'The Alice in Wonderland world of Jane Austen and Trollope', its role in the genesis of Wyndham Lewis's *The Human Age* – and how Empson, I.A. Richards, Kipling, and Mary Webb also became involved

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I

In *Men without Art* (1934) Lewis answers his critics:

> What those great moralists who censure us for our 'coarseness', our 'venom' [...] exhort us to do, is to go back into the *Alice in Wonderland* world of Jane Austen and Trollope. But it is to an imitation Trollope and Austen they turn; they wish for a spurious, sugared interpretation.¹

If we are to understand what Lewis meant by that curious conjunction of Austen, Trollope, Carroll, and what might be their role in the genesis of *The Human Age*, there are two points chiefly to bear in mind. The first is to recall the advice Lewis himself offers to 'the Plain Reader' near the beginning of *Men without Art*: 'Beyond a clearly defined, and quickly overtaken limit, you must be prepared to work a little bit, to look an abstract idea in the face and mildly cudgel your brains, if you are going to understand much about books and other products of the artistic intelligence'. (11) The second task that we find ourselves compelled to grapple with is the necessity of placing Lewis's enigmatic group of writers in their proper context. But what context might that be? Lewis's critics are not confined to the 'Men without Art', not even if we include in that talented category, as we must, Bloomsbury. Several years before *The Apes of God*, the Enemy's work had already attracted censure. Almost immediately we find ourselves 'cudgelling our brains' to identify those 'great moralists'. The field proves to be large, so what follows needs must be a tour d' horizon, even if we focus largely on Oxbridge. As Jeffrey Meyers notes, Lewis kept up with developments there.²

II

Cambridge. During the Autumn of the 1926-7 session, at a meeting of *The Heretics*,³ Lewis 'laid down ferocious laws for the more rebellious avant-garde'; later near Jesus College Lewis 'was seen talking to, almost barking at William Empson'.⁴ You could say that they struck sparks off each other. At least that is the impression left when one considers what the brilliant young mathematician turned student of English has to say in *The Granta* that Autumn. Empson had read *The Art of Being Ruled* (1926), *Time and Western Man* (September, 1927). Of course he has reservations but, on the whole, his shrewd assessments of the two books in *The Granta* are welcoming. The review of *Time and Western Man* in particular (as Paul Edwards observes) 'shows that he's read it very carefully, even if the conclusion is a bit smug'.⁵ It is entitled 'Ask a Policeman':

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Mr. Lewis’ thesis, though not new, deserves restatement. It is that two main props of our faith in Western common-sense have been damaged; private integrity of effort, by the success of the machine [...]; private integrity of thought, by the removal of a fixed God, which has fostered the idea of an unknowable, ever-changing organic flux, and referred all belief to contemporary shifting needs [so] as to throw aside all intelligence and initiative, all sex consciousness, and will. What is not so clear is whether Mr. Lewis disapproves of all such tendencies equally [...] and what in any case he would like to do about them. [...] for he is oddly at home among his heresies, and sometimes pillories as seditious what he tells us he himself believes. [...] There is no doubt he has collected with breadth and acuteness a body of valuable critical material, to which a critique may yet be applied, and it is possible that his next book, which he has assured us will make his own position more clear, may do what these important and very readable essays do not.6

Again, though not without more serious misgivings, he finds The Wild Body (November 1927) exhilarating:

These are good stories, neurotic egotist though he is, and painful though it is to read his accounts of himself as flaying in conversation some crippled mind. What he has is the humour Eliot claimed for Marlowe, he exhilarates by describing people with strong, able, well-marked systems of habits, absurdly unlike one’s own. It gives a sort of courage and makes one feel more competent, even to have imagined them.[...] [This is one of those] books [that] gratify our strong and critical curiosity about alien modes of feeling, our need for the flying buttress of sympathy with systems other than our own.7

Lewis must have been intrigued and infuriated in equal measure by the mixture of cheek and insight displayed in these comments. The comparison of his stories with Marlowe was flattering, and the reference to Gothic architecture especially apt; after all, my opening quotation comes from a chapter of Men without Art entitled ‘The Artist and the New Gothic’. Equally though, offended amour propre demanded satisfaction. Lewis is an advocate of ‘intellectual jujitsu’ and the evidence suggests that like a judo Black Belt, Lewis exploited the opening that Empson’s self conceit and bi-sexual bravado offers.

Empson writes of his current lover that:

He fills me with such fury and that I don’t say anything, I feel rather sick and he talks along. He has absolutely no mental grasp on anything [...] He is very soft and pretty and good natured, wants to be pawed and played with and is in no way male at all. He is Mr. Bloom’s nightmare [...] ‘the new womanly man – a dear man, a dear person’. Ever such a pure, clean boy, of course he spoke with indignation of homosexual young men with painted faces and
makes ten emotional statements he considers an argument about their being unnatural. He has Wyndham Lewis’s shaman ‘delicacy’ […] He stands for the breakdown of male logic and male will, for the post war exhausted niceness […] like Lewis’s Siberians […] in fact he stands wherever you like to put him, poor little fool, the problem at the moment is that he will stand in my room.⁸

Although this is a diary entry (taken from Haffenden’s cornucopia), the two explicit references to The Art of Being Ruled indicate the degree to which Empson found Lewis’s examination of Shamanism helpful. So much so that Empson is as likely to have been silent about his own sexual preferences as he is to have hidden his stimulating insight about the artistic strengths of the German film industry (Empson reviewed Fritz Lang’s Metropolis in The Granta of November 1927).⁹ After all, in the previous year at a Cambridge Union debate on the motion that ‘The Youth of today is degenerate’, Empson had ‘even proposed to proselytize for bisexuality’.¹⁰ Although the template for Lewis’s pair of anti-heroes in The Human Age (as I shall argue below) is much older, dating back to the stock types of Attic comedy, Empson’s attitude towards his tiresome boyfriend is congruous with the intellectually asymmetric, bickering and yet basically affectionate (possibly homosexual) relationship that Pullman has with Satters in The Childermass:

1. Pullman to Satters: “[T]here’s no occasion to be alarmed I mean you needn’t fancy your reason’s going. – You haven’t got any!” (61-2).
2. Satters to Pulley: “‘If yer loves us why don’t ye muck us apart?’ “Behave yourself!” Pullman disengages his neck.” (118)

These quotations are the more notable because they frame or foreshadow other parallels that appear to acknowledge the impact of Lewis’s fascinating new acquaintance.

Within a few weeks of their encounter and of Empson’s reviews appearing in The Granta, Lewis is finishing the first part of his epic exploration of the Afterlife. There he incorporates what look like aspects of Empson (and also, it seems, of his principal Cambridge mentor) into the characterization. True, at the opening of their misadventures Pullman, the more knowing of the pair, wears the look of a James Joyce. But Lewis’s characters are essentially composites.¹¹ And before long, Pullman has mutated into ‘a cocksure undergraduate’ or rather ‘young don’ (110, 112), trying to curb the coarse violence of a companion who has more than a passing resemblance to Lewis himself.¹² Like Pullman, Empson had been impressed by the heretical teaching of a new messiah. I.A. Richards, his tutor at Magdalen, began lecturing on the modern novel in 1919-20.¹³

Haffenden assembles an impressive group of witnesses as to the spell-binding effect these lectures had. These occasions felt to one student
like a cross between a Welsh revivalist meeting – for Richards shows very Welsh qualities as an orator – and the British Association lectures in Elementary Science.\textsuperscript{14}

They could also be ‘very funny’\textsuperscript{15} – if at times unintentionally so. Another witness remembered ‘the outstanding stimulus’ that came from Richards:

who […] would stand in front of a blackboard on which he made cabalistic marks with immense delicacy and dedication […] elucidating some subtle complex of ideas.\textsuperscript{16}

The response of others (when allowed to present their evidence to a fuller extent than Haffenden permits) is more conflicted. Christopher Isherwood recalls that Richards was the prophet we had been waiting for […] to us he was infinitely more than a brilliant new literary critic; he was our guide, our evangelist, who revealed to us, in a succession of astonishing lighting flashes, the entire expanse of the Modern World […] Poets, ordered Mr. Richards, were to reflect aspects of the World Picture. Poetry wasn’t a holy flame, a fire-bird from the moon; it was a group of inter-related stimuli acting upon the ocular nerves, the semi-circular canals, the brain, the solar plexus, the digestive and sexual organs. It did you medically demonstrable good, like a dose of strychnine or salts. We became behaviourists, materialists, atheists […] We talked excitedly about the phantom aesthetic state […] But if Mr Richards enormously stimulated us, \textit{he plunged us also into the profoundest gloom. It seemed to us that everything we had valued would have to be scrapped} (emphasis added).\textsuperscript{17}

Lewis might have heard this from Auden. Doubtless, much the same could have been gathered from Empson.\textsuperscript{18} Or, perhaps, Lewis came up to Cambridge drawn by Richards’s books, \textit{The Principles of Literary Criticism} (1924) and \textit{Science and Poetry} (1926 – at 2/6 a copy this Psyche Miniature was not beyond Lewis’s means, and it was provocative enough), indeed, eventually he owned a second impression of Richards’s \textit{Practical Criticism} (1930).\textsuperscript{19} So it is possible that Lewis sampled these justly-celebrated events for himself.

Such a challenging (and, ultimately for some non-specialists, dispiriting) amalgam of science, quasi-religious fervour, and humour, a heady compound of images suggestive of esoteric interpretation, and, not least, reductive argument dismissing the sacred ‘fire-bird’: all this does look as if it provided important elements of the armature for episodes in the irregular proceedings of the Bailiff’s Court. As when in the course of his sustained attack on ‘identity’, the Bailiff baffles his audience with Science, old and new.
With purposive scholarship, he equates the mystical aureole or mandorla with the human bladder, in order to discredit the holy. The colour and shape represent a halo, but the Bailiff represents it as an internal bodily organ, and not as a transcendental envelope. Yet he is justified in doing so – to an extent – precisely because the vesica piscis to which he refers translates as ‘the bladder of a fish’. Under the cover of invoking the latest theories in Physics, the Bailiff smuggles in a materialistic explanation of ‘individuality’ that, by limiting itself to the physiological facts, also casts doubt on both the Christian hope of Redemption and the existence of God:

Individuality then is identity without the idea of substance. And substance we insist on here, nothing else can hold any real interest for us [...] It is not the persistent life of a bare universal that any man, ever, is likely to covet. It is that crusted fruity complex-and-finite reality the term by which we are accustomed to express the sensations of our own empirical life – emerging in the matrix of Space and Time or Space-Time – that all the fuss is about. It is the cuticle that the little colony of valves glands and tubes gets to cover it that is precious, just as it is the form of the Redeemer surrounding the vesica piscis [Latin: bladder of the fish] that gives that emblem its importance. For us, whatever it may be for God, it is not the laver but the fish that matters – you understand me? (C 143-4)

This devilish parody may strike some as being a ‘Piss Christ’ avant la lettre. Once again, though, the basic template or formula is ancient, a mixture of irreverent Aristophanic comedy and medieval (or earlier) eschatological fears about the Anti-Christ and the Judgment of the Soul after death (C 45, 261). But the grotesque, deflationary rhetoric of the incarnate Zeitgeist, here presiding, voices also the modern heresies of Science and Socialism (whether National or Soviet).

At moments, the mockery verges on lampoon; consequently it is understandable if so alert a reader as Empson were un-amused. The other new acquaintance who can be identified as a target seems to have taken the satire in good part, for (thanks to Alan Munton) we have Lewis’s recollection that Richards conceded the Bailiff in The Childermass was a perfect model of how a schoolmaster, or a professor should behave. True, later when introducing D.G. Bridson’s radio dramatization to a Third Programme audience, Richards complained that ‘to an agonizing degree we are not allowed to know [...] what it is all about’. Equally telling, though, is his description of the experience of encountering Lewis’s ‘daunting’ enigma: ‘it feels just like being up before Wyndham Lewis’s Bailiff’ himself. As The Human Age evolves, one notes many affinities between Lewis, Richards and particularly Empson. There are similarities not just of plot, incident, character and theme but of style too: ambiguous terminology as in ‘the Time Flats’ that is well worth further exploration. Tom Lubbock has noted likenesses between One-Way Song (1933) and the poetry Empson was writing at this period. Nor are the influences only in one direction. Haffenden senses a Lewisian influence
on Empson as late as 1937 in ‘The Royal Beasts’. And in a letter some fourteen years later Richards strongly implies that Empson was well enough acquainted with the first part of Lewis’s masterpiece to be able to appreciate the value of its completion. As for Empson’s second major work of criticism, Some Versions of Pastoral (1935), the chapter devoted to Double Plots acknowledges a debt to The Lion and the Fox – an ‘excellent book’. Particularly important is the chapter on Alice’s adventures; and not just because it is the first extended criticism of Carroll’s masterpieces, elevating them to the status of books for adult readers. Empson’s seminal essay is remarkable also for the way it seems haunted by issues, ideas and images analogous to those in The Childermass. While death is present in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass, there is nothing of the Supernatural there. Whereas in ‘The Child as Swain’, developing his ‘challenge to the [...] doctrine of Redemption’ involves Empson in referring successively to ‘Christ’, ‘Original Sin’, ‘Lethe in which the souls were bathed before rebirth’, ‘the soul force’. (256, 262, 272, 273)

Since Dodgson and Lewis were both old boys of Rugby School (and neither happy there), the young Percy must have been long familiar with Carroll’s masterpieces. The allusion to ‘Humpty Dumpty’ made by Satters as he vainly strives to shake off the Bailiff’s magic in the opening section of The Childermass (109) should alert Lewis’s reader. As bewildering aspects of Through the Looking Glass help to shape the delusive topography of ‘the Time Flats’, and ruthlessly megalomaniac characters in Wonderland are reflected in the Bailiff’s flagrant misconduct of Divine Justice; or again as in Alice’s adventures a legal nightmare reminiscent of Kafka that dramatizes ‘the puzzling nature of identity in a world dominated by rules and rulers that remain obstinately unpredictable and indecipherable’, so likewise that notoriously shape-shifting ‘literary category’ which is the Empsonian Pastoral has much in common with the bewildering generic mutations observable in Lewis’s own anatomy.

One begins to suspect a kind of symbiosis at work in all this – at least for a spell. Certainly, Lewis and Empson seem to have been keeping an eye on each other. Since these parallels are so counter-intuitive, it is important that we should note at this crucial stage in their acquaintance, a phase of fruitful cross-fertilization, the younger man’s attitude is not yet marked by the open hostility displayed in the past Second World War period. On the contrary there is evidence that up to the lamentable Hitler book and, to the younger man, the irritating Doom of Youth articles (both 1931), Empson’s estimate of the form and content of Lewis’s achievement remained generally respectful and even supportive. Sylvia Townsend Warner records in her diary ‘11 April 1930 a delightful evening at Empson’s digs’ during which he defended Lewis:

We argued quite naturally, about Eliot, and Wyndham Lewis [...] the argument was that I complained that WL had A Message. He was of the opinion that poets should have a message, should be in touch with real life.

Accordingly, though Empson’s second book of criticism was not published until a year
after *Men without Art*, it seems legitimate to make use of Empson's recognition of Pastoral as the putting into, or recognition of, the Complex in the Simple. In Empsonian terms, then, Carroll, Austen and Trollope all fall into the category of Pastoral.

III

In this context, the shift in reputation of the Alice books from juvenile reading matter to adult canon is the exemplary paradigm. As the Surrealists put Carroll into their Pantheon, and this maverick English academic and poet, Empson, establishes links with the new Gospel of Modernism, tracing the connections with the Other World of the Freudian and Political Unconscious, so something similar occurs in the cases of Austen and Trollope.

Both novelists could, it had been generally felt, `present the surface of society with remarkable deftness`; both, however, failed to achieve `the depth of vision essential to art of a more elevated sort`.

The changes in their reputation, which are more or less contemporaneous, take two forms. There is a process of literary canonization that finds in their best work, the high seriousness and eloquence found in the great art of the past. Thus nineteenth-century literary works begin to be ranked with the epics and dramas of classical antiquity and the renaissance. By the early years of the twentieth century the comparison of Austen with Shakespeare had become routine but, more startlingly, in 1914 she is seen (by no less an expert than Saintsbury) as a counterpart of Swift `with all the savagery, and the gloom, and the coarseness taken out`.

Another kind of apotheosis is effected by:

1) Either popular and often saccharine sentiment – what Lewis refers to as `a spurious, sugared interpretation`.

2) Or more valuably, there is the creative writer who disturbs the complacency of the reader by noting the links these novels have with the Supernatural.

Thus in Trollope's case, the abrupt rise in critical esteem for his novels during the late 1920s does seem attributable to Michael Sadleir's *Trollope: A Commentary* (1927). The neglected Gothic elements in the rhetoric of narrator and characters of the *Barsetshire Chronicles*, on the other hand, have been brought out more gradually. This particular re-evaluation begins with M.R. James's terrifying ghost-story `The Stalls of Barchester Cathedral`.

Miss Austen, though, how does she come into the genesis of *The Human Age*? That was exactly the question I asked myself when well over a decade ago I discovered her in the work notes of *The Childermass*. On folios 103 and 104, in one of the largest clusters of quotations in the file are scores of extracts from what proved to be *Sense and Sensibility* – plus one remarkable exclamation of Lewis's delight in a particular passage in the novel: `sumptuous`.

Clearly Lewis had thought hard about Austen's craft (the bracketing and other indications of linkage between the extracts are evidence of that – especially when the extract is situated in its context). What was his purpose, though? Aside from one obvious record of his recourse to
the dictionary, it was difficult to see what exactly Lewis was up to. Only a few extracts seem to have been chosen as instances of Austen's mordant wit. For example, one finds (my page references are to the Norton edition):

23] p. 36 her face was so lovely, that when, in the common cant of praise, she was called a beautiful girl, truth was less violently outraged than usually happens.

These extracts from Austen are not any the less startling when – after working through the Cornell file – one begins to think that it might be possible to understand the sequence of major genres operating in Lewis's vision of the Otherworld. Those echoes of Aristophanes's *The Frogs*, visions of No Man's Land as glimpsed in a Soho seance, the Phoenix's epiphany in the Apocryphal accounts of Baruch and Enoch! Lewis's original plan might have been to have The Dialogues of the Dead preceded by The Journey to the Other World. But that relatively simple pattern has been shattered as filmic images of trench warfare are spliced into reminiscences of the Orvieto Apocalypse, of Dante and his illustrators. Worse, this Progress of the Soul is undermined by the nightmarish discovery that the Judgement Seat itself has been usurped by a devilish Mr Punch. The Judaeo-Christian visions of the Latter Days are contaminated by the dreams and magic associated with German Expressionist films. The very title of *The Childermass* conjures up not only the Massacre of the Innocents but the savageries of Saturnalia as explored in Frazer's *Golden Bough*. In sum, *The Childermass* presents a formidable array (or rather montage-cum-bricolage) of the literary and other artistic kinds or modes which Lewis deploys in his multi-layered quasi-allegory to anatome what he sees as the political and cultural death of his age. Even when one turns for help to the encyclopaedic scholarship of Northrop Frye (he coined the term 'anatomy' as he named the genre that best describes *The Childermass*), Lewis's vision of the Afterlife remains a monstrously daunting enigma.

IV

So what in Hell is Jane Austen doing in such a dud Heaven? Almost all the evidence would seem to point away from the genres and subjects associated with Austen. 'Almost', for as our two anti-heroes pick their way through this dismal waste land, they find themselves in a sort of burlesque Pastoral. As Kathryn Sutherland reminds us: 'Austen served an apprenticeship as a parodist, and even her mature novels are a form of critical engagement – with contemporary social relations, but also with the novel genre itself'. Similarly in *The Childermass*, the shade of Gulliver is invoked when, penetrating a Lillputian version of late eighteenth-century Islington, Pullman and Satters encounter apparently the author of *The Rights of Man* examining what seems to be a legendary piece of the East India Company's booty. Was Lewis
collecting from Austen examples of contemporary English to colour this episode? None seems to fit exactly. Rather it is that note of ironic derision for which Austen is famous that first catches one’s attention. To cite other examples:

18] p. 28 her four noisy children [...] put an end to every kind of discourse except what related to themselves.
24] p. 37 how is your acquaintance to be long supported, under such extraordinary dispatch of every subject for discourse?

Significantly, Lewis is at pains to make these extracts as accurate and telling as possible, thus:

41] p. 65 These bottoms ‘It is a beautiful country,’ he replied; ‘but these bottoms must be dirty in winter.’

And there is one extract that, it is easy to believe, was close to Lewis’s own heart:

43] p. 68 ‘I wish,’ said Margaret, striking out a novel thought, ‘that somebody would give us all a large fortune apiece!’

These notations, which now more or less puzzle the student would seem to have become vital cues for the writer during the composition of his enigmatic masterpiece. Again one is irresistibly reminded of other elements in the advice that Lewis offers his audience: ‘progressing by easy stages from the particular to the general, it has been my object to lead on [...] the “plain reader” [...] to an understanding of the absolute necessity of looking behind the work of art for something which is not evident to the casual eye, and which yet has to be dragged out into the light if we are to understand what any work of art is about’. (MWA 11)

While the meaning of all these Austen extracts obviously becomes much clearer by their being set back in their proper context, in the case of some the context is absolutely crucial to our comprehension. So in extract 47 (Sense and Sensibility, 87) if we are to begin to grasp the sinister import of ‘Sir John’s confidence in his own judgment rose with this animated praise’, it is necessary to complete the sentence: ‘and he set off directly for the cottage to tell the Miss Dashwoods of the Miss Steeles’ arrival’.

With Lucy’s entrance we reach almost the end of the extracts that Lewis made; by this point he has apparently identified the key players in Austen’s novel, reminding himself how they relate to the traditional kinds of fictional character and how he might deploy aspects of them in his own work. Thus the description of that ill-matched couple Mr and Mrs Palmer depends for its comic timing on its place in the narrative (the emphasis here added indicates Lewis’s extract):
‘He declares he won’t. Don’t you, Mr. Palmer?’

Mr. Palmer took no notice of her.
‘He cannot bear writing, you know,’ she continued – ‘he says it is quite shocking.’
‘No,’ said he,
46 ] ‘I never said anything so irrational. Don’t palm all your abuses of language upon me’. (S&I 83)

Lewis’s focusing on this particular passage from a novel that challenges the reader to distinguish between ironic pairings is noteworthy. The passage reminds us that a simile current among students of typology in the early twentieth century was that of ‘the jig-saw puzzle’. Lewis’s extract invites us to observe how this comic exchange between the Palmers mirrors Empson’s own amusing account of his lover. Recognizing that both pairs are caught in an intellectually and emotionally unequal relationship enables the student of Lewis to see how another piece of the puzzle that is the characterization of Pullman and Satters fits into place. It is also significant too that it is Mrs Palmer who is singled out by one of the most insightful nineteenth-century commentators on Austen. Richard Simpson notes that:

Mrs. Palmer’s nullity is represented […] by her total want of intellectual discrimination. […] Her failure to see the contradiction of contradictories. Her indignant speech about Willoughby is a typical utterance: – ‘She was determined to drop his acquaintance immediately, and she was very thankful that she had never been acquainted with him at all […]’ These are foolish sayings of which a clever man might be proud; if any real Mrs. Palmer could in fact string together contradictions so readily she would soon lose her character as a mere simpleton.39

To adapt this device in order to further characterize Satters, only a few adjustments would be necessary. Since of the pair, Satters’s behaviour is the more effeminate, the sole step-change required is one of linguistic register, from the gossip of society ladies down into the Lower School grumbles of a lovelorn lisp, Satters’s contradictory reactions towards his partner:

‘Pulley has been most terribly helpful and kind, terribly kind and most awfully helpful. He has been kind and in a sense helpful, though not so helpful. At the start he was helpful and kind now he pushes his hand off his arm as though he had some infectious disease […](C 41).

Lewis borrows such a device, I would argue, for the same reason as that one which Simpson identifies in the comparison of Mrs Palmer and Willoughby. Both Austen and Lewis are
distinguishing between the know-all and the self-deprecating naif – the innocent who gropes his way to the truth. Satters is the intellectual fool, Pullman the moral fool. This is exactly the distinction that Aristophanes makes between the Eiron (self-deprecator) and Alazons (the boastful impostor who sees himself as greater than he really is) of his comedies.

As dramatis personae of this type make their entrance into the discussion, recourse to The Anatomy of Criticism is illuminating; for as he develops his argument, Frye gradually puts the stock characters of Theatre into an immense historical and ultimately mythic perspective.

He begins with the helpful reminder that:

When we speak of typical characters, we are not trying to reduce lifelike characters to stock types […] All lifelike characters, whether in drama or fiction, owe their consistency to the appropriateness of the stock type to which they belong […] That stock type is not the character but it is as necessary to the character as a skeleton is to the actor who plays it. (Anatomy 172)

Although by no means one-dimensional, Aristophanes’s characters are skinny by comparison with Austen’s, because over the centuries since the days of the Old Comedy the stock figures had mutated, developing into many sub-species. These increasingly complex and subtle creations migrate into various genres of literature, often in the process putting on more flesh and acquiring additional realistic features. The Atellan farces – using stock characters and stock situations – and the more sophisticated creations of Roman Comedy influenced both the Commedia dell’Arte and the literary theatre of the Renaissance.

A section of The Lion and the Fox (1927) entitled ‘The Manufacture of a Shakespearean Colossus’ shows how carefully Lewis had studied the playwright’s solution of the problems involved: how when constructing his own tragic heroes, Shakespeare built, and elaborated upon, the traditional model of the heroic king as exemplified by Tamburlaine. We are most familiar with the stock character in comedy but, as Frye points out, ‘the alazon may be an aspect of the tragic hero himself as well’ (Anatomy 39); thus Tambulaine and even Othello are versions of the miles gloriosus, a type of the alazon that in turn derives from the basic impostor. As a modernist steeped in Frazer’s comparative mythology, Lewis gave his own peculiarly heterodox twist to the conventional terminology in The Lion and Fox; however when Lewis notes the ‘parallels’ between a wide range of dramatists of various cultures across the centuries and the differences of their creations from the ‘stereotype’, it is evident also that he is aware of the stock characters of the stage. Indeed he twice refers to ‘the fool and knave’ (Lion and the Fox, 202, 250); and when he alludes to ‘David and Goliath’ (189, 198) as well as to ‘Christ’ (191, 290) there is implicit recognition of connections between the apparently quite different typologies of church and theatre.

The wealth of cross-reference to great European novels that also accompanies the main argument in The Lion and the Fox displays a mind prepared to recognize the relevance
of Austen’s own subtle inversions. For the echoes of The Way of the World, She Stoops to Conquer, The Rivals, reminiscences of the novels of Richardson and Fielding in Sense and Sensibility, and the rest of Austen’s oeuvre indicate that she too was playing with such typological traditions.\footnote{The early use of the name and character of Mr Punch in Austen’s work.}

In thinking about such matters as his attention shifted from the earlier book to The Childermass, Lewis had not merely been drawing on The Frogs; also he profited from the consideration he had previously given to Francis Cornford’s study of The Origins of Attic Comedy (1914)\footnote{Cornford’s study of Attic Comedy.} — a scholarly monograph repeatedly cited in The Lion and the Fox. Tellingly, Cornford’s analysis of Aristophanes’s use of intruder and victim, impostor and dupe, know-all and naif does not merely involve comparison with Mr Punch; Jane Austen’s novels, too, are brought into the argument. The trouble is that while the connection with Mr Punch (originally Signore Pulcinella) sheds a deal of light on the origins of the Bailiff, Cornford does almost nothing with his reference to Austen, not even glancing at the affinities some of her most memorable creations share with another Commedia dell’arte character Pantalone, a lineal descendant of the senex iratus (or alazon) in the plays of Plautus and Terence. Although Lewis is likely to have some direct acquaintance with the Roman comic dramatists since their plays still had an important role in the teaching of Latin in Victorian schools, he seems to have refreshed his memory by consulting what (as the practice of Frye bears out) is still a mine of information, the stimulatingly ambitious and insightful essay on world drama in the eleventh edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica.\footnote{The influence of Cornford’s study.} How to explain Cornford’s comparative neglect of Austen, though? It is not enough to say that his major concern is with the Frazerian origins of the Old Comedy; it is as important to recognize that he is also one of those who, while finding her amusing, nevertheless seems to have thought that Austen was uninterested in any of the larger social issues.\footnote{Cornford’s approach to Austen.}

V

Such an estimate is plainly untrue of Sense and Sensibility. There are important political and social issues in common between the Austen and the Lewis. In the caustic tones of the most sardonic narrator of all her novels (and surely so apt a choice, by an author as concerned as was Lewis to defend his own plain speaking, cannot be accidental), Sense and Sensibility lays bare the economic basis of a patriarchal society. Admittedly, the explicit reference to the concerns of a seaborne empire crucial to Mansfield Park and Persuasion is missing, yet the decisive influence of the East India Company on Sense and Sensibility’s emotional outcome is subtly indicated. Again, though Austen’s novel does not mention The Rights of Man (as Paul Edwards points out, we hear the Bailiff denying them to the appellants in his Court – C 206),\footnote{The inclusion of political issues in Sense and Sensibility.} from beginning to end Sense and Sensibility is concerned with the evils of primogeniture and the domestic tyranny to which it gives rise. Belatedly the reader discovers a very dark, hidden, subplot to the novel. Empire and economics are only part of it; men’s mistreatment of women is deeply implicated; and indeed Willoughby’s seduction of
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Colonel Brandon’s ward verges on the sort of child abuse that brings us close to the concerns associated with the title of Lewis’s work. Moreover, there is the way in which the moral vision of Sense and Sensibility seems to transcend the formal boundaries of the novel genre, as in the bleakly-observed conclusion where Miss Steele joins the older Mrs Ferrars and her other daughter-in-law to make a hellish Trinity.

Although far from allegory, Sense and Sensibility is the most formulaic novel in Austen’s mature oeuvre; so it is not difficult to recognize that the dowager Mrs Ferrars and Mrs John Dashwood represent two generations of the senex iratus, and Lucy is a potential third. The gender-bending goes back through eighteenth-century and Restoration comedy to at least Romeo and Juliet, Shakespeare’s Lady Capulet being succeeded by Congreve’s Lady Wishfort and Goldsmith’s Mrs Hardcastle. The overbearing parental figure is an important comic archetype, and the most malignant among the alazon impostor group, manifesting himself (the patriarchs vastly outnumber the matriarchs) through rages and threats, obsessions, low cunning, and gullibility. With such a character type we approach ever closer to the dangerously interfering Bailiff, ‘Uncle Punch among his jolly children’ (C 148 and passim; note also his dangerously avuncular manner in the later books of the sequence). Northrop Frye considers all blocking character in comedy to be variations on the senex iratus, the bad father or parental surrogate. (Anatomy; 172)

The Senex iratus’s usual function is to impede the love of the hero and heroine, and his power to do so derives from his greater social position and his increased control of cash; these are exactly the power bases of Mrs Ferrars and Mrs John Dashwood. The parallel goes further still; frequently the bad parent is associated with the bad fiancé, and, of course, the greatest impediment to the love of Elinor and Edward in Sense and Sensibility is Lucy Steele. Despite the attempts of their adversaries, though, Marianne and Elinor do marry their intendeds – more or less.47

The solution of the comic problem usually takes the form of incorporating a central character or characters into society. In Christian literature, on the other hand, the chief concern is the quest for Salvation – as in the joyful conclusion to all three sections of the Divina Commedia. In the spiritual epic (and The Human Age contains allusions to Dante as well as to Homer), as Frye points out, the blocking agent seems closely related to ‘some demonic characters of romance, such as Polyphemus’. (Anatomy, 172) To put it another way: since in extremis the Senex Iraeus may well look a lot like Old Nick, we cannot fail to note that the whole purpose of the ‘Old Bailie’s’ usurpation of the Judgment Seat is to block the passage of the fittest into the New Life (C 66, 228) One of the authorities cited by Frye enables us to identify the Bailiff more closely. Drawing on Lewis’s own source (The Golden Bough), Throdon H. Gaster shows that in comedy as well as sacred ritual and myth the archetype of the blocking character is the interrex or deputy ruler.48 In The Childermass the Bailiff plays the saturnian role of ‘Lord of Fools or Abbot of Misrule’ (to use Frazerian terminology).49 In Monstre Gai his ambition extends to plotting to become City Boss of the New Jerusalem; still later, in Maligne Fiesta we discover just how temporary a ruler the ‘Old Bailie’ is, little more than the irrepresible, ever-resourceful
wily servant of the Devil, or as the Gospel calls Satan, ‘the Father of Lies’. (John 08:44)

Tellingly, in the closing stages of *Malign Fiesta*, the Lord Sammael (as Satan here likes to be styled) is the most terrifying example of the brutal father (346–7, 350), and by repeatedly associating Pullman with a succession of bad fiancés (509–24, 530–40), Sammael and the Bailiff seriously put in doubt the salvation of Lewis’s anti-hero.50

On further consideration, one soon finds among the expert commentators on the novel an awareness of a deeply sinister dimension to *Sense and Sensibility*. In her profound analysis of Austen, Barbara Hardy links Lucy Steele with the evil ones of epic and tragedy:

Lucy’s story is a perfect instance of the imaginative corruption of narrative which many excellent narrative artists have liked to imagine: Virgil’s Sinon, lying his way into Troy; Satan to Eve, lying his way into Eden; and Iago to Othello, lying his way to destruction. Lucy’s style is noticeably less elegant than Sinon’s, Satan’s, or Iago’s, but her technique is very like theirs. It relies on a sharp perception of her listener, a histrionic ability to act out lies and a delight in pitting an uninhibited rationality against the restrictions of honesty.51

If we allow for the grotesqueries of *The Childermass*, much the same might be said of the Bailiff’s technique, especially as we recall that tyrannical usurper is unmistakably associated with the very disguise Milton’s Satan adopts in Book IV of *Paradise Lost*. Satters confesses to having ‘that toad reaction’ to the Bailiff. (C 66)

Comparable suspicions are later voiced in Margaret Doody’s introduction to the World’s Classics edition of *Sense and Sensibility*; ‘the old Gentleman’ who set up the whole unjust inheritance scheme, she identifies as being the Devil. Nor was Hardy the first critic to perceive such sinister connections. More generally, Richard Simpson observes of Austen’s view of marriage:

*it would be, after all, much the same whether the proper people intermarried,*

*or whether they were mismatched by some malevolent Puck.*53

However, while such readings of *Sense and Sensibility* may lead us to fear a Gnostic creation, we are still among the Living. Whereas (in what is significantly the last of the extracts that Lewis made from *Sense and Sensibility*) Austen reminds us her novel is as much concerned with death as it is with deceit and cupidity; after all the narrative begins with the ill-effects of one unfair will and ends with the consequences of another. Thus when Elinor questions Lucy Steele about the morality of her secret engagement with Edward, the dismal topic of Death intrudes (again the emphasis here added indicates Lewis’s extract):

56] ‘But what,’ said she, after a short silence, ‘are your views? or have you none
but that of waiting for Mrs. Ferrars's death, which is a melancholy and shocking extremity? Is her son determined to submit to this, and to all the tediousness of the many years of suspense in which it may involve you, rather than run the risk of her displeasure for a while by telling the truth?' (S&S 106)

The nearest that nineteenth century criticism comes to recognizing this novel’s proximity to the realm of the Dead seems to be Alice Meynell’s troubling 1885 observation that Austen’s ‘is an unheavenly world’.54 We should note Meynell’s essay is reprinted in 1921 just two years before Oxford University Press begins publishing the Clarendon editions.

VI

Evidently Lewis kept his eyes on such developments in Austen studies. Chapman brings out his edition of Sense and Sensibility in 1926. During the same year in The Art of Being Ruled, Chapter 6 lists Austen among ‘celebrated women’ (223–4).55 Notable too is an eloquent passage in Time and Western Man (1927) celebrating artistic canonization as a process of ‘martyrdom’; again in The Childermass there are multiple allusions to ‘canons’;56 and two years later, in The Apes of God, the name of Austen comes up during a discussion that ranges from impersonality in fiction to the future of modern culture: ‘In the place of Christendom with all its faults and cruelties is substituted the salon’.57

At the same time, as the result of the posthumous publication of disturbing works like Sanditon (the complete text of which is not published until 1925, again edited by Chapman), Austen comes to be seen as problematic and as modern as are Woolf, Proust and Henry James.58 Besides her, Joyce seems to Auden ‘as innocent as grass’; Chesterton exaggerates over ‘Love and Friendship’ as one does with ‘the great burlesques of [...] Max Beerbohm’; Empson even glimpses Dostoevsky in Sense and Sensibility.59 Such paradoxical claims clash with the century-old sentimental view of a wholly respectable ladylike writer. On her death, Austen had been practically sanctified by her family. The tradition continued to as late as 1925 with an American critic, Wilbur Cross, still able to celebrate ‘the divine Jane’; in England, for some, the cult had become absurdly a religion.59

The process does reach a kind of sublime in a poem Kipling appended to his extraordinary short story ‘The Janeites’. This grimly humorous story is told from the point of view of Humberstall, a traumatized soldier. He had been the Mess steward to the kind of military unit in which Lewis himself had served. In this heavy artillery officers’s Front Line dugout, the cult of the novelist flourishes; even Humberstall is converted. The gunners escape from the inferno of war by remembering her novels. Gradually the reader discerns a narrative hidden in working-class speech, in Masonic and Army rituals. Out of this serio-comic bricolage emerges a poignant epic fragment expressively recycling distorted memories of the tyrants and their victims in Northanger Abbey, Pride and Prejudice and Emma. When a direct hit sends his companions to Kingdom Come, Humberstall is the sole survivor. Lying helpless
among the wounded, he distractedly recalls one of Austen’s garrulous ladies whose naivety shows up the know-all; this apt reference to Miss Bates attracts vital medical attention from a tough-minded yet compassionate Matron – also a Janeite.\(^6\) It will seem a far cry and an odd comparison, but in fact Kipling’s method of hidden narrative does seem to me comparable, on its much larger scale, to Jane Austen’s in her later books’, observes Joyce Tompkins, ‘such intricate, exacting work is not written without cost. Many of Kipling’s older readers could not keep pace with him.’\(^6\) These brilliant comments on ‘The Janeites’ and its reception illuminate more than just Kipling’s story. In the light of Tompkins’s reference to these two novelists’ ‘hidden narratives’ it is possible to see further links with Lewis’s own disturbing methods and the understandable difficulties of interpretation they present. Slowly comprehension dawns, the morphing of Pullman through ‘half hero’s nurse, half nursery governess’ into ‘Nurse Pullman... so hard boiled yet so kindly’, ministering to ‘her’ mentally scarred companion (C 42–52) is seen at last, as through a glass darkly, to reflect the bizarre yet truthful events recounted by Kipling. Events quite as bizarre as these certainly occurred both on the Western Front and in the Balkan Campaign. The shell-shocked were actually recommended Austen to read.\(^6\) Under fire, too, in the European theatre of war, or (shades, also, of The Childermass’s opening scene where ‘the pulse of Asia never ceases beating’) while still playing the Great Game in Tibet,\(^6\) the editors and biographers of Austen themselves had been inspired to conceive of their scholarly projects. And though aspects of the enterprise might be questioned by a contemporary journal like The Bookman, in the columns of the TLS it was as evident then as now that ‘at this time [...] Jane Austen came to represent specific qualities denoting cultural or national survival’.\(^6\)

‘The Janeites’ and its verse appendage appear in Kipling’s collection, Debits and Credits (1926). By way of contrast with the story, ‘Jane’s Marriage’ presents little difficulty. Its importance to my argument is that here (and in one of the most memorable of the reactions to Kipling’s lines) we discover the novelist and one or two of her characters in the Afterlife. For these charming lines tell of Austen’s reunion in Paradise with Captain Wentworth. However, not all readers approved. Among these skeptics was an increasingly acclaimed writer, not unknown to Lewis. His poignant 1919 portrait of Mary Webb manifests Lewis’s compassion for her disfigurement and his appreciation of her mind.\(^6\) Webb (now close to death) was provoked by the idea of Austen’s posthumous nuptials into a wicked riposte; this appeared in the widely read Bookman (February 1927). ‘Deceptively Janeite’, as Southam in his magisterial survey points out, Webb’s piece ‘soon discloses a cutting edge’:

It must be, to most of us, a keen regret that we can never meet Jane Austen, except in a problematical heaven. And what would the angels think of that trenchant wit, that ladylike Falstaffianism? For she had a kind of elfin ribaldry. Would she sit at the Celestial Banquet as she did at the Hampshire tea-parties, with a perfectly solemn face and an infinitely amused mind? There [...] would
she inaugurate with some officiating angel the kind of cat-and-mouse game which she played with Mr. Collins.²⁶⁷

If, as Hugh Haughton has suggested,⁶⁸ Carroll’s Alice is a Victorian avatar of the Austen heroine, then Webb’s witticism completes the transformation of the novelist into a recognizable Twentieth Century Intellectual. Relevant here is the startling evidence of a far from ‘gentle Jane’ which was reinforced when in 1932 Chapman published the complete edition of Austen’s letters. Some reviewers were upset; not though Lewis. In-Men without Art the novelist’s aid is enlisted in his skirmishes with Virginia Woolf (136–7). Particularly memorable is Austen’s confidence to her niece, Fanny Knight, Sunday 23 March, 1817: ‘in our ideas of Novels & Heroines; — pictures of perfection as you know make me sick & wicked’ (emphasis added).⁶⁹ This aversion lends support to Webb’s amusing vision of Austen casting an ironic gaze around the Celestial Banquet.

Remembering the essentially composite nature of Lewis’s characterization, such a disturbing impression of Austen is easily assimilated to those aspects of Joyce, Empson, and, not least to those fragments from Sense and Sensibility that have also gone to the making of Pullman. What emerges is markedly different to the relatively simple braggart and wiseacre that was the alazon of Attic comedy. That stock type, though, was only the skeleton that Lewis’s eclectic methods of characterization has been fleshing out. Pullman does display an impressive amount of arcane Biblical lore, unfortunately it is not as accurate as he thinks. To this extent he reminds us of the Dottore of Commedia dell’arte, the scholar in Renaissance who was often a rather absurd student of the occult sciences. Self-deceived, certainly, yet Pullman is hardly the tragic Dr Faustus, because, for one thing, he is not proactive enough in his dealings with the Bailiff. On occasion, moreover, he can act as a thought-provoking prosecution witness testifying as to what is wrong in this far from celestial kingdom of Third City. The resulting character, verging on novelistic subtlety, is a formidably complex satirical persona, especially in association with Mannock, who in Monstre Gaul substitutes for an increasingly buffoonish Satters as Pullman’s confidant – even down to the very tones of the ex-fag. (183)

When in the presence of the Monarch of Third City (the latter’s Persian title is an equivalent rank), the primly ladylike Pullman preserves something akin to Austen’s ‘perfectly solemn face’. In the privacy of Mannock’s flat, though, this incarnation of la trahison des clercs sneers at the White Angels, the apparently effete theocrats of a problematic heaven. Some of the criticisms that this Latter Day pedant voices are justified, some are not; the reader’s ability to distinguish is tested as Pullman holds forth to Mannock:

The archangel nicknamed by you and your friends ‘Padishah’ for me he is an athletic, perfectly ignorant, entirely unphilosophic young man. He is a big baby who does not know the ABC of life. (MG 164-5)
In this denunciation there are touches of the Marlovian humour that Empson had commended. Pullman’s investigations indicate that angelic ignorance and hatred of sexuality explain the nature of Third City. The disturbing truth about this far from Heavenly Kingdom is that what it offers is not a period of purification but a second chance to avoid the perils of sex; horrifyingly, Pullman discovers this opportunity is on offer only to men. (205–6) Women are consigned to the ‘Yennery’ (this ominous Carrollian portmanteau word combines Nunnery, Hennery and Yen – the latter, in the sense of strong desire, intense craving, lust: the term comes from the Chinese for addiction). While Third City is no Purgatory for men, for women it is a living Hell, reminiscent of Nazi death camp and Soviet Gulag, over which the corrupt Police chief, a crypto-Jesuit, has some responsibility. (206–10) To this extent, Pullman proves to be a key witness for the prosecution against the city-rulers, whose maladministration verges on the Gnostic. Yet also our doubts over the complacent Pullman increase as he continues to soliloquize to Mannock:

‘If [the Padishah] were willing to have a free conversation (such as you are ready to have with me), he would turn out to be naïf to an unbelievable degree […] Our everyday world is full of such cases as the angel […] each in his way is a perfect being, but completely stupid […] Now to be a real angel, and, just on the same principle, to be God, you must be entirely stupid. We are compelled deeply to admire such perfections […] I do not wish to be a humbug. So I will admit that only what is intelligent really interests me. Perfection repels me: it is (it must be) so colossally stupid. Here – in Third City – we are frail, puny, short-lived ridiculous but we are superior, preferable to the Immortals with whom we come in contact.’ (164–5)

In what has turned out to be less a conversation than a presumptuous and misleading lecture, Pullman shows himself to be an appalling intellectual snob. So akin is he to the ridiculous type of pedant identified by Frye as *philosophus gloriosus* (Anatomy 309) that the reader feels impelled to reconsider Pullman’s audience with the Padishah. There we notice the presence of another ghost conjured up in Mary Webb’s spoof vision: that delicious memory of Austen playing cat-and-mouse with Mr. Collins. When Pullman is introduced to the Padishah, that ‘very profoundly bored archangelic creature’ is courteous enough to mention his guest’s literary fame. The writer’s reaction is a give-away:

Pullman adopted a devout attitude, which a one-time seminarist must find instinctive. He answered, with his eyes lowered, ‘Thank you, sir. Please do not speak of my fame, there are very different matters which occupy me here’. (150–4)
In spite of his disclaimers, this disingenuous answer shows up Lewis’s sophisticated *alazon* as a humbug for it comes from someone already tempted to go over to the Enemy by the flattering Bailiff (increasingly recognizable as the head of Satan’s Fifth Column in Third City). That response suggests ‘the family resemblance’ (to borrow a useful concept from Wittgenstein) is not so much with Austen as with one of her greatest creations Mr Collins. Although Pullman (like Joyce) never entered Holy Orders, as a modern Intellectual he belongs to the New Clerisy. So the withering judgment Austen passes on Lady Catherine de Burgh’s self-serving toady gets significantly close to Lewis’s anti-hero: ‘with a very good opinion of himself, of his authority as a clergymen […] made him altogether a mixture of pride and obsequiousness, self–importance and humility’ (*Pride and Prejudice*, ch. 15). The list of Collins’s defects does more than merely allow homologous deficiencies to be identified in Pullman. The precedent whereby elements of Austen’s scheming cleric are integrated in the ‘jigsaw’ that is Pullman’s character prepares the way for Trollope’s clergymen, saints no less than sinners, to play their influential role in the expressive, if complex typology of *The Human Age*. Well ahead of many among the interpretative community in his awareness of the rhetorical possibilities in the new typologies operating in European literature, Lewis himself makes the connection (and, as is evident from the section on ‘the Pseudo-Believer’ in *Men without Art*, his friends T.S. Eliot and I.A. Richards are among those he has in his sights):

make no mistake, the, as it were, professional lay-religionist today is as busy trimming his religion to the prevailing ideologies, as was the nineteenth-century Anglican ecclesiastic (of the ‘new’ type recorded for us by Trollope, for instance) to the evolutionist avalanche. (*MWA* 177)

**VII**

For all its satire of the egalitarianism of Attlee’s Welfare State (seen as enmeshed in an apocalyptic Cold War that rapidly heats up when the threat from the forces of Supernatural Evil is devastatingly felt), Third City is basically a Trollopian City of God. First glimpsed in *The Childermass* from the Bailiff’s Camp across the river the Magnetic City (as it is there known) seemed as old as civilization, its architecture a record of Mankind’s attempts to understand the Divine, ranging from ‘a florid zoological symbolism --reptilian heads of painted wood [...] the severe crests of ziggurats’ to ‘the English church [...] built in the fifteenth century’. (8) Within its menacing walls, however, Pulley and Satters discover a more modern urban environment: though its downtown has been worked over by totalitarian architects, Pulley and Satters are in a post-Victorian metropolis with two cathedrals (one belonging to the state religion, the other Catholic). From the multiple references to Trollope in *Men without Art* (38, 48, 117-19, 137, 203) there can be no doubt of Lewis’s intimacy with the *Barsetshire Chronicles*; he had read them from beginning to end. In the 1930s Lewis had already grasped something of the continuing
relevance of these novels and the more sombre interlocking epic of the Pallisers (see especially *MWA* 118) for twentieth-century British culture in general, and how as a writer he himself could make use of them. Although when responding to a flirtatious Rebecca West, Lewis might jokingly allude to Mrs Proudie’s notorious skill as a power-broker, it was as a nightmare out of a High Anglican Apocalypse that the Bishop’s wife is recruited in Lewis’s own defence against those mealy-mouthed critics offended by his plain-speaking:

> even Trollope is much too severe for them, for he went out of his way to show ‘modernism’ disintegrating the state religion, and Mrs. Proudie is distinctly a figure of ‘venom’ and unquiet. (*MWA* 203)

The way Lewis personifies ‘venom’ in the above passage and the emphasis he lays on ‘unquiet’ suggest a revenant, the fear of which is evident in the inscription on Mrs Proudie’s grave.

This awareness of supernatural depths in the fiction of a writer usually considered as a realist has an important influence on the way Lewis will use Trollope. Mannock (now playing Eiron to Pullman’s Alazon) in life was evidently not just an English ‘toff’ (*MG* 105) but, one might say, almost a citizen of Barchester, not well instructed in theological matters but a quietly genuine Christian (112, 114). Like Trollope’s Archdeacon Grantly (*The Warden* 72) Mannock’s father was a bishop (*MG* 82, 88); but Theophilus Grantly’s arrogance and pretensions to Biblical scholarship (*The Warden* 105, 160) are as deeply suspect as Pullman’s. So is it that Mannock turns out to have a more marked resemblance to Grantly’s father-in-law, the modestly circumstance, retiring and saintly Mr Harding. The kinship between Harding and Mannock is especially evident when we find the former traduced by the bullying Press:

> ‘Read that, my dear’: and the warden, doubling up a number of the Jupiter, pointed to the peculiar article which she was to read […] *It named some sons of bishops, and grandsons of archbishops*: men great in their way, who had redeemed their disgrace in the eyes of many by the enormity of their plunder; and then having disposed of these leviathans, it descended to Mr. Harding. (*The Warden* 170)

The emphasis I have added here is to suggest once again Lewis’s keen eye for the significant detail: for he also gives to Mannock an Archbishop of Canterbury as great grand father. (*MG* 82)

Once an ‘old China hand’, Mannock of course, is far more worldly than Septimus Harding. His circle of acquaintance is that of a sophisticated metropolitan, extending beyond the habitues of café society. (*MG* 86-90) Mannock is a member of a proper gentleman’s club, the Cadogan, ‘apparently a Pall Mall Club’ (92, 94). Indeed, Pullman marvels at ‘the sublime conceit of this Carlton Club type of a Briton’ (95); he is familiar with the laws of precedence
— bishops ranking over barons. (88–9) Particularly telling, among these Trollopean echoes, are his politics: he is ‘not a Tory but a sentimental Whig’ (94); and, with what maybe a note of defiant authorial confession, he is ‘a reactionary but not a fool’ — or so Pullman defends his friend to that Demon of Progress, the Bailiff. (136) And, not least, he is capable of a fine irony reminiscent of Trollope and Austen, when he remarks at the end of Pullman’s lecture, ‘I have been entertaining an angel unawares’. (170) The dryness is almost worthy of Socrates playing the eiron in Plato’s Republic. Eventually, overcoming an earlier tendency to obtuseness, Pullman reaches the ‘point of enlightenment’ where he realizes that:

What here are archangels or disguised demons, were on Earth simply men and women like ourselves. It may be that they were angelic or diabolic. But this was not visible. (MG 265)

This apocalyptic revelation would seem to have one of its sources in Trollope’s doctrine that it ‘is ordained that all novels should have a male and female angel, and a male and female devil’. Trollope was willing to concede Mrs. Proudie ‘was not all devil’, but, like Mr Slope in the next chapter, she is ‘on the devil’s business’. (275) And, while angels are scarce on the ground, allusions to devils, satans, incubi, and imps, to such genres as the Journey to the Other World, to the Judgement Seat, Hell, and Purgatory proliferate throughout ‘the strong language’ used by Trollope’s characters and their narrator. At the opening of The Childermass Lewis relishes the mortal irony whereby his two sinners discover that, while in their past life they may never have taken such oaths seriously, now in the dismal limbo of the Bailiff’s Camp the threat or otherwise invoked by those expletives seems far from obsolete:

‘What are you doing here?’ ‘I’m damned if I know!’
They laugh. Damned if he knows if he’s damned, and damned if he cares.
So this is Heaven?
Here we are and that’s that!
And let the devil take the hindmost!
And be damned to him for God’s Ape!
God’s in his Heaven – all’s well with us! – Lullabys. (3)

A parody of unthinking public school profanities though it be, yet in its rhythms and complexity of meaning (contrary to Fredric Jameson’s assertion) Lewis’s own language escapes cliché and reaches towards the poetic, reminding us that on levels of texture as well as structure, The Human Age is, in a very real sense of the word, an epic. Perhaps, in its multiple resonances The Human Age is more deserving of that accolade than Trollope’s two great sequences.

In Monstre Gai, by building outrageously on reminiscences of Trollope’s more nuanced
mockery of the perfect ‘Whig utopia’ (Phineas Finn) and of the Church of England that ‘structure so nearly divine’ (Phineas Redux). Lewis is able to realize this problematic New Jerusalem (beloved of Socialists be they National, Soviet or Christian) and to do so in a convincingly critical way. Thus is Third City given something of the intricate, if at times absurd, concreteness, that sense of a physical place within the physical universe, that air of solidity evident in the beliefs about an After-world life of the kind that were wide spread through the United Kingdom – up until about fifty years ago.

VIII

What, though, of this Celestial Banquet, in which Mary Webb imagines Jane Austen’s participation? In the Gospels, the phrase refers to the Messianic Feast to which all the Elect are invited at the End Time. But the word has a more familiar if related significance. According to the OED, the Celestial Banquet is the Eucharist, the Lord’s Supper, Holy Communion.

Near the start of their misadventures, Pullman and Satters hear on the metropolitan shore the ‘sanctus bell’ (8), calling the faithful to partake of Holy Communion in the mysterious city across the River Styx. On the other shore in the ‘Dud Heaven’ (64) of the Bailiff’s Camp (to which this pair of anti-heroes are confined) hints of a Black Mass are dropped (94), and the Eucharist is mocked. (160) Otherwise (since full decoding of the murder and mangling of Macrob is delayed until finally we meet Satan), in the first volume of the trilogy there seem to be no meals, sacred or otherwise, actual or symbolic. Whereas in Monstre Gai (set in another problematic heaven) haute cuisine is on offer – to the select victim. For the cuisine is not as impeccable as some have thought: under what is supposed to be a citywide vegetarian regime, Pullman dines with the Bailiff on ‘a carafe of excellent wine and a bird something like a pheasant’ (177, 185: emphasis added).

The venue at which Pullman is the Bailiff’s guest is called the Hotel Phanuel. Now, Phanuel is one of the great angels of the Apocalyptic Books of Enoch and Baruch, on whose significance Lewis had long pondered. The name ‘Phanuel’ has a wide range of angelic reference; essentially Phanuel represents the hope of inheriting eternal life by means of Divine Grace. The sanctity of such a blessed Redemption, though, is subverted by that prefatory commercial term ‘Hotel’. Offering tempting (if damnably expensive) physical comforts in place of spiritual sustenance, the building’s business designation reminds the student of these matters of the name’s other, more sinister associations – with exorcism. In fact the hotel is a diabolic honey-trap. All of these should have given Pullman pause for thought. After all, he is a reputed expert on the Church Fathers (125), able to cite – if not accurately – the pertinent authorities (MG 157, 160-1), one who in the Bailiff’s Camp had witnessed the actual advent of ‘the fire bird’ that (in Isherwood’s account of his lectures) I.A. Richards had anathematized – the sacred Phoenix, traditionally an archetype of both the Incarnation and Resurrection. (C’ 136-44)

Significantly, the Patristic experts of Pullman’s day note ‘the close kinship between the
fabled Egyptian phoenix and the real golden pheasant of Asia’ (emphasis added).

In short, Pullman ought to have considered whether the bird on which he dines is not a blasphemous simulacrum, perhaps even a mock-incarnation of the Judaeo-Christian saviour in avian form. If so, has Pullman not been tempted into participating in a diabolical burlesque of ‘the Celestial Banquet’, an un-Holy Communion?

Marching his troops into Third City under a banner inscribed with the number of the Great Beast (MG 10), and himself bearing a title that mocks the idea of Redemption, the Bailiff makes little secret of the fact he is the Anti-Christ. Therefore, when forced to beat a hasty retreat from ‘this outpost of heaven’, he offers Pullman a drink that will ‘save’ him from the wrath of God, Pullman should have recognized another satanic parody of the Eucharist. In accepting the dose which will transform him body and especially soul, the words Pullman uses are ambiguous. ‘It is a case of Take Me’ (303) has for a biblical scholar, in such dire straights, the unmistakable ring of St Luke’s account of Jesus’s words at the Last Supper (Luke 23:1-38), words echoed in the Act of Communion, be it given in Roman Missal or Book of Common Prayer.

Failing to recognize that once again his chance of Salvation will be blocked, Pullman chooses to act as if he is about to undergo nothing more serious than the size-changes of Alice in Wonderland. Going way beyond the irreverence of Mary Webb’s Austen, Pullman comes to share Faustus’s (and, we should not forget, Empson’s own) disbelief in Redemption; and consequently he is then dispatched ‘through infinite space to the Prince of Darkness’.

In the Devil’s power, Pullman witnesses the most terrifying parody of the Eucharist. At which point it is imperative we remember the most influential genre among the hierarchy Lewis here deploys. As Frye remarks:

It is consistent with this that the Eucharist symbolism of the apocalyptic world [...] should have the imagery of cannibalism for its demonic parody. [...] The imagery of cannibalism usually includes, not only images of torture and mutilation, but what is technically known as sparagmos or the tearing apart of the sacrificial body, an image found in the myths of Osiris, Orpheus, and Pentheus. [...] The demonic erotic relation [...] is generally symbolized by a harlot, witch, siren, or other tantalizing female [...] The social relation is that of the mob, which is essentially human society looking for a pharmakos, and the mob is often identified with some sinister animal image such as [...] Virgil’s Fama, or its development in Spenser’s Blatant Beast. (Anatomy 148–9)

Illustrating this very point, in Malign Fiesta there occurs a truly astonishing trans-valuation of all values. Driving with Pullman through the savage landscape of Hell, Lord Sammael throws out of his car a promiscuous Frenchwoman. There she is simultaneously deflowered and devoured by devilish Satyrs. (370–3) ‘This seeming venom against sexuality might be
taken as confirming Lewis's misogyny. It confirms nothing of the kind, as John Holloway persuasively intuited, and to a certain degree Frye's encyclopedic scholarship tends to support Holloway's argument.\(^8^5\) This is about savagery, not sexuality, and it is not Lewis but the sadistic Lord Sammael who loathes women.

Earlier in Monstre Gai Pullman had realized ‘there is no such thing for a man as Beyond good and evil. That was merely the self-advertising eccentricity of the intellectual’. (203)\(^8^6\) Similarly in Malign Fiesta, Nietzsche's The Antichrist is controverted by features adapted from studies like Frazer's Golden Bough. Here, though, is re-enacted no ritual of the killing of the divine king. Before in The Childermass it was Macrob who braved death to engage with the Bailiff; now in Malign Fiesta it is the woman sinner heroically defying Sammael who becomes pharmakos or sacrificial victim.

At this stage in my argument I gratefully acknowledge Paul Edwards's reminder that in the Childermass notes Macrob (then known as Douglas) is explicitly linked with those Ancient Middle Eastern and Nordic legends which Lewis had long thought about. Reading the comparative mythological studies of his day, Lewis made the following discovery of an expressive archetype that he will turn to repeated use in The Human Age:

folio 72] “quite on the pattern of Osiris Douglas will reintegrate, or like the Valhalla dead!” (the bits of the dismembered Osiris were put together and he came to life once more whole and well).\(^8^7\)

Significantly, the association is not just with one of these gods who die and are reborn; rather, the link is with the resurrection promised to the heroic human Dead.\(^8^8\) For as a result of the appalling deaths of Macrob and Madame Carnot, another soul finds the means to take one further step towards salvation. Yet, even more than Macrob's forceful questioning of the Bailiff, it is the Frenchwoman's terrified denunciation of the pitiless Lord Sammael that ensures the problem of how one reconciles the idea of Divine Love with Divine Justice, a classical theological conundrum (with which over the decades Lewis had struggled)\(^8^9\) continues to deeply trouble the remainder of Malign Fiesta – and ultimately helps explain its author's failure to complete the projected tetra logy. This abiding problem may have been what Lewis had on his mind when concluding his advice on how his work was to be read. 'All forms of art of a permanent order are intended not only to please and to excite, believe me, Plain Reader, if you are still there [...] So undoubtedly a work of art, in the full-blooded intellectual sense, is no joke at all, but, from the "low-brow" standpoint, a rather grim affair [...] Implicit in the serious work of art will be found politics, theology, philosophy – in brief all the great intellectual departments of the human consciousness' (MWA 11)

IX

Instancing such examples as Madame Bovary, Billy Budd, Conrad's Kurz, and the hero of
Kafka’s *The Trial*, Frye’s vast scholarship and critical insight has shown how the *alazon*, *eiron* and *pharmakos* (in various mutations and refinements) are as detectable in the nineteenth-century and modern novels and plays as ever they were in the grand narratives and dramas of the Renaissance and antiquity, both classical and scriptural (since from theatrical to theological pre-figuration is no great distance). The extent to which these literary archetypes (and their resonances with both the myths of the past and contemporary politics) are deployed in *The Human Age*, however, does appear singular enough to further evoke comparisons of Lewis’s masterpiece with the medieval mystery cycles, the *Divine Comedy*, and Shakespeare’s history plays. Paradoxically, Lewis’s burlesque of Webb’s ‘Celestial Banquet’ in a set of variations on the Black Mass enables him simultaneously to give extra structure to a sequence that had been so long in gestation, and effectively (at any rate, on the theological plane of this multi-layered quasi-allegory) to question a culture that in many ways he values: ‘Christendom with all its faults and cruelties’ (as Lewis himself puts it). That is, Lewis is able both to criticize the radical defects of institutional Christianity (especially its attitude towards sex, women, homosexuals and despotism) – and also, and not least, to challenge his own Gnostic fears.

Thanks to their dramatizations on the air (largely BBC radio, vital to a writer losing his sight), broadcasts of the Alice books, the novels of Austen and Trollope (along with the rest of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Great Tradition) have attained literary apotheosis as a kind of national epic (woven of many narrative and generic strands). Given the degree to which the origins of Lewis’s masterpiece lie in film and in early exemplars of the classic serial, and the way too it provides an important bridge between the literatures of the Great War and Cold War, it is ironic that in the present climate of opinion the chance of *The Human Age* achieving classic status seems remote.

Nonetheless, Lewis’s masterpiece has not lacked advocates as well as *Advocati Diaboli*. The admiration of the Catholic Hugh Kenner was only to be expected, as also the way Richards’s initially knowledgeable and perceptive enthusiasm seems to have waned. Perhaps at long last he suspected that he too was the victim of a cat-and-mouse game. It seems clear that neither Richards nor his most outstanding student (Empson) could stomach the manner in which the truly horrific death of Madame Carnot was dramatized on radio. In any case (though at this late stage still ‘exhilarated’ by *Time and Western Man* and even confessing to a certain ‘reverence’ for its author) Empson was bound to find Lewis’s God quite as objectionable as Milton’s. By way of contrast, and altogether more surprising, is the verdict of that widely read son of a rabbi, David Daiches. Like Holloway a product of both Oxford and Cambridge, Daiches in his *Penguin Companion to Literature* (1971) rated ‘this novel sequence something unique in modern literature’.

As for later readers living in an increasingly post-Christian culture (at any rate in Europe), we may yet still be drawn by the way this modernist masterwork uses such an expressive neo-Gothic structure and so find ourselves adapting Empson’s brilliant earlier assessment of *The Wild Body*. In truth, *The Human Age* is another of those works that ‘gratify our strong and
critical curiosity about alien modes of feeling, our need for the flying buttress of sympathy with systems other than our own’.

This paper is part of a larger project entitled ‘Wyndham Lewis and Cosmic Man’. In the preparation of this particular piece, I am indebted for the kind help of Paul Edwards, C.J. Fox, Guy Hartcup, Michael Nath, Lilianne Ruf, and not least Alan Munton; also invaluable has been the aid of the staff at the London Library, and at the Carl A. Kroch Library at Cornell University, the British Film Institute, and the RNIB. An earlier version was delivered at the Wyndham Lewis: Modernity and Critique conference held at the Birmingham and Midlands Institute, Birmingham, UK in January 2008.

NOTES

3 John Haffenden, William Empson Volume I: Among the Mandarins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 109–10. Lewis would have been intrigued to note that as late as the early 1950s the membership card of this university society aptly bore the symbol of the Ancient Egyptian ankh; personal information supplied by Ben Levy.
5 Private communication.
8 Haffenden (see note 3), pp. 121–2.
9 Empson in Granta, p. 72; Lang’s Die Nibelungen figures in the Film Society programme for November 1926; Lewis’s ex-partner, Iris Barry, was a co-founder. The Childermass was conceived ‘in terms of cinema’, as Bridson notes in ‘The Making of The Human Age’, Agenda: Wyndham Lewis Special Issue 7, 3 – 8, 1 (Autumn 1969 – Winter 1970), 163; see Alan Munton, ‘From Charlie Chaplin to Bill Haley: Popular Culture and Ideology in Wyndham Lewis’, in Wyndham Lewis the Radical: Essays on Literature and Modernity, ed. Carmelo Cunchillos Jaime (Bern and Oxford UK: Peter Lang, 159–186 for Chaplin’s presence in Childermass. On Lewis’s use of Wiene’s 1919 film, see Peter L. Caracciolo,
'From Signorelli to Caligari: allusions to painting and film in *The Human Age* and its visual precursors’, in *ibid.*, pp. 137-57. The name itself of the Time Flats (and the sights, sounds and smells Pulley and Satters there encounter) evoke the atmosphere of a theatre or film studio.

10 Haffenden (see note 3), p.122. It was 4 May 1926, the second day of the General Strike, the debate was cut short so that everybody could listen to the radio, and Empson did not speak.


13 *DNB*; see also Haffenden (note 3), p.153, p. 194.


18 During 1926–7, Isherwood was a private tutor in London (Who Was Who); from Oct 1928 to March 1929, he was unhappy studying medicine at King’s College, London (DNB). In 1925 Isherwood re-encounters Auden (DNB), and Lewis made the acquaintance of Auden in the late 1920s (Meyers, p.152).

19 There is a copy of the second impression of Richards’s *Practical Criticism* (1930) among the books from Wyndham Lewis’s library held in the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, Austin, Texas.

20 The thirteenth edition (1926) of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* included an article by Einstein on ‘space-time’.

21 Lewis’s explicit interest in the creative synthesis of the formulaic and the eclectic dates back to, at least, as early as the foreword to the catalogue of his 1919 ‘Guns’ show and the apocalyptic accompanying article in the *Daily Express*; see Walter Michel and C.J. Fox, eds., *Wyndham Lewis on Art: Collected Writings 1913–1956* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1969), pp.104–8. Also Peter L. Caracciolo, ‘Ezra Pound as David and Goliath:'
The Genesis of *The Human Age*

Part I – Allusions to the Florentine Renaissance (and Samurai Art) in the Pound Portrait of 1919*, Enemy News 19* (Summer 1984), 17.


23 I.A. Richards, ‘A Talk on The Childermass’. Broadcast on the BBC Third Programme on 10 March 1952 and rpt. in Agenda: Wyndham Lewis Special Issue, p.16 (see note 9).

24 In an enlightening lecture on ‘One of the Stations of the Dead’ delivered to the re-launched Wyndham Lewis Society at the Courtauld Institute, 28 September, 2007.


26 See the letter to William Empson from I.A. Richards, 22 March 1951. Certainly Richards’s awe for Lewis’s powers is explicit, not only in his concluding words to Empson but also in a letter he sent to Lewis the same day: *Selected Letters of I.A. Richards*, pp. 126-7.


28 ‘[H]er dreams have no supernatural or magical dimension: they are part of familiar rule-bound household games (despite the label “fairy tale”, there are no fairies or supernatural powers in the Alice books, such as you find in the children’s fiction of those other religious dons, George MacDonald and C.S. Lewis)’. ‘Introduction’ to Centenary Edition of Lewis Carroll: Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass, ed. Hugh Haughton (London: Penguin 1998), p. lvii.

29 Hugh Haughton (‘Introduction’, p. xli), who points out that one of the great appeals of the Alice books is their affinity to Kafka’s *The Trial* (1925) and *The Castle* (1926).


31 In July 1929 ‘Empson removes himself to 65 Marchmont Street, London, where he lives as a freelance writer for the next two years; he is cultivated by literary figures including T.S. Eliot, Virginia Woolf, Harold Monro, and Sylvia Townsend Warner’ (Haffenden, p.xviii). Townsend Warner’s diary is cited by Haffenden, pp. 261–2.


35 Since its first appearance, readers have puzzled how to interpret The Childermass and its only slightly less complex sequels; the approaches listed in this paragraph reflect my own struggles to understand the extraordinary number of literary kinds, modes and media


On Lewis’s use of Cornford, see Peter L. Caracciolo, ‘Carnivals of Mass Murder’ at pp. 222–4 (note 35).

The scholarly essay on ‘Drama’ in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1910), which ranges widely through time and space, contains subtle comments on the development of the ‘heavy father’ and other stock types from the classical theatre through to the Renaissance stage; see Vol. VIII, 478–494, 504–5, 513. Notwithstanding the appearance of Gilbert Murray’s Hamlet and Orestes: *A Study in Traditional Types* (1914), among the younger generation of scholars and critics reacting against A.C. Bradley’s interpretation, only E.E. Stoll comes anywhere near Lewis’s revelatory syncretic method in *The Lion and the Fox*; see e.g. Stoll’s comments on the influence of folk-lore, the Machiavel and *Miles Glorius* quoted in Augustus Ralli, *A History of Shakespearian Criticism* (London: Oxford University Press, 1932), Vol. II, pp. 324, 349.

‘Jane Austen [...] the narrowness of her stage, on which English life at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries goes forward as if the French Revolution had never happened and Napoleon never been born’: Francis MacDonald Cornford, *The Origin of Attic Comedy* (London: Edward Arnold, 1914), p.198.


Eventually another version of the Father type, the *Senex Amans* or aged lover, appears in the shape of Colonel Brandon, who finally wins the younger sister’s hand.


On Lewis’s use of *The Golden Bough* and like studies, see Peter L. Caracciolo, ‘Carnivals of Mass Murder’ at pp. 208–31 (see note 35).

The topic is more fully explored in the forthcoming essay, ‘Wyndham Lewis’s Endgame: the use of Jane Austen, Mary Webb and M.R. James in *Malign Fiesta*’, by Peter L. Caracciolo.


Richard Simpson, in Southam I, 245 (see note 33.)

Meynell’s description of this ‘mistress of derision’, in Southam II, 219–22 (see note 33).

Wyndham Lewis, *The Art of Being Ruled*, ed. Reed Way Dassenbrook (1926; Santa Rosa
58 Southam I, p. 30, p. 102 (note 33).
59 W.H. Auden from ‘Letter to Lord Byron’, Letters from Iceland (1937); Chesterton in his preface to Love and Friendship (1922); William Empson, ‘Sense and Sensibility’ in Psyche XVI (1936); all three cited in Southam II, pp. 101–2, pp. 298–9 (note 33).
60 Southam II, pp. 3–12, 47, 57, 73, 101–3 (note 33).
61 See Rudyard Kipling, Debits and Credits, ed. Sandra Kemp (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987), at p. 136. S. 300 n. 13. In Time and Western Man, there is reference to another of Kipling’s glimpses of the Apocalypse: ‘The Ballad of East and West: ‘Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet, Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God’s great Judgment Seat’. To this prophecy Lewis opposes what has proved to be a more accurate vision of the future: ‘there is every sign that before long the great asiatic populations will have been turned “Westerners” […] and the factory hand of Wigan and Hanchow “meet” long before the Trump of Doom, in a way that would have been quite inconceivable to Mr. Kipling when he wrote his famous imperial ballad, with its mystical “Eastern” and “Western” duality’ (Time and Western Man, pp. 134–5). Thus does the Kiplingesque allusion help Lewis to give complexity and nuance to his argument in Time and Western Man; but it is not only ideology that links the earlier book to The Childermass – there is common to both the supernatural imagery of Doomsday.
63 ‘The Brasenose College tutor H.E. Brett-Smith, exempt from military service but employed by hospitals to grade reading matter according to a “fever-chart” for the war-wounded, prescribed Austen’s novels for the severely shell-shocked. We are back with Humberstall again’. Kathryn Sutherland, Jane Austen’s Textual Lives: From Aeschylus to Bollywood (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 53.
64 Southam II, p. 90 (note 33).
65 The editorial scholarship of Chapman was first advanced in a front-page article, ‘The Textual Criticism of English Classics’, which Chapman contributed, anonymously, to the Times Literary Supplement for 20 March 1919; the praise given to the Clarendon Edition in the TLS, and other welcoming reviews, incensed George Sampson. In The Bookman for January 1924 he protested that Jane Austen had become ‘a sedulously overpraised writer’ (Southam II,100–1); ‘On looking into Chapman’s Emma: How R.V. Chapman’s Classicists made Jane Austen into a classic’, TLS 13 January 2006, pp. 12–13.
67 Southam II, p. 103 (note 33).
68 ‘[S]he pursues her quest through a world which is as profoundly social as that of Jane Austen. [It] is as if what Harold Bloom called ‘the internalization of “the Quest Romance” [...] were rewritten as a utopian comedy of manners – a combination of Shelley’s Alastor and Jane Austen’s Pride and Prejudice’. Hugh Haughton, ‘Introduction’, p. xlvi (emphasis added).
70 The imagery of the game of cat-and-mouse, though strongly implied in the conclusion of Monstre Gai, only becomes overt when in Malign Fiesta the petrified Pullman finds himself playing against the greatest of the Fallen Angels.
71 Meyers, p. 31.
77 The Sanctus bell signals the recitation of the Eucharist Prayer; in this act of consecration of the bread and wine, Catholics (Roman and Anglo) believe the host and the contents of the chalice are transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ to be consumed in Holy Communion.
78 For more about Lewis’s reference to the Black Mass, see Peter L. Caracciolo, ‘Wyndham Lewis and Intertextuality II: Canons and the Uncanny’ at p. 45 (note 35).
84 Tellingly, though this sentence is an accurate summary of the end of Monstre Gai, these
are not (of course) Lewis’s words but the hilariously un-forgettable curse uttered by one of Trollope’s characters. “‘The traitor to domestic bliss! I know. And wherever he is, he has that false woman in his arms. Would he were here!’ And as he expressed the last wish he went through a motion with his hands and arms which seemed intended to signify that if that unfortunate young man were in the company he would pull him in pieces and double him up, and pack him close, and then despatch his remains off, through infinite space, to the Prince of Darkness’. Anthony Trollope, The Small House at Allington (1864; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), ch. 41.


86 This statement, of course, contains elements of a mea culpa; see Lewis’s admission ‘Nietzsche was, I believe, the paramount influence [on me], as was the case with so many people prior to world war I’ Rude Assignment (London: Hutchinson, [1950]), p. 120. See Michael Nath, ‘“We Are Unknown to Ourselves, We Knowers”: More Thoughts on Lewis’s “Paramount Influence”’, Wyndham Lewis the Radical, pp. 69–90 (note 9).

87 Lewis’s note continues ‘cf Reich p. 220 vol. I’.

88 In terms of Old Testament typology, Madame Caron seems related to the Forgiven Harlot, in the New Testament. Though Christ did defend the woman taken in adultery and befriend Mary Magdalene, the nearer parallel is with one of the two malefactors at the Crucifixon, the penitent thief whose rebuke of his fellow’s cynicism earns him the promise of Paradise (Luke 23:4).

89 See Edwards, 544–7.


91 ‘Now being totally blind, he had come to rely more and more on the radio to keep him in touch with the outside world’. D.G. Bridson, Agenda: Wyndham Lewis Special Issue, p. 165 (see note 9).


93 On negative reactions to this broadcast among the Lewis circle, see Paul O’Keefe, Some Sort of Genius: A Life of Wyndham Lewis (London: Pimlico, 2001), pp. 611–2; in fairness it should be remembered that in Western Europe and America during the mid-1950s little was generally known of the ‘unimaginable’ horrors of Nazi and Soviet death camps.

94 William Empson, ‘Preface’ to John Harrison’s The Reactionaries (London: Gollancz,

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