'Inferior Religions', the Wild Bod(ies), and the Early Stories

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Lewis's Breton and Spanish stories, published in 1909–11, are great comic creations.1 But recognition of the early Lewis as comic writer has been slow to emerge. And there has not been a popular edition of the stories.2

This neglect, of now some 80 years, is due, in part, no doubt, to the availability, until 1982, of only the revised text of the stories, published in 1927 under the title The Wild Body (TWB), whose Foreword, for good measure, carries Lewis's own denigration of the early versions.3 The aim of the present essay is to show that it is due, in part, also to the glamour and publicity value of certain other products of Lewis's pen, which had the effect of focusing interest on the revised, not the original texts: the opening passages of Lewis's 'Inferior Religions' (IR) and that essay's definition of a satiric 'Wild Body'; and the key role assigned, in TWB, to the figure of Ker-Orr.

'Inferior Religions' - A 'Misreading' of the Early Stories

The fascinating imbecility of the creaking men-machines some little restaurant or fishing boat works, is the subject of these studies... Moran, Bestre and Brodgdingnag are essays in a new human mathematic. But they are each simple shapes, little monuments of logic. I should like to compile a book of forty or these propositions, one deriving from and depending on the other.

These intricately moving bobbins are all subject to a set of objects or one in particular...

They are not creations but puppets. You can be as exterior to them, and live their life as little, as the showman grasping from beneath and working a Polichinelle. Their mechanism is a logical structure and they are nothing but that. IR, Sections I and II [315–6]

The stunning, often quoted phrases, sharpened as they are, to the point of grotesqueness, and implying the existence of a norm (for who would willingly be determined, like a 'little monument of logic'?), are prescriptions for the creation of puppets satirizing the mechanical aspect of our lives.

The prose of IR, first published in 1917, is mesmerizing, but there are muddles. It is surprising, after reading the preceding quotations, to find on the same page that '[the stories] are studies of rather primitive people'; or that 'we have in most lives a spectacle as complete as a problem of Euclid'. One may ask: are the characters to be regarded as real people seen comically, or as satirical, logical 'propositions'? The first view is elaborated in the interpretation of the stories as comic, given in Sections III–VII or IR, the second we have seen in the group of citations above.

I agree with Hugh Kenner that there was a development:

Lewis gradually came to doubt if there were in fact any more to know about people, than the mechanical aspect of their behaviour, and forgetting the concealed 'bitter ferment' he had postulated beneath the froth-forms in IR, [239] came to accept the satiric premises as truth.4

I see this development as less gradual than Kenner suggests, however. Its conclusion emerges as early as 1917–8 in two forms: as passages not transmuted into
art, in the war writings — a raw bitterness taking over, instead; and as program — itself satiric — for satiric fictions, presented in IR’s Sections I and II. Both of these forms recur later: the bitterness most notably in the 1927 revisions to the early stories, but also in seemingly unaccountable intrusions into other fictional writings throughout Lewis’s subsequent career; the satiric program just once: in The Apes of God.

To return to the stories, Moran as fetishist, ‘roll(ing) between his tables ten million times in a realistic rhythm that is as intense and superstitious as the figures of a wardance,’ is both comic and real. Aggrandized to ‘simple shape’ or ‘little monument of logic’, he would be, instead, satirical and a puppet. It is the satirical view, which, in IR, receives the most provocative formulations, and which, it is implied, is realized in the stories.

Yet, reading the stories, we find them not satirical but comic. It is in this misrepresentation, that IR is a ‘misreading.

The absence of a satiric view in the stories will here be illustrated by the example of ‘Brobdignag’. For even that arch-‘idol-worshiper’ and fetishist (‘Julie’s bruises are the mark — of an idol’ [315], its eponymous hero, is not satirized. A similar argument can be made for almost all the other characters in the stories.

Here is how Brobdignag looks:

‘He is a glorious and unique creature . . . His eyes are blue and smiling, and always seem evenly suffused with a rich moisture. They are great, tender, wise, mocking eyes, and the sides of his massive forehead are often flushed, as it is with some people in moments of embarrassment. But with him, I think this affluence of blood is something to do with the extraordinary expression he puts into his gaze, and the tension this effort must cause in the surrounding vessels, etc . . . [Brobdignag] walks softly, with a supple giving of the knees at each step. This probably comes from his excessive fondness for the dance — the Breton ‘gavotte’ — in which he was so rapid, expert and resourceful in his youth.

‘J’ains maître danseur; c’est mon plaisir’, he will say’. [292]

Brobdignag’s otherwise sympathetic character has one aberration. When drunk, he beats his, also tippling, wife. ‘He has been married twice, and in the first ardour of youth beat Julie’s predecessor to death’. [292]

With the exception of the last sentence — one of a few sarcasms that slipped in — the analysis of Brobdignag’s fault is conducted with irony and tenderness, often spun out to a comic, Gogolian complexity.

‘He addresses his wife always with the greatest gentleness. Still there is a vague something in the bearing of both of them, as of two people who, resigned, have long shared a strong affection, a constant intelligence and consciousness of something — of something soon to be borne, perhaps’. [293] The seeming clumsiness of the redundancy; and the vagueness following, carry the suggestion of the narrator’s ironic involvement and sympathy.

‘The morning after he has beaten [Julie] . . . he busies himself about her, gravely and thoughtfully . . . applying remedies . . . He walks fifteen miles . . . to get the necessary medicines.’ [293]

The dénouement is in the same sympathetic spirit: coming home from a fishing expedition one day, Brobdignag is told that in his absence severe bodily injuries have
been inflicted on Julie — by, he at once supposes (revealing the depth of his delusion), a rival, who wanted [as rendered in Brodchingnag’s indirect thought] by the narrator ‘that most mystic, thunder-guarded, inmost and incommunicable of rights . . . of giving her a beating’. [295] Told of the true cause — a runaway horse, he is despondent, ‘the reality now having . . . filled up the vacuum with a story, characterless matter, . . . a common fact’. [295] In the story’s concluding sentence, the narrator feels ‘that the shadow of doom had fallen upon (Brodchingnag’s) roof’. [296]

Brodchingnag is presented as a person, not as a mechanical grotesque. His fault is accepted as the other side of the ‘amenity and “sourire” of his nature’. [293] The contradictions between the two furnish the material for much of what is comic in the story.

Lewis’s early comedy is like that of the early Gogol: ‘not the frivolous laughter with which one man mocks another in society . . . but laughter that is engendered by a love of man’. [6] Or, it might be said, that in it one is never far away from ‘the seriousness of human beings.”

Even ‘The Pole’, otherwise almost entirely farce, concludes, touchingly, with ‘the only ‘real’ Pole there . . . running with sobs of laughter across the fields after a little boy who had got away with his brushes’. [218] And in the climactic dance of Mlle Batz and her lover Carl, rascals like practically everyone else in the story, pathos is achieved by the extraordinary intensity of the language: ‘their two gaunt and violent forms whirling round the narrow room, quite indifferent to the other dancers, giving them terrible blows with their driving elbows, their hair sweeping the ceiling’. [217]

In ‘Les Saltimbanques’, throughout, there is the mournful family of acrobats. At the climax, when the boy, discovering that the showman is ridiculous, laughs at him, here is the showman: ‘his vanity . . . in some very profound and strange way tickled . . . his face would suddenly darken and he would make a rush at the inexplicable boy . . . his poet’. [247] The boy is admired for his intuition. The showman, by comparison, is foolish. Yet the words ‘profound’, ‘strange’ and ‘inexplicable’ convey sympathy for his humanity.

In the ending sentence of ‘A Spanish Household’, the servant La Flora’s songs are ‘the wildest I have ever heard, and often her chanting, while she was washing the dishes or otherwise busy about her work, would have made the most barren gorge of the Urals seem a mild and smiling place in comparison with the spirit of her song’. [264]

In ‘A Breton Innkeeper’ the last two paragraphs set out a picture that is both touching and comic, of Roland’s three servants; the boy, in the characteristic fade-out of the last sentence, ‘has the strangest little rough, bullying way imaginable — and a reassuring girl-like softness that is quite charming’. [273]

In ‘Le Père François’ the half-crazy tramp is treated, throughout, in masterly fashion, as comic but also object of a detached tenderness on the part of the narrator. We shall find this early detachment of Lewis’s noted by a fine critic later on.

If the view given here of Lewis’s delicacy of feeling towards his characters may sound implausible to casual readers of the later Lewis (and of writings about Lewis), this is likely to be in part due to the influences which are the subject of the present essay. [8] That discussed so far, Lewis’s ‘misreading’ of 1917, was expanded, but left fairly unchanged in spirit, in the 1927 revision. The revision, as it affected the stories, however, was radical, reflecting the change in Lewis’s sensibility, which appears, in
his fictions, first in 1917-18. He presents us now with a harsher view of man, appropriate for treatment by satire or even outright scorn. It is the last which predominates in the revisions made in the stories.

As one result, the revised stories may seem to the reader to satisfy — only too well — the requirements of the satiric program of IR. Even the most curious, noting in the Foreword to TWB that IR was originally published in 1917 — only a few years from the original versions of the stories, will readily believe Lewis's assertion, in the same Foreword, that the early efforts were merely less skilful drafts of what is presented in TWB. They will not be enticed to take up the early versions, as we shall confirm shortly, when we examine some of the critical responses to TWB upon its publication.

— It was in this was that IR may have contributed to the neglect of the early Lewis as comic writer.

The Role of the 'Wild Bod(ies)'

To gauge the role of the 'Wild Body' (WB) in the obscuring of the early versions of the stories we need to look at the history of that tangled concept. The WB appears first in the title of Lewis's 1910 essay 'Our Wild Body' (OWB); but its capitalized presence there, as it were, spurious: for, in the text the words do not appear conjoined. 'Wildness' and 'body' appear, separately, carrying no more than the ordinary meaning of the words.

OWB is nevertheless an important statement of an aspect of Lewis's thought of 1910, namely, his insistence on the desirability of a kind of bodily empathy between people, and free expression of the emotions — the opposite, he argues, of the evasion of these qualities fostered by the London propensity for rules, as they appear in sports and games. Lewis writes: 'rules have robbed us of something of frankness and imagination ... we lose the wildness and reality of the fact; and the heroic suggestions of the human form vanish ...'[253] By contrast, the fishermen and other characters of the early stories are allowed, using words in Lewis's Diary of 1908, 'the proper explosion of our animal spirits'.[195]

The stories are contemporary with OWB. In their characters its idea of a psyche very closely linked to the body, and which has a wildness to it, materializes. Lewis recognised this when he titled a Collection of the stories, which was to be brought out by the London firm of Goschen in 1914, 'Our Wild Body', after the 1910 essay included in it. And 'Our Wild Body' is still the title in 1916.

Lewis did not use the term again until 1914. Then we read in Blast 1: 'Our soul is wild, with primitiveness of [its] own', and: 'The Wild Body and Primitive Brain have found a new outside art of their own'.

Idiosyncratic capitalization being a feature of Blast, its presence here does not guarantee that the WB has as yet become a concept for Lewis — any more than the 'Primitive Brain', in the same sentence.

The concept appears first in IR. that essay's Section IV has: 'Laughter is the Wild Body's song of triumph'.[317]

In this WB may be recognised the personification of the principles of OWB, now applied to the artist. The vitality advocated in OWB now issues in laughter. Who is or are the laughers? Not, surely, the characters of the stories; for they do not laugh. But their creator does; and 'their solemn gambols fill [him] with triumph'.[315]

The WB of Section IV, then, may be called 'Laughier-artist', a figure which grew out of the 'Soldier of Humour' of 1911, is elaborated in the 1927 IR's Section V (perhaps
written as early as 1914), and carried in unexpected directions in the new narrator of the stories, Ker-Orr, of that year.11

Another WB appears in IR's opening sentence: 'To introduce my puppets, and the Wild Body, the generic puppet of all, I must look back to a time when the antics and solemn gambols of these wild children filled me with triumph.'[315]

A 'generic' must resemble that of which it is the generic. This WB, then, must be like the satiric puppets, that is, not Laugher but laughed-at. Why Lewis should have chosen to use the term WB for two different, even opposed concepts must, for the moment, remain a puzzle.

The aggrandized vitality of the satiric puppets is only a degree removed from the vitalism of the (non-satiric) figures of the stories. It is not surprising, then, that the most widespread use of the term WB, among writers about Lewis, should have something of both these types, thus, paradoxically, combining satire and admiration.

A third component may often be found added to this melding of the comic and satiric: the aggressiveness of the WB as 'Laugher-artist', as displayed in the figure of Ker-Orr, introduced in the revision as new narrator of the stories. Ker-Orr, to be considered in the next part of this essay, is Lewis's most extravagant character, also self-parody, easily taken for self-description.

The term Wild Body, undefined but evidently a mix of these qualities — in unspecified proportions, may be found, in writings about Lewis, designating the characters of the stories of Apes, and of any number of Lewis's other works, including his pictures.

Lewis does, in fact, often straddle genres, so justifying, to an extent, the use of a WB with wide connotations. But the portmanteau WB can be an obstacle when one wants especially to distinguish the genres. In particular, its ubiquity has contributed to hindering the recognition of the differences between the original, comic, stories and their revisions under the aegis of Ker-Orr.

The Egregious Ker-Orr

In Rude Assignment Lewis recalls lengthy stays of the young man in Brittany, part of years spent on the Continent. 'Long vague periods of an indolence now charged with some creative purpose were spent in digesting what I saw, smelt and heard... Mine was now a drowsy sun-baked ferment, watching with delight the great comic effigies which erupted beneath my rather saturnine but astonished gaze: Brocton Naz, Bestre, and the rest'.12

Not only the Breton Journal and the stories, but Lewis's whole production of the pre-War years — including also 'Timon of Athens' and the 1912 drawings, Enemy of the Stars, Blast 1 and the early parts of Tarr, lives and breathes the atmosphere of innocence which his recollections convey so well, 'this paradoxical flowering, this surface obtuseness... and [the] unexpected fruit which it miraculously bore'.[118]

Innocence is what is absent in the revisions of 1927. Instead, there is the 'seemingly unmotivated hostility' towards his characters, exhibited by Ker-Orr, the new narrator, vastly extended from that of 1911. Ker-Orr shows a 'clear attitude of contempt, absent from the early stories'.13 What he observes in Julie will serve as example: her eyes, not mentioned in 1911, are, in the revision, 'black and moist, with the furtive intensity of a rat'. She is, newly, 'this bloated shell'. Similar examples from the other stories are cited in an essay by Ian Duncan.13

Ker-Orr's task as showman is to provoke his characters into 'quarrels of humour',

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so that he can enjoy their fury — which he does with a gnashing of teeth characteristic of him when he laughs. As prop for this activity, he operates his body (i.e. his behaviour) like a Wild Body puppet.

Ker-Orr introduces himself in these often-quoted sentences:

I am a large blond clown . . . This forked, strange-scented blond-skinned gut-bag, with its two bright rolling marbles with which it sees, bull’s-eyes full of mockery and madness, is my stalking horse. I hang somewhere in its midst operating it with detachment.[17]

Conrad Aiken, in a 1928 review of TWB, writes that Lewis tries to ‘project himself as a kind of observing character, or recording instrument’. He finds: ‘the projection doesn’t quite come off. The truth is, it is not good enough’.[14]

What, besides the introduction of Ker-Orr, often does not come off, is the style of the revisions: it may show an embarrassing insistence. As one example, no secret of Brobdingnag’s had been hinted in the original text. Now, we read: ‘the secret of this smiling giant, a year or two younger, I daresay, than his wife, was probably that he intended to kill her’. We may have doubts, and feel we were better off guessing.

Other examples are easily found: that Brobdingnag’s are ‘great, tender, wise, mocking’ eyes is now not enough.[294] An added sentence precedes: ‘The dimensions of his eyes, and their oily suffusion with smiling-cream, or with some luminous jelly that seems still further to magnify them, are very remarkable’. Similarly, ‘mocking eyes’ must be further supplemented by ‘that express the coquetry and contentment of animal fats’.

The passage beginning ‘He walks softly . . .’, cited earlier, is, in the revision, expanded to the clattering ‘The tread of this timid giant is softer than a nun’s — the supple quick-giving at the knees at each step that I have described is the result no doubt of his fondness for the dance . . .’.[137] Brobdingnag’s flushing, too, now, more clumsily, ‘I think, is a constant affluence of blood to the neighbourhood of his eyes, and has something to do with their magnetic machinery. The tension caused in the surrounding vessels by this aesthetic concentration may account for it.’[137]

Lewis was often at his worst in revising his own writings. The naïvetés in the original text may be easily forgiven, compared to these unnecessary and often meaningless elaborations.

TWB was widely reviewed when it came out. The two most cogent of the reviewers, whom we shall cite, demonstrate in a remarkable way that the early versions were as good as the new are bad. Neither of these authors had read the early versions — or so we may surely assume. Yet both find much to criticize in the framework — in effect, the revisions; and much to praise in what they call ‘the stories’ — in effect, the original text.

Aiken accompanies his criticism of Ker-Orr with this intelligent praise:

One feels [that Lewis] has the power to survey this curious world into which we are born with a very remarkable degree of detachment — a detachment so complete as almost to amount to genius in itself . . . [But his role-playing] gives him a nervous manner, a high degree of self-consciousness; it takes away from him precisely the pure freedom of the mind with which he appeared to be setting out . . . [But in the stories themselves . . . we are on solid ground . . . They have that consistency in oddity for which the only convenient word is genius. If only Mr. Lewis would content himself with this admirable tale-
bearing as regards the foibles of human behaviour and forget for a while that he
thinks he has a philosophical mission, one feels certain that he could write
fiction that would make any living writer green with envy.
William Empson, writing, much more briefly, in Granta (1927), and surely also
unacquainted with the early versions, also sees, through the revisions, to these:
[Lewis] always throws in, too, a great deal of innocent self-revelation, about
how he is a great, ruthless he-man, and it may be taken for granted that, besides
being rational, he has slept with the parlour-maid [the reference is to Ker-Orr’s
boasts, in the revised ‘Pole’, p. 53 and again (!) p. 54] . . . But his chatter is
irrelevant, so is his bad grammar. For these are good stories . . .

The Date of Writing of ‘Inferior Religions’
Writers on Lewis has shown no substantial disagreement with a date of writing, for
IR, of 1914, as given in Ezra Pound’s Editorial Note. But the presence, in the essay, of
two different readings of the stories, and of two WB’s, suggests the writing was not all
done in one go. Fortunately, we know of two occasions other than 1914 when it would
have been plausible for Lewis to write or revise a Preface which finally might have
become IR: 1911, when he had hopes of a ‘book of stories and articles’ being
published; and 1917, the year of publication of IR itself.

Such information — and it is all we have by way of external evidence — is not
likely to lead to finely detailed assignments of parts of the text to this or that period.
IR’s allusive prose, its very elements metaphor and surprise, adds to the difficulties.
But it suggests the following assignments, which appear broad enough to be
acceptable.

For the possible point of origin of the comic reading presented in Sections III and
V–VII, closely attuned to the stories as that is, we are readily led back to the period
1911–12 with its discussions of humour, in the ‘Tarr’ parts of Tarr, as well as its
invention of the notions ‘Soldier of Humour’ and ‘quarrel of humour’.

Section IV — tougher, with its Blast 1 aphoristic style and conception of harsh,
tragic laughter, but still outside the boundaries of the satiric — may well have been
written late in 1913, when much of Blast also must have originated.

With such dating, the bulk of IR (i.e., Sections III–VII) would fall fairly naturally
into the years 1911–14, in satisfactory agreement with Pound’s statement.

Turning now to what I have here identified as the ‘program’ of Sections I and II we
find similarities, but also differences. The ‘program’ still draws on the comic. But in its
attitude of criticism, as also in the degree of abstraction of the figures it postulates —
‘characters as embodied ideas . . . incapable of breathing the same atmosphere with
us’, it satiric. Adapting a phrase from Lewis’s discussion in Rude Assignment (from
which the preceding quotation is also taken), of an issue quite similar to ours: ‘It is not
merely a question of terminology. An interpretation of life is involved as well.’

If we look, then, in other writings of Lewis’s of the time, for a resemblance to the
attitude of the ‘program’, we find it in the War writings of 1916–18 — though IR far
excels those in imaginative power and language. It seems reasonable to regard the
‘program’ as an addition made probably just prior to publication in 1917.

The correspondence between Lewis and Ezra Pound, his wartime impresario,
shows that there was much discussion between the two men, of current and future
publication of writings by Lewis. Unfortunately, precisely the period preceding the
publication of IR coincides with a gap (mid-September 1916 to mid-May 1917) in the
correspondence. But this lacuna does not detract from the likelihood that revisions were made — always very great with Lewis.

It was a year since the Somme offensive, with its 400,000 casualties. Tarr was being serialized, and ‘The French Poodle’ published. Some of the war stories, published later, may have been in preparation or already in hand. At this time, Lewis must have been painfully aware that there was not yet a single book with his name as author. The list of ‘Possible Writings’, which he prepared, prior to going to the Front, in 1916, shows that a collection of stories, of which IR would surely have been a part, was still his plan.9

We may imagine him, then, on perusing the Goschen Preface, recovered by Pound from the defunct publishers, deciding that its comfortable pace and humour were not what was wanted for what might be his first and, if he was killed in action, perhaps only book.

At this time he must have been already toying with the idea of ‘pure satire’ expressed in IR. The extraordinary formulations of IR's opening paragraphs may have been already present in his mind. He would be anxious that they should not go to waste.

So, probably not having read the stories since 1911, the achronological Lewis puts the new material down at the head of the essay; and, since the book had better not sail under the innocuous flag of the title chosen for the Goschen collection, he added an opening sentence that would allow it to be called, instead of ‘Our Wild Body’, ‘The Wild Body’.

Notes
1 The publishing history of Lewis’s Breton stories and the essay ‘Inferior Religions’ is this: the stories appeared in 1909–11 in The New Age and The Tramp: An Open Air Magazine. ‘Inferior Religions’ appeared in The Little Review, September 1917. Its date of writing is not documented, except by a Note by Ezra Pound, then the Review’s Editor, accompanying the publication, stating that it was written ‘as the introduction to a volume of short stories containing ‘Inn-Keeper and Bestre’, ‘Unlucky for Pringle’ and some others which had appeared in English Review under Ford Madox Hueffer’s editorship, and in other English periodicals. The book was in process of publication (their author had even been paid an advance on it) when war broke out. The last member of the publishing firm has been killed in France, and the firm disbanded.’

In 1927 Lewis published, under the title The Wild Body a collection of most of the stories, revised, together with ‘Inferior Religions’, also revised, and including some new material. The original and revised versions are reprinted in Bernard LaFoucaude (ed) The Complete Wild Body (Santa Barbara, 1982) (CWB).

In the present essay, page references in square brackets are to CWB. References to ‘Inferior Religions’ are to the 1917 version, unless otherwise stated.

2 Bernard Lafourcade’s CWB prints, first, the revised versions of 1927 and second, appended under the heading ‘Archaeology of the Wild Body’, the original texts. It is attractive and indispensable, but it is not a popular edition of the early stories.

3 In the Foreword to TWB, Lewis gives as reason for revising the stories, that the materials ‘seemed to me to deserve the hand of a better artist than I was when I made those few hasty notes of very early travel’.


5 That the stories are comic — and not satiric, as has sometimes been asserted — has been recognised by recent close readers. Alan Munton writes: ‘Lewis’s fictions can be divided into the early comedy and the later satire’ (‘Wyndham Lewis: The Transformations of Carnival’, p. 144f). Jan Duncan refers to ‘Lewis’s Spanish and Breton grotesques’ and finds the narrator’s attitude to be ‘not of satire, but nor is it “celebration”, more of a detached, cool, elevated amusement’ (‘Toward a Modernist Poetic: Wyndham Lewis’s Early Fiction’ pp. 74 and 81); both in Giovanni Cianci, ed, Wyndham Lewis: Letteratura/Pittura, Palermo, 1982.


8 Thus William Empson, unjustly, on The Human Age, in his Preface to John R. Harrison’s The Reactionaries: ‘It is pleasant to find [Lewis] expressing tender admiration, for the first time, in his old age, even though he knows it is for a devil’. Repr. in John Haffenden, ed., William Empson, Arguing: Essays on Literature and Culture, Iowa City, 1987.

9 The title appears in a list of writings that he thought might be publishable in book form, which Lewis prepared in 1916 before being sent to the Front in France. The list is reproduced in Enemy News No. 10, an extract in CWB p. 383 under the title ‘Writings’.

10 Blast 1, p. 133.

11 Cf. CWB p. 151f and 154 (Note 2). Style and content of Section V do suggest an origin in 1914; but Lafourcade’s finding of wrong numbering in The Little Review seems to be an error on his part. See also CWB 319 (Note 3).


13 Both quotations from Ian Duncan, loc. cit. p. 83.


16 IR is dated ‘pre-War’ in G. Cianci, ‘Il Lewis prebellico e vorticista’, in op. cit. p. 64 n. 137. The chief dissenter, Bernard Lafourcade, dates it ‘early in 1917’ [314, 319 n.1]. He may have been misled by the elision, in his own citation of Pound’s Note [314, cf. No 1 of the present essay], of the words ‘which had appeared in the English Review’. The tense shows Pound’s statement to be that the essay was written previously, which must mean 1914.


19 Wyndham Lewis, Rude Assignment, p. 46.

20 Cf. Timothy Materer, ed., Pound/Lewis: The Letters of Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis, New York 1985. The gap coincides with Lewis’s training camp period. A letter to T. Sturge Moore of May 1917 implies that he went to London on several occasions during this time; he may then have had meetings with Ezra Pound, which would explain the gap in the correspondence. (Letter to Moore, 23/5/17, in W. K. Rose, Letters of Wyndham Lewis, London 1963, # 82.)