Wyndham Lewis's *The Childermass*, and National Crisis

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I

In the 1920s, Wyndham Lewis retreated into obscurity to diagnose and to recreate the world. *The Man of the World* was the envisioned instrument, a mixture of prose and fictional pieces that would reach and transform 'the few people who really matter in the affair'.[1] *The Childermass*, published in 1928, remained 'the book he set the most store by'.[2] Though it has appeared to earlier critics to be only the non-fictional works *The Art of Being Ruled* and *Time and Western Man* 'dramatized',[3] I argue instead that it is a unique and specific reaction to the crisis of the aborted General Strike in 1926, and, in a more abstract manner, to the process of economic rationalization which Lewis saw as the most direct manifestation of the time-spirit in British national self-consciousness.

Many very disciplined readers have admitted intense frustration with *The Childermass*. Hugh Kenner, a canny exegete of difficult modernist texts, has comparatively little to say about it. William H. Pritchard notes that the two sequels written in the 1950s, *Monstre Gai* and *Malign Fiesta*, 'have only the flimsiest relation with *The Childermass'*.[4] I. A. Richards lamented that 'to an agonizing

degree, we are not allowed to know what this is all about'.[5] A passage that illustrates the difficulties readers have with the text is this:

> A new voice hails him of an old friend, spanking noisily the opaque air, at his back. The maternal warmth of early life gushes unexpectedly from a mouth opened somewhere near him in the atmosphere.
>
> 'Pullman? I thought so! Well I'm damned!'
>
> The guttural cheery reports stop. A pink young mask flushed in welcome, the blue eyes engagingly dilated, comes smiling round, working from the rear uncertainly, not certain of Pullman, yet claiming him as a pink fragment of its past. Pullman reddens. The *wellimedammd* falls like a refreshing rain: his tongue, suddenly galvanic, raps out its response:
>
> 'I hope not!' The nondescript brevity of clattering morse hammers out on his palate message and counter-message, in harsh english. Eye in eye they dart and scent each other's minds, like nozzling dogs. (*C* 3)[6]

I present the following reading of the passage quoted above in order to illustrate some of the text's immediate interpretive problems, and also as a sample of its

unrelieved density. Before discussing the state of being that Lewis describes outside the gates of the Magnetic City – and the implications this has for his ideas about history and nationalism – I will describe in more detail the genre of *The Childermass* and in what meaningful sense it could be referred to as a 'novel'. The question of generic definition is important because Lewis wants to communicate ideas in the book not expressible in his earlier works on the general theme.

Pullman and Satterthwaite meet in the afterlife. Satterthwaite was Pullman's fag in school. This passage constantly uses what Kenner calls the 'documentary present tense'.[7] The first sentence quoted provides ample evidence of the tortuous Lewisian syntax, and the words 'voice hails him of an old friend' is an example of hypallage, the inversion of natural relations which Jameson notes is one of Lewis's favorite rhetorical figures.[8] The reader, already more than disconcerted, is then left with trying to picture how the air is opaque, and how 'spanking noisily' is either an intrusion into the mind of Pullman (or Satters) or a realistic description of the different properties of sound in the supernatural realm they now inhabit. The next sentence, speaking of 'maternal warmth', still describes the complicated effect that Satters's speech is having on Pullman, all considerably before the content of that speech is recorded. 'Atmosphere' again calls attention to the fact that air is present – a necessity for sound – but its perceptual discontinuities may suggest that their

sensory modalities have been transformed. Sound has become tactile and perhaps olfactory for Pullman; the warmth of breath would only gush if it were constant, and Satters utters only a few syllables.

The 'Well I'm damned', repeated as one word and emphasized in the next paragraph calls attention – somewhat ominously – to the ontological situation within which the characters find themselves, a situation of which Satters (he is mostly referred to by this shortened name) seems completely unaware. A 'pink young mask flushed in welcome' is what Pullman sees ('mask' is one of the most repeated words in *The Childermass*, occurring at least once on no fewer than twelve separate pages)[9] with the 'blue eyes engagingly dilated', another image that suggests a sexual history. Satters, who 'works from the rear uncertainly' but is 'not certain of Pullman', also is 'claiming him as a pink fragment of its past'. The pronoun 'its' instead of 'his' or 'their' suggests that Pullman (through whom this scene has become increasingly focalized) does not regard Satters as human. 'Pink fragment' is Satters' response to and recognition of Pullman's earlier use of the word, both of which acknowledge, through the feminine associations of pinkness, their earlier homosexual relationship. Homosexuality clearly preoccupies Lewis; the character Alectryon refers to it as a 'branch of the Feminist revolution' (*C* 312), perhaps indicating a shared origin with his misogyny.[10]

Pullman, before responding, ‘reddens’ in yet another embarrassment of recognition. Satters’ last words, rendered together to indicate his accent and the reification of their sound as a natural force, refreshes Pullman because the possibility that he (and Satters) are damned distracts his conscience from the disturbing memories of their sexual relationship. His tongue becomes ‘suddenly galvanic’, and it ‘raps out his response’: ‘I hope not!’ The sound of this response is likened to a telegraph, ‘clattering morse hammers out on his palate message and counter-message, in harsh English’. Luigi Galvani, as ‘an obstetrician, had good reason to be interested in muscle contractions’, and he produced the ‘first widely publicized evidence that the nerves and muscles of animals used their own electricity’.[11] When Lewis calls attention to the electrical basis of material existence in his description, he is alerting the reader to a paradox of Pullman and Satters’ existence: they have passed into the afterlife, and their corporeal forms are no longer available to them. The instantiations of their souls, however, are governed as their material bodies were; and the awkwardness with which speech is produced is a result of the relearning of these now subtly modified properties. The comparison of Pullman’s speech to a telegraph highlights a further development in the theory of materiality: not only are animal bodies electrical, but the human mind has harnessed electricity as a system of artificial communication. Within these two

paragraphs, Pullman's ontogeny recapitulates the phylogeny of electrical technology.

The final sentence of the quoted passage describes Pullman and Satters examining each other. While looking, 'they dart and scent each other's minds'. What is it that darts? Their bodies, whatever we are to think of them at this point, are obviously not moving about so quickly. And what sense is available that can scent minds? In the action of this sense, which is to be understood as olfactory only metaphorically, what is described as 'darting?' The final clause, 'like nozzling dogs', describes not so much the literal behavior of canine greeting, but rather the intense scrutiny required of each to know the other, as recognition of what passes for the body is immaterial in this shifting timescape. 'Nozzling' is better understood here as describing interlocking parts, such as the projected minds of the two characters. It is not a matter of their afterlife existence being more mechanical, but rather a reaffirmation of materiality because their minds have to relearn the machinery of their new existence.

II

Lewis wrote in a dedication to *The Revenge for Love* that *The Childermass* was not a novel.[12] In his autobiographical (a genre with which Lewis was quite

comfortable) *A Rude Assignment*, he suggested that the 'novel – if you can call it that [. . .] has no place in this survey'.[13] *The Man of the World* was to include *The Art of Being Ruled*, *The Lion and the Fox*, *Time and Western Man*, *Paleface*, *The Childermass*, and *The Apes of God*.[14] As the first four of these works are critical in orientation and the last two are fictional, the logic of Lewis's plan seems evident. It does not necessarily imply, however, that the form of *The Childermass* is itself novelistic.

The emergence of psychological realism has been an important question in the theory of the novel. Ian Watt argues that the novel 'surely attempts to portray all the varieties of human experience, and not merely those suited to one particular literary perspective'.[15] The position taken about what a novel may be traces back to the conception of its origin and the explanation offered of it. M. M. Bakhtin offers in his essays 'Epic and Novel' and 'The Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse' an argument that extends the definition of the novel much more widely than even other European commentators, whose use of the word *roman* for the genre tended to emphasize continuity with the romance tradition more than its novelty.[16] In the former essay, Bakhtin describes three distinctive features of the novel: '

> (1) its stylistic three-dimensionality, which is linked with the multi-languaged consciousness realized in the novel; (2) the radical change it effects in the temporal coordinates of the literary image; (3) the new zone opened by the novel for structuring literary images, namely, the zone of maximal contact with the present (with contemporary reality) in all its openendedness'.[17]

I shall evaluate *The Childermass'*s novelistic status with reference to Bakhtin's categories.

Bakhtin's description is diachronic; he seeks to determine what separates the novel as a genre historically from others. He also recognizes that the novel is a continuously evolving genre, and that it would be useless to compare a text written in the late 1920s with something from the Renaissance or Classical Greek era in order to determine whether it possesses the novel-property. While Bakhtin's criteria describe the emergence of the novel as a genre, they also serve as historically contingent – but determinable – evidence of whether a given text operates within the parameters of novelistic discourse.

Bakhtin distinguishes 'natural languages' from language itself as a communication system. There are different languages within the same natural language, each dependent upon the context of the utterance in order to be fully

understood between communicants. The first criterion he lists refers to what he elsewhere calls the 'essential heteroglossia' of novelistic discourse. The novel, commonly held to possess an unprecedented degree of psychological realism, is able to do so because of its increased sociological fidelity, its 'three-dimensionality'. Mere attention to social reality does not confer novelistic status, not even in Bakhtin's inclusive definition. In fact, the dominant generic classification of Lewis's novel has been 'satire', particularly 'Menippean satire'.

Northrop Frye's definition of the form, which in its 'short form [. . .] is usually a dialogue or colloquy, in which the dramatic interest is in a conflict of ideas rather than character',[18] seems particularly appropriate to *The Childermass*, as many critics have reiterated. Frye notes that a further characteristic of the Menippean satire is the 'exuberance in intellectual ways, by piling up an enormous mass of erudition about his theme or in overwhelming his pedantic targets with an avalanche of their own jargon'.[19] Alan Munton cites Frye's definition in classifying the narrative;[20] Fredric Jameson argues that the works of the post-1926 period are all 'satires';[21] Scott Klein, in his study of the affinities between Joyce and Lewis, sees a satire of Vico in particular;[22] and David Ayers accepts the definition on some levels but rejects it on others.[23] The dialogue form of the latter section of the book, and Lewis's prolific use of rare words and jargon throughout support Frye's

definition. The '*conte philosophique*', which is how the anonymous *TLS* reviewer described the book when it first appeared,[24] and which is what Maurice Shorder defines as the record of a 'process of disillusionment' caused by trying 'to apply systems to the unsystematic realities of life',[25] is a category that also would apply; texts also frequently considered *contes philosophiques* include *Candide* and *Gulliver's Travels*, which also fit Frye's definition of Menippean satire.

Elaborating upon Jameson's description of the allegorical structure of Lewis's narrative,[26] Ayers writes that the switch in Lewis's style (and in *The Childermass*) is that from a 'humanistic narrative to that of a surface world of the visual mediated [. . .] by the quasi-allegorical, in which lies the difference between Lewis's satire and the novel, Modernist or Victorian, to which it is opposed'.[27] I agree with Jameson (and Ayers) that there is a self-conscious change in Lewis's narrative style in the post-1926 works, one which, as I have noted, Lewis made explicit, but I do not accept Ayers's description of the 'Modernist or Victorian' novel as a humanistic narrative to which it is opposed. The second of Bakhtin's definitions of the novel, 'the radical change which it effects in the temporal coordinates of the literary image', is what I will use to particularize my objection to Ayers's distinction after reviewing the historical context of the General Strike.

Lewis's comment about needing a new literary form after the General Strike of 1926 is a particularly rare instance of a writer openly detailing what he perceives to be his own ideological motivations for his art, which, while no more reliable than the testimony of a writer who professes to be completely uninterested in politics, nationalism, or any of the rest, makes Lewis one of the – on the surface – most easily historicizable of writers. That Lewis seems to have aggressively resisted historicization in his theoretical writings creates a tension between stated intention and actual effect.[28] Bakhtin uses 'radical change' to describe both the historical emergence of the novel and its continued evolution. For Bakhtin, the novel must continue to advance in the interpretation of history just as history itself progresses. In fact, because of the restriction of 'temporal coordinates', it must do so. Lewis, who was concerned with his ideological impact on the 'few people who really matter in the whole affair',[29] attempts something distinct in his representation of the 'literary image'; and the earlier description of this representation as being 'visual' and 'mediated by the quasi-allegorical' captures both the formal innovation – in his representation of the time image – and the ideological – in his transformation of the political abstractions of his world into the realities of an afterlife.

The apparent rupture of the General Strike itself helped Lewis periodize the recent history of British nationalism. ‘When it comes to the practice of politics, anyone writing about his life in the years 1924-1939 must answer the critical question: ‘What did you do during the General Strike?”’[30] was Leonard Woolf’s well-known historical judgment. The remark suggests a revisionist interpretation of an event which failed to impress many of the nation’s intellectuals at the time. His wife, who was writing *To the Lighthouse* at the time, expressed interest in recording the events in her diary along with considerable displeasure at the inconvenience of it all. A book by Clive Bell, dedicated to her and inspired by the Strike, suggested that ‘far from discovering amongst them any will to civilization, I am led to suspect that the British working man likes his barbarism well enough. Only he would like a little more of it’.[31] Her husband, perhaps more politically sympathetic and aware, was astounded at the lack of guidance shown by the strikers. Some had colorful reactions to what they perceived as the Bolshevikization of the nation in the strike. Frederick Edwin Smith, the Earl of Birkenhead, was roused to ire by a protester’s threat to man barricades: ‘Barricades! You dare to talk to me about barricades! – we've beaten you with brains, and if it comes to fighting two can play at that game! Put up your barricades, and we'll slit every one of your soft white throats!’ The jeering resulting

from these remarks he dismissed as the howling of ‘wolves from Moscow’.[32] Birkenhead’s outburst was addressed to a disorderly crowd after the General Strike had ended, and the anxieties about class war and manhood should not conceal his bare declaration that the miners and allied workers’ interests were beaten by the ruling class with ‘brains’. Not only reactionary elements of British society agreed with this conclusion.

Various pressures brought to bear on British industry in general and coal in particular caused the owners to demand longer hours and lower wages from the workers to compensate. Perhaps the most important of these pressures was increased European competition, particularly after the French withdrawal from the Ruhr in 1923.[33] The weakening of the Empire and the strengthening of the United States were also significant. Trade union membership had increased dramatically after the war. There were four million members in Britain in 1914 and double that by 1920.[34] When the Baldwin government restored the gold standard in 1925, employers attempted to reduce wages, as unemployment was increasing rapidly. The miners felt this was unbearable. Serious unrest began in 1918, and increased until 1921, and then steadily decreased until the strike of 1926. The miners’ strike of 1921 was not given the expected supported by the Triple Alliance of

railwaymen, transport workers, and dockers, an event that came to be known as Black Friday.[35]

The publication of the Samuel Report on 10 March, 1926 signalled the likely beginning of the strike.[36] Appointed after the failure of the earlier Sankey Commission, which had equal representation among miners' representatives and owners, the Samuel Commission comprised Sir William Beveridge; Gen. The Hon. Sir Herbert Lawrence, GCB; Mr. Kenneth Lee; and the chairman, Herbert Samuel.[37] Far from being representatives of miners' interests, these gentlemen were former colonial administrators and financiers, several of whom had a direct financial stake in the coal industry.[38] Samuel in particular was no stranger to Royal Commissions, having been the High Commissioner of Palestine and a strong advocate of British acceptance of Zionism.[39] The Report found that no nationalization of the mining industry was necessary, contrary to the wishes of the Miners' Federation. It did, however, recommend further consolidation within the mining and closely allied industries, a proposal well suited to the financial interests which the commissioners represented. Finally, and most significantly, the report concluded that a decrease in miners' wages was unavoidable. Laybourn observes that the report was not popular. Its 'policies embarrassed the Government, offended the miners, and aggrieved the mine owners'.[40]

Why is it not possible to imagine a General Strike affecting so many workers lasting only nine days and causing no loss of life (though there was considerable violence employed against picketers by the Organization for the Maintenance of Supplies, and regular police forces) in any other industrialized country in the mid-1920s? What was it about the British nation-state that produced and adapted so readily to a potentially destructive and revolutionary moment? Why did the myth of British national character and unity so completely override what Georges Sorel saw as the myth of the general strike?[41]

This national inertia is what Lewis diagnoses in his afterlife, with its 'time flats' outside of the 'Magnetic City', which are Lewis's 'zone of maximal contact' with contemporary reality. Ayers sees the work as a dystopia in that it rejects the very structural possibility for social change present in utopian vision, and that it denies the utility of materialist and historical attempts to come to terms with the nature of existence.[42] The Menippean satire as described by Frye seeks to deflate certain local debates and arguments; in its more generalized *conte philosophique* form, it denies the ability of systematic thought to represent reality. *The Childermass* is inspired by these motives but also engages directly in a desire to instruct – not purely by negative example – by transforming the narrative space into a 'zone of maximal contact' with the present.

The value of Bakhtin's elastic definitions described above is that they call attention to progressive pressures on form caused out of necessity by changing historical circumstance and how they point to the fact that the degree of 'novelness' a given text has is proportional to the methodologies or formal effects chosen by the writer. Questions of response and contextualization are always complex, and my goal here is to reveal Lewis's attitudes towards the evolution of the British nation-state and how the narrative choices he makes reflect the filtering in his own consciousness of the collective anxieties and hopes of his fellow subjects. The evidence of the reaction of contemporary reviewers and intellectuals to the work[43] is of obvious historical relevance, especially when, as in Yeats's case, they seem to be based upon the same nationalist anxieties that motivate Lewis. The reactions of individual readers, while nearly infinitely variable, mirror the process of artistic creation – particularly the filtering process by which the individual consciousness transforms the material of history into an ordered narrative. There is a symmetry between the processes that is unique to the 'fictional' form. The previously mentioned critical view that *The Childermass* dramatizes the arguments of Lewis's two earlier philosophical and sociological works, *The Art of Being Ruled* and *Time and Western Man*, ignores Lewis's plan to conceive of the works as a *summa* and also does not question why Lewis would choose to use the

narrative form to repeat himself. Simplification for a different audience is not a satisfactory answer, as Lewis conceived of his audience as the elect.

This recognition that a different form was required to adequately represent the historical forces Lewis sought to analyze is why *The Childermass* should be thought of as a 'novel' in Bakhtin's historical sense. It certainly has the elements of satire, and Frye's definition of the Menippean genre seems especially apt. If, as Paul Edwards notes, the narrative provides 'exposure to the ways the modern states enforce ideological oppression through the 'society of the spectacle"' and that this constitutes its 'genuine resistance to totalitarianism',[44] then the specifically narrative and novelistic experience thus attained differs in degree from that of the non-narrative expositional form.

The argument that *The Childermass* only dramatizes *Time and Western Man* and *The Art of Being Ruled* derives its apparent force from not only the development of themes in the first part of the book, but also from the notably dramatic dialogue form of the second. The history of the 'realist' novel contains few examples of the narrative form being broken up into a long play-form such as this, though interspersed elements are more common; the 'Circe' episode of *Ulysses* is a frequently-noticed instance.[45] The change in narrative form may simply arise from expediency, as dialogue is most easily written this way; and

dialogue does begin to predominate. I will now discuss how the transitional scenes between the earlier narrative and the dialogue show that Lewis is beginning to engage issues that transcend those offered in the previous texts.

III

Satters first mentions the Bailiff, often taken to be the spokesperson for everything in the 'Time Cult' and modern politics in general that Lewis detests, early in the narrative, just after the first encounter between Satters and Pullman:

> 'Most! I told the old Bailiff off. He must have thought – He didn't seem to mind though as a matter of fact. It seemed rather to amuse him'.
>
> At the word *Bailiff* Pulley withdraws into a hypnotic fixity of expression, as if something precise for him alone had been mentioned under an unexpected enigma. (*C* 5)

The Bailiff is not mentioned again for nearly forty pages (44), and Pullman's reaction to the name signals the affinity he feels towards him. The Bailiff – now more real in Pullman's consciousness, despite this realization not having been recounted in the narrative – is next mentioned in the discussion of the 'Bailiff's Paper', a survey apparently given to each new arrival.

The two questions that puzzle Satters in the survey are ‘have you been inclined to say – There is no Judgment and there is no Judge? What is your opinion at present on this point? Is or is not?’ and ‘state whether in life you were Polytheist, Pantheist, Atheist, Agnostic, Theist, or Deist’. (45) Pullman advises Satters to answer with certainty ‘is’ and ‘none of these’ to the questions; this is another indication of his familiarity with the Bailiff. Satters begins to wonder at Pullman’s change of identity:

> Satters looks at Pulley, camped sphinx-like in front of him, with suspicion. This spaewife he has met is not the old Pulley. Not the Pulley he first supposed he was with. He has been deceived. It is Pulley, good old Pulley, and it isn’t. At the start it was. (45–46)

‘Spaewife’ suggests that not only has Pullman, through his identification with the Bailiff, achieved seer-like powers, but also that he has become feminine as a consequence. When Satters next reads the questionnaire, ‘whether you bring with you any subversive designs upon the celestial state. If so, of what nature are those designs’, the answer is ‘“put that down, then,” rattles Miss Pulley, as quick as thought’ (48). Whether this is an instance of focalization on Satters’ perceptions or a more general narrative comment is difficult to determine (Lewis’s narrative techniques present special challenges to many narratological concepts.) For Lewis,

the feminine is regarded as a sign of weakness, malevolence, and decay, which are also all qualities associated with the Bailiff.

Pullman goes on to clarify some of the Bailiff's characteristics for Satters:

> 'The Bailiff encourages jokes', mildly expansive, he proceeds, warming to this congenial instruction. 'If you want to get into his good books you will find that that's the way. He's really not so black as he's painted. Haven't you ever gone down there and listened to him? I mean for a whole morning, say? When I feel a bit under the weather I go there. He cheers me up remarkably. I was very surprised at first to find – you can hardly expect to find a sense of humor in such a person. He really can be extremely entertaining at times. He says himself that people come there as if he were a music hall'. Pulley indicates the paper with his stick. 'That particular question he expects you to take as a joke. He put it on account of that faction – you know that sort of bolshie crowd that lives in an enclosure away from the rest'. (48)

This is the first mention of the Hyperideans, the 'classical' faction that is often taken to represent both Fascism and Lewis's endorsement of its creative force as a counterweight to the Bailiff. Pullman's reference to them as a 'sort of bolshie

crowd' is ironic. Readers are confronted by Lewis's experiments with time in the narrative. Pullman has grown into these memories through the development of his self; he is becoming a representative not of a character but of an ideology. The figure of the Bailiff, not yet met or described, draws Pullman to him through his narrative gravity.

After an interlude in which Satters' increasing frustration with Pullman is enacted in a sadomasochistic fantasy, Pullman diagnoses what has happened to him as hysteria and again invokes the Bailiff's authority to support his conclusions. (61) As Hugh Gordon Porteus observes,

> The mind, it would seem, is able to impose its own image on the frailest actual point. The whole process of vision is half-composed of such self-trickery. The imagination plays a very considerable part in the act of seeing. Such deceptions occur everywhere in ordinary life, just as they are the basis of modern 'conjuring', and of much that passes for genuine magic. In *The Childermass* Mr. Lewis makes a very interesting use of the phenomenon: the characters create imaginatively out of the substance of their own needs and appetencies, all the furniture of their existence, changing it as their changing minds dictate.[46]

Satters fails to understand the constructed nature of the afterlife that Porteus describes above, but there is also more to it than Pullman realizes. Satters next reveals that he has only been there for ten days, about which Pullman is sceptical. Pullman reminds him that, according to the Bailiff, Satters shouldn't be alarmed that his reason is going, because he doesn't have any. A bit later, Satters admits his fear of the Bailiff, to which Pullman responds

> 'You're not the first person to say that. He's the best-hated man anywhere I should say – in this world or out of it. I don't agree with you that's all – I like the beggar!'
>
> 'I know I can see that you do, there must be some good in him I have no *reason*: he just terrifies me'.
>
> 'Lots of people say that. I don't experience anything like that at all I can say no more'.
>
> 'Who is he has he ever lived?'
>
> 'How can anybody say: some say he is Jacobus del Rio some a Prince of Exile. I have heard him called Trimalchio Loki Herod Karaguez Satan, even some madman said Jesus, there is no knowing what he is. I believe he's just what you see, himself, he is the Bailiff,

> simply, I don't understand the insistence on something factitive behind him or why he is not accepted as he is'. (66)

This is an interesting list of names for the Bailiff to be called. Jacobus del Rio was an abbot in Ghent during the Thirty Years' War, but *Martín* del Río was a well known Renaissance demonologist. Karaguez is a trickster-figure from Turkish folklore. Herod's slaughter of the innocents – 'then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men' (Matthew 2:16) – was commemorated as the 'childermas' and celebrated on 28 December.

The other figures are well known, though the inclusion of Trimalchio from Petronius's *Satyricon* seems to be a metacommentary on Lewis's chosen genre. Pullman's insistence that the Bailiff has nothing 'factitive' behind him suggests that Satters was attempting to analogize him to something from his memory. For Pullman, the Bailiff is a representation of force – in particular an ideological force, and his understanding of the Bailiff suggests that he is an aspect of this force. Satters' narrative function is increasingly becoming that of the naive outsider

common in speculative fiction: his constant questions about the world around him allow Lewis both to give exposition and maintain a narrative sequence.

Pullman and Satters now decide that they should see the Bailiff and his court, and begin the necessary journey (74). An important interlude on the way involves their transposition into what seems to be a seventeenth-century landscape painting, which David Ayers refers to as the 'most brilliant in a series of bizarre incidents'.[47] Lisa Siraganian suggests that Lewis's description of this landscape scene underscores his insistence that the spectator makes no contribution to the work of art, a theory that she argues Gertrude Stein also held in a fashion.[48] The persistent construction of their essence is being tested and refined, as Pullman uses this incident to describe his theory of their present existence, one which he says he learned after he got the 'Bailiff-habit' (93). He then tells Satters that he has learned from the Bailiff that they are at present only the memories of what they once were, and that they have to develop a 'method' in order to come to terms with this. Their journey to the Bailiff's court involves a recognition of the extreme relativity of their present surroundings; they move back and forth in perceived time by travelling through the 'magnetic time flats'.

The entry to the 'Yang Gate' and the Bailiff's court effects a shift in the narrative focus to a long description of the Bailiff's entrance (123). It is no longer

clear who is seeing the Bailiff, as Pullman and Satters now become participants who merge with the rest of the court. A roving camera occasionally focuses on Pullman and Satters in the audience as first one appellant is dealt with, then another. The beginning of the shift in narrative occurs with the entrance of Hyperides. The Bailiff has been explaining the coextensive nature of space-time to the 'Carnegie batch' when he is interrupted by 'a voice so deep that it seems to fill the air with some thickening oil as it rolls out, begins tolling: a shudder of scandal at its alien contact shakes the assembly' (149). Hyperides's voice, which claims that the Bailiff speaks only of 'time', is 'a hail from a contrary pole'. The Bailiff and Hyperides are 'the oldest opposites in the universe, they eye each other: all this has been enacted before countless times, on unnumbered occasions all these things that they are now about to say have been uttered, under every conceivable circumstance' (150).

At this point, the narrative becomes a dialogue and remains so, with interpolated descriptive sequences, until the end. Satters functions throughout as the naive character who needs things explained to him by the wiser Pullman, but his naïveté also allows Lewis to show his deep skepticism of all that Pullman – and the Bailiff – appear to stand for. Satters' slow realizations after listening to Hyperides are meant to recapitulate the progress towards understanding of Lewis's

imagined reader. Satters is our guide to this underworld, for he is most like us in his lack of awareness. Having brought Satters (and us) to a basic glimpse of reality, and suggesting a growing skepticism towards his own putative guide, Pullman, Lewis now leaves the audience passive before the Bailiff's court. Because of the narrative form, however, there is always difficulty in determining which voices should be identified with the attitudes of the author. Though it seems that Hyperides will clearly outline the arguments Lewis made in his earlier critical works, the narrative form's constant questioning of meaning mirrors the ambiguities of reading. I thus argue that the novelistic form of *The Childermass* is itself a comment on Lewis's theories of history and time, a dialectical and self-critical artistic exploration.

IV

Lewis prefaces *Time and Western Man* with an appeal to the 'general reader' (*TWM* xi). This preface is, even by Lewis's standards, an extraordinary document. He argues that

> Everyday life is too much affected by the speculative activities that are renewing and transvaluing our world, for it to be able to survive in ignorance of those speculations. So everyone, I think, in one degree or

> another, has this alternative. Either he must be prepared to sink to the level of chronic tutelage and slavery, dependent for all he is to live by upon a world of ideas, and its manipulators, about which he knows nothing: or he must get hold as best he can of the abstract principles involved in the very 'intellectual' machinery set up to control and change him. (xi)

What he seeks to do in the book is clearly the latter, and the uniform contempt with which he regards the very idea of a mass audience is manifest here in his appeal to it. You, reader, must try as best as you are able, which is not terribly so, in order to understand what I am presenting to you; for otherwise you will continue to be manipulated by ideas you will never grasp. At least the reader's initial impression is thus, but it turns out that the argument of *Time and Western Man* is much more subtle, even the opposite of what it first appears. As Paul Edwards has shown in the afterword to his edition of the text, the 'great dilemma of Lewis's thought about the personality' is how the 'sacred prostitute' of the artist can remain uncontaminated by the 'alien realities' of ideology. Edwards believes that Lewis's proposed solution to this problem in *Time and Western Man* is a simplistic form of mysticism, an 'Upanishadic belief that one cannot go behind oneself, as it were, and 'know the knower of the known.'"[49] I believe that in *The Childermass* Lewis

has engaged the problems of contextualization, history, and the artist's representation of it in a way that goes beyond the arguments presented in the critical texts, and to detail these changes, I will first analyze the presentation of history, time, and ideology offered in *Time and Western Man* and *The Art of Being Ruled*.

Lewis's theory of the artist is dependent upon the artist being able to see things as they are. The various time-philosophers – a category that he never defines rigorously – seek to deny the ability of the mind to perceive reality in itself. If human cognitive abilities are themselves subject to change over time – rather than the sensory data they perceive – then the ability of the artist or anyone else to penetrate the veil of historical conditions would be nonexistent. Lewis sees most of the time-philosophers (and their artistic incarnations) as fighting a philosophical battle with Kant.[50] There are apparent connections between what might be called Lewis's rationalist epistemological leanings, and the later development of cognitive science as a research program. One of the founding documents of that discipline, Noam Chomsky's 1959 'A Review of B.F. Skinner's *Verbal Behavior*', would have been appreciated by the fiercely anti-behaviourist Lewis.[51] Daniel Schenker notes that 'as an artist, Lewis claimed to have no interest in either power or action; he was instead a detached (though not disinterested) observer, a veritable

scientist of culture. Like a theoretical physicist observing the fall of an apple, Lewis deduced the laws behind the exercise of power that went beyond the conclusions of empirical study'.[52] At first glance, Lewis would seem to endorse a radically anti-historicist view of artistic production. The idea that an artist is inextricable from his historical circumstance motivates his polemic; and, if this is what is meant by historicism, Lewis is definitely opposed: 'in stepping directly into the world of art we shall fall upon a great deal of politics, too, as elsewhere, or the reflection of politics. To attempt to get rid of these politics, or shadow politics, is one of my reasons for undertaking this difficult analysis' (*TWM* 23). At the same time, however, Lewis is working out a more complex, dialectical view of the relation of the artist to historical circumstance, a view which is more clearly articulated in the following draft passage from *The Childermass*:

> Every theory whatever means dialectical [words indecipherable] another & every technical invention even, must be regarded as the *invention* of certain types of mind. Every thing that offers, directly or indirectly, a picture of the universe or suggest implies [*sic*] or otherwise necessitates a certain response to it, its author must be *personally* responsible for; or it must at least be interpreted as an experience of that type of mind to which it belongs. There is no

> possible exception to this. Even an inventor of motor-car bodies or engines *sees* the world driving about in motor-cars to *start with* hopes[?] he invents or wants to ride about himself. Ruskin, even had he been a mechanical genius, would not have been interested in locomotives. Or if you like, he was not a mechanical genius because he was not interested in locomotives. All beauty, all ideas are the expression of a particular need. Their acceptance & popularization in no way depends upon their general desire for what they imply – generally the contrary – but on the will of the people who at the moment are the real powers in the community.[53]

Part of the reason Jameson devoted a book-length study to Lewis is that he found him the most radical of the modernist writers *malgré lui*, and passages such as this offer evidence to support his claim. What Lewis sees as the 'great man' theory of history, the ability of the true artist to be able to see through the time-veil of ideology, is a permutation of a dialectical theory of cultural production: ideas result through need, and their acceptance is determined by the power-relations within a particular community. In art, as in everything else, Lewis writes, 'the revolutionary impulse comes from the strongest individual' (*TWM* 26). 'Strongest' here is not to be interpreted in the sub-Nietzschean sense which the term seems to suggest, but

instead should be read in light of the passage quoted above: strength is defined as expressive capacity. The artist does not statically transform the material of life and history, but instead is continually influenced by the commercial pressures of production. To give in to the relativism which seeks merely to represent rather than to transform – or which naively seeks to transform existing society by the influence of the representation without realizing the much stronger transformative pressure exhibited by society on that which seeks to transform it – is part of what Lewis was criticizing Joyce, Pound, and Stein for in *Time and Western Man*'s first section, 'The Revolutionary Simpleton'.

E.W.F. Tomlin notes that the 'Punch and Judy' booth of the Bailiff is decorated with a Maha-Yuga symbol, which in Vedanta doctrine signifies the complete cycle of history.[54] As the sections in *Time and Western Man* and many separate passages in *The Childermass* show, one of Lewis's many preoccupations was Joyce's *Work in Progress*, which he spends much time satirizing.[55] The primary object of Lewis's ire was what Lewis perceived to be Joyce's attitude towards history (and thus time), particularly his appropriation of Vico in the work that would become *Finnegans Wake*. Peter L. Caracciolo points out that one of Lewis's motivations for expanding *The Childermass* was the appearance of Joyce's work in *transition*.[56] Lewis's idea of the 'revolutionary simpleton' was one who

‘accepts the eternal recurrence, implicit, according to Lewis, in General Relativity, or the “homology principle” espoused by Spengler and Ezra Pound’.[57] A narrative exposition of Lewis’s argument about how the cyclical view of history imprisons time comes as Satters and Pullman are making their way to the Bailiff’s court.

Suddenly, instead of the alien and desert landscape outside of the Magnetic City, ‘there is a wide view stretching as far as the eye can reach across flattish country. It is bounded by rain-clouds, they block the horizon. Then, there is snow’. (*C* 82) Satters suggests that ‘it’s like a picture’, to which Pullman testily agrees before noting that ‘this is nothing. This will not detain us long – though it’s a bore – It is a large-scale hallucination’. The ‘time-hallucination’, as he subsequently clarifies it for Satters, is something Pullman has encountered before and recommends that they must walk *through*, not around. The time-sink is ‘musty’ and ‘like a damp vault’. (84) As they continue to walk inside the landscape painting, as it comes to resemble, they find that they are being observed by some upper-class figures – not the peons they saw from their previous vantage point – standing where they once stood at the entrance to the time sink. The entrance is now raised into a veranda enclosed by an iron railing. Satters realizes that they are somehow in England, to which Pullman responds that ‘it’s supposed to be, no doubt’. The intentionality of this supposing is unclear. As they proceed across the landscape,

they see and hail a ploughman and his horse. Both are immobile, flesh-like, though not of the same substance of Satters and Pullman. The ploughman is described as having features that 'are in the frowning sleep of an occupation that requires no consciousness above the animal' (85), and a 'painful lethargy' takes over Satters' limbs as he stands and contemplates the scene.

The lethargy afflicting Satters does not seem to affect Pullman, and he says that it is an effect of an 'auto-suggestion', being 'the opposite of insomnia'. (86) This 'fear-complex' that Pullman describes is a manifestation of his own anxiety about the relationship of the present to history and the mediating effect of time between them. Satters' next remarks upon the emptiness of the area, telling Pullman that his 'voices sounds awfully far away' (87). Pullman 'glanc[es] with contempt at the naughty lying alter-ego detected within Satters to whom he is signaling peremptorily that the game is up'. Pullman then asks Satters if he sounds as if he is speaking within a jug, and Satters answers that he does not. The next line is: 'that's another one for the untruthful child within who at last takes the hint'. The focalization of this line is on Pullman's consciousness, and the syntax helps explain something of what is happening here. Why is Satters described as an 'untruthful child'? What does the phrase itself mean? An untruthful child is not particularly ill-equipped to take a hint about something, unless the implication is that the child is

being disingenuous. The ‘naughty lying alter-ego’ of Satters is far different than his preceding characterization as a simple buffoon, and it is not an accident that this greater malice and awareness come as they have entered the time-sink. Is it only idiom that compels Lewis to write ‘within who at last takes the hint’ instead of ‘who at last takes the hint’? The ‘untruthful child within who’ refers to the segmentation and regression of Satters’ ego reflected in the temporal projection of the ‘Old England’ they have found themselves within.

Pullman officially recognizes this shortly thereafter, as he exclaims ‘the emphasis is on the *Old*!’ in response to Satters’ announcement that ‘this is Old England we’re in’. (87) Pullman refuses Satters’ commonsensical spatial explanation of where they are – a bubble or contained space they are moving through – because he believes the true nature of the area is that it is a temporal location through which they travel psychologically. It is the relation of their minds to history that provides their sense of movement, and this is not contained by exterior space. As they further encounter a cottage with a couple, she in ‘quilted petticoat and arch rustic bonnet’ and he ‘in gaiters’ (88), Pullman attempts to determine the exact era, noting that ‘it’s quite likely. Late Seventeenth Century. Several things seem to indicate it!’ When Satters expresses his unease at moving through the timescape, Pullman answers ‘when you say you feel you’re trespassing

it's some infantile fixation, I suppose. It's the *out-of-bounds* feeling don't you know – it refers to a time when you were caught stealing apples, I expect. You feel the farmer's in ambush somewhere behind the hedge!' (89) Pullman believes that the process of time-travel thus described is primarily historical through the boundaries of the individual consciousness, and the primitivism of the landscape recapitulates the development of the individual psychology. Pullman also recognizes these impulses from the ego, but he is able to resist them in a way, he implies, that Satters cannot.

Pullman, after noting again that 'the air of Old England suits me – I should say the Old English air', informs Satters that he was 'evidently built for Time-travel' (90). He is 'in his element, that's what it amounts to. It's most unexpected'. Pullman, as an avatar of a Lewis's version of Joyce and of the Time-cult in general, 'consciously develops his glee':

> I know now what it is, one thing about myself I've got wise to that's puzzled me quite a lot from time to time and I'm glad to be privy to. I like other dimensions! That, I'm afraid, has to be taken as proven it's strange, isn't it? I feel as much at home as possible in all this it's childish, I feel ridiculously at home! I could howl for joy – *why*, I haven't the least idea. (91)

Pullman's ecstasy increases until he feels that 'this two-hundred-year-old air is like an ancient vintage. I feel positively screwed. It is the identical nephalios methe – the drunkenness that is abstemious I've caught it'. 'Nephalios methe' means a measure without wine; 'nephalios' is used in several places in the New Testament to denote sobriety. Lewis seems to imply that the desiccation of time has, by deprivation, rendered Pullman ecstatic, whereas it is only having a nepenthean effect on Satters, a non time-man. An early reviewer, J. D. Beresford, noted that the 'adventurers are liable to step into other time systems in which they may encounter the appearance of frozen altitudes', and he relies on an essentially spatial metaphor to describe what is a temporal and psychological process. Only Pullman is immune to the effects of the 'frozen altitudes' because of his own degree of immersion in the time-sick present. Beresford also believes that *The Childermass* presents 'evidence of greater art than *Ulysses*',[58] an opinion not widely shared.

The problem of what might be called 'conceptual anachronism' is addressed by Lewis throughout *The Childermass* and in microcosm in this section. Pullman's caricature of Joyce fades in and out due to authorial expediency, and Lewis exaggerates it towards the middle of the time-sink episode. 'I consider *the father* a side-show a mere bagatelle – they are like the reason, overrated and not essential at all, that is the fathers – the male at all if it comes to that' (*C* 92) is a deliberately

obtuse parody of ‘paternity may be a legal fiction’ and Stephen’s other meditations on the subject from *Ulysses*.[59] Joyce’s Viconian explorations being published in *transition*, were, as I have noted, a source of anxiety for Lewis; and the interrelationship of cyclical history, anachronism, and historical process are all addressed in both the narrative technique of this scene and in its dialogue.

Vico’s theory of history was part of what Srivinas Aravamudan has called a ‘taxonomy of anachronism [that] came on the heel of a sophisticated historicism that investigated errors associated with chronology’.[60] ‘Anachronism’, particularly the ‘conceptual anachronism’ diagnosed by Herbert Butterfield in *The Whig Interpretation of History*, is an inextricable feature of the time-cult practiced by Joyce, as Pullman’s comfort with the illusion of the past into which he and Satters have entered reflects. For Butterfield,

> It is nothing less than the whole of the past, with its complexity of movement, its entanglement of issues, and its intricate interactions, which produced the whole of the complex present; and this, which is itself an assumption and not a conclusion of historical study, is the only safe piece of causation that a historian can put his hand upon, the only thing he can positively assert about the relationship between past and present.[61]

Pullman's comments indicate that the personality can be transported to the past, that the past can be recreated out of assumptions derived from the present in sufficient detail to be able to generalize about conditions in the present, a type of historical thinking that Lewis regards as an instrument of control. Lewis believes that the past is available – that historical truth is available – to those who seek it, and that the idea that the present must always contaminate historical observations is a source of grave error. Outlining how such historical truth may be revealed is quite difficult, and I think the narrative argument of *The Childermass* presents several examples of Lewis working through this problem in ways that expand upon the previous arguments in *Time and Western Man*. The key problem for Lewis's version of historicism is that of the nation and national consciousness, and this is most directly addressed in the second section of the novel, which is a long dialogue between the Bailiff and various interlocutors.

V

Lewis's most detailed exposition of the relation of nationalism to literature and consciousness occurs in *Time and Western Man*, and I will review his account before analyzing its transformations in *The Childermass*. Lewis argues that Joyce has 'the most studied contempt for his compatriots – individually and in the mass –

whom he did not regard at all as exceptionally brilliant and sympathetic creatures (in a green historical costume, with a fairy hovering near), but as average human cattle with an irish accent instead of a scotch or welsh'. (*TWM* 77) He states that Joyce was indifferent – even hostile – to nationalism but not adverse to nationalist interest in his works and the political positions (or lack of them) to be found there. Joyce's perceived indifference to nationalism and the problems it represents was disturbing for Lewis: 'What makes the question [of nationalism] of capital importance is the problem set throughout the world today by the contradiction involved in (1) a universal promotion of "nationalism," which seems to take, even in great cosmopolitan states, an ever more intolerant form, and (2) the disappearance of national consequences altogether as a consequence of technical progress'. (77) Lewis's criticism of Joyce here was not widely shared by subsequent critical work. The primary curse of modernity for Lewis is that while people have become ever more similar, they have '*ideologically* grown more separatist, and conscious of 'nationality"'. (78) The notion of 'technical progress' as being responsible for the eradication of individuating aspects of nationality – those which Lewis approves of for various reasons – may provide some of the representational impetus for *The Childermass*'s mimetic sympathies towards

cinema and radio. Marshall McLuhan noted that the book 'is concerned precisely with accelerated media change as a kind of massacre of the innocents'.[62]

Lewis argues that 'the time-fanaticism is in some way connected with the nationalisms and regionalisms which are politically so much in evidence, and so intensively cultivated seems certain – since 'time' is also to some extent a region, or it can be regarded in that light'. (83) As I have outlined, the 'time-sink' represents time as a region. The connections between 'time-fanaticism' and nationalism that Lewis adduces are presented as being a logical consequence of the inevitable situatedness of the 'time-mind', to which Lewis offers an oppositional 'non-nationalist, universal mind (whose politics would be goethean, we can say, to place them, and whose highest tolerance would approximate to that best seen in the classical chinese intelligence)'. (83) Lewis has sympathy for Confucian authoritarianism, and he later criticizes Oswald Spengler for wanting to make 'Buddha swallow his words, and Confucius learn to play the ukulele'. (223) Despite having such authoritarian sympathies, Lewis's doubts about the manipulative tendencies of contemporary democracies and his belief in the power of human reason to determine truth place him within the anarchist tradition of political thought. Alan Munton states that Lewis's prime objection to capitalist democracy was that it 'countenanced the politicization of art and thought',[63] and an

often-remarked tendency of fascism – a political tendency that much excited Lewis – is to aestheticize politics. Munton further argues that there is a difference between the politics of Lewis's prose works and those of his fiction;[64] and the narrative form heightens Lewis's contradictions, an effect I will explore in the long dialogue with and characterization of Lewis's nemesis-figure, the Bailiff.

The Bailiff's appearance and first comments heavily emphasize his hieratic nature and Oriental appearance, facts from which some commentators have plausibly inferred an anti-Semitic bias.[65] Immediately a retinue of Cockney clowns and harlequins attends the Bailiff's court, their speech rendered phonetically.[66] There are a number of important incidents immediately prior to the entrance of the Hyperideans, which signal both the transformation into a dialogue-form and the beginnings of the overt philosophical debate within the text. The Bailiff, addressing some recent dead who claim allegiance to Andrew Carnegie, elaborates upon an anatomical metaphor of the area outside the Magnetic City, saying that the dead are in a predigestive state and that the Yang Gate is round because it symbolizes the anus through which they may pass. The assembled crowd is subject to a mass hallucination, cinematic in its form if stronger in intensity. They see a large bird circling the arena, which first appears as two because it has something in its beak. (*C* 136) As the bird lands, 'two ponderous sounds enter the atmosphere along with

the image. They are Bab and Lun, of the continuous Babber'ln. The tumultuous name of the first giant metropolis echoes in the brains of the lookers-on. Heavily and remotely its syllables thud in the crowd-mind, out of its arcanum – the *Lon* as the lumbering segment of the name of another nebulous city, and the mysterious pap of *Bab* that is the infant food of Babel'. (*C* 136–37) Peter L. Caracciolo refers to this as 'mock-Joycean paronomasia',[67] which accurately describes Lewis's specious etymologizing of 'Babylon' but does not consider his reasons for wanting to separate the Hebraic 'Babel' from the Greek and Latinate version of the word, which is likely a consequence of the anti-semitic portrayal of the Bailiff and the time-cult. Lewis incorporated, as Caracciolo has shown, a large amount of the prolific turn-of-the-century archaeological scholarship surrounding Babylonian fertility cults into *The Childermass*; and he seeks to associate the Hyperideans with what might be termed, following the Arnoldian analogy, the Hellenic aspect of the Magnetic City: 'the Jews of the lamentation should be somewhere upon the plain of the eclipse, gazing with passionate envy from their latifundia upon this splendour, willing a jewish Babel, stirred up by their prophets, like an infant ravening for the moon'. (137)

Nicholas Brown calls attention to Pullman as 'sum of the social roles he plays, a "bobbin" in a set of "group mechanism[s]."'[68] As Brown goes on to note,

the Bailiff elaborates upon what might be called the economic logic of rationalization, a key aspect of the time-cult:

> Those who can combine should do so – that is the rule: it saves times. Also such combinations ensure the maximum effect of reality – I have known cases of man being completely restored to his true and essential identity after meeting an old friend it's most valuable it's the tip we always give the new-comer, dig out the old pal there's nothing like it. (*C* 137)

The term 'rationalization' was adopted by labor interests in their demands upon industry, as they had realized that nationalization was no longer even a possibility. But what was the actual content of 'rationalization' as it applied to industry? 'Once created, industries do not, like any organism, die without a struggle' wrote one of the participants in the Mond-Turner talks, which led to the new economic cooperation in Britain, in a paper devoted to the subject of international cartels.[69] Rationalization of industry was a reaction to the crises of world capitalism and was an attempt to insulate businesses from risk through more scientific methods. Its spiritual father was Frederick Taylor, whose micromanagement of employees at a factory enabled what seemed to be miraculous gains in productivity over short time-periods, although the long-term effects on employees of Taylor's system were

often disastrous. His rhetoric about his motivation was forward-looking: 'scientific management, on the contrary, has for its very foundation the firm conviction that the true interests of [employers and employees] are one and the same; that prosperity for the employer cannot exist through a long term of years unless it is accompanied by prosperity for the employé and vice versa; and that it is possible to give the workman what he most wants – high wages – and the employer what he wants – a low labor cost – for his manufactures'.[70] The word 'rationalization' thus came to be used by both labour representatives and business to represent their basic goals and anxieties about the changing nature of the British nation-state.

Impatience with the term was already apparent in 1927, just a year after it was granted official recognition in its economic sense by the *OED* (though it seems to have been used earlier than that). Writing about the international Steel Cartel, D.H. MacGregor observes that it was a form of agreement between Germany and her former enemies and that the secret negotiations and agreements which led to its formation were justified by the term 'rationalization' and that 'the iteration of this term has become tiresome'.[71] One of the volumes he reviews notes with resentment this '*lourd neologism importé par l'Allemand*'.[72] Among rationalization's many purported benefits, none was more directly related to the tensions of British nationality than 'the non-destructive elimination of the weak'.[73] The conventional

view of the actual motivation for rationalization was that it was an attempt to socialize risk while maintaining private control of profit. But the crucial point about the public attitude towards rationalization is that 'Democracy likes at any rate to think that it understands how it is governed'.[74] The tangled web of interrelated interests which characterized the rapidly advancing capitalist organizational system had to develop a myth with which to explain and justify itself to the public whose complicity its existence demanded.

Charles Maier describes the promise of rationalization and why it was, mysteriously, accepted by the labour movement as a necessary reform, an escape from the zero-sum conflict between labour and management. Its rhetoric of optimality had a utopian dimension.[75] In actuality, however, it and other vogues of scientific management were used by business interests to profit from the productive but oversaturated labor market of the late 1920s.[76] The competing interests that were managed in the three major British political parties at the end of the 1920s each expressed itself in three distinct ways. The Conservative party, with Joynson-Hicks as the main ideologue, favored an expansion of the *imperium* combined with strict protectionism to force open markets for British produce. The Labour party advocated widespread nationalization, and the Liberal party began to offer various 'loan-financed public works'.[77] The Liberals thought that this tactic

was compatible with free-trade at the time, as did Labour in their proposals. Only the Conservatives consistently rejected free trade as a matter of principle during the era. Both the Labour and Liberal parties had promoted rationalization as an economic principle, while the Conservatives had soundly rejected it in spite of the fact that 'by 1900, finance had replaced landowning as the most important business interest of Conservative and Unionist MPs'.[78] Though it is a mistake to consider rationalization in the managerial and economic sense to be directly correlated with rationality of thought in general, there is consistency between the decidedly irrational appeals to tradition, prejudice, and patriotism that the Conservatives made and their rejection of rationalization. Rationalization lacked a national aura, but it was given one by fascism.

The Bailiff, avatar of rationalization without aura and much else, soon mocks the appearance of the Hebraic Phoenix, which is described by Lewis as having the physiognomy of a 'solemn sly-eyed yiddischer child' (*C* 142), and gives a preliminary lecture to the assembled Carnegie crowd about the nature of Space-Time before being interrupted by the booming voice of Hyperides. This begins the major stichomythia that engenders the switch to dialogue format in the narrative.

The oppositions between Hyperides and his followers are established in the outline, then detailed in the following dialogue. Not merely a summary, the

prologue conversation provides a set of constraints within which the subsequent dialogue transforms its basic themes. The description from a distant level of focalization of the two is 'they are the oldest opposites in the universe, they eye each other: all this has been enacted before countless times on unnumbered occasions all these things they are now about to say have been uttered, under every conceivable circumstance' (150). This archetypal invocation places the narrator squarely in the camp of Hyperides, for whom there are eternals in human history and thought unmolded by temporal localities. The critical consensus has been that Hyperides represents Lewis's own counterattack against the time-cult represented by the Bailiff. There is much to suggest that this is the case, certainly, but I also question that reasoning by showing how the representation in the dialogue section (and the exordium to it) manifests a narrative logic of incompleteness – that the form is a dialectic properly speaking and that Hyperides is as much of a dramatized figure as the Bailiff.

Hyperides next compares the Bailiff to a magician and claims that his 'mechanical subtlety' is 'profounder than that of Protagoras that it took the greatest intellect of the Greek World all his time to refute' (150). The reference is not entirely clear; Protagoras's relativism is debated in a fashion in the eponymous Platonic dialogue,[79] but the phrase 'man is the measure of all things' appears only

in the *Cratylus*, *Theaetetus*, and *Laws* (386a; 152a, 160d, 161c, 166d, 167d, 170, 178b, 183b; 4.716c). The Bailiff answers Hyperides by appealing to the assembled crowd, claiming that he is most worried about their '*time*'. (151) There is a cut to Pullman and Satters, the latter mesmerized by Hyperides and his followers whereas Pullman remains unimpressed, noting that 'a man called Dixon calls him the loud-speaker'. (152) Hyperides condemns the Bailiff's 'physics of "events" and the cult of the "dynamical" that substitutes for the antique repose an ideal of restless movement'. (152)[80] After the Bailiff responds with an appeal to 'science', Hyperides, becoming more excited, remarks 'that Time-factor that our kinsman the Greek removed and that you have put back to obsess, with its movement, everything – to put a jerk and a wriggle, a tie and a grimace, everywhere – what is that accomplishing except the breaking-down of all our concrete world into a dynamical flux, whose inhuman behests we must follow instead of it waiting on us' (153).

The Bailiff responds with a mixed metaphoric attempt at humor: 'we promise nothing that we are not fully skilled to accomplish. *We hand over the goods*, as Joan of Arc remarked when she kissed the cow! (heavy and spontaneous applause)'. The usual phrase preceding this is 'to each his own taste', and it usually a farm woman, not Joan of Arc, who is the speaker. The Bailiff indicates that the

time-cult, which he represents, has commercialized the religious impulse; the figure and associated energy of the visionary saint being cathected into a consumerist society, one dominated by a Protagorean relativism. The next accusation offered by Hyperides is that the Bailiff is 'reducing all these creatures to the dead level of some kind of mad robot of sex'. (154) The Bailiff's response, 'what else is there but sex in life that is worth while, to be candid?' elicits a remarkably misogynistic reply: 'you mean that you refuse to admit, old despot, that your human slaves shall have any more ambitious interest – oh, unbecoming in a humble subject! – than the smelling and sucking propensities whose embodiments we see here, all garnished and dressed for the monotonous feast in the sickly finicks of the female pantry'. (155) Other than Pullman's brief hermaphroditic transformation (which is more of a perception), there are no women in *The Childermass*. The Bailiff then intimates that Hyperides and his followers are homosexuals, a charge to which Hyperides responds by noting that the Bailiff is only interested in power and that sex is a means of exercising it, 'like money [it] is merely a congenial instrument in its service'. (156)

The Bailiff, challenged again by the Hyperideans, steps down from his pulpit and addresses the crowd at their level: '"If you'd heard as much hyperidean invective as I have in my time you'd think me the most patient of men. What a

chap what a man! I had his head cut off once. But he was back here in a couple of months – after a short stay as an apparition at his old home on earth. He was very indignant. He was superb. I wish you could have heard him. Twice he has escaped from over there." He jerks his head towards the city'. (157) The 'short stay as an apparition' refers to Hyperides being a force of history, the spectre perhaps that was once and currently (for Lewis) is haunting Europe. Furthermore, this revolutionary force that the Bailiff admits cannot be exiled or defeated is as much of a force as the Bailiff himself. The apparition thus introduces the figure of haunting into the narrative structure. Lewis has detailed his theory of the relation of form to content in *Time and Western Man*, claiming 'there is an organic norm to which every form of speech is related. A human individual, living a certain kind of life, to whom the words and style would be appropriate, is implied in all utterance' (*TWM* 113); once the interrelationships between the forces that the Bailiff and Hyperides represent to each other and to Lewis's political representation of the actual world are established, the form of the narrative itself has to change to accommodate them.

There is a brief interlude in which the focalization returns to Pullman and Satters. The latter is depressed by the exchange, and asks Pullman why Hyperides was so quarrelsome. Pullman's response is: 'only to advertise himself! You can see

the sort of person he is. Look at the way he dresses! He's one of those people who must be in the limelight else they're utterly wretched'. (158) Satters remarks that Hyperides must be a 'frightful poseur', which causes Pullman to snap at him because 'it's what my aunt calls me!' Pullman then admonishes Satters not to say 'right ho' because it's 'stupid'. (158) A questioner begins, and Pullman and Satters revert to being passive spectators. The 'organic norm' that Lewis needs to represent his subject matter has changed. A pragmatic explanation of the beginning of the dialogue form is that Lewis simply felt it more convenient to write out the passages this way, but this does not explain why the remainder of the book has to be presented in dialogue format. Another explanation might be that the dialogue format is inherently more objective, as it gives the illusion of not being mediated by a narrator. This theory is undermined by the long interpolated passages of narrative description that punctuate the remainder of the text.

I have argued that this 'diremptive break', which is of the same type that Lewis was quick to reject in Georges Sorel's revolutionary theory,[81] itself reflects the fundamental historical schism that Lewis was seeking to represent. It has a mimetic function and is an adaptive narrative strategy. When Jameson writes that 'Lewis's relational universe has no place for a thesis about human nature',[82] he misrepresents Lewis's actually quite strong beliefs about the durability of human

nature and the ability of the human mind to recognize objective truth. In fact, Lewis was very much a rationalist in epistemology, deeply distrustful of the plasticity of empiricism that he traced back to Protagoras. (*TWM* 150-51) The emergence of the dialogue form in *The Childermass* signals a recognition of the need to incorporate a synthesis of these modes of perception in order to represent the post-General Strike political climate. The aftereffect of this 'revolutionary dud', as he called it, left Lewis much inclined to try to counteract the manufactured consensus he saw emerging in the forging of a British national identity, a consensus he sought to disrupt through his co-optation of mass media in narrative form.

NOTES

1. David Ayers, *Wyndham Lewis and Western Man* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1992), p. 99.

2. D.G. Bridson, '*The Human Age* in Retrospect', in *Wyndham Lewis: A Revaluation,* ed. Jeffrey Meyers (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1980), p. 238.

3. Hugh Kenner, *Wyndham Lewis* (Norfolk CT: New Directions, 1954), p. 97.

4. William H. Pritchard, *Wyndham Lewis* (New York: Twayne, 1968), p. 151.

5. John Constable and S.J.M. Watson (eds), *Wyndham Lewis & I.A. Richards: A Friendship Documented*, *1928-57* (Cambridge UK: Skate Press, 1990), p. 60.

6. All quotations are from the 1928 edition of *The Childermass* (London: Chatto and Windus; New York: Covici, Friede). Hereafter *C*. Lewis made some minor textual revisions to the edition published in 1955. These included regularizing Pullman's name to 'Pullman' throughout instead of the often-used 'Pulley' in the original text, changing his religion to Catholicism from Anglicanism, and adding at the end a transitional paragraph to the next two volumes. Lewis also dropped the definite article from the title. I choose to rely on the original text as it reflects Lewis's historical observations more directly.

7. Kenner (see note 3), p. 217.

8. Fredric Jameson, *Fables of Aggression: Wyndham Lewis, The Modernist as Fascist* (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1979), p. 27.

9. Geoffrey Wagner, *Wyndham Lewis: A Portrait of the Artist as an Enemy* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1957), p. 288.

10. See I.A. Richards on homosexuality in *The Childermass*: 'the homosexual *fashion* of the mid-twenties *is* a rather large-scale feature of the book. You have to remember what the fashionables were like in the mid-twenties if it's not to seem excessive. [. . .] it will seem overdone – till you see that it was the fashion, *the*

thing, of the Proustian hour of the book's creation; it is drawn from and to the life, no more'. *Wyndham Lewis and I. A. Richards: A Friendship Documented*, pp. 62-63.

11. Laura Otis, 'The Metaphoric Circuit: Organic and Technological Communication in the Nineteenth Century', *Journal of the History of Ideas,* 63 (2002), 107. Otis refers to Marcello Pera, *The Ambiguous Frog: The Galvani-Volta Controversy on Animal Electricity*, trans. Jonathan Mandelbaum (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), p. 64.

12. Alan Munton, 'A Reading of *The Childermass*', in *Wyndham Lewis: A Revaluation,* ed. Jeffrey Meyers (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1980), p. 121.

13. Wyndham Lewis, *Rude Assignment: A Narrative of My Career Up-to-Date* (London: Hutchinson [1950]), p. 214.

14. Jeffrey Meyers, *The Enemy: A Biography of Wyndham Lewis* (London: Routledge, 1980), p. 105.

15. Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel* (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1957), p. 11.

16. R.B. Kershner, *The Twentieth-Century Novel: An Introduction* (New York: Bedford Books, 1997) p. 4.

17. M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays,* ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Michael Holquist and Caryl Emerson (Austin TX: University of Texas Press, 1981), p. 11.

18. Northrop Frye, 'Four Forms of Fiction', in *The Theory of the Novel,* ed. Philip Stovick (New York: Free Press, 1967), p. 39.

19. Frye, p. 39.

20. Munton (see note 12), p. 121

21. Jameson (see note 8), p. 102

22. Scott Klein, *The Fictions of James Joyce and Wyndham Lewis: Monsters of Nature and Design* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 191.

23. Ayers (see note 1), p. 106

24. Anon, '*The Childermass*', *TLS*, 27 (13 July 1928), 53.

25. Maurice Z. Shorder, 'The Novel as Genre', in *The Theory of the Novel*, ed. Philip Stevick (New York: Free Press, 1967), p. 16.

26. Jameson (see note 8), p. 66.

27. Ayers (see note 1), p. 110.

28. Ayers, p. 102.

29. Ayers, p. 99.

30. Quoted in John Lucas, *The Radical Twenties: Aspects of Writing, Politics, and Culture* (Nottingham UK: Five Leaves Publications, 1997), p. 218. Lewis himself was sympathetic to the strikers' plight, though he may also have 'regarded them as dupes.' See Paul Edwards, *Wyndham Lewis: Painter and Writer* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 565 n36.

31. Clive Bell, *Civilization* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1928), pp. 255-56.

32. R.A. Florey, *The General Strike of 1926: The Economic, Political, and Social Causes of That Class War* (London: John Calder, 1981), p. 113.

33. Keith Middlemas, *Politics and Industrial Society: The Experience of the British System Since 1911* (London: André Deutsch, 1979), p. 197.

34. Keith Laybourn, *The General Strike of 1926* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), p. 13.

35. Laybourn, p. 13.

36. D.H. Roberson, 'A Narrative of the General Strike of 1926', *The Economic Journal*, 36 (Sept 1926), 376.

37. R. Page Arnot, *The General Strike May 1926: Its Origin and History* (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1967), p. 88.

38. Page Arnot, p. 89.

39. Quincy Wright, ‘The Palestine Problem’, *Political Science Quarterly,* 41 (September 1926), 399.

40. Laybourn (see note 34), p. 37

41. Cf. ‘In employing the term *myth* I feel that I have made a happy choice because I thus put myself in the position to refuse any discussion whatever with the people who wish to submit the idea of a general strike to detailed criticism’. Georges Sorel, *Reflections on Violence*, trans. Thomas Ernest Hulme and Jeremy Jennings, ed. Jeremy Jennings (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 21.

42. Ayers (see note 1), p. 106.

43. Both W.B. Yeats and H.G. Wells praised the book. See Meyers (note 14), p. 143 and p. 157.

44. Edwards (see note 30), p. 324.

45. John Russell, *Style in Modern Fiction* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), p. 57.

46. Hugh Gordon Porteus, *Wyndham Lewis: A Discursive Exposition* (London: Desmond Harmsworth, 1932), p. 80.

47. Ayers (see note 1), p. 101

48. Lisa Siraganian, ‘Out of Air: Theorizing the Art Object in Gertrude Stein and Wyndham Lewis’, *Modernism/modernity*, 10 (2003), 670.

49. Paul Edwards, ‘Afterword’ in Wyndham Lewis, *Time and Western Man* (Santa Rosa, CA: Black Sparrow, 1993), p. 462.

50. Edwards, ‘Afterword’, p. 468.

51. See the following passage from *Time and Western Man*: ‘[I]n setting out to give even the briefest account of behaviourist theory, the first thing you become aware of is the slenderness of its material, and in the sense that it reduces itself to a simple negation, and to an account of a series of not very satisfactory experiments on dogs, chickens, and rats, and a few on men’ (325). See Noam Chomsky, ‘A Review of B.F. Skinner’s *Verbal Behavior*’, *Language* 35, 1 (1959), 26-58.

52. Daniel Schenker, *Wyndham Lewis: Religion and Modernism* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1992), p. 131.

53. Quoted in Edwards, ‘Afterword’, p. 500, n. 17. Editorial additions by Edwards, except [*sic*]. Erratic sentence structure in the original.

54. E.W.F. Tomlin, *Wyndham Lewis* (London: Longmans, Green, 1969), p. 26.

55. Klein (see note 22), p. 191.

56. Peter L. Caracciolo, ‘Carnival of Mass-Murder: The Frazerian Origins of Wyndham Lewis’s *The Childermass’*, in *Sir James Frazer and the Literary Imagination*, ed. Robert Frazer (New York: St. Martin’s, 1990), p. 225.

57. Edwards, *Wyndham Lewis: Painter and Writer*, p. 336 (see note 30).

58. J.D. Beresford, ‘A Strange Necessity’, *The New Adelphi*, 2 (December 1928-January 1929), 174.

59. James Joyce, *Ulysses* (New York: Random House, 1986), p. 170.

60. Srinivas Aravamudan, ‘The Return of Anachronism’, *Modern Language Quarterly*, 62 (December 2001), 333.

61. Herbert Butterfield, *The Whig Interpretation of History* (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1963), p. 19.

62. Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, 2nd ed. (1964; New York: New American Library, 1966), p. 16.

63. Alan Munton, ‘The Politics of Wyndham Lewis’, *PN Review* 4 (1976), 35.

64. Munton, p. 35.

65. See Edwards, *Wyndham Lewis: Painter and Writer*, p. 335, and Ayers, p. 104 for two examples.

66. Lewis's ear for Cockney, predictably, is much better than for the African-American dialect he tries to imitate in the painful 'nigger-heaven' episode a few pages later.

67. Caracciolo, p. 220.

68. Nicholas Brown, *Utopian Generations: The Political Horizons of Twentieth-Century Literature* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), p. 141. Brown quotes *C* 24.

69. Alfred Mond, 'International Cartels', *Journal of the Royal Institute of International Affairs*, 6 (September 1927), 278.

70. Frederick Winslow Taylor, *The Principles of Scientific Management* (1911; New York: Harper, 1919), p. 10.

71. D.H. MacGregor, 'Recent Papers on Cartels', *The Economic Journal*, 37 (June 1927), 247.

72. MacGregor, 249.

73. D.H. MacGregor, 'Rationalisation of Industry', *The Economic Journal*, 37 (December 1927), 524.

74. MacGregor, 'Rationalisation of Industry', 535.

75. Charles Maier, ‘Between Taylorism and Technocracy: European Ideologies and the Vision of Industrial Productivity in the 1920s’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 5 (1970), 30-1.

76. Maier, 54.

77. Philip Williamson, *National Crisis and National Government: British Politics, the Economy, and Empire, 1926-1932* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 54.

78. Robert W.D. Boyce, *British Capitalism at the Crossroads, 1919-1932: A Study in Politics, Economics, and International Relations* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 21.

79. Scholars debate the degree to which Socrates’s position coincides with that of Plato, in this dialogue in particular. See Michael Gagarin, ‘The Purpose of Plato’s *Protagoras*’, *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, 100 (1969), 133 for a representative example.

80. Lewis was advised by readers of the *Time and Western Man* manuscript to revise his criticisms of Einstein because of the experimental confirmation of relativity, and he manages to shift his attack primarily to Einstein’s popularizers (such as Moszkowski) and the *popular* perception of relativity (*TWM* 138–43).

81. Ayers, p. 132 (see note 1).

82. Jameson, p. 47 (see note 8).