

**‘What rough beast’: Yeatsian glimpses of
‘Utopia’ in Wyndham Lewis’s *The Human Age* and
America and Cosmic Man (and what Tzvetan Todorov
and Ernst Bloch, let alone Barack Obama, might
make of it all)**

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‘After the Death of God and the collapse of Utopias, on what intellectual and moral base do we want to build our communal life?’¹ Todorov’s question (though itself begging essential questions) does at least help us understand why utopia proves to be so elusive in Lewis’s apocalyptic *oeuvre*.

A tragic exodus

On their mock-epic journey through the Afterlife, the anti-heroes of *The Human Age* fail to discover an ideally perfect place, whether in its social, political, or moral aspects. In *The Childermass* (1928) the newly dead souls find themselves in ‘a pretty dud Heaven’ (C 64). Across the River Styx looms what might be Augustine’s City of God, one of the two great archetypes of the Christian Utopia – the other being the Messianic Kingdom of Heaven.² Almost immediately, though, such hopes are checked, the city looking as if it had suffered a ‘tragic exodus’ (C 7). With *Monstre Gai* (1955), the second volume of the sequence, there is an increased sense of *Deus Absconditus*. True, the street names attest Third City’s claim to be a holy city. But is it the third Jerusalem, that is to say, the New Jerusalem, or, as the currency suggests, is it just the latest metropolis to fall under the Pax Romana? At any rate God is again absent. What this ‘degenerate, chaotic outpost of Heaven’ (HA 25) offers Mankind is scarcely Purgatory (as Catholic theologians and many

other Christian thinkers have understood the concept) – as for Womankind, their fate is utter degradation.³ When in the third volume *Malign Fiesta* (1955) the Devil (bored with acting as the torturer in the Divine scheme of things) attempts to reconstruct his Nazified Hell as a Hollywood utopia, his celebratory Carnival ends in an eschatological failure of the kind revealed in John's *Apocalypse*.

The Human Age was more than a quarter of a century in completion and it mirrors an appalling epoch. The worsening historical context helps to explain Lewis's pessimism. The first part of *The Human Age* emerges from the trauma of the Great War and the bloody revolutions of Right and Left that ensued. In *The Childermass*, the Enemy's targets are not confined to the various cultural, social, and political manifestations of the 'Time Cult'. Effectively Lewis asks also where God had been in the Trenches or later in the totalitarian experiments at re-shaping humankind.⁴ In the Bailiff's concentration camp, Pullman and Satters are far from the Judgement Seat of Judaeo-Christian tradition; the irregular proceedings presided over by the Old Bailie resemble more the Soviet show trial and its Surrealist prototype.⁵ Indeed, *Monstre Gai* and *Malign Fiesta* (both 1955) are horrified responses to Gulag, Blitz, Shoah, and the threat of Nuclear Holocaust. Small wonder that in *The Human Age* there is so little sign of utopia.

Nevertheless, for a short spell, from victory in the Second World War until overwhelmed by apprehensions of Armageddon III (as Lewis termed it), there is a brief period of widespread utopian optimism born of the exhilaration at the establishment of the United Nations. At an earlier stage in the second global conflict, Rene Harding in *Self Condemned* (1954) had complained about the lack of vision in the preachers heard on Momaco (i.e. Toronto) radio of a Sunday:

There is *no* voice telling people that this is a very great revolution rather than the stupid war every booby thinks it is –because it will afford all the nations an authentic *chance* (whether they take it or not, which is up to them) of escape from the unmentionable chaos which brought it about, that a more intelligent society *may* be in the making. (SC 182)

By the end of the war the climate of opinion had radically altered; in some quarters it verged on the apocalyptic. Lewis keeps a sharp eye on media hype: 'One [columnist] even declared that the San Francisco Conference was the greatest event since the Last Supper. (This it is true

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was an American columnist) (*ACM* 208).⁶ Even so, this mood as of ‘a new heaven and a new earth’ (*Revelations* 21: 1) helps explain how he came to write *America and Cosmic Man* (1948), a much more hopeful vision of ‘the global village’. Marshall McLuhan acknowledged his debt to Lewis’s vision of an electronically and racially liberated future, modelled in part on the utopian aspirations of the Founding Fathers of the USA – not least on the vision of the inadequately acknowledged Thomas Paine (*ACM* 23, 99, 101-3, 109-15).⁷

Naturally there is some explicit anti-dystopian caution expressed in Lewis’s book. Notwithstanding this aversion from the concept of utopia – most emphatic in his critique of Plato’s pattern of a model state ‘so grim, and cruelly dull’ and so militaristic (*ACM* 171) – Lewis’s unwillingness even to use the term except in a negative sense camouflages with shrewd realism a distinctly more optimistic spirit. On the book’s States-side publication in 1948, Lewis’s positive attitude to the United States was welcomed by no less than the most authoritative journals of the American Left and the Jewish intellectual community, respectively *The Partisan Review* and *Commentary*.⁸ Also, this ‘remarkably eccentric little book by a remarkably eccentric man’, as Page Smith described book and author, was twice singled out for praise by that distinguished historian of the States.⁹

At first glance the book seems just an urbanely amusing, informal, but always acute historical survey. Then one is startled and given pause for further thought by the apocalyptic allusions to Yeats that open the visionary second part of this analysis of the American Constitution (*ACM* 150-51). There, falling under the spell woven by the wittily awesome echoes of ‘The Second Coming’ (that most doctrinal of the poems issuing from *A Vision*) readers are prompted to look into the relationship between the British artist and Irish poet.

Sailing to Byzantium

Lewis and Yeats go back a long way – far further back than I and others had previously thought.¹⁰ As Roy Foster in his fine biography reveals, during 1918 Iris Barry (then Lewis’s girlfriend and subsequently mother of two of his children) had been acrimoniously sharing a flat with Iseult Gonne until the 18th of August.¹¹ Iseult was the daughter of Maud Gonne, and with both women Yeats had a complicated intimacy.

Crucial to my argument here is the fact that for a period (if only a limited period because of Barry's outrageous behaviour) Lewis came into the Yeats circle just at the time when the poet and his new wife George were collaborating on their momentous supernatural investigations. Iseult would have known quite a lot about these developments and would have talked about them. As to their literary importance, it is these investigations of the Occult which help inspire so much that is most memorable in Yeats's achievement: 'The Second Coming' (January 1919), first printed in *The Dial* (November 1920) and afterwards in his 1921 collection *Michael Robartes and the Dancer*; *The Trembling of the Veil* (1922, 1926); the Byzantium poems (1926-33); and especially *A Vision* (1925; revised 1937).¹² Among the surrounding glosses, not the least important is the poet's commentary on the process of this re-visioning, Yeats's 'Pages from a Diary of 1930' (published 1942). This particular record has a clarity often missing from the more formal assertions of *A Vision*; further it indicates Yeats's extensive interest in Lewis's writing. The interest was mutual.

Time and Western Man (1927) is notably courteous to 'the romantic, aristocratical, magic-loving William Butler Yeats' (*TWM* 75), and in *The Apes of God* (1930) the affectionate mockery of the poet is based on a close reading of Yeats's *Autobiographies* (1926; reprinted 1927).¹³ Later in *One Way Song* (1933) – prompted, it would seem, by the Cuala Press's 1927 publication of *October Blast* (amongst the glories of which is 'Sailing to Byzantium') – Lewis singles Yeats out for somewhat different reasons: 'The greater Yeats, / Turning his back on Ossian, relates / The blasts of more contemporary fates' (*CPP* 58). Again, analysis of *The Human Age* suggests that at a time when Europe seemed one vast graveyard, the narrative repetitions of the epic journey made by its two protagonists through the world of the Dead derives less from Dante than from Yeats. *The Childermass* and its sequels seem haunted by Yeats's use of the great Gnostic 'Hymn of the Soul' and the unorthodox visions of the repetitive patterns (in Yeats's version of the Dialogue of the Dead) whereby the departed souls negotiate the Afterlife.¹⁴ 'The first region of the dead as the ghosts everywhere describe it' was Yeats's awed comment on the opening pages of *The Childermass*.¹⁵ The poet seems wonderfully oblivious of the extent to which vital elements in Lewis's Time Flats phantasmagoria could well have been modelled on his own 1914 essay 'Swedenborg, Mediums and the Desolate Places', which first published as an epilogue to Lady Gregory's *Visions and Beliefs in the West of Ireland* in 1920.

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Belatedly the persistent reader (and you do need a certain amount of perseverance to make sense out of the enigmatic *Childermass*), belatedly one also recognizes that the manner of Pullman's devotion to the Holy Ghost comes from the Eucharist service of the Byzantine tradition. In the Eastern Christian liturgy (rather more so than in the West, apparently) the whole congregation at Mass (and that includes the departed souls) are envisaged as going on a journey to the Heavenly Kingdom.¹⁶ During a curious episode in *The Childermass*, the confessedly 'Anglo-Catholic' Pullman (by 1955 he is a Roman Catholic), having earlier heard "the sanctus bell" (C 8) coming from the metropolitan shore, prays in the Byzantine or Greek Catholic fashion with some care in standing, genuflecting, bowing, and making the sign of the Cross (C 116). As Lewis found, apparently when consulting the article on Liturgy in Volume XVI of the brilliant eleventh edition of *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, under the sub-heading of 'The Liturgy of Constantinople', in the Byzantine celebration of the Holy Eucharist at 'the Elevation' of the Host and then Chalice, the Holy Spirit is invoked with the very same prayer that Pullman recites.¹⁷

Wondering why Pullman keeps his gaze fixed upon 'the magnetic city' (C 116) across the River Styx as he recites in Byzantine fashion 'Holy Things to Holy Men', one is driven to speculate whether Lewis had encountered Yeats's 'Sailing to Byzantium' before its publication in *The Tower* (1928).¹⁸ In my 'Byzantium and Cosmic Man' I should have borne in mind E. W. F. Tomlin's 1955 *aperçu* that *The Childermass* 'is the hallucinatory world of Yeats's Byzantium and of [...] Eliot's Waste Land'.¹⁹ Others were not so neglectful. In Hugh Kenner's prefatory essay to Walter Michel's *Wyndham Lewis: Paintings and Drawings* (1973), Kenner suggested that this pictorial voyage-quest after immortality was a visual transposition of 'Sailing to Byzantium'.²⁰ Subsequently developing these ideas, Paul Edwards and I argued that Lewis's use of collage in this picture is more akin to Yeats's later poem, 'Byzantium', where narrative is replaced by a haunting montage of spiritual manifestations.²¹

The new evidence about the extent and depth of Lewis's intimacy with Yeats's world of ideas and images suggests that his interest in the Irish poet's visionary poetics would not have been long deflected by any estrangement between Iseult and Iris. Playing the role of something rather more than just the catalyst in the mutually inspirational renewal of the Lewis and Yeats friendship during the gestation of *The Childermass* was the fellow artist and writer Thomas Sturge Moore. Lewis's mentor from his student days (and with whom he had resumed contact in 1926),

Sturge Moore was not just a contemporary of Yeats – he was also an old friend and trusted collaborator.²² Of note here is the fact that when the Irish poet originally thought of giving his 1933 Macmillan collection the title of ‘Byzantium’, it was Sturge Moore who (before eventually devising the actual cover of *The Winding Stair*), very swiftly picked out the dome of Hagia Sophia (above which float the psychic emanations successively conjured up in Yeats’s poem) that provided the basis for an initial design. Significantly, this image was based on the exterior of Hagia Sophia, the stupendous former Orthodox basilica of Constantinople. As massive and buttressed as a citadel, Hagia Sophia was dedicated to Divine Wisdom or the Holy Ghost. That Hagia Sophia is the Third Person of the Triune Godhead could help to explain why in his devotions to the Holy Ghost Pullman is at pains to emphasize ‘the triangle of the Trinity’ (C 116). The colossal dome making it resemble a vast helmet, Hagia Sophia dominates the skyline when the Byzantine capital (defended by its famous Theodosian double line of land walls and towers) is viewed from the Asiatic shore of the narrow strait of the river-like Bosphorus at the point at which it opens out into the Sea of Marmara. In not quite identical fashion (the architectural flourishes are thought-provokingly different) but similarly besieged, the holy city of *The Childermass* looms up across the Styx:

Stretching into the distance away from the citadel, to the celestial north, are [*sic*] a double belt of battlements. As they recede they withdraw from the shore of the river. They are strengthened with numerous buttresses, a process at their tops finned like the biretta of a roman priest. (C 7, emphases added)

Among the reference books Yeats had bought with some of the money that came to him with the Nobel Prize in 1923 were the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and Hastings’s *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*.²³ Although Lewis was never as wealthy as Yeats, he shared his views about the key role in the work of the serious writer played by the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and the proximity of a major library. In truth, when one consults the article on Constantinople in the celebrated eleventh edition (1910) of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Volume III), it is almost as if one were peering over Lewis’s shoulders as he takes notes: Rome ‘the eternal city could no longer claim to be the rightful throne of state’ so Constantine decided to build at ‘Byzantium’ a ‘New Rome’; the site chosen by the Emperor ‘constituted a natural citadel’; and a beautifully

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detailed map shows the direction taken northwards by the land walls erected by Theodosius; 'the most glorious cathedral of Eastern Christendom is St Sophia'; Holy Wisdom 'is the glory of Byzantine art', the 'dominical canopy' of its magnificent interior swells larger [...] and higher [...] as though a miniature heaven rose over head; Constantinople 'was characterized by a strong theological and ecclesiastical temperament [...] full of churches [which] consecrated it a holy city and attracted pilgrims from every quarter'.²⁴ One singular parallel that seems to clinch this comparison of Constantinople (as described in the *Britannica*) and 'the magnetic city' in Lewis's *Childermass* is the slightly disconcerting fact that each Christian cosmopolis numbers among its notable edifices a pyramid. Further (as the emphases added above indicate) Lewis and, presumably, Yeats could not have done better if they had had the imaginative stimulus of Wikipedia.

In the Autumn of 1927, Yeats had lent Sturge Moore his only copy of *October Blast*; so his designer had had plenty of time to acquaint himself with 'Sailing to Byzantium', which was included in this collection.²⁵ And because everybody, then as since, who sees that poetic masterpiece is deeply impressed by it (even if like Sturge Moore they have doubts about the poem's conclusion), it is inconceivable that the mentor would have failed to give his protégé at least some highly stimulating clues.²⁶ Among these clues might well have been an idea of how by subtle amplification of Yeatsian echoes, a prayer to the Holy Ghost (that in the Byzantine rite comes between the Consecration and Holy Communion) could be made to fit so eloquently into the Eucharistic and other ecclesiastical symbolism which sustains those, if not utopian, at any rate more hopeful aspects of *The Human Age*.

Hardly less surprising is the frequency with which Lewis turns up in both versions of *A Vision*. Again, these reappearances give the student of Lewis much food for thought. The typology that is so important a feature of Yeats's System, a register of perennial types of humanity, provides, in its 1925 version, an acute assessment of the notorious ambiguities in Lewis's character. At the same time (and justifiably, given his revolutionary achievements as writer and artist) Lewis must have been gratified to find that he is seen as playing an intriguing if mysterious role in Yeats's vast correlated survey of history as a system of oscillating cycles.²⁷ These cycles, revolving in a somewhat Gnostic Cosmos from which God is distant, nevertheless are seen as offering a possible supernatural transcendence into 'a new species of Man' – a concept akin to Lewis's 'Cosmic Man'.

Accordingly, in the remainder of this article I shall endeavour first to show how the use of such Yeatsian parallels helps Lewis to articulate his analysis of the utopian potentialities in American culture; and second, and more paradoxically, to show how Yeats's assessment of Lewis's character ultimately provides a fresh perspective on a rather neglected element of the Enemy's achievement, an aspect that Ernst Bloch would surely recognize as, to some degree and in the best sense of the term, utopian.

The thunderous murmurs of a cradle-song

The prime example of how Yeats helped Lewis better to understand the States opens the second part of *America and Cosmic Man* where by an awesome and yet witty collage Lewis pastiches the great Irish poet's theory and practice. A medley of allusions to *A Vision* and to 'The Second Coming' are woven together. Although the nightmare that underlies 'The Second Coming' is absent from *America and Cosmic Man*, in both Yeats's poetic and Lewis's prose vision there is that sense of mystery enveloping the revelation and the way the experience of the seer (who receives it) is gradually given prominence and in the first person, the tone corresponding to the importance of the secrets about to be disclosed. These are some of the persistent features of the apocalyptic tradition, but more specific debts to Yeats also emerge:

We know a lot about the future, we can see into it a short distance very clearly: but there is [...] substantial evidence of what is to come, to enable us to go much farther than that narrow belt, into the darkening time-tract ahead. There is a fatality, too, that is written all over a country, if you know how to read it. America seems charged with it, to bursting-point. A curse upon a race is a familiar phenomenon. I am speaking of a fatality of that sort. But this one looks to me more like a *blessing* [...]. (*ACM* 150)

The phantasmagorical Time-Flats of *The Childermass* are what first comes to mind when one reads this passage. Then next those painstaking discriminations recall Yeats's struggles in *Vision B* (1937) to wrest clarity out of his Instructors' portentous mystifications. Finally come those echoes of the monstrous nativity predicted in the final lines of Yeats's most famous revelation:

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Surely some revelation is at hand;
Surely the Second Coming is at hand.
The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out
When a vast image out of *Spiritus Mundi*
Troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert
A shape with lion body and the head of a man [...] [
[...] darkness drops again; but now I know
That twenty centuries of stony sleep
Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle, [...].²⁸

Yeats's 'rocking cradle' apparently refers to the infant Jesus; the trouble is the Christ-child 'is almost never pictured as lying in a cradle, rather [he is placed in] the beasts' manger'.²⁹ True, in *America and Cosmic Man* the menace evoked by the 'rough beast' has diminished, but Lewis's disturbing image of a stormy lullaby gives no false assurance of an easy delivery or trouble-free upbringing: 'the thunderous murmurs of a cradle-song are audible. Something is being born' (*ACM* 150).

These spell-binding reminiscences of Yeats's heterodox apocalypse (memories of which also subsequently lead us to suspect in the immediate vicinity the presence of further echoes, this time of the Byzantium poems) allow Lewis to insert other strands into the complex pattern of his argument; new motifs not of poetical but of political thinking. Two different strands of utopian thought emerge: first, cosmopolitanism; second (and with a significant Yeatsian twist from the characteristic image of American Exceptionalism) 'the Melting Pot':

[1] How can the universalism celebrated in this second part be born out of that very parochial party-system of British origin? [...] They [that is, the 'Nordics,' the White Anglo-Saxon Protestants and more recent immigrants from Northern Europe] are surrounded by a sea of Underdog "foreignness," outnumbering them by a hundred to one. How can you "melt" them?

[2] Will this universalist future be a miracle-birth in [*sic*] to Cosmopolis? (*ACM* 150)

Taking his cue from the enigmatic conclusion of Yeats's poem, Lewis has cast all these statements of doctrine in the interrogative mode – a

challenging mix of rhetorical and epic questions. Epic questions to emphasize the importance of the matter about to be addressed by the poet; and the repetitions of Hebrew poetry (that are also echoed in Yeats's lines) here accumulatively impart to the expression of Lewis's theme something of the urgency of Biblical prophetic utterance. Rhetorical questions are deployed to encourage the reader or (since these were originally lectures) auditor to think about what the answer to the question must be. No formal answer is expected. Rather, it is a rhetorical device used by the speaker to assert or deny something, or to express ambivalence – and is not uncertainty voiced in the desperate Yeats's over-insistent 'Surely'? Among Lewis's 'utopian' statements above, there is one group where clearly Lewis wishes to support the argument advanced; whereas in the other case his attitude is more sceptical.

As a concept, 'cosmopolitanism' has been around for a couple of millennia. Wanting to affirm his belief in this ideal, Lewis's rhetorical question leads him into tracing it back to the Ancient Greeks (*ACM* 179). In the aftermath of the Second World War and with the advent of the United Nations, this ideology was very much in vogue. Cosmopolitanism holds that all varieties of humankind belong to an international community based on a shared morality. Lewis looks forward to a similar kind of society: 'An authentic World Government [...], that is only a first step, and a full world society is necessary' (*ACM* 170). Of course, Lewis is well aware of the objections to cosmopolitanism, but two World Wars readily supply him with a compelling answer: 'any doctrine of that sort [...] is liable to be criticised as unpatriotic. When you hear that, all you need do is to recall the bloody path along which the great "patriots" of all great nations have led us' (*ACM* 174).

As to the idea of that fusion of cultures imaged in the metaphor of the Melting Pot, Lewis seems more cautious. From the time of the first English settlements there, America had been seen as a new promised land, 'God's own country', a society where (as de Tocqueville suggests) an exceptional blending of peoples or cultures is taking place (*ACM* 98 and 100).³⁰ In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the metaphor of a 'crucible' was used to describe the merging of different nationalities. Later on in the twentieth century, it was allied with concepts of America as an ideal republic and thus connected to utopian visions of the emergence of an American 'new man', a society led by 'messianic Presidents' (*ACM* 12, 28, 71, 74-6, 78, 86, and 96). The exact

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term ‘melting pot’ came to be generally used in 1908, after the premiere of Israel Zangwill’s play of that name. By combining this somewhat jingoistic kind of utopian thinking with cosmopolitanism, Lewis continues to subtly undermine that myth of American Exceptionalism long cherished by WASPs.

A miracle birth into Cosmopolis

Lewis was also uneasy about the terminology and images often used in discussing these questions; and his concern extended still further to the genre traditionally used to extol the office of the American Presidency. Alternatives seem to have been suggested by Yeats. ‘Cosmopolitan’, as Lewis put it, ‘has associations of another and trivial order. World or earth are not promising substitutes for cosmic. So I have given the word “cosmic” precedence, and that is what I generally use to describe a society, the preliminary stages of whose incubation may be studied in America’ (*ACM* 153). This explanation is not entirely convincing; clearly the range of possible alternatives is not exhausted. After all, in the second paragraph of the book its author had described himself as an ‘internationalist’ (*ACM* 7). By deploying such an extraordinarily resonant term as ‘cosmic’, did Lewis want both to evoke that sense of the whole immense harmonious physical universe and yet at the same time imply its problematic relation to the transcendental realm, or in face of fears that the world is evil tentatively to assert the belief that there exists, in some sense, a Divine Order?³¹ More specifically was a nod intended towards Yeats’s impersonal, possibly Gnostic ‘supernatural’? One telltale sign is Lewis’s somewhat defensive admission of the term’s ‘fatal attraction for fakirs and mountebanks’ (*ACM* 153).

Another problem was that, by the late forties, the imagery most characteristic of American Exceptionalism could no longer be regarded complacently as a dead metaphor – at least not in the eyes of those Europeans with a rather uneasy conscience about their former defence of Christendom, with all its flaws and cruelties. As Lewis wrote: ‘in succession to [the Roman world] a theocratic universalism was attempted. But Christendom was the reverse of a reign of peace. Luckily, they had only battleaxes and bows and arrows, instead of the weapons of wholesale slaughter which we possess, or there would have been very little left, so remorselessly did the Sermon on the Mount

impel those Christians to homicide. Christianity, as a unifier, became a bad joke long ago' (*ACM* 179-80). Strikingly relevant here is the Goyaesque picture Lewis draws of 'a homicidal lunatic, clutching in his sweaty fingers bunches of human beings and thrusting them with a snarl into gas-chambers it keeps in its lair for that purpose' (*ACM* 211).

As information gradually emerged concerning the Death Camp and the absence of God that it implied, I myself am old enough to remember how during the late forties and early fifties as an imperfectly informed Catholic student, first in the sixth form of the local Grammar School and then at University College London (both consciousness-raising political environments) one felt more and more uncomfortable about using Israel Zangwill's language. 'Understand that America is God's Crucible, the great Melting-Pot [so commands Zangwill's spokesman] for these are the fires of God you've come to – these are the fires of God. A fig for your feuds and vendettas! Germans and Frenchmen, Irishmen and Englishmen, Jews and Russians – into the Crucible with you all! God is making the American'.³² For such disconcerting imagery Lewis tends to substitute, at this stage of his argument, the vision of an enigmatic incarnation, the miracle birth of the troubling sort we find in Yeats's 'Second Coming'.

In the Apocalypse literature strange animals are not uncommon. However, not all are threatening. True, in *The Revelation of John* (where the nearest match with the monstrous birth in Yeats's poem is to be found) the Beast 666 is the Anti-Christ. In *Monstre Gai* the Bailiff marches into Third City under a banner bearing just such a device (*HA* 9). By contrast, in another Apocalypse, and one that we know Lewis made significant use of, things are very different. In the Judaeo-Christian *Greek Apocalypse of Baruch*, the fabulous creature is the world saviour, incarnate as the Phoenix. This is the very phoenix which, in a sublime yet comic epiphany, appears in *The Childermass* (*C* 136-44). A simulacrum of this phoenix, in a diabolic parody of the Sacrament of Holy Communion, is later mockingly served to his guest and victim by the Bailiff, Pullman's Tempter in *Monstre Gai* (*HA* 177 and 185).³³ Conversely, in *America and Cosmic Man* Lewis exploits the potential in Yeats's creature to be, on its birth, less threatening than it appears at the close of his sonnet sequence.³⁴ Therefore, though still sounding formidably leonine, Lewis's beast has lost his roughness. Could this 'dusky yellow' marvel of racial and cultural miscegenation really be the embryonic world saviour? How much he is a new kind of American President only time will tell, but in this apocalyptic context thoughts of

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the extraordinary expectations burdening the charismatic Barack Obama are irresistible. The essential feature, which all these fabulous creatures of Apocalyptic literature share, is their hybridity and what that multiple nature symbolizes: the possibility of human transformation. There are problems, though, about the way both Yeats and Lewis conceive of that dream of ‘a new species of man’.

A running panegyric of the American city

‘Sailing to Byzantium’ (1928) and ‘Byzantium’ (1933) embody an ecstatic vision of the elderly poet translated into a legendary instrument of chronicle and prophecy, changed into an artistic masterpiece which in its transcendence of time can remember, record, and foretell. By contrast, ‘In Memoriam of Eva Gore-Booth and Con Markiewicz’ (1933) attaches a much darker meaning to the transfiguration wrought by age. Recalling the two once beautiful friends of his youth Yeats is troubled:

I know not what the younger dreams –
Some vague Utopia – and she seems,
When withered old and skeleton-gaunt,
An image of such politics.³⁵

In lamenting what her ideals have led Eva to make of her life as a social worker, it may be that (as Elizabeth Cullingford has suggested) Yeats is mainly criticizing the ‘undoubted extremism’ of certain ‘emotional ladies’ active in Irish politics.³⁶ Nevertheless, so devastating is the image drawn in the poem that it would have been a gross distortion had Lewis been using Yeats’s System and related poems to advocate wholeheartedly utopian ideas.

But of course Lewis is doing no such thing. He is fairly explicit about his aims, which are far more limited. What Lewis seeks is ‘a novel Cosmopolis. *Not a Utopia*; just somewhere in which armed groups are not incessantly menacing each other’ (ACM 156, emphasis added). Both writers have their preference among world cities: in the case of one, the city is set in the past; in the other it is in the present. In neither is the society perfect. Both cities, though, are portals to a supra-mundane world, liminal states offering the potential for human transcendence.³⁷ Significantly in his skirmishing with Henry Miller, Lewis associates the contemporary cosmopolitan not with Istanbul but with ‘Constantinople’

(*ACM* 164). As Frank Lentricchia has noted, ‘historical Byzantium becomes the symbolic good place for Yeats because [we learn from *A Vision*] there he would achieve “Unity of Being”’.³⁸ Yeats’s ‘holy city of Byzantium’ accommodates both ‘the Emperor’s drunken soldiery [...] nightwalkers’ song’ and fabulous creatures from pagan myth, dolphins bearing souls to their ambiguous Afterlife in a legendary West.³⁹ Much the same is true of Lewis’s preference.

The ‘magnetic city’ (later Third City, the New Jerusalem, or is it the New Rome?) occupies in Lewis’s personal mythology the place that Byzantium had in Yeats’s. However, the architecture of Lewis’s antechamber to the afterlife is shape-shifting. During the inter-war years, the Cosmopolis of *The Childermass* is a phantasmagorical synthesis mutating from Babylon to Vatican.⁴⁰ In the mid-1940s (and on the Spenglerian/Yeatsian principle of cultural correspondences between different historical cycles), now, apparently, it’s ‘New York, New York [that is] the helluva town’.⁴¹ Or, to use Lewis’s words: “The ‘rootless Elysium,’ as I have called it, enjoyed by the great polyglot herds in the American cities, is what will come to exist everywhere after universalism is established’ (*ACM* 170). What Lewis celebrates in his ‘running panegyric’ (*ACM* 217) of the American city is not merely a vibrant multi-ethnic population of voluntarily uprooted immigrants to the New World busily engaged in shaking off their old allegiances to nation, religion, class, and one day perhaps to race. Provocatively Lewis delights in the fact that the resulting society is still far from perfect – in both the traditional and slang meaning of the term, it is ‘wicked’. His exuberant response is a little reminiscent of St Augustine’s famous prayer for salvation ‘but not yet’.⁴² He repeatedly lays stress on this feeling of blissful transgression evoked by the American world-city: ‘I am quite serious when I say that this is what Heaven must be like – agreeably inhuman, naturally; a rootless, irresponsible city (for everyone is agreed that Heaven is a city [...])’ (*ACM* 167). Throughout Lewis’s panegyric of the American city, there is one particular, repeated allusion to the classical pagan myth of a posthumous, terrestrial paradise in the West that echoes Yeats’s own response. For Lewis, the American world-city is a “‘rootless Elysium” [...]: irresponsible, dirty, corrupt, a little crazy; a scene where the values obtaining are reminiscent of Butler’s *Erewhon*, one of the most entertaining Utopias’ (*ACM* 217).

When Yeats paid a long visit to New York in 1907-8 (the sharp-eyed Roy Foster notes) the poet had ‘by and large [...] loved *America*, which seemed an *Elysium*’.⁴³ Moreover, as ‘News for the Delphic Oracle’

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(*Last Poems*, 1938) reveals, there is a darker side to Yeats’s version of the Isles of the Blest.⁴⁴ In an unkindly Club-land episode of *Count Your Dead* (1937), the Enemy did burlesque Mrs Yeats as ‘the Adelphi Oracle’ (CYD 88). Nevertheless, Yeats’s disturbing vision continues to haunt Lewis when an exile in the States and Canada in the Second World War. So strong a presence do the Delphic poems exert that it is tempting to speculate whether Lewis’s strange series of beach scenes, idyllic yet unearthly (on which he worked in Toronto during the forties) border on Yeats’s ‘Translunar Paradise’.⁴⁵ Certainly, in *Monstre Gai* the irrepressible Bailiff (whom from the start Yeats identified as his own Gnostic usurper, the Hunchback of Phase 28) schemes against both God and the Devil to become City Boss of the New Jerusalem. And there is worse to come in *Malign Fiesta*, even in Angeltown, Sammael’s satanic parody of Los Angeles.⁴⁶

Messianic Presidents and the Apocalypse

The admiring American historian Page Smith has asked why Lewis’s insistently quotable *America and Cosmic Man* was almost ignored in the States when published there: ‘The answer is probably obvious enough. It fell under no recognizable historical canon, its author was not a historian, nor was the book orthodox history, or even unorthodox’.⁴⁷ Endeavouring to place *America and Cosmic Man* in terms of genre, Smith likens it to cultural studies of America by D. H. Lawrence and William Carlos Williams. The comparisons are illuminating, but they deflect our attention from *America and Cosmic Man*’s stronger connections with (or so the then still highly regarded historian Arnold J. Toynbee argued) what were the origins of historiography in myth and those developments in Biblical prophecy out of which grow that branch of historical research we now call futurology.⁴⁸ The nature of the relevant genres becomes clearer when we take another look at the allusions Lewis makes to Yeats’s gnomic poem. Belatedly one recognizes that the evocations of ‘The Second Coming’ are not just of local significance. Although the possibility of their full decipherment is deliberately delayed, on re-reading Lewis’s book those Yeatsian allusions can be heard re-echoing throughout both parts. It is not just a matter of the tropes that the two works have in common; to a significant degree the structures of ‘The Second Coming’ and *America and Cosmic Man* are similar. As I noted in my 1985 article on this subject, the thirteen

paragraphs of the introductory chapter to Part Two seem to gesture towards Yeats's expressive distortions of the generic patterns of sonnet and sequence – the closeness of blank verse to prose facilitating Lewis's approximation.⁴⁹ As Page Smith implies, *America and Cosmic Man* plays fast and loose with the conventions of its ostensible genre. Similarly, the opening octave of 'The Second Coming' collides with the second stanza – not at all the expected sestet so (despite its fourteen lines) it looks progressively less like a conventional sonnet. Thus, a notable prosodic distortion enacts the apocalyptic theme of Yeats's poem. Subsequently, much the same ideas about 'The Second Coming' were developed in a widely ranging and subtle analysis by Helen Vendler. One point that she emphasizes is particularly relevant to *America and Cosmic Man*. 'The Second Coming' is a narrative hybrid: the opening section historical, the second section visionary.⁵⁰ Likewise, after a largely historical Part One, Lewis introduces his revelations in Part Two by following Yeats's example, conjuring up that enigmatic beast out of the way the Judaeo-Christian tradition imagines the End of the World. As the poem uses imagery of the Apocalypse to create a profound allegory of the mood in Europe at the 1918 Armistice (a political atmosphere to which the League of Nations is one utopian response), so does Lewis's book in the aftermath of another World War and establishment of the United Nations. These similarities further help to corroborate the identification of the exact genre to which both works appear to be indebted.

But one needs to dig still deeper into these Biblical traditions of prophecy. To recap: the title of Yeats's poem and its references to 'Bethlehem' and 'cradle' point not to prophecies of the Messianic Kingdom of God but to their terrifying non-fulfilment. Grave doubts are cast on this particular Advent by the enigmatic nature of the monstrous creature seen in the nightmare. This suggests not the Saviour but His precursor, the Anti-Christ: 'The un-fulfilled Old and New Testament prophecies concerning the advent of the Messianic Kingdom served to popularize the methods of a new kind of prophetic literature, namely the Apocalyptic'.⁵¹ Of these and other characteristics of the genre Lewis and Yeats could have found a detailed description in the eleventh edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1910). Commenting on various contenders for the historical Giraldus in *A Vision*, Neil Mann suggests that one of Yeats's models might have been located in an entry, at page 764, on Gerardus Cremonensis of Toledo in Volume XI.⁵² Whether or not, in the process of the Yeatses's collaboration, the *Britannica* article on Apocalyptic literature was also consulted I have not

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been able to determine. Clearly, though, it is more than probable that Lewis did do just that. As noted above, there is ample explicit evidence in *Self Condemned* that Lewis found the *Encyclopaedia* essential (*SC* 247, 350).

In any case, Lewis and Yeats saw themselves as working in the Apocalyptic tradition (if to varying extents). Both acknowledged John's Book of Revelation and could expect to be understood more or less by the educated general public, since the Apocalypse and its foreshadowing in the Gospels and the Old Testament was then part of European culture as much as it still is in North America. In addition, as I have argued above, Lewis had been deeply inspired by a little-known but important example of this genre, when in *The Childermass* he drew on *The Greek Apocalypse of Baruch* to which undoubtedly he found his way via the *Britannica*. Taking a wider view of world history than Messianic prophecy (which focuses on the fate of a particular nation, Israel's destiny), Apocalyptic writing often incorporates vivid descriptions of the Past. The inclusion of such a global record is intended to give the prediction its proper geo-political setting. The panorama of successive events passing over, from the known to the unknown, this history serves to introduce the eschatological predictions. In a world threatened by nuclear extinction, the choice of this genre for the advocacy of cosmopolitanism is wholly appropriate: "The object of this [Apocalyptic] literature in general was to resolve the difficulties connected with the righteousness of God and the suffering condition of His righteous servants on earth".⁵³ Thus, *inter alia*, Baruch attempts to answer the question, "Why has God countenanced for a second time the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple?".⁵⁴ It's a type of question that could not be avoided in the twentieth century. From *The Childermass* on, this *Apocalypse of Baruch* is increasingly used to implicitly question the Divine purpose in allowing the First World War and then a second global conflict, with their equally bloodstained aftermaths. Although relatively muted, such concerns continue into this present text, underpinning the argument advanced in *America and Cosmic Man* about the need to avoid Armageddon III.

More to the fore in Part One of *America and Cosmic Man* is Lewis's targeting of that type of Biblical rhetoric traditionally applied to American presidents. This form of utopian thinking raises unreal expectations of the imminent advent of a quasi-Messianic Kingdom capable of solving the problems of war, capitalism, and dictatorship. Lewis criticizes, in particular, Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow

Wilson. The New Deal gets nearer to a realization of these utopian aspirations; but what is one to make of F. D. R.? Although characteristically not a 'New Dealer' himself, Roosevelt is given by that remarkable organization, Lewis claims, powers verging on the autocratic (*ACM* 57). At times in his account of Roosevelt Lewis seems on the point of reverting to the approach adopted in the folkloric and spiritist studies of Lady Gregory's *Visions and Beliefs in the West of Ireland*, and in that memorable essay on mediums, Cockney and Celtic, that Yeats appended to her collection. 'It was almost as if the strenuous, cunning, stupid Party junta, ignorant of the nature of their gift, had presented the nation with a Poltergeist for a President. Things began at once to fly about, at all events. And they had an uncanny habit of hitting the right people' (*ACM* 53). F. D. R. is viewed as casting 'a spell upon the Congress [...]. To magnify (and exaggerate) for analytical purposes, he was a tactful medium, who knew his place' (*ACM* 54). Even more startlingly, it can sound as if Lewis is raising the Devil:

As a witch says her prayers backwards, I have moved from that superlative political conjuror, Franklin Roosevelt, back to the alien English "foundation" of a nation not destined to remain English [...]. Endeavouring madly, as at moments he was, to break out into the open – into the universal America of tomorrow, we met Roosevelt first. Going backwards, we at last found ourselves, with one of the earliest representatives of reactionary America [...]. (*ACM* 138).

Gouverneur Morris (the US ambassador in Revolutionary France who ignored Thomas Paine's plight under the Terror) seems to be the arch reactionary referred to here. However, in this process of discriminating between one of the most attractive of American statesmen and one of the least, we find ourselves haunted by memories of Lewis's very ambivalent feelings about Roosevelt's own legacy in a Europe divided by the Cold War.⁵⁵ Tellingly there is a radical change in both Biblical and political reference in Part Two.

The statistics speak for themselves, indicating the degree of shift in *America and Cosmic Man* away from the traditional Messianic reverence for the Presidency (and so from American Exceptionalism) towards the universalist rhetoric of the Apocalyptic genre deployed to celebrate Cosmic Man. Whereas there are nine explicit references to a secular Messiah in Part One, there is none in Part Two. This imbalance is

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redressed by that powerful cluster of implicit allusions to the apocalypse that open the visionary Part Two. These amount to over a dozen evocations of some form of miracle birth in the manner of Yeats’s poem. Towards the end of Part Two, moreover, there are a couple of explicit references to the Apocalypse – as Lewis contemplates the threat of Atomic War and the possibility that humankind could be judged by God as culpable.

The American socio-political phenomena earlier surveyed are now viewed afresh in terms of the revised traditions of biblical prophecy. Alerted to this approach by the way Yeats’s *A Vision* and its ancillary poems mirror contemporary society, Lewis found the means to remain optimistic about the future of the United States and of the United Nations. The earlier type of Old Testament Prophecy ‘believes that since this is God’s world, His goodness and truth will yet be vindicated. Hence, the prophecies of a definite future arising out of and organically connected with the present’.⁵⁶ Whereas the Apocalyptic writer has lost all hope in the present and directs his aspirations to the future, ‘to a new world standing in essential opposition to the present’.⁵⁷ However, some scholars argued that ‘the kingdom of Heaven’ was not necessarily predicted to occur at the end of a set number of years in Babylonian exile or at a similar period after Christ’s Resurrection, but that sacred utopia would come about at some unspecified time in the future.⁵⁸ With a covert glance at Toynbee’s *Study of History* Lewis combines these two approaches, foreseeing a better world arising out of a future organically connected with the present but at no fixed date: ‘There is a new man [in America] you do not find anywhere else. He is not Cosmic Man yet, of course, he is innocent of the notion, even, of a cosmic culture. But he is moving towards that end, by reason of the logic of his position in time and space’ (*ACM* 184). A cosmic society ‘is what in the fullness of time [the States] must become [...] this is implicit’ (*ACM* 186). Balancing the threat of the atom bomb with the promise of the United Nations, Lewis remains cautiously optimistic – even if resolutely not a utopian: ‘Men are perfectly capable of blowing up our planet. We are assuming this will not happen. So, once these pre-eminent obstacles to the happy life of men in general are removed, will not the conditions be present for, if not an ideal, at least a so much more fortunate society than ours, or than men have ever known [...]. All that is necessary is *one* government instead of many’ (*ACM* 218 and 220). Lewis admits that the end of national sovereignties would not resolve all the problems of human life. Still, the difference would be so

enormous that anyone might be excused for thinking that it should be the top priority of the United Nations.

A bad business for all of us

Such are the glimpses of utopia that Yeats's poems, their content and form, diction, imagery, genres, and larger literary categories inspire in *America and Cosmic Man*. Paradoxically though, it is in his assessment of Lewis's character that Yeats sheds most light on what is utopian about *America and Cosmic Man*. The personal aspect of the utopian developments in Lewis's thinking emerge when we consider the role that the Enemy plays in *A Vision* (1925). At 'Phase Nine' we come across:

Example: An unnamed artist. [A reference to Lewis] [...]

Out of phase, blundering and ignorant, the man becomes when in phase powerful and accomplished; all that strength as of metallic rod and wheel discovered within himself.⁵⁹

These strengths are manifest in Lewis's changed attitude to different ethnicities and to the cultures of the non-Western world. Gone is the acerbic condescension that often mars such works of the late twenties and the early to mid-thirties as *The Apes of God* and *Count Your Dead*. Analysing the 'racial bottlenecks' to progress in American society, this new Lewis recognizes in the Afro-American something more than a nourishing force of nature. African Americans are acknowledged as a fount of culture and sanity:

American civilisation as we know it owes more, probably, to the Negro than to anybody. The coloured people are the artistic leaven; out of their outcast state they have made a splendid cultural instrument. The almost solar power of their warm-heartedness has been a precious influence; their mirth, too, which explodes like a refreshing storm, often making these house-serfs the only sane thing in the White household. Yet everybody knows how they are requited by their fellow-citizens for their enormous gift to America. The coloured people suffer more than it is easy to convey. (*ACM* 186).

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Likewise Lewis is taken back by what was then the prevalence of an absurd, cruel, and on occasion dangerous anti-Semitism in the United States:

An even stranger superstition is that affecting Americans of Jewish origin: I say stranger because the Jewish contribution to science, the arts, economics, politics – and, after all, religion – have [*sic*] been so great and vastly influential that it seems almost inconceivable that a “*numerus clausus*” should exist for the Jewish student at the great American universities. Jewish wealth is resented – as if the Jews had not the same right as other people to acquire more money than is good for them. Anti-Semitism, however emotionally satisfying to some people, is a bad business for all of us, like any other public feud. (*ACM* 187)

Things in the United States have changed since the hypocritical days of *A Gentleman's Agreement* (Laura Z. Hodson's bestselling 1947 novel and the compelling film that was made out of it). That is, things have changed at least for Jews, if not to anything like the same degree for African Americans.

Nor does Lewis neglect the potential Latino and Native American contribution. He suggests that when the culture of Mexico blends with 'the great American mass to the north, the Indian will probably give it its art, as the Negro has its music' (*ACM* 151). So in his striking murals at Detroit, 'the titanic glories of American industry' have been massively transferred into pictorial terms' by the Mexican painter Diego Rivera: 'It took an Indian to understand the tropical shapes of the great steel labyrinths' (*ACM* 152). Rivera, Orozco, and some other Mexicans, Lewis believes, 'are the best North American artists' (*ACM* 152).

There is even an Irish angle to these cultural predictions as Lewis draws on the memories of a famous contemporary of Yeats (and an old literary rival) recalling one of the epoch-making artistic, literary, and social revolutions:

Mexico City promises to be the future Paris of New World, where the big *ateliers* or *estudios* will be situated, the Aztec and Mayan cultures for a background, instead of the Graeco-Roman. At cafés on its boulevards art students will spend happy nights under the Aztec moon, after the manner of George Moore and his friends long ago in "the great moonlight of the Place Pigalle." (*ACM* 152)

Through that magical allusion to George Moore's 1886 *Confessions of a Young Man*, and, seemingly on the principles of Yeats's cyclic history (those two lunar references activating resonant memories of the moon symbolism integral to *The Vision* and its various literary outliers as well as to the pre-Columbian lunar cults), the Belle Epoque and a renascent Mesoamerican capital of the future are viewed as comparable, because imagined as positioned in equivalent phases of their respective civilizations.⁶⁰ Although, as twentieth-century history makes plain, the fate of the French capital has been almost as precarious as Tenochtitlan, the fabulous and doomed Aztec city, the tragic implications in any reference to the fall of Mocteczuma are not spelled out here. Instead that exhilarating allusion to the Irish novelist's fond recall of the stimulating milieu in which the third Impressionist exhibition was situated (so evocative of a pre-lapsarian culture) reminds us that Paris before the Great War is another of Lewis's Heavenly Cities, full of creative dynamism and not without a lively touch of evil.

There is another Mesoamerican connection via the literary mode that Yeats envisages himself using to mirror his culture. As Mann notes: 'in many ways *A Vision* is the *Daimonic* mirror of human lives. It is analogous to the spirit vision of John Dee's 'black scrying-stone'.⁶¹ This obsidian mirror (used by the Elizabethan magician in his occult research) was one of many Aztec cult objects brought to Europe after the conquest of Mexico. When Yeats identifies his prophetic book as a *Speculum Angelorum et Hominorum*, it becomes clear that *A Vision* belongs to a strange bundle of works which use the term 'speculum' (mirror, or variants on that word). Mann notes that it 'is probably too loose to be called a genre, yet Yeats has selected it with accuracy'.⁶² The label was applied to histories of instructive lives, surveys of the state of the world, prophecies, Menippean satires, and the like. Such constituents point to the Speculum's kinship with the Anatomy, the super genre to which in different ways *The Childermass* and *America and Cosmic Man* belong.

The speculum provides a means of scrutinizing humanity through 'an abstracted, spiritualised and strange perspective, which Yeats also compares to the way in which artists such as Wyndham Lewis or Constantin Brancusi view the world'.⁶³ Yeats acknowledges his debt: 'They have helped me to hold in a single thought reality and justice'.⁶⁴ Any such aspiration would militate against facile hopes of utopia, secular or sacred, reactionary or progressive. Indeed Yeats's formulation 'a Mirror of Angels and Men' would make a grand title for this complex of

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apocalyptic works by Lewis in which the traditional idea of viewing life *sub specie aeternitatis* is turned on its head as the satirist casts a searching eye not only on humankind but also the agents of the Divine. In *America and Cosmic Man*, too, we glimpse how in its successor texts Lewis will not exempt his past record from critical scrutiny; though here, like many a recent convert, he exaggerates the misdeeds of an unregenerate self (he was always too much the cosmopolitan to be seriously Eurocentric):

Once "Western Man" was the object of my particular solicitude. [...] it was denied me to foresee what would so shortly befall, and I sought to heal and reinvigorate him. He was of course past help [...]. He only breathed his last a short while ago, but to me he seems as far away as Cromagnon Man. I cannot regret him. [...] All my loyalties today are for a far more significant and imposing person, namely, Cosmic Man [...]. This man I have seen and talked with in America. So I know what he will be like when his day comes, and he is everywhere. (*ACM* 219)

The Holy Spirit and the *Geist der Utopie*

The projected fourth volume of *The Human Age* was scarcely begun. Lewis found 'God a big problem', and the only glimpse of a sacred utopia in the fragmentary *Trial of Man* is a post-Apocalyptic hospital ward with its mysterious visitor. The Stranger is identified by the Irish nurse through an enigmatic Yeatsian allusion: 'Where there is nothing, there is God'.⁶⁵ Plainly the reports of God's death have been exaggerated. One therefore needs to turn from Tzvetan Todorov to a thinker who knew that for a long time to come there was likely to be plenty of unorthodox spirituality around. Ernst Bloch's seminal *Geist der Utopie* (1918; translated as *The Spirit of Utopia*, 2000) has much in common with Yeats's visionary work.⁶⁶ Together they seem to provide a better theoretical angle from which to view *America and Cosmic Man*. Does not Lewis's book itself constitute a personal anticipation of utopia along the lines of Bloch's thinking? Especially relevant here is Bloch's concept of the 'ultimate self-encounter'. That phrase echoes and re-echoes throughout *The Spirit of Utopia*, for example, in such a rhapsodic meditation as 'Karl Marx, Death and the Apocalypse'. This utopian 'Self-Encounter' can eventually lead us to a heightened awareness of 'the WE-Problem' (so Bloch assures us), or, to put it in a more

understandable English, the shock of seeing ourselves as others see us can lead to the recognition that the concerns of others are our own concerns (and vice-versa). Such an insight best accounts for what is most distinctively utopian about *America and Cosmic Man*.

The corollary of this is the light that an exploration of these issues sheds on the rest of Lewis's *oeuvre*, not least on *America and Cosmic Man*'s contiguity with, and sometimes interpenetration of, that afterlife in which Pullman and Satters struggle to survive. The comparison of *The Human Age* with Dante's *Divine Comedy* frequently made is somewhat misleading, but, thanks to those glimpses afforded by Yeats and Bloch, in so far as the likeness to Dante holds, then *America and Cosmic Man* is the nearest Lewis ever gets to fully envisaging his own *Paradiso*.

Notes

¹ Tzvetan Todorov, *In Defence of the Enlightenment*, trans. Gila Walker (London: Atlantic Books, 2009), 1.

² On the flowering of the Christian Utopia, see Frank E. Manuel and Fritzie P. Manuel, *Utopian Thought in the Western World* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1979), 177-78.

³ See also *Monstre Gai*, chapters 6 and 8. However, none of these witnesses is to be wholly trusted. On Pullman as the ridiculous pedant see Peter L. Caracciolo, 'The *Alice in Wonderland* World of Jane Austen and Trollope and its role in the Genesis of Wyndham Lewis's *The Human Age*', *Wyndham Lewis Annual* 13 (2008): 74-107, 90-94.

⁴ See Peter L. Caracciolo, "Carnivals of mass murder": The Frazerian Origins of Wyndham Lewis's *The Childermass*', in Robert Fraser (ed.), *Sir James Frazer and the Literary Imagination* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990), 214-15.

⁵ See Peter L. Caracciolo, 'The Metamorphoses of Wyndham Lewis's *The Human Age*', in Warren Cherniak, Warwick Gould, and Ian Williamson (eds), *Modernist Writers and the Marketplace* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), 268-69.

⁶ For one view of the sorry history of the United Nations, see Rosemary Righter, *Utopia Lost: The United Nations and World Order* (New York: Twentieth Century Fund Press, 1995).

⁷ See Philip Marchand, *Marshall McLuhan: The Medium and the Messenger* (Toronto: Vintage Canada, 1989), 83.

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- ⁸ See Bradford Morrow and Bernard Lafourcade, *A Bibliography of the Writings of Wyndham Lewis* (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1978), 302-3.
- ⁹ Page Smith, ‘Wyndham Lewis’s *America and Cosmic Man*’, *Wyndham Lewis Annual* 12 (2005): 6-11.
- ¹⁰ In ‘Byzantium and Cosmic Man’ – *Wyndham Lewis Annual* 2 (1995): 23-29 – I suggested that Yeats’s first visions of the Afterlife influenced the phantasmagorical opening of *The Childermass*, a view that I later emended somewhat. See Peter Caracciolo and Paul Edwards, ‘In Fundamental Agreement’, *Yeats Annual No. 13* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998): 110-57.
- ¹¹ See R. F. Foster, *W. B. Yeats: A Life – The Arch-Poet* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 112 and 127.
- ¹² Jon Stallworthy, *Between the Lines: Yeats’s Poetry in the Making* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), 17.
- ¹³ See Peter L. Caracciolo, “‘Like a Mexith’s renowned statue bristling with emblems’”: Masquerade Anthropology, Yeats and Pound among Wyndham Lewis’s *Apes of God*, in Andrew Gibson (ed.), *Pound in Multiple Perspective* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993), 134-35.
- ¹⁴ See W. B. Yeats, *A Critical Edition of Yeats’s ‘A Vision’ (1925)*, eds George Mills Harper and Walter K. Hood (London: Macmillan 1978), 236. On the use of ‘The Hymn of the Soul’ in *The Human Age* see Peter L. Caracciolo, ‘Wyndham Lewis, M. R. James and Intertextuality: Part 2’, *Wyndham Lewis Annual* 7 (2000): 43-54, 48-50.
- ¹⁵ W. B. Yeats, *The Letters of W. B. Yeats*, ed. Allan Wade (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1954), 723. See Caracciolo, ‘Byzantium and Cosmic Man’, 23 and 29.
- ¹⁶ See Gilles Quispel, ‘The *Asclepius*: From the Hermetic Lodge in Alexandria to the Greek Eucharist and the Roman Mass’, in R. van der Broek and Wouter J. Hanegraaff (eds), *Gnosis and Hermeticism from Antiquity to Modern Times* (Albany: State University of New York, 1998), 70-72.
- ¹⁷ For ‘Holy Things to Holy Men’ see also *The Orthodox Liturgy being the Divine Liturgies of S. John Chrysostom & S. Basil the Great* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 85 and 86.
- ¹⁸ ‘Sailing to Byzantium’ was written in the Autumn of 1926 (Stallworthy, *Between the Lines*, 88).
- ¹⁹ E. W. F. Tomlin, *Wyndham Lewis* (London: Longmans, 1955), 28.
- ²⁰ Walter Michel, *Wyndham Lewis: Paintings and Drawings* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1971), 26.
- ²¹ Caracciolo and Edwards, ‘In Fundamental Agreement’, 125.
- ²² See Caracciolo, ‘Byzantium and Cosmic Man’, 24, and Caracciolo and Edwards, ‘In Fundamental Agreement’, 116-19 and 144-45.

- ²³ See W. B. Yeats, *W. B. Yeats A Vision and Related Writings*, ed. Norman Jeffares (London: [Arena] Arrow books, 1990), xix.
- ²⁴ *Encyclopaedia Britannica – Vol. III: Constantine Pavlovich to Demidov*, 11th edn. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1910), 3-6.
- ²⁵ *W. B. Yeats and T. Sturge Moore: Their Correspondence, 1901-1937*, ed. Ursula Bridge (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1953), 113-14.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, 162 and 165.
- ²⁷ Yeats, *A Critical Edition of Yeats's 'A Vision'*, 53 54 (and related notes).
- ²⁸ 'The Second Coming', in W. B. Yeats, *Collected Poems*, ed. Augustine Martin (London: Vintage, 1992), 184.
- ²⁹ See Neil Mann www.yeatsvision.com/secondnotes.html (accessed on the 12th of October 2010).
- ³⁰ See Seymour Martin Lipset, *American Exceptionalism; A Double-Edged Sword* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1996), 18. A more recent critique of this belief is to be found in Geoffrey Hodgson, *The Myth of American Exceptionalism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009).
- ³¹ See Arnold J. Toynbee, *A Study of History: Abridgement of Volumes I-VI by D. C. Somervell* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1947), 432.
- ³² Israel Zangwill, *The Melting Pot* (London: William Heinemann 1914), 33.
- ³³ See Caracciolo, 'The *Alice in Wonderland* World', 95-96.
- ³⁴ This insight I owe to Barbara Hardy during a series of private conversations in May and June of 2010.
- ³⁵ 'In Memory of Eva Gore-Booth and Con Markiewicz', in Yeats, *Collected Poems*, 241.
- ³⁶ Elizabeth Cullingford, *Yeats, Ireland, and Fascism* (London: Macmillan, 1981), 177.
- ³⁷ See the second chapter, 'Antechamber and Afterlife: Byzantium and Delphic Oracle', of Helen Vendler's *Our Secret Discipline: Yeats and Lyric Form* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).
- ³⁸ Frank Lentricchia, *The Gaiety of Language: An Essay on the Radical Poetics of W. B. Yeats and Wallace Stevens* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1968), 101-2. See also Vendler, *Our Secret Discipline*, 29-49.
- ³⁹ 'Byzantium', in Yeats, *Collected Poems*, 255.
- ⁴⁰ In the painting *Bagdad* (1929) and the related thirties paintings of the soul's quest, the visual echoes are similarly cosmopolitan, running from Ancient Egyptian through Celtic, pre-Columbian, and Arabian Nights to Art Deco. See Caracciolo and Edwards, 'In Fundamental Agreement', 122.
- ⁴¹ On the Spenglerian principle 'that Baghdad and Washington are contemporary because they are similarly positioned in late phases of their respective civilizations' (Andrew Causey, quoted in Caracciolo and Edwards, 'In Fundamental Agreement', 123). Neil Mann points out that

'though Yeats did not know Spengler's work when he published the first version of *A Vision*', he studied Spengler and others 'in more depth as he prepared for the second edition'. See www.yeatsvision.com/history.html (accessed on the 12th of October 2010).

⁴² Lewis owned a copy of *Les Confessions de Saint Augustin*, with the Latin and a translation by M. D'Andilly (Garnier Paris, n.d.).

⁴³ Roy F. Foster, *W. B. Yeats: A Life, Vol. 1: The Apprentice Mage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 382-83 – emphasis added.

⁴⁴ See Caracciolo, 'Byzantium and Cosmic Man', 27, and Vendler, *Our Secret Discipline*, 49-61.

⁴⁵ On the possibly Yeatsian sources of the Canadian pictures, see Caracciolo, 'Byzantium and Cosmic Man', 27 and 29, n. 16. See also Caracciolo and Edwards, 'In Fundamental Agreement', 126.

⁴⁶ Commenting on *The Childermass* in a letter from the 12th of August 1928, Yeats told Olivia Shakespeare, his long-suffering mistress, Ezra Pound's mother-in-law, and Lewis's patron: 'The Baily is of course my Hunchback – phase 28 [i.e. of the historical cycles mapped out in *A Vision*] though L[ewis] does not know that'. See L 182 and *The Letters of W. B. Yeats*, ed. Allan Wade (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1954), 743-44.

⁴⁷ Page Smith, 'Wyndham Lewis's *America and Cosmic Man*', *Wyndham Lewis Annual* 12 (2005): 6-11, 11.

⁴⁸ On the origins of history, futurology, and utopia in myth and prophecy, see Toynbee, *A Study of History: Abridgement*, 43-45 and 431-33. Tellingly Lewis in *America and Cosmic Man* cites the third volume of Toynbee's *Study of History* (ACM 207).

⁴⁹ Caracciolo, 'Byzantium and Cosmic Man', 28-29

⁵⁰ See Vendler, *Our Secret Discipline*, 171-73 and 177.

⁵¹ *Encyclopaedia Britannica – Vol. II: Andros to Austria*, 11th edn. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1910), 169.

⁵² Neil Mann, www.yeatsvision.com/Gyraldus.html (accessed on the 12th of October 2010).

⁵³ *Encyclopaedia Britannica – Vol. II*, 170.

⁵⁴ For Baruch's anguished concern over the fate of Jerusalem, see the prologue to, and the first chapter of, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament – Volume II*, trans. R. H. Charles (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913). Lewis found his way to the copy in the Round Reading Room of the British Museum.

⁵⁵ See Paul Edwards, *Wyndham Lewis: Painter and Writer* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 539 and 569, n. 23.

⁵⁶ *Encyclopaedia Britannica – Vol. II*, 170.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ A great deal of information about Apocalyptic Literature can be found on-line but I have gone to the admirable article on this subject in *Encyclopaedia Britannica – Vol. II*, 169-75.

⁵⁹ W. B. Yeats, *A Vision* (1925) (London: Macmillan, 1962), 119-20.

⁶⁰ See Andrew Causey's observation quoted above at n. 45. The importance of luration periods in the pre-Columbian cultures of Central America is a further parallel with Yeats's System since Mesoamerican creation myths are predicated on historical cycles, beliefs with which, as *The Lion and the Fox* (1927) and *The Apes of God* make plain, Lewis was well acquainted. See Caracciolo, "'Carnivals of mass murder'", and Caracciolo, "'Like a Mexith's renowned statue'".

⁶¹ Yeats, *A Vision*, 23; Mann, <http://www.yeatsvision.com/Gyraldus.html> (accessed on the 12th of October 2010).

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ Yeats, *A Vision*, 25.

⁶⁵ Caracciolo, 'Byzantium and Cosmic Man', 28, and Caracciolo and Edwards, 'In Fundamental Agreement', 139.

⁶⁶ On Bloch's interest in Yeats's view of Shelley's symbolism, see Ernst Bloch, *The Spirit of Utopia*, trans. Anthony A. Nassar (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), 194 and 289. Yeats's essay on Shelley sheds light on the imagery of 'Sailing to Byzantium' and 'Byzantium'.