another context, "There is no "left" and no "right" in the universe of art". [37] However he could also complain that "The political necessities underneath the surface are perpetually interfering, magnetically or otherwise, with artistic creation... [38] And it is clear that "underneath the surface" an insistent political dimension informed both the strategy and content of Lewis's art. Yet the relationship, here, between politics and art, was subtle and variable. Lewis's art was "political" in as much as it consistently repeated the themes and sub-themes of his socio-cultural attitudes, as expressed in the principal polemical texts of the 1920s and 1930s. However the

repetition of these themes, "artistically", involved of necessity, mediations and transformations which rendered them different in kind from political rhetoric. The drawings and paintings of the 1930s are equivalents to the politics of that period, but they are so as negotiated emblems, symbolically restating, and hence redefining, the political attitudes Lewis held.

An interesting example of this phenomenon occurred in a series of portrait heads Lewis completed in 1932. These were exhibited in the Lefevre Galleries during the October of that year.[39] These works were exclusively naturalisitc, indeed almost traditional. In his preface to the exhibition catalogue Lewis stated;

> "...this display of classic draughtsmanship does not signify in the least that I have repudiated the pictorial and plastic experiments with which my name has been mainly associated...there is a further reason for the traditional character of thirty drawings. They one and all set out to be purely imitational - they are likenesses of people."[40]

The mimetic qualities of these drawings cannot be denied, but in at least one sense they bear traces of Lewis's political demeanour. The final paragraph of the catalogue preface reads:

> "I move with a familiarity natural to me amongst eyeless and hairless abstractions. But I am also interested in human beings".[41]

Contrasted here are the depersonalised "monads"[42] of Lewis's abstract fantasies, with the "personalities" he chooses to depict in his portraiture. Consequently he was playing off the "natures" against the "puppets". Indeed the very title of the exhibition was loaded with this

discreet value system. These were "Thirty Personalities", and clearly a central thesis of The Art of Being Ruled surfaced in this exhibition. Lewis chose to depict a range of individuals, associated with the arts; Augustus John, Constant Lambert, Naomi Mitchison (Fig. 47), with the publishing world; Desmond Harmsworth, Viscount Rothermere (Fig. 48), with the academic world; The Rev. M.C. D'Arcy S.J., Dr. Meyrick Booth, and even prominent "heroic" types like Wing Commander A.H. Orlebar. Some opportunist motive must be conceded here for Lewis was in desperate poverty throughout this period and was consistently complaining, in private correspondence, of having to undertake more remunerative works. [43] However, there remains a clear sense in which these individuals were special. In the preface noted above Lewis wrote "...every unit of this big bag of thirty is in some way remarkable". [44]

This idea of the special individual, in some way marked out from the mass of people, was a consistent element of Lewis's theory. It initially surfaced in the neo-Nietzschean rhetoric of his Wild Body stories, continued in the artistic polemics of his Vorticist manifestoes, and was completed in the theorising incorporated in The Art of Being Ruled. For example, having declared, in The Art of Being Ruled, that the mass of people were incapable of "freedom", by which Lewis meant the exercise of a creative and intellectual responsibility, Lewis produced the example of Henry Ford as an authoritative personality;

> "This point is well brought out by Ford, the motor-magnate, in his interesting autobiography. He there affirms, with an admirable candour, that a great deal of humanitarian sentiment is wasted on the "terrible mechanical conditions" under which his employees work. He insists that from long experience he is convinced that they ask nothing better than to be given a quite mechanical and "soulless" task. He himself, he says, could not bear it for a week... But they not only can bear it, they like it... The testimony of such a very humane and intelligent man as Ford, with his vast experience of industrial conditions, cannot be disregarded".[45]

Hence the individuals in Thirty Personalities were set off against the foils that were the suppliants and puppets of Lewis's abstract paintings. They were the aristocratic and powerful intelligences, classically authoritative, noble in countenance and dignified in bearing.

In a sense a hierarchy was established and given symbolic presence in Lewis's paintings and drawings of the 1930s. The very nadir of this hierarchy consisted of the earthbound, plebian multitude represented in semi-abstract works like One of the Stations of the Dead. These were an "animal" mass, intuitive in their reasonings, instinctual in their actions. Their very communality, a condemnation, binding them to the distaff mentality, damning them to the eternal hell of "being" without "living". Beyond this, the historical fantasies of this period offered images of mythological heroic types. Landscape with Northmen, and in particular, The Surrender of Barcelona, depict races and groups discovering the essential "self" in existence by heroically contesting individuality through competitive action with the "other". Lewis, the intellectual, naturally satirises these figures.

While they are more worthy and "virtuous" than the supine mass, their actions are purely combatitive, without a creative edge. Hence these figures are heroic but mechanical, the nature of their actions in the world remains elementary and they are merely aspirants to consciousness, failed "natures". Finally, towards the apex of this hierarchy lie the "remarkable" personalities of Lewis's portrait studies, features fully formed in the likeness of individuals, characters with the strength and personality to form an identity and hence aspire to selfhood. These were the aristocracy of Lewis's age, and the power brokers in Lewis's culture-set. Socially and politically they were, in Lewis's theory, the embodiment of the elect.

Yet even here Lewis was impelled, personally, to resist the authority of this elect. To create his own "selfhood" through a combat with these significant others. This he does through the subtlest of methods. Thirty personalities was a flattering set of drawings. From the visionary heroics of Orlebar to the grim determination of Rothermere, the subjects were exclusively shown as noble, classical types. But they remain dominated, bound as it were, by the strength and power of Lewis's line. For despite the uncharacterisitc softenings in these drawings, displayed in the shading which functions as a strictly academic element of his technique here, the controlling power of Lewis's line remains sacrosanct. In some degree Lewis's use of line was simply a formal devise allied to his "external" approach and his determination to revive the "classical".

But these devises masked political and intellectual intentions in his work. They were the covert expression, in the world of form, of his political authoritarianism and personal ambitions. Towards the very end of the 1930s Lewis discussed the qualities of linear work in a short essay, The Role of Line in Art.[46]

Lewis began this essay with an attack of French Impressionism, citing that movement as a beginning to the contemporary decline in artistic standards. Because Impressionism invoked a crisis where the clear outlines of nature were hidden in effusions of atmospheric mists, the controlling relationship between man and environment was broken asunder. The artist reported the flux of nature rather than organised nature. In this way a shift in the relationship between "Man" and the world was made manifest. One which parallelled the shift from a classical to a romantic consciousness, and paved the way for contemporary decline. "Now the whole theory of French Impressionism" wrote Lewis, "was by way of being antagonistic to form".[47] And he continued:

> "The Impressionist Movement as a whole did unquestionably serve as an ideal hideout for incompetents... And our amateur world of today is the creation of French Impressionism".[48]

But this opening salvoe was only a preparation for the main theme which set out to eulogize "form" and the dominant character of line. The important thing about a linear art was, as Lewis noted, that "Line implies mastery".[49] Line itself was a mechanism wherein the artist could control nature, give order to the chaos of existence, and

create a sculptural stasis in the temporal, impermanent world. Line was a correlate, indeed a manifestation, of power. He wrote:

> "But if this something that is most easily recognised today, perhaps, in linear work, is not merely an aptitude for line, what is it? It is rather a matter of the artist's relation to the world about him, and the way he lays hold of it - or doesn't. You may dominate your visual milieu - discipline it and legislate for it..." [50]

Given this aesthetic then the artist can become legislator. Here the sub-romantic idealism of the modernist mentality was realised, the values of the artist determine and shape the exterior world. And, most importantly these phenomena are shaped through the actual act of creative artistic endeavour:

> "In any given scene, or object, once you control its lines you control it". [51]

Clearly Lewis was not unconscious of these characteristics of his art. The power to dominate, control and order were key aspects of his drawings which extended beyond the aesthetic into the world of political action. Consequently the hierarchy of "being" in Lewis's work of the 1930s was completed, surrepticiously, in these drawings. If Thirty Personalities were a sub-section of a culturally exclusive elect, then Lewis had, in the linear arrangements of the works themselves, demonstrated his mastery and control over the group and hence his dominance. These were graphic examples of the triumph of the will over the most worthy of Lewis's contemporaries.

Clearly, at one level, Lewis was realising in these works the ambitions of his early career. The construction

of a cohesive sense of "self", of individuality, through a continuous contest with the other. But more importantly, at this stage, the motivations of Lewis's creativity took on subtle political trajectories. The art of this period became a correlate to his public associations with British and European Fascism during the 1930s.

Lewis came to bitterly regret his associations with the politics of the extreme right, principally because he understood the unpopularity of these politics in the late 1930s to have contributed to his personal isolation in the art world. An abandoned fragment of manuscript, written for his autobiography Rude Assignment, complained:

> "Seventeen years ago I wrote a book giving an account of what was at the time a completely unknown movement, called the National Socialist German Workers Party... Even since then I have been called a "fascist"... But "fascist", "crypto", and such are like the cries and counter cries of fans at a baseball or boxing match. What is behind this however is a sport far more barbarous and deadly than any disgracing the Roman circus, swinging up into periodic orgies of bloodshed." [32]

The book Lewis spoke of here was Hitler, published in 1931. It was a personal appraisal of Hitler, the man, and the Nazi party as a whole, as he had observed them during his visit to Berlin late in 1930. This book, along with Left Wings over Europe of 1936, and Count Your Dead, They are Alive of 1937, presented Lewis's most public affirmation of rightist politics. They were disastrous works, sometimes incoherent, littered with internal contradictions and wholly devoid of any competent interpretative procedures. In part this was a calculated strategy on Lewis's part, for he was consistently cautious

of the possibility of critical classification. Early in the Hitler book he informed his audience:

> "...it is as an exponent - not as a critic nor yet as advocate - of German Nationalsocialism, or Hitlerism, that I come forward."[53]

And this insistence, that he reported as a neutral whose role was to explain the given situation, was a characteristic literary devise of Lewis's, designed to mask his sympathies. More often in this respect, Lewis might present a political position which he clearly condones, and then proceed to ironicise that position, making it appear ridiculous. This narrative schizophrenia was an important strategy in Lewis's polemics, for it allowed him to simultaneously hold a position, and to deny its implications and consequences. More importantly it permitted him a type of freedom which he understood to be fundamental for the creative artist, freedom from categorisation.

Yet Lewis had, in fact, previously confessed to the nature of his political profile. In The Art of Being Ruled Lewis remarked:

> "I am not a communist; if anything, I favour some form of fascism rather than communism".[54]

Indeed the tenor of Lewis's polemical texts indicates that he saw communism as a genuine threat, the root of a contemporary attack on civilisation, and a fundamental cause of social disruption, he wrote:

> "The child obsession, the flight from responsibility, would naturally result from the decay of the parent, in the old sense of a symbol of authority. In a communist state, where children were taken from the parents at birth to a public creche,

> the state becoming the "breadwinner" and the effective centre of authority or All-father, as it were, the parents would never be "parents" at all."[55]

The attack here was twofold, firstly it directed a salvoe towards the disintegration of traditional authority, based on the central power of the father who functioned, in Lewis's theory, as an enlightened guardian and example. Communism was seen to produce a centralised authority, the state, which, in order to control the populace, created a standardised, uncritical "child" as the human prototype for the millenium. Hence the example of the independent authoritative "father" was dispelled by the cosetting "mother" that was the communist state itself. Secondly this communist ethic created precisely those social ills Lewis consistently negated, the child-cult, the deification of the amateur, the prominence of feminist principles and attitudes, homosexuality, and the disruption of traditional values. Consequently Lewis began to promote Fascism as an alternative:

> "The disciplined <u>fascist</u> party in Italy can be taken as representing the new and healthy type of "freedom"."[56]

and more categorically:

> "... for anglo-saxon countries as they are constituted to-day some modified form of fascism would probably be the best".[57]

Notably he promoted this idea within a context of argument and counter-argument regarding the changing shape of liberal democracy, the promise and failure of communist principles, and only the contingent possibility of fascism as classical renaissance. In this way a number of

equivocations were embedded in those arguments which sponsor the fascist alternative. But fundamentally Lewis saw in fascism the possibility of an authoritarian leadership, based on masculine principles, which would regain the ground lost to romanticism, feminism and communism.

While in 1926 Lewis could promote Mussolini as a model for for this authoritarian ideal, by 1930 he was fully convinced of the merits of Hitler's National Socialism. This was the subject of his most forthright sponsorship of fascist politics which occurred in the text simply entitled Hitler. Lewis had visited Berlin in the November of 1930 in order to facilitate a German translation of Tarr. During this period he undertook some observations of the German political scene and agreed to publish these as five separate articles, in the journal Time and Tide. [58] By the spring of 1931 these had been worked up into the Hitler book. Lewis's actual stay in Berlin was very short and his account can hardly be said to have been well informed. Indeed as Frederick Voight, the German correspondent for The Manchester Guardian, said:

> "It is quite clear that Mr. Wyndham Lewis has simply been stuffed with Nazi propaganda...". [59]

And certainly the tenor of the book displayed a clear sympathy with the Nazi viewpoint, and the various fictions which formed the core of Nazi ideology.

Lewis began by introducing his readers to the decadence of German society. Curiously this is really the only interesting piece of writing in the entire book, and

tends to reflect the stacatto rythms and oblique associations of his Vorticist prose. Describing Berlin's vice-ridden underbelly Lewis wrote:

> "Berlin Westerns and all it means was thrown up by the War out of the earth's bowels, as it were, from sweated cellars, traps and gutters... The final touch came about two years ago. It is the electrical drum-fire, the high-voltage light-bombardment from all sides, that is the finishing stroke. A great campaign, with the popular label Berlin im Licht! was inaugurated by the Asphaltpresse - that was somewhere in 1928, I think. The spurious germanism of the colossal Wagnerian Vaterland of Kempinski, along with a thousand other night-circuses, Negertanz palaces, nakt-balleten, flegellation-bars, and sad wells of super-masculine lonliness, shining dives for the sleek stock-jobbing sleuth relaxing, and so forth, did indeed most luridly light themselves up and flaunt their names in fashionable electricity... No city has anything on it as regards the stark suggestion of being the Hamptstadt of Vice, the excelsior Eldorado of a sexish bottom-wagging most arch Old Nick sunk in a costly and succulent rut..." [60]

This extraordinary piece of writing is interesting not only because it parallels Vorticist fiction, but because the introduction of the mechanical, in this case electricity, is itself related to decay and decadence. That trajectory in Lewis's Vorticist aesthetic which related the mechanical to the decline in the sense of a fully realised "self", was surreptitiously repeated in this passage. Men behave as machines because, in the mass, they are condemned to this action. This is their tragedy. But a political dynamic enfolds this tragedy. The mechanical, which was itself a decay, was to be superceded by the will of those enlightened authorities who might reintroduce the social space for the contemplative, creative intellect, the metaphysical compositor of Being.

Consequently, in contrast to this image of a culture in decline Lewis isolated the asceticism of National Socialism. Nazi youth was consistently viewed as upright, morally pure, personally austere and intellectually enlightened:

> "But the young German politician, I need hardly remark, does not go to such resorts...these Bars and Dancings, with their Kaffir bands, are for him the squinting, misbegotten paradise of the Schiebertum... Sooner or later he would desire to...roll this nigger-dance luxury-spot up like a verminous carpet, and drop it into the spree...that is the attitude of the ascetic of politics - an asceticism not without its nobility, one that is little understood". [61]

It is hardly necessary to point out the correspondence between the image of the "verminous carpet", and that centrepiece of Nazi propaganda which related Jewish ghettos to rat-filled sewers. But this image of the noble ascetic aryan-type was one which clearly fascinated Lewis:

> "Their hefty young street-fighting warriors have not the blood-shot eyes and furtive manners of the political gutter-gunman, but the personal neatness, and clear blue eyes, of the police! The Anglo-Saxon would feel reassured at once in the presence of these straightforward young pillars of the law. Everything is strictly legal...fair, square and above board to the letter". [62]

All of these worthy virtues, too, were invested, as Lewis noted, in the character and personality of Adolf Hitler.

It is noteworthy that Lewis's assessment of Hitler as a character ran counter to those opinions expressed in most contemporary journals. Even in the early 1930s, most newspapers, the clear exception being Rothermere's Daily Mail, were treating the phenomenon of National Socialism with some alarm. While a correspondent like Frederick Voight of the Manchester Guardian, was actively hostile to Hitler's activities and saw in National Socialism a genuine

threat to peace and democracy. Lewis, however, variously described Hitler as a "very typical German 'man of the people'", [63] a "Man of peace", [64] "as even his very appearance suggests" he noted "there is nothing eccentric about him". [65]

Indeed throughout this book Lewis saw the real threat to German, and Western, society, coming from the development of communist politics on the one hand, and the irresponsible activities of international finance capital on the other. Communism was a heresy for Lewis precisely because it required, as he understood it, the breakdown of responsible individualism and all that went with this process, he wrote:

> "The Class-doctrine - as opposed to the Race-doctrine - demands a clean slate. Everything must be wiped off slick. A sort of colourless, featureless, automaton - temporally two-dimensional - is what is required by the really fanatical Marxist autocrat. Nothing but a mind without backgrounds, without any spiritual depth, a felt mirror for propaganda, a parrot-soul to give back the catchwords an ego without reflection, in a word, a sort of Peter Pan Machine - the adult child - will be tolerated". [66]

Interestingly Lewis has offered here a clear description of those figures which haunt his abstract fantasies of the 1930s. And it was in the Hitler book that the political dimension of these images was fully articulated. But Lewis was not simply an anti-communist. His hostility to the decline of individualism was complicated by his attachment to the romantic vision of the artist as privileged "seer" spurned by the contemporary world, consequently he was also hostile to capitalism:

> "A `sex-war', an `Age-war' a `Colour-line-war', are all equally promoted by Big Business to cheapen labour and to enslave men more and more. I do not like the present Capitalist system. It seems to me to be a very bad system indeed. I believe that it brings into anything it touches something destructive and evil".[67]

The attraction of Fascism therefore was, in part, the promise of an idealised individual freedom:

> "The creation of individuals, who, according to the Greek Conception of Citizenship, are "conscious of the identity of interest between themselves and their race" - that is the task that the Hitler Movement has set itself".[68]

A recipe for stability, authority and order was established here which was irresistible to that aspect of Lewis's character which required a stable, hierarchical social world in order to set the artist free.

For Lewis, Hitler stood at the head of a popular movement which was actively, and successfully opposed to communism on the one hand, and international finance capital on the other. It offered the promise of true individuals who nevertheless understood their proper role in society. And it was manifestly determined to correct the irresponsible actions of finance capital. Forcing capital to recognise the authority of the nation and the race, and hence take actions which would be to the benefit of a benign state. It was a measure of Lewis's naivety that he was astonished that the majority of western politicians, newspaper magnates and informed intellectuals should view these policies, and Hitler, as a threat. In consequence the Hitler book set out to present National Socialism to the

British public in a manner which traversed the border between explication and advocation.

Such a commitment led Lewis into an extraordinary interpretation of the political situation in Germany. He insisted, for example, that a conspiracy existed between communist groups and the German police forces to suppress National Socialism through the strategy of orchestrated street violence. He consistently viewed Hitler and his supporters as the representatives of decency and reason who were nevertheless the victims of aggression from the elected government. Hitler's politics were simply a response to the crippling and unjust war-debt imposed upon the German nation by the allies following the Treaty of Versailles. While the issue of anti-semitism was comically glossed over as a curious Germanic idiosyncracy.

Clearly Lewis's account of Hitler and his politics was peculiarly one-dimensional. It functioned, in 1931, as a sanitised vision of National Socialism, made palatable to the British public. Voight's claim, that Lewis was simply a mouthpiece for Nazi propagandists is certainly borne out when the principal themes of Lewis's Hitler book are examined. However a significant theme within this book, existing largely as an undercurrent to the text, helps explain Lewis's willingness to ascent to the Nazi world-view. Towards the end of Hitler he intoned:

> "On principle - for his is a deliberately "catastrophic" philosophy - the communist views everything in the darkest colours. Everything for him is difficult, and incredibly bitter and black. His is the romantic, the stormy palette... The Hitlerist

> dream is full of an immipent classical serenity - leisure and abundance".[69]

Obviously it was the classicist in Lewis, that was attracted to Hitler. For Hitler represented, within Lewis's vision, the manifestation of a popularised classicism. A classicism descending from the intellectual and abstract sphere, and emerging, rightly, in the socio-political world. And because this classicism would tame Demos by investing power in the single, authoritative, personality, it would produce the space in which the creative artist could thrive. As Lewis had previously indicated in The Art of Being Ruled:

> "...to get some sort of peace to enable us (artists) to work, we should seek the most powerful and stable authority that can be devised...for anglo-saxon countries as they are constituted today, some modified form of fascism would probably be best".[70]

Effectively then fascism would recreate that continuous thread between social form and artistic form, between civilisation and virtuous art, which had been torn apart in the chaos of modernity.

Given the depth of this commitment within Lewis's theory as a whole, it is unsurprising that he continued to be sympathetic to Hitler and German Fascism long after many British fellow-travellers had renounced the creed. In both 1936 and 1937 Lewis published texts, Left Wings over Europe and Count Your Dead they are Alive respectively, which sponsored appeasment with Hitler, and continued to suggest that fascism was a reasonable response to contemporary conditions. In particular he saw fascism as the only real alternative to a creeping communism. This was in fact the

principal theme of Lewis's only piece of writing which had a distinctly party-political nature. The short article "Left Wings" and the C3 Mind which Lewis wrote for Oswald Mosely's British Union Quarterly in January 1937.

Lewis completed two drawings of Mosely, one in 1934 (Fig. 50) and the second work in 1937 (Fig. 51). This first was a commission for The London Mercury, it appeared next to a drawing of Sir Stafford Cripps, then in opposition and popularly viewed as "ultra-leftist", under the byline "Two Dictators". The second Lewis undertook in 1937, the year of his article in Mosely's fascist quarterly. This was a drawing in the tradition of Thirty Personalities. Mosely is handsome, alert, enquiring and dramatically poised on the brink of some gesture or action. He clearly takes his place amongst those elected to the status of "natures".

In "Left Wings" and C3 Mind Lewis further disclosed his sympathy with fascist politics, and the audience it appealed to. Typically he opened the piece with a disclaimer:

> "I am a great believer in the Balance of Power, in the realm of Public Opinion... When I see such an immensely one-sided distribution of Opinion as exists at present in Great Britain, I cannot help asking myself how it comes that all the dough has got to one end of the scales..." [71]

Lewis claimed, then, that he merely sought to redress the balance. He was, by his own assertion offering an alternative to the "...overwhelming "Left Wing" orthodoxy prevailing among the "thinking" section of the English Public". [72] He was, by this time, prepared to be unequivocal in his loathing of the left, "Marxism is an

enormous evil" [73] he informed his audience. More compromisingly he offered a vision of the fascist as heroic saviour:

> "You as a Fascist stand for the small trader against the chain-store; for the peasant against the usurer; for the nation, great or small, against the super-state; for personal business against Big Business; for the craftsman against the Machine; for the creator against the middleman; for all that prospers by individual effort and creative toil, against all that prospers in the abstract air of High Finance or the theoretical ballyhoo of Internationalism". [74]

There is something almost absurdly sincere in this passage of Lewis's. It was one of the few unguarded comments he made in his polemical writings, and is the more astonishing because it was not masked in irony. There is a pleading here, a demand for respect and commitment, which reflected the desperate threat Lewis sensed in 1937. The threat of yet another war, this time against the political force he felt most sympathy with.

From this passage it is clear that Lewis identified fascism as a political force opposed to the enfeebling processes of standardisation. Those things Lewis hated most, and admired most, confronted each other. Consistently the fascist is identified with the small, independent, creative individual, against the impersonal, mechanical, abstract dynamo of the monolithic state. Both communism, and finance capital, were cited here as enemies. And, by implication, the fascist bette noirs of the red and the jew were indicted.

What makes Lewis's commitment here exceptional, is that he was supporting Mosely's aspirations against a

background of a steep decline in public support for British fascism. Mosely had founded his "New Party" in the March of 1931. By the end of 1932 the new "British Union of Fascists" had a membership of 5,000 individuals. The true high point of fascist activity in Britain occurred in 1934 when Mosely's party could boast upwards of 40,000 members, and had a great deal many more sympathisers. However the Olympia Riots of 1934 brought considerably unwanted publicity to Mosely's Blackshirts, or the absurdly named "Biff Boys" as they were known. This association with thuggery and intolerance began a rapid decline in Mosely's appeal. Coupled with whisperings of war against fascist Germany, which Lewis himself was conscious of, the promise of a British fascism had ceased to be a realistic option.

Only late in the decade did Lewis attempt to extricate himself from the political position his peers now perceived him to hold. This occurred through the publication of a series of conciliatory texts. A clear retreat from the sympathetic response to the fascist cause was signalled in these works. And they were almost certainly occasioned by the growing awareness of the inevitability of an anti-fascist war. Lewis obviously began to feel threatened by the consequences of his previous affiliations. Late in the November of 1937, Lewis confessed in private correspondence:

> "Look here, as I am among friends, I will tell you something. I have been much deceived in politicians, and I will never write another line for or against any of them".[75]

The urgency in the tone of this paragraph indicates the very real fear Lewis held with regards to possible incrimination as a fascist fellow-traveller. In consequence, between 1937 and 1939, olive branches were offerred to those individuals he had most offended. The first and most obvious act of contrition was the publication of Blasting and Bombardiering in 1937.

Blasting and Bombardiering was a volume of autobiography covering Lewis's life from the Vorticist years until the mid-1920s. Here, he enthusiastically discussed his adventures amongst the avant garde, reported on his role as a gunner and artist during the First World War, and made much of his associations with figures like Captain Guy Baker, T.E. Lawrence, and the "Men of 1914" Pound, Eliot and Joyce. He also offerred some conciliatory gestures to his enemies, most notably the Sitwells:

> "We are two good old enemies, Edith and I inseparables in fact. I do not think I should be exaggerating if I described myself as Miss Edith Sitwell's favourite enemy".[76]

This jocular tone continued throughout the text and successfully reduced the very real antagonism between Lewis and these dilettante artist figures, to a mere game. "Edith", Lewis joked, "is a bad loser. When worsted in argument, she throws Queensbery Rules to the winds. She once called me Percy".[77] In many ways, of course, Lewis's feuds with his contemporaries was an extended comedy, but like his Wild Body sketches it was comedy which contained a serious edge. In Blasting and Bombardiering Lewis camoflaged his social criticism as a wilful parlour game.

More significantly Lewis began to tackle the issue of his political profile here, and offered some subtle redefinitions of his position. The book closed its autobiographical account in 1926 with the publication of The Art of Being Ruled. Lewis wrote of this work:

> "The title of the book speaks for itself. I had attacked the problem of government. But it is important to notice that it was advice to "the ruled" that was tendered, not to those who do the ruling. It was instruction for the people in the gentle art of keeping the politician at bay. Next was what would be called a "Left Wing" book... I am trying to save people from being "ruled" too much...".[78]

Here was an ingenious reconstruction of the themes in The Art of Being Ruled which completes the circle and turns it from a sophisticated crypto-conservative critique into a "Left Wing" book. Establishing this distance between himself and an increasingly discredited fascism was obviously important for Lewis by this period. Indeed the very introduction to Blasting and Bombardiering made his new position clear:

> "In 1937 everybody's talking about "communism" versus "fascism". I am not one of those who believe that either "communism" or "fascism" are in themselves solutions of anything".[79]

Hence Lewis assumed an alternative persona. He was no longer an individual advocating "some form of fascism" as a proper government for anglo-saxon countries, but a figure sponsoring a reasonable middle course. Naturally this persona was available to him because the strategic equivocations of The Art of Being Ruled left open a multiplicity of possible readings of the text.

equivocations of The Art of Being Ruled left open a multiplicity of possible readings of the text.

Lewis completed his retreat from fascist associations with two publications in 1939. The grotesquely titled The Jews: Are they Human?, and a book published after his physical and geographic retreat to North America, The Hitler Cult. Despite its title the first work was, in fact, opposed to the doctrines of anti-semitism. Lewis himself had never been a hostile anti-semite. Certainly he displayed none of the outrageous intolerance which Pound became infamous for, nor did he indulge in the subtly pejorative intonations of Eliot. At worst Lewis would occasionally, in The Art of Being Ruled and Hitler, condemn the practice of usury. Given the association, in fascist tracts, between usury and the Jewish race some traces of anti-semitism might be implied. However, in The Jews: Are they Human?, Lewis was at pains to renounce anti-semitism in all its forms, and to announce his tolerance of the Jewish race. At times this could be downright embarrassing:

> "My contribution to this discussion, although denuded of all irrelevant emotionality, is of a very positive nature. It is on the side of the Jew. I am not "Pro-Jew" - not a partisan. But I respect the Jewish intelligence. I have no atavistic residue of dislike whatever for the Jew. I like him as well as I like anybody else...".[80]

Small praise indeed. But in his convoluted, undulating analysis of "The Jewish Problem" Lewis concluded that "the jews were human after all", [81] and if this was hardly a spectacular affirmation, neither was it inconsistent with his previous attitudes to this issue. However it did

the democratic middle ground occupied by the allies, and further distancing himself from the stigma of fascism.

A final surrender was signalled with the publication of The Hitler Cult and How it Will End late in 1939. In fact the work was made public after Lewis had left for North America. By this time Lewis was fully prepared to renounce Hitlerism as a political creed, the book has a confessional and apologetic tone:

> "As one of the only "neutrals" Germany has ever had in this country... I begin by announcing that I am no longer neutral".[82]

It is natural that Lewis would insist again that Hitler had simply been an exposition of the German scene by a "neutral". By 1939 however it was no longer possible to avoid the consequences of such neutrality. Lewis therefore insisted that his works were designed to assuage the possibility of another destructive, European war:

> "I adopted "neutrality". It was because another war like the last one is hardly an event lightly to repeat".[83]

There was considerable truth in this explanation. Lewis had been deeply affected by the First World War and regarded it as the ultimate human folly. However his personal appeasement with Hitler and his policies ran much deeper. Hitler and fascism were crude representatives of Lewis's world view. They were the lowest common denominator of his specialised "classicism", the popularisation, and politicisation, of his complex theory. It was for this reason he was prepared to sponsor Hitler in Germany, and a "modified form of fascism" in anglo-saxon

countries. But it was pragmatism, in 1939, that made him renounce this affiliation.

Consequently, The Hitler Cult reveals Hitler as an eccentric and idiosyncratic buffoon. A comic, Chaplinesque figure who could easily have inhabited the satirical drawings of Lewis's own Wild Body series. He was described as a "genuine eccentric", and once again Lewis's fundamental misunderstanding of Nazi race theories was revealed, for he sees these as simple political expediency. But the fundamental character of this text is designed to atone for earlier indiscretions, and promote the orthodoxies of the British establishment, even extending to an almost jingoistic defence of British Imperialism.[84] Lewis here had, somewhat unsuccessfully, attempted to extricate himself from the cleft stick he had, in all conscience, fashioned.

"I am not a fascist"

The issue of Lewis's "Fascism" is not easily negotiated. It is made no easier by his personal resolve to slip between identifiable attitudes and positions. The strategy of presenting a political profile, then undermining the authority of that position by creating a comedy of it, makes categorisation difficult if not impossible. This is as it should be, for at the metatheoretical level Lewis himself would insist that freedom from classification is the primary duty of a truly

freedom from classification is the primary duty of a truly creative individual. Certainly Lewis was reasonably successful in avoiding classification. Close friends, like Naomi Mitchison, herself a socialist and wife of a Labour member of parliament, claims never to have known of Lewis's affiliation with fascism. This is extraordinary since she first met Lewis in 1930 and was a personal confidant until his death in 1957. More exceptionally still she claims that she obtained a painting, by Lewis, for exhibition in an Artists Internation Association Show sponsoring the Republican movement during the Spanish Civil War. Certainly Lewis was a chameleon-like figure who, as his biography testifies, could present a variety of personas to different groups of figures. His willingness to nurture the friendship of Naomi Mitchison, a generous patron during this difficult period, was probably more insistent than his political ideals.

But in other relationships he was more candid. From 1920 he was a close friend of the fascist poet Roy Campbell (Fig. 52). Campbell was a vociferous supporter of the fascist forces in Spain, and Lewis seems to have shared this sympathy. His political novel, The Revenge for Love published in 1937, is set in Spain at the time of the civil war, and shows an empathy with Franco's aims. A letter to Lewis, from Campbell, demonstrated the latter's perception of the former as an enlightened right-wing evangelist:

> "I hope your health is alright. Intellectually, you are the Moscardo to the whole of Europe, and we cannot

> The amputations without anaesthetics and the fact that there was not a single case of infection among the besieged catholics... The Alcazar was the proof of West versus East... From that steel wedge the Christian and Classical mind can now drive right into the materialists... For years you have been the prophet of something like this miracle".[85]

Clearly Campbell was in no doubt as to Lewis's real sympathies. Moscardo, after all, was the Colonel who shot to fame during the siege of the Alcazar which took place in the July of 1936. Popularly viewed as a triumph for Franco's Nationalist forces the Alcazar military academy had resisted a republican siege from July until September 1936, when the garrison was relieved by the Nationalists. Moscardo had distinguished himself by refusing to surrender during this time despite considerable hardship. When the Republican forces captured, and threatened to kill, the colonel's twenty-four year old son he gave a simple instruction "commend your soul to God, shout Viv Espana, and die like a hero". This was an authenticated event from the siege, but many myths grew up around the hardships of the besieged. Campbell was clearly delighted to propagate this mythology, and saw in it far reaching truths. His descriptions of Lewis as "Moscardo to the whole of Europe", and "the prophet of...this miracle", testify to his perception, freely encouraged by Lewis, of the latter's commitment to a fascist ideology.

More significant perhaps was Lewis's continued support for fascist values late into the 1930s. There was the variety of crypto-fascist texts which continued into 1937, and the article for Mosely's fascist journal of that same

and the article for Mosely's fascist journal of that same year. A manuscript held at the University of Cornell reveals a further positive assessment of Hitler's fascist Germany. Lewis had visited Berlin in 1933, 1934 and as late as the October of 1937, when he combined a trip to Berlin with a visit to Warsaw. The manuscript at Cornell is written on notepaper headed "Hotel Bristol, Warsaw" and is therefore most probably from this latter trip. It is titled Berlin Revisited and describes in gentle, almost prosaic terms Lewis's trips around German bookshops following the "Nazi revolution". He was delighted to find there a quite middle-class taste for Galsworthy in fashion, coupled with a complete rejection of the "tough guy", Hemingway. This short note offered a highly comforting picture of "Nazi youth" and the "Nazi revolution" read through its quiescent tastes in literature. This is the spiritual son of the Hitler text, made all the more remarkable because of its late date.

At the very least Lewis was a fellow traveller in fascist politics until the very late years of the 1930s. Moreover the ideological tenents of fascist doctrine seep into all aspects of his theory and are carried over into his art. But if Lewis is to be condemned to this categorisation it must be understood that his "fascism" was of a unique sort. Indeed it was a "fascism" whose genesis was outside of party politics. It was a "fascism" which emerged through an uncompromising commitment to the civilising values of artistic creativity, and only entered

manner. But enter the political arena it did, and there it fatally compromised Lewis's life's work, wasted his energies and destroyed his talent. In 1950 Lewis was to insist "I am not a fascist", and to continue, "I am not a fascist but I love freedom and I hate usury.". [86] During the 1930s it was precisely these ideas and their associations which locked Lewis into a political posture aligning him to the extreme right. And in the 1930s this meant an alignment with the fascist right.

"Killing somebody must be the greatest pleasure in existence"

Belief in authoritarian government, established codes of morality and ethics, rigid conventions in social life, and, a sympathetic response to artists and intellectuals, these were the core principals of Lewis's political theory. They functioned in opposition to the contemporary fact of democratisation, philosophical relativism, the breakdown of a hierarchial system of values concomitant with "degenerate", "standardised" social practices, and the increasing "marginalisation" of the artist. Lewis's belief system, then, was born of a negative critique of contemporary life.

Fundamentally his political profile formed the background to his creative practice. Constantly his ideals and attitudes would seep through from theoretical speculation to become the formal programme of his art. Hence the predominant subject matter of human "types". The

abstract fantasies dealing with various stages in sub-conscious existence, the images of those who aspire to action and "life", and the individuals who reclaim "personality" from the mire of the contemporary social world. Implicitly a hierarchy was re-established in these works. Authority was reinvested in the exceptional personality. A "race" or "class" of leaders were presented, given an emblematic presence, and established as the prototype of a resurgent "classical" millenium. If the Hitler book represented a manifestation of Lewis's belief in the actual becoming of this world-view, then the paintings of the 1930s were his personal, creative manifesto of its desirability.

Yet the political commitment to authoritarianism was not simply codified in the various subject-matters of his painting. It was an elemental practice of his art, embedded in the formal dimension of his work. Technically the classical geometries, monumental "external" composition, and rigid authority of Lewis's line, were devices which carried his political predispositions into the very construction of his pictures. They were the mechanisms by which a commitment to the metaphysics of authoritarianism, control, order, command, ultimately power, was made manifest. And underlying these political and quasi-political images there lay the fundamental political contest. The contest where Lewis stood as individual ego opposed to the "personalities" of his peers, a contest fully realised in Lewis's portraiture of the late 1930s.

The high point of Lewis's career came in the late 1930s, with the vast array of portraits executed between 1937 and 1939. There was a marked shift in the atmosphere of these later portraits. Where the portraits of the early 1920s had contained elements of satire, existed as cyphers for a series of "philosophic generalisations", and had attempted to resurrect a classical canon within the context of modernism. The portraits of the 1930s appear, by contrast, almost conventional. Technically Lewis seemed to revert to a kind of stylised naturalism. The solid architecture of the early portraits softened, the details of physiognomy and anatomy were more clearly referential, while the qualities of character and personality began to assert themselves. Major portraits of this period, T.S. Eliot and Stephen Spender (Fig. 53) of 1938, Naomi Mitchison (Fig. 54) of 1939, bear clear and eloquent testimony to these changes. Yet these changes were, quite literally, only skin deep. For the portraits of the late 1930s were the bearers of a complicated system of ideas which, in many ways, articulated the intellectual preoccupations of Lewis's authoritarian politics.

The darker elements of Lewis's political predisposition emerged, circumspectly, in the later portraits. There was, of course, the establishment of a unified elite, separated by a capacity for intellectual endeavour and the self-conscious affirmation of individual personality. Moreover these personalities were clearly more conscious, more "alive" than the "monads" they confronted in Lewis's

fantasy work. But these personalities were also subject to a kind of "death", a submission of the will. If, socially Lewis's politics affirmed the idea of authority over democracy, the mass, then privately his political demeanour required a personal triumph over his peers, the establishment of his individual authority over the separate identities of his culture-set. This theme was symbolically presented in the late portraits through an authorial intervention in the "life" and "death" of the sitter. [87]

Death played a central role in Lewis's aesthetic strategy. It was the constant, sometimes, hidden presence which pervaded his satire, permeated both his criticism and painting, and certainly haunted his portraiture. It was, moreover, a recurring theme even in his polemical and political texts. Yet the role which the image of death, the consciousness of mortality, played was never, with Lewis, a sentimental one. Death did not appear in order to remind the audience of life, or to increase the subject's sensitivity towards the sensual aspects of existence. Rather, throughout Lewis's aesthetic offensives, death was seen to be the very condition of life for it represented the stultification of consciousness and the failure of individuality: people were "as near dead as possible". In these respects Lewis saw the idea of death as the perfect expression of the contemporary experience and the stanardised mind of modernity. [88]

Within this context a special place was retained for art and the artist. "Art" after all, was "identical with

the idea of permanence".[89] It stood in a special relationship with the phenomenal aspects of reality, with "life". For whereas material existence was transitory, superficial and impermanent, art bore transhistorical, transcultural, and ultimately transcendental, imperatives. Art was the fixed and the permanent in confrontation with phenomenal chaos. The artist then carried responsibility for transporting these fundamentals of civilisation into the present. Here was a tremendous responsibility as well as an incredible power. A power of "life" and "death". In many ways Lewis's later portraits contrived to display the darker elements of this theory in the manipulation and execution of his sitters.

These later portraits were clearly concerned with individuality and personality and opposed to the unequivocal satires of the portraits painted in the 1920s. Yet it remains characteristic of Lewis that even within this framework the deeper and more fundamental obsessions remained contingent elements of his practice. In particular the infatuation with this relationship between art and death. There is, for example, an extraordinary passage in The Art of Being Ruled in which he compared the activity of the artist with the entrancement projected by a predatory animal upon its prey:

> "Without accumulating instances or going further into this, it seems likely that the bird being fascinated by the snake is having what we should call a 'fascinating' experience, perhaps unique in its life. Until it is killed, which naturally terminated its pleasure, it is having the time of its life.[90] The snake, it is true, is an artist...".

> Until it is killed, which naturally terminated its pleasure, it is having the time of its life. The snake, it is true, is an artist...".[90]

Clearly Lewis regarded the artist's ability to capture a likeness, to capture and hold an image, as a relationship of power in which the subject was first hypnotically frozen by the painter and subsequently, in the metaphysics of fantasy, killed. This establishment of authoritative, authorial, power over the external world, and the figures who inhabit that world, was a key dynamic in Lewis's aesthetic. Hence, in the portraits of the late 1930s, Lewis might be said to have provoked a contest of wills. The "natures" or "personalities" depicted were viewed as significant others in context with the ego of the artist. Lewis would impose his authority upon these sitters and propel them into the frozen regions of the fallen.

The portrait of Josephine Plummer (Fig. 55), from 1939, is an example of this unequal contest between painter and sitter. The subject sits, rather stiffly, her head turned to face left, the features set in a two-thirds profile. Naturally the proportions within the canvas are classical and monumental. The body is stretched on the vertical axis, slightly off-centre, the centre of the head falls one-third of the way down the canvas. Overall the figure occupies the major part of the painting's surface. Despite this appeal to a classical matrix there is little sense in which the viewer is presented with a person, still less a true personality. The sharp and angular delineation of the features suggests the figure has been cut in stone. The

been so tightly and irrevocably closed. Above all the eyes show the tragedy of the sitter's situation. They are dull, vacant and lifeless, there is no sense in which they are passages to the sitter's interior life. Indeed this figure, from the evidence of the portrait, has no interior life. For despite the shift in these later portraits towards an aesthetic based on verisimilitude, Lewis had not betrayed the principal aesthetic determinants of this art. Here, the quality of likeness remains subservient to the exterior vision, the proposition that "deadness is the first condition of art". And this proposition finds its becoming in Lewis's compulsive desire to subject his peers to the strength of his own personality, and hence to affirm the primacy of his will.

These effects are to be seen time and time again in Lewis's later portraits, figures frozen into architectures, exposed as superficial and posturing marionettes, above all ruled and imprisoned by the authority of his line. But if these later portraits were examples of Lewis contesting the strength of his personality against those of his contemporaries in order to assert the primacy of his intellect and ego, then clearly the greater the challenge, the greater the victory. For this reason his finest portrait of this period must surely be the one in which he challenged the figure whom his contemporaries acknowledge to be the greatest artist of his day, T.S. Eliot.

Lewis painted Eliot in 1938. This was a work which Lewis clearly took very seriously. In fact he painted Eliot twice in that year, the first being a detailed sketch in oils for the major portrait now hanging in Durban, South Africa. Moreover he took the unprecedented step, for Lewis, of presenting the work for exhibition at the Royal Academy. It is interesting that Lewis was delighted to participate in the furore which followed its rejection and consequently gain publicity, and notoriety, for the work. It was as if the flag of his victory was being waved.

The Eliot portrait pinned the poet between two decorative panels where he reclined, petulant and defeated. It is a portrait, at one and at the same time, humorous and tragic. The humour was all Lewis's. For the austere, sober, Eliot has been dadified, and, when identified with his surroundings, made to assume an air of buffoonery. This was a typical devise of Lewis's in his portraiture. Naomi Mitchison reports that when Lewis painted her in 1939 he placed the small crucifixion scene in the background as a private joke. She was, in fact, writing The Blood of the Martyrs at the time. [91] The tragedy in the Eliot portrait was however, all the poet's. He has been defeated, the body sags, the head droops, the eyes fall into a lifeless vacant stare. Eliot has become subject to a magical transformation which was also a kind of death, that brain death which was imposed upon him by the artist-snake. Here was the "intoxication of death". The final, climactic

affirmation of the individual will in its contest with the other, the worthy foe.

In these hidden aspects of the late portraits, Lewis was constructing a fantasy of power and manipulation in which a peculiar violence was perpetrated on the victim-sitter by the artist-aggressor. But it would be wrong to suggest this was a predominant feature of all the portraits of this period. Some of the commissioned works, John MacLeod (Fig. 58), of 1938, for example, were straightforward exercises in drawing, composition and likeness. Moreover the major portrait of Ezra Pound painted during 1939, while it bears all the characteristics of the death and deadness theme, was the solution to a simple, practical difficulty. Pound had arrived exhausted in Lewis's studio. He stretched out in Lewis's chair, closed his eyes, and
was painted during the space of two hours. The destructive sub-theme in Lewis's painting then was a contingent aspect of his theory which did not necessarily surface in all his works.

Most significantly, at least one portrait of this period contained an ideational content which ran completely counter to the theme of violence and death which exists as an undercurrent in the Eliot portrait. This work is Froanna - A Portrait of the Artist's Wife (Fig. 59), painted in 1937. In this work all the technical apparatus and stylistic idiosyncracies of Lewis's painting are present in abundance. The crisp and circumspect delineation of form.

That hard exterior vision of the sitter, the equality of emphasis given to both organic and inorganic objects. Yet here is a curiously informal portrait, where the entire atmosphere was calm and intimate. The sitter was clearly relaxed, she poses in a dressing gown, the curtains slightly ajar. More fundamentally the eyes of the sitter are alive and enquiring, they comprehend and are perhaps resigned to the environment and situation. But there is no sense of threat here, there is no hostility. Uniquely, the appropriate adjective is tender. This is a tender portrait, and such a description is all the more exceptional given the uncompromising nature of Lewis's aesthetic.

Nevertheless a highly idiosyncratic political disposition infested these works of the 1930s. At its clearest it was authoritarian, dismissive of democracy and indulgent of specific elites. These attitudes were manifestly present in the abstract fantasies and "naturalistic" portraiture of the period, where these are read in conjunction with Lewis's theory. Surreptitiously, however, a darker element of Lewis's political attitudes surfaced in his determination to contest the one authority, his own, against significant "others". This was a reflection of his more public sponsorship of the charismatic leader. It was the point where the "public" became the personal. Where the political theorising, suitably transcribed, surfaced as an interpersonal negotiation with his peers. It was Lewis's tragedy that this imperative should have necessitated a condition of

permanent alienation, a condition where all his triumphs were, fundamentally, disasters.

CHAPTER V: Footnotes

1. Lewis produced three major oil paintings of Eliot in all. Two were completed in 1938. The first, now in the Eliot House, Harvard University, was a detailed sketch for the major work currently held at Durban Art Gallery in South Africa. This latter work was the subject of a significant scandal when rejected by the Royal Academy for show in 1938. The final Eliot portrait was painted during 1949 when Lewis was near blind.

2. This "contest" a typical characterisitc of Lewis's lifes project, had its first salvoes as early as 1934 in Men Without Art. Lewis calls Eliot a "pseudo-believer", claims he owes a considerable debt to Pound, and extols "T.S. Eliot is as close as Ezra is exuberant. He is as arrogant as Ezra is modest - as sly as Ezra is open". Wyndham lewis Men Without Art, California, 1987, p. 57.

3. Lewis was in a nursing home for three months during 1932-1933. In the thirties he was rarely free from illnesses and underwent serious operations during 1934, 1936 and in 1937. During this period he also began to offer as his address a Pall Mall Safe Deposit Box. Clearly these physical and psychological stresses

interfered with his work. For details of these problems see J. Meyers The Enemy, op.cit..

4. Wyndham Lewis in W.K. Rose The Letters of Wyndham Lewis, op.cit. p. 217.

5. Lewis's scandalous episodes with women are well documented in Meyers' biography. His attitude to his wife Gladys Anne whom he met in 1918 and eventually married in 1930 was casual to say the least. He had at least two children by another woman, Iris Barry, during the period of cohabitation with Gladys Anne, and innumerable affairs. He seems to have treated her generally as an unpaid servant and model, though later in life his attitude was consistently affectionate, almost loving.

6. The 1930s remained productive for Lewis despite the illness. The major published work includes the political texts, Hitler 1931, The Old Gang and the New Gang 1933, Left Wings over Europe, 1936, Count Your Dead They are Alive, 1937, The Jews: Are they Human, 1939, and The Hitler Cult, 1939. Autobiographical work included work in verse, One Way Song 1933, Blasting and Bombardiering 1937, and Wyndham Lewis the Artist 1939. The most important novel of the period was the politically inspired The Revenge For Love 1937, which took as its subject the Spanish Civil War. And he even managed a book of travel writing Filibusters in Barbary 1932.

7. Ms. Cornell University, Department of Rare Books. From a sheaf of notes headed "Personal Statement" and probably written while in exile in Toronto.

8. Lewis in W.K. Rose, The Letters of Wyndham Lewis, op.cit., p. 212.

9. Lewis, The Art of Being Ruled, op.cit., p.35.

10. Lewis, The Art of Being Ruled, op.cit., p. 418.

11. Lewis, The Art of Being Ruled, op.cit., p. 135.

12. Lewis, The Art of Being Ruled, op.cit., p. 168.

13. In Rude Assignment Lewis noted, "I have varied between realist fantasies and semi-abstraction. The satiric realism of Beach Babies and the semi-abstract Stations of the Dead", op.cit., p. 140. One of the Stations of the Dead was the only major oil sold from the Leicester Galleries show of 1937. It was bought by Scottish authoress Naomi Mitchison, after 1930 a close friend of Lewis's. It now hangs in Aberdeen Art Gallery.

14. Naomi Mitchison writes of Lewis's theme in this picture; "it is quite clearly the crossing of something based on the Styx, but he never made anything very

clear, as everyone who works with mythology is bound to behave." In correspondence with the author.

15. The precise nature of Lewis's debt to Dante's work is difficult to ascertain. While One of the Stations of the Dead and Inferno are clearly affiliated to Dante's epic concerning the passage of the soul after death, Lewis extends that theme in his mythologies of this period. A work like Creation Myth 1933-36, deals with the pre-conscious world. The general tenor of these works is secular.

16. In his essay entitled "Our Wild Body" Lewis reflected upon the idea of the eye as a signal of consciousness. He writes "Gazing at a body for which the owner obviously has the greatest contempt, and ostentatious slights and disregards, and a face from which all expression has vanished...one is positively startled on becoming aware in the midst of all this desolation, of an abnormally vivid and disarming eye". The Complete Wild Body, op.cit., p. 255.

17. Lewis, foreword to Paintings and Drawings by Wyndham Lewis, catalogue, Leicester Galleries, December 1937. Reproduced in Walter Michel Wyndham Lewis: Paintings and Drawings, op.cit., p. 439-440.

18. See, for example, his review of a Giorgio de Chirico exhibition first published in The Listener, 12 May, 1949.

19. Lewis, The Enemy, no. 2, September 1927.

20. Lewis, reproduced in Michel and Fox Wyndham Lewis on Art, op.cit., p. 307.

21. Lewis, reproduced in Michel and Fox, Wyndham Lewis on Art, op.cit., p. 331.

22. Lewis, reproduced in Michel and Fox, Wyndham Lewis on Art, op.cit., p. 332.

23. Walter Michel has reported Mrs Anne Lewis as saying that Lewis had and lost several libraries during his career. (see Enemy News, The Newsletter of the Wyndham Lewis Society, No. 19, p. 27). Michel himself arranged for one of Lewis's libraries to be sold to the University of Texas where many annotated works, usually used by Lewis for reference, now reside.

24. See particularly Lewis, The Dithyrambic Spectator, published in The Calendar of Modern Letters, April 1925.

25. Richard Humphreys first examined this important source in Enemy News, The Newsletter of the Wyndham Lewis Society, No. 9, Dec. 1978, pp. 3-4, where he discussed Inca and the

Birds in relation to an account by Garcilaso de Vega of this Inca rite of passage. Subsequently he has cited Prescott's book as the source, both in conversation with myself, and at a lecture given in the Royal Academy during February 1987. Lewis is known to have had a slightly annotated copy of Prescott's book, which is now held, along with other books from Lewis's library, at the University of Texas. Full credit must be given to Richard Humphreys for discovering this key source for Inca and the Birds. Responsibility for the political parallels which follow, however, lie with this author.

26. W.H. Prescott, History of the Conquest of Peru, Vol. 1, London, 1902, p. 27.

27. Prescott, ibid., p. 27.

28. Prescott, ibid., p. 46-7.

29. Prescott, ibid., p. 56-7.

30. Prescott, ibid., p. 39-40.

31. Prescott, ibid., p. 87.

32. MS. Lewis, Lecture on Freedom, 1930s (?), Department of Rare Books, University of Cornell.

33. MS. ibid.

34. MS. ibid.

35. Wyndham Lewis, A World Art and Tradition, reproduced in Fox and Michel Wyndham Lewis On Art, op.cit., p. 258.

36. Richard Humphries again cites Prescott's History of the Reign of Ferdinand and Isabella, published 1837, as a source for this painting.

37. Wyndham Lewis, Preface to the catalogue Thirty Personalities, Lefevre Galleries, October 1932. Reproduced in Michel Wyndham lewis Paintings and Drawings, op.cit., p. 439.

38. Wyndham Lewis, The Art of Being Ruled, op.cit., p. 399.

39. An exhibition of drawings entitled Thirty Personalities, by Lewis, was held at the Lefevre Galleries, London in October 1932. In the November of 1932 Lewis issued his third and final portfolio of reproduced drawings. This was Thirty Personalities and a Self Portrait, limited to 200 sets and published by Desmond Harmsworth. Drawings of both Desmond Harmsworth and his wife were included amongst the "personalities".

40. Lewis, Preface to Thirty Personalities catalogue, London, 1932. Reproduced in Michel, Wyndham Lewis Paintings and Drawings, op.cit., p. 439.

41. Lewis, ibid., Michel, ibid, p. 439.

42. In his introduction to the Wyndham Lewis and Vorticism exhibition held at the Tate Gallery in 1956, Lewis wrote of the figures in paintings like Tank in the Clinic and The Stations of the Dead (sic), "If I had given them a name it would probably have been monads", op.cit., p. 4.

43. In a letter to Oliver Brown Lewis complained "...I found a wolf at the door, his teeth bared... I just must do nothing now but traditional pictures; beggars can't be choosers... One relatively well-paid portrait - or two ill-paid ones - would as I said to you today settle all my illness-debts..." Rose, Letters... op.cit., p. 239-9.

44. Lewis, Preface to Thirty Personalities catalogue, London 1932. Reproduced in Michel, Wyndham Lewis Paintings and Drawings, op.cit., p. 439. There is some evidence that Lewis was actually "collecting" individual types representing aspects of the "professions" and "society". In a letter to Desmond Harmsworth of June 1932 he wrote "I may go up to Cambridge and draw Eddington: someone is

getting Arbuthnot here for me, to represent the Surgeons, and Lady Cholmondeley is sending me a pilot..." Rose, Letters..., op.cit., p. 210.

45. Lewis, The Art of Being Ruled, op.cit., p. 36.

46. The History of this essay has been researched by Tom Kinninmont and published in Lewisletter no. 2, March 1975, pp. 5-6, with an edited summary in Enemy news: Newsletter of the Wyndham Lewis Society, no. 10, May 1979. The essay itself is published in this latter edition pp. 2-4. The essay was set to be published by Lord Carlaw sometime after 1939 and before 1941. In 1942 all copies appeared lost following a German bombing raid on London in which the offices of Carlow's private press were destroyed. A xerox copy of the book however has turned up at the University of Buffalo, in the Lockwood Memorial Library. Hence its reproduction in the journal above.

47. Lewis, The Role of Line in Art, Enemy News, no. 10, May 1979, p. 3.

48. Lewis, ibid.. p.3.

49. Lewis, ibid., p. 4.

50. Lewis, ibid., p.4.

51. Lewis, ibid., p. 4.

52. MS. Dept. of Rare Books, Cornell University, New York. Recently published in Lewis Rude Assignment, op.cit, p. 260.

53. Wyndham Lewis, Hitler, London 1931, p. 4.

54. Lewis, The Art of Being Ruled, op.cit., p. 27.

55. Lewis, ibid., p. 189.

56. Lewis, ibid., p. 147.

57. Lewis, ibid., p. 369.

58. Time and Tide, a journal of social commentary edited by Lady Rhonda ran Lewis's articles during the January and February of 1931.

59. See Rose, The Letters of Wyndham Lewis, op.cit., p. 199. Lewis was to reply to Voight's criticism in a letter to the editor of Time and Tide "Mr. Voight is the politician pure and simple - too simple. It was like pressing a button, writing my article: up jumped Herr-Mister Voight, armed to the teeth with communist argument...how very hot a partisan of the Communists we have in Mr. Voight. And since he is that, it is perfectly clear that Mr. Voight would not

200. See also D.G. Bridson's commentary in The Filibuster relating to these issues.

60. Lewis, Hitler, op.cit., pp. 13-14.

61. Lewis, Hitler, ibid., pp. 27-28.

62. Lewis, Hitler, ibid., p. 65.

63. Lewis, Hitler, ibid., p. 31.

64. Lewis, Hitler, ibid., p. 32.

65. Lewis, Hitler, ibid., p. 31.

66. Lewis, Hitler, ibid., p. 84. And later Lewis wrote "The human model for a thorough-going Klassenmensch - or, "Class-Person" - would be a featureless, infantile robot - a mechanical infant-robot, without any mental or physical background at all. That is a standardised Peter Pan, who learns nothing and forgets everything - a phonograph for the convenient parrot-cries of the hour", p. 89.

67. Lewis, Hitler, ibid., p. 97. Lewis's critique of "Big Business" parallelled his critique of Communism "In Big Business fewer and fewer individuals are indispensable. Less and less responsibility is shared by any given member of the more and more mechanical staff of underlings", p. 90.

of the more and more mechanical staff of underlings", p. 90.

68. Lewis, Hitler, ibid., p. 64.

69. Lewis, Hitler, ibid., p. 184.

70. Lewis, The Art of Being Ruled, op.cit., p. 369.

71. Lewis, The British Union Quarterly, Vol. 1, Jan.-April, 1937, p. 22.

72. Lewis, ibid., p. 24.

73. Lewis, ibid., p. 30.

74. Lewis, ibid., p. 33.

75. Lewis, in Rose (ed), The Letters of Wyndham Lewis, op.cit., p. 246. A letter to his patron Sidney Schiff.

76. Lewis, Blasting and Bombardiering, op.cit., p. 91.

77. Lewis, ibid., p. 92. "Percy" was, of course, Lewis's baptismal Christian name, in 1937 long discarded.

78. Lewis, Blasting and Bombardiering, ibid., p. 339.

79. Lewis, Blasting and Bombardiering, ibid., p. 16.

80. Lewis, The Jews: Are they Human?, London, 1939, p. 16.

81. Lewis, The Jews: Art they Human?, ibid, p. 109-110.

82. Lewis, The Hitler Cult, London, 1939, p.

83. Lewis, The Hitler Cult, ibid., p.

84. See The Hitler Cult, ibid., pp. 169-175.

85. MS. Letter, Campbell to Lewis, Department of Rare Books, Cornell University, New York.

86. Lewis, Rude Assignment, op.cit., p.

87. Lewis offerred many colourful epigrams on the subject of "death" and "deadness" from the startling "killing somebody must be the greatest pleasure in existence" in Blast I, op.cit., p.133, to the various references in Tarr, see especially chapter 3 of this thesis. The Art of Being Ruled talked also of "the intoxication of death" op.cit., p. 63.

88. One of the most interesting studies of Lewis's concern with death occurs in Frederick Jameson's fascinating analysis of Lewis's fiction, Fables of Aggression. Jameson

employs post-structuralist and neo-Marxist categories in order to study Lewis's work, but his conceptual framework is essentially Freudian. Consequently his premises for a discussion of the role of death in Lewis's work are twofold, firstly that

> "...representations of death will always prove, under closer inspection, to be complex displacements of an indirect, symbolic meditation about <u>something else</u>", p. 160.

And secondly that

> "...the satirist bears final responsibility for what are now real victims, and the <u>guilt</u> inherent in his aggressivity must at last be confronted undisguised", p. 172 (my italics).

The most obvious difficulty here is surely the impossibility of requiring Lewis to lie on the psychoanalyst's couch, in a darkened room, and confess to his guilt. Moreover all the evidence of his theoretical and polemical texts suggests that Lewis saw it as the artist's irresistible duty, given the context of modernity, to behave as satirist and censor. Guilt, then, was hardly an appropriate emotion. However Jameson introduces an extraordinarily evocative notion in relation to the way Lewis portrays his characters in his satiric fiction, that is the idea of the "second death" (see <u>ibid</u>., pp. 160-177).

Briefly, Jameson, who notes that:

> "Lewis's satire aimed at killing organic reality and endowing it with the spatial stasis of the visual" (p. 170)

argues that Lewis's principal intellectual crisis lay in understanding how the victims of his satire, who were all

trilogy, where the rites and passages of the "second death" were negotiated and encountered. But this concentration in the double death is, as Jameson has already noted "a symbolic meditation on something else". That something else was, for Lewis, the absolutely crucial issue of individuality and personality. However, as Jameson has correctly noted, the satirical method which Lewis developed in order to defend individualism and the willful personality, effectively, rendered all of humanity thing-like, devoid of persona and empited of consciousness. This was a contradiction from which Lewis was never fully released for if all of humanity was depersonalised then the satirist too must suffer the same fate, and consequently lost sight of his individuality. In fact Lewis attempted to resolve this problem by adopting a strategy of perpetual opposition and allying this to a specialised notion of classicism.

89. Lewis, Tarr, op.cit., p.

90. Lewis, The Art of Being Ruled, op.cit., p. 58.

91. In conversation with the author, September 1986.

CHAPTER VI: The Sea-Mists of Winter

Towards the end of his life there was a marked deterioration in Lewis's artistic skills. This coincided with his self-imposed exile from Britain late in 1939, and the extremes of personal and physical discomfort which were to climax in his blindness. [1] Lewis sailed for North America on September 2nd 1939, the day before Britain declared war on Germany, and was never to complete a painting of genuine merit after this date. Significantly, the high point of his career as an artist, the fantasies and portraits of the 1930s, had corresponded with his period of intense political involvement. In this sense Lewis parallelled the career of the neo-classicist Jaques-Louis David, and Lewis's Eliot portrait might be considered an equivalent of David's Marat.

Still, portraiture was to be his lifeline while in exile, and in North America Lewis initiated a number of portraits, in a variety of mediums, which bear all the hallmarks of hackneyed opportunism. Perhaps the best of all these works was the earlist, the portrait of Samuel Capen (Fig. 58) begun late in 1939. This was a commissioned work instigated by Charles Abbott. Abbott was an academic working at the University of Buffalo and a Lewis enthusiast. The commissioned portrait was a formal one since Capen was then chancellor of the university and this was to be his

official totem. [2] The canvas is lifesize and Capen stands in full regalia, gowned, with academic cap in hand, for all the world like a giant exclaimation mark. Lewis has set him between a pilaster and an arched window, the traces of a cubist architecture are glimpsed through the fenestration. By his side there is a table on which rest some books, and, clearly in order to create some visual interest, a decorative table cloth. The bearded, bespectacled face of Chancellor Capen is rather bland and lifeless. But this is not the "deadness" of Lewis's best portraiture. There was no metaphysical, philosophic or intellectual intent here. The features are lifeless only in the sense of being uninteresting. Lewis himself was clearly going through the motions of "official" portrait painting. He was recording, aggrandising, denoting social status, and flattering. It was not that he disliked Capen, on the contrary he regarded him as a "friend". In a letter to the Canadian publisher Lorne Pierce he requested that an advance copy of his revisionist text Anglosaxony, a League that Works be sent to "....my friend Chancellor Capen, of Buffalo University, who likes democracy". [3] However the work is without commitment. It is an example of an artist demonstrating his capabilities and advertising his skills. But what stops it having merit amongst Lewis's oeuvre as a whole, is its lack of intellectual resolve. The metatheoretical references common to Lewis's best work were, here, weakened and compromised. For the first time, perhaps, Lewis had allowed the exegencies of making a

living to completely overwhelm his reason for living, his creative commitment.

The story of Lewis's years in North America consisted of a succession of debilitating compromises as Lewis drowned in the anguish of his exile. A few, more or less worthy, pencil drawings were swamped by a plethora of opportunist portraits. The best works remain sketches of his wife. Portrait (Fig. 59) of 1944, and Reading the Newspaper from the same year, both show Anne Lewis in distraught mood, reflecting on developments in Europe and agitated by domestic insecurity. These drawings are truly interesting precisely because they border on expressionism, and were clearly concerned with the interior life of the sitter. In this sense they usurp the principles and canons of Lewis's earlier aesthetic. They were "humanist" works. But these were exceptions, and while they undermine the character of Lewis's previous works in a positive way, the majority of the North American portraits usurp Lewis's earlier paintings only in as much as they are trite and vacuous. The chalk drawing of Lorne Pierce, 1941, for example was a straightforward, academic hack work. The portrait drawing of Charles Abbott (Fig. 60) from 1939 was a beacon to mawkishness. [4]

Further deterioration in Lewis's skills is evidenced in the series of portrait heads he executed of Basilian fathers during 1944. Lewis had been rescued from unremitting poverty and isolation in Toronto by Father J. Stanley Murphy, a catholic priest who organised a lecture programme

on Christian Culture at Assumption College in Ontario. Lewis had lectured on Religious Expression in Contemporary Art in this programme and was later invited to teach at the College. Consequently by the autumn of 1943 Lewis's immediate financial plight had been alleviateed, and he held something approaching a full-time job. In 1944 he undertook the painting of ten previous President-Superiors of the College, mainly from photographs. Clearly this use of the photograph was unique in Lewis's experience and this may partially account for the inferior quality of these works. The painting of Archbishop O'Connor, (Fig. 61) for example, is pedestrian and dully conventional, a piece of very ordinary reportage. Interestingly it has been suggested that Lewis was "much interested in the actual persons whose photographs he had; studies them, reflected much on them as sitters". [5] And this signals a shift from the rigid ideology of the "external" approach which had characterised Lewis's last work. Perhaps because Lewis was no longer an independent artist, but was so firmly dependent upon the charity of others, compromises with a distinctly humanist value system began to emerge at this point. But it was precisely where he abandoned the titanic orthodoxies of his previous practices that his actual quality as an artist was diminished.

Nowhere is this decline more clearly seen than in his portrait of Pauline Bondy (Fig. 62) from 1944. Bondy was a teacher of French who befriended Lewis while at Assumption. The portrait he manufactured of her is inelegant and clumsy.

It is a profoundly bad piece of art. Bondy perches on a balcony, her back to the sea. She is framed by curtains. The features are flat and vacant. But it is the architecture of her limbs which is completely inarticulate. Arms and legs are pinned together and attached to the torso at impossible angles. The figure cannot be read as a complete and cohesive human form. There was a time when Lewis could produce the mirage of a complete figure, while subtly introducing clues relating to the humourous mechanistic aspects of the human body, hence producing a unified satire on human pretentiousness contradicted by the body's deceit. Most notably he constructed precisely this satire in the Sitwell portrait . But Pauline Bondy is not a satirical piece, the figure here is simply inarticulate, badly painted, wrongly conceived. It was very nearly, the nadir of Lewis's work as a portrait painter.

Two things inform this deterioration in Lewis's creative activites throughout this period. Firstly there was a gradual revision, after 1939, of Lewis's metatheoretical beliefs. In effect he compromised the epistemological system he had shared with Hulme. His absolute commitment to the irreducibly malevolent nature of human kind was no longer absolute. Traces of a creeping humanism and a partial resolution with democratic ideals are to be found in his final portraits, and in texts like Anglosaxony: a league that works, 1941, and America and Cosmic Man, 1948. More important perhaps was the fact of his exile. In many ways the very lifeblood of Lewis's

creativity was his interaction with his culture-set and intellectual peers. He needed to be "The Enemy" and have worthy foes in order to realise his being. Hence the nefarious battles with Fry, the Bloomsbury set, the Sitwells, D.H. Lawrence, Ernest Hemingway, and, most important of all Pound and Eliot. In North America he met no worthy opponents. Only the occasional figure offering succour and charity. Here there were no peers, only patrons. And without the sustaining intensity of actual contest, Lewis lost that vigour and conceit which had fed his creative capacities. He became, in North America, a journeyman painter stepping finally into the snare of glamourous society portraits like Mrs Paul Martin, 1945 and kitch child portraits like Tom Cori and James Taylor, (Fig. 63) from 1944.

"A One-Eyed Heart"

The background to Lewis's exile, his theoretical revisions and his artistic decline is fascinating and instructive. Ostensibly Lewis left England because the coming war would surely ruin his financial security, and he anticipated a large market for his work in North America; he wrote to Naomi Mitchison:

> "But the war-drums did not only agitate me. They had an exceedingly depressing effect upon the business world of England, and that caused my modest personal economy to shake and sag... It was under these circumstances that I collected what I could and made a bee line for New York. With lectures, a few portraits and so forth I should return before very long to London..."[6]

Explaining his failure to return to England throughout the period of the war he confessed to the artist Eric Kennington:

> "My presence on this continent is purely economic. I don't mean I am here to get rich, I mean I am here to try to make my bread and butter and a bit over to pay my debts. I came here as a result of an economic miscalculation. I remain here under an economic compulsion. I mean I can't get away".[7]

The concluding sections of this paragraph were certainly true, even with his meagre salary fronm Assumption College Lewis could not expect to finance his passage back to England. However the nature of his initial "economic miscalculation" must remain suspect. During the latter part of the 1930s Lewis's reputation was probably more widespread than it had ever been. He held exhibitions in the Leicester Galleries in 1937, and in the Beaux Arts Gallery in 1938. While these were not great financial successes they were significant publicity coups. More importantly his reputation in America at this time was minimal. Resting on small American editions of his main published works, the largely forgotten exhibition of his Vorticist works in New York during 1917, and the fact that his Surrender of Barcelona was being shown at the New York World's Fair in 1939. Lewis's self-imposed exile, then, must have been predicated on deeper fears.

From 1937 Lewis began to revise his political and social demeanour. Prior to this time he had been viewed as an aggressive, combative, largely misanthropic satirist, who had become publicly identified with fascism. With the publication particularly of Blasting and Bombardiering, The

Jews: are they human?, and The Hitler Cult, Lewis attempted a significant reversal of this development. These were conciliatory texts which softened his social, political and artistic attitudes. They attempted to provoke a sanitised image of a much misunderstood Lewis who, all along, had only been playing a sophisticated intellectual "game" with his peers. The apex of this curious process occurred when he submitted his portrait of Eliot to the hanging committee of the Royal Academy in the April of 1938.

The Eliot portrait was a fine selection. Almost certainly it is the best of Lewis's portraits, combining the most audacious of his technical skills with the subtlest of his intellectual invective. Whatever the hidden agenda of Lewis's portrait of Eliot, it to all intents and purposes looked like a conventional mimetic work. Moreover Eliot was, by 1938, a figure of sufficient stature to grace the walls of even the most discerning academy. [8] Of course it was extraordinary that Lewis should actually choose to present a work before the academy. He had, for decades, railed against its conservative and unimaginative policies. In 1914 he had made a point of "Blasting" the "British Academy". While in 1921 he declared:

> "An exhibitor at the Royal Academy...is literally, for me, not an artist in any sense at all. The tradition in which he works; the taste and understanding of the large democratic public for which he provides, is so beneath contempt, if you compare it with the milieu experienced by the painter living in sung China, ancient Egypt, or what not, that he has not begun to be, or ever dreamed of being, an artist". [9]

Even as late as 1937 he was categorically stating that "no serious art can ever be inside the Royal Academy". [10]

Consequently accounting for his sudden decision to attempt to appear "inside" the academy causes a considerable problem.

In fact Lewis's presentation of the portrait before a hanging committee he could hardly have admired [11] should be seen in the context of his public apologies and reversals of the late 1930s. Alongside the comic history of his own life, and the significant revisions of his political theses, his supplications before the portals of Burlington House completed a humiliating, public act of contrition. The Enemy, it seemed, wished to become a friend.

Surely, the spectre which haunted Lewis, was the possibility of excommunication from the culture which was his sustaining base. As early as 1933 he acknowledged:

> "...These are long Vendettas. A peculiar people, neither forgivers nor forgetters. All I know is that my agents write "Your Hitler Book has harmed you" - in a night, somewhat like Byron - only I waken thus to find myself not famous but infamous". [12]

While in 1937 he was keen to insist:

> "I am not one of these who believe that either "communism" or "fascism" are in themselves solutions of anything". [13]

His attempts to claim the democratic middle ground were worthy though hardly convincing. Lewis was in no sense a committed, reductive, fascist. His "fascism" was merely the outcome of a negative idealisation of humanity allied to a prejudice towards the prescriptive order of his "classicism". In 1937, and later, he maintained this epistemological base to his theory. However he was quickly ridding his theory of its political dimensions. This was

the root of his crisis. The theory was no longer complete. It was one dimensional and contradictory for it was, as Lewis understood it, impossible to have a classical aesthetic without a classical political order to sustain it. Increasingly, after 1937, this contradiction, which now undermined the prescriptive dimension of his theory, rendered his art unsustainable. His practise became equivocal, and a debilitating insecurity was revealed, especially in those works completed in exile.

The conciliatory texts and actions of the late 1930s were a final attempt to avert this disaster. Lewis was attempting to become "establishment", albeit "fractious" establishment. For only in doing so could he avert the probability of identification with fascist sympathies in the midst of an anti-fascist war. The consequences of such an identification, with its haunted visions of fifth-columns and internments would have been horrific for the ageing Lewis, who was now anyway increasingly concerned with his artistic reputation and status. Hence his unprecedented application for viewing space in the Royal Academy.

Thankfully the work was rejected, for this brought once again to the fore Lewis's best combative energies. The precise reasons for the portrait's rejection are impossible to ascertain. Perhaps, as a Mr. Montague-Nathan evidenced in a letter to The Times on 2 May 1938:

> "The only excuse that can be offered is that the President (as he has since confessed) was unaware of Mr. Lewis's identity, and that the body over which he

> presides was in like case in regard to the subject of the portrait".[14]

This, however, seems unlikely given the fact that Lewis had, only the year before, shown a major exhibition of his recent works at the Leicester Galleries, and Eliot's contemporary status. More probably Lewis's insistent hostility to the academy was discovering its denouement. Or, just possibly, his public associations with fascism had, in 1938, rendered him untouchable in the eyes of officialdom.

The furore which developed from the portrait's rejection, however, instigated a lively and energetic debate. Lewis manufactured a rage of correspondence, principally to The Times and The Daily Telegraph, fulminating against the academy's shortsightedness and retrogressive policies. He appeared on a Pathe Newsreel film with the rejected portrait, and his old friend Augustus John resigned from the Academy in protest. The affair was topped by a speech from no less a figure than Winston Churchill who, at the Royal Academy Banquet on 30th April 1938, offered his support for the policy of the selection committee vis-a-vis the:

> "...high-mettled palfreys prancing and pausing, sniffing, snorting, foaming, and occasionally kicking, and shying at every puddle they see".[15]

Lewis replied with yet another letter to The Times:

> "I would like to point out that "authority and respect for authority" is all very well: but even in the political sphere - in the terms of which Mr. Whutchill thinks and perorates - a small oligarchy, which is notoriously feeble and superannuated, has never for long succeeded in holding down by force a restless population: and if today a plebiscite were taken of all the artists in Great Britain you would get

> a 90 percent majority for the abolition of the Royal Academy of Arts".[16]

Here, the democrat spoke. But this was to be Lewis's last substantial battle, thought certainly his most public, it was characterised only by elements of burlesque. His attempts at political reintegration had clearly backfired, and by 1939 he was, if anything, less secure.

Lewis left for Canada and North America the day before war was declared on Germany. In terms of painting he left behind his greatest monuments, and was never to recover his technical and intellectual prowess. Besides the decline in the actual quality of his portrait work after 1940 there was a gradual adulteration of his theoretical principles. This occurred largely in response to his desperate circumstances while in exile, his attempts to make a living through lecturing to audiences already predisposed towards anti-elitist, democratic theory, and, his need to rehabilitate his reputation. In 1942 he was writing to Kennington:

> "Long ago however it became apparent to me that I had been wrong, like so many other people in opposing war. Before the Munich Conference enlightened us all upon that subject, I saw too clearly with anger and dismay, that Hitler was that most detestable of things a chronic and unteachable little militarist, who just would have his good old second war, because it is for such hideous childishness that such men live".[17]

Fragments of a manuscript at Cornell, provisionally entitled "Notes for a Political Book" and probably actually notes for <u>America and Cosmic Man</u> develop this point:

> "I do not know today why I mistook Hitler for a "man of peace" two years before he became REICHSKANZLER,

> except that it was impossible at that time to suppose that he could ever make war even if he wanted to".[18]

This was, of course, a revisionist history, but there were elements of truth here. Lewis was not a militarist and was opposed to war. His sponsorship of Hitler nevertheless belonged to a broader Weltanschung which fed back into his most fundamental epistemological categories.

The 1940s however saw the breakdown of these categories, most powerfully in a manuscript headed "Personal Statement", and probably written in Toronto during 1943. Quite uncharacteristically Lewis began this statement with an apology:

> "Much valuable time - which would have been far better employed in other ways - has been spent by me, during the past ten years, arguing about contemporary politics with a bias against communism I feel quite differently about all that now, and I will try and explain why".[19]

he continued:

> "I saw there was something radically the matter with it (society). But I argued that there always had been. It was the human race that was at fault, not any particular form of society... Today I think otherwise".[20]

It was the depth of Lewis's seeming reversal which is fascinating in this document. For he appeared to move from his uncompromising elitism and anti-democratic dogma, to a position which was both humanist and socialist. He confessed:

> "In looking back I detect flaws in my reasoning: but, much more, I should accuse myself of having a one-eyed heart... My mistake consisted, I think, in not keeping enought in the forefront of my mind the sufferings and humiliations of the poor - the underpaid and undernourished multitude of people we all take so much for granted".[21]

Here was a fundamental shift in Lewis's entire intellectual disposition. Almost certainly occasioned by the fact of his exile, and the more depressing fact that the climax of his pre-war "classicism", his proto-fascist commitments, had created the absurd senario he most despised, world war.

Highlighting the tragi-comic burlesque of Lewis's personal deliverance and salvation is a letter written to Naomi Mitchison in October 1945, two months after his return to England. He was congratulating her on her husband's, Dick Mitchison's, election to parliament as a Labour M.P.:

> "Very glad to hear that your husband has got his wish. 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 (us and the rest) be made impossible".[22]

Ironically Lewis, the supreme individualist, has opened his arms to nationalisation and collectivisation. Lewis, the uncompromising elitist, has welcomed, indeed identified himself with the democratic liberation of the people.

This was the background to Lewis's artistic decline while in Canada and North America. Where the dogmas of his theory had rigidly sustained him through periods of neglect and humiliation, he had remained a significant artist. As political and social exigencies increasingly backed him into a corner, he was forced to abandon the most fundamental values of his creative practice. Where the theory was progressively weakened and compromised, so the art lost its strength. There was a marked, visible,

deterioration in Lewis's creative practice. He had, for years, ridden the twin horses of his talent and his fierce intellectual commitment. As his philosophical imperatives were challenged and impaired, so his talent was dissipated and broken. His decline, as an artist, throughout the 1940s was almost wholly created by these extra-artistic conditions.

"Everything in Life is Absurd"

After 1940, and besides the largely lamentable series of portraits he completed, Lewis undertook a number of drawings. Unfortunately the term drawings actually dignifies these works, they were in fact sketches. Most significantly, the authoritative quality of Lewis's line was lost. The once powerful linear element of his technique, loaded with value and meaning, was diffused in a new more indeterminate scrawl. At its worst, in Hanged Man and Figures, (Fig. 64) a subject which perhaps recalls Goya's Disasters of War etchings, it is no more than the scratching out of some matchstick men. Even in a more sophisticated guise as in Homage to Etty, 1942, a subject which returned to the classicising themes of his earlier "bathers" series, the line is uncertain and vague.

Increasingly traces of self-doubt and self-pity were to be found in Lewis's private sketches. A revealing 1940s watercolour, retrospectively entitled Composition (Fig. 65) shows an open book. On the recto page the titles

of Lewis's major literary and polemical works are inscribed. These include One Way Song, The Apes of God, The Art of Being Ruled, Time and Western Man, et.al. Above this book a hieroglyph is neatly mapped out, this depicts the figure of Don Quixote and he is, of course, shown tilting at a windmill. Various sketches from this period function likewise as reflections of Lewis's isolation and sense of hopelessness.

However three important themes emerged in the sketches between 1940 and 1950, all of which were, in a sense related. There was firstly, an extraordinary concern with issues that could broadly be termed supernatural, in the specific sense of examining the world of witchcraft and demonic fantasy. Secondly, a curiously orthodox series of sketches and watercolours relating to the birth and life of Christ. This culminated in an unprecedented, for Lewis, series of crucifixion scenes. And finally, a return to the theme of creation. Not principally religious creation, nor the secular, scientific vision of universal creation, but personal creativity, the gestation and the birth of the creative act, a theme which pursued Lewis throughout his life and tied together the conceptual wanderings of his final artistic outpourings.

Especially in relation to his demonic fantasies, the context of these drawings and watercolours was all important. Most of these works were begun in 1941 and 1942, though many were later retouched and dated 1948 to 1950. Being the products of his war time exile they bear

elements of foreboding and fear. But a work like Walpurgisnacht, (Fig. 67) probably begun in the early 1940s though dated 1950, contains an iconography of considerable complexity. Walpurgisnacht is the evening prior to the German feast of St. Walpurg. Traditionally it is a night when witches and demons patrol the earth. In this pen and ink drawing Lewis described a cataclysmic panorama of supernatural fiends. Two emaciated witch like figures scar the sky, complete with broomsticks. Skeletons and insane monsters are scattered over the landscape. Figures are mutilated and tortured. A mad axeman assaults a prancing swordsman. In the foreground a dark, menacing cow inhibits the spectator. For Lewis this was an extraordinary theme, though curiously it related quite directly to his more general themes from this period.

During the early 1940s Lewis began to sketch a few imaginative battle scenes. Lebensraum 1: The Battlefield from 1941, is typical of these works and seems to recall his memories of the first world war. It is a watercolour depicting a mass of dead bodies, generally rendered in the overlapping ovoid style of his 1930s underworld fantasies. The vision haunting Lewis here was clearly the waste and carnage of war. There can be no doubt that his anti-war rhetoric was absolutely genuine, and the fact of a second world was seems to have instigated in him a hopeless pessimism. No longer the objective satirist this pessimism was now reflected in demonic images. Witch on Cowback, 1941, a recurring theme of the 1940s, became the

emblem of this frightening vision. The witch was a personification of evil, bringing about destruction and catastrophy. The bestial element of this phenomenon was characterised in the cow which carried the witch on her extra-terrestrial flights. Lewis's insistence on the female gender in these references was probably predicated on the metaphysics of his misogyny. The female being the bearer of intuitive, emotional and irrational impulses. This may be juxtaposed to Lewis's A Man's Form Taking a Fall from a Small Horse (Fig. 68) of 1941, where the male figure, bearer of reasons, intelligence and the "classical" values, is shown having been thrown to the ground. Walpurgisnacht was probably the most complete of these images, though technically inferior in quality, it created an atmosphere of the most intense and infernal devastation.

Almost contemporary with these sketches Lewis lectured on Roualt and Original Sin at Assumption College. In the course of this lecture Lewis noted:

> "`Man is a wolf to man' is the title of one of the designs for Miserere et Guerre. How can man be otherwise than degraded and blasted to the bone and to the bottom of the soul by the awfulness of his servitude to evil? - And how could a `painter of original sin' look at things otherwise than that?". [23]

He could very nearly have been speaking of himself at this point, and his "concern" here is a measure of his abandonment of the satiric mode and the metaphysics of his disinterested classicism. Significantly he continued, in reference to Roualt:

> "There is social criticism here: but one can nowhere detect a positive political impulse. I was about to say these pictures are too mature for that. Perhaps a

> better work would be sincere. For a political impulse, in such a tragic context, would imply some measure of easy optimism... Politics.... presupposing... the inherent goodness and intelligence, rather than the inherent sadness and stupidity, of human nature".[24]

and a number of important references were outlined here. Lewis may well have abandoned his "classical" pessimism and replaced it with a concerned humanism, but he was not optimistic about human development. His intellectual framework was rather a form of tragic romantic sentiment. Consequently the more rigorous aspects of his satirical invective disappear along with the authority of his linear technique. Moreover, having abandoned politics, even the negative politics of his idealistic fascism, he seemed to orientate his thought-world towards religious speculations of a more orthodox kind.

An Adoration of 1941 depicts the arrival of the three wise men, on horseback, before the activity scene. Likewise a Nativity of the same year, shows the Kings before the assembled grouping of shepherds and, of course, the proud parents. While a series of images from 1941 depicted the crucifixion of Christ from crucifixion, through pietà to resurrection. There is some evidence that Lewis was turning towards Roman Catholicism during the 1940s, but this remains debatable. In the final analysis he seems to have sustained his belief in himself, and the integrity of his ego, until the very end of his life. His period at Assumption College would, of course, have brought him into close contact with catholic thought, and he was indeed indebted to those people for his very survival. Perhaps as

a consequence of this he allowed himself to dwell on religious thought during this period, even stating:

> "I am for the Thomist God as against the pantheistic God of the Evolutionists - I am disposed to (a) particular sympathy for the Catholic habit of thought".[25]

Yet beyond the crucifixion sketches, which are as much humourous as serious, there was no sustained religious predisposition in Lewis's thought-world.

If anything Lewis's images of the birth and death of Christ were metaphorical, relating principally to his overriding concern with the nature of creation and creativity. The Christ myth was emblematic of death, gestation, life, and recreation. Imbued moreover with a universal and transhistorical significance. It mirrored then, the creative process itself. Consequently the most significant theme from the 1940s remained the sketches and watercolours abstractly conjuring with the idea of creativity, Gestation from 1941 and the Creation Myths of 1941 and 1942. These were generally soft abstracts composed of ellipses and ovoids. Gestation (Fig. 69) is a kind of abstracted womb, complete with embryonic foetus metamorphosing from seminal aquocity into pure substance. Similarly Creation Myth No. 17 from 1941, depicts an arrangement of ovules and orbs from which there erupts a dynamic discharge loaded with nascent energies. A further Creation Myth (Fig. 70) from 1942 described the progeny of this eruption, the idea pure and simple, an arrangement of spheres in relation. There is a clear biomorphic quality to these works. This was an "inner" vision

offering a physiology of the creative process, though sufficiently abstracted to propose also an astronomic metaphor for creation. But it is impossible to escape the sexual dimension of these works. A clear parallel existed here between sexual procreation and artistic creation. Lewis offered, then, a correspondence between the instinctual desires of the libidinal energies, and the necessary drives of the creative energies. In these works the universalising dimensions of Lewis's theory of creativity was made apparent. An exceptional confluence of comic, religious, magical, organic and sexual forces combine to generate the greatest of human acts, creativity. In a sense then, towards the end of his life, he recovered the theme which was fundamental to his entire being. The idea of creation and creativity as the only worthwhile act of human kind, and therefore the status of artist as the only worthy pursuit of human kind.

A final work from 1942 articulated this notion. The Mind of the Artist, About to Make a Picture (Fig. 71) is a watercolour with pen and ink. It shows an artist, his eyes closed, meditating upon and before the act of creation. Beside him an open book on which a few lines can be seen. Around him, however, swirl the fantastic designs, the orbs and ovoids which come together, gestate and erupt into the idea and the act. It is a literal work, and like the majority of Lewis's 1940s sketches, poorly constructed. But it was clearly an important work for Lewis, a manifesto almost of his aesthetic and intellectual predispositions.

A reminder in many ways that "The artist (was) older than the fish", [26] indicating his fundamental commitment to creative action as the primordial activity.

Outside these very private, though revealing, sketches and watercolours Lewis undertook one important swansong in the field of portraiture. [27] Again his subject was Eliot (Fig. 72). Lewis began this portrait in the early summer of 1949. It is a naturalistic work and almost a mirror image of the 1938 portrait. Eliot sits, with shoulders haunched, his face again cast downwards, the eyes staring into the middle distance, by his side some papers, a sheaf of notes. The work is sketchily painted. The contours of the ear and jaw indefinite. The element of satire and contest is not present in this work. The decorative panels of the 1938 portrait have been removed and Eliot's demeanour is resigned and only slightly puzzled. There is an atmosphere here of respect and pride. Lewis recognising a worthy peer from the "men of 1914" [28] who had given shape to a classical modernism. It was a painting, principally, designed to honour its subject.

Honours, of the public sort, were something Lewis singularly lacked. There is evidence that in the late 1940s he became ambitious in this direction. Indeed, as early as 1937 he was complainting to Oliver Brown the director of the Leicester Galleries:

> "...I will make a start with public recognition. In many institutions for the encouragement of art in this country...I am unrepresented". [29]

Lewis was clearly bitter about this, and naturally blamed Fry; "The great influence of Roger Fry in the past militated against my pictures being bought institutionally". [30] It might even be suggested that his presentation of the 1938 Eliot portrait before the Royal Academy hanging committee was, in part, a misguided attempt at a form of public recognition. But given Lewis's initiation of Modernism into English painting, and his adventurous career after 1919, it remains extraordinary that no public honour was bestowed upon him. Though once again this may well have been a consequence of his political dissent. However, a partial redress of this situation occurred in 1952 when Leeds University bestowed an honorary degree of Doctor of Letters upon Lewis. He was inordinately proud of this and saw it as a stepping stone to further glories. Writing to Henry Regnery in August 1952 he offered a footnote:

> "PS. Leeds University has made me Doctor of Literature. Eliot says Leeds was his first Hon. Doctorate. Says all other universities follow suit - he has fourteen". [31]

In a later letter, probably late November or December 1952 Lewis informed Regnery of his Royal connection:

> "I have delayed answering you until my return from Leeds (where the Princess Royal - aunt of the Queen - officiated and made me a Doctor!)". [32]

All of this was some measure of Lewis's late desire for acceptance and acknowledgement. And in many ways the second Eliot portrait belonged to this schema. For Lewis was no longer contesting his peer group, but identifying with it. Eliot's tragic countenance, in the 1949

portrait, was shared by Lewis. The men of 1914 being heroic and defeated, Joyce dead, Eliot retreating into the autumn of public approbation, Pound in the madhouse and Lewis all but forgotten. In this sense the second Eliot portrait was a miserable swansong.

A concluding tragedy revealed itself during the painting of this portrait. Lewis recognised that he was going blind. There had been problems with Lewis's eyesight for a number of years. In painting Pauline Bondy during 1944 Lewis became aware of an incomplete grasp of his subject and was advised to have his eyesight checked. Of course, these difficulties account in part for the inarticulate figuration of the Bondy partrait, and the inferior drawing techniques in the 1940s sketches and watercolours. But it was during the painting of Eliot that Lewis's problem became acute. In his touching, and comic, article on his progressive blindness Lewis recalled:

> "When I started my second portrait of T.S. Eliot, which now hangs in Magdalene College, Cambridge, in the early summer of `forty-nine', I had to draw up very close to the sitter to see exactly how the hair sprouted out of the forehead, and how the curl of the nostril wound up into the dark interior of the nose. There was no question of my not succeeding, my sight was still adequate. But I had to move too close to the forms I was studying".[33]

By the middle of 1951 Lewis had become completely blind. For a man whose entire approach to knowledge and understanding was based on the inviolable quality of the visual, this was the cruellest of ironies.

The article in which Lewis announced his blindness was published in The Listener and entitled The Sea Mists

of the Winter. It is, in many ways, a beautiful document and deserves quoting at length. He began with a description of the winter of 1950-51.

> "It became evident quite early that it was going to be a deplorable winter. The cold was unvarying, it had purpose, it seemed. Normally in a London winter it forgets to be cold half the time; it strays back to autumn or wanders dreamily forward to spring, after a brief attempt at winter toughness, perhaps, squeezing out a few flakes of snow. But this winter...there has been an un-British quality, an unseemly continuity.
>
> Speaking for myself, what struck me most was the veil of moisture like a sea-mist which never left my part of the town".[34]

There follows a comic interlude in which Lewis expressed astonishment at his newsagents utter failure to recognise the omniscient mist, until he finally confessed:

> "But you may have seen through my innocent device. The truth is that there was no mist. The mist was in my eyes: there was no mist in nature... "You have been going blind for a long time" said the neuro-surgeon".[35]

What is remarkable about the article is the complete lack of mawkishness, self-pity or fear at this cataclysmic revelation. Indeed Lewis revealed a characteristic determination and courage:

> "Pushed into an unlighted room, the door banged and locked forever, I shall then have to light a lamp of aggressive voltage in my mind to keep at bay the night".[36]

And of course he saw, at the root of it all, a comic intervention:

> "...as a writer, I merely change from pen to dictaphone. If you ask, `And as an artist, what about that?' I should perhaps answer, `Ah, sir, as to the artist in England, I have often thought that it would solve a great many problems if English painters were born blind'".[37]

Lewis saw fit to publish this confession in The Listener in May 1951 because he had earned something of a living as art critic for that journal since 1946. Despite his contempt for English painters he had proven to be a kind and reasonable critic. He was particularly benevolent to figures like the young Francis Bacon, the Scottish painters Robert Colquhoun and Robert MacBride, and admirers like Michael Ayrton. Old friends, particularly John, Epstein and Wadsworth were praised. And he tended to reserve his ire for institutions, especially the Royal Academy. Following his blindness in 1951 this role was finished and he concentrated on his writing until his death in 1957. The second Eliot portrait remains his last significant work. However his role as a commentator and evaluator on the metaphysics of art did not cease. In 1954 Lewis published a book of criticism titled The Demon of Progress in the Arts. [38]

Like the theoretical reversals of the early 1940s, in politics, social criticism, and to some extent in the thought-world of his painting, Lewis offered here a castigation of "progressive" tendencies in the arts. In many ways this was a resurrection of those themes in Blast and The Caliphs Design which had argued the necessity of a correspondence between art and "life". And again his target was the romantic formalism of the avant-garde:

> "painters and sculptors are whisked away into an arcanum by a host of pundits, a wild competition of "advancedness" takes them entirely out of sight of the public". [39]

Remnants of Lewis's "classicism" were evidenced here, particularly the insistence on a continuous thread of understanding between artist and public. Moreover he was also keen to insist on the usefulness of enquiring, forward-looking creative enterprises, "I do not object to the extremism of Henry Moore or Graham Sutherland". [40] But his ultimate assertion was to argue for a conservative caution in the matter of the arts:

> "There is no merit in extremism: although at present it is a universal fashion. What I am arguing...is that an easily defined limit exists in painting and sculpture... It is quite simple; beyond a certain well-defined limit exists in painting and sculpture... It is quite simple; beyond a certain well-defined line - in the arts as in everthing else - beyond that limit there is nothing. Nothing, zero, is what logically you reach past a line of some kind, laid down by nature, everywhere". [41]

While echoes of Lewis's previous theory can be heard here, this remains a considerable departure, proselytising a creative caution to which he, himself, never submitted.

The Demon of Progress in the Arts was a diatribe directed against "extremism", but more properly against fashion and dictat. It attempted once again to insist on the redemptive aspects of artistic endeavour as an expression of a genuine civilisation. Above all it was critical of outrageous, "unnatural" experimentation, and the exploitive vicissitudes of the art market, all themes which Lewis had successfully explored in earlier work. But in 1954 these could appear only as the feeble thoughts of a weak old man. In the course of this book Lewis reminded his audience that it was "essential to realise that everything in life is absurd". [42] Most probably he was

entirely aware of the final, absurd irony, that a castigatory essay of art criticism was being completed by a blind man.

These final years as a creative artist were sad and disappointing. Those titanic struggles which had characterised Lewis's work through to the late 1930s were lost, and he fell into private ramblings. That substantive, dissenting, negational anger which had fed Lewis's art became confused with self-pity, opportunist revisions and the desire for some form of recognition. Only a shadow of his stubborn, vigorous and uncompromising idealism remained in the 1940s. And as this shadow faded so too did his rigorous skills. Blindness was almost a metaphor for this process, as if it were some logical outcome of Lewis having lost his way, or just perhaps Lewis had finally become blinded by his own rage.

CHAPTER VI: Footnotes

1. Lewis left Britain in September 1939. He held a Canadian passport from birth, consequently there were no problems with immigration. In Canada and North America he was subject to extremes of hardship and poverty which are well documented in Meyers's biography of Lewis. After continued problems with his eyesight throughout the 1940s Lewis eventually went completely blind in 1951, a pituitary tumour having been pressing on his optic nerves for a number of years.

2. This work, a full length portrait, now hangs in the Poetry Room, State University of New York, Buffalo.

3. Rose, Letters of Wyndham Lewis, op.cit., p. 291.

4. Given the fact that Lewis's visual satire consisted largely in exposing the immature child in the posturing adult, his mimetic studies of children were particularly inept.

5. Walter Michel reports this in his catalogue essay in Wyndham Lewis: Paintings and Drawings, op.cit., p. 345.

6. Rose, The Letters of Wyndham Lewis, op.cit., p. 329.

7. Rose, The Letters of Wyndham Lewis, op.cit., p. 325.

8. By 1938 Eliot had already published the majority of his poetic achievement, besides the early poems the Wasteland appeared in England in 1923, Ash Wednesday in 1930, and Collected Poems in 1936. He was moreover an acknowledged literary critic, The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism having appeared in 1933. And a prestigious convert to Anglo-Catholicism.

9. Lewis in Tyro 1, Roger Fry's Role as Continental mediator, op.cit., p. 3. In 1920 he had been even more damning, in his catalogue for the Group X exhibition held at the Mansard Gallery Lewis referred to the Academicians: "The large official Exhibition at Burlington House appears...to be beyond redemption. It is a large stagnant mass of undescribable beastliness, that no effort can reform short of the immediate extinction of every Man, Woman and Child at present connected with it", in Michel and Fox Wyndham Lewis on Art, op.cit., p. 185.

10. Lewis, Blasting and Bombardiering, op.cit., p. 214.

11. The hanging committee for 1938 consisted of S.J.L. Birch R.A., O. Hall R.A., G. Harcourt R.A., H. Knight R.A., G. Ledward R.A., S.F. Godden A.R.A., and J. Woodford A.R.A.

12. Lewis, One Way Song, op.cit., p. 47.

13. Lewis, Blasting and Bombardiering, op.cit., p. 16.

14. The Times, newspaper, 2nd May 1938.

15. Churchill's speech which made a number of indirect references to the public debate surrounding Lewis's work, was first given at the Academy Banquet then later broadcast on the BBC and printed in the The Times on 2 May 1938. Interestingly he makes a reference to fascism in art: "In another country - which shall remain nameless - an artist would be sent to a concentration camp for putting too much green in the sky, or too much blue in his trees. Even more grievous penalties would be reserved for him if he should be suspected of preferring vermillion to madder brown. We should all agree that such rigour is excessive over here...".

16. The Times, newspaper, May 3rd 1938.

17. Rose, Letters of Wyndham Lewis, op.cit., p. 324.

18. MS. Dept. of Rare Books, Cornell University, New York, U.S.A.

19. MS. Dept. of Rare Books, Cornell University, New York, U.S.A.

20. MS. ibid.

21. MS. ibid.

22. Rose, Letters of Wyndham Lewis, op.cit., p. 391.

23. This lecture was first given in January 1943 at Assumption College, it appeared under the more generic title Religious Expression in Contemporary Art, but was subtitled Roualt and Original Sin. The lecture is reproduced in Michel and Fox, Wyndham Lewis on Art, op.cit., pp. 367-380, this quotation, p. 371.

24. Ibid., p. 371.

25. Ibid., p. 379.

26. The title heading of Part 2 of The Caliph's Design, see op.cit., pp. 65-81.

27. Lewis undertook a number of portraits in the late 1940s, notably Nigel Tangye 1946. Indeed after this later Eliot portrait he began a study of Stella Newton. The Eliot portrait however was his last important work in terms of his ambition to display his talents in relation to the greatest minds of his generation.

28. A favourite phrase Lewis used in Blasting and Bambardiering, op.cit.

29. Rose, Letters of Wyndham Lewis, op.cit., p. 243.

30. Ibid., p. 243.

31. Regerny was an American publisher. This letter is from the MS. collection at Dept. of Rare Books, Cornell University, New York, U.S.A.

32. MS. ibid.

33. Lewis, The Listener, May 10 1951.

34. Ibid.

35. Ibid.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid.

38. The Demon of Progress in the Arts was published in London during November 1954, it was reprinted in 1955.

39. Lewis, ibid., p. 13.

40. Ibid., p. 32.

41. Ibid., p. 32.

42. Ibid., p. 55.

CHAPTER VII: A jest too deep for laughter

Art and politics, politics and art, an insistent pendulum marking out the trajectory of Lewis's obsessions. It's arc encompassed the entire history of western thought, touched on disciplines as diverse as anthropology and aesthetics, and settled into a rhythm of permanent negation. What was remarkable was that such a public declaration could appear in such a private landscape. Lewis's commentaries, in art and theory, were often so cryptic and idiosyncratic as to appear meaningless within contemporary debate. The tortuous arguments in The Art of Being Ruled and Time and Western Man, the esoteric thought world which inhabited The Tyros and Inca and the Birds, were so deeply personalised that they appear to be intellectually circumscribed. In part this was stragegic, the hostility of his negation, like the depth of his pessimism, required expressions which were always pushing at extremes. But the conflict between the public and the private in Lewis's art was unresolved. He was an expository classicist who damned his public, a polemicist "speaking in tongues", an advocate who turned his back on his audience. The contradictions, personal, intellectual, theoretical, were rife and made more confusing by his personal desire to eschew all classification and categorisation.

Certainly it is this propensity which makes it difficult to isolate the political in Lewis's art. In the modern period most artists can successfully be attributed with a political profile. From the quiescent, complacent journeymen whose refusal to participate in politics made them political by default, supporters of the democratic status quo, to the polemicists of the left, particularly in Britain those associated with the Artists International, whose principal criteria of aesthetic worth was an artwork's political intent. Subtler political motives can be ascribed to the avant-gardes. Formalist experimentations often found social justification by offering insights which were other than materialist, the rationale being that the recovery of the "spiritual" dimension of human activity in a world corrupted by secular, commercial and material values was ipso facto a political, indeed revolutionary, act. [1] A slightly less naive version of this idealism was given voice in the cultural politics of the Dadaists, and to some extent extended in the work of the Surrealists. [2] Picasso's decision to commit himself to communism and carry the card of the Communist Party of France, signalled a significant reversal of the modern artists' commitment to romantic individualism. Though, of course, even Picasso's most overtly political works revert to dehistoricised mythologies. [3] Examples of these types of broad political profiles can be ascribed to artists throughout the twentieth century. But in a sense all these artists were compromised

by the overarching ideological constraints of romanticism. Their commitment ultimately was towards the authority of the creative act. The idea that aesthetic contemplation was the most rareified form of knowledge, and qualitatively different from all other understanding.

This, too, was the case with Lewis, although it was complicated by his associations with a specialised classicism. For while, with the principal participants in the modern movement, a proto-political commitment might parallel their creativity, touching upon their art where appropriate, though more often existing as a complementary value system. With Lewis a political imperative lay, like the minotaur, at the very centre of his creative project. Because Lewis's "classical" epistemology insisted that all things were intimately connected, that there were no disengaged aspects of social activity, then it followed logically that the creative project only existed in relation to the socio-political whole. This belief clearly separated Lewis from the romantic disposition of the mainstream moderns. Moreover it necessitated some form of political association in his art.

The distinction to be made here is between the political as an engagement in practical issues, matters of public policy and long term social goals on the one hand, and, the political as the construction of ideas, values and thematic concerns orientated towards the re-evaluation of social life on the other. In practise Lewis engaged in both these types of activities. His participation, however

equivocal and hesitant, with fascism in the late 1920s and early 1930s was a practical association with the real world of politics. In his art, however, he was principally involved in the secondary form of political activity. Equally as insistent, but entirely more discreet. A subtle network of relationships was established between the primary dimension and the secondary dimension, and where this network is carefully traced then the genuinely political in Lewis's art is revealed.

Two points of contact were made between the political and the aesthetic in Lewis's project. Firstly, at the level of content Lewis offered subtle and innovative correspondences between a political value system and an integrated artwork. In this respect The Crowd was political invective relatively unmediated and therefore transparent. This was a work clearly designed to articulate an anti-democratic, pessimistic negation of human action, social change and collective agency. It was a kind of aesthetic manifesto offering opposition to the mainstream modernist, particularly Futurist, eulogising of mass action. Predicated on an elitist vision of art and the artist, it negated the contemporary romantic participation of artists with the masses. This was really the first point where Lewis, in a meaningful way, displays the schism between himself and his contemporaries and peers. Lewis's alternative modernism was characterised by his refusal to display even a token commitment to democratic values. In this respect The Crowd should be viewed as Lewis's first

significant political statement articulated in terms of the manifest content of the work.

More subtle political images emerged in Lewis's later works. The satires of The Tyros were directed against a social class. Or, more precisely, against a fragment of a social class, the progressive intellectuals who articulated the visions of bourgeois liberalism. Slings and arrows were showered on this group as Lewis displayed his hostility to their sham intellectualism, compromises with an enfeebled democratic system, and progressive undermining of the authority of enlightened intellectuals. In many ways Lewis reserved his greatest contempt for this group precisely because they were, in an objective social sense, closest to him in occupation and role. Hence, the manifest content of The Tyros was an insistent, comic and sometimes virulent castigation of those intellectuals who had committed a treason upon the social duty of their class, the maintenance of a stratified, ordered and authoritative public world. In terms of this context The Tyros slip back from the comic and the satirical into speculation on the social role of the intellectual, and ultimately into a crypto-political theory of social control and social order. Truly they were "philosophic generalisations".

Perhaps the most discreet politicising, in terms of content, was made manifest in Lewis's mock-historical paintings and fantasies of the 1920s and 1930s. As a group the fantasies were a continuation of the theme which had first emerged in The Crowd. One of the Stations of the

Dead, Inferno, even the images of suppliants all insist upon the idea of an undifferentiated mass-mind devoid of consciousness and emptied of intellect. If anything they were more depressingly pessimistic than The Crowd for they forego even the possibility of meaningful action. In this sense they were dehistoricised images, referring to an ontological condition wherein the mass of humanity were intrinsically incapable of activating the ego. Consequently these "monads" were incapable of Being. Here the metaphysics of Lewis's political position was articulated. Those who could not develop consciousness could clearly not be trusted to participate in government. They might themselves be "ruled", but only by continually supplicating themselves to an authoritative, fully conscious, ego.

This particular vision, the stable, hierarchical autocratic society, inhabited the quasi-surreal fictions of Lewis's "history" painting. Most clearly it was a dominant sub-text in Inca and the Birds, and an insistent undercurrent in, for example, The Armada. Theoretically the political dimension of these images was reinforced by Lewis's many references to ancient Egyptian and Chinese civilisation, the structure of which afforded a stable order in which the creative facility could be meaningfully flexed by a privileged and informed minority. These themes were allowed to surface less obliquely in The Art of Being Ruled, and found their disastrous conclusion in Lewis's sponsorship of Hitler.

Finally a political content of sorts, emerged in the portraits. The social and the personal were continually interlocked in Lewis's art and theory. Frustration of a political nature could easily undergo metamorphoses which would allow them to be exorcised against individuals. Hence Lewis's ironic portrait of Edith Sitwell censured an entire class of mock intellectuals after the manner of the Tyros. Likewise, Lewis's portrait of Stephen Spender released a subtle invective against those "shamen", [4] the "inverted" intellectual who had abandoned the "male principle" in thought and action, and hence had contributed to the collapse of authoritative civilisation. A more circumspect evaluation was offered in Lewis's portraits of his immediate peers, particularly Pound and Eliot. For these were offered as both homage and critique, just in the manner of his essays in Men Without Art. These portraits simultaneously promoted these figures as an enlightened elect and castigated them for their failures and retreats. Ultimately they offered for display the defeat of these individuals, condemned to be beaten by the weight of their compromises in Eliot's case, or by the absurd romanticism of their opposition, in Pound's. Lewis's "victory" over them, as individuals and as representatives of a specific ideal, was manifest in the omnific authority of the portraits themselves.

These were the ways Lewis would manipulate content to give expression to a broad political programme. But the second point of contact between the political and the

aesthetic is probably more important, for it was even more subtle, and succeeded by virtue of ingenious association. The reference here is to Lewis's use of style, the confluence of form and technique to produce a surrogate politics.

Consistently, and throughout his development, Lewis produced hard images. Not simply hard to understand, but hard like stone, like marble. His vision was sculptural. Of course this allowed him to insist on the factual presence of the visual, to demand that concrete spatial relations were established as a primary fact. And this insistence allowed an important opposition to the relativism of much modern thought. Space was established in order to counter the transience of "time-philosophy". Hence to undermine a fundamental aspect of modernist epistemology and disrupt the decadent other worldliness of modern art. Lewis complemented this idea of establishing clear spatial intervals, with the systematic development of disorientating colour schemes. This device took two forms. In the early works, up until the mid 1920s, Lewis would use raw, acidic colouring in his work. The acerbic pinks in Workshop for example, contesting with the sour ochres and browns. Such a ploy was deliberately constructed in order to rival the sensual, empathetic colouring of the mainstream moderns. The idea, implicit in Fauvism for example, and explicit in the theory and practise of Kandinsky, that colour should create pleasing, harmonious relationships which might liberate the aesthetic or "spiritual" dimension of human

receptivity. Lewis was actively hostile to this type of intuitive, empathetic and ultimately democratic aesthetic, precisely because it mitigated against his negative view of human potential and commitment to hierarchical government. In consequence his raw, acidic colouring was established as a satire upon the sensual colouring of his contemporaries. It was a significant negation of their romantic humanism.

Though Lewis continued to include aspects of this satire in his later colour schemes, the dominant colouration in the work of the late 1920s and after tended to be terracottas, earth browns and metallic blues. Here he was insisting on the materiality of the visual world he created. Even of the materiality of his most speculative, metaphysical thought, which was locked into a practical assessment of the real world. Moreover his extraordinary images, created in this type of colouring, produced not aesthetic empathy but intellectual distance. The estrangement of image from spectator forced a contemplative negotiation of the object, which was designed to produce philosophical insight, even enlightenment.

Colour functioned as satiric opposition and corrective reminder of the materiality of thought and Being. In the same way the classical elements of Lewis's composition were designed to oppose romantic miasmas, and reorientate the viewer to the stable substance of practical existence. These dimensions to his art were both negative and positive. They offered a critical assessment of the ideology of modernist art, while simultaneously proposing an

alternative based on an abstract, highly authoritarian motif, while the element of composition, in part, constructed the boundaries and direction of this visual metaphor, its finest expression was articulated in Lewis's manipulation of line.

The power, command and unequivocal resolve of Lewis's drawings remains startling and significant. Again and again his lines bound across the page, taut and certain, they impose an absolute limit on the visual fact of his subjects. In this way, as Lewis said, he "takes control" of the external world, demonstrates its fixity, finiteness and ultimately its stable core. At base, this programme of outline and boundary manufactures a world in which the shifting is stabilised, the indefinite concretised, and the disputed categorised. Here was a formal device in which the abstract speculations of Lewis's thought world, the perceived need for stable and ordered structures in the social world, could be realised, as metaphor, in his art.

Formal aspects of Lewis's art were never neutral. They were the bearers of meanings just as potent and universal as the primary content of the canvas. But like the subjects on the canvases, the formal inventions were the carriers of a discreet content. Obtuse, hidden, more usually masked "revelations" were only occasionally allowed to seep through to the surface of the artwork. Perception was to be followed by conception, followed by meditation and ultimately produced "revelations" not freely available in the discourse of modernist art. This tactic was an element

of Lewis's elitism, his intellectualism and his classicism. For he was firmly committed to a revelatory art whose meanings were conveyed through oblique associations and the abstract quality of visual form. Form itself was a bearer, then, of a crypto-political content in as much as it reinforced the authoritarian "classical" cannon in its very structures. In effect, what occurred in Lewis's art, was the conscious politicisation of form.

This begs the question as to the nature of Lewis's politics. The complication, here, is that political involvement was a necessary inconvenience for Lewis. Certainly a political system of thought inhabits all of Lewis's practice and theory, but it was often an unwelcome visitor, ushered in by necessity, and constantly interrupting the flow of discussion and debate. Futhermore, Lewis's politics were subject to calculations and revisions which clouded any clear and established pattern. Hence his association with Mosely and his group could parellel a friendship with the radical Naomi Mitchison. And his sponsorship of the Spanish right, evidenced in his close association with the catholic and monarchist Roy Campbell, could be confused with the presentation of work to the Artists International Association for the relief of Spanish republican forces. [5] This type of inconsistent behaviour was typical of Lewis, but it was also part of a willed strategy. Here, where the public and the private world collide, Lewis might promote a cause while

simultaneously remaining faithful to personal relationships independent and opposite to that action. The key to such inconsistent activity was that politics was always an incidental concern initiated by a need to preserve the only truly meaningful form of action, creative endeavour. Reflecting on his life, in a letter written in 1940, Lewis wrote:

> "I regard anything as a waste that is not spent in giving the fullest play possible to a person's aptitudes, and mine are very marked in all the arts except music... However, we all waste our lives. I reckon I waste 99 percent of mine... Society is not organised properly. The money-value everywhere usurps the place that belongs to the values of greater importance".[6]

So Lewis slides into socio-political critiques, from an absolute dedication to art. It is this relationship that remains fundamental to any understanding of Lewis's political profile.

At the centre of Lewis's thought world sits the idea of the individual artist and the mysterious category, art. These categories were ahistorical for Lewis and asocial, they pertained exclusively to the ontological. But everywhere the fact of social, historical, political and economic necessities impinged upon this exclusive world. Hence:

> "My trade is painting. Many of my books are merely a protest against Anglo-Saxon civilisation, which puts so many obstacles in the way of the artist - I really do believe in music, pictures, and books: that is a completely authentic obsession of mine. The politician and the religionist mean very little to me, except in relation to those activities".[7]

The immense weight and volume of Lewis's theory, from his speculations on the nature of individualism to his radical

negation of contemporary social practice was an extended sacrament, a last rite, over the demise of art. But they were also more than this, for they formulated a significant critique of contemporary civilisation. Lewis, in many ways, presaged the Frankfurt School in his analysis of the standardisation of thought, and the concommitant collapsing of all distinctions between cultural groups in his insistence on the monolithic nature of modern institutions and the corrosive effects of the new technologies. Of course these ideas were themselves developed in the cultural theory of Marshall McLuhan, particularly in his concept of the "global village". [8]

In many cases Lewis's social analyses were astute and incisive, prophetic even. But equally they forced him back into a regressive political posture. Because Lewis did not simply identify effects, but assigned also specific causes, he was forced to look for some all-embracing panacea. Hence, the "decay" evident in modern civilisation, its superficial, standardised, vapid programmes of action, were a logical outcome of the hegemony of romanticism and the treachery of the intellectuals. In turn this was caused by a failure in thought, the failure to comprehend the "true" nature of Man, that is, static, limited and corrupt. Socially, these failures instigated the "cults" of democratisation, anti-intellectualism, feminism and even bolshevism. They conspired in the breakdown of meaningful individualism, and succeeded in marginalising the artist. It was necessary to sponsor, then, a return to a

classical canon. Not only classical in demeanor, informing the style of artworks, but "classical" as a social ideal. A return to a social world where order and hierarchy prevailed, where an overarching moral universe informed the activities of citizens and directed the thought of intellectuals, and, where the artist could continue, undisturbed, his rareified activity, offering works of genuine merit to a unified, informed public. This was an ideal world for Lewis, but rarely did he offer a precise prescription for its becoming. His eventual political associations with Hitler's Germany, Moseley's British Union of Fascists, and the right-wing theorising in the 1930s texts, were in essence a grotesque, even comic, flirtation with political movements he assumed might bring this social ideal into practise. It was the measure of Lewis's naivety that he saw in these movement only the popularisation of classicism.

Lewis once described his political position as that of an "anarchist, with a healthy passion for order". [9] Comic and contradictory as this may seem it was in many ways true. Lewis was a supreme individualist who believed that in order for creative individuality to flourish, strictly organised social structures must be initiated. Superficially this made Lewis an illiberal, anti-democratic, authoritarian elitist, and indeed he was these things. Functionally, in the late 1920s and throughout the 1930s, this made him a fascist fellow traveller, a sponsor of dictatorship, and a propagandist for the radical right, he

was also all of these things. But to stop at this point is to create an unworthy fiction. Certainly Lewis was capable of considerable cruelty, in his personal life he was often vindictive and malicious even to his closest friends, similarly in his artistic works he could produce the most damning and wounding imagery. But this interface of politics and personality was constantly intersected by an underlying desire to ameliorate the absurdity of existence and conflict. This was the root of his classicism. It was a remedial care, an antibiotic, an absurdly idealistic antiseptic which would cleanse the world of toxins and create an ideal society. The politics of Lewis's painting and theory are impossible to understand without reference to this root. His politics were the politics of a physician. A physician attempting to revive a corpse, to give life and sense once again to a dissolute being. And to make the heartbeat, art itself, pump faster and stronger.

Of course, there were contradictions here. Lewis was blind to the philistinism of the politics he sponsored. His idealism could never be realised in any practical political programme available to him. And, in fact, his finest skills were diagnostic, analysing and accusing the developments he witnessed in the social world. In consequence for all the prescriptive idealism of his political thought Lewis remained principally a satirist. As such he consistently exposed the negative dimensions of social life, his insights were primarily oppositional and

antagonistic. Clearly, as a "doctor", he was closer to Crippen than to Fleming.

It is possible to isolate the subtle and disceet means by which Lewis's politics informed his art. It is also possible to expose the nature and root of Lewis's complex political attitudes. A more difficult question occurs in accounting for the particularity of Lewis's responses to the contemporary social world. In many ways his responses seem so individual, indeed idiosyncratic, as to avoid any classification. But in fact he was behaving in a manner entirely appropriate to his class, occupation and peer group.

Paradoxically, the sociology of Lewis's radical, retroactive negations can be traced back to the overarching ideology of romanticism. From the early nineteenth century a tendency evolved which isolated the categories of art and artist from the more pragmatic dimensions of social activity. [10] This corresponded with the breakdown of established modes of patronage, notably aristocratic and religious patronage, and the development of an "art-market". Increasingly, throughout this period the artist functions at a distance from his or her patrons and public. The organic relationship which, say, Velazquez had with Philip the fourth of Spain, developed into a mechanistic relationship between the artist as producer, and a distant public as consumer. This relationship was mediated by the figure of the dealer. Consequent upon these

developments was the increasing marginalisation of the artist, and a profound antagonism between the artist's view of creativity as the production of rareified, aesthetic truths, and the consumers evaluation of art as commodity. Increasingly through the nineteenth century artists can be seen to retreat into ever more specialised, ever more esoteric modes of expression. Normally these practises disrupt and usurp the expectations of market and consumer alike. And from this set of circumstances then emerged the ideologies and practices of the avant-gardes.

Such isolation also entailed specific ideational developments. Most notably the idea that artistic production was a specific and highly distinctive form of activity qualitativly distinct from all other material activities. Art was concerned with the autonomous and esoteric realm of the aesthetic which bore little or no relation to the practical, commercial and materialist values inhabiting the everyday world. Consequently the artist was the privileged bearer of these rareified truths, the artist was prophet and seer. This led, of course, to the more extreme forms of individualism practised by artists, and to the inherent elitism of artistic practice and consciousness. Towards the end of the nineteenth century the most extreme characterisation of these processes occurred in the work of Lewis's spiritual father, Nietzsche.

These processes, in all their particularity made Lewis's position possible. The egocentric elitism, the loathing and fear of the common masses, the deification of

creativity and art, the demand for a shift to a "classical" order wherein art and the artist will be returned to a genuinely privileged central position in the social configuration. All of these phenomena were shaped by the overarching culture of romanticism and the fact of a hostile marketplace. Hence the extremism of Lewis's politics, demanding authoritarian government on the one hand, and reviling not only democracy and socialism, but also the practical applications of capitalism.

Naturally this picture is further complicated by the "uniqueness" of Lewis's opposition, and its inherent contradictions. The responses of individual artists were not exclusively overdetermined by the ideology of romanticism. In England, in the first quarter of this century, competing interests of class, nascent and newly emergent political ideologies, and attitudes towards the fact of social change, constantly interrelated. Hence Lewis's split with the Bloomsbury circle in 1913 was not a straightforward difference regarding aesthetic preferences. Nor was his challenge to prominent intellectuals in the polemical texts of the 1920s a disinterested academic debate. Lewis was, in fact, contesting these fragments amongst his peers who were responding sympathetically to liberalism, humanism and the development of democratic institutions. He was particularly hostile to those individuals who splintered their relationships within a dominant upper class, and allied themselves to the emergent democratic groupings. The uniqueness of Lewis's response

then emerges from the fact that he chose a retrogressive position. Where significant splinters of Lewis's peer group chose to develop associations with progressive social tendencies, Lewis chose to radicalise the dynamics of reaction. In doing this he moved beyond the dominant ideology of his class, patrician conservatism, and countered the emergent ideologies of socialism and liberalism to which a majority of enlightened intellectuals were affiliated. This "radicalism" made Lewis the "Enemy", informed his attacks upon intellectuals, and created the dehumanised metaphysic which inhabits his painting. Indeed this "radicalism" forms the base of his alternative modernism.

Of course Lewis was not entirely alone in adopting this position. Indeed a small, but significant, proportion of the figures in English modernism displayed these tendencies. Eliot leaned eventually towards monarchism, anglo-catholicism and the principles of a high Tory. His cultural theory was elitist and hierarchical in much the same way as Lewis's. Though politically he remained cautious, his oblique anti-semitism indicated an underlying sympathy with the ideational trajectories of crypto-fascist thought. More outregeously, Pound declaimed his anti-semitism, hatred of usury, and promotion of Mussolini's ideals in the most disingenuous and disarming manner. If Eliot's politics were completely submerged in his work, and Lewis's only discreetly announced, then Pound's were entirely transparent, functioning both as surface and core of his work. The figure all these

individuals had in common was T.E. Hulme. And his significance should never be underestimated. It was in particular Hulme's eccentric vision of the "classical" that they all shared and developed. It was Hulme's unremitting pessimism which underlay their social programmes. And it was mediated versions of Hulme's politics they eventually were to articulate. But through all this there stood the resounding fact of social isolation and marginalisation, artists locked in an internal conflict overdetermined by the social processes of late capitalism, kicking, screaming at, and mourning a system which was progressively undervaluing, even undermining, their activities.

It was in this confluence, of the social and the individual, that Lewis's thought-world congealed. There existed a set of objective social conditions to which he responded. He responded as an individual, but not an entirely autonomous individual. Indeed he responded using concepts and categories freely available within the ideological parameters of his social class. Certainly he was influenced by other individuals, but they too had their responses overdetermined by the fact of their social position. Hence it was possible to select from varieties of socialism, liberalism, conservatism and extreme authoritarianism. What was not available, for example, was any serious idea of a return to a religious or monarchist state, or any conception of an ecologically determined politics. In other words the extreme of Lewis's individualism was fictitious within the particular social

environment. But the fact of his appeal to the category of autonomy and individuality was wholly consistent with the available ideological framework. Lewis's "uniqueness" consisted in the intensity of his use of this idea. For it conditioned all aspects of his work, mapping out the contours of his satire, his external approach to portraiture, and his universal pronouncements on the condition of Man. More pertinently it informed his continual contest with his peers and mentors. Where the category of individualism became the sine qua non of existence, then the appropriate response to others was the establisment of a singular personality in opposition to the other. This encouraged not only the rejection of delinquent contemporaries, but even the intellectuals closest to Lewis in temperament and outlook. Through these conditions Lewis became trapped in a profile of permanent opposition, expressing his personal "freedom" through the negation of all significant others, only relenting and relapsing when the exegencies of actual livelihood were at stake.

Lewis was so absorbed in the construction of his individual "free" ego that he failed to recognise society as anything other than an appendage to his personality and needs. Politics insinuated themselves upon his work because society had failed to provide the stable order needed for him to flex his creative muscle. Society needed restructuring and reorganisation precisely so that he might have the space in which to work. Ultimately the politics were entirely egocentric and for that reason were not

politics at all. In the most bourgeois of conceits Lewis believed that society's function was to provide a platform for his individuality. Indeed here society does not really exist, only the individual exists.

Naturally then Lewis conflated historical change with ontological crisis. Democracy was a manifestation of the innate "lack of grace" in the human condition. It functioned as both cause and effect of contemporary decline and decay. The processes of democratisation and change needed analysis only in order that their "miscalculations" and "distractions" could be reversed. If this failed then the next best thing was the popularisation of authoritarian principles. having the appearance of mass involvement, but devoid of its substance. This authoritarianism could be named "classical", and indeed for all the posturing of Lewis's classicism" it was only a partial resolution of the "fact" of "original sin". And it was this "fact" that lay at the base of Lewis's theory and his art, an unremitting, entirely destructive, pessimism.

For all of this Lewis's achievements were considerable. He was, after all, responding to the loss of meaning, experienced by many intellectuals, in contemporary civilisation. Faced with a consciousness of the absurd pointlessness of existence itself, and cast adrift in a universe without centre or sense, Lewis set about reconstructing a world of fact and value. Many of his responses were admirable. He was quick to formulate a

critique of modernism, particularly its increasingly esoteric and relativist tendencies. He sponsored, through the early satires and theory, an alternative modernism which would continually refer back to "life" itself as the key motive of a meaningful art. In the demented patriotism of the first world war, he recognised the grotesque horror of mechanised destruction. From within, he articulated an imagery which exposed this tragedy, and constructed one of the few bodies of painting which were genuinely anti-war. Later, in the 1920s, he reacted again to the pseudo-spirituality, the redundant metaphysic, of orthodox modernism by returning to the figure, and an art of intellectual conscience. Throughout the 1930s, he formulated a position which he believed, however mistakenly, would counter the aimless and fragmented conditions of modern life with "an imminent classical serenity - leisure and abundance". When he came to understand that this vision was less benign than he had hoped, he offered a revision and expressed a humility quite uncharacteristic of him. Towards the end of his life he proved conciliatory, a kindly critic, he clutched on to the vestiges of his earlier beliefs, though now emptied of political imperatives. He was a figure who had the strength to continue an opposition to his age, to condemn decay and decadence, and to demand respect for ideals and values which were other than commercial and materialist. It was the consistency of his negation, despite personal

humiliation and impoverishment, which made his lifework so remarkable.

Against this there were the miscalculations and the considerable political naivety. In a sense these were inescapable, for the politics were an inevitable element of his broader system of thought and value. They were an aspect of his supreme egoism and exaggerated individualism. Flowing naturally from his demand for a stable order wherein he could express himself, and corrupted into the systematic obliteration of everything that represented the other. Hence while his negation was worthy it was ultimately destructive, for the ego could only triumph through the subjugation of humanity, and in this scenario a single atom is left to float, pointlessly, in a darkened void.

Lewis, most probably, was aware of this final absurdity. There is a scrap amongst his manuscripts where he discussed his intellectual development, he noted that he had learned "...early in life...to shun hope altogether".[11] This is surely the key to Lewis's work. He was, like so many of his generation, like his great mentor Nietzsche, a hopeless nihilist. And like so many of his peers he sought to recover meaning in a meaningless world by returning to the abstract sphere of the aesthetic. His art, comic, tragic, absurd, satirical, metaphysical, political, confessed to the grotesque horror of hopelessness and simultaneously attempted to rise above this. Life was negation, art a partial salvation. Where, for example, he pressed the idea of the "deadness" of his imagery he

was, at once, highlighting the non-being at the centre of existence, and, provoking a complex resurrection, and "immortality", through art. This, of course, was confused by the other element of his will to deaden his subjects, the need to assert the primacy of his ego. And so these dynamics spin in a complex, chaotic, eccentric universe. Bound together by the fact of Lewis's individuality, and his particular responses to a specific exterior reality. Tied, ultimately, to the moral decay, intellectual surrender, and social disintegration of industrial capitalism.

There is a chapter in Tarr which Lewis entitled "A jest too deep for laughter". Significantly it includes a scene, simultaneously horrific and comically absurd, where the artist-manqué Kreisler rapes Tarr's mistress, Bertha. Symbolically this represented Kreisler's return to "nature" and abandonment of art. There was something inevitable about this return to the most fundamental condition of human kind. Art was the paragon, to be strived for, constantly sought, and attained only through an infinite regeneration of the creative "will". The joke, of course, was that this was unattainable, for even the strongest "will" must return to nature, eventually. Lewis constantly encountered the absurdity of this fact, and recognised:

> "a practical joke of the primitive and whimsical order, in its madness and inconsequence. But it was of a solemn and lonely kind, more like the tricks that desperate people play upon themselves...".[12]

If the essence of Lewis's life's project can be captured, it is captured here. In the face of a hostile environment, to aggressively seek out meaning and sense, all the time knowing the pointlessness and ridiculous absurdity of that venture. Finally to leave behind only an echo, the sound of a ringing and hollow laughter.

CHAPTER VII: Footnotes

1. It might be argued that a figure like Kandinsky most clearly fits this type of interpretation. However, the theoretical development of this argument can be found especially in H. Marcuse The Aesthetic Dimension.

2. Of course a number of important surrealists went as far as joining the communist party, these included Breton himself, the poet Paul Eluard, and the poet/novelist Louis Aragon.

3. The controversy over Picasso's Guernica, led in Britain by the "Marxist" art historian Anthony Blunt, focussed precisely on this issue.

4. Lewis was entirely damning of this category of individual whom he had dissected in The Art of Being Ruled. Part of the vitriol he poured on the Bloomsbury circle related to their effeminate characteristics. In his unpublished article on The Bloomsburies, 1934, held at Cornell University, he describes how "several gentlemen...have to perfection the stammering and halting, blinking and blushing habits of a Bloomsbury to the manor-born". The fictional counterpart of Spender in The

Apes of God is Daniel Bolegn who is continually blushing, and undergoes the full trauma of the male/female inversion in the hilarious "Lesbian - Ape" chapter of that satire.

5. Reported in J. Meyers The Enemy, op.cit., p. 228, and confirmed by Naomi Mitchison in conversation with myself, though she could not recollect further details.

6. Rose, The Letters of Wyndham Lewis, op.cit., p. 274.

7. Rose, The Letters of Wyndham Lewis, op.cit., p. 275.

8. McLuchan, whom Lewis met in Canada has frequently cited his debt to Lewis's work. His publication, in 1954, of Counterblast was a homily to Lewis's influence.

9. Lewis offered this whimsical definition of his politics in The Diabolical Principle and the Dithyrambic Spectator, London 1931. It was in the first essay, `The Diabolical Principle' that he suggested he was "partly communist and partly fascist, with a distinct streak of monarchism in my marxism, but at bottom anarchist, with a healthy passion for order", p. 126.

10. The processes were most clearly traced in Raymond Williams Culture and Society, London, 1958.

11. MS. Dept. of Rare Books, Cornell University, New York, U.S.A. Probably dating from 1940.

12. Lewis, Tarr, op.cit., p. 175.

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This bibliography is divided into three sections. Section one consists of unpublished letters, manuscripts and recorded material. The vast bulk of Lewis's archive is housed in the Department of Rare Books, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York State. This unique material was bought by Cornell University in 1960 with additional material being acquired in 1972. The archive has not, as yet, been properly systematised and items have not been numbered. Consequently manuscripts here are identified by a title where this is available. In relation to manuscripts I have listed only those which are relevant to the thesis.

In 1963 W.K. Rose produced an edited volume of some of the more important letters from Lewis's pen. Still, this volume consists of considerably less than fifty per cent of the Lewis letters housed at Cornell. Where, in my text, I have used material reproduced in Rose, these references have been acknowledge in footnote citations. Otherwise letters remain in the Cornell archive where they are housed in boxes, each of which covers a circumscribed chronological period. Because there are no reference numbers for these letters they are acknowledged in this bibliography under a general heading. Similarly letters to Lewis from named individuals remain improperly catalogues. In this bibliography I have listed only those correspondences which are relevant to the production of the thesis. These are listed under a general heading indicated by the sender's name. Some further details of the collection at Cornell can be found in W.K. Rose's Wyndham Lewis at Cornell, Cornell University, N.Y., 1961. And, in Mary F. Daniels's Wyndham Lewis, A Descriptive Catalogue of the Manuscript Material in the Department of Rare Books, Cornell University Library, N.Y., 1972.

Section two lists material published contemporaneously with the events analysed in this thesis. All significant work published by Lewis, books, journals and articles, is listed. Similarly important contemporary material published by figures within Lewis's orbit, and relevant to his developing attitudes is cited within this section.

The third section is a selected list of secondary published material. This covers principally the major contextual works, and contributions pertinent to scholarship in the fields of Lewis studies, art theory and aesthetics, political history, sociological analysis, etc.

In its entirety this bibliography includes all works which have a direct bearing upon the subject area of this thesis. And, lists the background material which has been utilised in the completion of this work.

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POLITICAL TRAJECTORIES IN THE PAINTING OF P. WYNDHAM LEWIS

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Illustrations.

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7.	Lewis	*Cafe*, pen and ink wash with conte crayon and gouache, 8¼" x 5¼", Private Collection, 1910-11.
8.	Lewis	*Dieppe Fishermen*, pen and ink, 10 " x 8 ", Private Collection, 1910.
9.	Lewis	*Architect with Green Tie*, pen and ink with gouache, 9½" x 5¼", Private Collection, 1909.
10.	Lewis	*The Theatre Manager*, pen and ink with watercolour, 11 " x 12 ", Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 1909.
11.	Lewis	*Courtship*, pen and ink with chalk, 10 " x 8 ", Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 1912.
12.	Lewis	*Nijinski*, pen and ink wash, 7 " x 6", Private Collection, 1914.
13.	Lewis	*Figure Holding a Flower*, pen and ink with gouache, 14½" x 11 ", Private Collection, 1912.

14.	Lewis	Smiling Woman Ascending a Stair, charcoal and gouache, 37½" x 25½", Vint Collection, 1911.
15.	Lewis	Dancers, pen and ink with watercolour, 11 " x 11½", Private Collection, 1912.
16.	Lewis	Man and Woman, chalk, pen and ink wash with gouache, 14½" x 10¼", Anthony D'Offay, 1912.
17.	Lewis	Musicians, medium unknown, size unknown, whereabouts unknown, 1913.
18.	Lewis	Timon of Athens: Alcibiades, printed portfolio, 10 " x 15¼", 1913.
19.	Carlo Carra	Funeral of the Anarchist Galli, oil on canvas, 6' 6¼" x 8' 6", Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1910-11.
20.	Lewis	Timon of Athens: Act IV, printed portfolio, 10 " x 15¼", 1913.
21.	Lewis	Composition, pen and ink with watercolour, 13½" x 10½", Tate Gallery, London, 1913.
22.	Edward Wadsworth	Radiation, reproduced from Blast 1, 1914.
23.	Lewis	Portrait of an Englishwoman, pen and ink with watercolour, 22" x 15", The Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut, 1913.
24.	Lewis	Workshop, oil on canvas, 30" x 24", Private Collection, 1914-15.
25.	Lewis	Red Duet, chalk with gouache, 15¼" x 22¼", Private Collection, 1914.
26.	Luigi Russolo	Rebellion, oil on canvas, 4' 11" x 7'6½", Gemeente Museum, The Hague, 1911.
27.	Lewis	Tyros: A Reading of Ovid, oil on canvas, 5' 5" x 2' 11", Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh, 1920-21.

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29. Lewis — A Battery Shelled, oil on canvas, 6' x 10' 5", Imperial War Museum, London, 1919.

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31. Paul Nash — The Void, oil on canvas, Imperial War Museum, London, 1918.

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34. Lewis — Eugenie, black chalk, 13" x 8½", Private Collection, 1922.

35. Lewis — Seated Woman, black chalk, 12½" x 9", Private Collection, 1920.

36. Lewis — Edwin Evans, oil on canvas, 4' 11" x 3' 8½", Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh, 1922.

37. Lewis — Self Portrait as a Tyro, oil on canvas, 2' 5" x 1' 5¼", Ferens Art Gallery, Hull, 1920-21.

38. Lewis — Portrait of T.S. Eliot, oil on canvas, 4' 4" x 2' 9½", Durban Art Gallery, South Africa, 1938.

39. Lewis — The Convalescent, oil on canvas, 2' x 2' 6", Private Collection, 1933.

40. Lewis — Group of Suppliants, oil on canvas, 2' 6" x 2', Private Collection, 1933.

41. Lewis — One of the Stations of the Dead, oil on canvas, 4' 2" x 2' 6½", Aberdeen Art Gallery, 1933.

42. Lewis — Inferno, oil on canvas, 5' x 3' 4", National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia, 1937.

43. Paul Nash — Harbour and Room, oil on canvas, 3' x 2' 4", Edward James Foundation, 1932-36.

44. Lewis — Two Beach Babies, oil on canvas, 1'8" x 2', Rugby Art Gallery, 1933.

45. Lewis — Inca and the Birds, oil on canvas, 2' 3" x 1' 10", Arts Council, London, 1933.

46. Lewis — The Surrender of Barcelona, oil on canvas, 2'9" x 2', Tate Gallery, London, 1936.

47. Lewis — Naomi Mitchison, pencil and wash, 11" x 9", Private Collection, 1933.

48. Lewis — Viscount Rothermere, pencil and watercolour, 13¼" x 9 ", Private Collection, 1932.

49. Lewis — Landscape with Northmen, oil on canvas, 2' 2" x 1' 7½", Private Collection, 1936-37.

50. Lewis — Oswald Mosely, pencil or chalk, size unknown, whereabouts unknown, 1934.

51. Lewis — Oswald Mosely, pen on ink, 13½" x 9½", Private Collection, 1937.

52. Lewis — Roy Campbell, pencil and watercolour 9" x 7", Private Collection, 1936.

53. Lewis — Portrait of Stephen Spender, oil on canvas, 3' 3½" x 2', Stoke Art Gallery, 1939.

54. Lewis — Portrait of Naomi Mitchison, oil on canvas, 3' 4" x 2' 6", Private Collection, 1939.

55. Lewis — Portrait of Josephine Plummer, oil on canvas, 2' 5½" x 1' 7½", Private Collection, 1939.

56. Lewis — Portrait of John MacLeod, oil on canvas, 2' 6" x 1' 8", Private Collection, 1938.

57. Lewis — Froanna - A Portrait of the Artist's Wife, oil on canvas, 2' 6" x 2' 1", Kelvingrove Art Gallery, Glasgow, 1937.

58. Lewis — Portrait of Samuel Capen, oil on canvas, 6' 4" x 2' 1", Buffalo University, New York State, 1939.

59. Lewis — Portrait of the Artist's Wife, chalk, pencil and wash, 14 " x 11", Private Collection, 1944.

60. Lewis — Charles Abbott, black chalk with wash, 17 " x 12", Private Collection, 1939.

61. Lewis — Archbishop O'Connor, oil on canvas, 2' 1 " x 2', Assumption University, Ontario, 1944.

62. Lewis — Portrait of Pauline Bondy, oil on canvas, 2' 4½" x 1' 6", Private Collection, 1944.

63. Lewis — Portrait of James Taylor, oil on canvas, 2' 6" x 1' 8½", Private Collection, 1944.

64. Lewis — Hanged Man and Figures, pen and ink, 10 " x 6½", Private Collection, 1940s.

65. Lewis — Composition, pen and ink with water-colour, 12" x 9½", Cornell University, 1940s.

66. Lewis — Walpurgisnacht, pen and ink, 17" x 2' 6", Private Collection, 1950.

67. Lewis — Witch on Cowback, chalk, 11" x 15½", Private Collection, 1941.

68. Lewis — A Man's Form Taking a Fall from a Small Horse, pen and ink with watercolour, 11½" x 17 ", Private Collection, 1941.

69. Lewis — Gestation, black chalk and watercolour, 11 " x 9½", Private Collection, 1941.

70. Lewis — Creation Myth, pen and ink with water-colour, 14½" x 10", Private Collection, 1941-2.

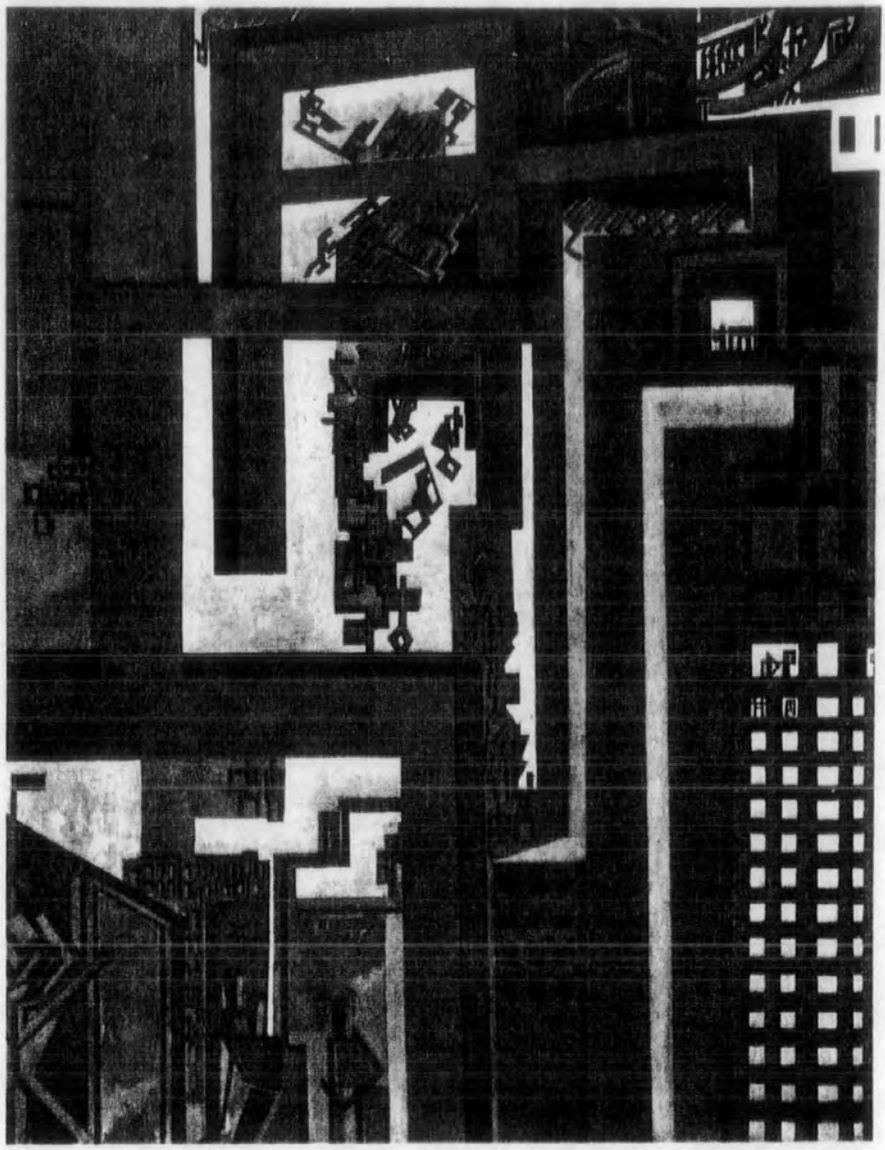
71. Lewis — The Mind of the Artist About to Make a Picture. pen and ink with watercolour, 15⅛ x 12", whereabouts unknown, 1942.

72. Lewis — Portrait of T.S. Eliot, oil on canvas, 2' 10" x 1' 9 ", Magdalene College, Cambridge, 1949.

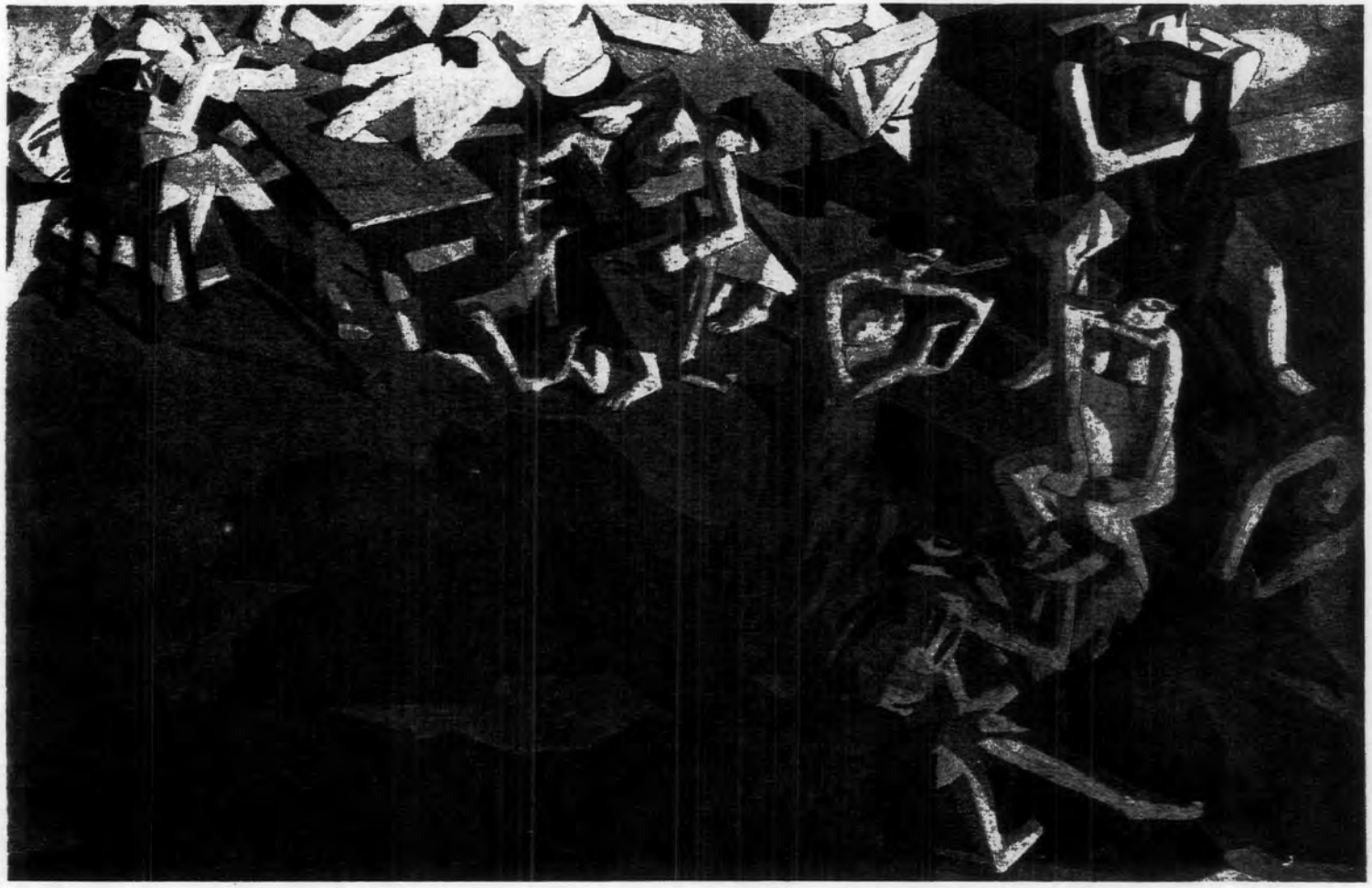
Endpiece — Photograph, Wyndham Lewis when blind, 1952.



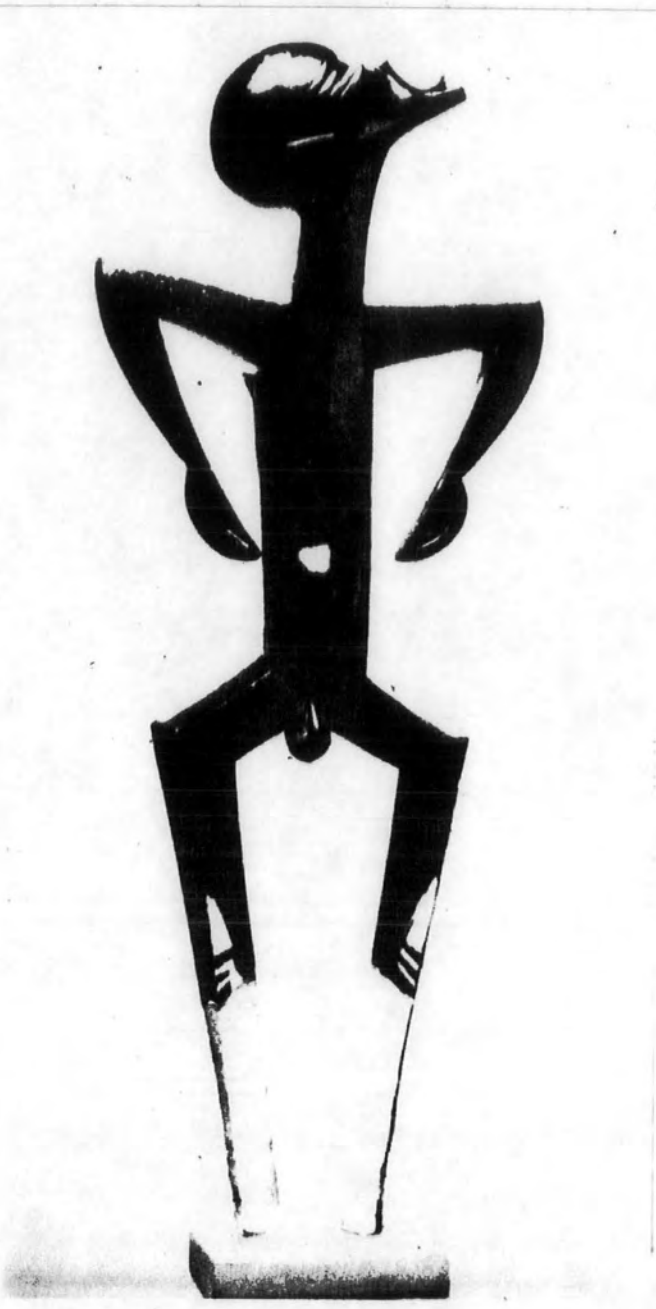
Frontispiece. Photograph, Wyndham Lewis with Smiling Woman Ascending a Staircase and, inset, The Laughing Woman (detail of head), c. 1911.



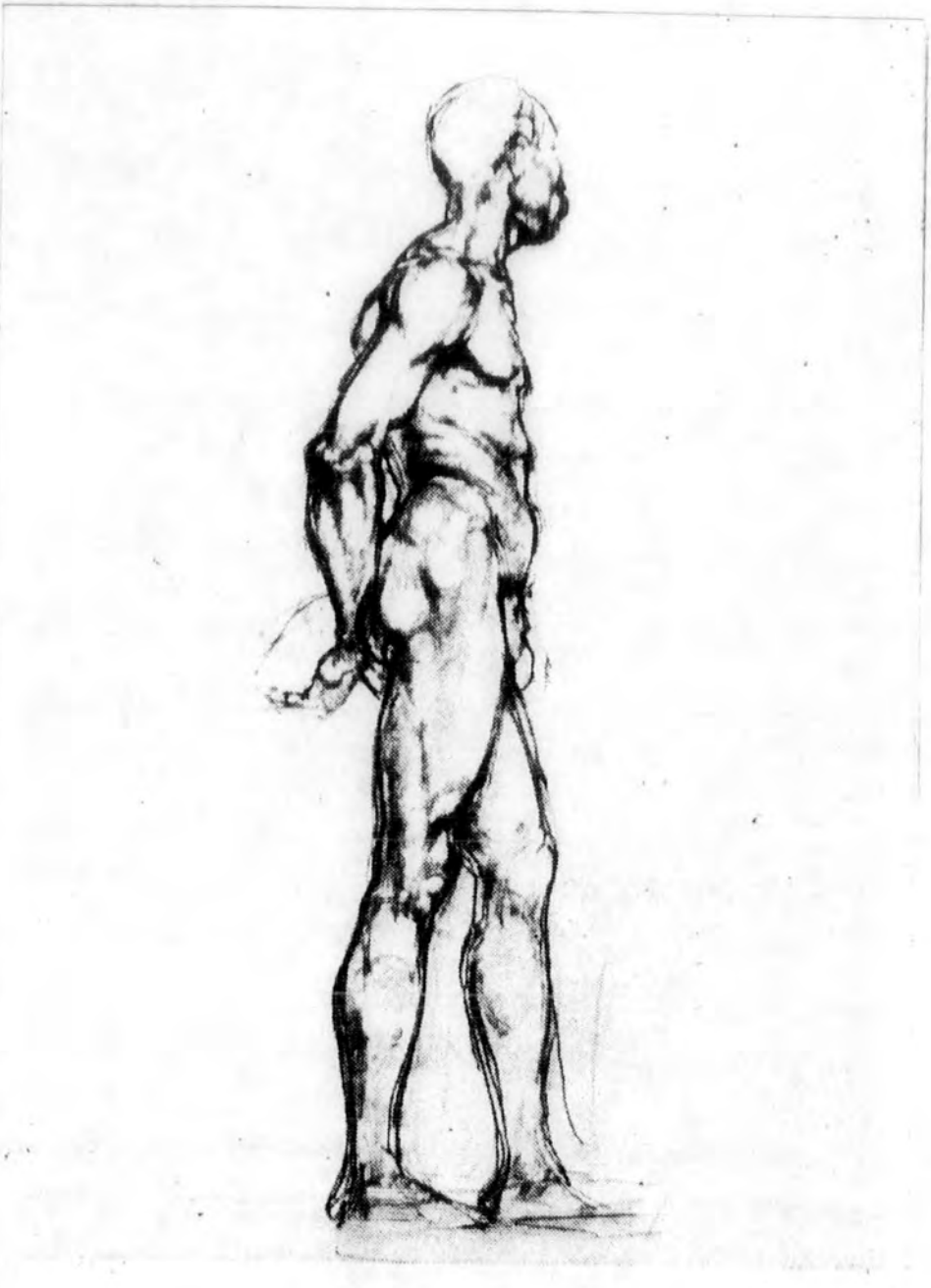
1. Lewis — The Crowd, oil on canvas, 6' 6" x 5', Tate Gallery, London, 1914-15.



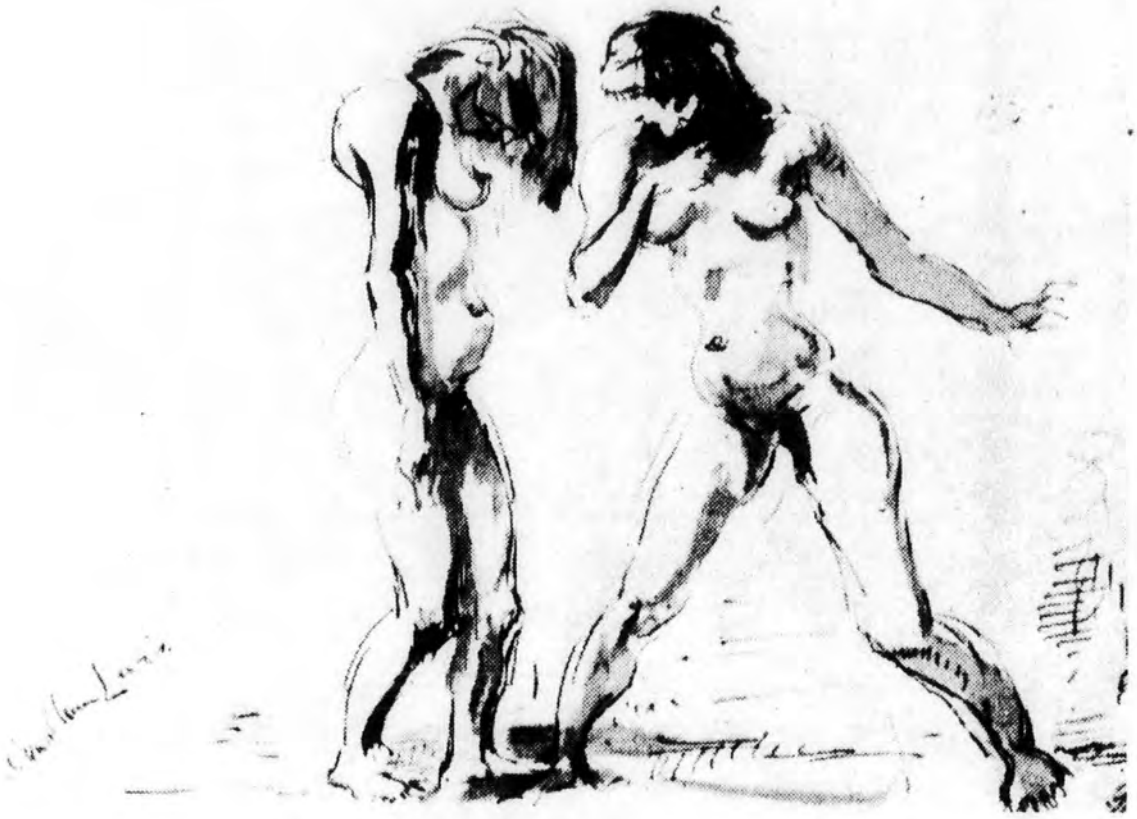
2. William Roberts — <u>Study for the Return of Ulysses</u>, oil on canvas, Castle Museum, Norwich, 1913.



3. Jacob Epstein Cursed be the Day Wherein I was Born, plaster painted red, size unknown, lost, 1913-15.



4. Lewis — Male Nude, Standing, pencil, 17" x 8½", Slade School of Art, London, 1900.



5. Lewis — Two Nudes, pen and ink wash, 9½" x 11½", Private Collection, 1903.



6. Augustus John French Fisherman, oil on canvas, Private Collection, 1907



7. Lewis

Cafe, pen and ink wash with conte crayon and gouache, 8¼" x 5¼", Private Collection, 1910-11.



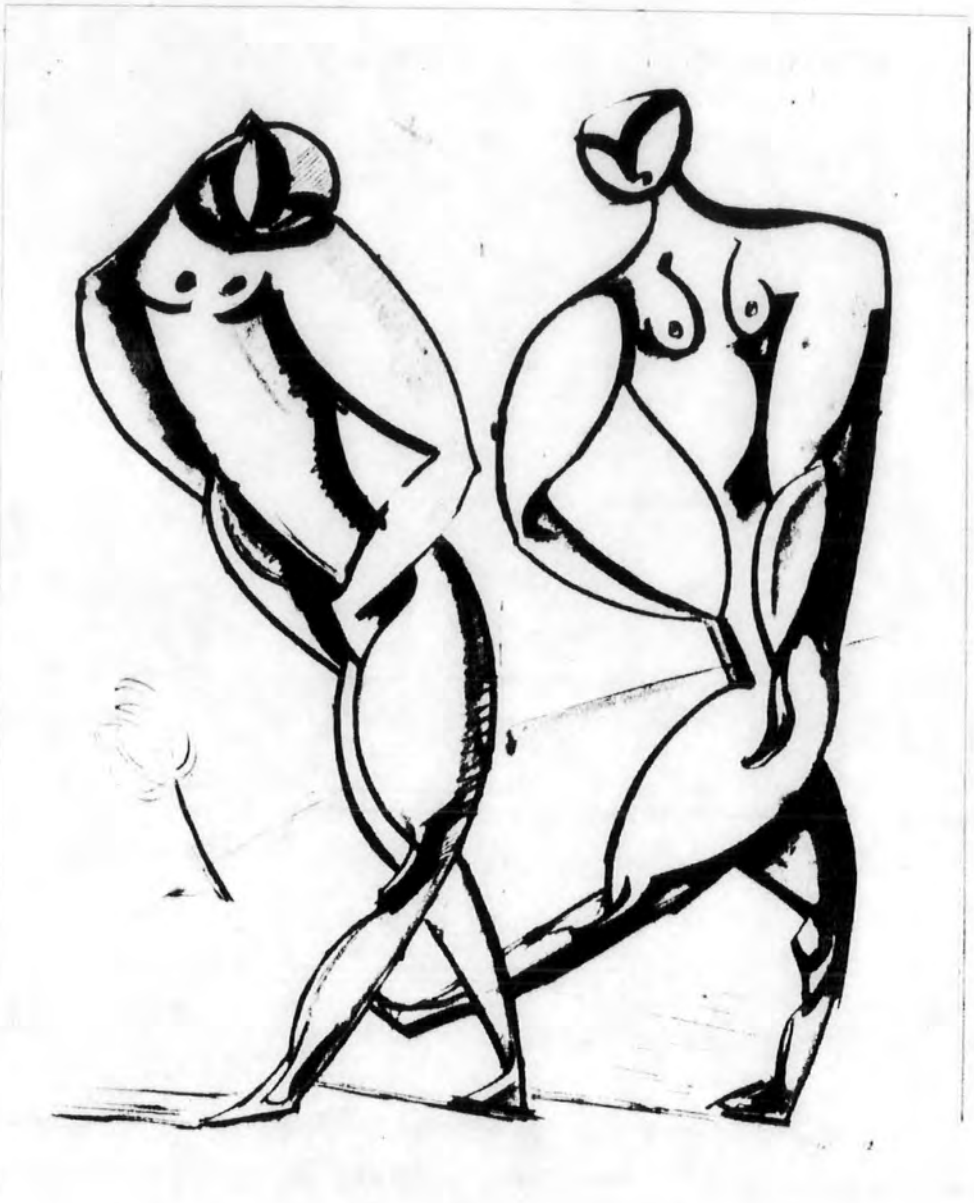
8. Lewis — Dieppe Fishermen, pen and ink, 10 " x 8 ", Private Collection, 1910.



9. Lewis — Architect with Green Tie, pen and ink with gouache, 9½" x 5¼", Private Collection, 1909.



10. Lewis — The Theatre Manager, pen and ink with watercolour, 11 " x 12 ", Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 1909.



11. Lewis — Courtship, pen and ink with chalk, 10 " x 8 ", Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 1912.



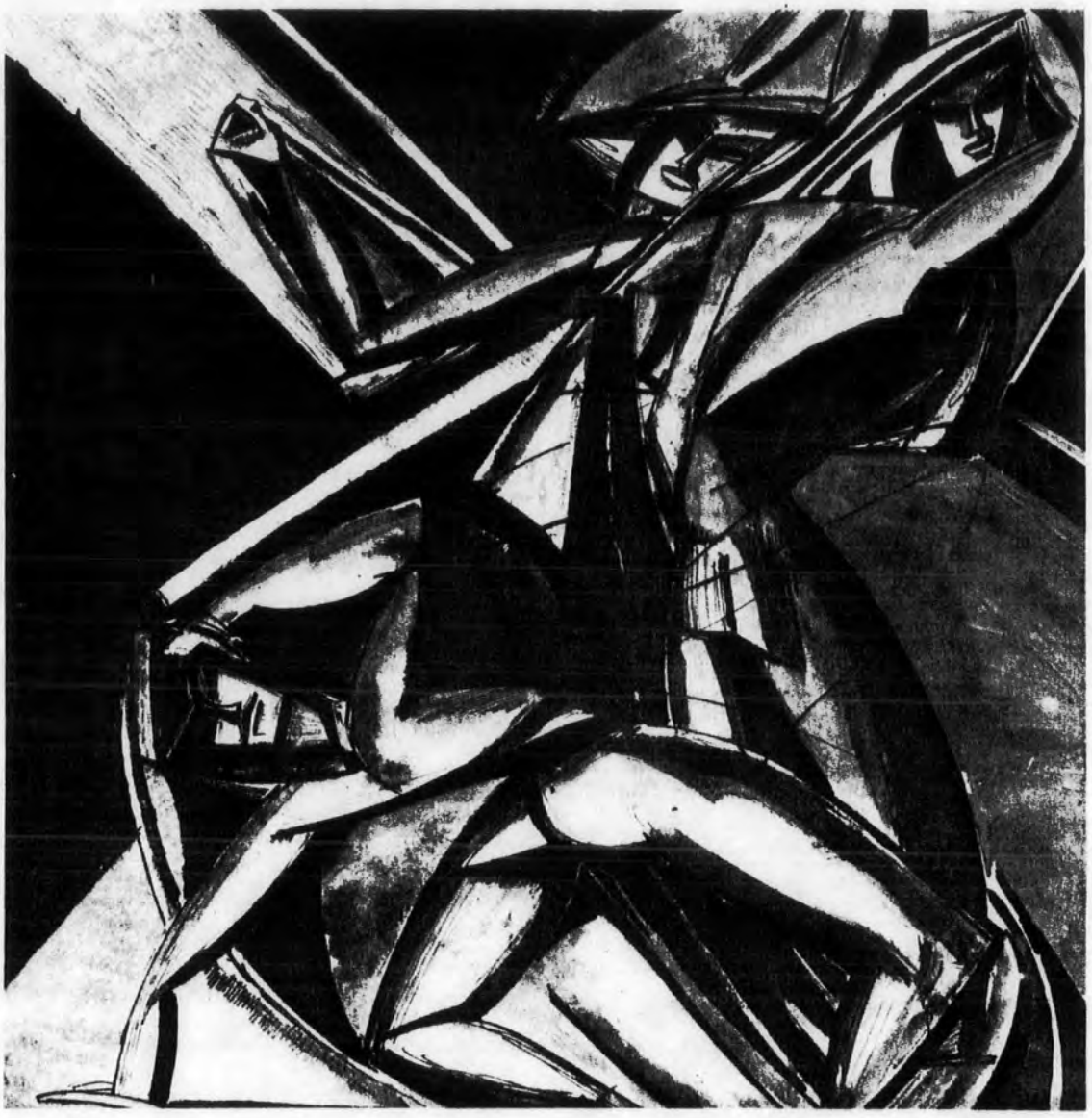
12. Lewis Nijinski, pen and ink wash, 7," x 6", Private Collection, 1914.



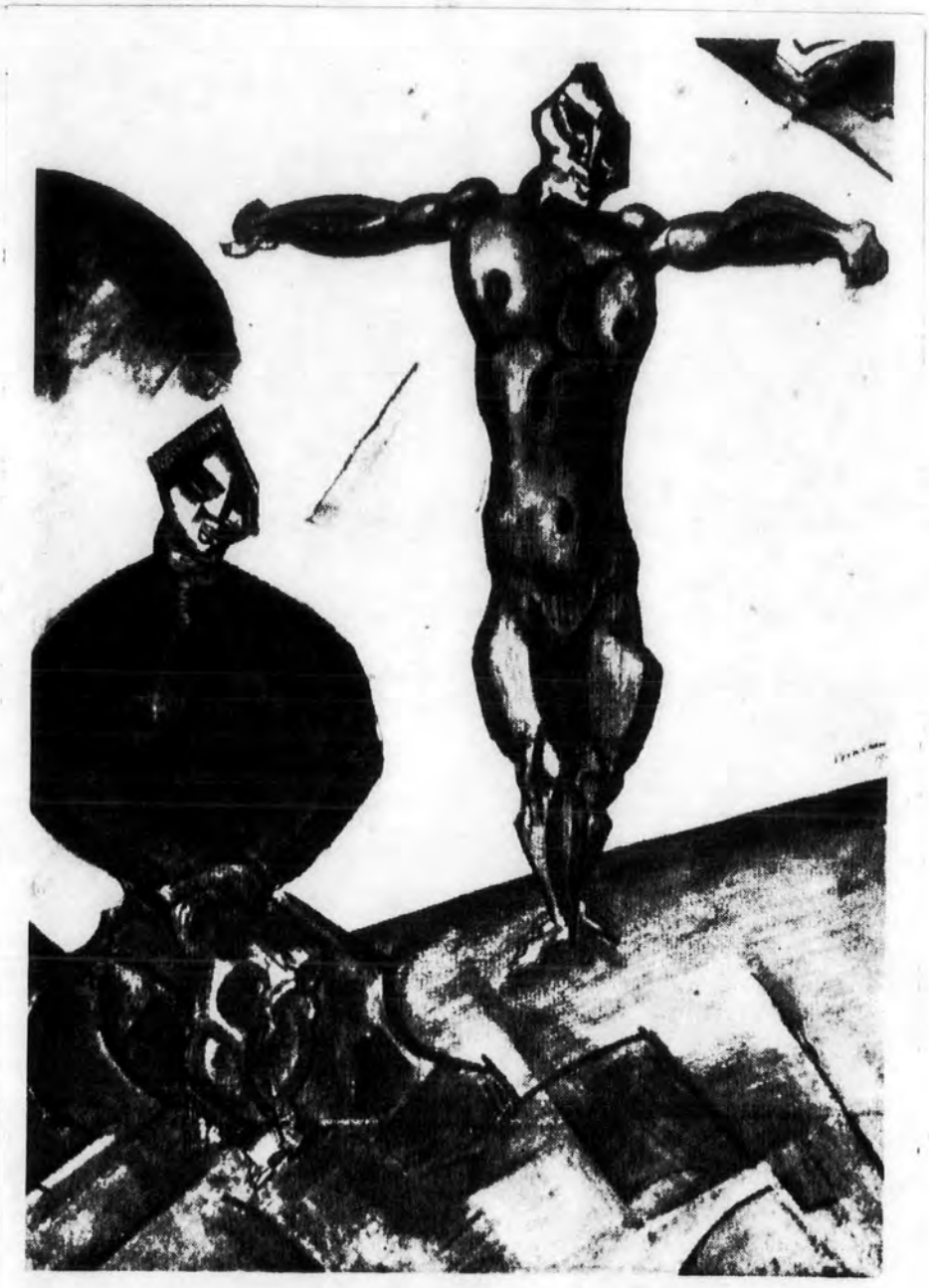
13. Lewis — Figure Holding a Flower, pen and ink with gouache, 14½" x 11 ", Private Collection, 1912.



14. Lewis — Smiling Woman Ascending a Stair, charcoal and gouache, 37½" x 25½", Vint Collection, 1911.



15. Lewis — Dancers, pen and ink with watercolour, 11 " x 11½", Private Collection, 1912.



16. Lewis — Man and Woman, chalk, pen and ink wash with gouache, 14¼" x 10¼", Anthony D'Offay, 1912.



17. Lewis — <u>Musicians</u>, medium unknown, size unknown, whereabouts unknown, 1913.



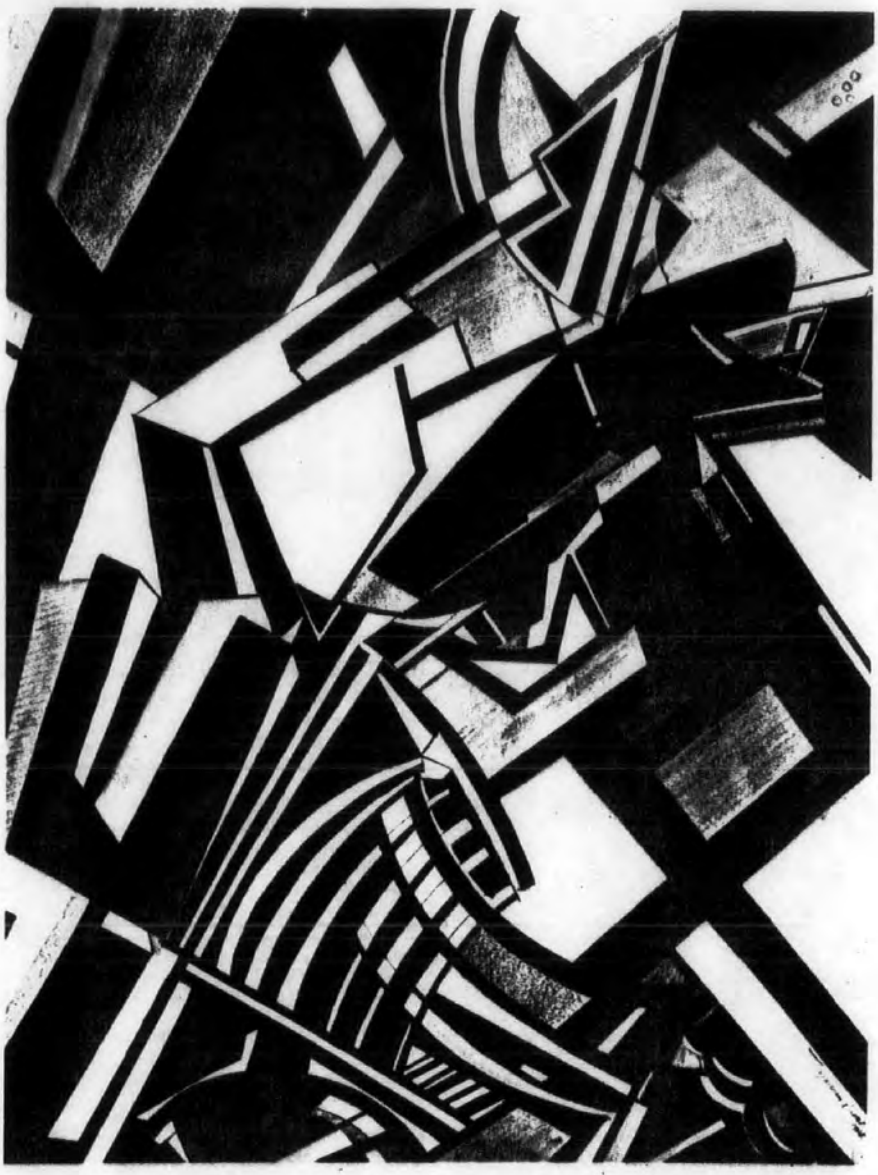
18. Lewis — Timon of Athens: Alcibiades, printed portfolio, 10 " x 15¼", 1913.



19. Carlo Carra — Funeral of the Anarchist Galli, oil on canvas, 6' 6¼" x 8' 6", Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1910-11.



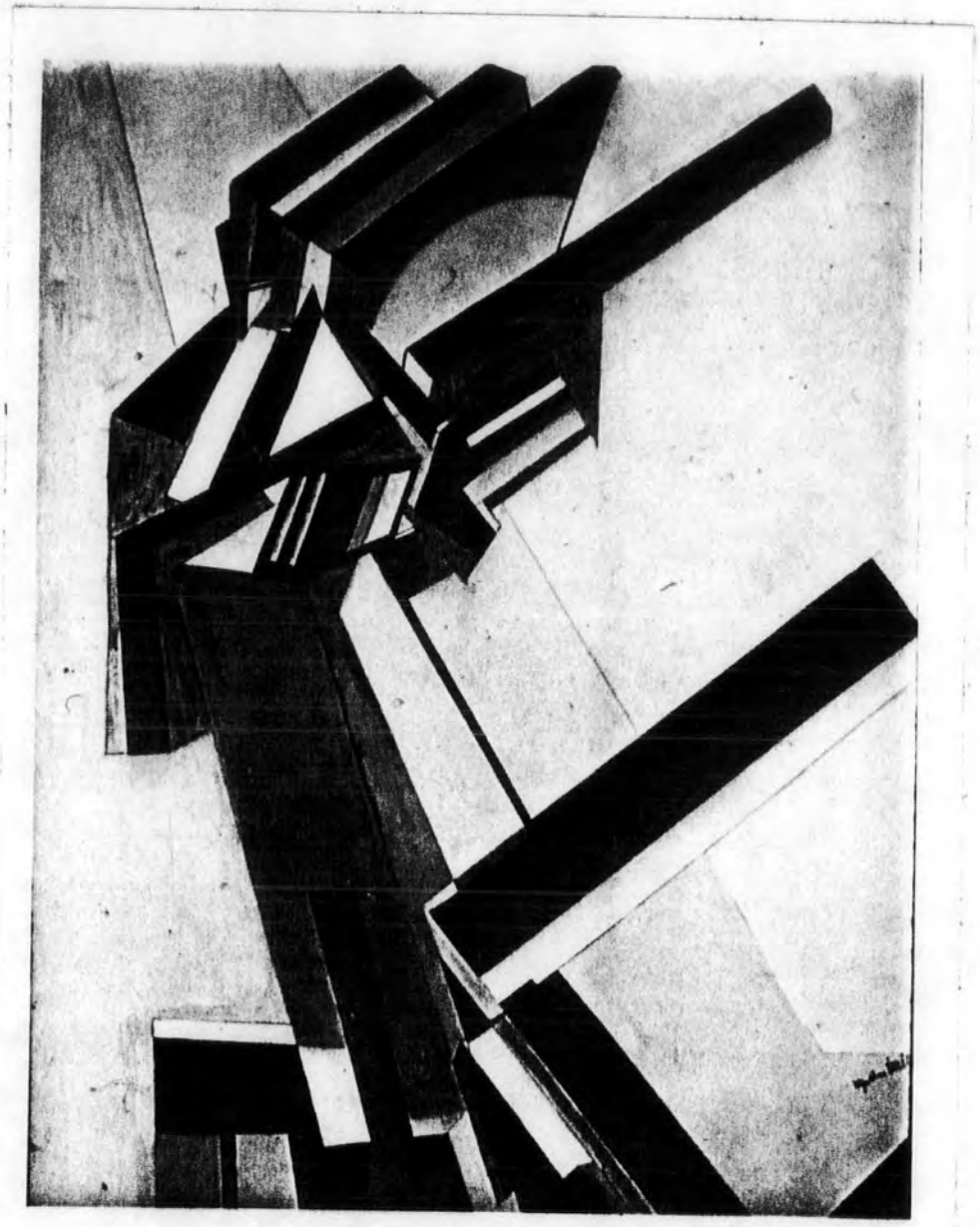
20. Lewis. Timon of Athens: Act IV, printed portfolio, 10 " x 15¼", 1913.



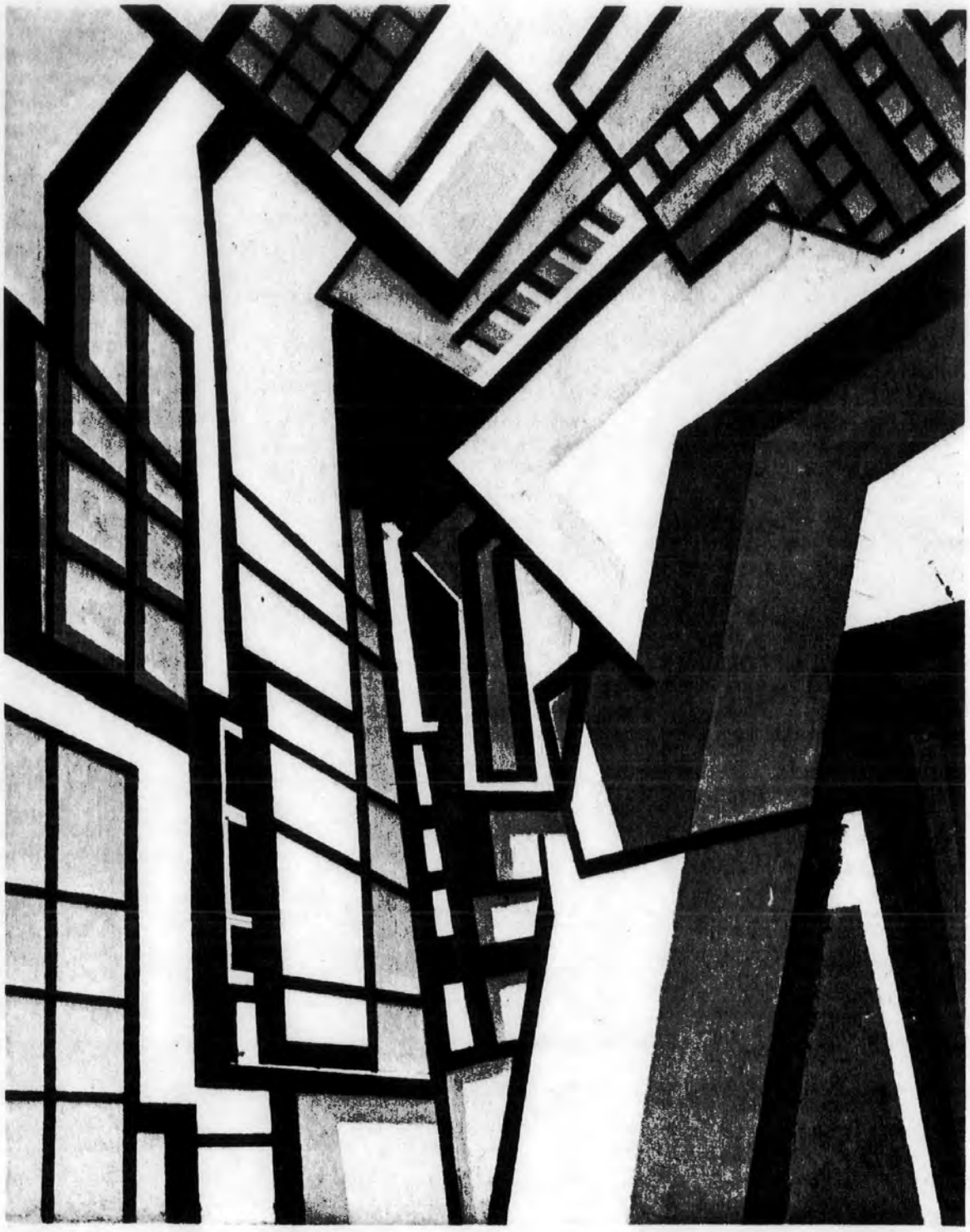
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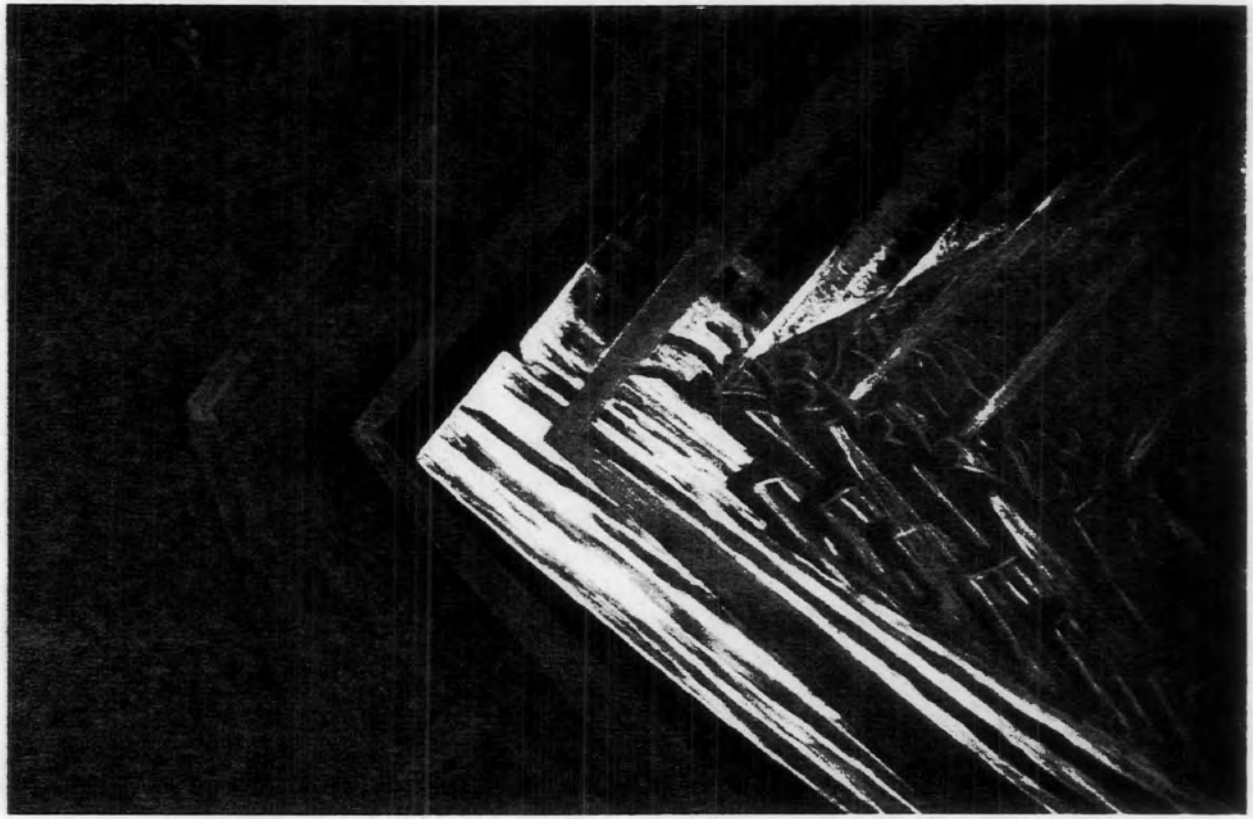


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25. Lewis

Red Duet, chalk with gouache, 15¼" x 22¼", Private Collection, 1914.



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Tyros: A Reading of Ovid, oil on canvas, 5' 5" x 2' 11", Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh, 1920-21.

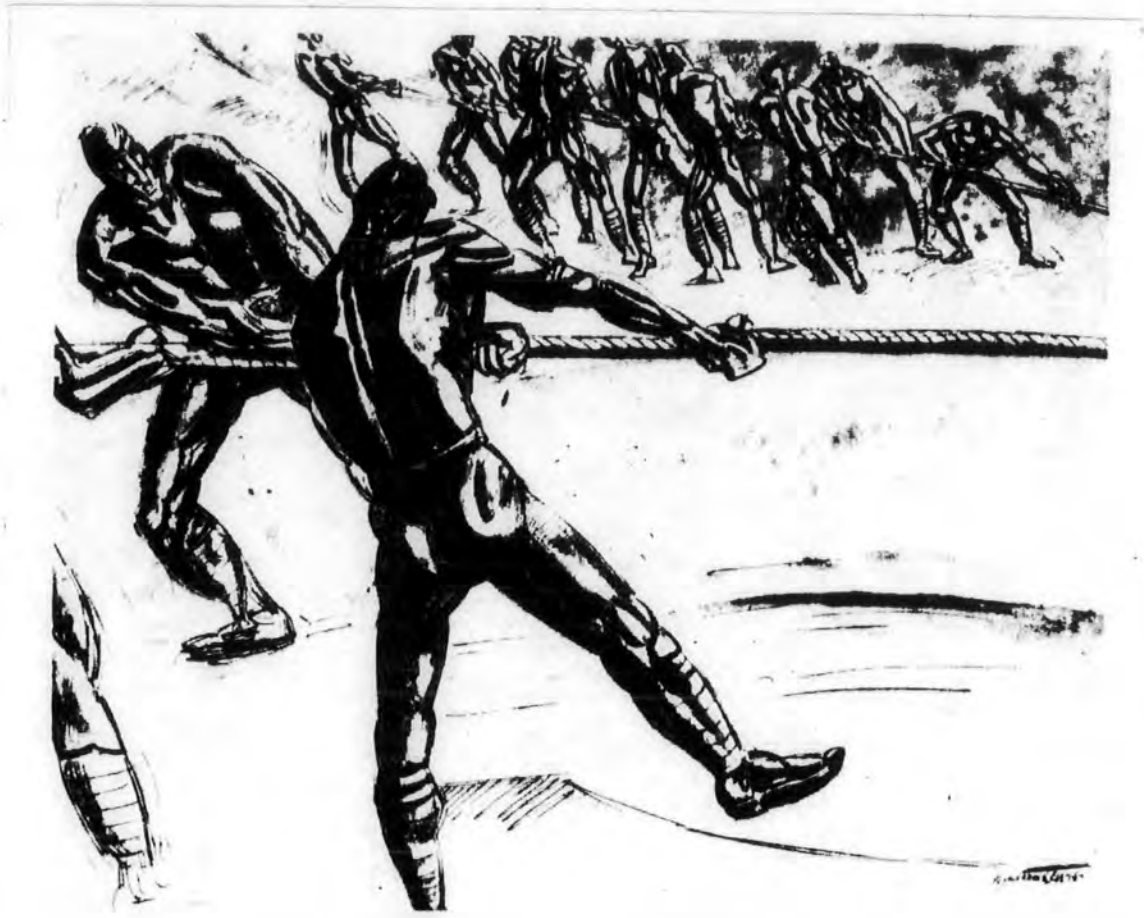


28. Roger Fry — Essay in Abstract Design, oil on paper with bus ticket, 14¼" x 10½", Tate Gallery, London, 1914-15.

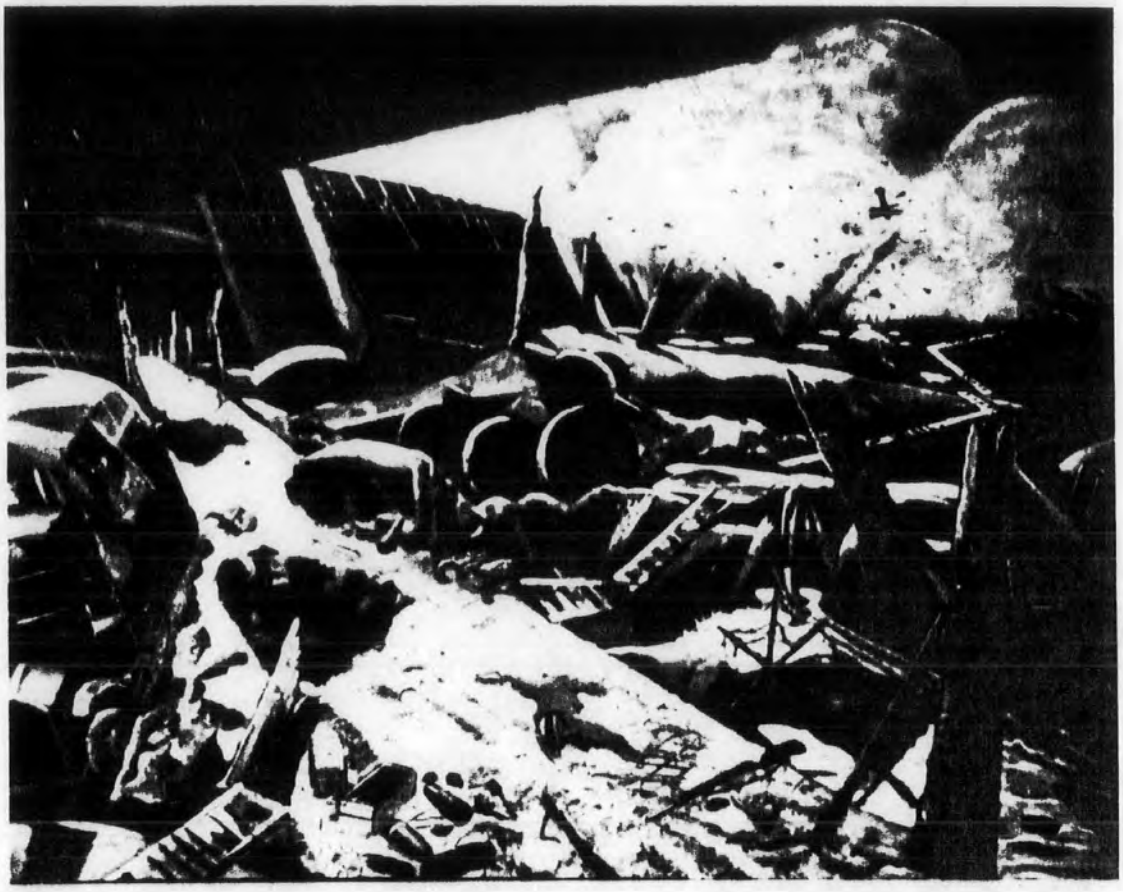


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A Battery Shelled, oil on canvas, 6' x 10' 5", Imperial War Museum, London, 1919.



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31. Paul Nash — The Void, oil on canvas, Imperial War Museum, London, 1918.



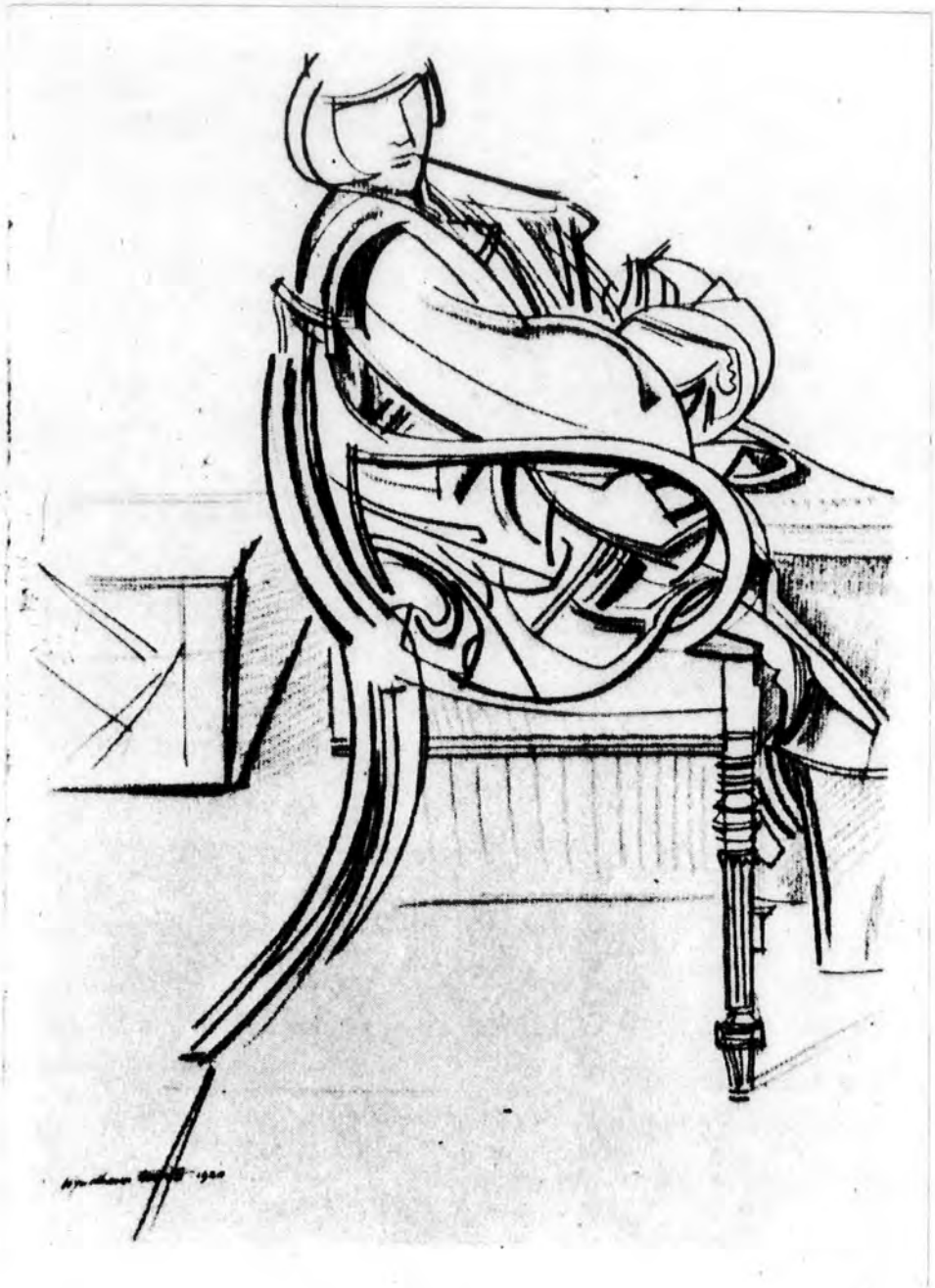
32. Lewis — Praxitella, oil on canvas, 4' 8" x 3' 4", Leeds City Art Gallery, 1920-21.



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36. Lewis

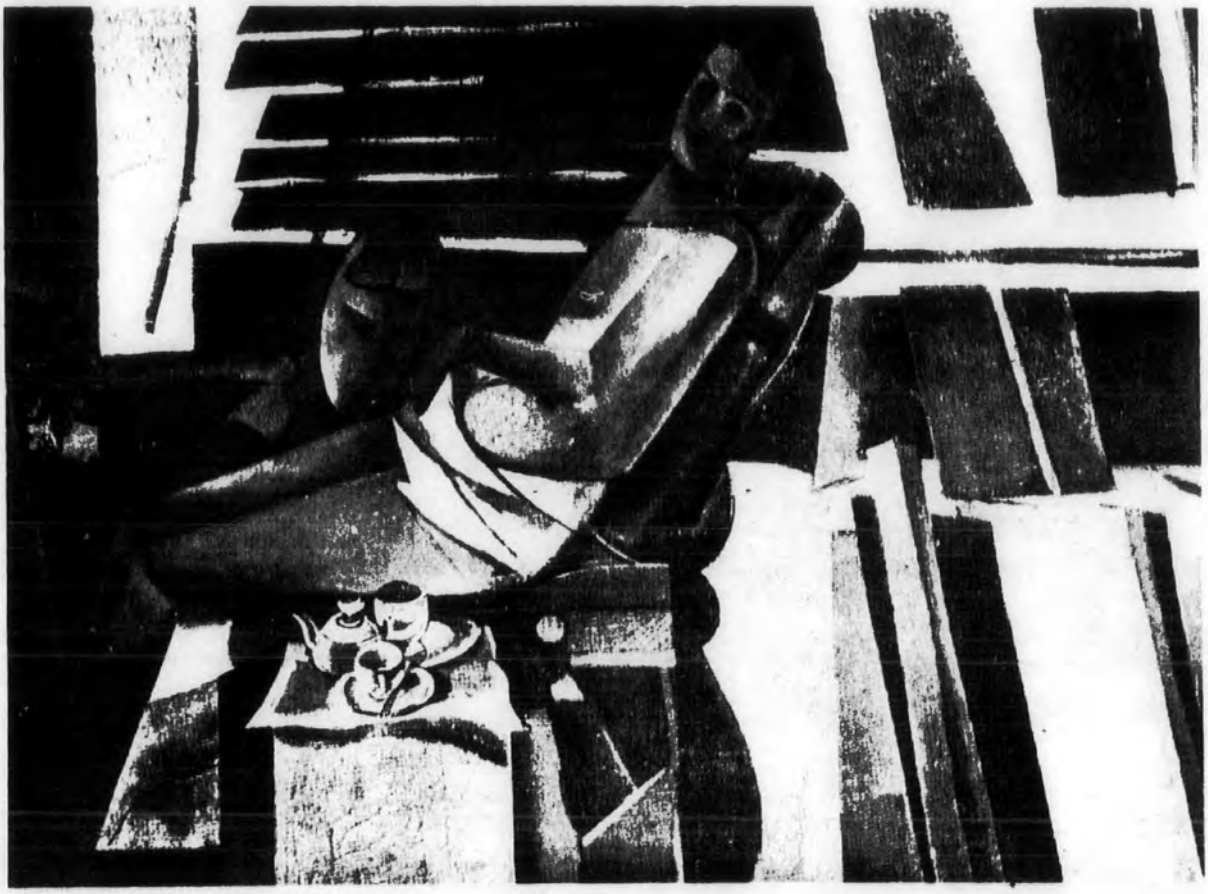
Edwin Evans, oil on canvas, 4' 11" x 3' 8½", Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh, 1922.



37. Lewis — Self Portrait as a Tyro, oil on canvas, 2' 5" x 1' 5¼", Ferens Art Gallery, Hull, 1920-21.



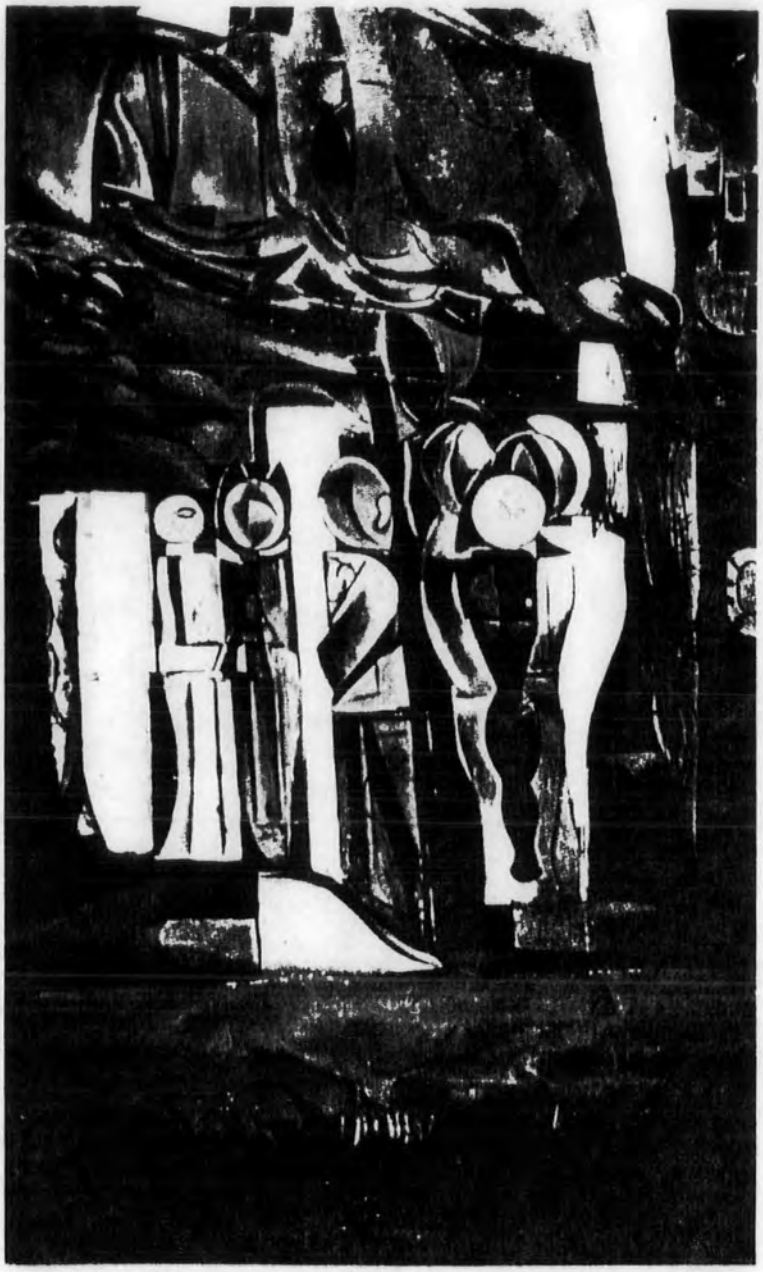
38. Lewis — Portrait of T.S. Eliot, oil on canvas, 4' 4" x 2' 9½", Durban Art Gallery, South Africa, 1938.



39. Lewis — The Convalescent, oil on canvas, 2' x 2' 6", Private Collection, 1933.



40. Lewis — <u>Group of Suppliants</u>, oil on canvas, 2' 6" x 2', Private Collection, 1933.

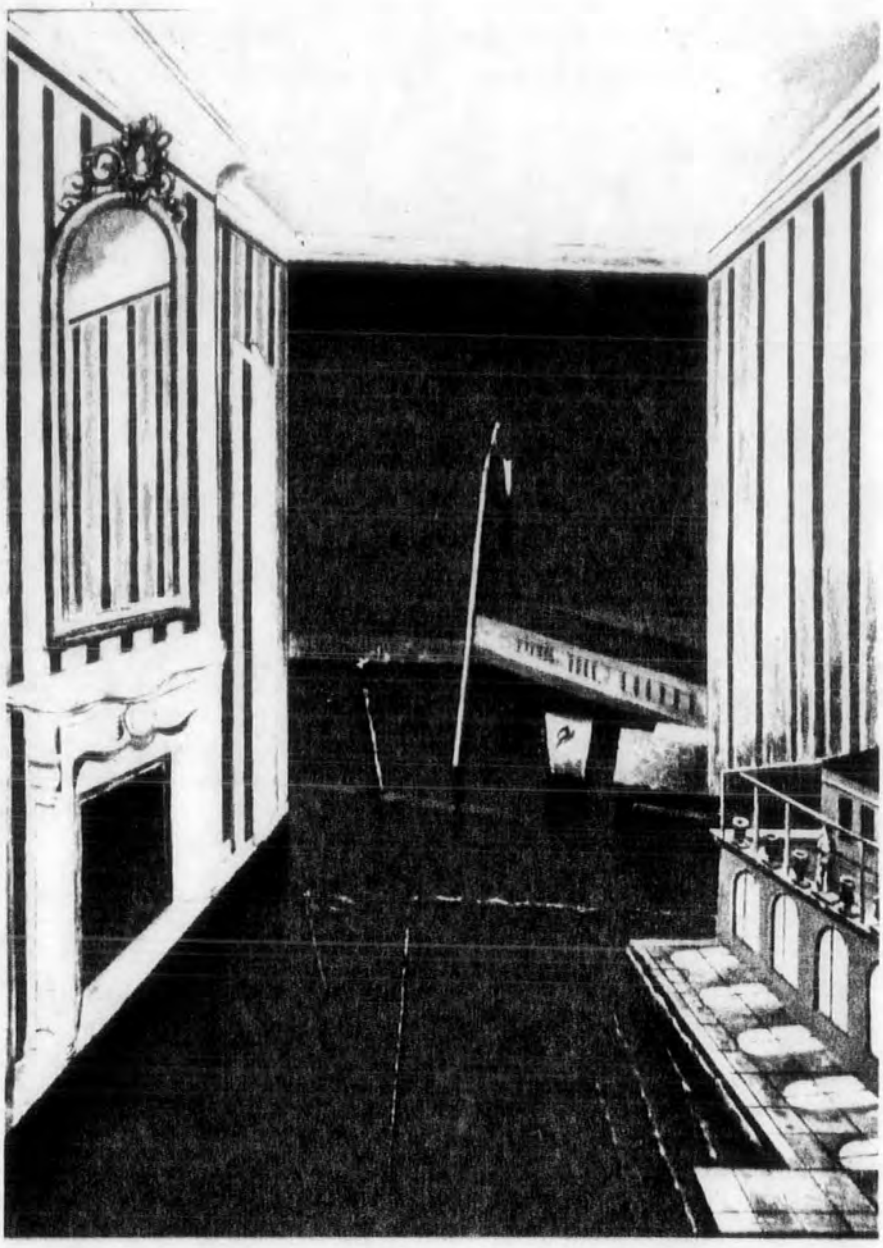


41. Lewis — <u>One of the Stations of the Dead</u>, oil on canvas, 4' 2" x 2' 6½", Aberdeen Art Gallery, 1933.



42. Lewis

Inferno, oil on canvas, 5' x 3' 4", National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia, 1937.



43. Paul Nash — Harbour and Room, oil on canvas, 3' x 2' 4", Edward James Foundation, 1932-36.

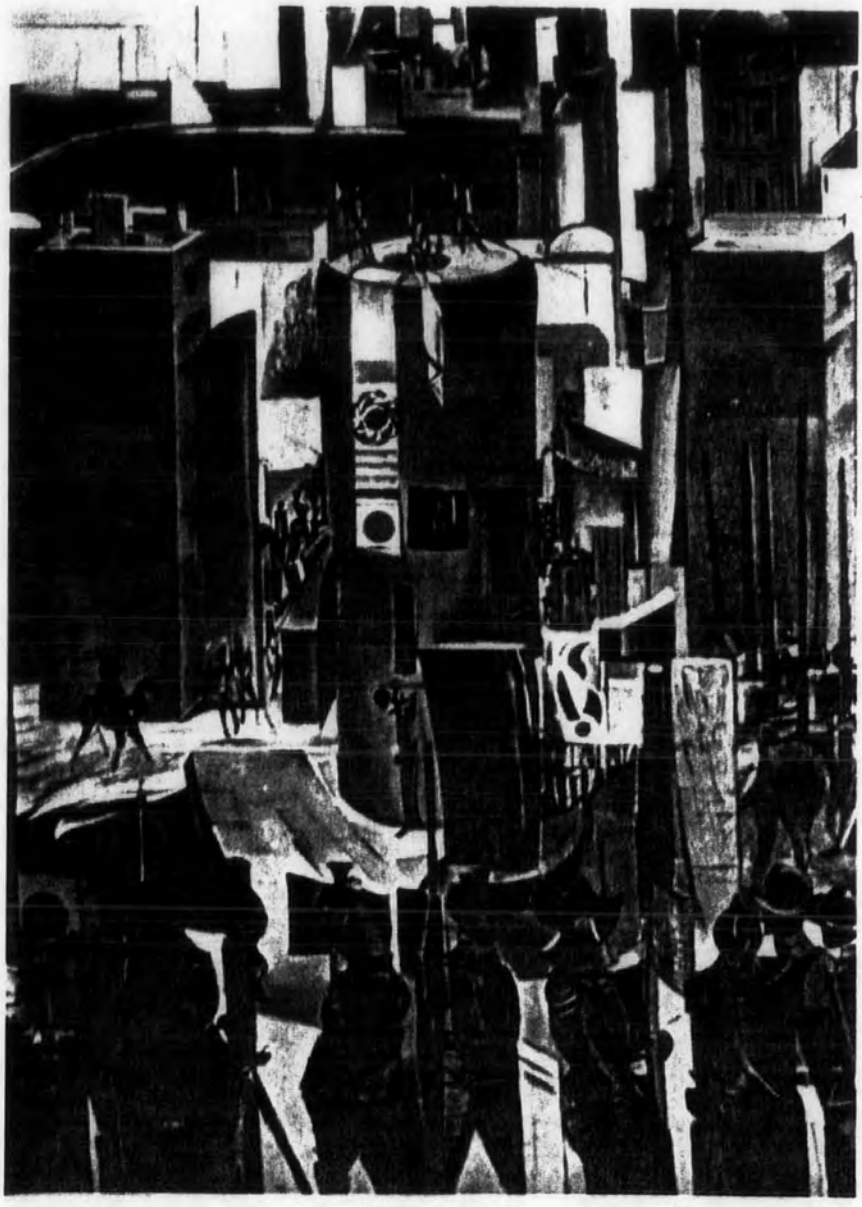


44. Lewis — Two Beach Babies, oil on canvas, 1'8" x 2', Rugby Art Gallery, 1933.

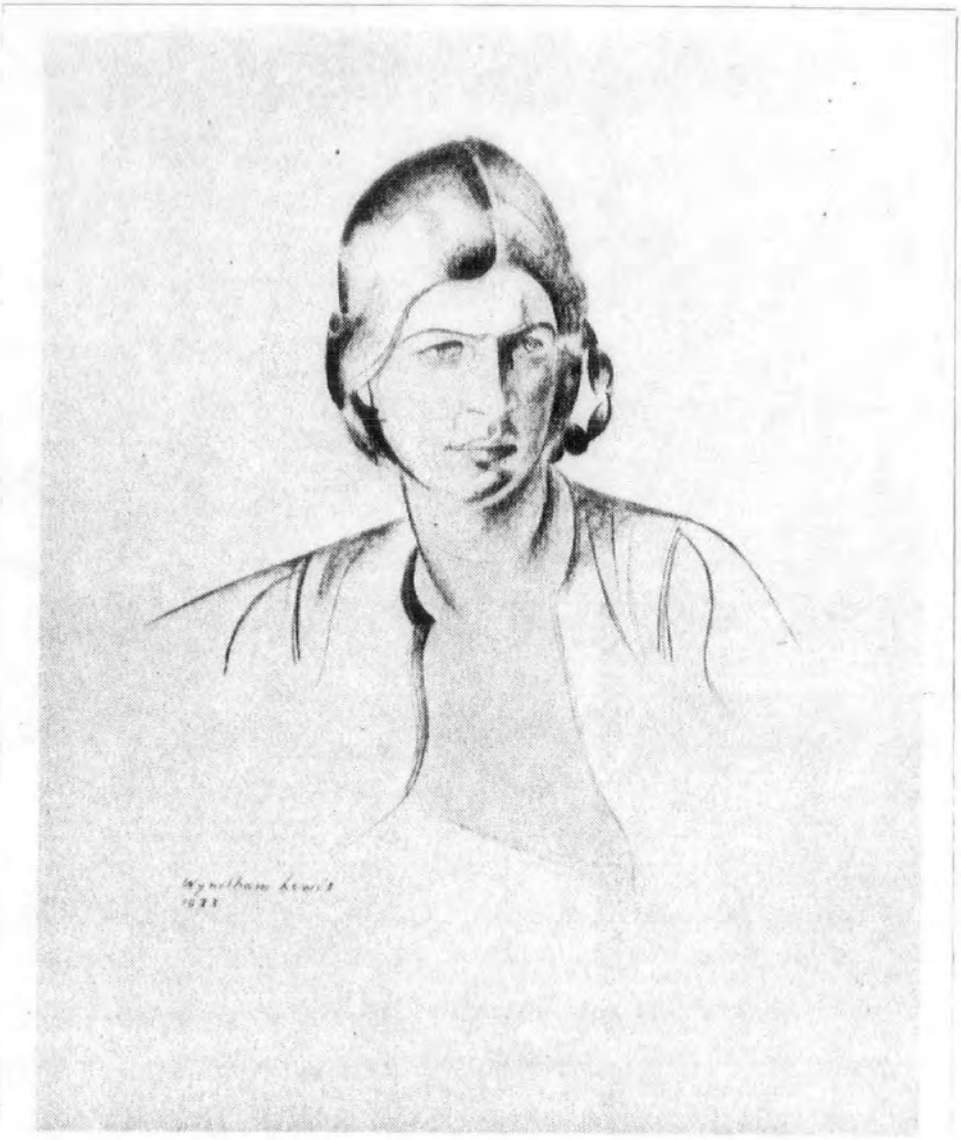


45. Lewis

Inca and the Birds, oil on canvas, 2' 3" x 1' 10", Arts Council, London, 1933.



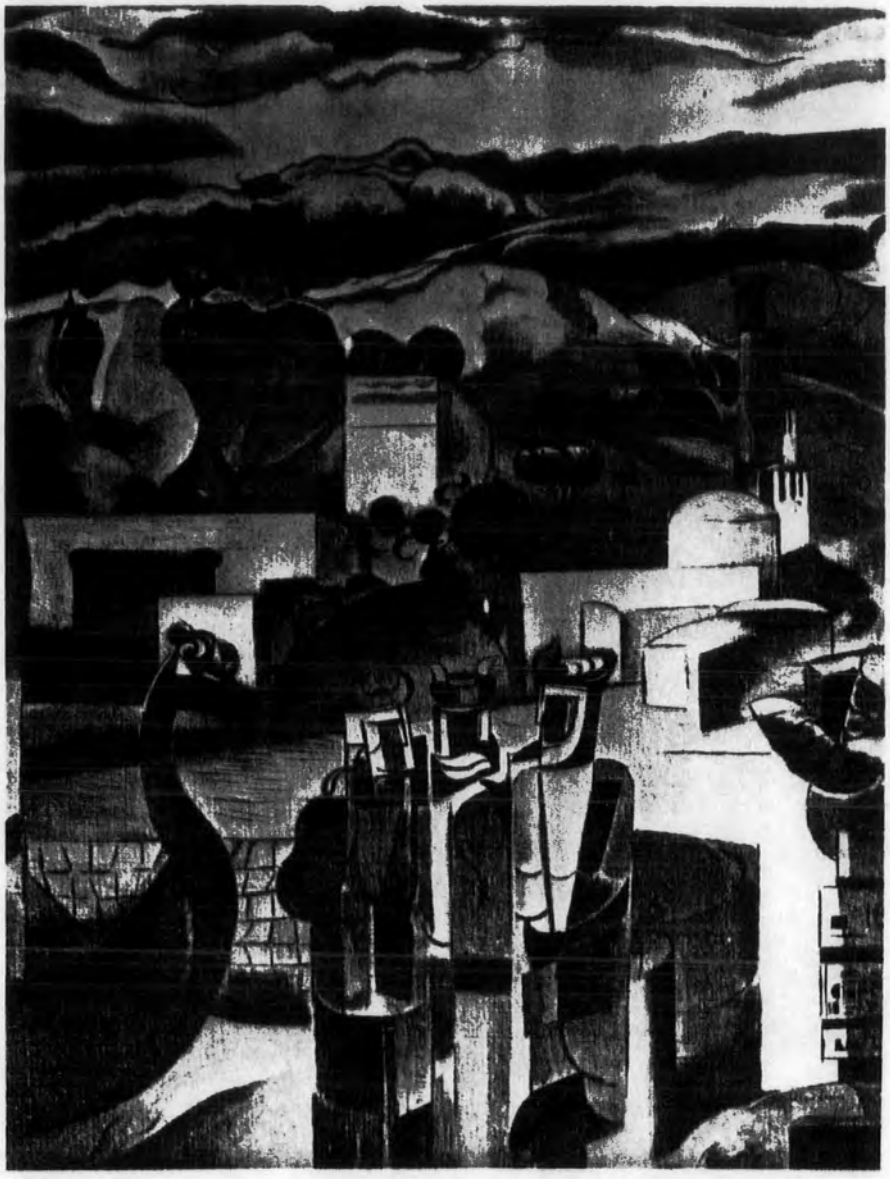
46. Lewis — The Surrender of Barcelona, oil on canvas, 2'9" x 2', Tate Gallery, London, 1936.



47. Lewis — Naomi Mitchison, pencil and wash, 11" x 9", Private Collection, 1933.



48. Lewis — Viscount Rothermere, pencil and watercolour, 13¼" x 9 ", Private Collection, 1932.



49. Lewis

Landscape with Northmen, oil on canvas, 2' 2" x 1' 7½", Private Collection, 1936-37.



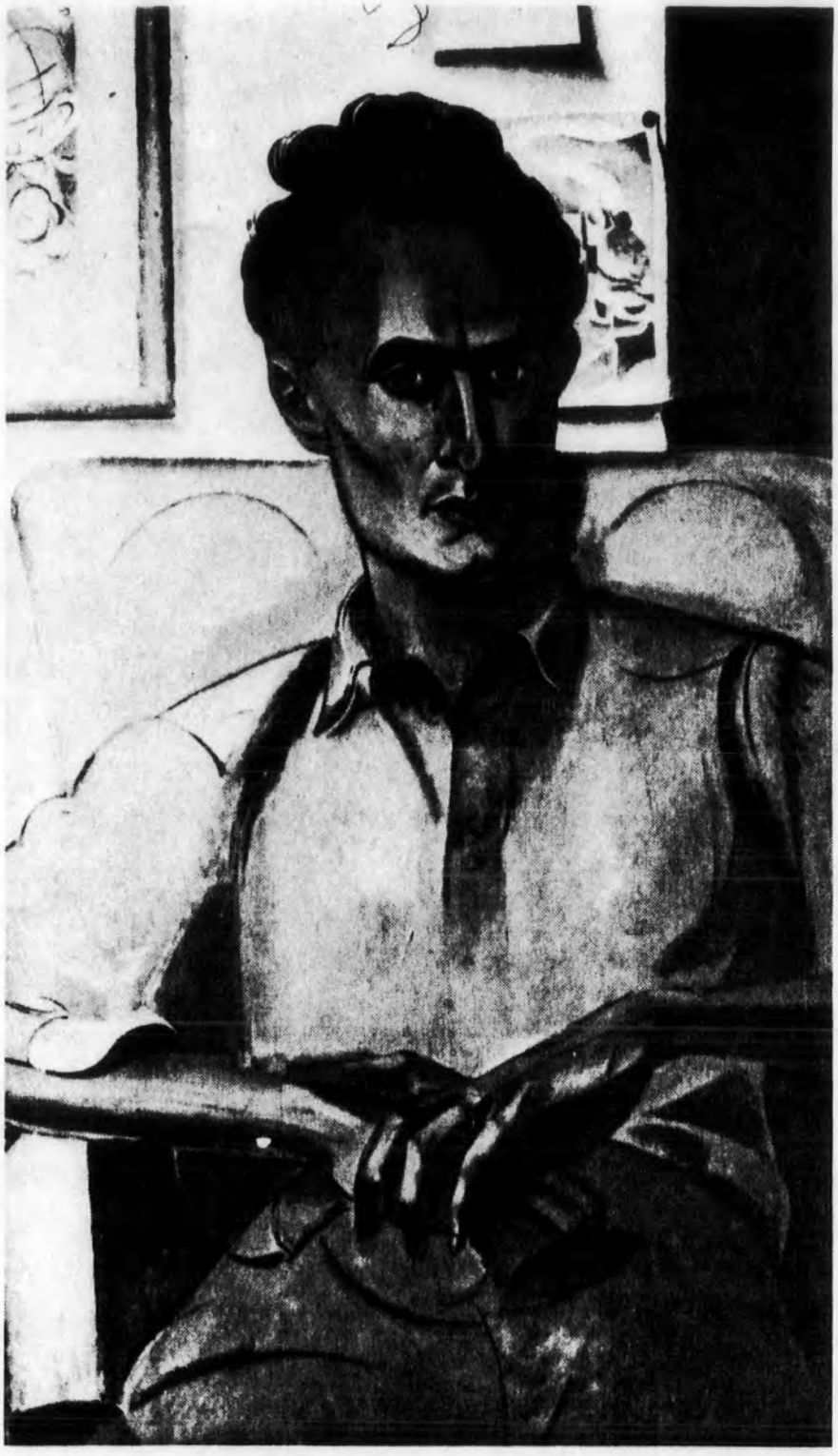
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55. Lewis — Portrait of Josephine Plummer, oil on canvas, 2' 5½" x 1' 7½", Private Collection, 1939.



56. Lewis — Portrait of John MacLeod, oil on canvas, 2' 6" x 1' 8", Private Collection, 1938.



57. Lewis

Froanna - A Portrait of the Artist's Wife, oil on canvas, 2' 6" x 2' 1", Kelvingrove Art Gallery, Glasgow, 1937.



58. Lewis — Portrait of Samuel Capen, oil on canvas, 6' 4" x 2' 1", Buffalo University, New York State, 1939.



59. Lewis — Portrait of the Artist's Wife, chalk, pencil and wash, 14 " x 11", Private Collection, 1944.



60. Lewis Charles Abbott, black chalk with wash, 17 " x 12", Private Collection, 1939.



61. Lewis — Archbishop O'Connor, oil on canvas, 2' 1 " x 2', Assumption University, Ontario, 1944.



62. Lewis

Portrait of Pauline Bondy, oil on canvas, 2' 4½" x 1' 6", Private Collection, 1944.



63. Lewis — Portrait of James Taylor, oil on canvas, 2' 6" x 1' 8½", Private Collection, 1944.



64. Lewis

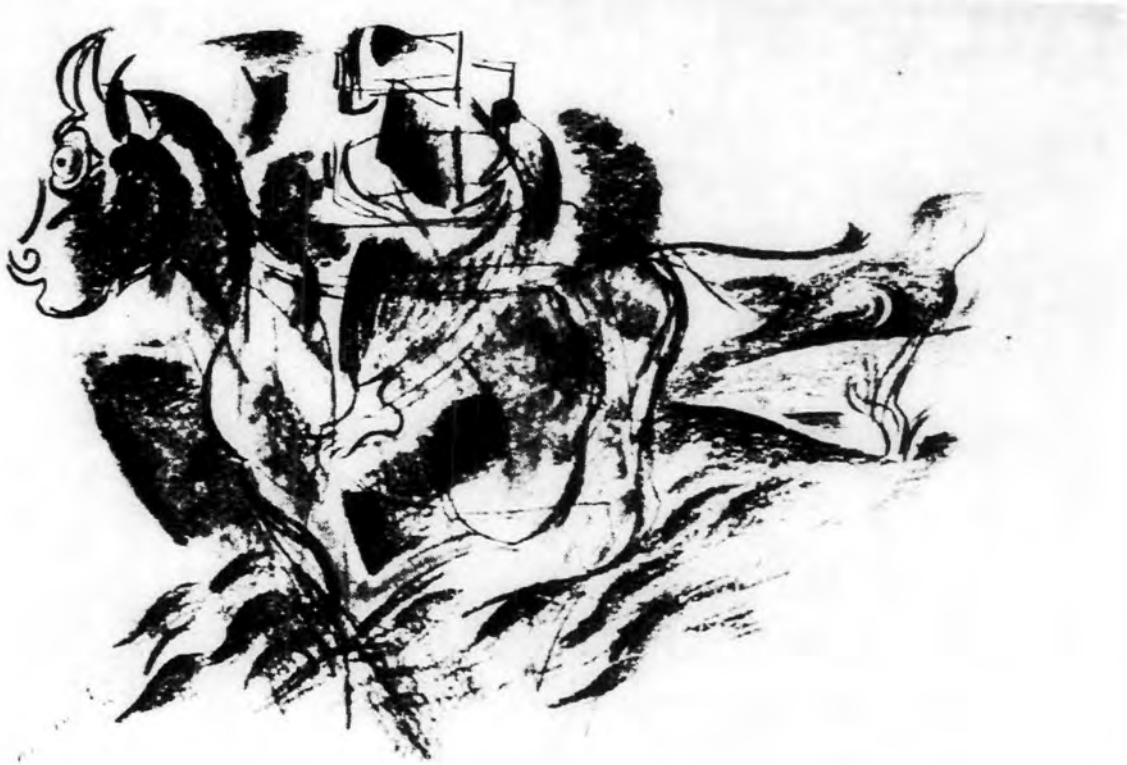
<u>Hanged Man and Figures</u>, pen and ink, 10 " x 6½", Private Collection, 1940s.



65. Lewis — Composition, pen and ink with water-colour, 12" x 9½", Cornell University, 1940s.

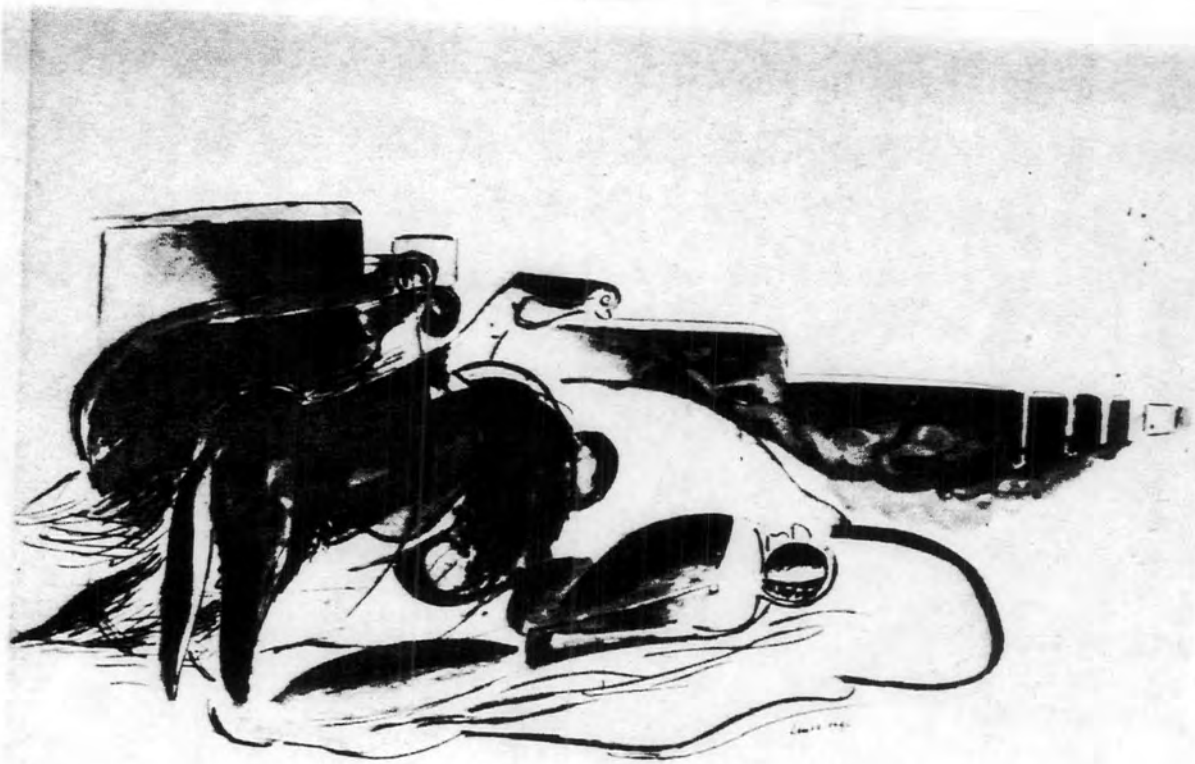


66. Lewis — Walpurgisnacht, pen and ink, 17" x 2' 6", Private Collection, 1950.



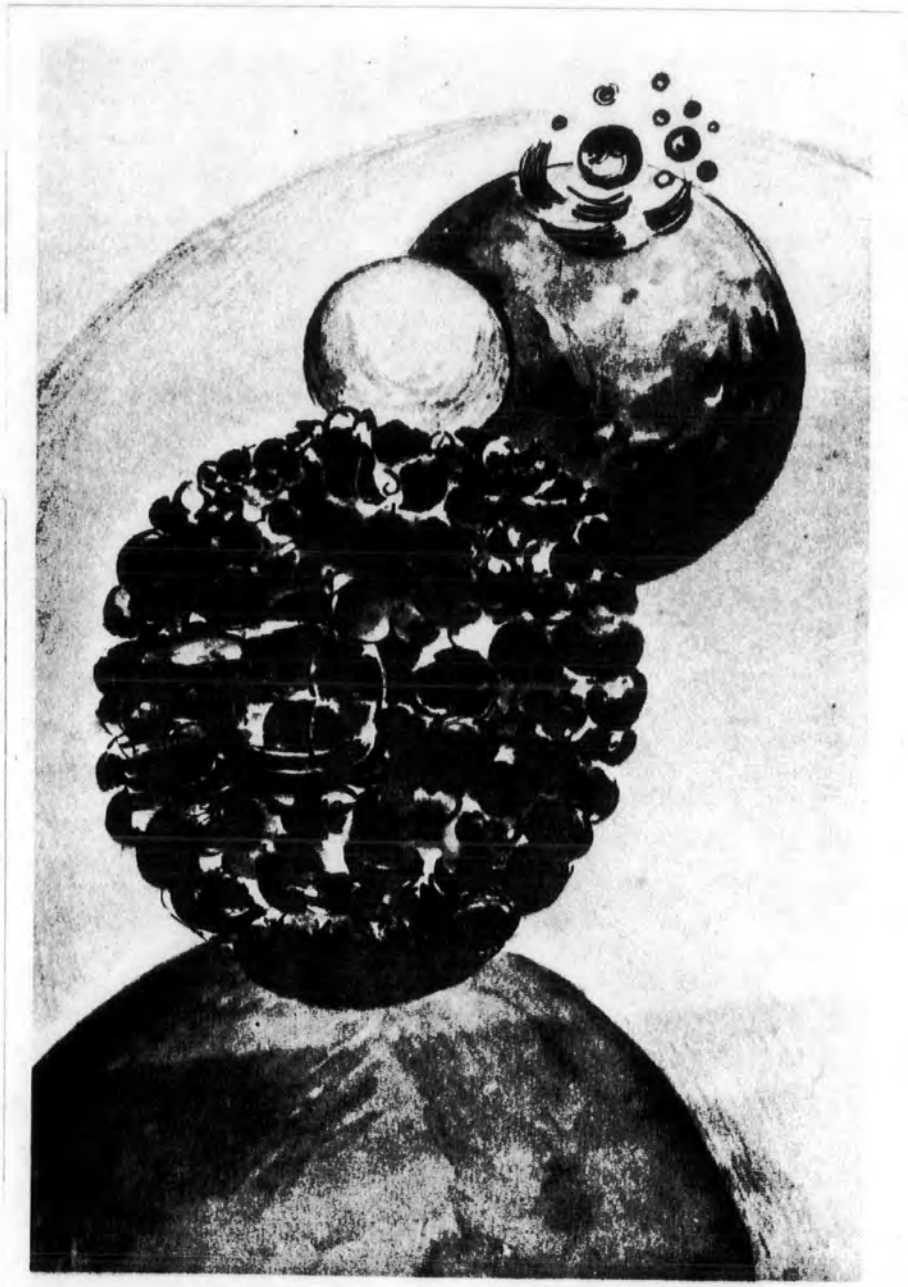
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Witch on Cowback, chalk, 11" x 15½",
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A Man's Form Taking a Fall from a Small Horse, pen and ink with watercolour, 11½" x 17 ", Private Collection, 1941.



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71. Lewis — The Mind of the Artist About to Make a Picture. pen and ink with watercolour, 15½ x 12", whereabouts unknown, 1942.



72. Lewis

Portrait of T.S. Eliot, oil on canvas, 2' 10" x 1' 9 ", Magdalene College, Cambridge, 1949.



Endpiece

Photograph, Wyndham Lewis when blind, 1952.