

## To Absent Enemies: Wyndham Lewis in Contemporary Political Theory

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The group of thinkers upon which I delivered an assault – “Time-philosophers” I named them – represent a type of thinking common to all ages. They increase in numbers and influence in such a period as this. In all times and places, however, they should be answered in the manner used in this book. It should be a permanent armoury for the reduction of their pretensions. (RA 208-9)

Wyndham Lewis’s success and extraordinary impact as a painter, novelist, and literary critic eclipse his contribution to political thought.<sup>1</sup> Although it was received warmly upon its publication in 1926, *The Art of Being Ruled* is today almost completely unknown to political theorists.<sup>2</sup> This is perhaps not surprising given Lewis’s alleged fascist sympathies and the handful of statements in that book appearing to confirm them.<sup>3</sup> (His political writings are very far from flawless, as students of his work have always readily accepted.<sup>4</sup>) The ‘fascism’ question is tiresomely well-trodden ground for students of Lewis,<sup>5</sup> and Ivan Phillips has recently done as much as can reasonably be done, I think, to deal definitively with the matter.<sup>6</sup> One notices, of course, that that sort of association has been considerably more deleterious for academic estimation of Lewis than it has been for giants of political philosophy such as Martin Heidegger or Carl Schmitt. Suffice it to say here that (1) as the mid-twentieth century played out, it became increasingly easy to say of Lewis that (as Chace has it) ‘[i]n his long and prolific career as a writer, it is astonishing how often he was simply and unambiguously wrong as a political observer’;<sup>7</sup> and that (2) clearly this has contributed to what has been called the ‘post-war establishment distaste for Wyndham Lewis’, to which rule the field under discussion here, political theory, has proved no exception.<sup>8</sup>

It is perhaps not surprising, then, that although Lewis specialists have not shied away from talking about their man’s politics, including

the 'topical books' of what Lewis himself calls 'political journalism' (RA 237), still they have not been especially enthusiastic advocates of his forays into political philosophy.<sup>9</sup> Even the classic comprehensive survey of Lewis's political writings, D. G. Bridson's *The Filibuster: A Study of the Political Ideas of Wyndham Lewis* (1972) – sympathetic but generally cool in its defence, written as it is by an author who states at the outset that he never really expected to find himself in agreement with Lewis politically (Bridson, TF xi) – closes with only general reflections on Lewis's 'after-glow': reflections which seem to reveal at least as much about Bridson's political sentiments as they do about Lewis's.<sup>10</sup> More recently, although Andrzej Gąsiorek has commented in several places, and in good detail, on the substantive arguments contained in *The Art of Being Ruled*, he has levelled most of his criticism *against* Lewis.<sup>11</sup>

It is time, I think, to attend to what remains valuable in Lewis's political writings, and to state unambiguously the nature of that value. To that end I wish to discuss some of what Lewis would later identify as his 'more serious work, where the thinking had deeper roots', and where the 'conclusions arrived at were as a rule in accord with [his] present beliefs [i.e. in 1950]' (RA 237; see also 182).

*The Art of Being Ruled* (1926) and *Time and Western Man* (1927) are ambitious, complex, and at times difficult books.<sup>12</sup> If it is true that Lewis spent ten times longer writing a page of fiction than a page of polemic (see Bridson, TF x), it rarely shows here – assuming that he considered these books 'polemical'. Of the two texts, *The Art of Being Ruled* is more interesting to the political theorist on account of its subject matter. But there are major obstacles to recognizing it as a work of serious, constructive political theory in its own right. First, it is not really about how a society should be ordered. Lewis's thoughts on that subject are vague, often ambiguous, and rare. Certainly he does not propose some model for the ideal society, an 'imagined republic'.<sup>13</sup> *The Art of Being Ruled* is, rather, 'critical' political philosophy in the true sense: critical of other people's ideas. So its contribution to the field has to be estimated as that of an antithesis, albeit a very broadsided one; and its value understood to depend on the status of what it attacks (that is, how real and prevalent it is), and on the accuracy and justice of that attack.

Secondly, *The Art of Being Ruled* contains a more varied array of styles, devices, and voices than is commonly to be found in the canon of twentieth-century political theory.<sup>14</sup> In places Lewis is deploying a good deal of irony, for instance; it is, after all, intended to serve a satirical

purpose.<sup>15</sup> It could of course be argued that the variety of literary strategies Lewis mobilizes to make his points should in fact *increase* scholarly estimation of his contribution to political philosophy, rather than decrease it. But it seems that such unconventional features have in fact made Lewis's assessments of more 'serious' authors easier to dismiss or ignore. Students of Lewis hardly need the stylistic features of his writings explained to them: they are as conversant in the terminology and analysis of writing styles, voices, and literary devices as any other body of literary scholars, if not a little more so.<sup>16</sup> I am only a junior political theorist, and trained therefore to focus on the evidence and reasoning of an argument, rather than the style in which it is presented.<sup>17</sup> However, even from a logical point of view, *The Art of Being Ruled* is difficult. Diverse fragments have to be pieced together to form arguments; a great deal of thematic disentangling is often required; and Lewis's treatments of some subjects seem to evince shifting, fluctuating positions, which apparently often cancel each other out. In *Rude Assignment* Lewis mentions an 'Hegelian' methodological conceit involved in the planning of the work (RA 183), of which he thinks some embarrassing remnants remain.<sup>18</sup> But this is not a completely satisfactory explanation. These little 'contradictions', rather than resulting in any 'synthesis', merely give the impression of an author attempting to be simultaneously provocative and evasive. So on these grounds, too, the book would be highly atypical of the field.

### **Lewis's Critique of Bergsonism**

However, *The Art of Being Ruled* contains much that bears on contemporary political philosophy, in which regard, it seems to me, Part XII is particularly important. There, in short chapters collected under the title "The 'Intellectual'", Lewis discusses the nature and increasing popularity, in art, philosophy, and social and political thought, of a particular way of conceiving the relationship between the 'intellect' and 'flux'. (He occasionally uses the term 'Becoming'; see *TWM* 232-34.)

In general, Lewis's target can be identified as 'Bergsonism' (the term is still used).<sup>19</sup> *Time and Western Man* protracts the critique, but with added attention to (ostensibly) apolitical authors and culture. It can be argued that (a) *The Art of Being Ruled* is the 'political' book of the two, operating on the level of political philosophy and popular political

discourse, and that (b) *Time and Western Man* is equally 'political'. Both propositions are easily justified, which is why I have treated the books as mutually illuminating.<sup>20</sup>

Lewis explains that there are, at present, certain intellectuals engaged in a 'war on the intellect' (ABR 343; see also 330, 339, and 344). These intellectuals are members (or dupes), Lewis says, of a 'cult of flux' – or, in other places, a 'cult of Time', 'Time school', 'Time-attitude', or 'time-mind' (TWM 205-7 and 245) – which worships vitality, dynamism, and (especially) *time* (TWM 204), and preaches the relative inferiority of the individual to the mobility, mutability, and temporality of the greater reality. The fashion for this powerful idea in 'every branch of educational activity' (ABR 335), Lewis thinks, is largely traceable to the work of Henri Bergson (ABR 334-38; TWM 204), whose Paris lectures Lewis attended as a young man.<sup>21</sup> (Bergson is also among the first fifteen names to get *BLAST*-ed.) Bergson, the 'great organizer of disintegration in the modern world', Lewis writes, has 'found all the *reasons* [...] for the destruction of the things of the intellect, and the handing over to sensation of the privileges and heirlooms of the mind, and the enslaving of the intelligent to the affective nature' (ABR 334); 'the root impulse in Bergson's philosophy was a rendering back to LIFE, magiscular abstraction of a feverish chaos, all that the mind had taken from her to build into forms and concepts' (ABR 336-37). The effect of such a philosophy, Lewis thinks, is that individual opinion, assertion, pronouncement, everything that is the product of the intellect, is denigrated in favour of the 'flux' (ABR 336-38).

It has long been recognized that the fiery contributions of the French 'neo-classicist' Julien Benda to what Robert C. Grogin has called 'the Bergson-Benda Affair' in pre-war France is the major influence on this area of Lewis's work.<sup>22</sup> Geoffrey Wagner, who has detailed the influence of 'the French neoclassicists' in detail, goes as far as to call Benda Lewis's 'master'.<sup>23</sup> Lewis tells us himself of his debt to Benda, naming him several times in both *The Art of Being Ruled* and *Time and Western Man*, almost always favourably – especially when discussing Benda's *Belphegor* (1918), which Lewis greatly admires. He also offers the fact that 'Benda has not left much in Bergson worth destroying in his *Le bergsonisme, ou une philosophie de la mobilité* [1912], and other books' (ABR 334) as an explanation for why he, instead of dealing with Bergson himself, turns his attention to the social *effects* of Bergson's general philosophy, in the work of American pragmatists (such as William

James), psychoanalysts, Futurists, Dadaists, 'Proustites', Charlie Chaplin, Klee, Matisse, and Gertrude Stein ('and the various stammering, squinting, punning group who follow her'; *ABR* 344) – all of whom are participants in one way or another in the 'cult of flux' that is traceable, according to Lewis, ultimately to Bergson.

Lewis clearly thought Benda was on to something big with *Le bergsonisme* and *Belphégor*. But although Wagner might call Benda Lewis's 'master', it is fairer to think of the two as working in parallel in the 1920s. *La trahison des clercs* (*The Treason of the Intellectuals*), still the work for which Benda is best known to English readers, was published a year after *The Art of Being Ruled*, and Lewis in fact distinguishes himself from Benda's earlier work in two ways. First, where Benda's attacks on Bergson are presented as near-apocalyptic warnings (Grogan also reads Benda's writings as 'violent', 'personal', and 'diatribe'), Lewis's critique is patient, humorous, and simultaneously more wide-ranging and more precise in its method.<sup>24</sup> His attack is, like Benda's, supposed to be very damaging, but unlike Benda he provides plenty of direct quotation so that the reader can be *shown* what these writers are up to, rather than only warned about them. And second, although Lewis's analysis of the effects of Bergsonism upon intellectuals is rooted in these French exchanges, he applies that analysis to figures in various fields writing in English.

Lewis was not, however, the first English voice to discuss the Bergson controversy. It might be noted that some of his observations of Bergsonism parallel earlier analyses by T. E. Hulme. Hulme's was an early name to be associated with Bergson's philosophy for the English-reading audience, and his evolving thoughts on Bergson were presented in several articles from 1909 until 1912, mostly in *The New Age*, and mostly of a promotional nature. (Even one of his own editors calls Hulme's writings on Bergson 'propagandizing'.<sup>25</sup>) According to Hulme, '[t]he two parts of Bergson's general philosophical position which are important in the theory of æsthetic are (1) the conception of reality as a flux of interpenetrated elements unseizable by the intellect [...]; and (2) his account of the part played in the development of the ordinary characteristics of the mind by its orientation towards action' – insights which are, for Hulme, important philosophical achievements.<sup>26</sup> From 1911, however, Hulme became disillusioned with Bergson as public enthusiasm for him grew, and he decided that Pierre Lasserre and Benda had been right about Bergsonism's correlation with romanticism, crowd

enthusiasm, and revolutionary rhetoric.<sup>27</sup> In 1924, while Lewis was writing much of what would go into *The Art of Being Ruled* (and when Hulme had been dead for seven years), much of Hulme's material on Bergson was published (having been collected into 'essays' by Herbert Read) in his posthumous *Speculations: Essays on Humanism and the Philosophy of Art*.<sup>28</sup> Lewis seizes upon the points of Bergson's philosophy celebrated by Hulme and republished in that volume, but ridicules them as part of his much wider critique of Bergsonism. It is perhaps interesting to note not only that Lewis deploys the same terminology, but also that Hulme's focus, similar to Lewis's, is the implications of Bergson's general philosophy for the philosophy of *art* (including, in his case, poetry). Although Lewis discusses much more besides, he acknowledges that his judgements of Bergsonism in general are made through an 'artists' eye' (ABR 338).

It would, however, be a mistake to conclude that Lewis's critique of Bergsonism is derivative of Hulme's: first, the points Hulme discusses are plain to any reader of Bergson, and the English terms he uses to discuss it are hardly idiosyncratic; second, Lewis says much about Bergsonism that Hulme does not; third, Hulme talks about Bergson himself, which Lewis avoids doing (because, he says, Benda has already 'destroyed' everything worth destroying); and fourth, and most pertinently for my purpose here, Lewis attends to the *effects* of Bergson's ideas among other authors, especially the effects on social and political thinking. It was attention to those effects that had eventually turned Hulme away from Bergson.

Actually, Lewis's sights are set even more broadly than the groups and figures he names (above): 'the plain man, the intellectual crook, and the society hostess are the only people, for all practical purposes, with whom we have to deal' (ABR 336), he says. John Mullarkey has recently confirmed what Lewis is saying here. 'The diffusion of [Bergson's] ideas was so extensive throughout intellectual Europe', Mullarkey explains, 'that, as a distinct and original body of thought, it was all but indiscernible by the 1920s.'<sup>29</sup> In whatever field you survey, Lewis observes, the 'cult of flux' is to be found harnessing relativity, chaos, and the all-encompassing notion of 'time', in order to render the present moment obsolete and trivial, and thereby to 'shake people's confidence everywhere in their own opinion', while enabling 'them to circumvent other people's' (ABR 336). This new philosophy, he adds in *Time and Western Man*, by trying to crush the past into everything is 'stuffing up

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and constipating the “pure Present,” impeding clear-cut living and sane, resolute, “classical” action’ (*TWM* 225).

For Lewis, all this points to hatred of the intellect (*ABR* 339) and a war against it on all fronts. On the political front, the war on the intellect, he thinks, is carried out by way of *the dissolution and diffusion of the individual*, and increased celebration of collective phenomena (*ABR* 130-37; see also *TWM* 166-67, 222-23, and 300-1). Correspondingly, Lewis observes, the ‘cult of flux’ offers an alternative vision of freedom: the ‘freedom’ of being immersed in ‘the *poetry of the mass*’, or ‘the *rhythm of the crowd*’ (*ABR* 130). The sort of freedom thereby recommended is not freedom from the interference from others, or the freedom to do or say this or that, but freedom *from responsibility*:

It is a belief that has never been formulated, but it is at the root of a great deal of behaviour today, that *freedom and irresponsibility are invariably commutative terms*. The first object of a person with an ambition to be free, and yet possessing none of the means exterior to himself or herself (such as money, conspicuous ability, or power) to obtain freedom, is to avoid responsibility.

[...] A rhythmic movement is restful: but consciousness and possession of the self is not compatible with a set rhythm. [...] Luxury and repose are what most men undeniably desire. They would like to be as much at rest as if they were dead, and as active and “alive” as passivity will allow. (*ABR* 130; see also 42-43 and 151)

### **The New Bergsonism**

In recent years there has been a renewed interest in ‘Bergsonian’ themes in political theory, and of course Lewis is totally absent from the emerging literature. As I have already said, this is due at least in part to his damaged political reputation. (His anti-systematic method of argument, conversely, is today less exceptional.) But Lewis’s critique of politicized ‘Time-philosophy’ is also obscured by intervening changes in terminology. In the philosophical parlance of contemporary political theory, Lewis is calling into question certain radical claims about the relationship between ‘becoming’ and ‘subjectivity’. Those are the key-words, ‘becoming’ and ‘subjectivity’, which an author would now be

required to deploy in such a discussion.<sup>30</sup> But Lewis's analysis is not consistently presented in those terms: mostly he prefers 'flux' to 'becoming' and, although he does discuss 'the subject' (*TWM* 289-344), he mostly talks about 'the self', 'the individual', 'the person', 'the ego', etc., and uses these terms interchangeably. So his contribution to the debate is easily overlooked.

But Lewis's contribution should not be overlooked. It seems to me in fact that it remains remarkably perceptive in light of recent developments in political theory. The chief tropes of some recent work, inspired by certain conceptions of *becoming* and *time* (traceable to Bergson), are strikingly similar to those that Lewis identifies among the 'cult of flux'. I will demonstrate this by surveying three current authors to whose recent work Lewis's critique is especially pertinent.

Of these three, the best known is William E. Connolly, a senior political theorist at Johns Hopkins University who, according to a recent survey of American academics, is the *fourth* most influential political theorist of the last twenty years.<sup>31</sup> Connolly made his name in the 1970s and 1980s with books about pluralism and the ambiguity and contestation of political terminology. But his most recent books, *A World of Becoming* (2011) and *The Fragility of Things* (2013), are very different: their themes, influences, and conclusions bring them well within Lewis's purview. The first chapter of *A World of Becoming* is called 'Complexity, Agency, and Time'. It is dedicated to explaining how the (apparently recent) arrival of complexity theory in the physical sciences puts 'new pressure' (Connolly, *WB* 17) on cultural theory, philosophy, and political theory. 'Complexity' explains the phenomenon whereby a plurality of things (operating as a 'self-organizing' system) produce new, 'emergent' phenomena: the phenomena thereby generated, the 'results' if you like, *could not have been predicted in advance*, and thereby defeat the intellect. The theory is that prediction is foiled by the nature of the natural system itself, rather than by epistemological limitations: the classical account of causality, in other words, is not applicable; something has interrupted it, on the ontological side, and this something we can call 'creativity' (Connolly, *WB* 27).

Connolly deploys complexity theory in order to lend new scientific 'evidence' to the worldview of *becoming*. He illustrates the high degree of activity, mobility, relativity, interaction, temporality, and (ultimately) 'creativity' going on around us. '[E]very spatio-temporal system constituting the universe is open to some degree' (Connolly, *WB*

19), he writes, and each system ‘regularly maintains connections with other heterogeneous systems [...]’. For instance, the tier of chrono-time on which an asteroid flow is set could intersect with the rotational pattern of the earth, creating a collision that affects future life on the face of the earth’ (Connolly, *WB* 19).

For Connolly, always ultimately the political philosopher, all of this has very radical political implications. He talks about the ‘strategic action’, ‘tactics’, and ‘microtactics’ needed to overcome the ‘worldwide capitalist system’, ‘poverty, resentments, and anger’, and ‘a contemporary global condition that now exceeds the control of any market system, state, or network of states’ (Connolly, *WB* 127). He encourages his readers to join political movements and ‘spirals of interinvolvement between desire, action, ethics, and politics’ (Connolly, *WB* 116). But his chief message is that the philosophy of becoming, newly informed by the scientific ‘evidence’ of complexity theory, forces us to think of ourselves no longer as ‘consummate agents’ (Connolly, *WB* 7). Complexity is not only outside of us, on the astronomical scale (and the reader might already be thinking here of what Lewis calls a ‘snobbery of scale’; *TWM* 173-74 and 226-29); it is also, Connolly explains, going on *inside* us on the molecular and biochemical levels. The micro-organisms, viruses, and hormones in our bodies are ‘proto-agents’ or ‘actants’, Connolly says; bacteria ‘communicate actively through chemical signals, and new *collective actions* are undertaken’ (Connolly, *WB* 24, emphasis added). So we should be more ‘sensitive’ to ‘nonhuman forces’ (Connolly, *WB* 24); we should acknowledge the *collective agency* of things like bacteria and viruses, and note what this suggests about our own agency (Connolly, *WB* 24-25). In short, the lesson is that we are ‘internally complex and dependent upon external aids’.<sup>32</sup> So individual agency and responsibility are very much on the retreat in Connolly’s thinking – though he is careful not to say explicitly that they have disappeared altogether. Instead of trying to fix, master, and ‘know’ with the intellect, in our interactions with the world, we must (he says) develop a ‘spirituality of radical immanence in a world of becoming’; we must ‘feel our way’ into a politics of *distributed agency*, or ‘degrees and sites of agency’ (Connolly, *WB* 22).

Since the early 2000s Connolly has been working closely with Jane Bennett, another Professor of Political Theory at Johns Hopkins University.<sup>33</sup> In its key features the argument Bennett presents in *Vibrant Matter* (2010) is the same as Connolly’s. For Bennett, the traditional

concept of a disembodied soul, or mind, a 'separate force that can enter and animate a physical body', must now be replaced with a concept of the *élan vital* which occupies matter – specifically the 'gaps' between the moments of time from which the universe is made (space and time being interwoven) – all of which she borrows from Bergson.<sup>34</sup> Again the reader is told that the new science supports what Bennett calls an end to the 'life/matter binary' (Bennett, *VM* xviii), and lends evidence to Bruno Latour's 'attempt to develop a vocabulary that addresses multiple modes and degrees of effectivity, to begin to describe a more *distributive* agency' (Bennett, *VM* viii-ix). Agency, then, only makes sense in the context of complex 'assemblages' of 'actants' in a world of things 'differentially distributed across a wider range of ontological types' (Bennett, *VM* 9) – similar, Bennett says, to the Deleuzian 'quasi-causal operator' (Bennett, *VM* 9). 'The locus of agency', she adds, 'is always a human-nonhuman working group' (Bennett, *VM* xvii), 'affective bodies forming assemblages', such as 'electrons, trees, wind, fire, [and] electromagnetic fields' (Bennett, *VM* 24).

Like Connolly, Bennett thinks there are radical political consequences to all this. She calls for an end to the 'privileged' position man has traditionally ascribed to himself and his agency which, she announces, is 'hubristic', 'narcissistic', and 'earth-destroying' (Bennett, *VM* xvii, xvi, ix). The 'being of the demos', she says (channelling Rancière), is an 'unruly activity or indeterminate wave of energy' (Bennett, *VM* 106), and she wants to rally this 'wave of energy' to what she calls a 'counter-cultural' (Bennett, *VM* xiv) movement, or 'onto-story' (Bennett, *VM* 4), so that we may get 'caught up in' (Bennett, *VM* xv) and 'tune in to the strange logic of turbulence' (Bennett, *VM* xi). The invocation in politics of 'autonomy and strong responsibility', Bennett says, now 'seems tinged with injustice' (Bennett, *VM* 37); science has proved that humans 'turn out to be confederations of tools, microbes, minerals, sounds, and other "foreign" materialities' (Bennett, *VM* 36). So we must stop reducing *political* agency to *human* agency (Bennett, *VM* xv); 'we must develop a concept of *nonidentity* to cure the hubris of conceptualization' (Bennett, *VM* 15, emphasis added), a concept that emancipates us from hierarchy (Bennett, *VM* 10), and 'chastens our will to mastery' (Bennett, *VM* 15).

Again, then, among Bennett's radical activist language, we find that the main message pertains to the individual's concept of himself and his responsibility. In emphasizing the ensemble nature of action

and the interconnections between persons and things,' Bennett writes, 'a theory of vibrant matter presents individuals as simply incapable of bearing full responsibility for their effects' (Bennett, *VM* 37). Identification of agency (or as she calls it 'condemnation') is to be rejected in favour of a 'discernment of the web of agentic capacities' (Bennett, *VM* 38). To her credit, Bennett is not afraid to pursue her theory to its logical conclusions. Reassuringly for the obese, for instance, to 'eat chips is to enter into an assemblage in which the I is not necessarily the most decisive operator' (Bennett, *VM* 40). What if, she ponders, 'the swarming activity inside my head was *itself* an instance of the vital materiality that also constituted the trash?' (Bennett, *VM* 10).

As well as Bennett, Connolly numbers among his 'growing contingent' (Connolly, *WB* 8)<sup>35</sup> Nathan Widder, a Professor of Politics at Royal Holloway, University of London. Although Widder's *Reflections on Time and Politics* (2008) is the earliest of the 'New Bergsonist' books discussed here, it was directly inspired by Connolly's visiting professorship at the University of Exeter in 2004.<sup>36</sup> Widder's book is more interesting than Connolly's for the general student of philosophy, largely because what it lacks in news from the world of microbiology it makes up for in detailed readings of various thinkers from Aristotle to Deleuze and Foucault – via Hegel, Nietzsche, and, of course, Bergson. Widder eschews the biological and entomological fascinations that Connolly and Bennett have inherited from Bergson, and pursues the philosophy of time aspect more thoroughly. His ultimate interest, though, is on the 'micropolitics' of how people's *identities* are formed.

Widder's thesis, in short, is that 'identity' is not fixed. Indeed, identity and therefore people's identities are, like everything in and around us, in flux, on account of the nature of *time*.<sup>37</sup> Time, Widder explains, is the 'form of what changes or moves', but, by being both *continuous* (history) and *discontinuous* (discontinuity), it generates 'illusions of identity and stability, which organize much of our thinking, our discourse, and our personal, social, and political worlds' (Widder, *RTP* 10); 'it is because these social and political formations, being constituted by historically specific and contingent practices, are nonetheless also tied to an excess and discontinuity that give them their out-of-sync structure' (Widder, *RTP* 180-81), he adds. Identity is, though, worse than just changeable (which anyone would anyway acknowledge): it is 'fictitious' (Widder, *RTP* 177); no more than a 'surface projection' (Widder, *RTP* 11). Nevertheless, concepts of identity are used to structure 'a certain

level of political and social life, figuring prominently in the standards of normality and deviancy that seem to give sense to various practices and institutions' (Widder, RTP 177). In this way, philosophy of time is, in Widder's *Reflections on Time and Politics*, funnelled into Foucault. So although there is, Widder concedes, 'an experience of unity, or being an ego or an "I"' (Widder, RTP 10), it is an experience that he thinks should no longer be allowed to result in *concepts* of identity, ego, 'and associated categories' for political-philosophical use (Widder, RTP 12). The 'political' moral of the time-identity story Widder is telling is that we must *resist* (another activist word) the 'segments' and 'categories' in which we are sorted with the identities assigned to us. We must now activate 'a politics that surmounts these crude divisions through a creative and revolutionary becoming' (Widder, RTP 177).

### **'Permanent armoury'**

In their main points, then, these contemporary political theorists are presenting versions of what Lewis has in his sights in *The Art of Being Ruled* and *Time and Western Man*; and, for that matter, in *The Childermass*.<sup>38</sup> In each case the argument is that (1) everything around and in us is in a state of flux, or *becoming* (if you are allowed to call it a 'state'); that (2) classical conceptions of the individual subject must therefore be rethought in terms of becoming; and that (3) this rethinking of the subject has politically radical, collectivist implications. So it seems that a great deal of Lewis's critique of the 'cult of flux' remains directly applicable to these 'New Bergsonists'. My intention here is not to explain what I think is wrong with these contemporary arguments, but to demonstrate that Lewis's critique of Bergsonism in political thought still has an important role to play in the debate. This is not anachronism, I would add: it is *use*, and a use for which Lewis clearly intended the work we are discussing (see RA 208-9).

It is often uncanny how applicable Lewis's observations remain. Connolly and Bennett, for instance, with their very selective, highly interpretive recruitment of astrophysics, climatology, oceanography, biology, etc., might well be guilty of 'vulgarizing' natural science (ABR 34; see also 111-12)<sup>39</sup>, and making of themselves precisely what Lewis says he wishes to attack: 'the essentially political middleman, the imitative self-styled "revolutionary,"' who 'pollutes on the way the prime

issue of our thinking, and converts it into a “cultural” or “scientific” article, which is a masked engine of some form of political fraud’ (*TWM* 129; see also *ABR* 343-44). (And if there is one single theme that ties together the fragmentary chapters that make up *The Art of Being Ruled* it is, I think, ‘political fraud’.)

Lewis’s primary example of ‘vulgarization’ is what writers such as Moskowski have done with Einstein’s general theory of relativity (*ABR* 336): ‘adapting’ it to suit their socio-political messages (*ABR* 34). But he also notices that ‘flux’ authors are always vitalists, and especially attracted to ‘biological sciences’ and ‘disease’ (*ABR* 349), which is certainly true of the evidence and examples presented by Connolly and Bennett. It is perhaps inevitable, then, that ‘sensation’ and the ‘interiors’ of things (*ABR* 334 and 349-51; *TWM* 409-12) would also be promoted and appealed to – sometimes with quasi-spiritual overtones. According to Connolly, for example, instead of *resenting* time, becoming, and the complex processes in which we are forever involved, we should just ‘allow the sweetness of existence to sink into our pores’ and permit ourselves to ‘feel tremors of gratitude for existence itself’ (Connolly, *FT* 181; see also 146).

Although Connolly and Bennett present their ‘world of becoming’ thesis as something newly evidenced by the very latest advances in science, their sleight of hand (upon which none of their readers has commented) is exactly what Lewis pinpoints in *Time and Western Man*: they present examples of ‘constant empirical flux and change in time’ (*TWM* 232) as evidence that there is nothing ‘besides, behind, or over and above the Flux’ (*TWM* 233). Widder, meanwhile, treats it as given that there is nothing but becoming; the task of philosophy, for him, is to be able to deal with this fact without recourse to the projection of transcendent entities, to think becoming ‘immanently’ (Widder, *RTP* 7-8). (Widder uses the term ‘transcendence’ as shorthand for what he considers to be a particular kind of philosophical failure; see Widder, *RTP* 7 and 9.)

For Lewis, I think, the something ‘*besides*, behind, or over and above the Flux’ (*TWM* 233) is the intellect, which is why he deliberately, and a little provocatively, boasts of his mind being ‘entirely free’ (*E3* 27). Andrzej Gąsiorek thinks Lewis may have over-valued the intellect: ‘But of course nobody’s mind is “entirely free”’, he replies; ‘we belong in complex, interleaved ways to particular communities and networks of interlocution’ (Gąsiorek, *JG* 45). As Gąsiorek has already discussed,

better than I am able to here, Lewis's account(s) of subjectivity – or, as Tyrus Miller has it, his 'psychology' – I will limit my overview of Lewis's position to the following points only.<sup>40</sup> The intellect, Lewis is saying, *takes* from the 'flux', from the *becoming*, what it wants to build, fix, and 'set up' as *concrete* (*ABR* 337-38; see also *WLA* 208). He does not provide much support for this 'metaphysical' position, other than insisting on the importance of the 'eye' and the 'carapace', and seems content to offer it as an alternative interpretive preference. But suffice it to say that whatever establishes or maintains the 'separateness' and/or 'freedom' of the intellect Lewis is asserting here – and it could be any of a number of things, ranging from a brute fact of consciousness to an indispensable or absolute presupposition of the existential kind – he *is* deliberately taking the position that intellectual processes are separate, in some important sense, from physical and temporal processes.<sup>41</sup> Bergsonian writers, Lewis is claiming, denigrate the intellect; like the impressionists and realists in the arts before them, they take 'blessed retreat' in Nature, which 'does their thinking and seeing for them' – a retreat 'for those artists whose imagination is mean and feeble' (*B1* 130). This is, Lewis writes, 'the typical cowardly attitude of those who have failed with their minds, and are discouraged and unstrung before the problems of their Spirit; who fall back on their stomachs and the meaner working of their senses' (*B1* 129).

The political consequences discussed by these recent writers also fit Lewis's prognosis. First they heavily romanticize 'action' (*TWM* 20-21); movement and struggle, rather than repose and peace (*TWM* 155), are what they celebrate. Their prose, which seems to be aimed at an activist readership, exhibits that 'thirst for action' identified by Lewis, via Bertrand Russell (see *TWM* 202). Connolly's new theory of freedom, which he calls 'creative freedom', also seems vulnerable to Lewis's critique. Connolly explains:

neither the tradition of negative freedom nor that of positive freedom comes to terms sufficiently with the role of creativity in freedom.

Creativity here means [...] action by the present upon ambiguities arising from the past oriented toward the future in a way that is not entirely reducible to the past. [...] It might involve an exploratory movement back and forth between different parties in a cloudy situation that issues in a new result none

intended at the start. [...] To articulate the creative dimension of freedom, then, is to insert a fundamental qualification or hesitation into the ideas of both the masterful agent and agency as the activation of intentions already there. The creative element is located somewhere *between* active and passive agency. (Connolly, *FT* 74-75)

‘We are not the masters, individually or collectively, of our own creativity’, Connolly says: ‘It is, in a sense, impersonal’ (Connolly, *FT* 15). Connolly selects his words carefully. His exact position on what ‘active’ agency might legitimately remain, what exactly this ‘hesitation’ leaves to the figure of the autonomous individual agent, and what sort of ‘freedom’ he/she might still seek, is therefore rather slippery. But all of this seems to me to be very close to what Lewis identifies as the chief weakness of the new theory of freedom associated with ‘Time-philosophy’: namely, that it is a celebration of irresponsibility and the ‘joys of slavery and submission’ (*ABR* 132); the ‘freedom’ of falling back into ‘Life’ (*BI* 129), a life led according to the rhythm of the crowd, instead of the rather more difficult ‘*rhythm of the person*’ (*ABR* 130); a type-life that allows one to escape the responsibility that comes with individuality (*ABR* 131-32). ‘The difficulty comes in’, Lewis writes, ‘when this type of conception takes to itself the name “creative” or “organic”, or has “Progress” conspicuously painted on its banner. For nothing could so ill describe it’ (*TWM* 219).

The drawback for Lewis, of this account of freedom, is that it ‘leaves very little room indeed for the individual, the person – that is if you regard that as a drawback’ (*TWM* 222), and that is where (ever the artist) Lewis consciously locates ‘creativity’. His criticism of the ‘freedom’ offered by the cult of flux is correlatively that:

You become no longer one, but many. What you pay for the pantheistic immanent oneness of “creative,” “evolutionary” substance, into which you are invited to merge, is that you become a phalanstery of selves. The old objection to any pantheism, that it banishes individuality and is not good for the self, comes out more strongly than ever in the teaching of “space-time.” [...] [A]lthough it is by no means clear that you gain anything [...], it is very clear what you *lose*. By this proposed transfer [...] to the “organic” world of chronological mentalism, you lose not only

the clearness of outline, the static beauty, of the things you commonly apprehend; you lose also the clearness of outline of your own individuality which apprehends them. (*TWM* 166-67)

This ‘phalanstery of selves’ is certainly part of the New Bergsonists’ agenda for the individual. The will, Connolly explains, is ‘divided against itself’ (Connolly, *WB* 22; see also 81); ‘human beings themselves are composed of multiple micro-agents collaborating and conflicting with one another’ (Connolly, *WB* 27); ‘Agency is never consummate’ (Connolly, *WB* 27). But Lewis’s critique goes beyond the Bergsonist dissolution of the subject. It also offers a neat (albeit occasionally *ad hominem*) reduction of associated revolutionary pretensions. ‘What is happening in reality in the West’, Lewis writes, ‘is that a small privileged class is *playing* at revolution, and aping a “proletarian” freedom that the proletariat has not yet reached the conception of. The rich are always the first “revolutionaries”’ (*ABR* 134-35).

Although I would not like to speculate whether Connolly, Bennett, or Widder meet Lewis’s financial criterion, the reader will already have noticed the revolutionary conceit of their prose. Bennett thinks her movement is ‘counter-cultural’ (Bennett, *VM* xiv); the political act she is calling for is something that ‘disrupts in such a way as to change radically what people can “see”: it repartitions the sensible; it overthrows the regime of the perceptible’ (Bennett, *VM* 106-7). Similarly, Widder’s ‘political’ programme has two parts. First, the *resistance* he envisages consists in ‘marginals who oppose the coding that depreciates them’ *overturning* concepts of their personhood (Widder, *RTP* 179). And second there will be *experimentation*: ‘segmentation’ is necessary, but in order to avoid falling into the trap of ‘microfascism’ we must activate ‘a third kind of politics, which concerns neither reform nor opposition but literally “doing something different”’ (Widder, *RTP* 181); we must make of ourselves (as Deleuze and Guattari recommend) ‘*bodies without organs*’ (Widder, *RTP* 182, emphasis added). All of this is dressed up in the language of action: we are to ‘*engage* in a politics’ (Widder, *RTP* 182), the ‘*construction* of the BwO [bodies without organs] is necessarily a matter of *pragmatism* and *strategy*’ (Widder, *RTP* 183).

But despite all the language of action, upon closer inspection it seems that Lewis might also be right about such authors ‘*playing* at revolution’. The revolution they are talking about is really only conceptual. Of course political ‘reality’ changes only when ideas change, but the

overturning of concepts alone is only a revolution for political theorists, and only for those who wish to attend to it. It does not do much to help the sort of people who are normally supposed to benefit from political revolutions. It is not at all clear that Connolly, Bennett, and Widder wish to suggest anything concrete to *realize* the revolution they are talking about in self-image. Widder says (quoting Deleuze) that there ‘is no general prescription’; but, he adds, ‘perhaps this is the only possible answer, since uncertainty is what makes the body without organs both experimental and political’ (Widder, *RTP* 183). His ensuing warning, however – that ‘experimental B[odies] w[ithout] O[rgan]s can be botched. They may become empty, cancerous, or fascist’ (Widder, *RTP* 183) – seems implicitly to recommend a very *cautious* experiment. Connolly too seems content with the hope that *something* will happen: ‘The juxtaposition of the social movement, the religious response, and the medical technology may set a new resonance machine into motion’ (Connolly, *WB* 149-50), he suggests.

This fatalism, Lewis thinks, is typical of political Bergsonism. His diagnosis highlights the ironic logical and practical tendency of ‘time-thought’ to turn against the rational political planning and executive functions of individual minds, and to become *de facto* conservatism:

It is true that an “ahistorical” people may change things if they don’t find they agree with them: but not so an “historical” people. An historical people is very superior, superior to mere self, and far too respectful towards “destiny” to dream of changing *the Changing*. The chronological, the critical, mind, never attempts to alter anything: its rôle is passive, essentially. What *is* is sacred to it, in fact. [...] This fatalism should be particularly noted, for it characterizes most Time-thought. [...] With this you arrive at what is certainly the greatest paradox in the mass of time-doctrine taken as a whole: namely that, advertising itself as “creative,” “evolutionary” and “progressive,” it is yet the deadest system, productive of least freedom, that you could imagine. (*TWM* 216-17)

### Genealogy and 'time'

What, then, has given rise to this surprising coincidence, that recent authors, operating with what they advertise as new science, new philosophy, and radically new politics, should find themselves in so many areas vulnerable to a critique now nearly ninety years old? The renewed interest in Bergson in political philosophy owes significantly to Gilles Deleuze's *La Bergsonisme*, published in French in 1966 and in English (as *Bergsonism*) in 1988. It is probably this work more than any other that connects the early cult of flux as challenged by Lewis with what I am saying here is a sort of revival.<sup>42</sup> But as well as from Bergson (via Deleuze), Connolly, Bennett, and Widder have also taken considerable inspiration from other authors targeted by Lewis, especially Samuel Alexander, A. N. Whitehead, and William James. Indeed, Lewis's rough historical outline of 'the vicissitudes of the notion of the ego' in philosophy (*TWM* 298-319), which deals largely (but not exclusively) with these figures, effectively summarizes those features of their work from which most of the New Bergsonists' afflatus derives.

Now, Connolly thinks that resistance to the 'world of becoming' vision that he and his 'growing contingent' are propounding signals 'resentment' (Connolly, *WB* 65).<sup>43</sup> It is 'resentment' that motivates the arguments Connolly has in his sights – and presumably he would say the same about Lewis's critique. That is not an argument, of course. It is a 'diagnosis'. Concerning the motivation of the 'war on the intellect', Lewis offers a diagnostic riposte. 'Such "intellectuals"', he says (speaking in his context of Sorel, Péguy, and Berth), 'were *hypnotized* to strike at themselves; their clamour against the mind, of which they possessed a fair share, was the result, I think, of an *enchantment*' (*ABR* 330, emphasis added).<sup>44</sup> Again, Lewis is extremely perceptive: what enchants these authors, he says, is *time*.

I would not like to say that Connolly, Bennett, Widder, and other New Bergsonists are 'hypnotized' or 'enchanted' by *time*. But it is clear that their work, starting with Connolly's *Neuropolitics: Thinking, Culture, Speed* (2002), reflects a significant level of interest in time. Connolly's joint editorship of *Democracy and Vision: Sheldon Wolin and the Vicissitudes of the Political* (2001) exposed him to the 'time' aspect of Wolin's thought – due largely to Michael J. Shapiro's contribution to that volume, "Time, Disjuncture, and Democratic Citizenship".<sup>45</sup> Here is a passage from

Connolly's *Neuropolitics*, published a year later. (The chapter from which this passage is taken is called 'Democracy and Time'):

To abbreviate, Wolin and I both reject the cyclical image of slow time adopted by many ancients. But I also find myself at odds with progressive, teleological, and linear conceptions of time set against it. Against these four images I embrace the idea of rifts or forks in time that help to constitute it as a time. A rift as constitutive of time itself, in which time flows into a future neither fully determined by a discernible past nor fixed by its place in a cycle of eternal return, nor directed by an intrinsic purpose, pulling it along. Free time. Or, better, time as becoming, replete with the dangers and possibilities attached to such a world. [...] Politics is rendered possible and dangerous by the constitutive rift in the moment. 'Becoming' – that uncertain process by which the new flows or surges into being – is rendered possible by the rift.<sup>46</sup>

This insistence on the importance of *time* to political theory is furthered in Connolly's two most recent works: 'We belong to time', he writes in his introduction to *A World of Becoming*, 'but we do not think often about [this] strange element through (or "in") which we live, breathe, act, suffer, love, commune, and agitate' (Connolly, *WB* 2).<sup>47</sup> (Note: 'We belong to time'!)

For authors inspired by Bergson, it is *time* that 'opens the system' (Connolly, *CI* 791) – *every* system.<sup>48</sup> Failing to embrace time and flux means being stuck with illusions of permanence, individuality, and separation. The presence of presuppositions of this sort in our political thinking will cause it to be unsuitable for the world, they think, so we must instead embrace and celebrate the impermanence of everything, the amazing spatio-temporal connections between ourselves, the world around us, and the other people in it, and the fact that we are not really in control of things or ourselves and our identities. We are living in a 'unique moment', because science is *rediscovering time*, one of Connolly's inspirations, Alvin Toffler, enthuses.<sup>49</sup> But despite the 'uniqueness' of this moment, it seems to me that most of Lewis's interwar criticisms, of the 'time cult' and so on, can be applied to these authors and probably others whose writings I have not yet found.

### Conclusions

The research I have tried to present here is obviously not complete. I have introduced an approach to Lewis's critical writings of the 1920s that cannot be exhausted in an essay of this length, and which needs to be taken further. But the main conclusions I would be glad to have the reader draw from what I have said here are that Lewis's political philosophy is sophisticated, that it is (some of it) worth defending, and that it is relevant today, especially in view of the recent revival of Bergsonism in political theory. There are still, or *again*, some philosophers whose sense of awe and wonder before a world 'pumped full of time' (*TWM* 162) inspires them to denigrate the individual intellect and its work. But today there are few or no critics working to keep this school in check. The position of 'enemy' is currently vacant. This is no doubt due in part to the increased specialization of academic political theory, which means that people tend only to write about what they like or agree with. Debates in political theory now take place only on a thick platform of shared presuppositions. Lewis's work, by contrast, speaks to us from an era when attacks could be launched across fundamental divides, and under the eyes of a larger popular readership.

The critique which I am saying Lewis offers consists of certain hesitations for political theorists to keep in mind when faced with arguments such as those discussed here. First, we should assess very carefully whether the scientific or metaphysical breakthroughs being cited really prove what the 'middleman' before us is claiming they prove, or whether it might in fact be the 'masked engine of some form of political fraud' (*TWM* 129). Secondly, we should be wary of those claiming that philosophy of time throws very much light on political questions; advocates of this view often seem, as well as guilty of the sorts of deception outlined above, bent on doing violence to the concept of the individual as a matter of priority. Thirdly, we should continue to be wary of ostensibly practical, large-scale political remedies which on closer inspection turn out to be seeking the deconstruction of hard-won concepts in order to entice us to accept the joys of slavery and submission, and to no obvious practical political gain. And finally, we should not neglect the possibility, at least, that the intellect is something '*besides*, behind, or over and above the Flux': perhaps not 'entirely free', as Lewis crudely puts it, but at least not at its mercy. Lewis is worried about the potential consequences of wars on the intellect, and I think he

is right to be: 'In killing the intellect,' he warns, 'men would certainly be killing the goose that lays the golden eggs [...] of intelligent endeavour' (*ABR* 330; see also 374) – which ought to chime with people whose profession and service to society depends upon their independence of mind. 'It is worth', as Lewis says, 'pausing to think whether this war is a very sensible one' (*ABR* 330; see also 374).

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> I am conscious of David A. Wragg's view that 'you can't do Lewis properly by limiting your range of reference to his literary works and books of cultural criticism'. See David A. Wragg, 'Advanced Introduction', *Wyndham Lewis Annual* XII (2005): 80-84, 80. I have not sought here to deal with Lewis's full range of thought, so I hope my limited focus might be permitted.

<sup>2</sup> See Jeffrey Meyers, *The Enemy: A Biography of Wyndham Lewis* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), 133. Hereafter Meyers, *WL*. See also *ABR* 434.

<sup>3</sup> For an interesting account of the progress of Lewis's political thought in the 1920s and 30s, see Alan Munton, 'Wyndham Lewis: From Proudhon to Hitler (and back): the Strange Political Journey of Wyndham Lewis', in Jennifer Birkett and Stan Smith (eds), *Right/Left/Right: Revolving Commitments: France and Britain 1929-1950* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008): 47-60.

<sup>4</sup> See for example D. G. Bridson, *The Filibuster: A Study of the Political Ideas of Wyndham Lewis* (London: Cassell, 1972), vii-viii (hereafter Bridson, *TF*); Alan Munton, 'The Politics of Wyndham Lewis', *PN Review* 1 (March 1976): 34-39; Fredric Jameson, *Fables of Aggression: Wyndham Lewis, the Modernist as Fascist* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1979); Meyers, *WL* 134-35; Reed Way Dasenbrock (in *ABR* 445); Andrzej Gąsiorek, "'The Cave-Men of the New Mental Wilderness': Wyndham Lewis and the Self in Modernity", *Wyndham Lewis Annual* VI (1999): 3-20; Gąsiorek, "'Jujitsu for the Governed"? Wyndham Lewis and the Problem of Power', *Wyndham Lewis Annual* VIII (2001): 30-49, 45 (hereafter Gąsiorek, *JG*); Gąsiorek, *Wyndham Lewis and Modernism* (Tavistock: Northcote House, 2004), 80-91 (hereafter Gąsiorek, *WL*); Munton, 'Wyndham Lewis: From Proudhon to Hitler (and back)'; and Gąsiorek, 'Wyndham Lewis on Art, Culture and Politics in the 1930s', in Andrzej Gąsiorek, Alice Reeve-Tucker, and Nathan Waddell (eds), *Wyndham Lewis and the Cultures of Modernity* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2011): 201-22, 205-8.

<sup>5</sup> The reader will probably be aware already of James Fox's recycling of it in his BBC documentary *British Masters* quite recently, for instance. See Paul Edwards, 'Big Englander', and James Fox, 'Response to Paul Edwards', *The Journal of Wyndham Lewis Studies* 2 (2011): 156-62 and 163-69. Previous efforts to countermand, qualify, and/or contextualize much of Lewis's political work include: Hugh Kenner, *Wyndham Lewis* (Norfolk: New Directions, 1954), 82; C. H. Sisson, 'The Politics of Wyndham Lewis', *Agenda*, Wyndham Lewis Special Number 7. 3-8. 1 (Autumn-Winter 1969-1970): 109-16, 115-16 (hereafter Sisson, *TP*); Bridson, *TF* 24, 64, 75, 84-5, and 104-18; Dasenbrock (in *ABR* 442-45); David Peters Corbett, 'History, Art and Theory in *Time and Western Man*', in Paul Edwards (ed.), *Volcanic Heaven: Essays on Wyndham Lewis's Painting & Writing* (Santa Rosa: Black Sparrow Press, 1996): 103-22; Gąsiorek, *JG* 33-4 and 39; and Munton, 'Wyndham Lewis: From Proudhon to Hitler (and back)'.

<sup>6</sup> Ivan Phillips, 'In His Bad Books: Wyndham Lewis and Fascism', *The Journal of Wyndham Lewis Studies* 2 (2011): 105-34.

<sup>7</sup> William M. Chace, 'On Lewis's Politics: The Polemics Polemically Answered', in Jeffrey Meyers (ed.), *Wyndham Lewis: A Revaluation* (London: Athlone, 1980): 149-65, 155. Bridson also highlights some of Lewis's failed predictions (Bridson, *TF* 278-79).

<sup>8</sup> Andrew Brighton, 'Post-War Establishment Distaste for Wyndham Lewis: Some Origins', in Paul Edwards (ed.), *Volcanic Heaven: Essays on Wyndham Lewis's Painting & Writing* (Santa Rosa: Black Sparrow, 1996): 169-83. For Brighton, Lewis is disliked for his 'failure to lie about power and culture [...]; he questioned the political and cultural assumptions of the increasingly triumphant professional classes' (p. 180).

<sup>9</sup> I consider Gąsiorek, *JG* the best candidate for an exception to this rough rule. Gąsiorek's intention is, though, to clarify and contextualize Lewis's changing critique of liberalism and his account of the state, and not to offer that critique or account to political theorists as a contribution to current debates. See Gąsiorek, *JG* 30.

<sup>10</sup> See Bridson, *TF* 278-88. For a note on the limitations of Bridson's survey, see Phillips, 'In His Bad Books', 128, note 3.

<sup>11</sup> See Gąsiorek, *WL* 80-91 and Gąsiorek, "'The Cave-Men of the New Mental Wilderness'".

<sup>12</sup> *The Art of Being Ruled* has been described as a 'discursive and associative rather than a reasoned and disciplined critique of politics, art and society' (Meyers, *WL* 132). Lewis acknowledged the difficulty of approaching *TWM* (see *RA* 207).

<sup>13</sup> Sisson writes: 'What Lewis was doing, in *The Art of Being Ruled*, was not so much indicating the lines of a new society as defining the position of the intellectual in relation to it' (Sisson, *TP* 114). *The Art of Being Ruled* does not, then, stand in the tradition of Plato, More, *et al.* sketched by Nicholas Greenwood Onuf in 'Imagined Republics', *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 19. 3 (1994): 315-37.

<sup>14</sup> For a discussion of the impact of Lewis's style on his 'philosophical' method, see Sisson, *TP* 110-13. See also Marshall McLuhan, 'Lewis's Prose Style', in Meyers (ed.), *Wyndham Lewis*: 64-7; and, most recently, Gąsiorek, *WL* 7-12.

<sup>15</sup> See *RA* 47-62. See also Wyndham Lewis, *Enemy Salvoes: Selected Literary Criticism*, ed. C. J. Fox (London: Vision Press, 1975), 41-9.

<sup>16</sup> See for example Paul Edwards, 'The Apes of God: Form and Meaning', in Meyers (ed.), *Wyndham Lewis*: 133-48; Sisson, *TP* 110-13; McLuhan, 'Lewis's Prose Style', in Meyers (ed.), *Wyndham Lewis*: 64-7; and Gąsiorek, *WL* 7-12.

<sup>17</sup> This is also one reason why I have not extended the present study by discussing *The Childermass*. See *ABR* 432-4. The other reason is that Alan Munton has already provided that discussion: Alan Munton, 'A Reading of *The Childermass*', in Meyers (ed.), *Wyndham Lewis*: 120-32. Page Smith thinks it 'impossible to separate [Lewis's] message from his mode of conveying it'. See Page Smith, 'Wyndham Lewis's *America and Cosmic Man*', *Wyndham Lewis Annual* XII (2005): 6-12, 10.

<sup>18</sup> Reed Way Dasenbrock also discusses this (see *ABR* 437-38).

<sup>19</sup> See for example John Mullarkey's editorial introduction ('*La Philosophie nouvelle*, or Change in philosophy') to *The New Bergson* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1999): 1-13.

<sup>20</sup> For a good overview of how 'Bergsonist' themes are discussed in *Time and Western Man*, see Paul Edwards's 'Afterword' (*TWM* 466-74).

<sup>21</sup> See Richard Cork, *Vorticism and Abstract Art in the Machine Age – Volume 1: Origins and Development* (London: Gordon Fraser, 1976), 5.

<sup>22</sup> Robert C. Grogin, 'Rationalists and Anti-Rationalists in pre-World War I France: The Bergson-Benda Affair', *Historical Reflections / Réflexions Historiques* 5. 2 (1978): 223-31.

<sup>23</sup> See Geoffrey Wagner, *Wyndham Lewis: A Portrait of the Artist as the Enemy* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957), 9 and *passim*; Bridson, *TF* 62-63; and Ray Nichols, *Treason, Tradition and the Intellectual: Julien Benda and Political Discourse* (Lawrence: The Regents Press of Kansas, 1978), 15 and 88.

<sup>24</sup> Grogin, 'Rationalists and Anti-Rationalists', 224-5 and 227.

<sup>25</sup> T. E. Hulme, *Further Speculations*, ed. Sam Hynes (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1955), xiii.

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- <sup>26</sup> T. E. Hulme, 'Bergson's Theory of Art' (written c. 1911/1912), in Karen Csengeri (ed.), *The Collected Writings of T. E. Hulme* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994): 190-204, 193.
- <sup>27</sup> For a good summary of Hulme's changing view of Bergson, see Henry Mead, 'T. E. Hulme, Bergson, and The New Philosophy', *European Journal of English Studies* 12. 3 (2008): 245-60, 255.
- <sup>28</sup> T. E. Hulme, *Speculations: Essays on Humanism and the Philosophy of Art*, ed. Herbert Read (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1924). For Read's explanation of how the collection was compiled, see xi-xv.
- <sup>29</sup> Mullarkey, 'La Philosophie nouvelle, or Change in philosophy', 1. See also A. E. Pilkington, *Bergson and his Influence: A Reassessment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976).
- <sup>30</sup> The authors discussed here do use the term 'flux' occasionally: see for example William E. Connolly, *A World of Becoming* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2011), 102 (hereafter Connolly, *WB*). In general, however, they eschew it. This may be partly attributable to Connolly's associating the term 'flux' with attacks from some of his critics (Connolly, *WB* 44 and 72).
- <sup>31</sup> Matthew J. Moore, 'Political Theory Today: Results of a National Survey', APSA 2009 Toronto Meeting Paper, 8. Available for consultation at SSRN: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=1463648>
- <sup>32</sup> William E. Connolly, 'The Complexity of Intention', *Critical Inquiry* 37 (2011): 791-98, 793. Hereafter Connolly, *CI*.
- <sup>33</sup> William E. Connolly, *The Fragility of Things: Self-Organizing Processes, Neoliberal Fantasies, and Democratic Activism* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2013), 199. Hereafter Connolly, *FT*.
- <sup>34</sup> Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A New Political Ecology of Things* (Duke University Press, 2010), xiii and 76-81. Hereafter Bennett, *VM*.
- <sup>35</sup> I am inferring this from his references and acknowledgements (Connolly, *WB* 178-79 and Connolly, *FT* 197-99).
- <sup>36</sup> Nathan Widder, *Reflections on Time and Politics* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008), ix. Hereafter Widder, *RTP*.
- <sup>37</sup> For Widder's summary see Widder, *RTP* ix-x.
- <sup>38</sup> Lewis was not the first critic of political 'Bergsonism' – though it is worth observing that he got there before Isaiah Berlin. Berlin accused Bergson in 1935 of being responsible for the 'abandonment of rigorous critical standards and the substitution in their place of casual emotional responses' – which Lewis had already pointed out in *ABR* nine years earlier. See Isaiah Berlin, 'Impressionist Philosophy', *London Mercury* 32. 191 (1935): 489-90, cited in Mullarkey (ed.), *The New Bergson*, 5.

<sup>39</sup> I have detailed some of this more thoroughly in an article called 'William E. Connolly's "politics of complexity": A Critique' which is forthcoming in *The Review of Politics*. The anonymous reviewers of an early draft of my article agreed that all my discussion of Wyndham Lewis and quotation from his work was clouding the critique of Connolly, where their primary interest lay. So they recommended that for the redraft Lewis be more or less removed. I have nevertheless explicated the passages in which Lewis's voice has been preserved in my notes to that article.

<sup>40</sup> Andrzej Gasiorek, 'Wyndham Lewis and Politics', in *Wyndham Lewis (1882–1957)* [exhibition catalogue] (Madrid: Fundación Juan March: 2010): 67-75, 70. For an interesting discussion of the roots of Lewis's thinking about the 'ego', see Philip Head, 'Lewis and 'the Political'', *Wyndham Lewis Annual* XII (2005): 29-41, 33-37. Tyrus Miller, 'No Man's Land: Wyndham Lewis and Cultural Revolution', *Wyndham Lewis Annual* XII (2005): 12-28, 26.

<sup>41</sup> To argue about the 'freedom' of intellectual processes might, for Lewis, be to make the kind of error that R. G. Collingwood calls the 'Fallacy of Misplaced Argument'. See *The New Leviathan: or Man, Society, Civilization and Barbarism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 25.

<sup>42</sup> See Mullarkey (ed.), *The New Bergson*, 2 and Widder, RTP 1. Deleuze's interpretation of Bergson is filled with his own trademark terms – *difference*, *multiplicity*, *assemblage*, and so on – but he also retains the term *flux*. See for instance Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (New York: Zone Books, 1991), 80.

<sup>43</sup> See also Connolly, *WB* 106, 119, 138, and 165-66, and Connolly, *FT* 170-73.

<sup>44</sup> See also Lewis's earlier, rather rougher (and more directly insulting) diagnoses in *B1* 129-30.

<sup>45</sup> See Michael J. Shapiro, 'Time, Disjuncture, and Democratic Citizenship', in Aryeh Botwinick and William E. Connolly (eds), *Democracy and Vision: Sheldon Wolin and the Vicissitudes of the Political* (Princeton, NJ and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001): 232-55.

<sup>46</sup> William E. Connolly, *Neuropolitics: Thinking, Culture, Speed* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 144-45.

<sup>47</sup> See also the lesson concerning 'time' that Connolly takes from Prigogine (Connolly, *WB* 20).

<sup>48</sup> Such as brain processes (see Connolly, *CI* 792).

<sup>49</sup> Alvin Toffler, 'Foreword: Science and Change', in Ilya Prigogine, *Order out of Chaos: Man's New Dialogue with Nature* (London: Fontana, 1985): xi-xxvi, xxix.