

‘A Long Chuckling Scream’: Wyndham Lewis, Fiction, and the First World War

Jamie Wood¹

Between the two images that mark Wyndham Lewis’s promotion to the officered ranks of the Royal Garrison Artillery in 1916 and his demobilization in 1919 there is a traumatic chasm concentrated in a sliver of time.² The earlier image of Lewis as a new subaltern is remarkable for its sense of drama. ‘The war was like a great new fashion’, Lewis had written in the guise of Cantelman. And so ‘he became a man of fashion’; full frontal, high-booted, and aggressive, he masters the cane in the grip of a right hand with protruding index finger while suavely balancing the cigarette between his lips.³ This is a carefully stage-managed image, built from a series of abstract shapes (the triangular stance, the horizontal and diagonal crossing of the belting, the curvature of the arms, the straightness of the cane) which serves to romanticize British soldiery as a game; it is an ode to ‘khaki fever’, to military and sexual power.⁴ ‘I was now “an officer”, whom hundreds of thousands of men still living have saluted – have trembled at the sight of’ (*BB 98*), Lewis later recalled.

But this Lewis stands in stark contrast to that of 1919. Recovering from influenza and pneumonia, this second image is focused on hidden depths rather than constructed externalities; it is narrated by a camera that intrudes on personality and accentuates the unsaid. Here, in that ill-fitting shirt, in those weary eyes and now vacant stare, and in that military haircut grown finally unkempt, we can see the vague signs of trauma. Now the lapel of the coat is raised to shroud and not to display rank: it is protection and not plumage. It is an image that betrays the realities of artillery bombardment on the Ypres Salient at Messines Ridge and Oostduinkerke. As psychogeography, the gap that exists between these two photographs is quite simply Passchendaele.



Figure 1: Wyndham Lewis, before and after Passchendaele. *Photographs courtesy of the Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library. © By permission The Wyndham Lewis Memorial Trust (a registered charity).*

But the trauma that emerges in the gap between these photographs has gone largely undiagnosed. Indeed, Lewis's involvement in the war, while widely acknowledged, is often bypassed, especially by theoretically-minded critics.⁵ For Lewis, there is no clinical record of shell-shock as with Richard Aldington, no wounding as with Robert Graves, no moment of rebellion as with Siegfried Sassoon, and, unlike Henri Gaudier-Brzeska and T. E. Hulme, Lewis came through his experience alive. Ordinarily these are the signposts we use to locate trauma. But perhaps its denial is partly traceable to the way in which Lewis deflated this stage of his career, especially in the populist tendencies of *Blasting and Bombardiering* (1937), to the status of just another moment in his *Bildungsroman*. This is certainly the overwhelming stance taken up by academic criticism, either through an implicit acceptance that Lewis's memoir of war is to be accepted at its jocular face value or else through the stubborn recurrence of the idea of Lewis as a dehumanized artist, largely unaffected by human suffering, operating within a right-wing

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modernist tradition.⁶ This critical strain has tended to privilege certain texts, especially *BLAST* 2 and 'The French Poodle' (both 1915), as ciphers for Lewis's relationship to the War, despite his own protestation that at this stage of his career "war" conveyed nothing to him' (*UP* 47), that 'the whole War-time was sheer loss of time' (*L* 120).⁷

But part of the failure fully to investigate this relationship stems from Lewis's role in the artillery. The major literary accounts of the First World War have tended to come from the infantry; ironically, the artillery has proven largely silent. Indeed, when Ezra Pound mentioned to Violet Asquith, the prime minister's daughter, that Lewis had chosen the role of gunner Pound records that she exclaimed: "What! GARRISON artillery!!, my dear, safe as a church" (*P/L* 46).⁸ Although the relative safety of the artillery initially influenced Lewis's choice of regiment, it was one that he quickly came to see as untenable as he experienced the precise terms of modern warfare. He had chosen the profession at a crucial moment of change. The 8th Division of the Royal Artillery, for example, suffered more casualties between June and August 1917, the period of Lewis's first arrival at the Front, than they had incurred since they had arrived in France in 1914.⁹ And whereas at Waterloo (we hear its echo in the structure of feeling that pervades the photograph of the khaki subaltern) the artillery operated in the rear and saw injuries restricted to treatable perforation wounds caused by lances, swords, and low-velocity bullets, in the First World War it was the gunner's shell that became the principal instrument of destruction. On the Somme, over seventy per cent of injuries came from shells, and it is the sheer variety of the shell's mutilating power that served to horrify and fascinate the First World War soldier.¹⁰ Shell wounds could cause the body to disintegrate, be flung into the air, and become scattered across the battlefield in pieces. Shrapnel, splinters, and cluster bombs were capable of inflicting multiple wounds across the entire surface of the body, amputating, bisecting, decapitating, and mutilating.¹¹

My argument is that the trauma Lewis experienced as an artillery officer – the gunned and the gunner – is pivotal to his later fiction. Through a progressive understanding of trauma Lewis was able to visualize that pre-symbolic version of the real which in Lacanian theory exists underneath the imaginary structures of everyday reality.¹² Following this architecture, I hope to demonstrate that the image that best conveys this experience in Lewis's fiction is the dismembered image of the *corps morvelé* – the infantile body experienced as a series of fragments (arms, legs, fingers) rather than the unified totality of the

body, which emerges at the point of entry into language. According to Lacan, the *corps morcelé* reappears to adult consciousness as a sign of the real in moments of acute irreality, in dreams and madness for example, at the point of the ego's disintegration. It is an image that Lewis deliberately used in his post-war fiction, often through surrogates, in order to convey his acute apprehension of modernity, and it is one that, because of its paradoxical relationship to language, helps to account for the nature of his fictional experimentation. Inevitably, then, this argument calls for a reorientation in the understanding of what we term Lewis's 'war-stories'.¹³ Careful examination of the circumstances of the composition of Lewis's major 'war-stories' – especially 'Cantleman's Spring-Mate' (1917), 'The War Baby' (1918), and 'The King of the Trenches' (1967) – shows a progressive change of stance as Lewis moved from being a civilian-observer, to a bombardier in basic army training, to a 2nd lieutenant at the Front.¹⁴ As Simone Weil has argued in her powerful analysis of war, 'the first contact of war does not immediately destroy the illusion that war is a game [...] but [...] soon there comes a day when fear, or defeat, or the death of beloved comrades touches the warrior's spirit, and it crumbles in the hand of necessity'.¹⁵ I argue that this progressive crumbling of the individual reaches its greatest intensity in Lewis's fiction of the 1920s and 1930s as part of the wider memorialization of war by such modernist-soldiers as Sassoon, Aldington, and Graves.¹⁶ It is then in *The Childermass* (1928) and *The Revenge for Love* (1937), for example, that Lewis fashioned his most powerful 'war-stories' as a means of coming to terms with the traumatic core of modernity.

The Crumbling of Spirit

As early as the 8th of June 1917, having been in France for less than two weeks, Lewis began to regret the photograph of the khaki subaltern: 'That funny one with my legs apart mustn't be reproduced', he told Pound during the Battle of Messines Ridge (*P/L* 74). The rejection of the romance of artillery warfare was then comparatively swift. Lewis had attested himself fit and willing to serve in January 1916, and by March had become 'gunner Lewis' at Fort Burgoyne in Dover (*P/L* 27). Mostly bored and hungry, he moved to the Westham Camp at Weymouth in April. It was here that Lewis was introduced to the gunner's arsenal, the machines he would later see as the amalgam of technology, masculinity,

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and power. But Westham also served as a base for Australian soldiers injured at Gallipoli, and alongside the gun's power it brought one of the first glimpses of the horror of battle to British shores.¹⁷ Lewis wrote to Pound on the 9th of April: 'I am surrounded by tame Australians: (there are only 5 tame ones in camp: all the rest are wild, pacing up and down the town, flouting officers & the police)' (*P/L* 30). In 'The Bull Gun', a short essay written at Westham, we can already see the signs of apprehension at the outcome of the inevitable union of gun and man: 'It is only a pity that the steel cannot be pitted against the steel, instead of goring such multitudes of gladiators'.¹⁸ As Elaine Scarry has noted, although war attempts to efface its true purpose, it cannot ultimately disguise that the soldier's primary purpose is neither to die nor kill for his country, but rather to "alter body tissue" (either his own or another's) for his country.¹⁹ And it is precisely this fear of dismemberment – 'should I get killed or smashed up' – rather than death that haunted Lewis (*P/L* 31). 'If I get my head blown off when I am pottering about Flanders, I shall have left something', he had written to Pound in January 1915 (*P/L* 8). 'I must join the Army', he had written in July 1915 to Mary Borden Turner, a collector and a former lover: '[I] have certain accomplishments [...] that might be of more use [...] than my trusty right arm, which, I flatter myself is rather a creative than a destructive limb'.²⁰ At Westham, Lewis was made acutely aware of the vulnerability of the artist's limb.

Although he was promoted quickly to the role of bombardier, Lewis feared that his artistic reputation was holding back his progression to a commission. In a revealing response to Lewis's frustration, Pound wrote to him on the 24th of June:

Judging the matter from the depths of my moderately comfortable arm chair, with the products of your brush, pen [...] before me – [...] I can not see that the future of the arts deamns [*sic*] that you be covered with military distinctions. It is equally obvious that you should not be allowed to spill your gore in heathen and furrin places. I can only counsel you to endure your present ills with equanimity and not be too ready to see malice where mayhap none is intended. (*P/L* 39)

Pound's letter, uncharacteristically serious and formal, directly opposes creativity ('brush, pen') to dismemberment, but the degree of Pound's separation from the realities of modern battle can be glimpsed through

the injury he fears for Lewis: it is from Waterloo – a bayonet and not a shell. Nonetheless, Pound correctly diagnosed that Lewis’s anxiety was partly a function of the difference in their positions. Lewis never openly expressed the true source of his desire for a commission, and part of it can surely be traced to social status and to financial constraints. But there is a deeper and more insistent impulse in his assertion that “‘the Ranks’ are a trap’ (P/L 37). A ‘trap’ for what precisely? In a letter to Pound of July 16th he claimed that these ‘strivings’ for a commission ‘have not had for their object an avoidance of this inevitable development of my present activities, but only to secure myself favourable conditions’ (P/L 48). There is perhaps too much insistence in Lewis’s prose here. The broader record shows that Lewis’s time as a parading private had convinced him that military training and the associated routines of combat forced the body, through procedures of discipline and control, into dumb receptivity, the nadir of which was death in some ‘heathen and furrin’ place. When he responded to Pound’s advice he keenly pointed to the difference in their roles. ‘If you knew exactly how it was in the Ranks – the many reasons why it is desirable to be an officer’, he rebuked Pound, ‘you would understand my being anxious to change my state’ (P/L 42). Lewis’s ‘state’ (not a status) was the beginning of a process that would alienate him from non-combatant modernist culture in London.

By July Lewis was beginning to face the possibility of a posting with 183 Siege Battery. The first reports of the horror of the Somme were reaching England, and the severity of the war is clear in Pound’s letters, filled as they are with memories of Gaudier-Brzeska and news of Ford Madox Ford’s hospitalization and nervous breakdown.²¹ Lewis wrote to his mother in August questioning whether the position of artillery officer was indeed any safer than that of other army ranks:

A man just back with shell-shock tells me that over a space of 6 months his battery (a “heavy”) lost 5 officers killed, and the sixth wounded, arm amputated. The loss amongst officers in the Artillery seems higher than in the ranks [...] I am not sure that I shouldn’t be better off to stick where I am. (L 81-82)

With these fears escalating, he left Westham in early August, first attending a firing course at Horsham before arriving at Lydd, having seemingly taken Pound’s advice to focus on hard work and a commission. He was finally admitted to Field Artillery cadet school in

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September before moving from what he termed an 'inferno of horseflesh' to Trowbridge cadet school (BB 97). By his own admission, he excelled in the exams at Trowbridge and on the 25th of December 1916 he became a 2nd Lieutenant. The khaki subaltern was born.

But Lewis's anxieties had clearly been growing and, as the short stories 'The War Baby' and 'Cattleman's Spring-Mate' demonstrate, this was beginning to be reflected in subtle changes in his politics. Written in the months immediately prior to his departure for France, both these stories follow substantially the same simple plot structure: a soldier prepares to leave for the Front, shares a few stolen moments with a lover, uses the event to delineate a view of the world, and finally learns of a subsequent pregnancy. What is ultimately under examination here is not the War itself but rather the stability of that certain worldview, the origins of which can be traced to the short stories Lewis had written as a civilian and which he intended to be collected under the title *Our Wild Body*. In these earlier stories Lewis had expressed an essentially anti-humanitarian vision, opposing the privileged status of the artist, 'the recluse', to the primitive status of the herd. Here the body is made the figurative exemplar of Bakhtinian grotesqueness, but the carnivalesque – those events that Lewis repeatedly chose to open up foreign societies – doesn't undermine the political so much as reinforce the primitive: 'fêtes are essentially orgies' that reveal men's 'flagrant ego like a dog in heat'.²² It is this same core principle which runs through 'The French Poodle' in the idea that Rob Cairn, another soldier home on leave, is reduced to a visible automaton by his shell-shock. His subsequent transference of sexual love from a female to a dog is then designed as the natural outcome of this state of affairs.

But already in 'The French Poodle', in the way it is structured as a piece of hearsay, we can see that Lewis was questioning the early wild body politics. As the unidentified narrator tells us at the beginning of the story, it only 'appears the following things happened'. Such is the fragility of the status of the story that the narrator feels it necessary to assure us that its veracity – his ability to 'tell the story with genuine completeness' (UP 53) – derives from one of Cairn's friends. This confirms nothing of the sort, and it is hard to avoid the conclusion that Cairn and the poodle might both just be part of a fantastical game of Chinese whispers. It is this political unease – neither rejection, nor acceptance – that sits at the heart of Lewis's two later 'war-stories'. In 'The War Baby', Richard Beresin, a recovering artillery officer, finds himself struggling with the very terms of his 'Nietzschean illusion' (UP

90). Having finally assuaged his sexual longing with his landlady, Tets, his long-held conviction of woman as both 'conventional' and 'inferior' is undermined by the sight of his abandoned lover, 'crying, sitting like a child sideways on a seat, and shaking'. Unable to reconcile these two sensations, they threaten to 'devour' him as he returns to the Front and reads that Tets is to have his child. Now the wildness of her body on the morning following their lovemaking – its 'warm mass', the 'cumbrous bestial scented arm' that curls around him, and the 'thick primitive gush of hair' – which he had equated with the 'the presence of a pool of blood or a dead body' at the Front, is transformed: 'had he really been immersing in a harsh, seething brutality what was fundamentally a *child*?' (UP 101, 103). The image of the child, 'a temperate atom of everyday life', signals that Lewis, through Beresin, is beginning to use Nietzsche to prise open the reality of human carnival rather than to damn it: 'Beresin derived acute satisfaction from the sight of this diminutive pathos: the small, in fact, in this case, almost synonymous with the Beautiful' (UP 103). It is a brief glimpse of a different reality.

The same architecture is followed in 'Cantleman's Spring-Mate' but this story achieves its effect through the use of form rather than content. 'In a week he was leaving for the Front, for the first time' (UP 78), Cantleman tells us at the start of the story. But this is simply a temporal ruse. Although the narrative is structured as a soldier's anxious musings as he anticipates his fate, it is actually, we discover in the very final paragraph through a sharp shift in the tense, the recollections of a soldier who has already served at the Front for some time. As we are shocked into the realization that Cantleman writes his narrative in the past tense, spurning the letters from Stella, his pregnant 'spring-mate', the shift in the location of the present tense serves to re-orientate our empathy from Cantleman's vulnerability to his brutality. Cantleman has played a game with the reader, refusing to reveal the temporal terms of the narrative until he needs them to support his claim that the 'impartial malignity' with which he rejects Stella and beats out a 'German's brains' (UP 84) is merely the game of all 'God's creatures' (UP 77). The ostensible purpose of Cantleman's narrative – that is, to validate the early modernist idea that the evolutionary struggles of nature are the inescapable hidden patterns of social reality itself – is then brilliantly undermined by Lewis. What was supposed to be a narrative of vulnerability is instead the defence case for a series of moral crimes; it doesn't objectify Cantleman as a mouth-piece for Lewis's politics but rather undermines the veracity of those politics. When we combine this

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with Lewis himself being historically situated in the very place in which we believed Cantleman was temporally located – preparing to be shipped to France – we find that the story collapses in on itself, leaving only a series of hollow anxieties about the future. Although Christine Hardegen has suggested that these stories argue that ‘those who are not able to build up an emotional distance from the war are [...] destroyed or damaged by it’, the temporal structure of ‘Cantleman’s Spring-Mate’ demonstrates that these stories are not really ultimately about war at all.²³ Rather than delineating the effects of war they express a precise lack of knowledge about the way it operates, and they use that uncertainty to undermine the narrative’s own initial claim on the reader. These are tales of confusion and anxiety rather than of conviction.

By the time Lewis left for France on May 24th 1917 he was increasingly aware of the violence of war and beginning to question the conviction of his earlier politics. Posted to 330 Siege Battery, he moved from the dock at Le Havre to Rouen and onto La Clytte, the headquarters of the 69th Heavy Artillery Garrison where he was split from 330 Siege Battery and asked to reinforce 224 Siege Battery at Wytschaete. He wrote to Pound on the 6th of June and described himself as having arrived ‘in the midst of an unusually noisy battle’ (*P/L* 73). It was an unprecedented bombardment. Some 2,266 guns had been assembled by the Allied troops to advance on the Wytschaete-Messines ridge in an attempt to remove the southern part of the salient at Ypres.²⁴ In *Blasting and Bombardiering* the arrival at Wytschaete is cloaked in drama, with the sound of the guns progressively ‘getting louder and nearer’, the ‘lights turned down for the performance’, and the night sky flashing ‘angry and red’ as an ‘unseen orchestra thundered away’ (*BB* 113): ‘So we plunged immediately into the romance of battle. But all henceforth was romance. All this culminated of course in the scenery of the battlefields, like desolate lunar panoramas. That matched the first glimpses of the Pacific, as seen by the earliest circumnavigators’ (*BB* 114).

The motion of the masculinized machinery lends the scene its peculiar tone: ‘out of their throats had sprung a dramatic flame, they had roared, they had moved back [...] they hurled into the air their great projectile, and sank back as they did it’ (*BB* 114). But what appears to be a simple ode to the most powerful weapon of the war is actually undercut with complexity:

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It is they who plough up the ground till it looks literally “like nothing on earth”. It is they who transform a smart little modern township, inside an hour, into a romantic ruin, worthy of the great Robert himself, or Claude Lorrain. They are likewise the purveyors of “shell-shock”, that most dramatic of ailments. And lastly, they give the most romantic and spectacular wounds of all – a bullet-wound, even a dum-dum, is child’s play to a wound inflicted by a shell-splinter. (BB 116)

In their letters Pound and Lewis frequently speculate on the possibility of Lewis getting a ‘decent and convenient wound’ that would return him to England (P/L 99). But the ‘romance’ here is ultimately linked not to shirking but to the concept of circumnavigation, to the freshness of vision, of seeing something for the first time. ‘Romance is partly what you see but it is much more what you feel’, argues Lewis, ‘*you* are the romance, far more than the romantic object’. It is a subjective, magical experience, which ‘partakes of the action of a drug’, focusing the ‘organism marked down to be destroyed’, and infecting vision. It is a transfigurative process with its roots in the very foundational elements of the body: ‘the source of the light is within your own belly’ (BB 115).

However, these profound glimpses into warfare in *Blasting and Bombardiering* are buried beneath techniques of bathos, comedy, and dismissal. It is the ‘wind-up’, the description of the manner with which one of his colleagues answers the ‘strange parabolic whopping onrush’ of the shelling with ‘an anal whistle’ (BB 118), which we are meant to remember in this narrative. Indeed, Lewis repeatedly positions himself in the memoir as a vaudeville comedian mocking the state of the British and downplaying the threat to his life. Instead of engaging with the enemy, Lewis tells us he spent his time at Messines doing very little, smoking cigarettes, sleeping, and reading Stendhal. Echoing the earlier comments to Pound, again perhaps too insistently, Lewis wrote to his mother on the 6th of June 1917: ‘I am not in the least afraid nor even have I felt any excitement in the face of this novel experience’ (L 89). But this is posturing. Lewis had quickly become acquainted with war. Although it appears he managed to sleep through the explosion of nineteen carefully excavated mines under the German positions on the 7th of June, apparently gassed in his sleep, the Battles of the Messines Ridge was a dramatic opening for the khaki artillery subaltern. He related to Pound on the 8th of June how on one sortie to an observation post he saw ‘the desolation of the Bosche concrete dugouts in a

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wilderness of charred spikes that was formerly a wood' and witnessed the 'dead Germans lying about like bloody waxworks' (P/L 73).

It is at this point, as he begins to amend the opening of 'A Soldier of Humour' (1917) in the aftermath of the initial offensive, that he insisted Pound prevent the photograph of the subaltern from being printed. Something had changed in Cantleman as he developed into Mr. Arthur Pine.²⁵ Specifically, it is the self-control of Cantleman, and his easy prognosis of a world he feels he controls, that had begun to give way to a paranoid and fantastical landscape, a more uncontrollable reality. Rather like Pine's haunted anxiety in the staged battles with Valmore, Lewis's letters at this time begin to chart a fear that the German shelling, previously just a game of chance (being in the wrong place at the wrong time), was meticulously targeted at him. And now the anxiety started to become pervasive. On his way to one observation post, Lewis saw the horror in the passing infantry squads: 'their faces are all dull, their eyes turned inwards in sallow thought or savage resignation; you would say revulsed'. The landscape became a 'bad tract, the narrow and terrible wilderness', as Lewis began to try and unravel its strange concoction of fantasy and reality. 'Shall I or shall I not go up there again tomorrow?' he asks himself in the same letter to Pound. 'There is nothing there you cannot imagine: but it has the unexpected quality of reality. Also the imagined thing and the felt are in two different categories' (P/L 75). Not only does this again preclude Pound from an emotional response – he can imagine what Lewis describes but he cannot feel it on the surface of his skin – it makes personal the suffering; it rearticulates 'romance', drawing the somatic relationship with the real laid out in *Blasting and Bombardiering*. The crumbling of the warrior's spirit had begun.²⁶

On the 24th of June Lewis was removed from Messines and taken to a casualty clearing station suffering from trench fever. When he arrived at the 46th Stationary Hospital at Étaples in 'the best of jolliest and jauntiest health and Humour', he was still working on the corrections to 'A Soldier of Humour' and several of the 'Imaginary Letters' (P/L 82). By late July he was well, and after a brief stay at a station for convalescents in Dieppe he rejoined 330 Battery at Oostduinkerke, close to Nieuwpoort in Belgium, as part of the support of the Royal Navy's proposed attack on the German U-boat fleet. Bunkered in a concrete-reinforced, whitewashed cottage on a road that ran through the sand dunes, Lewis was shelled almost continuously. Dismemberment was again central to his fear: 'one of my men was

wounded in the arm yesterday', he told Pound on the 20th of August (P/L 96). 'I had quite a half dozen splinters within a yard or two of me', he wrote to Helen Saunders at around the same time (L 91). His own will was under mounting pressure, and by the 26th of August he told Pound: 'It is a matter of pure chance, under these circumstances, when, how and how much you get pipped. Sooner or later it is difficult to see how it can be avoided' (P/L 100).

On the 31st of August 330 Siege Battery was moved south to a final position on the Menin Road, from which it was to give artillery support for Passchendaele, the 3rd Battle of Ypres, which has been described as 'one of the most costly campaigns in history'.²⁷ Built out of reclaimed bogland, it was a cold and almost submerged landscape; an 'archipelego [*sic*]' dominated by 'circular holes full of water' is how Lewis described it on his arrival in early September (L 91). By the 16th of September his battery was shelling the villages surrounding the main line of attack, and Lewis, having fallen out with his commanding officer, was again on forward observation duty. He wrote to Pound describing the two-hour journey to one observation post:

You meet plenty of dead men. I stumbled into one (of two) with his head blown off so that his neck[,] level with the collar of his tunic, reminded you of sheep in butchers' shops, or a French salon painting of a Moroccan headsman. He was a Scot, & had been killed a few hours before. Every track & road is spasmodically infested with shells. Two officers in the following evening were wounded, one very badly. (P/L 105)

The 'salon painting' that Lewis refers to here is presumably Henri Regnault's graphic *Summary Execution under the Moorish Kings of Granada* (1870), which Lewis would have seen at the Louvre while he was living in Paris in the 1900s. The reference reminds us that his response to war had been thoroughly politicized by this stage. It is a 'summary execution', an act by omnipotent powers undertaken without customary legal procedure.²⁸ But Lewis's interest here is not solely political. 'Force', Weil argued, is 'that *x* that turns anybody who is subjected to it into a thing in the most literal sense'. 'Exercised to the limit', she argued, 'it makes a corpse out of him'.²⁹ Regnault and Lewis are both exploring the same question: exactly where does the human exist when it is subjected to such force? The severed head is reduced to nothing more than a lifeless object that rolls to the bottom edge of the canvas. It ironically

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finds its echo in the cold and untroubled symmetry of the caliph's body, uncannily reminiscent in its haughty grandeur and professional dignity of the khaki subaltern. Both are contrasted with the only sign of life in the canvas – the tensed muscular left arm that shrouds the wound and has reached out to protect the falling body at the moment of death. In *Blasting and Bombardiering* Lewis returned to the Scottish infantrymen:

As we approached them my party left the duckboards and passed round the flank of this almost sardonically complete tableau of violent death. Averting their heads, the men circled round. Their attitude was that of dogs when they are offered some food which they don't much like the look of. (*BB* 155)

Taking up the original simile of the dismembered soldiers as 'sheep in butchers' shops', Lewis's focus here is on the body reduced to the ultimate 'thing': pieces of meat. The painter Lewis now has in mind is not Regnault but Goya and his series of still-life paintings of meat.³⁰ This graphically shows how far Lewis's attitude to the 'thing', to the Bergsonian wild body, has shifted by 1937. The nature of 'things, or physical bodies, behaving as *persons*' is now recast, for what Lewis is concerned with here is not the body itself, but rather with embodiment, the complex process of becoming a body in social space (*CWB* 158). As the sociologist Bryan Turner argues, meat is placed both beautifully and horrifically somewhere between nature and culture; it raises questions related to the way the body is formed in relation to power, to its own pornographic status, to issues of luck and ethics.³¹

By the time 330 Battery moved its position eastwards at the start of October to the sinisterly named Moated Grange, Lewis's attitude to war had changed beyond recognition. Now facing constant shelling and aircraft bombing, his battery had been severely depleted by death and injury. In 'The King of the Trenches', a story extensively redrafted at this time, the war enters Lewis's fiction really for the first time. War is now a known, rather than an anticipated, landscape; it is composed of 'damp, black hole[s]', 'hurrying splinters' (*UP* 62), and 'red fountains of earth' (*UP* 63). It is documented in a soldier's vocabulary: trench mortars are 'Flying Pig[s]' (*UP* 60) and attacks are 'stunts' (*UP* 63). The dismembered Scottish infantrymen reappear after one German attack: 'the bodies of three gunners lay near the Flying Pig, the leg of one two yards away and another beheaded' (*UP* 68). Only the hardened soldier could observe a man borne on a stretcher in these terms: 'it's [*sic*] eye, as

he passed, appeared aware of him; the head remained facing the sky' (UP 63). The slipping of the pronouns here reveals an unfathomable gap between the survivor and the injured. With its black humour, menace, and sense of paranoia, 'The King of the Trenches' is closer to 'A Soldier of Humour' than to any of the 'war-stories' with which it is ordinarily aligned. In both these stories Lewis is attempting to find a formal mechanism for the incommunicability of experience, for that sense of irrealty that radiates across the Front. Although the strange antics of Captain Polderdick (literally the penis of the polder, or the reclaimed marshland) are the object of fun for his men, he is deeply traumatized through his wounds, is 'a different man', perhaps like Ker-Orr and Valmore on the very edge of sanity (UP 64). His good-natured optimism and failure of reason merely disguise a recurrent nightmare in which missing men fall into an archaic dried stream, are sniped by German soldiers, and then washed to a mass burial in a festering pool at army headquarters. The power of the story derives from its simultaneous willingness and refusal to admit the nightmare.

Lewis's sole desire was now to get out of these trenches; the romance of the *Bildungsroman* had become pure gothic horror. He implored Pound for his help:

Of the two detachments on my gun, only half the men who came out with me are left: several killed, the rest wounded. I have discovered no panic streak in myself so far, & am fortunately not of a timid disposition. [...] But there is one thing to be remembered. Nature & my training have made me curiously sensitive to ugly & stupid influences. The whole point of Me is that (& not that I don't happen to be over physically nervous). This causes me to suffer a great deal more than most people by my surroundings. (P/L 109-10)

Lewis casts off the khaki of the military hero here. Again there is perhaps too much insistence in his explanation that it is his 'curiously sensitive' nature that belies the desire to leave the Front. He clearly was panicking and understandably wanted to escape. The machismo cannot hold back the suffering. Now the odds of being hit by a shell are narrowing in his mind, every uninjured day a victory. Lewis had experienced the realities of modern warfare. Although he would return to the Front as a war artist during 1918, when he was recalled from the Front in November 1917 on compassionate leave to be with his mother

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(who had fallen ill), the experiences as a frontline soldier that would shape the remainder of his life were effectively complete.

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When it came to shaping these months of his life Lewis's response was swift. 'A new subject matter has been found for Art', he announced in the *Daily Express* on the 10th of February 1919. 'That subject matter is not war, which is as old as the chase or love; but modern war' (*CHC* 41). Lewis had experienced war as the apogee of modernity. Instead of being the discrete experience he had expected, it had laid bare the revelation that the modern is itself composed of a traumatic kernel. But although war had opened up reality it had simultaneously made it less communicable. 'To make a reconstruction of this landscape for a millionaire-sightseer, [...] would be impossible', Lewis wrote:

This is a museum of sensations, not a collection of objects. For your reconstruction you would have to admit Death [...] You would have to line the trenches with bodies guaranteed freshly killed that morning. No hospital could provide it. And unless people were mad they would not want – apart from the cost – to assemble the necessary ordnance, the engines required for this stunt landscape-gardening. (*BB* 134)

How then should the artist communicate the incommunicable, this 'hollow centre of a madman's dream' (*BB* 134)? Lewis's first move was to disqualify others from the task by making the modern inferno 'accessible only to a certain type of creative artist' (*CHC* 42). This excludes Pound in his 'arm chair', but its direct objective correlatives are Clive Bell and Roger Fry, converting a brooding aesthetic conflict into experiential logic. Lewis wrote to *The Athenaeum* in March 1920 in response to Fry's criticism of the 'Imperial War Pictures' exhibition; Fry had no hand at all in 'marshalling' a war he was so vexed and disturbed by, 'not even that of the non-com' (*L* 117). The war allowed Lewis to establish an opposition to non-combatant modernist culture in general, erecting a strict division between the soldier and the civilian, men and women, the patriot and the pacifist.

But Lewis's break from London's modernist culture is not solely adversarial. As he acknowledged in the catalogue to the *Guns* exhibition

at the Goupil Gallery in February 1919, during the war he had returned to a form of visual representation (WLA 104-6). 'Eyes and noses' had now appeared in his drawings and paintings of men at war. And throughout 1919, in 'What Art Now?', *The Caliph's Design: Architects! Where is Your Vortex?*, and 'Prevalent Design', Lewis attempted to extend this idea into a formal aesthetic position. At the centre of each of these essays is a struggle with the relationship of the touch and feel of the dreamscape of war, and the cold and distanced principles of abstraction. What Lewis attempts to achieve is a compromise. Somatic experience must be communicated but without any backsliding into a 'wallow of sentiment' (CHC 48); the public must still be made to see that abstraction is a more powerful vehicle than mere representation. Lewis solidifies this change of outlook in *Rude Assignment* (1950):

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 bleak and empty. They wanted *filling*. They were still as much present to my mind as ever, but submerged in the coloured vegetation, the flesh and blood, that is life. (RA 139)

What Lewis wants to achieve here with this process of '*filling*' is a partial re-humanization of the landscape. It is an attempt to reconcile the cold but 'perfectly placid pageantry' (WLA 106) of an Ucello, which conveys nothing of the 'emotion, [...] disturbing or dislocating violence, terror or compassion' (WLA 105-6) of war, with a Goya, which is in contrast an excess of emotion in the face of war's 'jagged horror' (WLA 106).³² It is in Lewis's fiction – the force that Lewis admits dragged him out of 'the abstractist cul-de-sac' – that the stylistic implications of this *rapprochement* are most obviously worked through (RA 139). However, the challenge in fiction is complicated by trauma's own involvement in the way memory makes traumatic images available to consciousness. Trauma can only be experienced *ex-post*; in contrast to 'Cantleman's Spring-Mate' which is *ex-ante*.³³ The attempt to communicate trauma is thereby locked into a series of circular references with no obviously iterative conclusion. In 'The Anonymity of Perfection', an unidentified typescript fragment in the Lewis archive at Cornell, we can see Lewis attempting to shift this appreciation of the real into a workable aesthetic model. Lewis's argument is that a toy – a wooden sword or a doll for

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example – is but a ‘simulacra of life’ itself; a ‘small and incomplete model of a larger mature thing’. But this ‘*real* thing’ is only aesthetic. It is ‘a representation, and not a reality’ at all: ‘Would men be so ready, would they be *able* even, to indulge in huge butcheries, [...] if they were not intimately convinced of the superficiality or “nonentity,” of the events in which they were called on to “play their part”?’

It is this realization, Lewis argues, that haunts the maturing child (the girl in puberty is his odd example, presumably from the doll analogy) as she becomes part of the ‘exterior world’. As she develops, a new alienated body is produced; it ‘grows away from her, leaving her behind’. It is not ‘herself’ (what Lewis terms ‘personality’) but rather ‘some separate enigma’. It drives him towards an understanding, through nightmares that ‘terrorize’, that we are ‘only offshoots of the OVUM: that our arms, legs, head and the rest of us, sprouted up like a plant, merely, from this anonymous root, and all our complex activities referred to it’. It is the *corps morcelé*, the pre-symbolic idea, in which the reality of selfhood resides: ‘the more Personality we possess, the more child-like we are’.³⁴ What had threatened to devour Beresin in ‘The War Baby’, visualized in the figure of the abandoned Tets, was this idea of the child as a repository of the real. By 1927, with the completion of *Time and Western Man*, Lewis had turned this theorization into praxis, arguing that “reality” as a notion [...] is not what it usually represents itself to be’ and that this reality can only be approached by the ‘newly-born baby’, a ‘loose, disconnected “self” that does ‘not discriminate between itself and the exterior world’ (*TWM* 355). This moment of self-discovery must then, as in Lacan, be a moment of horror since it threatens destruction. This artistic vision is, as Lewis says in ‘The Meaning of the Wild Body’, ‘hard and exquisite light’, a form of ‘summer lightning’ become a ‘dangerous form of absolute revelation’ (*CWB* 158).

It is out of this contradictory complexity – trauma’s structure, the pre-symbolic nature of the real, and the horror of realization – that Lewis’s mature fictional style emerges. Already partially evident in the phantasmagoric and paranoiac elements of ‘A Soldier of Humour’, it is defined by the way the traditional and the representational are in friction with the futuristic and abstract. Time and space become protean, motivation breaks down, explanation drops away, things both are and are not what they seem. Such is the difficulty Lewis faced when approaching this experience in the 1920s that he clearly considered creating (as the unpublished manuscript ‘Hoodopip’ shows) entirely

virtual realities.³⁵ It is this idea that Fredric Jameson surely had in mind when he described *The Childermass* as a ‘hallucinatory phantasmagoria’ organized as a ‘theological science fiction’.³⁶ Indeed, this novel opens in a place that might or might not be the Ypres salient: the city cradled in the plain, the ‘black plume of smoke’, the ridge of ‘nummulitic limestone’, the mules, the reveille, the ‘night camp’ (C 1), the ‘hut[s]’ and ‘dug-out[s]’ (C 22), the ‘heavy murmur [...] of ritualistic drums’ (C 1), the ‘dead environment’ (C 3). The sky radiates with ‘the afterglow of catastrophe’ (C 12). The roads, down which the occupants of this landscape ‘march and counter-march’, zigzag across the landscape like a trench system, ‘marked out through the solid walls of matter’ (C 9); some, such as the ‘High Street’, have even been christened like a trench. The novel recounts the conversations of Pullman and Satterthwaite, or Satters, two soldiers who we are to presume have entered purgatory following their death in the First World War. It is a war that is never quite manifest but one always present to consciousness: the mud, the ‘frogged mess jacket’, and the ‘Mons Star pinned upon the left breast’ (C 4). Pullman is described at one point as a ‘veteran rat trotting in an aerial gutter’ leading his companion to the observation post, ‘their eyrie their coign of vantage’ (C 9). And Satters at one point finds ‘his mouth and nostrils full of the Death-gas again, shell-shocked into automaton’ (C 52). He still walks with ‘a shell-shock waggle’ (C 12). War here is a constant figure of mind. Visual and verbal language have been infected with it inescapably, perhaps against their own better intentions. Pullman even holds his cane in the same manner as the khaki subaltern: ‘the point of his stick held penwise along the underside of the index’ (C 10). The novel shows that nothing is literally intended to represent the War, but equally nothing can escape it.

In many respects *The Childermass* is not a novel at all but rather a collection of staged set-pieces. But the crucial moment of self-realization comes in one such set-piece. Pullman explains to Satters that their existence in this world reminds him of a Professor Tyndall, a celebrated physicist, who while moving around a ‘large battery of Leyden jars’ during a lecture ‘received a very severe electric shock’: ‘It was so severe that it knocked him out’ (C 69). As Tyndall came around from the shock he found that his intellect has returned to consciousness faster than his visual cortex:

“He was able to address the audience and reassure it immediately. But *while he was reassuring* the audience his body appeared to him

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cut up into fragments. For instance, his arms were separated from his trunk, and seemed suspended in the air. He was able to reason and also to speak as though nothing were the matter. But his optic nerve was quite irrational. It reported everything in a fantastic manner." (C 69-70)

In what is ultimately a metaphor for the novel's own 'fantastic' form, Tyndall says he experienced this shock as the separation of his arms from his trunk: "Had it been the optic nerve speaking it would have said, "As you see, I am all in pieces!" As it was, he said, "You see! I am uninjured and quite as usual!" (C 70). It is the very same fate that Ker-Orr imposes on his enemy Valmore at the end of the revised version of 'A Soldier of Humour' (1927): 'My enemy pulled himself together as though the different parts of his body all wanted to leap away in different directions, and he found it all he could do to prevent such disintegration' (CWB 45). But in this case Satters, the common man, is unconvinced, forcing Pullman to explain the diversion: "Tyndall when he was addressing the audience was really disembodied. He had no body at that moment, only bits. He spoke from memory of the normal situation. [...] On the physical side we are, at present, memories of ourselves. Do you get that? We are in fragments, as it were, or anything you like' (C 70). The electric shock delivered by the Leyden 'battery' (a military originated term coined by Benjamin Franklin to signify the action of several jars acting in concert) is then the surrogate of shell-shock as the literal and the metaphoric double back on each other so that abstraction is '*filled*' in by painful memory.

Lewis's most thorough use of this motif, in perhaps the most complete of all his 'war-stories', is *The Revenge for Love* (1937). To demonstrate this I want to look at the novel's final scene, in which Margot and Victor escape their arms dealing in the Spanish Civil War. As their car speeds towards a guard at the French-Spanish border:

[Margot] watched, in the matter of seconds she had for watching, this mathematical shortening of the space, this telescopic closing-up of the time – of all that separated the man that was a gun, and the man that was a car. There was the deadly instrument – there was the vessel of propulsive power: they *must* meet, they were compelled by their natures to clash. This was a fatality that came into play the moment it was machines, not men, that mattered.

[...] And her teeth came out grinning against the shock, like a cat's at bay. (RL 321)

As in *The Childermass*, the literal becomes the metaphoric as Margot is transformed into an artillery officer: his trigonometric accuracy, the telescopic shortening of space in a viewfinder, the game of technological chance as machine is pitched against machine. As she bears her teeth we see that she is really a tyro (from the Latin *tiro*, the novice recruit), the verbal equivalent of Lewis's painting *Mr Wyndham Lewis as a Tyro* (1920-21). The bared teeth are a spitting and snarling defence mechanism at the inevitability of destruction by the technological power of all 'bull gun[s]'. As Margot hurtles forward, Lewis freezes space and time to allow her to pick out the specific physical details of the guard, his 'dark blue chin [...] sharp blues eyes'. Such is the telescoping of space that she sees 'one of his eyes close up, the lid went neatly down over it'. As with Ker-Orr at the moment of Valmore's humiliation, the dénouement, here the physical impact, is marked by her scream of horror: 'a long chuckling scream' which finds her 'clawing at her mouth to hold in this offensive outburst'. As she opens her eyes she finds herself like Tyndall in different intellectual and visual universes: 'for her eyes did not stay shut, but when they came open again they had a glaze of sorts, that veiled them to induce in them a partial vision, like that of a smoked glass'. Through the smoke she can pick out certain lucid fragments, incoherent as a whole. She sees the guard leap aside struck by the car; there is the 'explosion' of impact accompanied by the flash and crack of the other guard's gun. With her mouth torn into a 'wide protective grimace' the scene is transposed into a battlefield, 'a disgusting chaos of Guards, guns, horses, tree-trunks, and the rest of it'. Margot-Lewis is transported to Passchendaele, surrounded by explosions, the buffeting of the wind, 'the thick of a typhoon', 'tossed in some turgid medium'. Only her padded seat stops a bullet penetrating her back as they speed away under a hail of gunfire (RL 321-22).

But the ordeal is not over, despite Victor's assurance that they are out of sight: 'What did he mean by saying it was "all over"?' As with Valmore and Tyndall, 'she began violently to tremble – her limbs appeared to rebel against the stolid *status quo* of the trunk':

She dug her nails into the palms of her hands, with her teeth she drew blood from her shuddering lip. The ordeal upon her, she had slipped slyly away, out of the front-line. The senses had been

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under intensive bombardment, but she had not *chosen* to fly. She had been forced back without her permission into her private arcanum. There everything reached her wadded up and muffled in from external shock. So she had sat out the blackout in her ivory tower. (RL 323)

This becomes a curious blend of biography and fiction. The terms are entirely those of the war: the 'front-line' and 'bombardment'. Lewis too survived the war 'wadded up and muffled in from external shock' in a now arcane world. But this defence mechanism cannot prevent the war's spread: 'Hurriedly and apprehensively she glanced about her, taking stock. But still she shrank from facts whose impact was *too rude*' (RL 323). The assignment is then '*too rude*' and must be repressed to protect the ego. 'With a wild look cast over the rocky hills which they were now approaching, she retired, numbed once more by contact with the reality, into her customary brooding retreat. There she would digest this ominous information'. The realization that they have killed the guard haunts her, the idea begins to 'stray and woolgather, entering all kinds of bypaths'. She cannot distract her mind, which keeps returning, 'gazing all the time [...] at an enormous Prussian-blue chin'. The senses struggle against reason as she recalls the klaxon, the rifle fire, and the rearing of the horse:

[s]he discovered herself at last watching against her will the floodlit stretch of rust-red road. Plumes of dust were spurting up; but their car (it had left her behind) was rapidly disappearing and had already grown quite small, in diminishing perspective; while in the foreground she was staring down at a disagreeable flattened object. Sprawling in the centre of the road, it was incredibly two-dimensional and, in short, unreal. It might have just been painted upon the earth. But it looked more like a big untidy pattern, cut out of black paper, except for what was the face. (RL 325)

In Margot, Lewis demonstrated that the war really was always with him, '*filling*' in between the abstractions 'against [his] will'. As his car drove away from war down the 'rust-red road' he too disappeared into the distance. But as for Margot, the decapitated soldier he had left behind would stay with him, 'like a big untidy pattern', for the rest of his life. It thoroughly hallmarked his fiction: always there, never silent.

Notes

¹ Support for the research and writing of this article was provided by a doctoral award from the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC).

² The image of Lewis as a subaltern can be dated to between Lewis's appointment as a 2nd Lieutenant on the 25th of December 1916 and the 24th of May 1917 when he sailed for France. The later image of Lewis as a civilian has been dated by Paul Edwards to Lewis's demobilization in April 1919. See Paul Edwards, *Wyndham Lewis: Art and War* (London: Lund Humphries Publishers, 1992), 15. However, Lewis's 'Demobilization Ration Book' was not stamped until the 4th of June 1919 at the Officers Dispersal Unit just off Sloane Street in London. The unused ration book is contained in the Wyndham Lewis Collection 4612 of the Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library, Ithaca, NY. Estate of Mrs G. A. Wyndham Lewis. By permission. This collection is referred to hereafter as Cornell. Paul O'Keeffe dates the photograph to October 1919. See Paul O'Keeffe, *Some Sort of Genius: A Life of Wyndham Lewis* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2000), 214 and the related image caption.

³ Wyndham Lewis, 'Cantelman-Crowd Master', unpublished manuscript, Cornell. This manuscript can be dated to between the latter half of 1914 and the early months of 1915 given that part of it appears in *BLAST* 2 (1915) under the title 'The Crowd Master' (B2 94-102). A small section of the manuscript, originally the second part, has been reprinted under the title 'The Countryhouse Party, Scotland' in *UP* 45-49.

⁴ 'Khaki fever' was a term used by the British press in the opening months of the War to describe the excitement experienced by young women at the sight of troops in uniform. See Angela Woollacott, "'Khaki Fever' and its Control: Gender, Class, Age and Sexual Morality on the British Homefront in the First World War', *Journal of Contemporary History* 29 (1994): 325-47.

⁵ There are only two substantial studies of Lewis's overall career in relation to the First World War: Edwards, *Wyndham Lewis: Art and War* and David Peters Corbett (ed.), *Wyndham Lewis and the Art of Modern War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). A special war issue of *Enemy News* – 34 (1992) – is largely composed of a reprint of part of the 'Cantelman-Crowd Master' manuscript.

⁶ See Fredric Jameson, *Fables of Aggression: Wyndham Lewis, the Modernist as Fascist* (1979) (London: Verso, 2008); John Carey, *The Intellectuals and the Masses: Pride and Prejudice among the Literary Intelligentsia, 1880-1939* (London: Faber and Faber, 1992); and David Ayers, *Wyndham Lewis and Western Man* (London: Macmillan, 1992). The argument persists in such recent work as Ella Zohar Ophir, 'Towards a Pitiless Fiction: Abstraction, Comedy, and Modernist Antihumanism', *Modern Fiction Studies* 52 (2006): 92-120.

⁷ The importance of the texts composed during 1915 to our understanding of Lewis’s relationship to war can be seen in Paul Peppis, “‘Surrounded by a Multitude of Other Blasts’”: Vorticism and the Great War’, *Modernism/Modernity* 4. 2 (1997): 39-66.

⁸ I have retained Pound’s punctuation throughout this article except where it would detract from sense.

⁹ John Terraine, *White Heat: The New Warfare, 1914-18* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1982), 219.

¹⁰ See Joanna Bourke, *Dismembering the Male: Men’s Bodies, Britain, and the Great War* (London: Reaktion Books, 1996) and Ana Carden-Coyne, *Reconstructing the Body: Classicism, Modernism, and the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

¹¹ John Keegan, *The Face of Battle* (London: The Folio Society, 1976), 245-47.

¹² Trevor Brent has analysed this concept of ‘the Real’ in the work of Jacques Lacan and Slavoj Žižek in relation to Lewis’s work. See ‘Keeping Up Appearances: Reality and Belief in Wyndham Lewis’s *Time and Western Man* and *The Revenge for Love*’, *Textual Practice* 22. 3 (2008): 469-86. His conclusion that Lewis attempted to insulate the body from ‘the Real’ has also been investigated in Hal Foster, ‘Prosthetic Gods’, *Modernism/Modernity* 4. 2 (1997): 5-38.

¹³ The term is taken from Lewis’s foreword to *The Wild Body* (1927) in which he noted that the stories in the collection ‘represent my entire literary output prior to the war, with the exception of *The Enemy of the Stars* [...] and a group of war-stories’ (CWB xiii).

¹⁴ ‘Cantleman’s Spring-Mate’ was first published as ‘Cantelman’s Spring-Mate’ in *The Little Review* 4. 6 (October 1917): 8-14; ‘The War Baby’ in *Art and Letters* 2. 1 (1918-19): 14-41; and ‘The King of the Trenches’ in the expanded *Blasting and Bombardiering* (1967).

¹⁵ Simone Weil, ‘The Iliad, or the Poem of Force’, trans. Mary McCarthy, reprinted in *Chicago Review* 18 (1965): 5-30, 19.

¹⁶ The principal texts here are Aldington’s *Death of a Hero* (1929), Sassoon’s *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer* (1930), and Graves’s *Goodbye to All That* (1929).

¹⁷ Westham served as a convalescent camp to the ANZAC troops in the Weymouth area. See C. E. W. Bean, *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-18*, 5 vols (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1941), iii, 145-87.

¹⁸ See Wyndham Lewis, ‘The Bull Gun’, unpublished manuscript, Cornell, reproduced by Robert Edward Murray in *Stand To!* 31 (1991): 29-30. We can trace the writing of this article with some precision.

¹⁹ Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and the Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 80-81.

²⁰ Quoted in O’Keeffe, *Some Sort of Genius*, 171 from an undated letter at Cornell.

²¹ See the letters to Lewis of July 1916 (P/L 50-53).

²² Wyndham Lewis, ‘Autobiographical Fragment, Quimperlé’, unpublished manuscript, August 17th 1908, Cornell.

²³ Christine Hardegen, ‘Wyndham Lewis’s First World War Art and Literature’, in Peters Corbett (ed.), *Wyndham Lewis and the Art of Modern War*, 75.

²⁴ Ian Passingham, *Pillars of Fire: The Battle of Messines Ridge, June 1917* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2004), 38-40.

²⁵ I have discussed ‘A Soldier of Humour’ at length in a previous article and return to it here only in passing. See my ‘The Siamese Demon: Wyndham Lewis and America’, *Modernism/Modernity*, 17. 2 (2010): 383-98.

²⁶ Lewis was at this stage reemphasizing his desire for a posting in Intelligence (P/L 79, 85-86).

²⁷ Lyn Macdonald, *They Called it Passchendaele: The Story of the Third Battle of Ypres and of the Men Who Fought It* (London: Penguin, 2003), 241.

²⁸ This painting can be seen at the Musée d’Orsay, Paris.

²⁹ Weil, ‘The Iliad, or the Poem of Force’, 6.

³⁰ The particular canvas I have in mind here is Francisco José de Goya y Lucientes’s *Nature morte à la tête de mouton* (1808-12).

³¹ Bryan Turner, *The Body and Society*, 2nd edn (London: Sage Publications, 2006), xiii.

³² The paintings Lewis is referring to here are Paolo Ucello’s *Niccolo Mauruzi da Tolentino at the Battle of San Romano* (1454-57) and Goya’s *Los desastres de la guerra* (1810-15).

³³ See Roger Luckhurst, *The Trauma Question* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), 1-3.

³⁴ ‘The Anonymity of Perfection’ has been reprinted by Paul Edwards in *Modernism/Modernity* 4. 2 (1997): 165-69. Edwards traces its composition to the early 1920s.

³⁵ See Wyndham Lewis, ‘Hoodopip’, unpublished manuscript, Cornell. The ‘Foreword’ to the manuscript begins: ‘Let OO be a world on which twenty thousand years previously, some adventurers from the earth had landed’. Parts of the manuscript have been reprinted in a Wyndham Lewis edition of *Agenda* 7. 3 – 8. 1 (1969-70): 1-224, 187-96.

³⁶ Jameson, *Fables of Aggression*, 52. Paul Edwards calls *The Childermass* a ‘comprehensive anatomy of the trauma caused by the war in postwar culture’. See Edwards, ‘British War Memoirs’, 30.

Wyndham Lewis: Wyndham Lewis, English artist and writer who founded the Vorticist movement, which sought to relate art and literature to the industrial process. About 1893 Lewis moved to London with his mother after his parents separated. At age 16 he won a scholarship to London's Slade School of Fine Art, but he. While in Paris, Lewis became interested in Cubist and Expressionist art; he was one of the first British artists to do so. On his return to London in 1908, Lewis began to write satirical stories, and he developed a style of painting that drew upon aspects of Cubism and Expressionism. By 1913 he was creating paintings that contained abstract geometric forms and references to machines and urban architecture. (Percy) Wyndham Lewis (1882-1957) was a novelist, painter, essayist, polemicist and one of the truly dynamic forces of the early 20th century and a centr... After serving as an artillery officer and official war artist during the First World War, Lewis was unable to revive the avant-garde spirit of Vorticism, though he attempted to do so in a pamphlet advocating the modernisation of London architecture in 1919: *The Caliph's Design Architects! Where is your Vortex?* He continued writing fiction and criticism, to renewed acclaim, until his death.