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THE PORTFOLIO OF FIFTEEN DRAWINGS BY WYNDHAM LEWIS 1919.

A Historical, Technical and Critical

Analysis.

Thesis researched and compiled by:

CATHERINE WALLACE.

Department of Art History, University of St. Andrews.

For M.Litt (Gallery Studies) Degree, 1989.



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.

I would like to thank the following people in relation to the production of this thesis.

To Prof. Martin Kemp, for having had the courage to take me on as a student.

To Walter Michel for sharing his endless knowledge of Lewis and giving access to his private collection .

To Robert Dalrymple for his expert knowledge on the technical aspects of this work.

To the National Library of Scotland's photographic department for their patience.

To Cathy Henderson at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, Austin, Texas for her help with finding and photocopying relevant work.

To numerous galleries and museums assistants for providing access to and advice on their collections.

To Chris Heeley for being so supportive and encouraging and for providing me with faith in the capabilities of the female intellect.

To Craig Downie for having high standards and encouraging me to reach them.

And last but by no means least, to Tom Normand for giving purpose and meaning to my study in St. Andrews and for pathing the way for my future .

This thesis is Dedicated to
Joanne Copley
who died before her time.

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is to explore the nature of the portfolio of Fifteen Drawings by Wyndham Lewis as a work of graphic art. Questions regarding the publishing, printing and criticism of the portfolio are the basis for the discussion in this thesis.

In chapter one the nature of the Ovid Press (which published and printed the portfolio), is placed into a historical context by making some comparisons with other contemporary British private presses. Lewis's portfolio is then set in context by analyzing some other Ovid Press productions. They included portfolios by Gaudier-Brzeska and Edward Wadsworth.

The printing of the portfolio of Fifteen Drawings is then analyzed with an accompanying description of the techniques and processes involved. Historical evidence is used to illuminate Lewis's involvement in the printing process and his dealings with the Ovid Press in general.

Chapter three involves an analysis of the critical reception of the portfolio. This explores the currency of art criticism and discusses to what extent the critics fully understood the nuances of Lewis's art, c.1920.

The fourth chapter offers an interpretation regarding Lewis's choice of the fifteen drawings included in the folio. This requires a detailed analysis of the themes of Lewis's art from 1912-1919 as the drawings in the portfolio offer a retrospective of his art covered by this period. In conclusion the importance of the portfolio to both Lewis's own career and

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INTRODUCTION

In comparison to many of his contemporaries there are few visual works that remain in existence by Wyndham Lewis, even though there are photographs and other points of reference to a lost archive of his work. This lack of 'actual' material has given rise to a gross underestimation of Lewis's powers as a visual artist, and, because more of his literature exists than his art, greater emphasis has been given to his abilities as a polemical writer.

Lewis produced three portfolios of prints of his drawings in his lifetime, Timon of Athens 1913, the Fifteen Drawings 1919 and, 30 Personalities and a Self-Portrait 1932, few copies of which remain in existence. These rare documents of Lewis's skills as a draftsman have barely been researched, and this thesis, in offering a detailed analysis of the portfolio of Fifteen Drawings 1919, attempts to redress the balance. The copy of the portfolio used for the purposes of this research is held in the National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh, and remains in its complete state with all fifteen prints represented.

An initial analysis of the circumstances of the portfolio's production is essential. It provides an evaluation of the portfolio's significance in the artistic avant-garde of Britain in 1920. It is known that Lewis was not the only artist to publish a portfolio of prints through the Ovid Press. Yet, it is evident that there were very few publishers other than Rodker, producing this kind of work in Britain. In this way the Ovid Press can be seen as a unique phenomenon.

Lewis's own production, the Fifteen Drawings portfolio, can also be seen as unique in the context of the Ovid Press publications. Principally it became the only portfolio to use such a complex and diverse number of printing techniques.

Although the portfolio of Gaudier Brzeska's drawings (which was produced prior to Lewis's folio) ,involved similar techniques to the Fifteen Drawings, Brzeska's portfolio was produced as a posthumous collection . It is therefore, of greater significance that Lewis had the opportunity to become directly involved with the printing of his portfolio . Hence it can be judged as a complete work of art in its own right, since the artist could dictate, to a certain degree, the quality and nature of each print.

As Lewis's letters to Rodker and Sidney Schiff in 1919 show, Lewis was undertaking many projects as well as the portfolio at this time. Lewis received some criticism in the press for this work, (much of it being taken up with the contents of his polemical writing, The Caliph's Design of (1919). The main precedent to the portfolio criticism was that of the war paintings completed by Lewis and his post-Vorticist associates in 1918-19. By looking at these criticisms, the reception of the portfolio of Fifteen Drawings can be placed in context.

The criticism of Lewis's portfolio at the time, was on the whole favourable, but it is clear that Lewis was subject to the limits of other peoples knowledge of his work. The significance of this portfolio in terms of Lewis's own career can only be fully understood with hindsight. In giving a detailed analysis both in terms of their theme and formal technique, the drawings can be evaluated in a broader sense than they were in 1920.

Every work of art is open to interpretation and the one offered in this thesis as to the meaning of the portfolio (to both Lewis, and its audience), is inconclusive. What has been done, however, is to try and place each drawing in the portfolio into the stylistic and thematic development of Lewis's art. This is achieved by comparing the drawings represented in the portfolio with similar works by Lewis known to have been completed at the same time. The conclusion from this method of analysis, is that Lewis himself was evaluating the direction of his visual work from 1912-1919.

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CHAPTER ONE

The Ovid Press and Its Uniqueness in the History of the Private Press.

Introduction

One of the prime motivations for an ambitious artist like Lewis, in making a portfolio of prints, was to sell his art to a wider audience. The commercial art market in 1919 was limited to the exhibitions arena. The usual outlets were still very formal occasions such as the Royal Academy shows and the main alternative was to exhibit in a private gallery with an agent. Lewis's main agent in 1919 was William Marchant, who was director of the Goupil Gallery, and who gave Lewis his first 'one man show' after the War entitled , Guns, Feb.1919. Although Guns was a moderate success and generated interest in his work (especially from the American collector, John Quinn), Lewis's success needed to be sustained.

Lewis held a second one man exhibition, Drawings, at the Adelphi Galleries in Jan.1920 which included life studies, such as L'Ingenue, [Fig.1] executed c.1919, but this exhibition did little for Lewis's artistic promotion.

Evidence of the poor attendance to the exhibition can be found in a letter from T.S.Eliot to Sydney Schiff; Schiff had suggested the idea of Lewis having an exhibition of his most recent drawings:

"The show which Lewis put on exhibition at Rutter's at your suggestion, had some extraordinarily fine drawings in it. I hope it will attract notice. It is a pity that the room is not bigger. I went on the first day, and there were no visitors. Wadsworth's show at the Leicester Galleries was on the other hand crowded. With many more drawings, and a

conspicuous gallery (I believe they are skillful advertisers) and more illustrative subjects - The Black Country- it seems to go well, and might attract more people than Lewis's, which would only interest people who are really interested in art.(1)" [Fig.2]

Possibly due to the failure of the Adelphi exhibition, Lewis created the idea of publishing some of the drawings most representative of his recent work . Lewis could only have achieved this with a 'private press,' his work was not particularly well known outside the 'avant-garde' world of art and would therefore be seen as a financial risk to any well known or larger company. Although Lewis had drawings published in Art and Letters, the quality of printing was poor, and they were merely seen as 'incidentals' to the text. The private press therefore, provided a worthy outlet for an artist such as Lewis. John Rodker's Ovid Press was not a unique operation in the printing world, but his press was created in a period in which the private press was at its most prolific. His press therefore faced fierce competition as general standards in printing reached a zenith .

In placing the prints of the Fifteen Drawings and the work of John Rodker and his Ovid Press in historical context, it is necessary to first set the work of the press within the tradition of the private press. This is achieved by making some comparisons with its relevant contemporaries in the twentieth century revival of the art of printing.

The Private press.

The development of the 'private press' can be placed within the general revival of earlier printing techniques and processes. It was motivated by three main aims; firstly, to bring about a return to the high quality of book printing and illustration, (felt by many artists and printmakers to have deteriorated by the end of the 18th century, and to have continued to decline throughout the 19th century). Secondly, a desire to return to the use of the "hand -pulled press" which had by the end of the 19th century been outmoded by the mechanical rotary press. Thirdly, to publish original pieces of literature and art, which would have either been passed over because of their limited appeal, or mechanically produced, and hence down graded.

John Martin has provided an early definition of what a 'private press' actually meant:

"By private-printed books, the Editor means to designate such only as were not intended by the writers for sale, and the circulation of which has been confined entirely to their friends and connections, or to those who took an interest in the matter contained in them."(2)

This was a fairly strict definition, and was written for a survey of privately printed books which did not include works "printed for sale". Later in the 19th century, it seems this definition of what a 'private press' was primarily aimed at, was no longer held as true:

" Whether the copies issued were merely intended for the use of an ecclesiastical order or to be presented to high personages, whether they were exposed for sale or reserved for exchange,.....makes no essential difference. The books were produced under the screw and the lever of a private and not of a public press. Herein lies the difference."(3)

In this definition there is "no essential difference" between the products of the press being printed for sale, or purely for the

benefit of friends. It seems that this was an arguable point, however, even in the late 19th century:

"For a press to be private a double qualification seems necessary: the books it prints must not be obtainable by any chance purchaser who offers a price for them and the owner must print for his own pleasure and not work for hire for other people."(4)

Although the definitions of what a 'private press' varied, the one that became of prime importance by the beginning of the 20th century was the use of the hand-press, as opposed to the increased use of fully mechanized techniques, used for public printing.

The advantages and disadvantages of using a hand press as opposed to a machine run press are described in Tomkinson's

Bibliography of Modern Presses:

"In the trade printing offices the hand press has been superseded entirely by printing machines, driven by power at a speed which a hand press could never approach. Nevertheless it is still held by printers most competent to judge that printing with a hand-press is the best training for printing with a machine. Whatever improvements have been made in the printing plant within the last hundred and twenty-five years, with the exception of such devices as may give the more uniform rolling necessary for printing half-tone blocks, and especially for more exact register in colour work, have all been directed to the saving of time and physical labour rather to any improvement in the work done."(5)

A further definition of the 'private press' was much more specific, in terms of its actual location:

"In fact, a private press is a press reserved for personal and not for public use, patronized held, owned, or hired for the occasion by a private person at his own house, or by a congregation in, or close to, their buildings."(6)

This early description points out how important it was for the actual venue or set of buildings in which the press operated to were also private. It was logical that the press was not only 'private' in the sense that it was funded by independent means, but that it produced works mainly for a private audience, and that the place of production was also privately owned.

The Ovid Press and some comparative British Presses.

One way in which Rodkers Ovid Press, could be called unique, was in its production of so many purely original visual works (7). The only presses which had a consistent attachment to one or more artists were: The St. Dominic's Press (1916-1937) which published the visual and written work of the sculptor and calligrapher Eric Gill(8). Judging by these publications, the St. Dominic's press had very strong Catholic allegiances. This also extended to publishing books that dealt with social, moral and political questions. They produced a series of 10 Welfare Handbooks, from Town Planning: a translation by Fr. Vincent McNabb of The De Regimine Principium of St. Thomas Aquinas with an editorial note by Hilary Pepler, to Birth Control written by Gill himself in 1918, and Dress ,An Essay in Masculine Vanity also written by Gill with wood engravings.

The Nonesuch Press (1923-1936) printed work by Paul Nash, in 1924 such as Genesis: The First Chapter of the First Book of Moses in the Authorized version. (9)

The Beaumont Press (1917-?) which also printed the illustrated work of Paul Nash for books like Loyalties: A book of poems by John Drinkwater. 1918 (10). This press also produced Images of War: a book of poems by Richard Aldington illustrated by Paul Nash, dated St. Georges Day , March 1919 .(11) Other artists and poets published by this press included Herbert Read with his Eclogues Dec 20th 1919 with cover designs and 10 decorations by Ethelbert White. The latter artist, Ethelbert White, was representative of the wood engraving artists who were mainly employed to do the illustration work and cover designs for these books.

The two founding members of the Wood Engraving Society, Robert Gibbings and Noel Rooke, became associated with a press that they more or less made their own, "The Golden Cockere] Press". This press was established in 1920 by Harold M. Taylor, but Gibbings later bought the press in January 1924. From then on much of the illustration work was done by Gibbings and his friends. This press represented the kind of style and subject that the Wood-Engraving society perpetuated, principally that of the traditional English Landscape.

This tradition of landscape, albeit with a post-impressionist slant, was also represented by the work of such Camden Town Group artists as Charles Ginner, Harold Gilman and John and Paul Nash, in publications such as Art and Letters. The style consisted mainly of clear, sharply cut lines, that had a flowing quality, and defined a high standard of craftsmanship. Unlike their German counterparts whose Expressionist wood-engravings of the Die Brücke and Blaue Reiter groups were governed by a much harsher, uneven use of line .(12).

The English illustrated books were not particularly challenging or controversial in their own right, unlike their Russian contemporaries, for example Old Time Love, 1912, and A Game in Hell 1912.(13) However, one of the few private presses in Britain which was set up to publish work that was not orthodox was the Egoist Press. This originated from the small company that was set up in 1913 to run The Egoist; a philosophical and literary monthly review which folded in 1919.

The only other Press that really challenged the public with contemporary literary material, and therefore can be seen as the only true rival to the Ovid Press, was the Hogarth Press (1917-1938). It produced the work of writers such as, Virginia Woolf,

Katherine Mansfield, Sidney Woolf, T.S.Eliot, E.M.Forster and Maxim Gorky.(14) The Hogarth Press was set up by Leonard and Virginia Woolf to promote the art and work of their Bloomsbury friends. Although the motivation for printing books with texts and images seen as a whole, was within the tradition of Morris and Co., it had nothing like the same quality or high finish of the connoisseurs of the Aesthetic movement.

The epitome of early Hogarth Press productions was Kew Gardens by Virginia Woolf published in 1919, with illustrations by Vanessa Bell, which summed up the Bloomsbury ethos. There was only one actual wood cut in the book,[Fig.4] but all the written passages were surrounded by suitably vague and 'organic' waves of the brush, evoking the flowery presence of Kew. [Fig.3]. Again there were significant differences in this rather crude publication, with its hand painted cover, and that of the refined quality of the Morris company's productions. It was clearly put together in a haphazard way and was of generally 'poor quality'. However, the principles of the 19th Century Aesthetic movement persisted, and was inherent in productions such as Roger Fry's Twelve Original Woodcuts of 1922,[Fig.5 and 6].

Aswell as having their own work printed, artists associated with the Hogarth Press, including Duncan Grant and William Nicholson, provided designs for the book covers. These were seen as a specialty, and some of the more extravagant covers were imported from Paris, Florence and Prague.

The St.Dominic's Press was founded January 1916 by H.D.C.Pepler. His intention was to attempt to earn his living solely by printing work using the hand process. In order to do this his press was run on a semi-professional basis, unlike Rodker, whose press was run strictly on a personal basis and was

not intended to be financially rewarding. This made the Ovid Press unique, in that, unlike the St. Dominic's, the Hogarth and other presses which were semi-public, Rodker's press never became a truly commercial concern.

The most successful of all Rodker's productions was Wadsworth's Black Country of which 450 copies were printed . Rodker went as far as advertising his Press and its publications well in advance of them actually being printed. In the March\April Edition of The Egoist in 1919 he set out an initial advertisement. [Fig.7] He was obviously hoping to have some prospective buyers in the readership of this monthly magazine, which regularly published the literary work of Lewis, T.S.Eliot, Pound and ,indeed, Rodker's own poems. In this advertisement Rodker already had his first two prospective titles, these were i) Twenty Drawings from the Note-books of H.Gaudier Brzeska and ii) the Lewis folio, Fifteen Designs by P.Wyndham Lewis. The rest of the works were described as being "New Poems" by Pound, Eliot, and John Rodker.

In one sense the Ovid Press was set up by Rodker as an amateur venture, it seems only to have existed as a vehicle for publishing the work of his friends and himself: "His object in founding it was to learn the technique of printing and to produce the work of his friends."(15)

Still, Rodker did have some professional intentions, he obviously took the matter very seriously and was aiming at a certain quality of work. As he advertised: "Special attention will be paid to binding, and all the work of the press will be hand-printed on hand -made paper"(16) This would obviously not produce a high 'finish', which was now being accomplished on machine run presses, but aimed at maintaining a certain integrity

of the 'print'. However, the Ovid Press was certainly not amateur in the standard of the work of the artists and writers Rodker chose to print. Of course, standards and quality can be and were confused at the time with the modern nature of the art printed. The aims of the Press are often quoted: "to bring before the public work that was then considered advanced.(sic)"(17) This in itself would provide a certain financial risk. Although becoming well known, none of these artists and writers were particularly 'easy' to comprehend. In this sense Rodker was gifted in having the vision to publish such radical work.

It is difficult to ascertain where Rodker found the financial resources for all the Ovid Press publications. It was probably mostly his own money, and certainly the letter-press photo-mechanical process (which he chose to reproduce much of the work), although not particularly advanced, proved to be expensive.

In a letter written to Rodker, asking payment for some work, Wadsworth alluded to the indefinite financial organization of the Ovid Press:

"As to payment- It will do when it is convenient to you - and as to how much, I don't know. As neither your press nor myself are organized business concerns it is difficult to think of a suitable figure"(18)

The only way to estimate the possible cost of setting up a 'private press' such as Rodker's is to compare it with the more documented history of a contemporary press such as the Hogarth Press. According to Mary E.Gaither's, history of the Hogarth Press, Leonard and Virginia Woolf, founded and ran the press originally as a hobby. They approached, "The Excelsior Printing Supply Co", where:

"they bought a small handpress, complete with instruction booklet, and some old type face for £19.5s.5d. They set the press up in their dining room at Hogarth House in Paradise Road, Richmond, hence the name Hogarth Press."(19)

However, Rodker's expenditure would have been considerably greater than £20. He had to rent his space in order to carry out the printing and his press, considering the size of both the Brzeska and Lewis folio, would have been fairly large. According to Tomkinson the type of face for the printing was "Caslon Old Face, 14 point." The press used was mentioned in a letter from Wadsworth to Rodker:

"I am so glad the design looks alright and shall be most interested to see the Brzeska - I think you have been remarkably quick with it- fairly hot work these days pulling a Columbia about the room!"(20)

Although possibly purchased by second hand auction, a Columbian Press would have been more expensive than the press used by Leonard and Virginia Woolf. Rodker's was clearly a more cost intensive venture.

The Ovid Press Publications

There were clearly problems in the nature of Rodker setting up his press in order to produce the work of 'his friends'. Their work was 'considered advanced' and represented the current avant-garde in British art and literature. It was, therefore, simultaneously bound to place Rodker in financial difficulty. Consequently, the Press was never a financial success and it was forced to close by Spring 1921. Despite this, in two and a half years he had managed to produce eight pieces of original work by some of the most provocative, modern artists in Britain.

The relationship between artist and publisher proved to be mainly constructive. The earliest collaboration on the Press was between Rodker and Wadsworth, when the latter was asked to design

the "Trade-mark" for the Ovid Press, [Fig.8].In letters between Wadsworth and Rodker the design for the trade mark is discussed, and Wadsworth enclosed a woodcut which he later called "the little Lion and Unicorn design":(21)

"Is the enclosed (a woodcut) the sort of thing or is it too complicated and devoid of literalness- do you want any literary idea as a matter of fact or merely a decorative trade mark."(sic).(22)

Even though Wadsworth suggested there was no literary significance in his design, Rodker could well have been alluding to "Ovid" the Greek writer and his series of stories concerning the metamorphosis of people into animals, hence the Lion and the Unicorn.

After Rodker accepted the design, Wadsworth sold the rights of ownership for the sole use of the Ovid Press for a "couple of guineas". The design then became Rodker's property and Wadsworth could not exhibit it without Rodker's permission.(23)

In addition to producing his highly successful Black Country portfolio in 1920,(at the same time as Lewis was preparing his Fifteen Drawings portfolio), Wadsworth was working on a set of Alphabet of Initial letters (omitting X and Z) which were to be used in Ovid Press publications , for example, as decorations to T.S.Eliot's Ara Vus Prec . The letters are in a semi-abstract post-vortlicist style, and were reproduced by a process engraving technique. They were certainly a good advertisement for the Ovid Press, and the kind of art it was to promote. [Fig.9] Wadsworth finished the designs in October 1919, and was pleased with the results:

"Dear Rodker,
All the initials are finished, I think, very successful"(24)

The prints were obviously very important as the South Kensington Museum requested a copy and suggested they should exhibit them:

"My dear Rodker,
The Department of Engraving ,Illustration and Design" at South Kensington Museum have asked me if I can let them have a set of proofs on good paper of your Initial Letters. I told them that they were your property and that I should have to ask you if you would present them with a set. They are very keen to have them I think and as they would be exhibited there I suppose it would advertise the Ovid Press."(25)

Wadsworth then went on to suggest a possible lay-out scheme for the letters, which is in fact how they were printed, i.e. in the "middle of the platten - with say half inch between each letter, so they can be cut up for mounting".(26)

It is evident from these letters, and those of Lewis to Rodker, that Wadsworth did much to promote the potential of the Ovid press to his fellow artists. Wadsworth had given Lewis a prospectus of the Ovid Press in Spring 1919. In an undated letter written from Endsleigh Palace Hospital, where Lewis was suffering from influenza (which had turned into pneumonia), he mentions his plans for the Fifteen Drawings portfolio for the first time:

"We could then have a talk about the 15 drawings. I hope your press will be a great success. I am sure it will. Have you got your plant yet and when are you starting="(sic).(27)

Lewis became involved with Rodker not only for this project but for his next paper Tyros. Whether or not Rodker was intending to publish this review is not clear as there was, in 1919, great discussion between Lewis and Rodker on the subject of the right paper for his "Review":

"Dear Rodker. I am afraid that for the next few days I shall not be able to get to Belsize Park, though I should like to discuss other matters with you about my project for Review; also to see your printing mechanic and learn more about your processes"(28)

There is a later letter, which refers more specifically to the issue of the paper, and to the financing of this venture.

"I have a new plan for the first number of the Review also I have started my economic hunt; and want before going away

for the summer to get things under way. The paper should come out first thing in the Autumn= Better purge them again shortly. I will let you know what I have thought out, and how much money I can probably get.....P.S. I am seeing a friend of mine who has a large stationary business, and hope to get a cheaper type of paper.(29)

However, Tyros was eventually published by Harriot Weaver's Egoist Press who had also published Tarr for Lewis. Although Lewis had Rodker and the Ovid Press in mind as a possible publisher for the arts review Tyro, it never became a reality because the Ovid Press folded by early 1921.

Rodker had aswell as having previous publishing experience, also had his own work published. For instance he had a series of his poems published privately in 1914. He also undertook review work. Eliot wrote to him in November 1919, asking him to do a review for The Egoist:

"Would you care to exercise your critical acumen by doing an article of any length or brevity you please a propos of a number of volumes of verse (inc.Fletcher ,Sitwells) for the Egoist?"(30)

Lewis obviously valued Rodkers knowledge of printing techniques. Rodker is stated in Tomkinson's bibliography as being the chief printer at the Ovid Press though he did have a "little occasional help." Rodker did not have a secure formal knowledge of printing and his capabilities were developed essentially by 'hands on' experience.

Wadsworth was probably the main source of extra assistance , along with the Ovid Press printing technician (name unknown). Wadsworth took an early interest in the first production of the Press which was a posthumous production of a selection from Gaudier Brzeska's sketch books. It is evident from Wadsworth's letters to Rodker that the Brzeska portfolio had been produced "remarkably quick".(31)

The Portfolio was entitled 20 Drawings from the Note Books of H.Gaudier Brzeska, [Fig.10]. In the inside cover on a separate piece of paper the drawings are grouped into three sections: 1910 Heads; 1911 Torso; Other Drawings circa 1914. In fact, the drawings fit into a series of subject categories. The 1910 Heads, consist of two pages with an assortment of different heads and views on each page, [Fig.11 and 12]. The drawings are probably from direct observation, but their interest lies in the treatment of abstract patterns and shapes from an aerial perspective.

The 1911 Torso [Fig.13] stands out as a sketch in a classical style made up of cross hatched lines, and probably originating as an outline for a sculpture using the life model.

Two animal drawings are included, [Fig.14 and 15] both of lions and which represented a style of simple line drawing that Brzeska also applied to figure drawings. [Fig.16].

Many drawings by Brzeska in this style were being printed in the art journals of the time. There are eight of 'types', more in the class of caricature than realistic interpretation, though they were obviously taken from real life observation: women walking in the street, women carrying their shopping, [Fig.17] men loading a cart, [Fig.18] and a more classical interpretation of the Mother and Child, [Fig.19]. These drawings were probably executed within one or two minutes, but even in the rapidity of the line they display a confidence and assurance of form. They do not reflect the influence of Vorticism, yet they do bring to mind Picasso's later 'neo-classic' period of Mother and Child drawings from c.1924.

Rodker does include in this selection a series of "Cubist/Vorticist drawings" which can be seen as drawings for

sculpture. Two of these are mask like totemic heads and reflect African and tribal influences. They are very much working drawings but the image becomes an object in itself, and therefore works strongly as a drawing ,[Fig.20 and 21].

Some of these drawings, indicate how the 'primitive' nature of the art in which he was interested influenced his own perception of the figure.[Fig.22 and 23]

This portfolio was the technological precedent to the Lewis folio in terms of its use of the line, and half-tone block technique. In general, this technique was successful mainly because the original drawings were probably small and had to be enlarged for print production. Hence, much of the detail of the original would have been distorted by being enlarged. Other problems would have arisen in that because the drawings were not all completed on the same quality of paper, some had much harsher tonal backgrounds.

All these drawings by Brzeska were reproduced courtesy of Ezra Pound, except for "dancing figure " (owned by Nina Hamnett). This indicates an earlier collaboration between Pound and Rodker and ,indeed, Pound may have given Rodker the idea to publish Gaudier's drawings in this way. Pound was also, of course, the owner of the drawings. Moreover it was in April 1919 that he presented his copy of Lewis's earlier portfolio Timon of Athens to the Victoria and Albert Museum. Evidently Pound was considering the printing of portfolios as a possible means of getting his friend's works noticed. He was probably also instrumental in introducing Rodker to the American dealer John Quinn, who certainly received copies of a later production of Eliot's poetry Ara Vus Prec published by the Ovid Press.(32)

Eliot commented on the Gaudier portfolio in a letter dated

1st June 1919:

"....It occurred to me after leaving that I had most rudely forgotten to thank you for the Gaudier. It was good of you to send it to me, and it seems to me very well done. I should have preferred slightly thicker paper."

Wadsworth received his copy of the Brzeska folio in May and gives

Rodker his opinion on it in a letter dated 26th May 1919:

"Dear Rodker,.....I saw the portfolio at Nina Hamsworth's that day and I think it is excellent in every way - couldn't in fact be better except that perhaps it would have been a more substantial object to handle had one side of the folio been backed with cardboard to give rigidity - this is a mere detail and I daresay an impossible one to carry out at the price but it did just occur to me afterwards (not when I was looking at the reproductions) and thought I might mention it in any case it might be useful for future occasions. I think you are very much to be congratulated on your debut and I wish you every success."(sic)

This was a very important letter in relation to the Lewis folio as it was evident that Rodker later took Wadsworth's advice concerning the backing of the prints in the folio. In the Fifteen Drawings portfolio, the prints have been reinforced with a strong blue/grey mounting board and the cover of the portfolio has been strengthened. In this way Lewis certainly benefited from Wadsworth's contributions and comments, which Rodker took seriously. This, of course, affected the price of the Lewis portfolio in comparison to the Brzeska; the latter was sold at 15 shillings and the Fifteen Drawings portfolio was sold at 2 guineas. This price of 2 guineas must be seen in relation to the price Wadsworth received for just the one woodcut design and the rights of ownership. However, in comparison to a later portfolio of lithographs, The Black Country produced by Wadsworth, and sold at one guinea, the Lewis folio still seems expensive. Yet two aspects of their production have to be taken into consideration. Firstly, Wadsworth used the lithographic technique, without the

use of colour which was a cheaper process to use. Secondly there were 450 copies of the Wadsworth folio produced, whereas only 250 were produced of the Fifteen Drawings . It was obviously less expensive to produce a work on paper in greater numbers as this would result in a lower unit cost.

Commenting on the Gaudier folio, Lewis acknowledges that: "It is very successful; Top-hole ,in fact,as the Prince of Wales said at the Beaver Hut."(33) But Lewis ,by this time was more concerned with his own plans.

The main literary piece Rodker produced before the Lewis folio was Ara Vus Prec by T.S.Eliot. Unlike Lewis, Eliot had not been alienated from the Bloomsburies and therefore was able to publish work with the Hogarth as well as the Ovid Press. He published a book of poems with the Hogarth Press in May 1919, entitled Poems, but fewer than 250 copies were printed. Nevertheless he was obviously pleased with what Rodker had produced:

"Dear Rodker,.....

Ezra showed me a page of the final setting up which pleased me: the paper is excellent, the type is good, and the initials have come out very well. I hope you are allowing me to have a certain number of copies, to keep to give to people who could not afford to buy the book in any case? in as much as I am not expecting to make any money out of it whatever."(34)

This letter reveals how Eliot obviously saw the whole venture of Rodker printing his work as a non-profitable exercise. This was probably more out of friendship with Rodker, rather than a professional insult. By comparison it is possible to believe that Lewis took the exercise much more seriously, as he probably needed the money more desperately.

Although it evidently did not concern Eliot if his book was not a financial success, he certainly wished it to be a critical

one, demonstrated by the number of copies he intended to be kept for review:

"Dear Rodker,

The copies arrived yesterday, and I congratulate you on your admirable book. I do not think that a guinea is at all too much to ask for such a piece of work.

Do you send copies to Pound and Lewis as if not I must present them? And I understand from you that Quinn had ordered several copies of all these publications. Still, I think I had better send him one personally from myself. I notice stated in the back that ten copies are for review. What papers do these go to?

Many thanks for producing an excellent book. (35)

The only mistake made in Eliot's "poems" for the Ovid press was his own mistranslation of the title. (36) There was obviously a great sense of camaraderie and mutual admiration amongst the group of artists that Rodker had brought under the umbrella of the Ovid Press. Eliot thought highly of both Pound and Lewis as writers:

"I think there will be a certain literary activity in London after the war. I think that my friends Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis are the best literary men in London, and I hope we can do something. Do you know any of Lewis's work, either in drawing and painting, or his novel *Tarr*? He is, in my opinion, the most interesting person in London Society." (37)

Despite Eliot's praise of Lewis, the biggest commercial success and critical success of Rodker's productions was Wadsworth's portfolio of lithographs The Black Country published in 1920.

If these lithographs are compared with Wadsworth's earlier woodcuts of his Blast era and the camouflage designs during the war, there is a marked difference in the use of pattern and design. However, in terms of subject matter the picture of mud and chaos is not that different from that of the front line trenches of the war. Wadsworth writes to Rodker:

"I am now doing a series of drawings of the Black Country, the most amazing landscape in smoke I think and am enjoying myself. On my return I hope I shall have an opportunity of showing you some interesting notes on the subject". (38)

The main technical difference in Wadsworth's description of the industrial northern landscape, is that he allows "tone" to play a part in delineating space in the picture plane. Because of the nature of the original pen, ink, and wash drawings, the lithographic technique is used to pick up the subtleties of tones, rarely seen in Wadsworth's work prior to this date. His very translation of the "smoke" in these landscapes is presented by smooth, wispy curves, which were presented as blocks in the woodcuts. This shows more Wadsworth's ability to translate his subject into two different media. The harsh tonal areas and geometric patterns are well suited to the modern woodcut technique, whereas the smoother, softer lines, tones and mark making, are appropriate to lithograph.[Fig.24]

Wadsworth's Black Country portfolio was not only a great success for the Ovid press, but had, in the form of an exhibition of drawings and lithographs also entitled The Black Country been a great personal success for Wadsworth. This exhibition was held at the Leicester galleries in January 1920, whilst Lewis held his exhibition Drawings at the Adelphi Gallery .

As with Lewis, the main reasons for Wadsworth making a portfolio of prints was to improve his commercial success by reaching a wider audience. However, the difference between the two artists was timing and advertisement. Lewis's portfolio had been completed by the time his small exhibition of drawings was held. Wadsworth however, had, by the time his portfolio of lithographs was printed, already received widespread acclaim in the London press for his exhibition of drawings in The Black Country. Wadsworth had these reviews printed in the portfolio ; by way of a little self-promotion. As Eliot implied in a letter to Sidney Schuff, in comparing Lewis' and Wadsworth's

exhibitions, Wadsworth and his team were the more "skillful advertisers". It is possible that Lewis's lack of success with his exhibition and portfolio production was due to poor advertising and bad timing.

Another point which Eliot raised in his letter to Schiff comparing Wadsworth's and Lewis's exhibitions was the nature of the two artists subject matter. Wadsworth like Lewis was seen to be reverting to a form of naturalism, by his critics:

"Mr. Wadsworth has found in the Black Country slagheaps a content just suited to his particular talent: all the care he spent a few years ago in abstract stripes now bears fruit in more animated compositions."(39)

As Eliot saw it , these drawings had an "illustrative quality" which was one reason why they appeared to be more successful than Lewis's life-drawings. It is possible that there was a certain amount of rivalry between the two artists, but, considering the involvement of Wadsworth in the Ovid Press and the encouragement and help he gave to Lewis's Fifteen Drawings portfolio , it was probably a healthy rivalry. In fact Wadsworth produced a lithograph Crouching Nude c.1920 [Fig.25] which shows some reference to Lewis's ideas at the time, particularly the reclining nudes in the Fifteen Drawings.

Wadsworth's Black Country lithographs have a surface uniformity which is mainly due to both his original drawing technique and the ability of the lithographic process to reproduce the detail of the crayon line. However, when each print is examined closely, it is apparent that Wadsworth employed several different formal drawing techniques to depict the same, rather bleak and empty landscape. In Windmill End (V), [Fig.26] Darby Hill (XIV), [Fig.27] Tarmac II, (XVII), Sir Alfred Hideman Ltd (I), View near Bilston, (VIII) and Bilston Slag, [Fig.28] Wadsworth has been frugal in his use of line and used the white

of the paper to create the spatial areas in each drawing. The diagonal lines come from the railway tracks and dirt roads ploughed in to the landscape. This group of prints shows a distant view of what was happening on the surface of the slag heap, with the chimneys and smoke acting as a patterned horizon line. This overall view is indicated by the "scribble" Wadsworth has invented to describe the vast landscape of the shelved surface.

Yet in Tarmac (XII), Blast Furnaces (III), Ladle Slag Round Oak (XIX)[Fig.29], Ladle Slag Springvale Furnaces (XVIII), Ladle Slag (XI),Ladle Slag Old Hill (IX) [Fig.30], and Ladle Slag (II),[Fig.31] the view of these landscapes is much more detailed; there is a suggestion of almost going underground, of looking at what is happening internally in the landscape. The strong diagonals are still evident in these drawings, but they are formed by the power of slag heaps covered in boulders, which seem ready to move and cause a landslide. These drawings certainly demonstrate Wadsworth's use of a Vorticist dynamism in composition and powerful patterns.

The only artist Rodker produced wood cuts for was Roald Kristian, with his small book A Bestiary 1920. Only 110 copies were printed and few of these were issued, according to Tomkinson's Bibliography of Modern Presses. The idea of producing a portfolio of animal wood cuts or illustrations to a text was not original. In 1911 Raoul Dufy produced over 30 woodcuts to accompany Apollinaire's text for Le Bestiaire, ou Cortège D'Orphée, [Fig.32]. Apparently, the original idea for such a production was given to Apollinaire by some early animal drawings by Picasso, c.1906 "but when Picasso abandoned them, Apollinaire turned to Dufy."(40)

Roald Kristian's The Bestiary, itself consisted of woodcuts of various types of deer, goats, sheep and cattle, [Fig.33]. None of the blocks were particularly well printed as not all the edges printed through on to the paper. It was bad timing for Kristian to publish this particular portfolio since a facsimile of the Dufy version was brought out by Editions de la Sirène, in Paris in 1919. Roald Kristian became involved in the Press because he had also contributed some of the few illustrations to The Egoist. His subject in that publication were not animals but the poets and writers who contributed to the magazine. They included portraits of Gaudier -Brzeska, Wyndham Lewis, James Joyce et al. These woodcuts demonstrate why he was included in the Ovid group, for, although these portraits border on caricature, the expressive nature of the work derives from the way Kristian used line in association with the forms of each face. He was part of the avant-garde in his unusual treatment of a traditional form, i.e. the portrait. None of the faces have eyes, and in that sense they are devoid of expression. The person is defined by characteristics, such as Lewis with his pipe, [Fig.34] and Joyce wearing his monocle, [Fig.35] while others are simply summed up by the silhouetted form of their heads.

Because of the purpose of Rodker's Ovid Press being to "produce the work of his friends", it was possible for a relatively unknown artist such as Kristian to have his work published alongside some of the great literary and artistic men of the times.

In summary, Rodker's Ovid Press was a financial failure and the fact that in the end he owed considerable monies was evidence of this. Moreover, Eliot wrote to Rodker when he heard the press had been forced to fold:

"Dear Rodker,
I am very sorry to hear that the press has had to come to an end, after doing such good (and improving) work. I shan't bother you about the £5.15.9 I hope you will succeed in emerging from your difficulties. I wish you could put your experience in with someone else who wanted to run a press."(41)

But, obviously financial success was not the main goal for Rodker's Ovid Press. Neither did it succeed in its aim of achieving a high level of printing quality. Compared to the early productions of, for instance, the Hogarth Press, the quality of work was not altogether bad. The achievement for the Ovid Press was instead what it produced rather than how. It was successful for the artists involved in getting their work out to a broader audience and by being totally independent from editorial or other restrictions, they had the freedom to make an entirely personal statement.

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NOTES ON CHAPTER ONE

- (1) Valerie Eliot, edited The Letters of T.S.Eliot (Faber and Faber London, 1988). Letter from T.S.Eliot to Sydney Schiff. 12th Jan. 1920. page 356.
- (2) John Martin, A Bibliographical Catalogue of Books Privately Printed (J. and A. Archer. London First edition 1834) page iii.
- (3) Anatole Claudin "Private Presses in France during the 15th Century Bibliographica. Papers on Books Their history and Art." Vol.III, Parts IX-XII, 1897. page 344.
- (4) Pollard. Ibid. page 345.
- (5) G.S. Tomkinson, A Selective Bibliography of Principal Modern Presses Public and Private in Great Britain and Ireland (First Edition Club, London, 1928) page xix.
- (6) J.C. Oswald, A History of Printing. Its Development through 500 Years. (The Library Press Ltd. London 1929.)
- (7) The Ovid Press productions are as follows:
- 1 H.Gaudier Brzeska, A PORTFOLIO OF TWENTY DRAWINGS. 1919. 20 loose pages, 250 copies on Japanese Vellum at 15s.
 2. T.S.Eliot, ARA VUS PREC. Poems .1919. 11.5 x 9.5, 260 copies (of which 10 were numbered for review and so were signed by the Author) on paper at a guinea, and 4 on Japanese vellum, not for sale; cloth boards, black sides, yellow back.
 3. Wyndham Lewis, PORTFOLIO OF FIFTEEN DRAWINGS. 1919. 17"x 12"; 250 copies at 2 guineas ; some coloured by hand.
 4. Ezra Pound, HUGH SELWYN MAUBERLEY 1920. 10"x 6.25"; 185 copies (of which 20 were signed by the Author) on paper at 15s. and 15 on Japanese vellum, not for sale; cloth boards, brown sides, brown back.

5. John Rodker, HYMNS 1920. 9.75 "x 6"; 175 copies (of which 20 were signed by the Author) on paper at 15s., and 15 on Japanese vellum not for sale; cloth boards, yellow sides, white back.

6. Wadsworth, THE BLACK COUNTRY Lithographs. Preface by Arnold Bennett. 1920. 14.25"x10.25", 450 copies on paper at a guinea and 50 signed copies on Japanese vellum at 3 guineas with extra woodcut and two cuts coloured. Later reissued by John Lane, 1922.

7. Roald Kristian, A BESTIARY 1920. Animal Woodcuts; very few copies were printed; none for sale.

8. Ezra Pound, THE FOURTH CANTO 1920. A four-page folder on Japanese vellum; a few copies only printed, not for sale.

(8) Other publications by the St. Dominic's Press.

Eric Gill, Emblems Engraved on Wood (From the Devil's Devices. First issue 1915. 15 copies signed, Second issue, 33 copies signed, 1916.

Eric Gill, Adeste Fideles Five woodcuts, 1916

H.D.C.P. God and the Dragon: Book of Rhymes with engravings by Eric Gill and R.J. Beedham. 200 copies in stiff wrapper.

Eric Gill, Essential Perfection, 1918.

Eric Gill, Sculpture, An Essay, 1918.

Eric Gill, Catalogue of Drawings and Engravings at the Alpine Club Gallery, May 5-14 1918, sold in wrapper at 6d.

(9) Printed from the blocks. 375 copies on Zanders handmade paper, in black boards, 25s. Printed by the Curwen Press.

(10) 120 copies on hand-made paper at 12s; 50 copies on cartridge paper at a guinea, with hand coloured decorations; and 30 copies on Japanese vellum at £1.10s, signed by the author and the artist.

- (11) 120 copies on hand made paper at 12s.6d, 50 copies on cartridge paper with hand coloured decorations, and 30 copies on Japanese Vellum, signed by the author and artist, at £1 10s. The cover and decorations were designed by Paul Nash.
- (12) Some German avant-garde books, c.1912-19,
 Ernst Barlach, Der Arme Vetter, album of 36 lithographs, 1919. 300 copies.
Buch Der Toten, illustrated by Franz Marc, 1919. 1525 copies, 25 on hand made rag.
 Kandinsky, Über das Geistige in Der Kunst 1912, manifesto of modern art, including woodcuts and reproductions of paintings.
 Wassily Kandinsky and Franz Marc, Der Blauer Reiter, 1914, including reproductions of artists of the Blauer Reiter group.
- (13) Russian avant -garde publications c.1912-14
 A.Kruchenykh, poems Old-Time Love, hand written .cover design by Larianov. 1912. 13 leaves 300 copies.
 A.Kruchenykh, poems A Game in Hell: a poem hand written , cover design by Goncharova. 1912. 14 leaves. 300 copies.
 N.Goncharova, War: Mystical Images of War, portfolio of 14 lithographs, 1914.
- (14) Hogarth Press publications c.1920 ,
 Virginia Woolf, Kew Gardens , May 1919 with illustrations by V. Bell, first edition 150 copies.
 T.S.Eliot, Poems May 1919, fewer than 250 copies.
 Middleton Murry, The Critic in Judgment or Belshazzar of Baraonscourt, June 1919, 200 copies printed by the Prompt press.

Hope Mirrless, Paris a Poem, May 1920, 175 copies.

Clive Bell, Poems, Dec 1921. 350 copies

Roger Fry, Twelve Woodcuts, Dec. 1921, number of copies printed not known.

- (15) G.S. Tomkinson, A Bibliography of Modern Presses, op.cit. page, 141.
- (16) The Egoist advertisement, page 32, March-April 1919.
- (17) Will Ransom, Private Presses and their Books (R.R. Bowker and Co. New York 1929) page 374.
- (18) Letter from Wadsworth to Rodker. 3rd August 1919. University of Texas at Austin.
- (19) J. Howard, A Checklist of the Hogarth Press 1917-1938 Woolmer and Mary. E. Gaither. (London 1976) page 8.
- (20) Letter from Wadsworth to Rodker 15th May 1919.

Early publications by Private Presses were produced on hand-press machines which consisted of the "screw and lever" system which had been developed from the cider press and paper making presses. The printing press was further developed in the 19th Century both in America and Britain. In Britain, the Earl of Stanhope (1753-1816) made the first printing press entirely out of iron, and developed the techniques of stereotyping and logotypes. But it was the American, George Clymer who was to make the biggest breakthrough in the development of his Columbian Press. This virtually did away with the "screw mechanism" and replaced it with a more compact system of levers which in essence reduced the demands on the press operator. The Albion Press was a variation on the same theme of the iron press, was less ornate than the Columbian and was prolifically used by Private Presses in the 20th Century.

- (21) Letter from Wadsworth to Rodker 20th April 1919. University of Texas at Austin.
- (22) Letter from Wadsworth to Rodker 13th April 1919. University of Texas at Austin.
- (23) Letter from Wadsworth to Rodker 20th April 1919. University of Texas at Austin.
- (24) Letter from Wadsworth to Rodker. No date. University of Texas at Austin.
- (25) Letter from Wadsworth to Rodker 2nd November 1919. University of Texas at Austin.
- (26) Ibid.
- (27) Letter from Lewis to Rodker, University of Texas, no date. However we can assume it has been written between Feb and April 1919. In a letter from John Quinn to Lewis dated 28th April 1919, Quinn received a cable from Marchant, Lewis's dealer, saying "Lewis ill with pneumonia." Quinn also received a letter from Lewis, from Torquay dated April 13 1919, where Lewis was obviously recuperating.
- (28) Letter from Lewis to Rodker, University of Texas, no date, but refers to moving house and selling "most of my goods." His previous address was 1a, Gloucester Walk, and after his stay in hospital his new address was 20A, Campden Hill Gardens, Campden Hill. Therefore this letter must have been written some time after April and before June 1st.
- (29) Letter from Lewis to Rodker. The first edition of the Tyro did not come out until April 1921. This letter was probably written in 1920 as Lewis went away on holiday in

the summer of 1920, 15 August to 28 August with T.S.Eliot.

- (30) Letter from T.S.Eliot to Rodker 7th November 1919, the Egoist was an arts magazine that Eliot, Pound and Lewis contributed to.
- (31) This was in a letter dated 15th May 1919. If Wadsworth had first been approached about designing the trade mark for the Press in early April, the evidence suggests that the Brzeska portfolio would have been produced in approximately a month.
- (32) Letter from T.S.Eliot to John Quinn 26th March 1920:
 ".....Rodker told me that you had ordered three signed copies of his edition, so I thought it might be no particular gratification to you to receive another from me; but I have one that I kept for you,if you wish."
- (33) Letter from Lewis to Rodker Sunday June 1st 1919, University of Texas at Austin, also in The Letters of Wyndham Lewis by W.K.Rose. op.cit.page 105.
- (34) Letter dated Late November 1919.
- (35) Valerie Eliot editor, The Letters of T.S.Eliot Vol.1
 Eliot to Rodker, 1st Feb.1920 op.cit.page,360.
- (36) According to Valerie Eliot, T.S.Eliot relied on an Italian translation of Dante's "Inferno" and copied "Vus" instead of "Vos" for the title to read correctly as "Now I prey you". By the time Eliot realized the mistake the title had already been printed.
- (37) Letter to Mrs Jack Gardner 7th Nov.1918, Ibid.
 op.cit.page 252.
- (38) Letter from Wadsworth to Rodker 20th April 1919. University of Austin Texas.
- (39) The New Age.
- (40) Eleanor M Garvey The Artist and the Book,1860-1960.

Catalogue (London 1972).page 71.

- (41) Eliot to Rodker, 8 August 1921. The Letters of T.S.Eliot.op.cit. page 463.

CHAPTER TWO

The Printing of the Portfolio of Fifteen Drawings and Lewis's Involvement.

Introduction.

The printing of the portfolio of Fifteen Drawings was a complex, time-consuming operation, and, from its first mention by Lewis to its completion date, there were many problems for Rodker and his technician to solve. In comparison to the Gaudier folio, it proved difficult, costly and complicated

In a letter to Rodker dated June 1st 1919, Lewis promised that his drawings would be ready for their meeting on 3rd June:

"By next tuesday (June 3rd) I shall have gathered enough drawings here to make a choice. Could you come round some time in the evening?.....I hope that by Tuesday I shall have more to tell you of my plan for an art paper."(1)

However in a letter dated 21 July he was still promising the drawings: "...I will guarantee to get the 15 drawings ready for you by August 3rd."

Lewis at that time had many other projects under way including his portrait of Ezra Pound. This apparently took precedent over all his other work:

"I am unusually finishing a picture with a time limit....I am working a bit at night as well as in the day time. I cannot until that is finished do anything else."(2)

There is further evidence that Lewis did not give his full attention to the Ovid Press project because he was producing his "pamphlet" the Caliph's Design at that time. Lewis wrote to

Rodker on the 31st October 1919:

"Dear Rodker, Really excuse my remissance in not communic ting with you before. I have only just finished my pamphlet and have been holding everything up for that."(3)

This was written at the end of October and still Lewis did not have the time to devote to finishing the portfolio.

However, this tardiness does not suggest that Lewis took no interest in the printing of his drawings, or did not actively participate in the process. Letters between Lewis and Rodker, and other correspondence at the time, show that there were two major factors affecting the printing of the Fifteen Drawings portfolio. The first was the short period of time that Lewis had available to involve himself in the printing because of all his other commitments. The second main factor was financial.

Lewis did not return from the war with any capital to speak of, and due to his recurring illness in 1918-1919, he did not have the best opportunity to make money. Certainly, the letters show that Lewis was, working very hard in 1919, but it was years before he would reap any benefits from his labour. In the end, he was forced to vacate Adam and Eve Mews because he simply could not afford the rent. Although Lewis had retained William Marchant as an agent after the initial success of his "Guns" show in 1919, the interest of his main American buyer, John Quinn had declined. This was obviously a serious blow for Lewis's chances of being shown abroad, which he considered at the time to be the only way of getting out of what he saw as the stalemate of the British art scene:

"As to your repeated statement, in your letters to me and to Merchant, of your preference for French painters (over English painters), I am wholly of your opinion. It is almost a physical impossibility for a young painter here (in England) not to be slowly but surely spoilt and broken."(4)

It is clear that Lewis's creative output was affected by his lack of financial support, his only help came from friends like Ezra Pound, then a member of the Guggenheim Foundation, who in 1925 put Lewis forward for a Fellowship.

"Wyndham Lewis, I consider without exception the best possible 'value' for your endowment, and the man most hampered by lack of funds at the moment."(5)

In the end many of his friends including Wadsworth and his wife, Raymond Drey, Dick Wyndham, and others helped by setting up a private fund for Lewis amounting to £16 a month.(6)

Because Rodker was not financially well off, and due to the purely private nature of his press, the making of the Fifteen Drawings portfolio would not in itself solve Lewis's money problem. What it did directly affect was the way the Fifteen Drawings portfolio was printed:

"Dear Rodker,
When can I see you and how? As soon as you like the stuff can be handed over, and be got on with: though I have not been able to get together what I wanted. Tomorrow I shall be down in London all day, and Sunday I am busy with Pound. On Monday could we meet, if you are coming this way, come in about Tea Time = That is a great pity about the prohibitive price of the blocks. I have thought of a way out as regards one block, this needs further care."(sic).(7)

It is clear that the choice of the Letter-press printing technique used on the Fifteen Drawings portfolio,[Fig.36] was governed by this lack of financial resources. Rodker had used the process to produce the Gaudier portfolio, and therefore probably felt more confident about its application to Lewis's work. However, there were several fundamental differences in the type of drawing that the Gaudier portfolio presented and Lewis's drawings. The Gaudier portfolio was made up of drawings from sketchbooks, in order for these to be presented on sheets of 12"x9" paper to making up a portfolio, the originals would have been photographically enlarged. This, in one respect, was a disadvantage as there was some loss of definition in the printed version. However, due to the clarity of the single line in many of the drawings used in the Gaudier folio, by enlarging the image, the nuances of line are more noticeable.

In Lewis's folio, many of the original drawings had to be photographically reduced in order for the print to be made. This was certainly more advantageous as it condensed the image and also disguised any blemishes in the printed surface. The original of Nude II measured 28cm x38cm, the print was 17.5cm x23cm; the original drawing of Nude I measured 25cm x29cm and was also reduced to 17.5cm x23cm in the print. Conversely, other images in the folio such as the Reading Room, had to be enlarged. Given all these different sizes of original art work, one of the main problems facing the printer would have been to create an overall consistency of image.

The Photo-Mechanical (Letter-press) technique , and how it was used to reproduce the original drawings.

In the 1920' the letter-press process of producing a printed image was the technique most commonly used for the printing of text. Each letter was placed at a fixed height the letter being raised above the block surface, the blank areas, being kept at a much lower height. The advantage of this process, especially when photo-mechanical techniques had been developed, was that original works of art (such as illustrations) could be printed on the same page in and the same manner as the text. This process became more generally used as a mechanical process for mass production of newspapers and books, but could also be used on a hand operated press, like the Columbian, which was the press used by Rodker.

The photo-mechanical printing technique consisted of original artwork being photographed through a glass screen onto a metal plate. It was etched so that the original artwork was left as a raised area above the rest of the plate, like other

processes such as wood-engraving and intaglio. The etching process has a minimal involvement by the printer. It is unlike wood-engraving and lithography which allow the artist to draw and work directly with the plate of wood or stone.

In this sense Lewis's involvement with the actual print process was minimal, as much of the work was done by machines. However, there is evidence that Lewis wanted to find out more about printing process:

"Dear Rodker,
I am afraid that the next few days I shall not be able to get as far a field as Belsize Park, though I should like to discuss other matters with you about my project for Review; also to see your printing mechanic and learn more about your processes = I have been moving my things in home today. I am going to sell most of my goods. I carry too much baggage! Our meeting must be left in the hands of fate."(8)

In producing a letter press block for printing, there are two main processes involved. One is the production of a negative of the original image. The second is the etching of the plate with the image placed on it. In the case of Lewis's prints, it seems that a combination of several photographic processes were used. The basis for most of the prints was the 'line block' process which was used to print the main 'lines' in the original drawings. Its chief quality is to produce black and white, like a woodengraving, but is not open to the subtleties of tonal areas. It is therefore not practical for the reproduction of washes and heavily shaded areas, where watercolour, pencil or crayon would have been used.

The success of printing the fifteen drawings that Lewis chose to be produced by this process must have been doubtful, as many of them were drawn with pencil and crayon with tonal washes. This was obviously overcome to a certain degree by the use of the 'half-tone' block process which Rodker used in conjunction with the line block.

However, because of two processes being used, with further evidence of a third 'photo-lithographic offset '(which was used to produce some of the coloured washes), each print must have taken several plates to make up. This would have caused the 'registration'(9) of each print to be a complicated operation, and ,therefore, an expensive one.

The fourth process which was evident in the portfolio of Fifteen Drawings was that of Lewis himself applying a watercolour wash to some of the drawings. Each of these processes had their advantages and disadvantages, which were reflected in the quality of the Fifteen Drawings prints.

The Line block process

The photographic process is much the same for both the line block and half-tone processes. In the line block process, the negative of the original image is placed on to perfectly clear glass, whereas in the half-tone process the glass is made into a screen with crosshatched lines drawn on it. But the process of placing the negative on the glass is the same. In both, the negative can be exposed onto either a wet or dry sheet of glass, the wet version producing more variation in the darker tones. The glass is prepared with a photographically sensitized material, collodine, which forms a sensitive film when dipped in a silver bath. The original is then photographed through the glass, the white on the original drawing will throw light on the glass plate and make it black. Where as the line in the drawing will not effect the emulsion on the glass, and when washed will, appear as clear glass. This glass negative is then printed onto a phtographically sensitized zinc plate. The image on this

plate is positive, so when the plate is washed what remains on the plate is the original line.

The design on the plate must now be etched to produce a relief block. The plate is first inked up with a thin film of ink, to which powdered bichumen is applied, and this is then melted by heating the plate. The melted bichumen forms an 'acid resist', so that when the plate is placed in the acid bath, while the 'white' areas of the print are eaten away, the 'line' remains in relief on the plate. The plate is placed in the acid several times, according to how deep a bite into the plate is required. The line itself has to be protected from the acid, this is done by 'inking up' again this time with the ink containing bees wax, which when the bichumen is added and the plate heated, allows the resist to run over the edges of the raised line. The etched plate is then usually nailed on to a wooden block for the purposes of the letter press process, especially if it is to be printed along side a text, to raise it to the same level.

In Head I [Fig.37] and Head II [Fig.38] and Portrait of Ezra Pound [Fig.39] the whole image was printed using the line block process. The advantages and disadvantages of this method are evident in these three prints. The line is certainly blacker in contrast to some of the half-tone areas on other prints and therefore the quality of contrast and line is sharper. However, the original drawings by Lewis were in pencil and it is clear when looking at the line under magnification, that in the area around the ear of Head I [Fig.40] much of the original detail was lost because pencil did not provide a high enough contrast. This can also be seen in the fingers in Head II [Fig.41].

From a formal point of view, these irregularities in the printing process worked in Lewis's favour. The stronger lines

defining the features in Head II, (and the thumb and ball of the hand which the head is resting on), are given a greater emphasis and act as the focus to the print. This lack of definition is also evident in what must have been vertical crosshatching in the back of Nude III, [Fig.42 and 43]. Again, this was probably due to the use of a light weight drawing medium like pencil or crayon.

The use of the line block was, however, much more successful in Blue Nudes, [Fig.44] where the single pen and ink line is contrasted well against the white background. The process also works well with the ink drawings, including Timon of Athens I [Fig.45] Timon of Athens II [Fig.46] and The Reading Room, [Fig.47]. The cross-hatching in Timon I and II provided a density of black lines which made it easier to print using the line block process. Another important factor in the relative clarity of these drawings is that their original size was not much smaller than their size when reproduced as prints.

The Half-Tone process.

The essential difference in quality of reproduction between the line block and the half-tone process is that the latter clearly defines tonal areas. This is achieved by photographing the original through a 'screen'. This 'screen' can be made of two sheets of glass which have been etched with parallel lines, with the two sheets placed at right angles to each other, the same effect can be achieved by using gauze. The result is the same; when the sensitized sheet is exposed to light through the glass or gauze, it has to pass through the 'squares' or 'dots' of the screen, thus light is also divisioned into 'dots' by the time it hits the sensitized plate. Where there are dark areas in the

original, less light passes through the screen and therefore the dots are larger because little of the plates surface has been changed. In the white areas more light passes through the screen, so in the final etched plate the dots are smaller and more of the plate is bitten away.

The photographic process in the making of a half tone block is, along with the fineness of the screen, the most important aspect of its printing. If the exposure of the negative is not right, for instance if it is too dark, then it will appear as a large black area on the plate. In order to avoid this the negative is first exposed using a white sheet of paper so that a uniform surface of dots covers the negative. The original is then exposed onto the negative, which allows a greater definition to the smaller dots in the lighter areas. The larger dots in the darker areas remain the same.

The negative may define the basic tonal range available but the subtlety comes from the number of 'squares' or 'dots' that make up the screen. The more dots there are per square inch, the greater the evenness of the tonal areas of the image. Screens can have from 45 to 225 lines to the inch, meaning there could be up to 50,625 dots per square inch.

However, there would be little point in applying a plate which has been exposed through a very fine screen being placed on 'roughly textured' or hand made paper, as all detail would be lost. The paper Lewis used for the portfolio was a hand made, very smooth Japanese paper, which required a medium fine screen.

The etching process is the same as is used for the line block, but care has to be taken in the etching as the 'dots' which appear as relief on the plate can easily be eroded and destroyed. Another major factor is the 'making ready' which can

make all the difference between a good and a bad print. This technique, again, is concerned with the adjustment of tones in the printed block. Here the printer places a piece of paper over the area that needs, for instance, to be darker increasing the pressure layed to bare on the paper when printed, thereby pushing the ink deeper into the surface.

The problems encountered when employing the half tone method in combination with the line block process are evident in the Fifteen drawings portfolio. In The Group [Fig.48], Post Jazz [Fig.49], Seraglio [Fig.50] and The Pole Jump [Fig.52] all the drawings have a tonal background, unlike the rest of the images, where the figures are linear or cut out against a white background. This meant that there would be more problems for the printer in recreating the subtleties of tone in each block.

In the printing of Seraglio, the problems of maintaining an evenness of tone in the print is evident. This was probably because the tonal background was so close to the tone in the figures that it was hard to make a great enough contrast between the two. The problem may have stemmed from a poor quality negative, but from looking at the area around the feet of the left hand figure under magnification, [Fig.51] there appears to have been a defect in the screen- there are many irregularly large dots, making the surface uneven in its delineation of tone. In another copy of the Fifteen Drawings portfolio, there is a copy of this print which has failed to provide any tonal variation. This could have been due to a clogging up of paint in the printing but from the other copies it appears likely that the block was saved by the 'making ready' process, as described above. It is interesting that Lewis chose to have this drawing reproduced in a shade of yellow ochre. This could well have been

the original colour of the drawing, but it could just as easily have been printed in black and white. The very fact that such a yellowish colour provides little tonal variation, was an obvious disadvantage. However, the veiled quality of this print in the use of colour enhances the suggestive nature of the subject.

Combined Half-tone and Line Block process

There are several ways in which the printer could have applied a combination of both line and half-tone blocks to recreate these drawings. Using the half-tone negative, when fine lines in a drawing require the same intensity as an area of unbroken black, the block maker makes the line solid, by running a needle over them in the negative. A more probable method is to actually make two negatives, using the original half-tone negative to make a positive (which can be changed by hand), blacking in the areas that want to be darker. Another negative is then made from this, which is then used to make up the block. If it is possible to separate the tonal areas from the linear, then two negatives, (one to describe line the other to describe tone) can be made separately and then cut out to fit together to make a third combined negative.

In the original drawing of the Pole Jump [Fig.52], Lewis had used combination of pencil and pen and ink with added washes. There is evidence in the printed version that in order to recreate the effects of these different mediums a combination of line block and half-tone blocks was used. In the reproduced print of the portfolio, the problems of tonal definition are not so evident. In fact, when looking at the area covering two of the foreground heads [Fig.53] the printer has achieved many variations in tone, with high contrast. In a detail of the pole

vaulter [Fig.54], the faint outline of an earlier sketch of the figure can be seen. This could only have been picked up by the fine dots of a half-tone screen. The re-drawn figure itself stands out in sharp contrast to its background, and the density of black used to describe the muscular figure, has been achieved through a combination of line block and half-tone screen. It is difficult to deduce how many dots there were to the screen that was used in the printing of these drawings, but in relation to the smooth quality of the Japanese paper they were printed on, the screen would have had more than 150 dots per square inch.

The most complex of the prints in the Fifteen Drawings portfolio, are the Nude I [Fig.55] and Nude II, [Fig.56] . This was due to the necessary addition of colour. They involved the application of a wash , or textured area of colour, which was quite separate from the linear and shadow areas. In Nude II [Fig.57] the grey areas within the shapes of the figure have been made from the half tone screen using black ink. The actual red wash, (other than the nipples) has been made from a similar process, but by using a negative for a line block, where flat areas of tone can be reproduced. This colour wash is clearly not watercolour (as the nipples are), because the applied paint stands out so clearly as a different texture from the printed surface. The area of red on this print would have been a cut out negative for a line block combined with that of the half-tone. A close examination of the complex curves and areas of white in Nude II reveals that this process was accomplished with skill and proved was a success. There are no overlaps in overlaying colour and tone.

When looking at the original drawing for this print Nude II, [Fig.58] the wash has been applied in such a dense manner that

the reproduction of this wash in the print could have resulted in it appearing as totally flat. However, there is evidence of brush marks and movement in the paint, and, although a poor substitute, the half-tone, black dotted area placed underneath the colour is an attempt to convey these tonal variations.

Photographic Offset Litho.

In Nude III and Nude IV [Fig.59] there is evidence to suggest that the coloured areas have been applied by using a lithographic technique. In photo offset-lithography, the main difference from direct lithography is that the image is transferred from the etched plate which has been prepared by photographic methods (as described earlier) instead of being drawn directly on to a lithographic stone.

Additionally, rather than being directly printed from the stone the image reaches the paper via a cylinder which is covered in a rubber 'blanket'. The paper is sandwiched between this and another cylinder. This second cylinder applies the pressure to the paper, so it is in effect squeezed between the two cylinders. In this offset-lithographic process, only a very thin film of ink reaches the surface of the paper due to the gentle pressure of the rubber 'blanket'.

In details of Nude III [Fig.60] and Nude IV, [Fig.61] the application of a very thin film of ink is detectable. This process also makes the area of tone produced very flat, and one of the major draw backs of using the off-set litho in conjunction with the half-tone screen is that the image once etched onto the copper plate cannot be reworked as in the re-etching of half-tone blocks for Letterpress printing. The main point of using this process was to highlight the 'brush' work in the original colour

areas - the sensitivity of the thin film of paint would pick up on these details. The off-set litho process also requires a different form of printing press which there is no evidence that Rodker actually possessed.

The final process which is evident in the portfolio of Fifteen Drawings is Lewis's hand colouring of the green wash in Nude I (as seen in a detail [Fig.62]) and the red wash in Nude II. This can certainly be read as a last resort for Lewis, as there is so much evidence that he and Rodker took great pains over the appropriate printing techniques for each drawing.

On the 6th October 1919, Lewis wrote to Rodker:

"Perhaps Wadsworth could do something with the headless nude. He might make a block of the outlines, and I could also get that filled in by hand."(10)

The "headless Nude" to which Lewis refers, could be Nude IV, but there is no evidence of hand colouring in this particular print. Wadsworth was the natural person to turn to as he had produced many prints, mainly wood engravings, in the past. He would probably have suggested the use of the off-set litho in order to recreate the colour areas in Nude IV, as opposed to hand colouring. Wadsworth was also very involved in the beginnings of the Ovid Press. He had given Lewis the prospectus of the Ovid Press to read, designed the Press's motif and contributed to its publications with a set of lithographic prints, The Black Country. The Ovid Press therefore must have had facilities for producing lithographs, and Wadsworth was obviously called into help because of his knowledge of lithographic printing.

The necessity, however, for Lewis to resort to some hand painting was due to the of lack of time. By 29th October, Lewis was obviously in a hurry to get the work finished on time:

".....tell me when you want the hand colouring done: I will send you them by registered post the nude that requires re handling."(sic).(11)

In terms of printing techniques the Fifteen Drawings can not be seen as outstanding in its reproduction of original drawings. It was more a case of finding the cheapest possible methods for achieving a fairly quick result.

It is useful to compare this scenario with the 30 Personalities and a Self Portrait portfolio produced in 1932, where the financial and social circumstances for Lewis were quite different. This is most evident in the quality of the printing used. Lewis overcome many of the blemishes in the reproduction of tonal variation which had occurred in the Fifteen Drawings portfolio by using a process called 'Collotype'. Although the process of collotype was introduced to create tonal printing before the invention of the half-tone screen, collotype was generally of superior quality. This quality of print was achieved through the medium of gelatine. The process involves the gelatine being coated to make it hard and then it is dried by heating. It then forms a fine grain, or texture to its surface, this fineness of surface allows the smallest details and finest changes in tone to be printed. The image is transferred onto the gelatine, photographically, the exposed areas of gelatine become hardened and dry, but the unexposed areas remain capable of absorbing liquid. The plate is then washed, clearing it of its coating. It is then etched using a combination of ammonia, water and glycerene. The lighter areas will absorb more water therefore will accept less ink, and the hardened areas will make up the darker areas of the print [Fig.63].

Variations in moisture, temperature and atmosphere make the collotype process unpredictable, and it requires great skill in

order to be successful. Thus the process is expensive and the number of prints limited as the printing surface of gelatine is not permanent. In some ways the expenditure on such a printing process in the case of the 30 Personalities portfolio was justified. Because by its very contents, Lewis knew he had a ready market for the work.

By 1919, Lewis's situation had changed. There is no record of who bought the portfolio of Fifteen Drawings, though it is probable that John Quinn was sent a copy as he received the Eliot production Ara Vus Prec. The fact that Lewis's portfolio (unlike any of the other portfolios produced by the Ovid Press) had titles to each print in both French and English indicated a possible view to selling the work abroad. Again, however, there were discrepancies in the translation of these titles, e.g. in the Pole Jump, incorrectly rendered as "Le pôle Jompe," is replaced in other editions with "Le Saut à la Perche". Other copies do not have a circumflex over the "nu", meaning 'Nude'.

It is not known exactly how many copies of the Fifteen Drawings portfolio are still in existence, an under researched aspect deals with the question of how many copies were actually printed in 1919. Although in each copy the number of the copy and the total of 250 copies is written in the inside back flap in John Rodker's handwriting, see [Fig.64], the main reference in Ransom's, Private Presses and Their Books, states that only 50 copies were actually issued. However, as Lafourcade and Morrow deduce in their bibliography of Lewis's work:

"Although the scarcity of this portfolio would tend to verify this statement, if we may assume that the limitation notices were numbered sequentially - and not randomly - considerably more than 50 copies were published, as the number of copies bear high limitation marks."(12)

This statement is supported by issue number 69 on the copy held in the National Library of Scotland.

There are 9 other copies of this portfolio known to be still in existence (13), but what many of these copies show is that many were printed incorrectly, others have prints missing, or incorrect titles and some are of poor quality with some of the prints missing. One conclusion, therefore could be that although 250 copies were perhaps printed off, or even 150, there were some copies that were discarded, or simply not put onto the open market, because of their poor quality.

The question as to whether the production of the portfolio of Fifteen Drawings with the Ovid Press was a success for Lewis, is double edged. It was clear that Rodker did not intend to run the Ovid Press as a commercial venture, and Lewis must have realized that when taking on the project. It is also clear that Lewis was in great financial difficulty at the time; the hope of earning some money would seem to have been the prime motivation for producing a portfolio of prints. Lewis would possibly have liked Rodker to have been more of a business man, (certainly one with greater capital,) but the evidence of Lewis's involvement in the Arts League of Service at the time, (see Appendix) showed that his motivations for getting his art out to a wider audience were not entirely egotistical but rather that he felt some kind of 'social responsibility' to his public.

There is no real evidence as to what Lewis thought of the portfolio once it had been published. It did, receive some criticism in the press which was not entirely unfavourable. This was accompanied by criticism of his pamphlet, The Caliph's Design and the war paintings, consequently Lewis was once again a topic of discussion in the British art world.

NOTES ON CHAPTER TWO

- (1) W.K.Rose The Letters of Wyndham Lewis Letter from Lewis to Rodker, Sunday June 1st 1919. page 105.
- (2) Letter from Lewis to Rodker dated 29th October 1919. University of Texas at Austin.
- (3) Letter from Lewis to Rodker, 31st October 1919. University of Texas at Austin.
- (4) W.K.Rose, The Letters of Wyndham Lewis, Letter 111. Letter from Lewis to John Quinn, June 14th 1920. page 119.
- (5) T.Materer, The Letters of Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis Letter from Pound to Henry Moe, March 31st 1925. page 125.
- (6) This was from December 1923, to May 1924.
- (7) Letter from Lewis to Rodker, 31st October 1919, University of Texas at Austin.
- (8) Letter from Lewis to Rodker, there is no date, but Lewis mentions moving house to 20A, Campden Hill Gardens, Campden Hill, which was approximately, between April-May, 1919.
- (9) The registration of a print is the term applied to overlaying each colour or layer of printing exactly over each other in order to gain a clear print.
- (10) Lewis to Rodker, 6th October 1919. University of Texas at Austin.
- (11) Letter from Lewis to Rodker, 29th October 1919. University of Texas at Austin.
- (12) A Bibliography of Wyndham Lewis edited by Lafourcade and Morrow, 1978. page 39.
- (13) The 10 copies known to exist are as follows:-
 No.6 Privately Owned.
 No 45. Buffalo
 No 59. Baltimore.

No 62. Yale. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

No.67.University Library Cambridge.

No.69 National Library of Scotland.

No 71.and

No.79.The John Rodker Archive, Harry Ransom Humanities
Research Center, University of Texas at Austin.

No.85 Privately Owned.

and One Copy at The New York Public Library.

CHAPTER THREE

The Critical Reception of the Portfolio of "Fifteen Drawings" c.1919-20.

Introduction

The two major critical responses to the portfolio of Fifteen Drawings, one by R.H.Wilenski in The Athenaeum, (Jan.2nd 1920,) the other by the art critic for the Times Literary Supplement, (Jan.22nd.1920,) not only involve separate interpretations of Lewis's art, but also expose two very different styles of art criticism prevalent at the time. These two critiques of Lewis's portfolio were on the whole favourable. In order to put them into a perspective as to the general level of interpretation of Lewis's art, reference must be made to the critical response of the war paintings.

In Lewis's polemical writings The Caliph's Design and Prevalent Design (1) he argued that the "Nature- Morte" artists of the pre-war European avant-garde ,(such as Matisse, Derain and Picasso,) had made every aspect of art subject to the non-vital quality of the still life. It was this Lewis set out to change, and it was only recognized by some critics of his war paintings. Clutton Brock in his Essays on Art 1919, noted the different way in which the British avant -garde approached the subject of war(as demonstrated in their paintings of the 1914-18 war); as opposed to the way it was depicted in the past as part of the tradition of the still-life. He used the comparison with Uccello and Tinteretto, whose battle scenes he described as versions of the 'still life'. This was something Lewis also underlined in his forward to his own Guns exhibition:

"Uccello's battle-piece is a magnificent still life, a pageant of armours, cloths, etc.,....
It does not borrow from the fact of War any emotion, any disturbing or dislocating violence, terror or compassion- any of the psychology that is proper in the events of war."(2)

Clutton Brock in his essay, compared this representation of ancient war with that of Nevinson, and the nature of modern warfare. This comparison was also pertinent to Lewis's war paintings. Clutton Brock pointed out the main factor in the 1914-18 war was the Machine:

"In Mr.Nevinson's war pictures there is expressed a modern sense of war as an abnormal occupation; and this sense shows itself in the very method of the artist....for his cubist method does express, in the most direct way, his sense that in war man behaves like a machine or part of a machine, that war is a process in which man is not treated as a human being but as an item in a great instrument of destruction, in which he ceases to be a person and is lost in a process."(3)

For Brock it was the realisation that "machines have affected even our view of the universe.....all humanity is evidently dominated by the struggle for life, and is but part of it...."

In other criticisms of the war paintings, analogies were made to Lewis's style of painting being similar to that of the machine:

"Mr. Wyndham Lewis's "Battery Shelled,"acquired at the nations expense,.....is destitute of imagination and feeling, and is built up as mechanically as a proposition in Euclid. Mechanical works of this kind present no difficulty to an artist, for it avoids dolincation of form and the rendering of texture atmosphere, chiaroscuro, and local colour."(4)

More importantly, what Lewis's work represented to many critics was the anti-humanist philosophy symptomatic of the conditions of war, where men are at odds with their environment as well as each other. What this criticism reflected was a current trend in post-war Britain in the call for a return to 'nature' with all its associations of natural materials versus machinery and traditional forms of beauty versus modern design etc. The return

to nature was a return to a form of balance which was an extension of the humanist philosophy i.e. that man should be in harmony with his surroundings. For many, it took a political form where a balance was required in the economy after the upheavals of war. Lewis was directly affected as an artist as this philosophy infiltrated the art world with a call for, "a return to the arts and handicrafts for all things of grace and beauty."(5)

This philosophy in turn can be referred to the post-war work by Lewis. In particular his life-drawing c.1919 and the portfolio of Fifteen Drawings . These works show that although he appeared to be included in the general euphoria of a return to nature in drawing the nude model, his view remained "anti-humanist" and "anti-romantic".

"The External Approach"

The anti-humanist/ external approach Lewis applied to his view of the war was also evident in his vision of the human figure. Lewis strips the nude of all sentimentalization, and reduces it at will to the pure object. This was an element of Lewis's work which was picked up on by the critics of the Fifteen Drawings. The critic of the Times Literary Supplement however, saw this external approach to the nude as setting up a conflict between technique and subject in Lewis's art. That is, in viewing the figure like any other subject, Lewis saw "it is part of life, to be criticised mastered by the will," and yet the critic notes, Lewis could not simultaneously deny its allurements and seductive nature, hence there is:

"a conflict, between the allurements and the will that would master it in the interests of a purely aesthetic problem."(6)

Here the critic would be referring to Nudes I to IV in the portfolio as they are both seductive in their nature but Lewis depicts them by using a hard, sharp line which denies the sensuality of the flesh . This is also achieved by the use of a red and green wash in Nude I and Nude II. Here the figures become like moss covered stones.

R.H.Wilenski sees the same paradoxical juxtaposition between these ideas in Lewis's art :

"Those who are familiar with the varied manifestations of Mr.Lewis's talents will recognize the characteristic alternation of logic and inconsequence, of intellect and eroticism."(7)

This was all part of the recognition of Lewis as a primarily intellectual artist, and yet at the same time realizing that the very subject of the female figure, and the seductive way in which Lewis portrayed it, set up a conflict of interests. The suggestion was that out of this conflict came an originality, a spark, which set his life-drawings apart from the traditional approach, i.e:

"We expect the nude, if presented at all to be presented with a sentimental respect. Mr. Lewis has no more respect for it than for trees or buildings."(8)

Wilenski, and the critic of the Times recognized that Lewis was trying to approach the nude in an alternative manner to that of the great traditions of figure painting. However, the Times critic found the end result an unattractive vision of the figure. "(Lewis) presents the voluptuous simply as material for an art almost cynical in its asceticism." Thus, he renames Lewis's external approach to all subjects of art and life as an "artistic coldness". This can be associated with what Brock , in his criticism of the war paintings of 1919, saw as evidence of, a human being, ceasing "to be a person" and becoming "lost in a process."

Sex as a Mechanism

The two critics of Lewis's portfolio of Fifteen Drawings in recognizing Lewis's external approach, especially when applied to the nude as an alternative vision, were associating it with an alternative view of beauty. By saying that Lewis did not represent the figure with any kind of "sentimental respect", they implicitly acknowledged that he was creating an opposition to the traditional idea of beauty and the female form i.e. the tradition of sensuality and sexuality.

In the Times Literary Supplement, the critic draws a comparison with Lewis and Correggio, the latter being an artist who indulged himself in the sentimental, sexual undertones of the female nude which was seen by the critic as a form of escapism:

"Correggio in his life, was an anxious, rather penurious father of a family, and he turned to beauty, especially beauty of the body, as a compensation, a wish world of his dreams.....The dream made his art, made for him the necessary distinction between beauty and routine."(9)

The key therefore to looking at Lewis's art, according to this critic was how Lewis viewed the human figure and the function of sex merely as a mechanism, as something which could be set apart from the intellect, the human consciousness. In these dichotomies of 'body' and 'machine', and in the light of the criticism of the war work, there is a logical continuation of Lewis's anti-humanist philosophy:

"What he draws in any naked man or women, almost any animal seen as male or female; it is not a person at all."

This de-personalisation was particularly relevant to the Nudes I to IV in the portfolio as well as Head I and II and the Portrait of Ezra Pound.

The application of this idea of sex as a mechanism to the absurdity of human existence was noted by the Times critic:

"He uses these figures as characters are used in an improper French Farce, where we have any male and any female presented to exhibit the absurdity of sex in a plot which turns sex into a mechanism and laughs at it."

The figures referred to here would be Seraglio, Blue Nudes and Post-Jazz, with their provocative poses and their strange interchange of sexual organs.

The most important element in understanding this notion of the absurd was Lewis's use of humour in the form of satire . This was not always readily appreciated by the critics at the time. Herbert Furst was one of the few critics to realize this aspect of Lewis's art, although he did not discover it from looking at any of Lewis's painting, but from reading Blast:

"Until a few days ago I frankly belonged to that part of the public which rashly laughed at Wyndham Lewis and the Vorticists. I do not laugh now, certainly not at, though possibly at times with him.....I read Blast for the first time and came across a passage in which he says that the drawings in Punch are , very improperly, not funny...Drawings in a comic paper should be comic in execution; one should be able to see the joke, even without the legend."(10)

Wilenski also noticed this element in Lewis's art, and is clearly one of the few who, even though he discerned the use of absurdity did not find the man himself absurd:

"Mr.Lewis has no illusions because he is not afraid of the facts, and no prejudices because he is not afraid of theories and he is never absurd because he is not afraid of a joke."(11)

The critic of the Times Literary Supplement clearly saw this particular brand of Lewis humour (as displayed in Seraglio, Post Jazz and Blue Nudes,) un- nerving:

"The result is something confusing, discomfoting, at first sight, as if he were playing a malicious practical joke upon you, as if he were talking scandal about civilized men and women."(12)

Because the critic of the Times.Lit.Supp. failed to see, or felt threatened by what he saw as Lewis's humour, he failed to make

the association in Lewis's art between this element of "laughter" and it pertaining to the essential element of "humanity".

This critic then goes on to draw analogies between Lewis and another artist, namely Degas, who also presented this more modern view of the female nude, i.e. looking at it mainly as another subject for drawing, devoid of human or animal interest. In doing so, the critic suggested that these artists in their ruthlessness to control the subject matter of their vision, had possibly "ignored the facts of the world" and therefore lost the power to communicate the nuances of "humanity".

It is evident now, that Degas, even in his voyeuristic notion of the female nude (as seen in his drawings of women at their toilette etc.) still conveys a human concern. In the same way Sickert and the Camden Town artists in Britain later painted the nude in order to create an atmosphere (with the rough texture of their brush work), Degas nudes are of the same quality with his cross-hatched use of pastels to depict the model's flesh. These materials and general approach gave a sensuality and undercurrent of sexuality to the work.

The apparent lack of "humanity" in Lewis's work derived from his use of harsher materials such as pencil, pen and ink in order to create his "whip - lash" line, but at the time it was seen by the critics as being part of his "tendency to abstraction."

The Tendency to Abstraction

This was a notion present in the discussions of naturalism versus abstraction amongst art critics, c. 1919. For many critics, Lewis was still remembered for, and associated with, his pre-war Blast paintings such as Plan of War 1913-14 and Slow Attack 1913-1, such works were examples of Lewis's total

abstraction . To the critics, paintings such as these associated Lewis with having sympathies with war. They interpreted the abstract patterns and shapes as derivations of the machine. The machine was seen as devoid of all human qualities because it was not derived from any aspect of nature.

Lewis's continued interest in the formal concerns of pure abstraction were represented in the portfolio of Fifteen Drawings by Timon of Athens I (1919), Timon of Athens II (1914), and The Reading Room (1915). The drawings were deliberately juxtaposed to the Nudes I to IV (1919) and Heads I and II(1919) . These drawings from life, although concerned with the representation of the human figure were still concerned with " form, line and mass" which were also the dominant concerns of his abstract work of the "Blast" era. Thus Lewis's art, even in 1919 was accused of being devoid of "humanity".

One of the main purposes of Lewis studying the nude was clearly in order to conquer it as a technique for graphic precision, accuracy and style. This was very much the emphasis that Wilenski in his review of the portfolio gave to Lewis's work:

"Shut up a man with a ream of paper and some black crayon, and sooner or later he will show us the best he can do or give himself away."

Lewis probably saw the importance of these drawings to his career in the same light and the reception by such critics as Wilenski, underlined that he had indeed proved himself a worthy draftsman.

At the same time as recognising Lewis's interest in the "abstract elements" of art , Wilenski did not see them as being Lewis's "religion" as he suggested they appeared to be in the work of "Gaudier(Brzeska) in his later years, or as they are with Mr.Wadsworth today." However, as a continuation of the critics argument in the Times Literary Supplement, the tendency towards

abstraction was indicative of a loss of content in the subject of art:

"The notion of purely abstract design based upon no visible facts is a figment; it is design cut off from experience and so from content."

The critics suggestion that there was a division in abstract art between "form" and "content", was evidence they needed to have a recognizable image, i.e. something translated from nature, in order for the painting to convey meaning. Herbert Furst saw this exploration of unknown territory as obstructing the true role of art :

"The function of art is not to provide peepshows in to things we can never understand, but to emphasize and enhance the value of things we do understand. A work of art must represent a complete union of body (outward appearance), and soul (inner meaning)."(13)

Furst was, of course, presuming that an outward representation of the human form was necessary in order to achieve an inner meaning.

Lewis described his pre-war abstract work as "geometries" that were "empty" and "needed filling." Evidence that this was no longer true was that, by the end of his review of the Fifteen Drawings folio, the Times critic acknowledged there was a great deal of humanity in Lewis's art and cited Head I and Head II as examples of work that was now devoid of all "meaningless geometries".

A Comparison of two critical styles.

Wilenski's approach in dealing with the portfolio was much more detailed, in its observations of each print, than the Times critic. Wilenski was not afraid of tackling them in terms of their formal content. The Times critic was much more general in his approach and used the traditional methods of art evaluation,

by making comparisons of Lewis to a great master , such as Correggio, and discussing Lewis's art in terms of its form of "beauty" and where that beauty originated from. Wilenski also compared Lewis to the great masters , such as Leonardo, but he had a different motivation for doing so than the Times critic.

Wilenski was in many ways different to his contemporary critics and he outlined the destructive nature of their kind of criticism in The Transatlantic Review, 1924:

"All painting of consequence is a compound of derived elements and elements contributed by the artist. Appreciation involves the separation of these elements, the recognition of their mutual relations, the readjustment to the status quo, and the enlargement of the spectators experience by the artist's contribution. We are often tempted to take the easier course ; to enjoy only such beauties as we have seen before."(14)

It would be a misdemeanour to put the critic of the Times Literary Supplement in such a category, but as Wilenski goes on to point out, it was because such an attitude did prevail in the British art world that its art seemed to be one step behind that of the leading avant-garde of Europe. According to Wilenski, it was due to this lack of encouragement that so few British artists continued to work after the age of forty.

Wilenski saw the exception to this rule in Wyndham Lewis, who he described as a "crucial" artist:

"whose agile mind reacts to a hundred facets of contemporary life and drives him to turn from literature to painting to literary expression and then back again to paint. He has long been a vital figure in the English world of art and there is no reason to fear any diminution of his powers."(15)

In his criticism of Lewis's portfolio of Fifteen Drawings Wilenski clearly shows this appreciation of Lewis's work by the criteria previously described. Head I is seen as Lewis being the " Prince of the Expressionists" Seraglio, and Post Jazz, are products of those moments when Lewis's "intellect take a

holiday". All these works are recognized as different facets of Lewis's artistic potential, and his desire to experiment.

Wilenski uncharacteristically used 'academic phraseology' to describe Nude I by saying Lewis had "wrestled with the difficulties of complicated foreshortening". He goes on, however to point out how inadequate such a description this was of what Lewis was trying to do:

"in this case the foreshortening is the beginning of the story; the artist passes on the conception of the huddled figure as a potential element in a composition. To this end he colours it grey-green, and it becomes a block of granite; chisel in hand, he hacks it into a plastic entity, a group of organic forms together instituting a central rhythm radiating other rhythms."(16)

Hence Wilenski's criticism goes beyond the merely formal and by doing so indicates that Lewis's own concerns in his art also went beyond this point.

The Comparison with Leonardo and the French Masters

What was to become the central point of Clive Bell's unprecedented attack on Wyndham Lewis and his fellow post-Vorticist colleagues, in his article "Wilcoxism", The Athenaeum, March 5, 1920, was Wilenski's comparison of Lewis with Leonardo Da Vinci.

One of the aspects that Wilenski so admired in Lewis's work, as seen in the portfolio, was his continual desire for experiment:

" he is only interested in hitherto insoluble problems; he attacks in places where success looks hopeless, and just as he scorns to hide his failures, so he also scorns to repeat any chance success."(17)

It is in this desire by Lewis to discover and explore untested ground and not to be frightened of failure, that Wilenski makes the comparison with Leonardo:

"He is an artist who has certain affinities with Leonardo da Vinci; he has less skill of hand, but he has more sense of

humour and the same passion for experiment and contempt for an easy task."

This involvement in experimentation, for Wilenski, was represented by the Reading Room where Lewis had the confidence to present a work that was not much more than a doodle from a sketch book. Wilenski saw them as series of "experiments in formalism" which were "very unlike the drawings of Sir.William Orpen, but not unlike the note-books of Leonardo."

Wilenski's comparison of Lewis with Leonardo was therefore on the basis of their similar creative thinking, and not necessarily on them having equal technical skills or visual accomplishments.

The comparison made by Wilenski with the French Masters, Derain and Matisse was of a much more contentious nature in the light of the current art criticism:

"Head I" shows us that he could, if he so desired, become the Prince of Expressionists and beat Matisse and Derain at their own game. But his restless interest in experiment will not let him linger long in this mood; he is impelled to the major problems."

There are three major points that Wilenski implied in this statement about Lewis's art; firstly, he inferred that Lewis was equal if not better at creating a seductive, sensual , pretty image than Derain or Matisse. Secondly, because of Lewis's desire to experiment, and wish to move on from this kind of work, Wilenski suggested that Lewis did not regard prettiness and sensuality in art as being very important. Once mastered it was not seen by Lewis as worth sustaining, thus Wilenski insinuated that Derain and Matisse were clutching on to a style which they knew to be successful, rather than experimental. Thirdly, Wilenski indicated that these ideas of sensuality and prettiness were not the "major" issues in Lewis's art, and that therefore, by association, Matisse and Derain were criticised by Wilenski for not evidently facing these issues.

Clive Bell and "Wilcoxism" The Athenaeum 5 March 1920

Clive Bell's reaction to this review of Lewis's work by Wilenski and in particular to his making such comparisons between Lewis and Leonardo Da Vinci was that of shock and embarrassment. Bell had just returned from Paris, and could not believe this kind of "hearty self-applause " which was being given to British art. Bell spoke:

" as a critic who hopes that his country is not once again going to make itself a laughing stock of Europe is bound at all risks to say something disagreeable."

He also insinuated that it was Lewis and his fellow Vorticist colleagues of the

Blast era, who had been responsible for England being the laughing stock of Europe . Principally through the associations he then made with Lewis and the disease afflicting British art, which he termed as "Wilcoxism".

This term came from an article in The Athenaeum on Mrs Wilcox who had written a book Words and I. According to Bell, she was convinced that all the magazine writers she was associated with (even though nothing more than experts "in first-hand personal gossip") were in fact the "truly great figures of her age." This was a delusion of grandeur according to Bell which was neither 'dishonest', or 'assuming' but "ridiculous". Bell made a comparison of this delusion to that occurring in the English art scene. The fact that artists in England should even deem themselves to be in the same bracket as contemporary French artists, was for Bell absurd:

"where our painters are fiercely disputing with each other the crown of European painting, and our critics appraising the respective claims of Mr. Augustus John and Mr. John Nash as solemnly as they were comparing Cezanne with Renoir."(18)

Bell described "Wilcoxism" as a disease, but the root of this disease came from his own assumption that in comparison to the French Masters, the British artist was an amateur. Bloomsbury itself, however could have been accused of the very disease that Bell described, being a large incestuous organization of artists and writers who were friends and relatives promoting each others work, the Hogarth Press itself being a good example of Bloomsbury "Wilcoxism".

The majority of Bell's criticism in his article "Wilcoxism" centered around the war paintings at the Royal Academy. He used the exhibition as a vehicle for ridiculing Lewis and his contemporaries in their depiction of war. Bell can only fancy:

" that they may have mistaken the nature of their gifts. Were they really born to be painters? I wonder. But of this I am sure ,their friends only make them look silly by comparing them with contemporary French masters or even Leonardo Da Vinci."(19)

This was a direct way of implying that the criticism that especially Lewis had received, in Wilenski's review of the Fifteen Drawings was only favourable because Wilenski was a friend of Lewis.

The hypocrisy of this statement was only too evident to Lewis in comparison with what Bell had stated in his article on Duncan Grant (which had appeared in a previous weeks issue of The Athenaeum.) In this article Bell made analogies of Grant's work with that of the great English painters such as Gainsborough, Crome and Constable. Lewis retaliated in his correspondence concerning this article:

"To write one week that his friend Mr. Grant is greater than William Blake or Hogarth, and to object the next to your contributor R.H.W., asserting that "Mr. Lewis possesses certain affinities with Leonardo", is just a dull essay in impudence."(20)

Lewis also took the opportunity to point out that whereas he and his friends might suffer from the dreaded disease "Wilcoxism" it was a case of the , "Pot is calling the Kettle black.(sic)"(21) The motivation for Lewis's retaliation in The Athenaeum on March 12, 1920 was the implication by Bell in his article "Wilcoxism", that because Lewis suffered from this disease "Wilcoxism" ,he had lost all " sense of imperfection,...desire for improvement, and ... power of self criticism." Lewis, because of the so called false flattery that he had received from Wilenski, was therefore incapable of self criticism:

"Let us admire, for instance, the admirable, though somewhat negative, qualities of the work of Mr. Wyndham Lewis - the absence of vulgarity and false sentiment, the sobriety of colour, the painstaking search for design - without forgetting that in the Salon d'Automne or the Salon des Independents a picture by him would neither merit nor obtain from the most generous critic more than a passing word of perfunctory encouragement."(22)

The question lies in whether this was a true description of Lewis's art? The fact the Bell found Lewis's "absence of vulgarity" and "false sentiment" a negative quality was a double edged comment. It certainly equated with Lewis's idea of Bell's notion of art, i.e. that Bell had a love of sentiment in his admiration for the French masters Matisse , Derain and Picasso. His idea that Lewis's "painstaking search for design" was also ambiguous, for it implied that the negative aspect of such a search for Lewis was that he never found what he was looking for. This criticism further indicates that Bell saw the art of France as having higher standards than in Britain . Its critics were definitely more severe on their artists than in Britain. Lewis satired Bell's appraisal of French art to the detriment of the English equivalent:

"For he regards Paris with something of the awe-struck glee and relish of a provincial urchin at the sight of a cockney guttersnipe. Is there anything that almost any artist with a little prestige in Paris might not tell him that he would not swallow unhesitatingly."(sic).(23)

Lewis in his retaliation to Bell's criticism, not only defended his own position but that of his fellow artists who had come under fire.

Bell of course could not allow the matter to be interpreted by Lewis, and wrote a rejoinder in The Athenaeum, March 19, 1920. The tone of this letter was condescending and insulting:

"I should be sorry to quarrel with Mr. Wyndham Lewis about anything so insignificant as his art or my character;"(24)

Bell translates Lewis's correction of what Wilenski actually said about his "affinities" with Leonardo as deprecating the complement he had received. Of course, Lewis had been forced to do so because of Bell. Bell saw this as false modesty in the form of "forgetfulness" by Lewis, as Bell has to remind the reader and Lewis of the compliments that Wilenski had included in his article on the portfolio of Fifteen Drawings. Bell in doing this suggests that it was possibly Wilenski who was suffering from the disease "Wilcoxism", and that it was not too late for Lewis to treat his own symptoms:

"If Mr. Lewis takes my advice he will run through "The Worlds and I", underlining every sentence that gives him pain."

Lewis does in the end have the last word, as he refused to continue the argument, and his only defence, was, "It was for another purpose that I originally answered his attack on War artists and others."(25)

Where Lewis had wished to defend the work of his country's young artists, Bell had retaliated in a personal attack on Lewis. Whether Lewis's counter attack did his public reputation any good is doubtful. But he was forced to diminish the only real

compliment he received from Wilenski in reference to the portfolio of Fifteen Drawings.

The view that critics of Lewis's portfolio of Fifteen Drawings projected to the rest of the art world in 1920 was that its value was minimal. To most critics its only interest was in Lewis's novel view of the female nude, but this was seen as just another form of experimentation by Lewis that would lead nowhere. The exception was Wilenski, who in associating Lewis with Leonardo suggested the importance of experimentation in pushing the frontiers of art further forward.

It is clear, however, that because Lewis was known only for his big war paintings in 1919, which were in turn associated with his Vorticist abstractions, the critics of 1920 were not aware of the broad range of Lewis's work. If the Adelphi exhibition of Drawings in Jan. 1920 was as poorly attended as Eliot implied, it is evident that very few people would have seen Lewis's life drawings, which made up a large part of that show.

In the next chapter, with the knowledge of most of the drawings that can be associated with those represented by the folio, it is possible to present a clearer picture of what Lewis was trying to achieve overall in both his art and literature.

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NOTES ON CHAPTER THREE

- (1) Wyndham Lewis, The Athenaeum Nov.1919–Jan 1920.
- (2) Wyndham Lewis, Forward to the Guns exhibition in the Goupil Gallery, London. Feb.1919, appears in Wyndham Lewis on Art, by Walter Michel and C.J.Fox. page 105.
- (3) Clutton Brock, Essays on Art, "Process or Person"(London, 1919.) page 98.
- (4) C.Reginald Grundy, The Connoisseur : "Spurious Art" by editor March 1920. page 138.
- (5) T.L.Tudor, Drawing and Design: "The Mind of A Nation", Dec. 1919. page 14.
- (6) Anon, The Times Literary Supplement, "Wyndham Lewis : Fifteen Drawings" Jan 22nd 1920.page 47.
- (7) R.H.Wilenski, The Athenaeum, " Mr.Lewis as a Draftsman". Jan.2nd 1920. page 19.
- (8) Anon, Times Literary Supplement : "Wyndham Lewis : Fifteen Drawings",Jan 22nd 1920, page 47.
- (9) Ibid.
- (10) Herbert Furst, Colour : "About Wyndham Lewis", March 1919. page 24.
- (11) Wilenski, The Athenaeum : " Mr.Lewis as a Draftsman," Jan.2.1920. op.cit.page 19.
- (12) Anon, The Times Literary Supplement.op.cit.page 47.
- (13) H.Furst, Colour: "About Wyndham Lewis", March 1919.op.cit.page 25.
- (14) R.H.Wilenski, The Transatlantic Review : "London Art Chronicle", June 1924. page 487.
- (15) Ibid.page 488.
- (16) Wilenski, The Athenaeum : " Mr.Lewis as a Draftsman", Jan 2.1920. p.cit.page 19.

- (17) Ibid.page 19.
- (18) Clive Bell, The Athenaeum : "Wilcoxism", March 5 1920. page 311.
- (19) Ibid. page 312.
- (20) Wyndham Lewis, The Athenaeum : "Correspondence Mr. Clive Bell and Wilcoxism", March 12 1920. page 349.
- (21) Ibid.page 349.
- (22) Clive Bell, The Athenaeum : "Wilcoxism", March 5 1920. page 312.
- (23) Wyndham Lewis, The Athenaeum : "Correspondence" Mr.Clive Bell and Wilcoxism", March 12 1920. page 349.
- (24) Clive Bell, The Athenaeum : "Correspondence", March 19, 1920. page 379.
- (25) Wyndham Lewis, The Athenaeum: "Correspondence", March 26 1920. page 425.

CHAPTER FOUR

Chronological and Thematic Discussion of the Drawings in the Portfolio of Fifteen Drawings

Introduction.

This chapter sets out to enlarge upon some of the themes of the portfolio already indicated by its critics of 1920. This considers Lewis's folio both in reference to the work it is known he went on to produce in 1921, and work prior to its production from 1909 -1919. This is to show that although the Fifteen Drawings folio was a preliminary sketch to the major achievements of his paintings of the 1920's and 30's, it was an indication of the themes and direction Lewis was to take in his art. The difficulty lies in that many of Lewis's views of life had been elucidated primarily through his fictional writings of 1909-1912. The drawings that accompanied these writings were literal in their translation and lacked any formal precision. These were still days of experimentation, and it was only when Lewis had gained the technical skills witnessed in the life drawings of 1919, that the visual translation of ideas could come to fruition. In order to elucidate some of Lewis's ideas about the human condition in the portfolio of Fifteen Drawings, the pre-war literature of the Wild Body Stories have been cited.

The Fifteen Drawings portfolio suggests that its thesis was to present a chronological development of Lewis's style from 1912-1919. The evidence being that the dates of the work in the selection relate to the changes in style Lewis underwent prior to, and including 1919. Lewis, by juxtaposing several styles and

themes in the drawings, was possibly trying to re-define for himself the direction of his work. Despite the chronological dating of these drawings, there is no structure to viewing the work and therefore the portfolio is open to interpretation.

This apparent lack of structure in the portfolio suggests it was an ill thought out random selection of views by Lewis.(1) It could be argued however, that this was not untypical of a portfolio system. What was more typical was to create an overall picture of what the artist had done, up until that point and to leave it for the audience to decide what structure existed .

One opinion is that the Fifteen Drawings portfolio acts as a retrospective on Wyndham Lewis's career and his achievements in the visual arts up until 1919. There is a parallel here with the way a retrospective exhibition would be used to create an atmosphere and aura around an artist's work.

Certainly, if the Fifteen Drawings portfolio is compared with its predecessor Timon of Athens(2) 1913, and its successor 30 Personalities and a Self-Portrait 1932 (3), where one style of drawing the figure dominates, then the Fifteen Drawings portfolio, presents neither such a theme or a single view point. In its broadest sense the Fifteen Drawings portfolio was an attempt to get Lewis's work known to a broader public . To do this some consideration of what 'subject' would appeal must have been essential.

The portfolio of Fifteen Drawings represents the many differing interpretations of the human figure by Lewis from 1912 to 1919. He presents the figure in isolation; in an environment: as part of a group; as an anonymous nude, and as a portrait of an associate. The core of the work was the life drawings completed

in 1919. Lewis had returned to drawing the "nude " model after the war, which was a significant development both in terms of his own career and in his attitude to the artistic avant-garde c.1919. These drawings also suggest some of the sociological and intellectual concerns Lewis made with the figure throughout his artistic career. The social and philosophical content was a polemical discussion of the the conflicts of human nature; the intellect versus the animal, the function of sex and the absurdity of the human body.

Another interpretation of the folio suggests that in the same way the Caliph's Design of 1919, can be interpreted as a thesis on the development of the integration of art in society, and takes to task existing standards of design, so the portfolio of Fifteen Drawings acts as a polemical discussion of "modernism" and turns it on its head. Lewis, although continuously an active and integrated member of the artistic avant-garde was simultaneously outside its mainstream. He chastised the Bloomsbury artists and many of his contemporaries for their dilettante attitude to art. For Lewis the binding link to all creative practice was an intellectual superiority which came from a true understanding of contemporary philosophy.

In this way Lewis's art was not the art of the Bloomsbury aesthete, the subject for both his art and literature was not dominated by narrow aesthetic concerns, but by philosophical and sociological ideas. His revelations of the female nude in his life drawing studies completed in 1919, represented by Nude I to IV in the folio, are not Matissean dalliances into the extasies of the human flesh and therefore should not be viewed as such. In Lewis's art the human figure was an abstract phenomenon used

to explore the mental, emotional and social aberrations of the human condition.

For Lewis, the mainstream of his thinking at the time centered upon a necessity to re-integrate life into art. Life was a word Lewis was to use constantly in his writings and discussions about art, and had many meanings for him. Life in its relationship to art has two meanings here. Firstly, Lewis argued that the trivializing of art over the past 50 years had meant that its relationship to life had also become trivial and meaningless. He saw art as being overrun by sentimentalisation and the love of 'prettiness' which obstructed its real purpose. These beliefs were outlined in his polemical writings of 1919 such as the

Caliph's Design:

"Life has begun, as language, for instance, begins with a crowding and redundancy that must be ordered and curtailed if the powerfulllest instincts of life, even, are to triumph. Where everything is mutually destructive, and where immense multitudes of activities and modes of life have to be scrapped and excised, it is important not to linger in ecstasy over everything, simply because it is."(4)

Lewis put forward a second more positive interpretation of life in its relationship to art, as the need for a greater integration of the two. Art had to be projected beyond the studio and gallery doors, in order for it to be reestablished as part of life. Again this was an idea put forward in the Caliph's Design :

"You must get Painting, Sculpture ,and Design out of the studio and into life somehow ..."(5)

This idea manifested itself in Lewis's involvement in the Arts League of Service and their portfolio scheme.(See Appendix) It can also be seen as an alternative motivation, other than the purely financial, for Lewis to produce the portfolio of Fifteen Drawings.(6)

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Chronologically the drawings of the portfolio can be put into three categories. The first being the period 1912-13 represented by Seraglio, Post Jazz and Blue Nudes all of which were developments of Lewis's early attempts at placing figures in an environment, and emphasizing the physical similarities and differences between them. The second group of drawings date from the Blast era of 1914-15, including Timon of Athens II and the Reading Room, and although dated 1919, Timon of Athens I also belongs in this grouping. The rest of the drawings all date from 1919, and include, Nudes I,II,III and IV, Head I and Head II, The Group, The Pole Jump, and a portrait of Ezra Pound.

The latter group although all completed in the same year, also cover a wide range of themes and subjects in Lewis's art.

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The earliest drawings represented in the portfolio are Seraglio, Post Jazz and Blue Nudes all dating from approximately 1912-1913. They all consist of representations of the male and female "nude" in isolation from any recognizable environment. They are part of a series of thematically associated drawings including Chickens 1912 [Fig.65], Courtship 1913 [Fig.66] and Second Movement 1913 [Fig.67]. These were distillations of Lewis's other drawing such as Sunset among the Michelangelos (1912) and Two Mechanics (1912) where the figures still existed in a defined backdrop. All the figures in these drawings were grotesque in the distorted proportions of the large bodies to their pin-like, featureless heads. The use of line progressed through these drawings to reach a more curvaceous, minimal statement, as in Seraglio Post Jazz and Blue Nudes. Thus the drawings of the portfolio have lost some of the roughness evident

in their visual counterparts and the environment in which the figures are placed has been subdued or eradicated. This is possibly why Lewis chose these three drawings from the rest as they have a flowing quality and a slightly more sophisticated use of line. Thematically, they maintained a sense of comedy, and were evidence of Lewis's use of laughter to expose the absurdity in us all. The Root of the Comic as he calls it this absurdity came from "the observations of a thing behaving like a person."(7)

Lewis's ideas concerning human existence were based in his writings of 1909 to 1917, which he produced collectively under the title the Wild Body in 1927. These were based on Lewis's observations whilst travelling through the Breton villages of Northern France c.1904-1906. They offer an external view of the behavioural patterns of primitive people, who Lewis used as a case history for all humanity, by dissecting them and exposing them in their primordial state. They served as the embodiment of the tragic nature of human existence, which was an underlying theme in all Lewis's philosophy. The tragic nature of our existence was linked to humanity being trapped in the animal nature of our own bodies. This was for Lewis a comic phenomenon. The duality of the tragedy and comedy of our existence makes our appearance grotesque, which renders action absurd, hence Lewis's summing up of this idea as the "totality of the absurd":

"To begin to understand the totality of the absurd, at all, you have to assume much more than what belongs to a social differentiation. There is nothing that is animal (and we as bodies are animals) if you like, the madness of our life, is at the root of every true philosophy."(8)

This philosophy of the absurd which Lewis was exploring in his writings, c.1911-12 was also inherent in his drawings of that period. The figures in Veraglio, Post Jazz and Blue Nudes are

depicted as acting in the unconscious manner of the herd, a form of mentality which Lewis associated with crowds, while viewing himself as the artist and conscious intellect, as being separate, and therefore the "Crowd Master". These ideas were discussed in a very early critical essay:

"The body of contemporary man is the prey of the mercenary "strong men", he is lured with their muscle manufactories, or, to be more accurate, it is his body that they almost suck in, by the mere brute magnetism of size."(9)

However, these drawings are important because they are not governed by the actual world but by a physical manifestation of an idea. The figures are recognizably male and female, but their anatomical differences are paradoxical if not misleading. In Seraglio the physical attributes of both figures are exchanged, the man is attributed with the vagina and the large curvaceous hips, the woman with her back turned with more masculine shaped hips and phallic shaped pony tail. Similar paradoxes occur in Second Movement.(10) The visual punning on physical nature and sexuality evident in these drawings involves Lewis's complexed and somewhat muddled views on women and their sexual roles.

Tarr, although a novel, can be used to demonstrate some of Lewis's attitudes to sex and women. In the original copy first published in 1916, Lewis was perhaps referring to his own attitude towards sex when Tarr said:

"First I am an artist, with most people not desirable as artists, all the finer part of their vitality goes into sex. They become third-rate poets during their courtship."(11)

In this way, as can be seen in Courtship, the men in Lewis's drawings of couples, which include, Seraglio, Post Jazz and Blue Nudes, are drawn with the same proportions as the women, because the animal act of sex makes them like one of the herd. If the

herd instinct is therefore a female one, then the male in these partnerships, can possess female genitalia, and vice versa. The fact that both sexes represented by the figures in these drawings exchange their sexual organs can also indicate homosexuality, which Lewis was very intolerant of; these drawings could be seen as an early satire of this state. However, it is more likely in 1919, that Lewis was satirizing the sexual act itself in its debasement of the human intellect to that of the pure animal psyche.

The idea that Lewis saw sex as a mechanism was one aspect of the drawings in the portfolio commented upon by its critics. Although more obviously illustrated in the drawings, Seraglio, Blue Nudes and Post Jazz this was also the underlying theme to Nudes I, II, III, and IV. The sexuality in these nudes is semi-dormant and muffled by the emphasis on the nude as being seen as pure object, describing artistic curiosity of form:

"All the delicate psychology other men naturally seek in women, the curiosity of form, windows on other lives, loves and passions, I seek in my work, and not elsewhere."(12)

The discussion of the sexual role of women in society continued in Lewis's later polemical writings such as the Art of Being Ruled, 1927. Here the difference between the sexes was used to make sociological and political points. Lewis went as far as to say :

"Let us say that women are men with a handicap. It is a natural handicap."(13)

Lewis insisted that this philosophy was not necessarily against women, for him it was an extension of his segregation ideal between the herd, unconscious crowd, and the thinking intellectual authority.

These drawings, Seraglio, Blue Nudes and Post Jazz although dealing with the anatomy of the human form, remain part of

Lewis's fantasy work. The observation of the real world that affects the forms, comes from a distillation of literary and philosophical notes. The proportions of these figures and their general appearance are not yet governed by reality.

The second group of drawings which seem to present a particular translation of the figure, are Timon of Athens II 1914, The Reading Room 1915, and Timon of Athens I 1919 .

As a continuation of Lewis's philosophy of human existence based on his mindless creatures of Seraglio, Blue Nudes and Post Jazz the figures of Timon of Athens I and II reflect more "violent individualities" and the position of Lewis as the artist, in the environment:

"When we say "types of humanity" we mean violent individualities, and nothing stereotyped."(14)

Timon of Athens I in the Fifteen Drawings portfolio is contorted and introverted crouching in on himself, the cross-hatched black ink line being used to create abstract areas of light and dark which bare no relation to muscle or bone. It is similar in construction to the Abstract Designs [Fig.68] of the Timon portfolio. Timon of Athens II is alternatively a figure which is stretched out bearing an up-raised arm, implying anger, at the outside world.

By including the Timon figures, although probably completed after the date of the original drawings for the portfolio of that name, Lewis was deliberately making a reference to its theme both in terms of style and content. The Timon of Athens portfolio [Fig.69] was completed in 1913, as illustrations to the Shakespeare play but, it is clear from the dates of the drawings

of Timon in the portfolio of Fifteen Drawings 1919 ,that Lewis continued to be preoccupied by its theme for the next seven years.

Timon of Athens the play can be seen as depicting the dichotomy of human existence. In the first Acts a humanistic philosophy is presented; man is at one with his surroundings, and can function with the consciousness of self, but the second half reveals the tragedy of this existence and that in fact there is no affinity between man and his surroundings . By denying self hood existence becomes more tragic and real. The play ends with Timon unable to find a solution to this dilemma and dies alone.

Lewis uses his drawings of Timon to illustrate this dilemma. In the major drawings of the Timon folio used to demonstrate the deterioration of any affinity between man and his environment, the figure is placed in a collaged backdrop, drawn in a cubo-futurist manner. The later drawings of Timon in the portfolio of Fifteen Drawings were more reflective of the later state of Timon as a figure in total isolation. The style of these single figures seems to be distilled from the small motifs which were included in the original Timon portfolio, and were intended as decorations to the text.

As with the Reading Room, the geometries and hatchings that fill the Timon figures appear to be like doodles, rather than seriously intended drawings. The significance of Lewis including such doodles in the portfolio was recognized by Wilenski as being a demonstration of Lewis's ability not be afraid of experiment:

"He goes to the British Museum Reading-Room, and in the long depressing interval between demand and supply he draws on a Museum "slip"- not a portrait sketch of his neighbour, as nine artists out of ten would have done - but a series of experiments in formalization: plastic symbols based on the human profile, contrasted angles embodying figures in motion, resulting in fantastic hybrids, and semicircles degenerating into human calves."(15)

The Timon II, Reading Room and Timon I, are the nearest representations of the "abstract geometries" of Lewis's Vorticist period. They are still recognizable forms of the human figure, their primitive nature harkens back to the earlier "Seraglio" type. But these are figures devoid of all sensuous nature, unlike the Seraglio, Blue Nudes and Post Jazz drawings. The juxtaposition of these two types of work, in the portfolio indicates Lewis's involvement in both naturalism and abstraction. It is clear from the criticism of the portfolio at the time that this was one of the major issues raised by the apparent lack of harmony in style and content. For Lewis there was no contradiction in terms. In reference to Wadsworth's exhibition of Woodcuts in 1919, where he also juxtaposed earlier total abstractions with more representative war work, Lewis advises the audience:

"We may really consider then two phases of this artist's work quite simply side by side, without any knitting of the brows and mental readjustment as we pass from the less to more abstract works."(16)

The same advice could be given to the viewer of the portfolio of Fifteen Drawings. Concluding that the juxtaposition of abstract and representational work was not contentious for Lewis, is an observation made purely in reference to its formal appreciation. Lewis knew it was a contentious issue amongst the International avant-garde and was addressing this in the choice of drawings for the folio.

Historically it has been argued that after the events of Cubism, Futurism and Vorticist abstraction, there was a general return to naturalism within the International avant-garde. To fit Lewis neatly into such an argument would be a distortion of the aims of his art:

"The writer of this note had written before the war: "I would sign no paper promising never to do a purely naturalistic work again." Similarly I would sign no paper foregoing my, in terms of history, newer enthusiasm." (17)

However, Lewis's contrasting of abstract against figurative elements in the portfolio of Fifteen Drawings was not as startling as those in Wadsworth's exhibition. In Lewis's portfolio the variations are more subtle in his portrayal of the human figure. These oscillate between the female nude as drawn from life, to the isolated geometric doodles of the imaginative figure.

Another group of drawings which have similar concerns in the portfolio were The Group (1919) and The Pole Jump (1919). They both involve the setting of figures in an environment, and in particular, the Pole Jump involves the figures as spectators to a leisure activity.

The most immediate precedent to these two drawings can be seen in the war paintings and drawings which also incorporated the relationship between humans surviving in what was, ostensibly, a hostile environment. These two drawings of the folio refer to the war work as they deal with the same machine like, automaton nature of the soldiers in the trenches, e.g A Battery Shelled 1919 [Fig.70]. This was a painting Lewis was still trying to complete at the same time as producing the portfolio of Fifteen

Drawings.(18) Therefore his concern with this style of drawing the figure must have been still uppermost in his mind.

The Group , clearly borrows more from the Vorticist work rather than being influenced by the life drawing technique that was to preoccupy Lewis in 1919. The Group has similarities with another drawing of the time, Study (1919) which has a more obvious reference to war, with the figures wearing recognizable uniforms, depicting more of a historic battle than modern warfare.

In the Pole Jump there are three foreground figures who are spectators witnessing the athlete in the pole vault. The athlete is given distorted proportions to his body, for two reasons. Formally, to indicate space within the picture plane and give the sensation that he is way above the spectator's head; secondly, the distortions demonstrate the animal nature of the athlete and present him as a dead, lifeless figure. Although supposedly a figure in motion, the athlete appears to be static and somehow acts as an extension of the pole. The spectators are equally featureless, semi-abstract in appearance, indicating the mindless nature of those who watch sport as well as those who participate. The Pole Jump [Fig.71] was later added to and altered by Lewis to be included in a commission for Lord Inchcape in 1929.

Other drawings in this series included Boxing at Juan les Pins(1929) ,Wrestling.(1929) and Beach Scene(19129). The main changes he made to the drawing were to add colour and to fill in the left hand area of the composition. The new drawing has more rhythm and spatial irony but the crowd and athlete elements are the same as the original. Lewis obviously felt the Pole Jump was near enough completion in 1919, to include it in the Fifteen Drawings portfolio.

The essential theme of this work and much of Lewis's art was its humour. As Herbert Furst put it , it was in the execution of the drawing which made it funny, "one should be able to see the joke, even without the legend." The Pole Jump however, provided the subject which was a well used target for Lewis's humour in the form of satire. The target was true nature of the English as a race and their social hierarchy ; the perfect occasion for witnessing their behaviour was in their love of sport. In this sense drawings like the Pole Jump can be seen as being in the tradition of Hogarth.

Again, these observations of life through Lewis's satiric eye begin with the Wild Body stories and his critical writings,c. 1911:

"As Englishmen are fond of asserting, sport has people less quarrelsome, and more orderly in their quarrels. We think of fighting as boxing, with the conditions varied a little, and we lose the wildness and reality of the fact; and heroic suggestions of the human form vanish with the various athletic uniforms. And throughout the Anglo-Saxon world sport is studiously encouraged, and the particular spirit that has come to prevail in the conduct of all sports warmly lauded and fostered; for it is felt how useful sport, and this way of approaching it, is, in daunting and taming the body, and the spirit as well."(19)

In 1914, Blast, Lewis was including sport as another acrimonious subject to be Blasted:

"BLAST SPORT-HUMOURS FIRST COUSIN AND ACCOMPLICE."(20)

What Lewis meant by his association of sport to humour was its relationship to the non-thinking, herd like state which was governed by the physical nature of the animal in us all. This was not only the antithesis of Lewis's own position but that which he believed was damaging to life:

"Every natural and heroic gesture and energetic impulse has been turned into a "game," has had the life taken out of it."(21)

The observations of Lewis's puppets at play were continued in his bathers series dated 1919-1920. These include Dancers(Ballet Figures) M.367,[Fig.72] Bathers M.364 , Lovers with another figure M.403, [Fig.73] and Three figures Ballet Scene M.382. These drawings however, have clearly benefited from Lewis's increased technical skills derived from his life studies, and can therefore be placed in a different genre again to that of The Pole Jump and The Group. The bathers series also indicates, that whilst involved in the relative traditions of the life model, Lewis allowed these activities to feed his imaginative work. This was also indicated in the contrasting of the fantasy works, such as Timon of Athens I and II, the Reading Room, with drawings from observed life in the portrait Heads I and II and the Nudes I to IV.

Lewis 's ability to draw was not a freak discovery of 1919. He had studied at the Slade from 1898-1901 and evidence that he could draw the nude in a traditional format is demonstrated in Male Nude 1900 and Nude Boy bending over,1900. These drawings show his ability to describe an object in three-dimensional space and indicate nuances of texture and form. But from leaving art school it is clear that Lewis's drawings were seen primarily as vehicles for exploring ideas and philosophic notions presented more readily in his literature. The only evidence of Lewis returning to the function of drawing as observation was in his war drawings, such as The Rum Ration 1918. This work was probably what motivated him to become involved in drawing the life model in 1919:

"When I came out of my vorticist period, just before the beginning of the twenties, I set myself to perfect my drawing by practicing tirelessly in work from models."(22)

What Lewis set out to achieve in the life drawings of 1919–21, as represented in the portfolio of Fifteen Drawings by Nude I,II,III IV and Head I and II was a new confidence in formal techniques. Walter Michel sees this period of drawing as representing a balance between nature and artifice, where neither was dominant. The essential component that allowed this balance to be achieved was in Lewis's control over his use of line. There was a greater need for him to fulfill a certain degree of competence in the formal techniques of painting and drawing in 1919, as it gave him attention in the press and amongst his colleagues, who went so far as to compare his ability in draftmanship to some of the great Renaissance artists.

Nudes III and Nude IV in the portfolio can be associated with a group of drawings which are early attempts by Lewis to draw the nude.e.g. Red Nude M.351 [Fig.74] Red Nude Seated,M.353 [Fig.75] Seated Nude M.355[Fig.76], and The Lascar M.336 [Fig.77]: all dated 1919.

They all have certain qualities in common. It's seen in the uncertain awkward line, and the way the washes used do not delineate real tone. The anatomy of these figures is still not particularly accurate, although there is a clear-cut silhouette of each figure, the internal delineation of forms is very scratchy in its cross-hatching, particularly in Nude III. Many of these early views have their hands and feet missing from the composition, the emphasis therefore being on the back view of the nude. This de-personalizes the character of the sitters, and they are analogous to slabs of meat, rather than to human beings.

What transpires through the life drawings Lewis did at this time was a reassessment of how to use line to describe the observed world. For instance, the linear cross-hatching of pen and ink in Timon I and II were not relevant to conveying convex and concave forms of the female nude.

The drawings Nude I and Nude II which are reproduced in the folio are much more adventurous in their use of composition and use of tone than Nudes III and Nude IV. Nude II can be seen within a series of drawings of similar compositional devices, Crouching Nude M.365, [Fig.78] Crouching Women M.366, [Fig.79] Stooping Nude M.357, [Fig.80] Nude (D'Offay), [Fig.81] and Seated Nude M.378, [Fig.82] all dated 1919–1920. The composition of the majority of these drawings stems from a crouched or squatting position which create highly foreshortened shapes. The flatness of the form making up the figure is emphasized by having no defined background, suspending it against the white of the page as in the style of the Japanese print. Again these nudes are featureless with no hint as to the character of the sitter.

In Nude II the figure is also seen as a series of flattened shapes; the viewer looks down on the head. The shoulders are defined as a flat plane leading to; the outstretched arms; the hanging breasts; the rolls of stomach, and the folded legs. They only recede in to real space because of the progressive delineation of each shape. We are not allowed to see through what is beyond the figure as the area underneath each arm pit is blocked by a view of the raised hips. The only indication of the figure not being a totally solid object is in the strips of lighter tone than the rest of the body. This lighter tone is that of the surrounding paper and is used to indicate some source of light. This is achieved by reversing the effect of reality to

become like a negative image. That is, the areas of light are in fact what would in reality be shadow. To use a wash in this way again defies the laws of nature, as it is not used to define real tonal areas.

What the crouching position gives to all the associated drawings of Nude II is a composition which is centered upon the main body of the figure. Or as Wilenski put it, "a group of organic forms together constituting a central rhythm radiating other rhythms." (23)

The image of the figure is self contained, the extended arms as in Nude II and Crouching Women M.366, act as an archway for the head to be placed at its pivotal centre. The symmetry of this design is emphasized in Nude II as the head is positioned exactly between the breasts. It is only through the extended "V" shaped position of the folded legs to the right which breaks this symmetrical pattern. But, the open scissor shape of the legs echoes that of the open extended "V" shape of the arms. In Nude II there are no distortions in the almost perfect, silhouetted outline of the figure, but in order for this to occur the distortions are made internally. The sensation that this figure is looking down on the viewer is created by the horizon line being on the viewer's eye level.

The opposite effect is created in Crouching Women, where the wash is used to actually define shadow, and the figure although still crouching is looked down on by the viewer. Again the figure is flattened against the picture plane, and yet the reading of space within the forms of the figure is essential. This is made more difficult by the greater distortions of the legs in this particular pose. The figure ends at the knees as

there is no further reading of space from the shadow made by the wash.

In Nude I the compositional devices formed by the foreshortening of the figure are taken to an extreme, where most of the upper body and head is drawn in the very top of the picture plane. This makes it one of the most dynamic drawings in the Fifteen Drawings portfolio, and is outstanding compared to many of his other life studies. The reclining position was a much used pose for the model by Lewis, but particular reference can be made to, Seated Nude M.377, [Fig.83] Reclining Nude, M.376, [Fig.84] Girl Reclining, M.330, [Fig.85] Reclining Nude, M.374, [Fig.86] Reclining Nude, M.375, [Fig.87] Seated Nude, M.380, [Fig.88] and Seated Nude, M.379 [Fig.89]. These all consider the reclining nude from different views, but Nude I is particularly provocative. The model's bottom faces the viewer as the largest mass on the picture's surface, its placed three-quarters of the way up the picture plane, giving the viewer the sensation of looking up at the model. As in Nude II, Lewis used a wash to make the figure appear to be as dense as well as a flat object. This time the wash is green, and seems to add to the static nature of the figure. Nude I is successful in solving the problem caused by the extended legs coming from such a foreshortened figure, with the legs appearing to be larger as they come closer to the viewer. Reclining Nude M.376, Reclining Nude M.375 and Girl Reclining M.330, do not achieve the same fluidity as the legs appear to be wooden and awkward compared to the rest of the body. One solution, as seen in other drawings was to raise the figures slightly into a semi-recumbent position and to raise the viewer's position of the nude so that we are looking down on it, as can be seen in Reclining Nude M.375,

Seated Nude M.377, and Seated Nude M.379. Here the legs are in proportion to the rest of the body, but the flat shapes of the legs simultaneously produce a flattened composition which lacks the dynamism of Nude I.

The Nudes represented in the portfolio of Fifteen Drawings seem to be of a more "finished" quality than many of the other life drawings. For example, Crouching Nude M.365, and Reclining Nude M.374. In these drawings there are lines that Lewis has made mistakes with but chose to leave in.

It can be deduced that many of these drawings were concluded at a rapid speed, as Handley -Read points out they "show no trace of scaffolding" i.e. there is very little evidence of preliminary drawing, to place the figure within the picture plane. There is no evidence that these drawings were approached as 'master' drawings. Where Lewis either re-defines a line or where he has simply made a mistake, these imperfections remain in the finished drawings, and in some cases add a quality of movement, to what is predominantly a static image:

"Most of them were probably made in 10 minutes and painted as quickly. The dark washes were nevertheless added with great skill to give cohesion to the whole figure."(24)

These drawings, however quickly executed, show Lewis's increased confidence in the handling of his line. In the adaption of this line from that of his Vorticist abstractions, the tendency might have been for Lewis to compromise his "external approach" and become seduced by the nature of the image. Evidence that this was not the case, is in the comparison of the life drawings of 1919 with those of the Slade c.1900. If Lewis had been corrupted by the sentimentality of the flesh he probably would have returned to a similar style. In fact, what Lewis's new redefined

line suggested, (because of its hard edged quality), was the element of satire returned in a more menacing form:

"His subject matter maybe as innocent as a daisy but the resultant work of art suggests a cynical frame of mind, a refusal to be taken by false sentiment and a consequent mistrust of sentiment."(25)

Eric Newton defines this Line as being like a "whiplash".

"Whiplash" suggests castigation; the whip elegantly used is the satirists weapon."(26)

The essence of the satirical element in Lewis's nudes is in their antithesis to the "romanticized\humanistic" vision of the female nude, as it was taken up by the Post-Impressionists . Lewis saw it as a symbol of the new "emotional impulse" of the later stages of Cubism. This sentimental content was for Lewis the curse of modern European painting:

"An effete and hysterical mechanism certainly threatens every art. A sorrowful Eastern fatigue wedded to a diabolical energy for materialistic reactions; a showy dedicated scepticism, wedded to a tearful sentimentality as sweet and heavy as molasses."(27).

The life drawings had certainly filled Lewis's previous empty geometries of the Blast era. As Wilenski put it, he "beat Matisse and Derain at their own game"(28) But in turn, the study of the life model for its own sake was not an end in itself and as a subject, Lewis never returned to it again(29)

What Lewis did go onto become deeply involved with was the clothed figure. This took the form of the full length portrait and the portrait Head, in his paintings of the 1920's and 30's . For example, Edith Sitwell (1923) and T.S.Eliot(1938) . Lewis undertook many forms of portraiture before these major works and included the purely abstract style, of Portrait of an Englishwoman 1913. But in the same way Lewis developed his

abstract formal language to that of the nude, he recognized that an equally potent formal language had to be developed to apply to the portrait. What the early attempts at portraiture show, however, was Lewis's great reluctance to become personally involved in the subject.

The portraits Head I and Head II of the portfolio of Fifteen Drawings are still drawings of nameless people, rather than personalized visions of certain characters, even though, the models here could have been any number of women that Lewis knew at the time. e.g. Iris Barry or Nancy Cunard. Some drawings gave the models name, one frequently used c.1920 was Madge Pulsford. Again, these two drawings Head I and Head II are representative of many drawings of a similar style and nature Lewis completed c.1919. Although many of these drawings encourage the viewer to have a more intimate view of the figure, very few of the models look at the artist or the audience. As seen in Reading M.350, 1919 [Fig.90], A Women Student 1919, [Fig.91] and Women with a Cat M.361 ,1919, [Fig.92]. These drawings involve a refinement and editing of Lewis's use of line. In Head II and Women with a Cat, Lewis has found a technique for representing the face with eyes closed and chin highly foreshortened in a series of edited sweeping lines. What becomes the essence of these works is the denial of the "person" who inhabits the carcass of the body, an idea Lewis established in the Wild Body stories:

"It is only when you come to deny that they are 'persons', or that there is any 'mind' or 'person' there at all, that the world of appearance is accepted as quite natural, and not at all ridiculous. Then, with a denial of 'the person', life becomes immediately both 'real' and very serious."(30)

For Lewis the depicting of figure in the form of the nude and head was the ultimate challenge in injecting life into art.

Lewis refused to resort to "prettiness" but was faced with every

aspect of it in drawing the female figure. Lewis however, was misinterpreted at the time as being unavoidably caught in his own trap. The critic of the Times Literary Supplement saw that Lewis could no longer be accused of being, "an arid dogmatist, a mere theologian, so to speak, or a mere satirist...." But instead implied that, "perhaps he may find someone to accuse him of prettiness." (31) Even when taking into account the intimacy with which Lewis draws his portrait subjects, they do not amount to such a form as prettiness. However, as Michel suggests Lewis was less detached in his view of life in these works. In dealing with the figure as a clothed posed sitter with all the added details of clothing and individual characteristics, Lewis was forced in to a more human realm.

The portrait of Ezra Pound was much more personal in its handling as the sitter at least faces the audience and the appearance of the figure has begun to imply some form of life. Lewis was undertaking a major portrait of Pound at the time which was exhibited in the Goupil Gallery Salon in December 1919 M.26. [Fig.93] Lewis made many drawings and sketches of Pound, both in preparation for the 1919 portrait and after he had completed it. In some of these sketches Lewis did treat Pound purely as an "object" to be experimented with in visual terms. e.g, Portrait of Ezra Pound M.412, 1920, [Fig.94] where the sitter has no eyes and exists merely to be destroyed and then reconstructed as a series of forms and shapes. It is clear that from Pound's appearance, with the wave of hair, the pointed beard and deeply set eyes, that he made for interesting artistic material. (Gaudier-Brzeska had carved a marble "over-life" size bust of him in 1914. Again, using the bulbous mass of hair and Slavonic features to make a deliberately phallic-lik monument.) In the

late 1919 portrait painting of Pound, M.P.26, Lewis applies a strong geometric, and yet post-Vorticist, technique of oils. The style is similar to that of the figures in a A Battery Shelled [Fig.70] 1919, and the Canadian Gun Pit, the structure being rigid, almost mechanical in the drapery of the over coat. The head acts as a phallic piston coming out of the gun-barrel body.

It is clear that this painting had not yet benefited from the life drawings that Lewis was undertaking in 1919. In the later drawings of Pound, such as M.414, [Fig.95] and M.411 [Fig.96] completed in 1920 there is still an emphasis on structure, but the use of line is much more flowing and lucid, the kind of line which is inherent in the life drawings and in this new, sensitive approach the portrait begins to invoke a greater human quality. The use of line in the portrait drawing that Lewis finally chose for the portfolio, is rougher, than the later drawings, almost acting as a cartoon sketch, but this, simultaneously gives great force to the picture. With the head turned and twisted to face the onlooker, there is very little drawing to actually hold it in position. The head is suspended by one line that defines the left shoulder, and a very rough drawing of the tie and collar, describe where the head meets the body. The emphasis, is therefore not merely on the head but primarily is focused on the eyes. The eyes appear to be snake-like in their transparency and glare. Lewis had accomplished the same effect in another Drawing of Pound, M.349, which is also dated 1919. [Fig.97] (32)

The Pound portrait included in the portfolio indicates that Lewis was at last becoming more involved in the personality of his sitter and in this sense can be seen as the precursor to the major portraits of the 1920's and 30's.

Lewis also undertook many self-portraits in 1920 but he did not include one in the portfolio of Fifteen Drawings, but instead placed one in his next portfolio, which was made up entirely of portraits, in 30 Personalities and a Self-Portrait 1932. As a preface to this portfolio, Lewis wrote a piece entitled "What Is Drawing?". It is a fairly banal piece of writing, outlining the different techniques of drawing and those used by some great artists. Its significance in relation to the portfolio of Fifteen Drawings is in the way it indicates the importance Lewis placed on drawing, as he stresses its equality with painting:

"Drawing, in the sense of something done on paper, with ink or chalk with or without pigment- may of course be as elaborate as, or more so than, something done upon canvas. And it is always necessary to remember that oil-paint, as used in the west (pigments mixed with oils, and applied to a strip of canvas or wood) does not possess any mystical advantage over images, representational or otherwise, done with lead or ink upon a strip of paper."

He goes on to say that there are advantages in drawing over painting in creating, "Purer linear effects, especially of an improvisational nature".

Lewis defined drawing as fitting into certain categories, .

Either they were a) "a (usually small) picture more or less, coloured- upon paper", or b) "it means a working sketch, for a subsequent work in sculpture or oil painting." In the context of the Fifteen Drawings portfolio, the Nudes I to IV can be seen as drawings in their own right, fitting into category a) as can The Group, The Pole Jump, although The Pole Jump , (because it was added to later,) would fit in to the second category as a sketch, as would the Reading Room, and the Timon I and II drawing which appear more as notebook doodles.

In summing up the many themes and techniques employed in the Fifteen Drawings portfolio its primary concern seems to be the exploration of the possibilities of drawing. What was unusual about the portfolio was that these drawings, ranging from the highly finished studies, to doodles on "book slips", were presented equally as works of art.

The folio acted as a collage of these different techniques as well as ideas. This can also be termed eclecticism. But in presenting many different views and styles of the figure Lewis's eclecticism was of a personal nature and should not be confused with an eclecticism of International styles as seen in Picasso's work of this period.

For Lewis it was a greater commitment and a genuine change in his outlook. Picasso's forte was his ability to conquer any style. Lewis's attitude was more anarchic. Like Duchamp he wanted the audience to change their perceptions of what art was when looking at his own work. In Blasting and Bombardment(1927) Lewis dismissed all his work before 1919. However, after leaving the Slade in 1901, Lewis had had 18 years of artistic practice and experience, (which certainly was governed more by the "imagination" rather than direct observation), and can not be dismissed as he appears to do in 1927. After all in returning to the relative naturalism of the female nude in 1919 Lewis cannot be said to have forgotten the experience of "Vorticism."

In 1919, in selecting his drawings for the portfolio, Lewis takes into account his 1912-1918 images and lays them along side current observed work, for the juxtaposition of styles and interests to be observed. One reason why Lewis showed such a broad selection of his work in the portfolio, was therefore

because he saw no division between his visual work formed in the imagination and that governed by reality.

According to a letter Lewis wrote to Rodker ,who ran the Ovid Press, Lewis had every intention of writing a forward note to the portfolio:

"Under the circumstances, would it not be better to get the portfolio out, and as soon as I can write its 500 words required to get that printed as a slip, and stick it in?"(33)

Lewis obviously never had the time to complete this preface, and thus the true intention of Lewis's portfolio remains a mystery.

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NOTES ON CHAPTER FOUR

(1) In a recent article on the portfolio of Fifteen Drawings by Misha Ringland, in The Journal of the Wyndham Lewis Society the author offers an interpretation of the work as being,deliberately random,inconsequential,and any connections being merely coincidental.

"Each plate is different. Each plate carries a different style, a different proposal, a different mark of authorship, and a different location in time. The title of the portfolio is self evident and the date of publication (1919) seems more witty than coincidental.....An effort to discredit sequence is carried out almost at every turn. Virtually every aspect of the portfolio,that ought to be, or usually is,very clear in others, is obscured,neglected, or repeated (as in the title) without gaining explanation.(page.7-11.Winter 1988)

Certainly, the selection appears random, but there seems to be a purpose in doing this i.e. that it was a conscious decision on Lewis's part.In comparison to the Timon of Athens portfolio, where the structure came from the sequence of Acts in the play, the Fifteen Drawings. portfolio is unstructured, it contains no narrative.

(2) Wyndham Lewis Timon of Athens Portfolio,published in December 1913,by the Cube Press in a limited edition (quantity unknown) at 10s and 6d. The drawings were originally intended as illustrations to Shakespeare's play.

(3) Wyndham Lewis 30 Personalities and a Self Portrait was published in November 1932 by Desmond Hamsworth in a limited edition of 200 copies at £2 and 2s.5s.

(4) Wyndham Lewis, The Caliph's Design, London ,1919.page 73.

(5) Ibid. page 12.

(6) Notes on Introduction

The dating of Lewis's drawings, for the portfolio is not always consistent with his style in the given period, and creates

difficulties in being exact about the number of drawings Lewis had to choose from at the time of its printing. For instance, many of the life drawings associated with those represented in the portfolio are dated 1919-1920, whether this means Lewis completed these at the end of 1919, after he had completed the selection for the portfolio, is not clear. The portfolio was probably completed at the end of November- or beginning of December 1919, and it was not reviewed by the press until January 1920.

It is likely that the drawings chosen for the portfolio inspired him to continue with more life drawing, from October 1919 through to January 1920 and in the case of the Pound portrait, to extend his work as a portrait artist. It is also possible that Lewis altered the dates on some of his drawings, to make them attractive to the market he was selling to at the time.

(7) Wyndham Lewis, The Complete Wild Body, 1927. Edited by

Bernard Lafourcade. Santa Barbara. 1982. page. 158.

(8) Ibid. page 157.

(9) Ibid. page 252.

(10) Although now lost, there is evidence that

Lewis produced an even more explicit set of drawings in c.1917 which were titled 'prick, Arseward, Coitus I and II, and Ornamental Erection.' These drawings, according to Pound, were shown to the owner of the Leicester Galleries, but were never exhibited as they were seen to be too provocative.

(11) Wyndham Lewis, The Egoist, Tarr, April 1st 1916. page 56.

(12) Ibid. page 57.

(13) Wyndham Lewis, The Art of Being Ruled, "The Ruler and The Ruled", page. 95. 1927.

- (14) Wyndham Lewis, The Complete Wild Body, op.cit. page 150.
- (15) R.H.Wilenski The Anthenaeum, "Mr. Lewis as a Draftsman", .
- (16) Wyndham Lewis, Art and Letters "Mr. Edward Wadsworth's Exhibition of Woodcuts" Spring 1919, Page 89.
- (17) Ibid. page 85.
- (18) W.K.Rose, The Letters of Wyndham Lewis .Letter to John Quinn 3rd September 1919. page 111.
"Another task is my big eleven-foot canvas, for the Imperial Government, which I must finish sometime this autumn." .
- (19) Wyndham Lewis, The Complete Wild Body .page 254.
- (20) Wyndham Lewis, Blast 1914,(The Bodley Head, London) page 17.
- (21) Wyndham Lewis, The Complete Wild Body, op.cit,page 254.
- (22) Introduction to his major Retrospective at the Tate in 1956.
- (23) R.H.Wilenski, The Anthenaeum "Mr. Lewis as Draftsman",page 19.
- (24) Charles Handley Read, The Art of Wyndham Lewis 1951. page 68.
- (25) Eric Newton,Introduction to The Art of Wyndham Lewis 1951. page 23.
- (26) Ibid. page 23.
- (27) Wyndham Lewis, The Caliph's Design, op.cit. page 108.
- (28) R.H.Wilenski, The Anthenaeum, ."Mr. Lewis as a Draftsman". Jan 2, 1920.page 19.
- (29) There are two life drawings dated 1936 and 1938 respectively, the 1936 Nude is in Walter Michels collection and the evidence that is suggested from the way the date and signature have been erased and re drawn implies that there was another date on this drawing and Walter Michel suggests that because Lewis had a policy of never showing any work that was not recent he may have scrubbed out the earlier

date. Also comparing the style of these two drawings with M.378 for instance, the use of line to describe certain forms such as the hips is no different.

(30) Wyndham Lewis, The Complete Wild Body, op.cit. page 158.

(31) Anon, The Times Literary Supplement, Jan 22 1920, "Wyndham Lewis : Fifteen Drawings".page 47.

(32) The Drawing that Lewis chose of Pound for the portfolio also appeared in The Apple in 1920, page 97. Pounds role in Lewis's life was of great importance at the time, Pound was constantly trying to promote Lewis's art in America and Italy.

(33) Letter from Lewis to Rodker dated 29th October 1919. University of Texas at Austin.

CONCLUSION

It has been suggested that the 'private press' played a major part in offering artists in Britain c.1920, an alternative outlet to the gallery environment. To be part of the general euphoria of forming 'private presses', such as the Ovid and Egoist Presses (consisting of artists who were friends as well as competitors) was of great benefit to artists like Lewis. Although these presses were, by their limited production, regarded as the fringe element in the publishing world, and were of little financial benefit to the artists concerned, the importance of these publications was in their relationship to rest of the British avant-garde.

Presses like Rodker's were indicative of the intense, active dialogue between artists and writers of differing motivations and groups at this time. Although, not falling into any official grouping prevalent in the artistic avant-garde prior to 1914, the Ovid Press brought artists together in order to produce a quality publication of some aspect of their work, either graphic or literary.

The underlying concern for both Lewis and Wadsworth, producing a portfolio under the Ovid Press title, was not the treatment or the subject matter of their art, but the techniques involved in printing such works. For once, this allowed both Lewis and Wadsworth to put forward their ideas as individuals, rather than being seen in relation to the other members of the Vorticist group or other such art movements. As the criticism of Lewis's war paintings demonstrated, up until 1919, Lewis was still seen as the leader of the Vorticists. But, the collapse of Group X, after its sole exhibition of April 1920 at the

Mansard gallery, showed the formation of a group and Lewis's associations with it was no longer regarded as a successful idea.

The portfolio of Fifteen Drawings of 1919 stands out as a unique statement of Lewis's own abilities as a draftsman without the association of any other artists. The two major criticisms of the portfolio demonstrate this. Wilenski and the critic of the Times Literary Supplement made little, if no reference to Lewis as a Vorticist artist. The portfolio presented a challenge in 1919, for critics and audience alike to discover the many facets of Lewis's art. It declared that there was more to Lewis than his vorticist abstractions and war-commissioned paintings. The critics were made to re-evaluate Lewis's talent as an artist-just as it is clear Lewis was reassessing for himself his style and motivation for art in 1919.

A conclusion to this thesis must be based on Lewis's own conclusion regarding the direction his art was taking. The evidence for this is to be found in the immediate form Lewis's art took after 1920. This consisted of the Tyronic dialogues in his arts review, The Tyros I and II and Tyronic portraits in his exhibition entitled Tyros and Portraits in the Leicester Galleries, April 1921.

From the evidence of the letters between Lewis and Rodker c.1919-1920, the idea of the Tyros review was already being discussed whilst Lewis was completing the Fifteen Drawings portfolio.

As a conclusion to Lewis's reassessment of his art in 1919 the Tyros ethos sums up a determination to emphasis the satirical element in Lewis's art:

" At present my Tyros are philosophical generalizations, and so impersonal. Is this a new departure in art? No, not quite. You must remember that Hogarth didn't die so long ago."(1)

This is not an obvious connection to make as the Tyronic portrait was an "animated , but artificial puppet" (2), and therefore seemed to have no visual connection with the life drawings Lewis had been so concerned with in 1919, and which are the dominant view of the figure represented in the portfolio of Fifteen Drawings. However, Lewis certainly made a connection between the two as he included two "Crouching Nudes", two "Seated Nudes", a "Nude Standing" and a "Nude study" in his exhibition Tyros and Portraits 1921. This juxtaposition of such life drawings with the obviously satiric Tyros implied that Lewis also regarded the life drawings as satires.

If this is so, then it is clear that Lewis felt his work of 1919 had been misinterpreted. This was evident in the criticism of the portfolio of Fifteen Drawings ; the implication being that drawings like Head I and Head II were bordering on a "prettiness" in his style and content. This mis-interpretation induced a satiric back-lash by Lewis which was fuelled by the argument with Bell over "Wilcoxism".

In seeing the Tyro portraits as satires of Lewis's enemies and the life studies as satires on the Matissean nature-morte vision of the nude, this evaluation could lead to a conclusion that Lewis's art was nothing more than a self-indulgent argument between the image and his own personal beliefs.

But Lewis in his writings from Blast(1914) to The Caliph's Design (1919) constantly extended his discoveries as an artist to the problems of daily life:

"Your interest in the forms around you should be one liable to transfigure and constantly renew them: to use the grand masses of life, in fact, as the painter uses the objects on the table. He does not paint those objects as though he were photographing them. He arranges ,simplifies and changes them in his picture. So it should be with the larger form-content of general and public life.(3)

Up until 1919, these polemical writings were the main vehicle for Lewis to voice his opinions on the change required in Britain's understanding of art, both by its artists and by the public.

What the Fifteen Drawings portfolio initiated, (later developed and manifested in the Tyros,) was a translation of his argument from the written word to the language of paint and charcoal:

"People are, in fact, impervious to logic, so I have determined to get at them through the medium of paint."(4)

Although, retrospective this argument can also be seen in the choice of the drawings for the portfolio. The Fifteen Drawings can not be interpreted as random and inconsequential in its content or technique because of Lewis's need to apply order to his art and his view of life.

In all Lewis's art he never presented just one style of art which demonstrated his understanding of life. For Lewis, life was full of conflicting and contradictory elements, these contradictions are represented in the portfolio. For instance, it is difficult to reconcile Timon of Athens I and II in any form with Head I and II. We the audience are left to ponder on this to try and discover a unity.

Lewis's idea of applying a logic and order to life meant he distilled the chaotic elements into stereotyped images. These stereotypes had to change and they moved on from the Tyros to the classic portraits of the 1930's to his mystical dream figures of the 40's paintings.

In constantly trying to elucidate the figure in all its varying manifestations of form- content, Lewis never stopped experimenting in his art. The portfolio of Fifteen Drawings was a crucial experiment in this elucidation of the figure in 1919 .

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NOTES ON CONCLUSION

- (1) The Complete Wild Body, interview with the Daily Express, April 1921, page 359.
- (2) Ibid.
- (3) The Caliph's Design, page 119.
- (4) The Complete Wild Body.op.cit.page 359.

APPENDIX

The Social Motivations for producing a Portfolio

This thesis outlines the reasons for Lewis producing a portfolio as being both personal and financial, but to merely discuss such a publication according to these criteria would be to ignore one of the prime motivations in Lewis's art and philosophy at the time.

What his early writings in BlastI (1914), through The Caliph's Design(1919) and later in the Art of Being Ruled(1927), displayed were Lewis's sociological concerns as an artist. Lewis as well as being a strong critic of the European avant-garde was also very critical of the state of British art. He was in 1919 especially concerned with the need to make a greater number of the populace aware of art, to educate the public not just in understanding, but in encouraging the patronage of up and coming young artists.

The production of a portfolio such as the Fifteen Drawings was part of this philosophy, by creating an arena for viewing art outside that of the gallery. The publishing of such a portfolio was prior to that of detailed monographs of artist's works . Therefore, a portfolio was an essential device for getting artists work known to a broader audience. Unfortunately, this was usually left for the artist to finance and co-ordinate.

One of the aims of an organization like The Arts League of Service was to take over the role of promoting artists in Britain by undertaking such projects as producing portfolios and monographs of artists work.

Their policy in 1921/2 was:

"(i) The Arts League of Service exists to represent the various modern movements in Art.

(ii) Our method of work is both experimental and educational.

(iii) In our several activities we aim at maintaining a high standard of art."(1)

These priorities could in effect sum up many of the aims of Lewis in his approach to art and he was directly involved with the League being on their Arts Committee from 1920-22. Lewis did much to promote the "modern movement" both in art and literature, with his own periodical Blast, and in his literary and visual contributions to periodicals such as Art and Letters, The Athenaeum, The Apple etc. Lewis's art had been seen as nothing but experimental up until 1919 and he had great difficulty in being accepted as a legitimate artist. His understanding of the importance of maintaining a high level of art was manifested in his avid hatred of the amateur in British art. This went hand in hand with the fashionable cliques in art, which for him were epitomized in Bloomsbury.

The guiding force behind the Arts League, and the person who wrote in particular on the involvement of "fine artists" in the League, was Miss A.M. Berry. She wrote extensively on the need for a promotion of the importance of art, and particularly the artist in everyday life. The problem for Britain, according to Berry was not that it lacked sufficient artistic talent. In her estimation the practitioners of painting, music, sculpture, literature in Britain fared well in comparison to those artists of other countries. The problem was in the general cultural unawareness and lack of appreciation and importance applied to the art: "Surely we can no longer be content with the reputation of being the most inartistic nation in the world."(2)

Thus, as the statement of the Leagues policy makes clear , the obligation was not only of the public to the artist but also "of the artist to the public in applying his creative genius to every department of life in which it is possible to make use of his art."(3) But in return the ,public was there to pay the artist a service by,"insisting on favourable conditions for his work".(4) This was the basis for the Arts Leagues proposals for changing the state of art promotion and appreciation in Britain. They recognized that change could only take place with, " a continuous interchange of appreciation and support between the public and the artist."(5)

Their travelling portfolios scheme was just one way of achieving this, and involved many artists, including, Frank Dobson, Frederick Etchells, J.D.Fergusson, E.McKnight Kauffer, Edward Wadsworth and Wyndham Lewis to name but a few. This was an idea introduced by Frank Dobson in 1921, because of a demand for work to be sent to people who found it difficult to get to the main cultural centers and therefore felt out of touch with contemporary art. The starting price for a portfolio was £3.3s. There were quite strict conditions that accompanied this scheme.i.e. that the purchaser had to have two references, they could not keep the portfolio for more than a week to view, they had to pay for the return of the portfolio by registered post,and that they were limited to sending work only within the British Isles.

The magazine Art Work in an article of October 1925, describes the Arts League's portfolio scheme, accompanied by 12 or more illustrations from varying artists involved in the project. They included illustrations by Robert Bevan, George Bissill, Alan Durst, Sidney Hunt, Mcknight Kauffer, Wyndham

Lewis, Cedric Morris, John Nash , Francis Unwin and Ethelbert White. These artists represented a fairly broad spectrum of contemporary art in Britain. It included original lithographic prints by Robert Bevan, one of the older more established artists. The lithographic landscape reproduced in Art Work was part of a series by Bevan, (6) and although an artist trained in the traditions of the late 19th century, presented work for the portfolio which was obviously influenced by his associations with the Cumberland Market Group, and the Camden Town Group. According to an article on the same subject which appeared in Drawing and Design Feb.1923, other artists such as Charles Ginner, T.Lessore, from the Camden Town group were also involved, but there are no illustrations as to their contributions.

The tendency of all the portfolios under the A.L.S. umbrella, was for the artists to produce a popular image .The emphasis was also on skill and craftsmanship in the work selected for these portfolios. For example, landscape was represented by Francis Unwin's The Farm, and McNight Kauffer, who was unusually included with a watercolour of buildings in a landscape. John Nash produced a pastoral scene of Pigs in the form of a woodcut. There were portraits and figure drawings, by Cedric Morris, and Sidney Hunt. Lewis also chose portraits to put in these folios. One was a women knitting,(not in Michel) but has similarities with, Woman Knitting, 1920.M.440. and therefore could be given the same date . The other portrait Lewis included was one of Edward Wadsworth. This drawing is remarkably similar to Edward Wadsworth M.436, and Edward Wadsworth M.435, according to Art Work the drawing included in the folio measured 16"x23", the Michel drawing is the same drawing only smaller.

The A.L.S. portfolio scheme also included a woodcut by Alan Durst, Adam and Eve and George Bissill's, At the Gate End Plate which depicts men working under ground in the mines.(7) The other primarily illustrative artists included were, Ethelbert White who was a member of the Wood Engraving Society and epitomized the exact technically accomplished style of this group. Rupert Lee and Therese Lessore were also part of the scheme and evidence of their work can be seen in illustrations for Art and Letters.

The main reason for Lewis becoming involved in such a portfolio scheme, was primarily financial, as with the portfolio of Fifteen Drawings, but his involvement in the League's other activities, showed that he had a genuine concern on a simply voluntary basis. For example Lewis delivered a lecture on "Tendencies in Modern Painting" in October 1919, (Central Hall Westminster) with Bernard Shaw as chairman. Lewis was also present at many of the inaugural meetings of the A.L.S. in early 1919, held at Maralyn Morris's studios as well as being on their Arts committee.

The fact that the portfolio of Fifteen Drawings in the end did not bring Lewis financial reward was, as with the A.L.S. scheme indicative of his having alternative motivations for producing such a work. By presenting the portfolio of Fifteen Drawings, with such an approachable subject as the figure, to the public Lewis was bound to broaden the scope of his audience, and therefore broaden the appreciation of art in general.

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NOTES ON APPENDIX

- (1) Arts League of Service Bulletin.1921-22.page 9.
- (2) A.M.Berry,"The Artist and the Nation". Arts League of Service Bulletin 1921-22.page 17.
- (3) Ibid.page 17.
- (4) Ibid.page 18.
- (5) Ibid.page 18.
- (6) This is evident from other lithographs found in the British Museum.
- (7) Another woodcut by Bissill , dated 1925 on a similar theme can be seen in the Victoria and Albert Museum.

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Fig.1.

Lewis

L'Ingenu M.334. Pencil, red
chalk, wash. 51x35cm. Manchester
Art Galleries.1919.

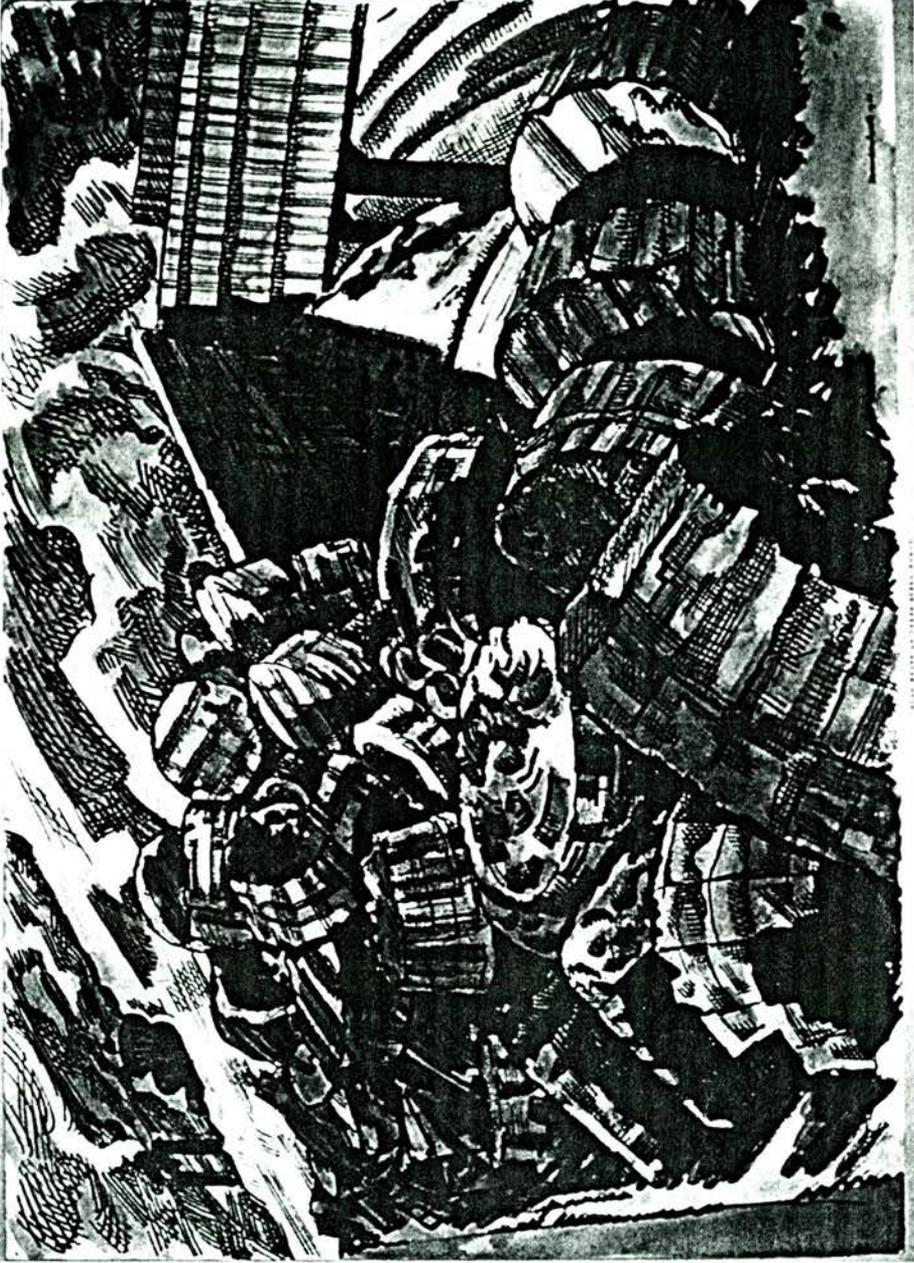
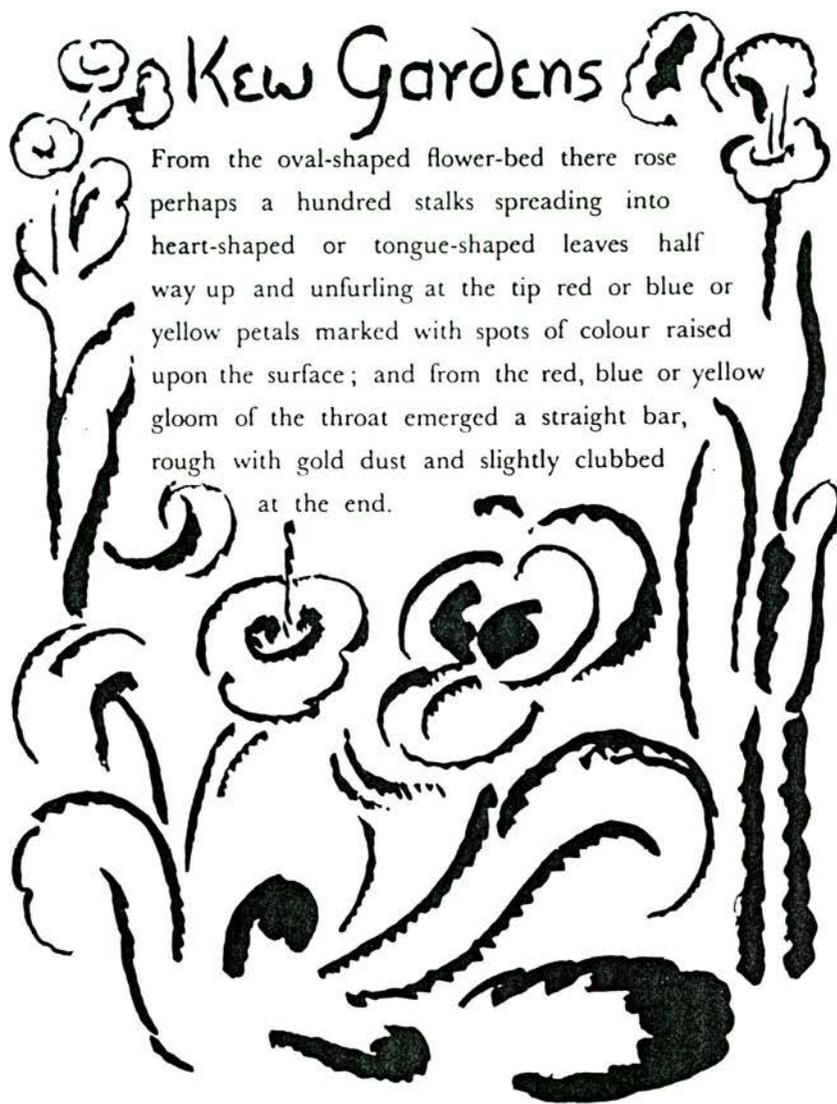


Fig.2. Wadsworth.

Slag Heaps at Leeds Steel Works
Pen, ink, watercolour. The British
Museum. c. 1920.



From the oval-shaped flower-bed there rose perhaps a hundred stalks spreading into heart-shaped or tongue-shaped leaves half way up and unfurling at the tip red or blue or yellow petals marked with spots of colour raised upon the surface; and from the red, blue or yellow gloom of the throat emerged a straight bar, rough with gold dust and slightly clubbed at the end.

Fig.3.

V.Bell.

Kew Gardens, lithograph printed in black. Decoration for the text written by V.Woolf. Second Edition 1922.



Fig.4.

V.Bell.

Kew Gardens, woodcut. Printed in
black .Decoration for the
text written by V.Woolf.
First and Second Edition.1919,1922.

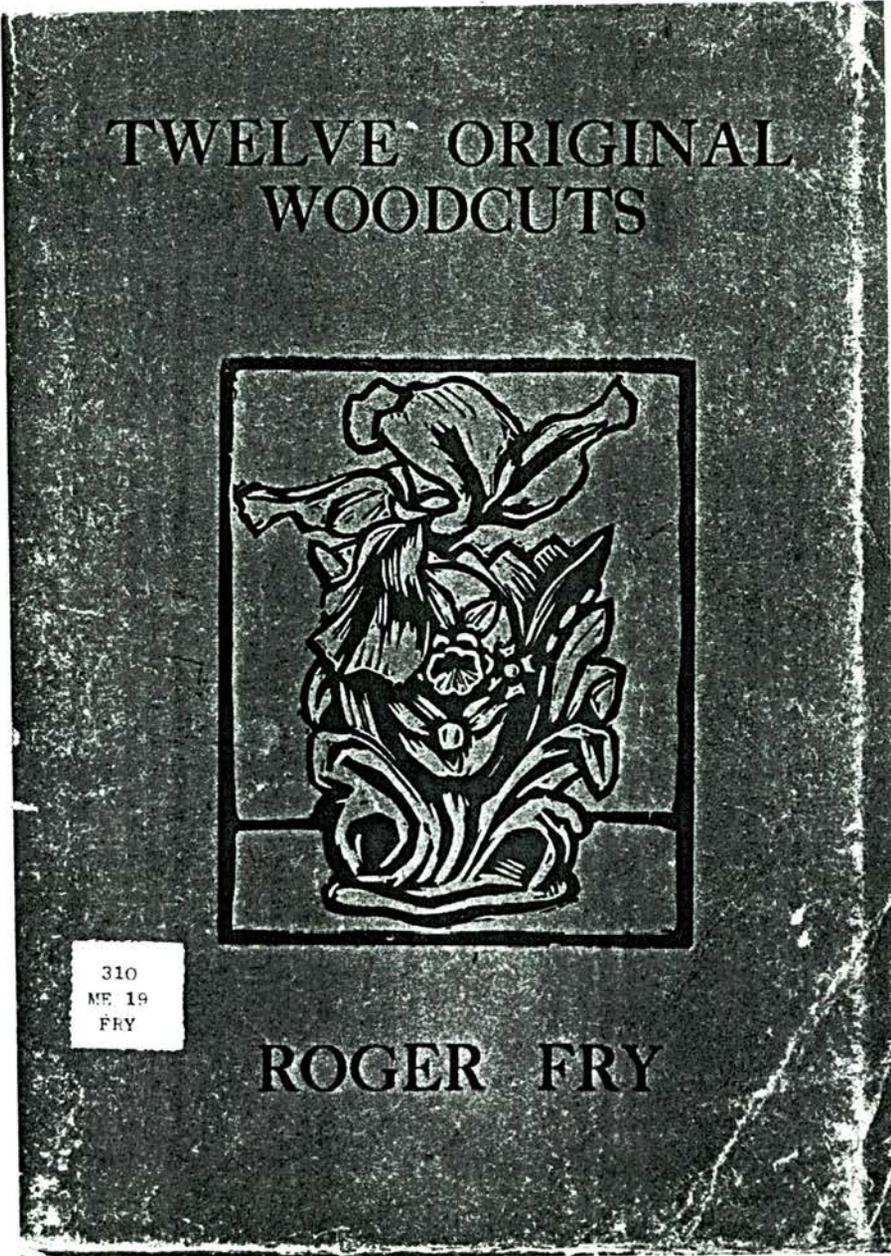


Fig.5.

R.Fry.

Twelve Original Woodcuts Front cover. woodcut. Black on coated paper. 23cmx16.5cm. 1921.

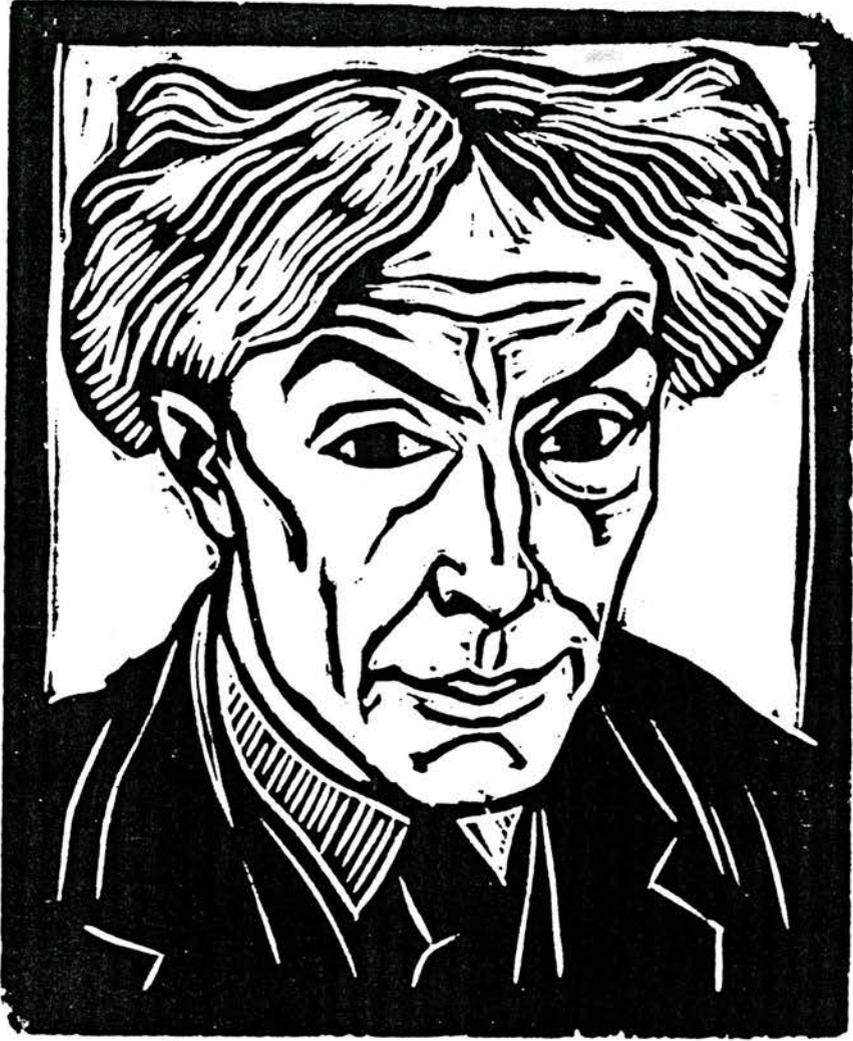


Fig.6.

R.Fry.

Self Portrait from Twelve
Original Woodcuts woodcut
printed in black. 23cmx16.5cm.
1921.

The Ovid Press

will print during 1919

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Fig.7.

J.Rodker.

Ovid Press Advertisement.

The Egoist, March/April 1919.

page 32.



Fig.8.

Wadsworth.

Ovid Press Motif. Lion and Unicorn. woodcut. 4.4cmx4.3cm.
Victoria and Albert Museum. 1919.

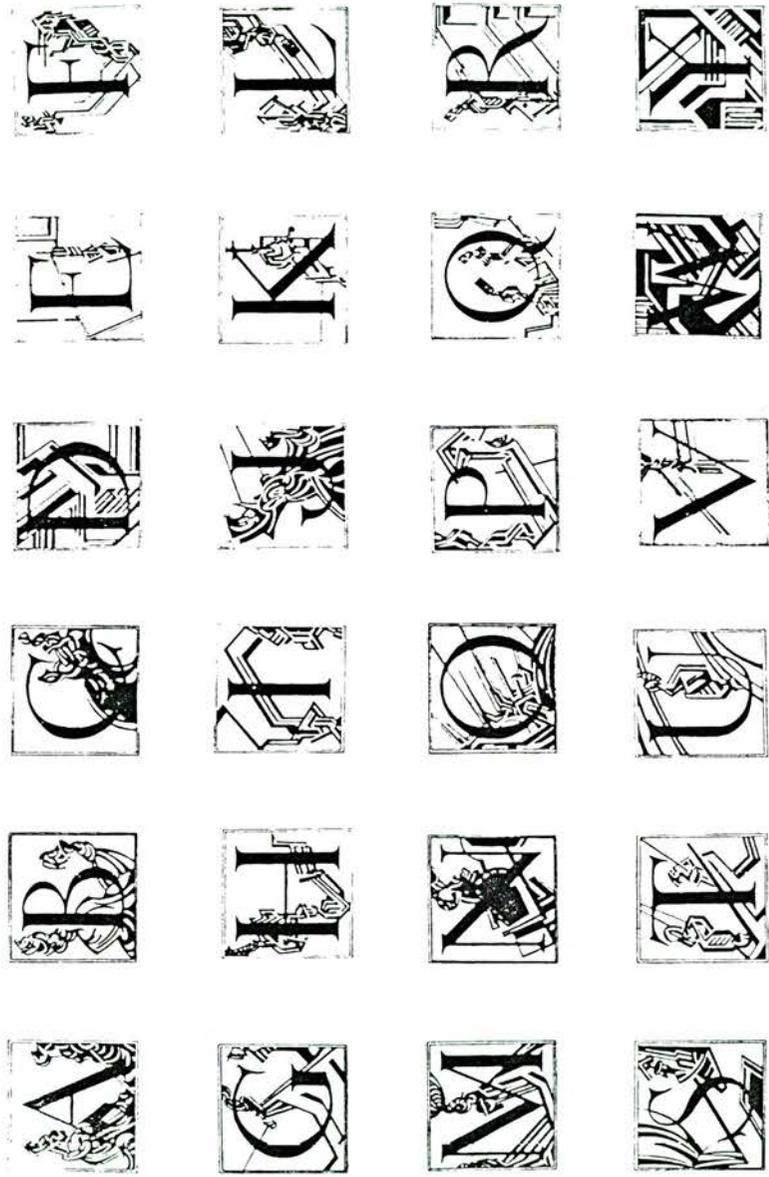


Fig.9. Wadsworth.

Alphabet of Initial Letters
 for the Ovid Press. Process
 engraving. Each letter 1"x1"
 Engravers proof. Victoria and Albert
 Museum. 1919.

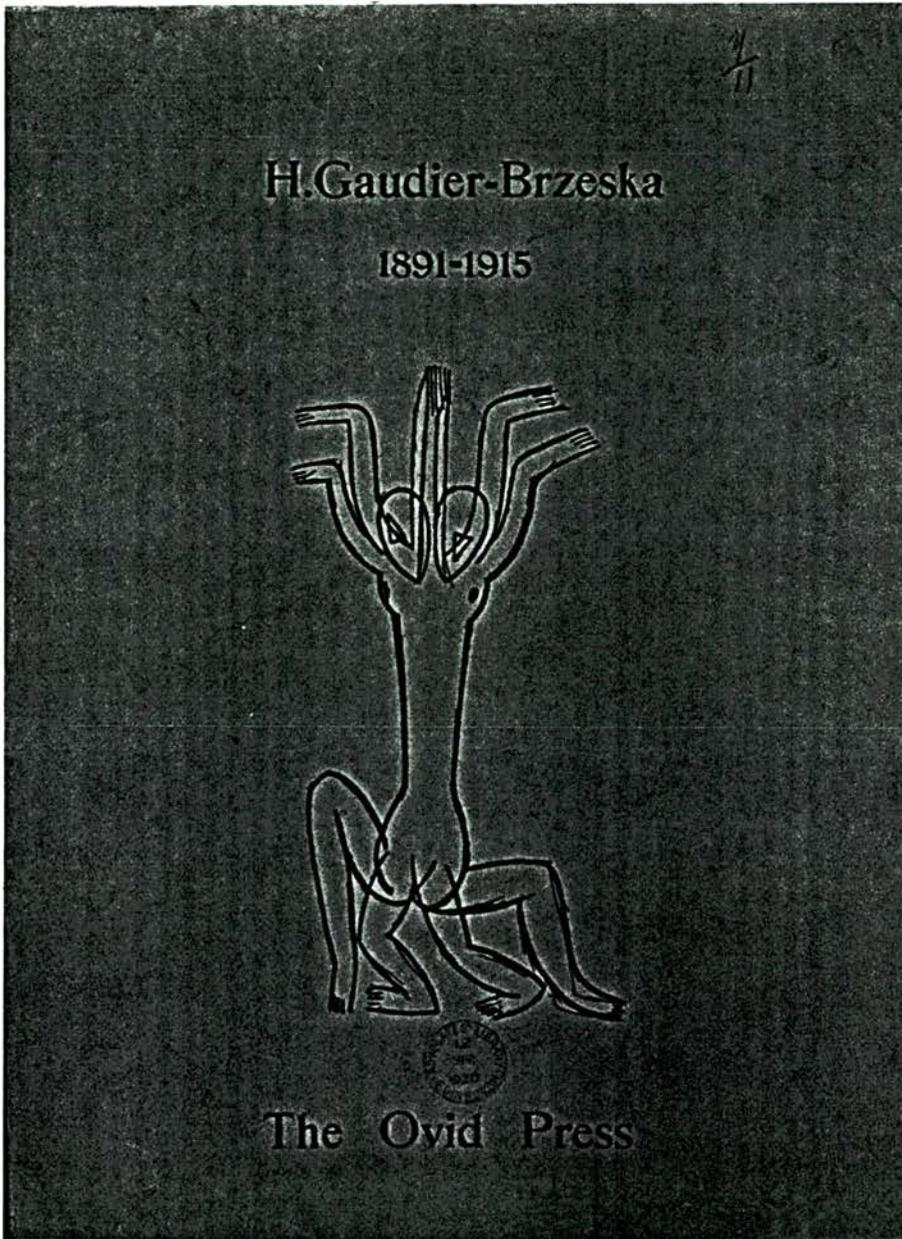


Fig. 10.

G.Brzeska.

Front Cover for Portfolio of
20 Drawings from the Note-Books
of H. Gaudier Brzeska.Ovid Press.
printed on Jap.vellum. Nat.
Lib.of Scotland.1919.



Fig.11.

G.Brzeska.

1910 Heads photo-mechanical
letter press print. Black on
Jap.vellum.20 Drawings from
the Note-Books of H.Gaudier Brzeska
Ovid Press.25.5cmx37cm.1919.



Fig.12.

G.Brzeska.

1910 Heads.photo-mechanical
letter-press print. Black on jap.
vellum. 20 Drawings from the Note-
Books of H.Gaudier Brzeska. Ovid
Press.25.5cmx37cm.1919.



Fig. 13.

G.Brzeska.

1911.Torso.photo-mechanical
letter-press print.black on jap.
vellum. 20 Drawings from the Note-
Books of H.Gaudier Brzeska. Ovid
Press.25.5cmx37cm.1919.

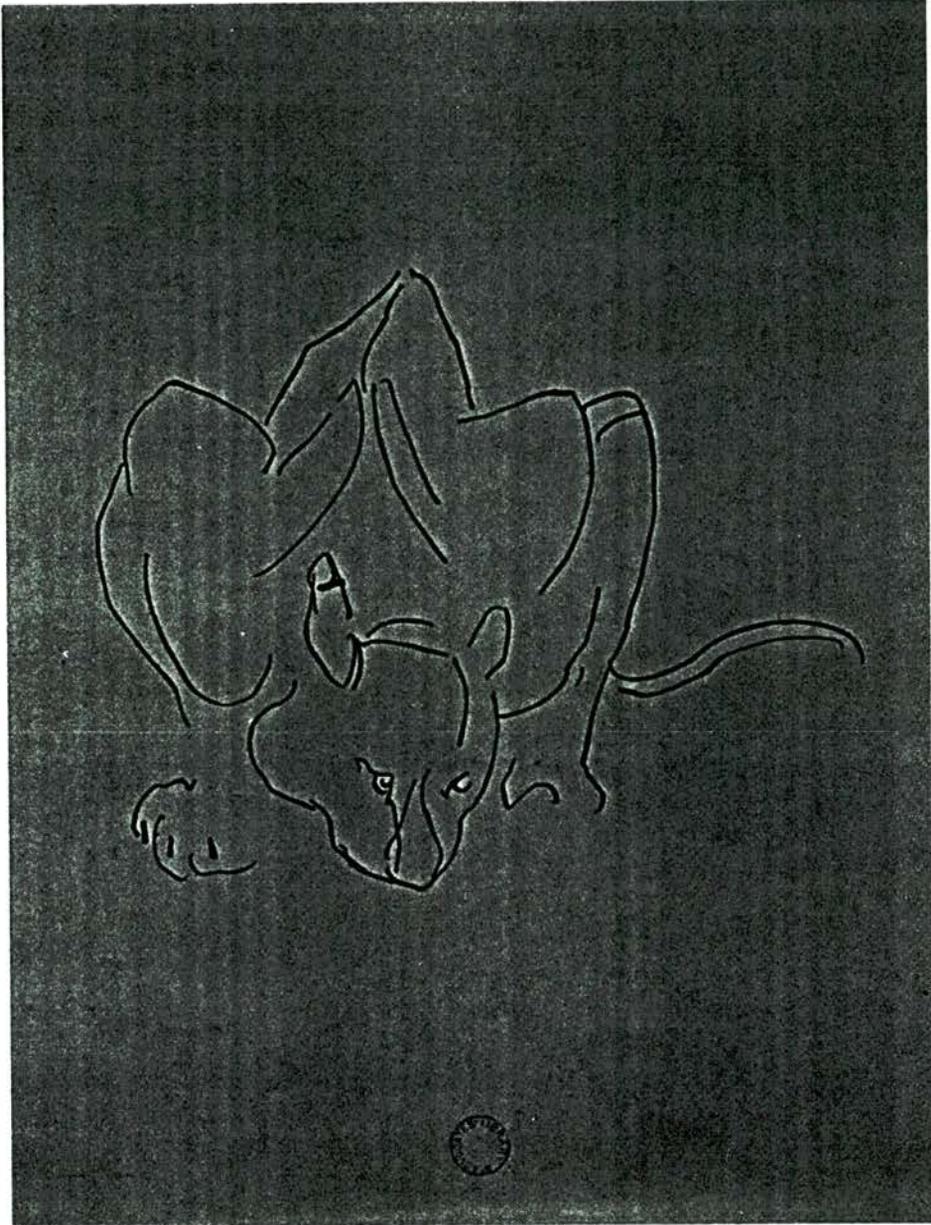


Fig. 14.

G.Brzeska.

Lion.photo-mechanical
letter-press print. Black on
jap.vellum.20 drawings from the
Note-Books of H.Gaudier Brzeska.
Ovid Press.25.5cmx37cm.1919.

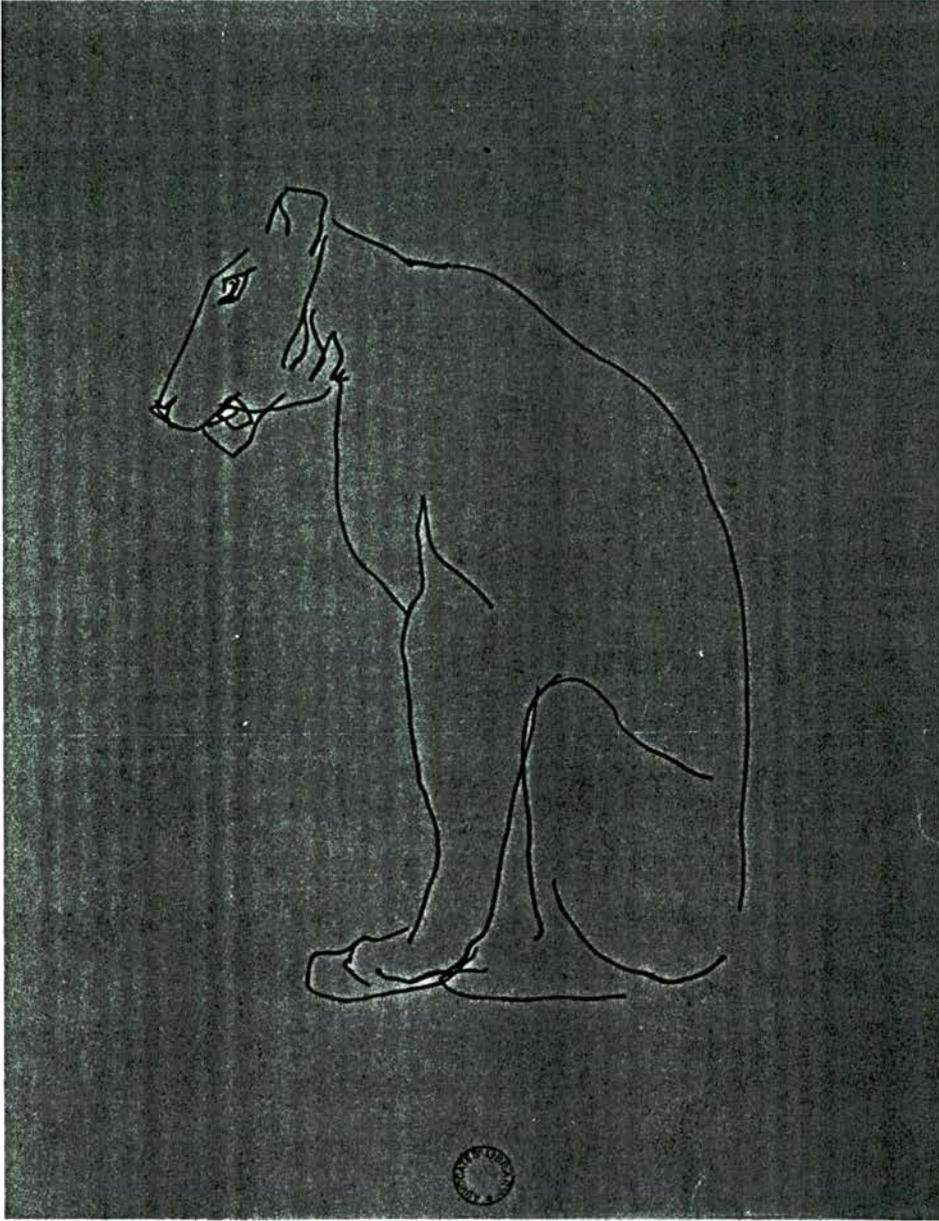


Fig.15.

G.Brzeska.

Lion. photo-mechanical
letter-press print. Green
on jap.vellum. 20 Drawings from the
Note-Books of H.Gaudier Brzeska.
Ovid Press. 25.5cmx37cm. 1919.

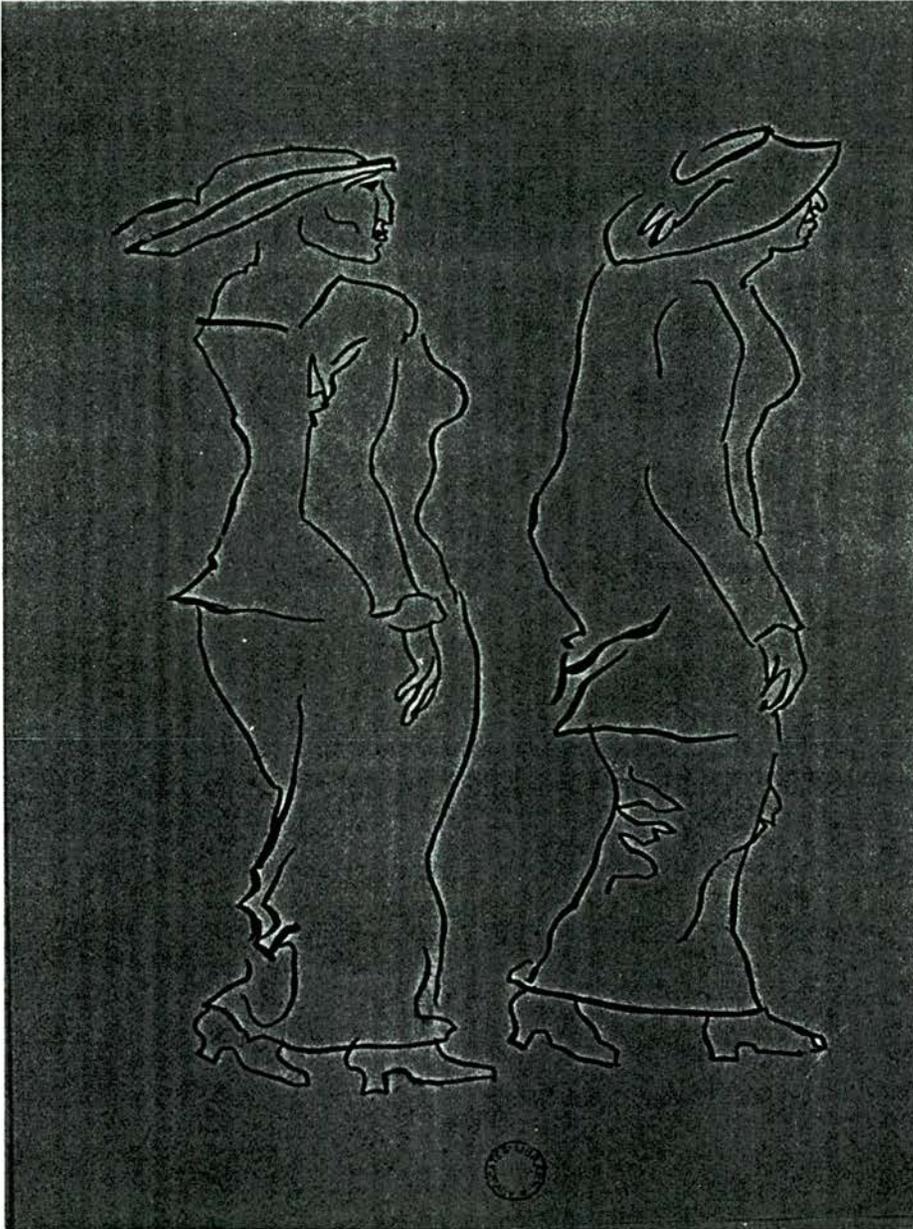


Fig. 16.

G.Brzeska.

Women Walking. photo-mechanical
letter-press print. Black on
Jap.vellum. 20 Drawings from the
Note-Books of H.Gaudier Brzeska.
Ovid Press. 25.5cmx37cm. 1919.



Fig.17.

G.Brzeska.

Women carrying shopping.photo-
mechanical letter-press print.
Black on Jap.vellum. 20 Drawings
from the Note-Books of H.Gaudier
Brzeska.Ovid Press.25.5cmx37cm1919.

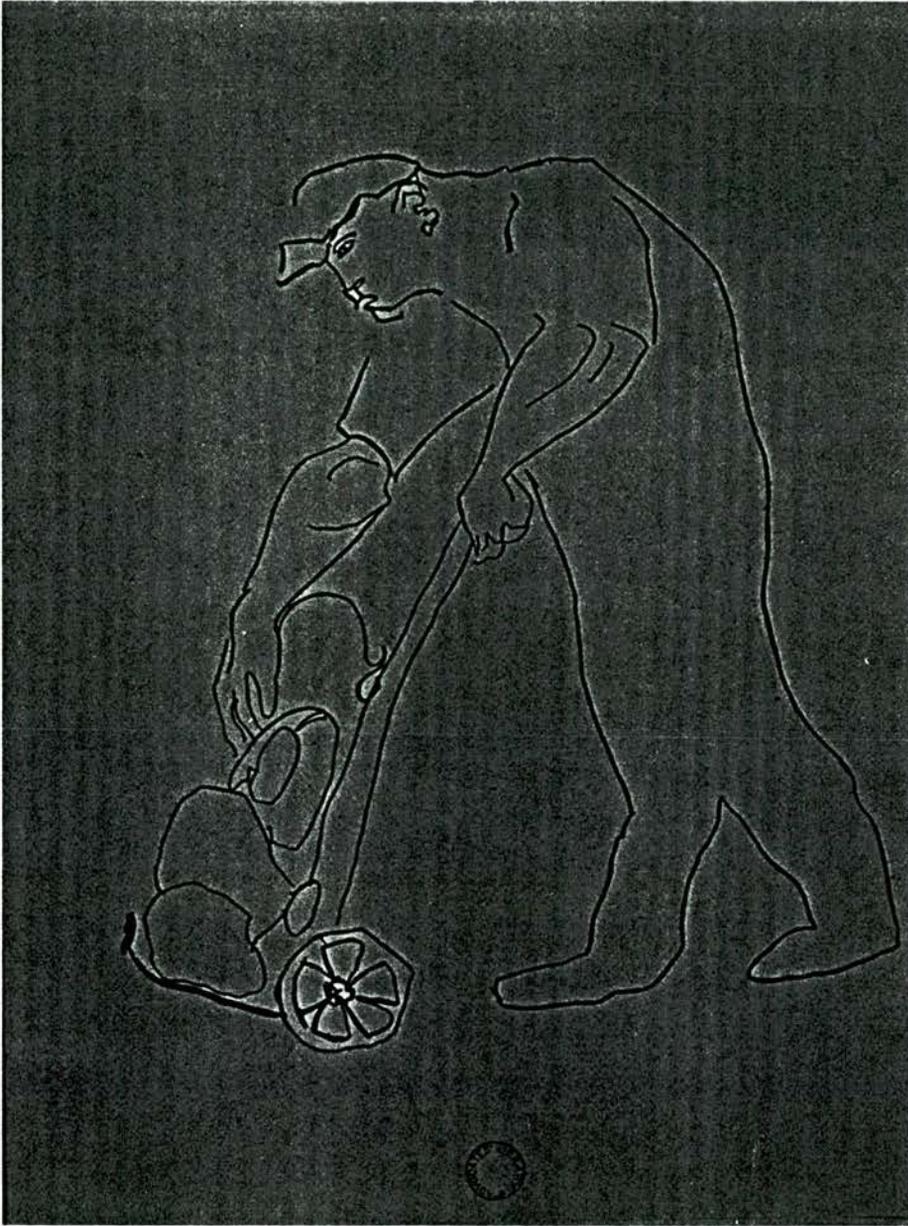


Fig.18.

G.Brzeska.

Man loading cart photo-
mechanical letter-press print.
Black on Jap.vellum. 20 Drawings
from the Note-Books of H.Gaudier
Brzeska.Ovid Press.
25.5cmx37cm. 1919.

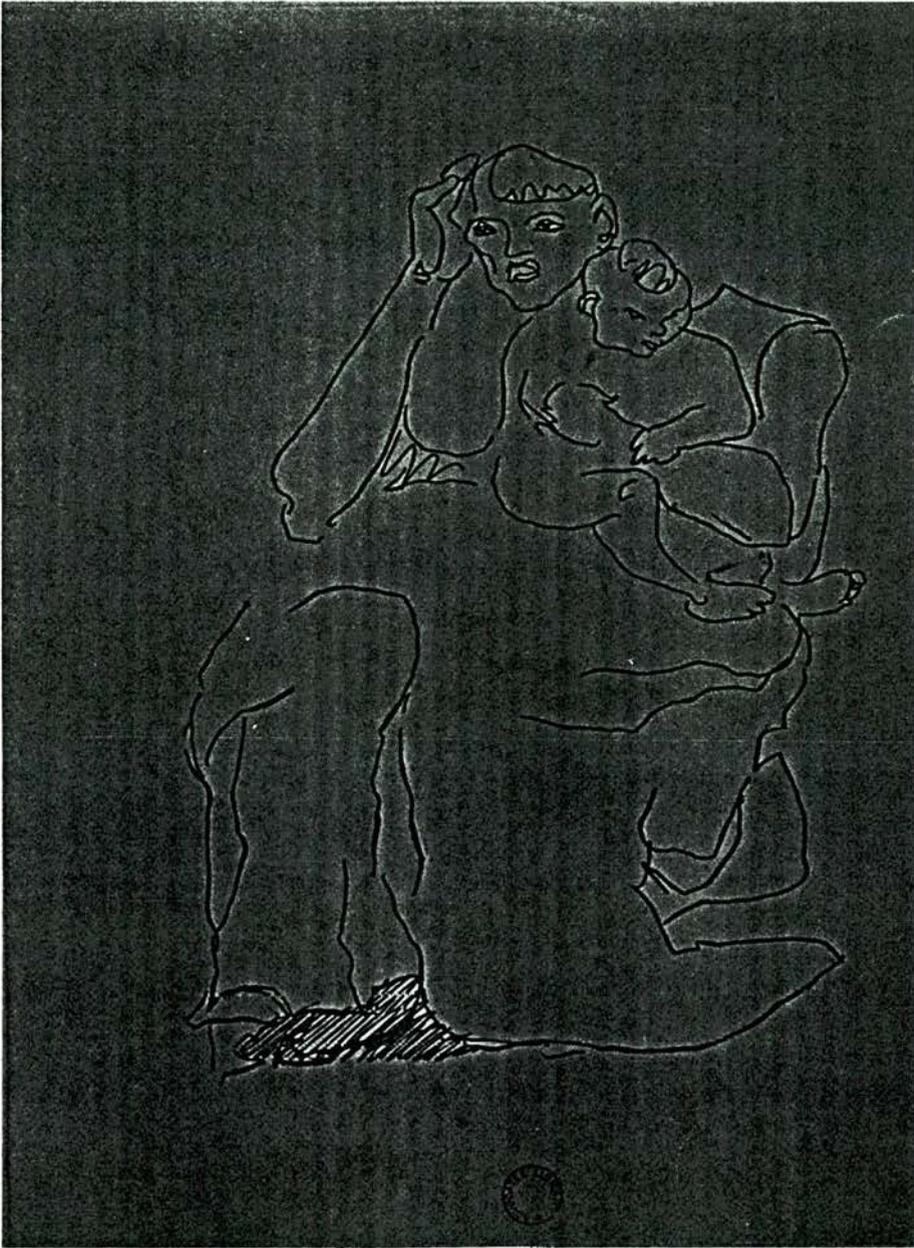


Fig. 19.

G.Brzeska.

Mother and child photo-
mechanical letter-press print.
Black on Jap.vellum. 20 Drawings
from the Note-Books of H.Gaudier
Brzeska.Ovid Press.
25.5cmx37cm. 1919.

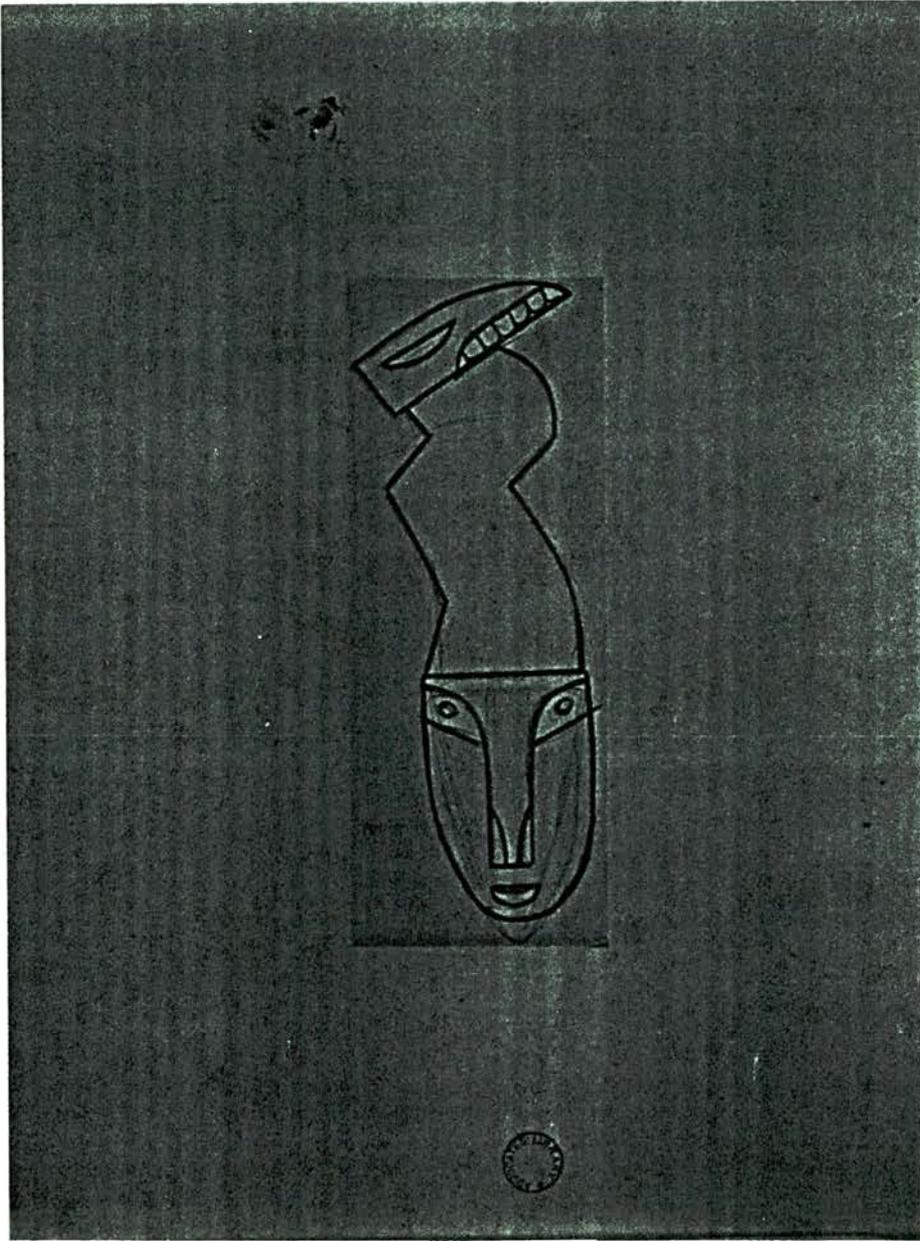


Fig.20.

G.Brzeska.

Mask photo-
mechanical letter-press print.
Black on Jap.vellum. 20 Drawings
from the Note-Books of H.Gaudier
Brzeska.Ovid Press.
25.5cmx37cm.1919.

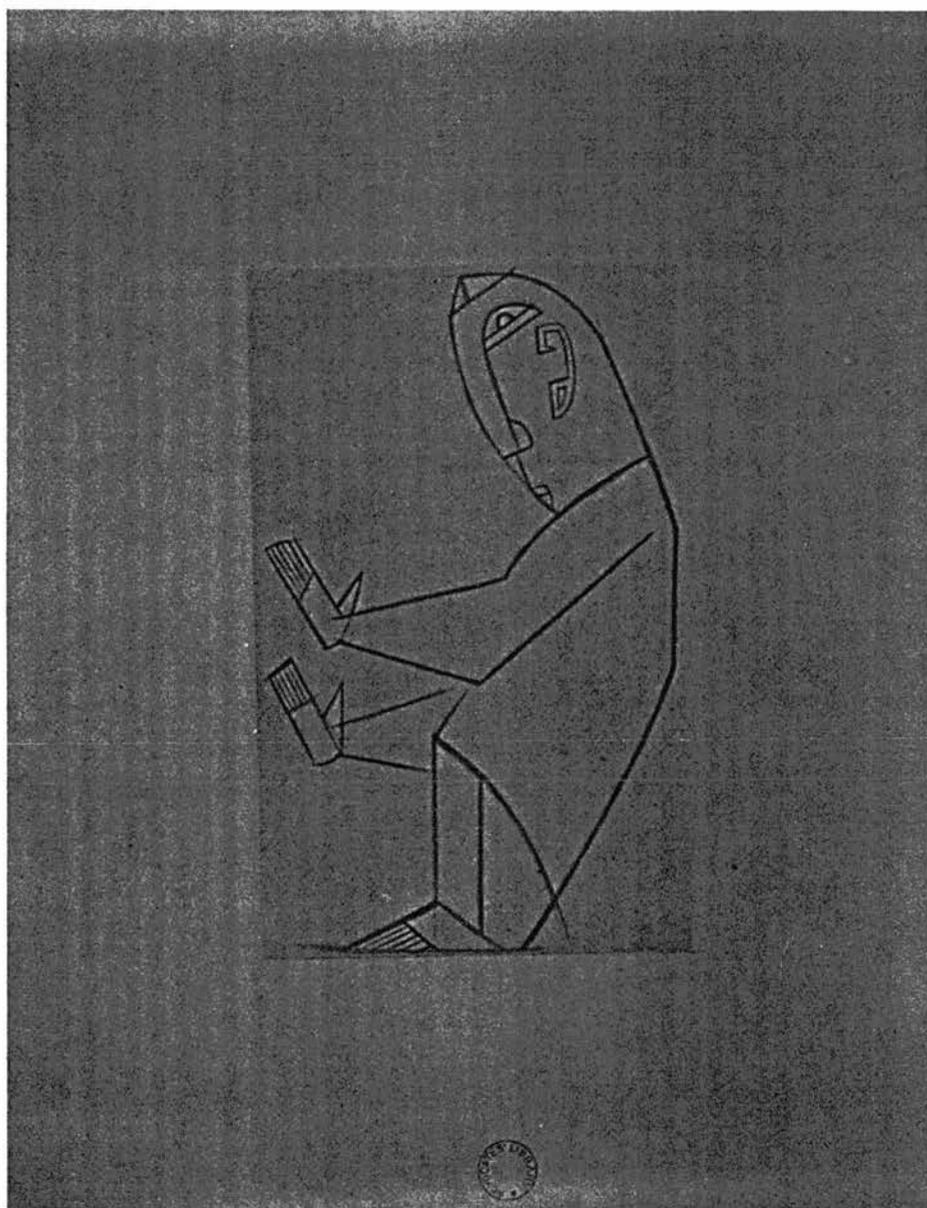


Fig.21.

G.Brzeska.

Primitive Figure.photo-
mechanical letter-press print.
Black on Jap.vellum. 20 Drawings
from the Note-Books of H.Gaudier
Brzeska.Ovid Press.25.5cmx37cm
1919.

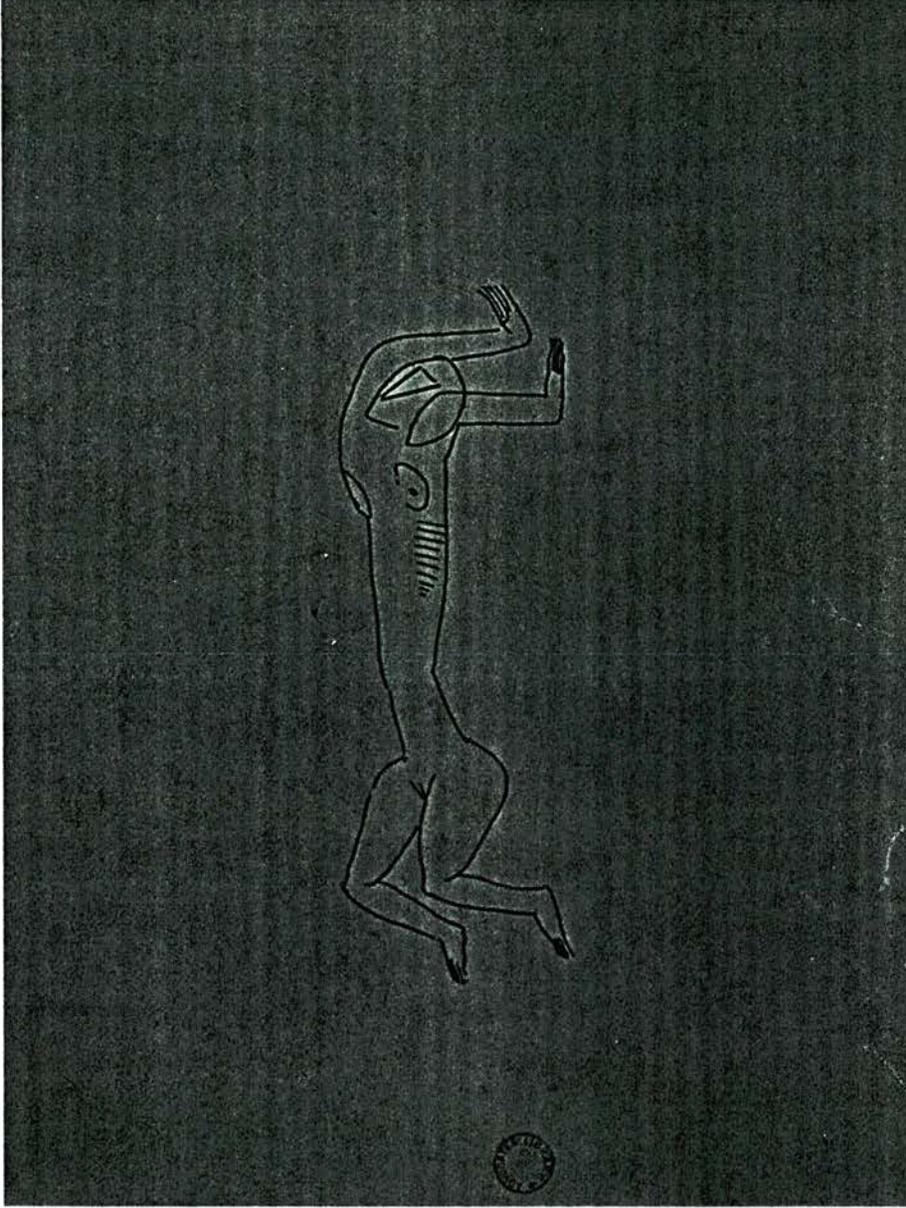


Fig. 22.

G. Brzeska.

Figure, photo-
mechanical letter-press print.
Black on Jap. vellum. 20 Drawings
from the Note-Books of H. Gaudier
Brzeska, Ovid Press. 25.5cmx37cm.
1919.

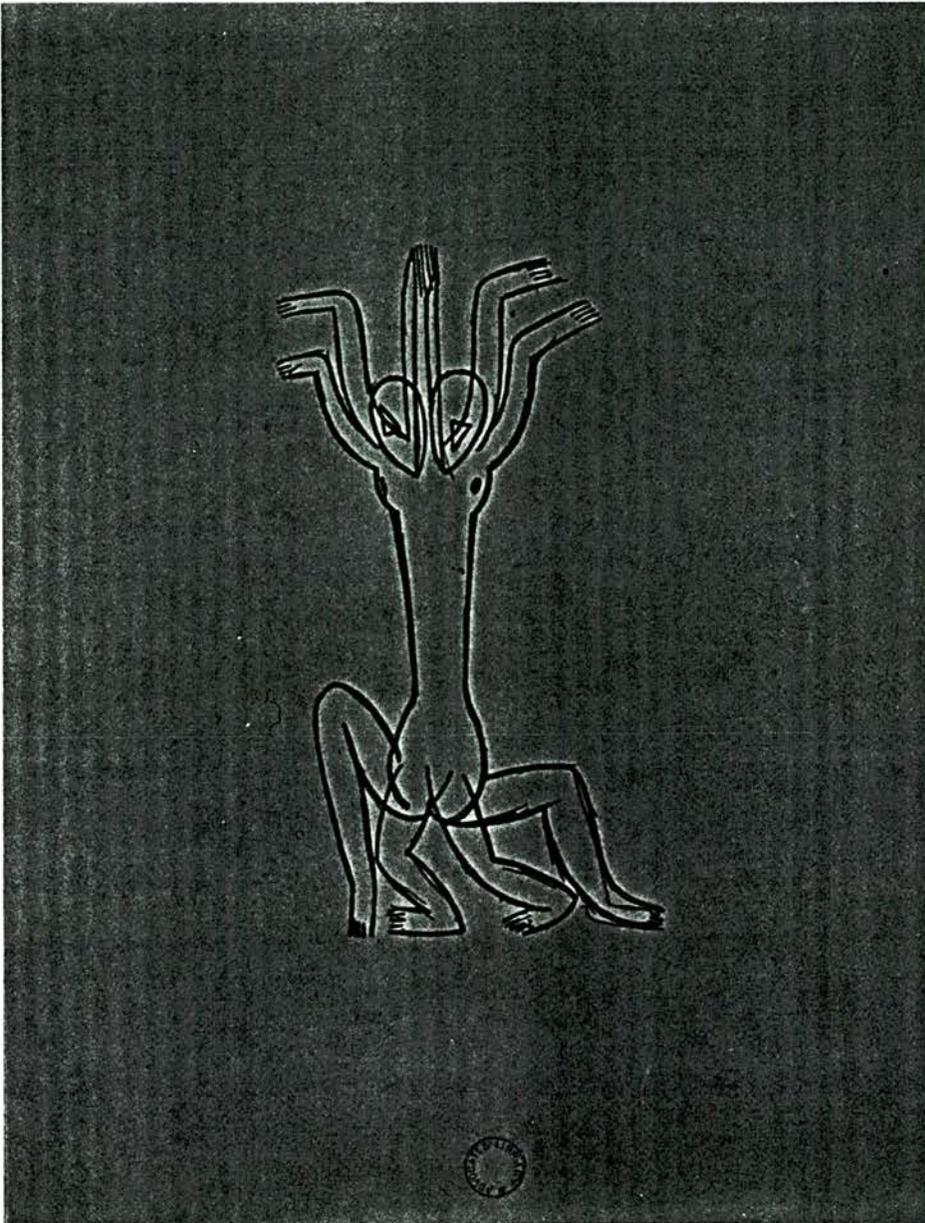


Fig.23.

G.Brzeska.

Figure.(Used for Front cover)photo-
mechanical letter-press print.
Black on Jap.vellum. 20 Drawings
from the Note-Books of H.Gaudier
Brzeska.Ovid Press.25.5cmx37cm.
1919.

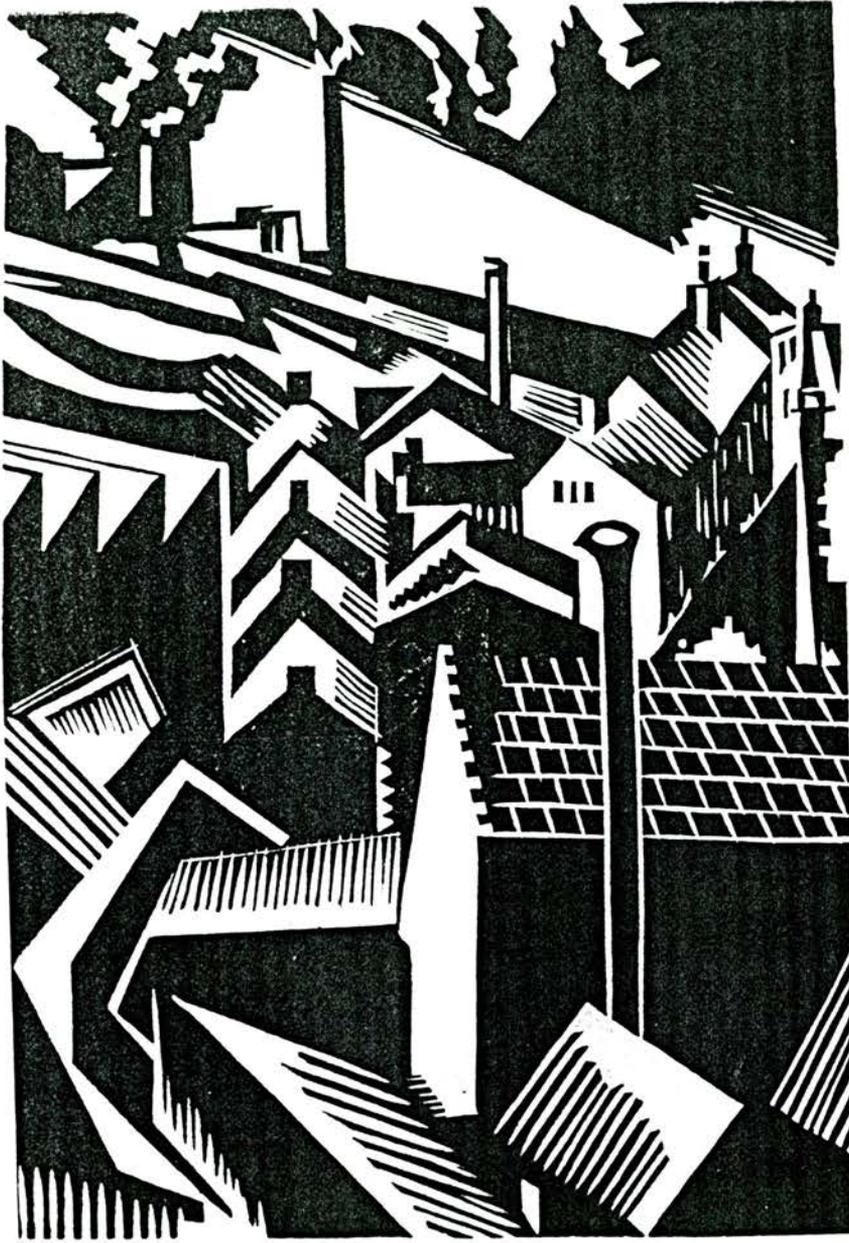


Fig.24.

Wadsworth.

Northern Roofscape.
woodcut. 15.2cmx10cm. Scottish
Nat. Gallery of Mod. Art. 1920.



Fig. 25. Wadsworth. Crouching Nude. Lithograph printed in black, 1920.

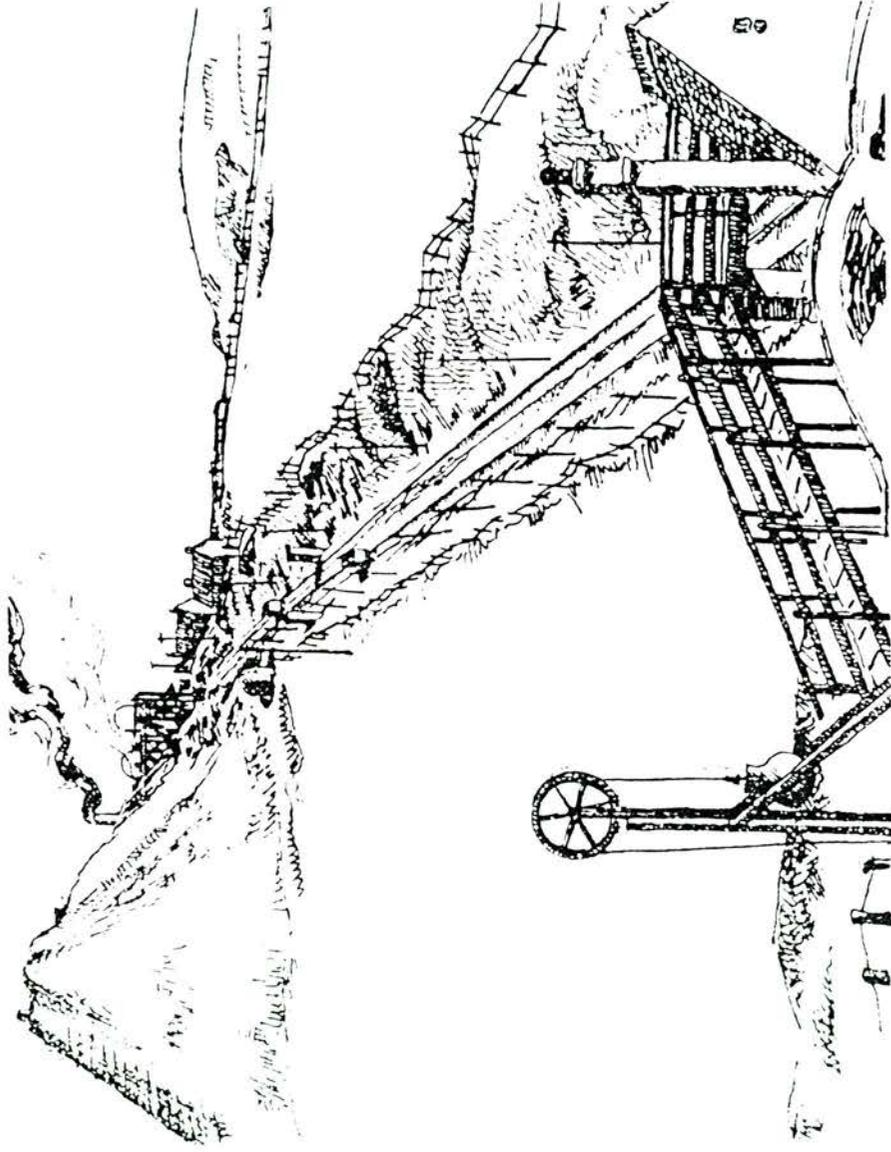


Fig. 26. Wadsworth.

Windmill End. V. lithograph. The
Black Country. Ovid Press. 37x49cm.
Nat. Lib. Scotland. 1920.

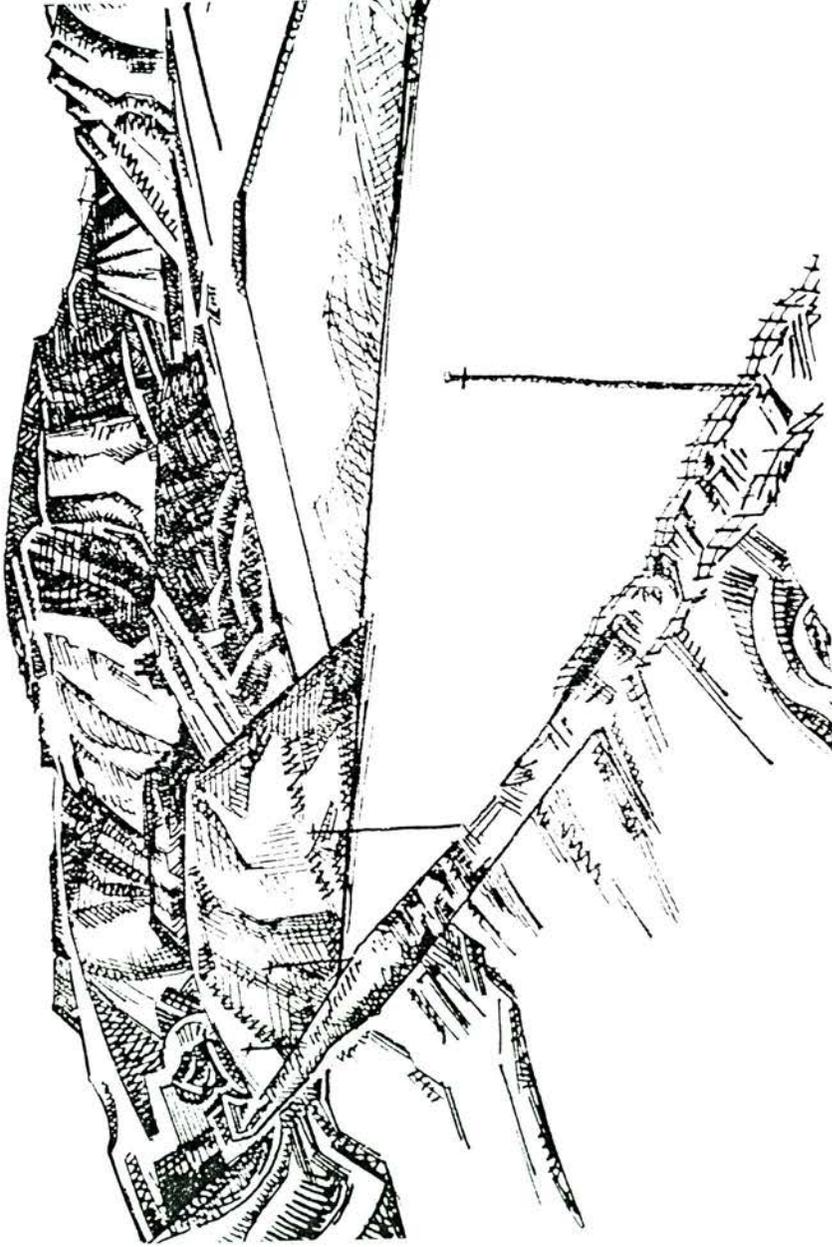


Fig. 27.

Wadsworth.

Darby Hill XIV. Lithograph. The
Black Country. Ovid Press. 37x49cm.
Nat. Lib. Scotland . 1920.

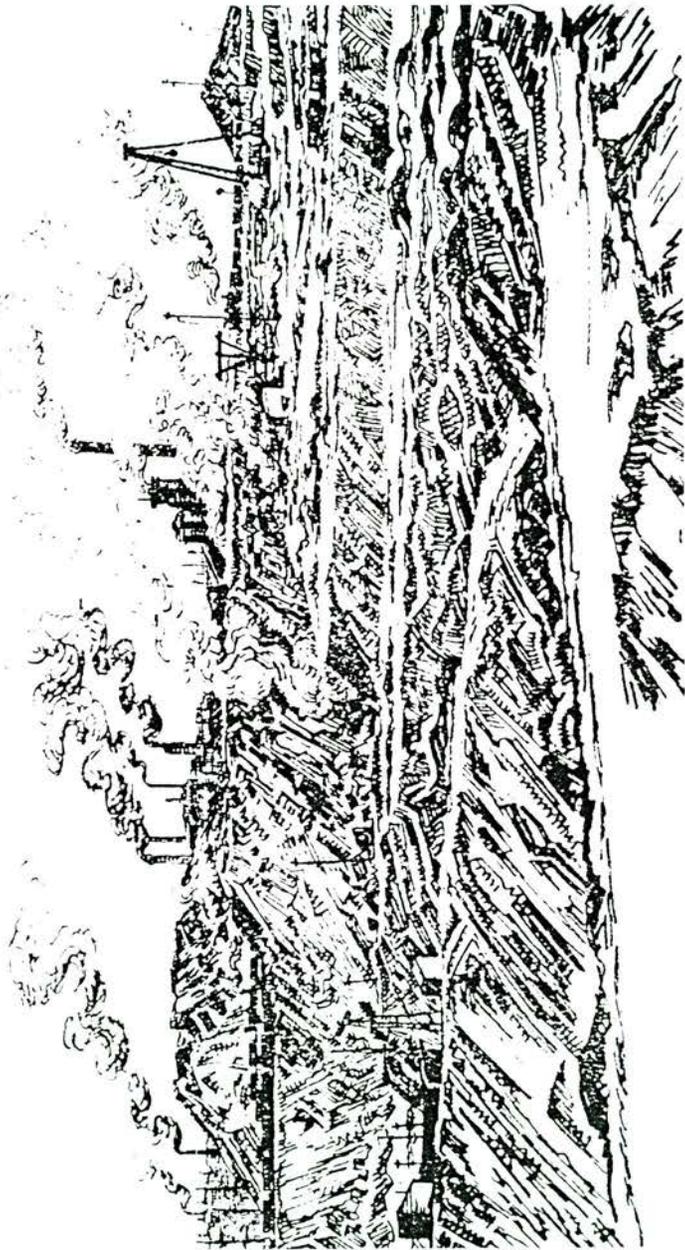


Fig. 28. Wadsworth.

Bilston Slag XIII. lithograph. The Black Country. Ovid Press. 37x49cm. Nat. Lib. Scotland, 1920.



Fig. 29. Wadsworth.

Ladle Slag Round Oak, XIX.
Lithograph, The Black Country, Ovid
Press, 37x49cm, Nat. Lib. Scotland,
1920.



Fig.30.

Wadsworth.

Ladle Slag Old Hill. IX.
Lithograph, The Black Country, Ovid
Press, 37x49cm. Nat.Lib. Scotland
1920.



Fig.31. Ladle Slag II, XI
Wadsworth.
Lithograph, The Black Country, Ovid
Press. 37x49cm. Nat.Lib. Scotland
1920.

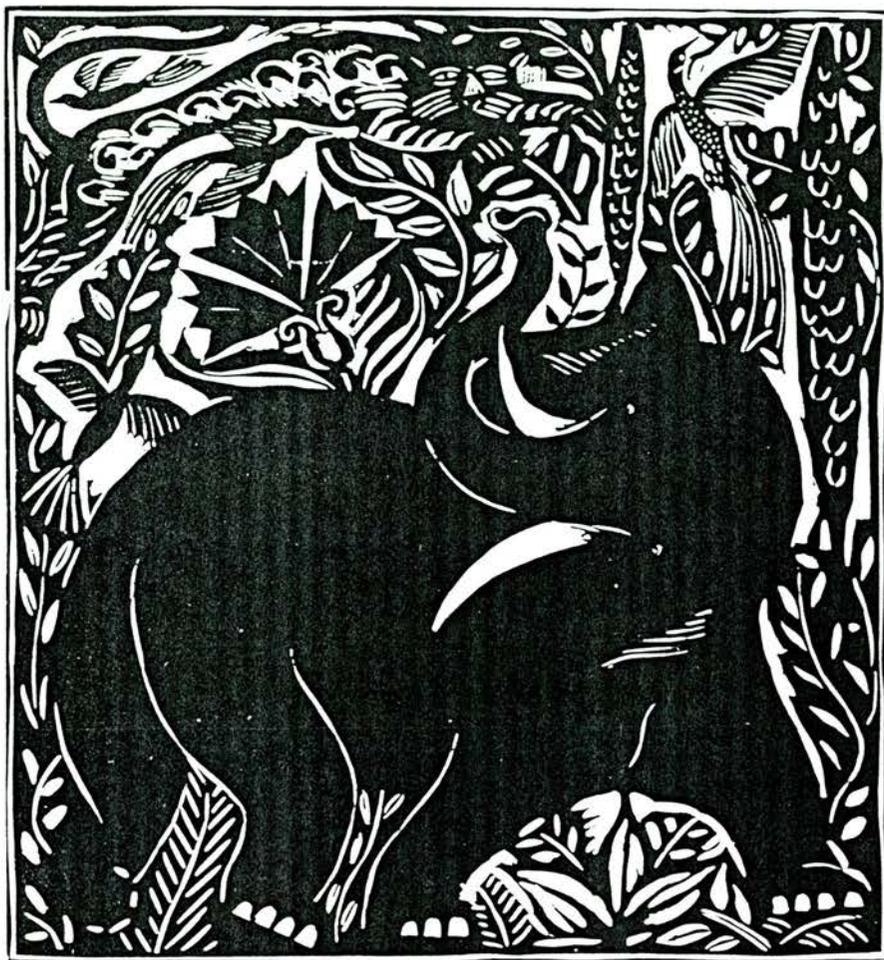


Fig.32.

R.Dufy.

L'Éléphant, from "Le Bestiaire, ou Cortège D'Orphée." by Apollinaire. woodcut printed in black. page, 32.5cmx26cm. Paris. 1911.

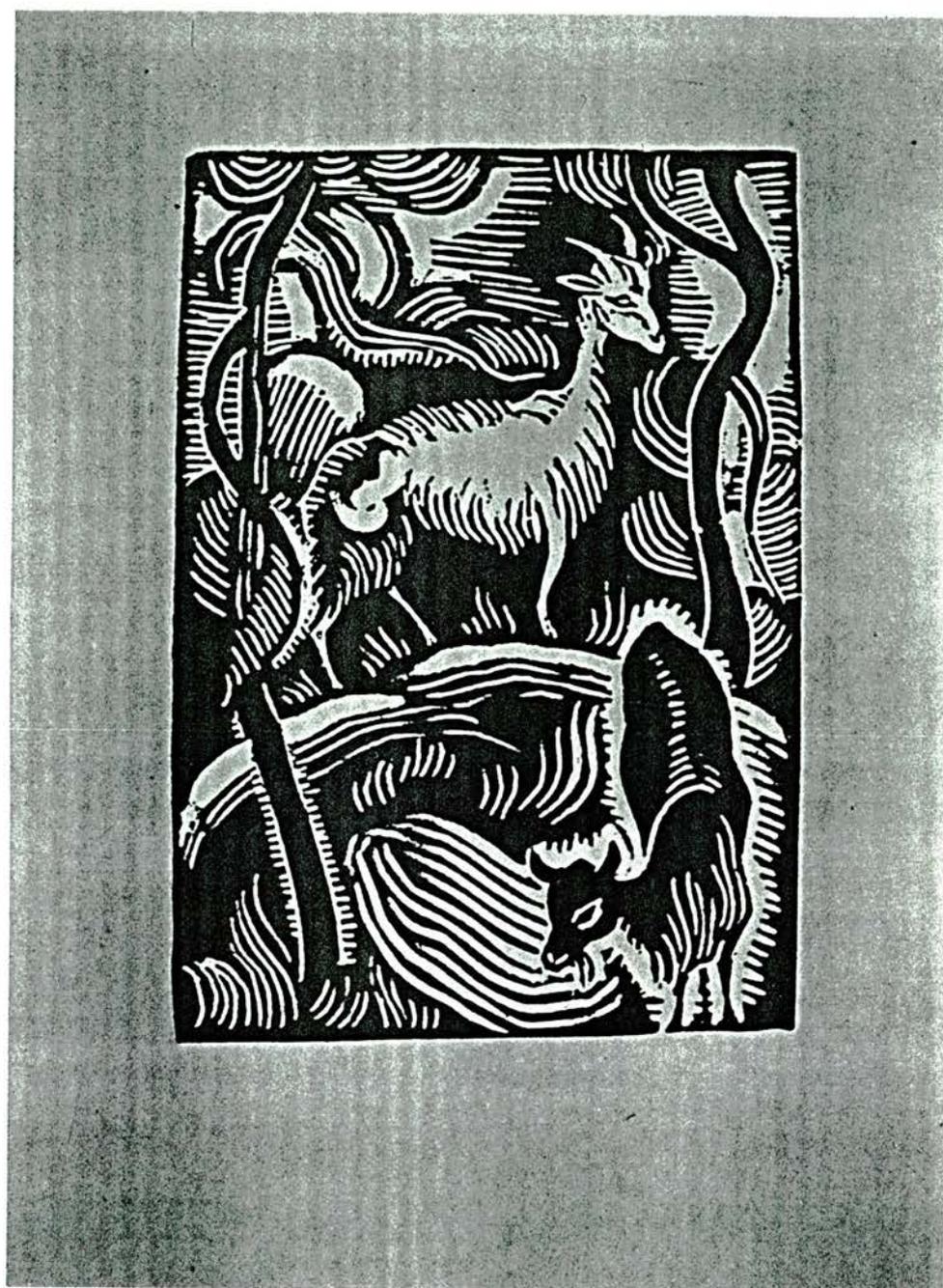


Fig.33.

R.Kristian.

Goats from The Bestiary woodcut.
printed in black.book 8cmx12.5cm.
Ovid Press.Nat. Lib. of
Scotland.1920.



Fig.34.

R.Kristian.

Wyndham Lewis.woodcut.The Egoist
March 1st 1916.page 40.8cmx10cm.

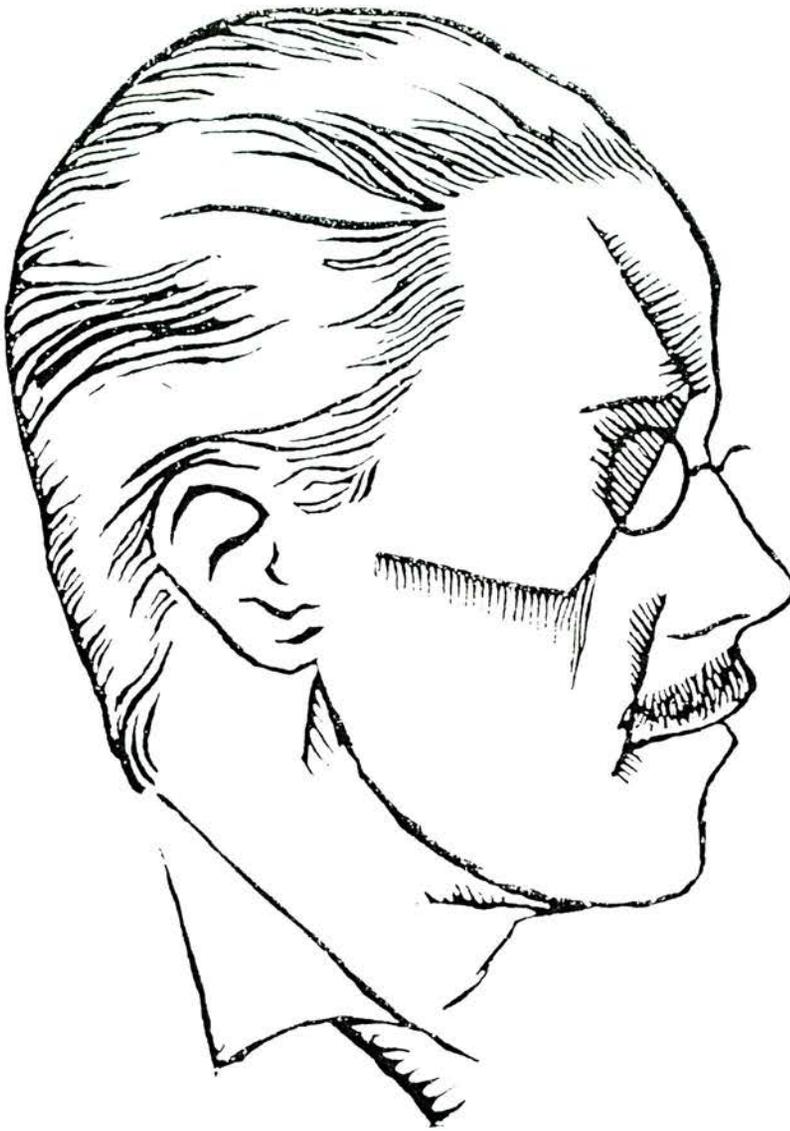


Fig.35.

R.Kristian.

James Joyce. woodcut. The Egoist
Feb. 1917. page 22. 8cmx8cm.

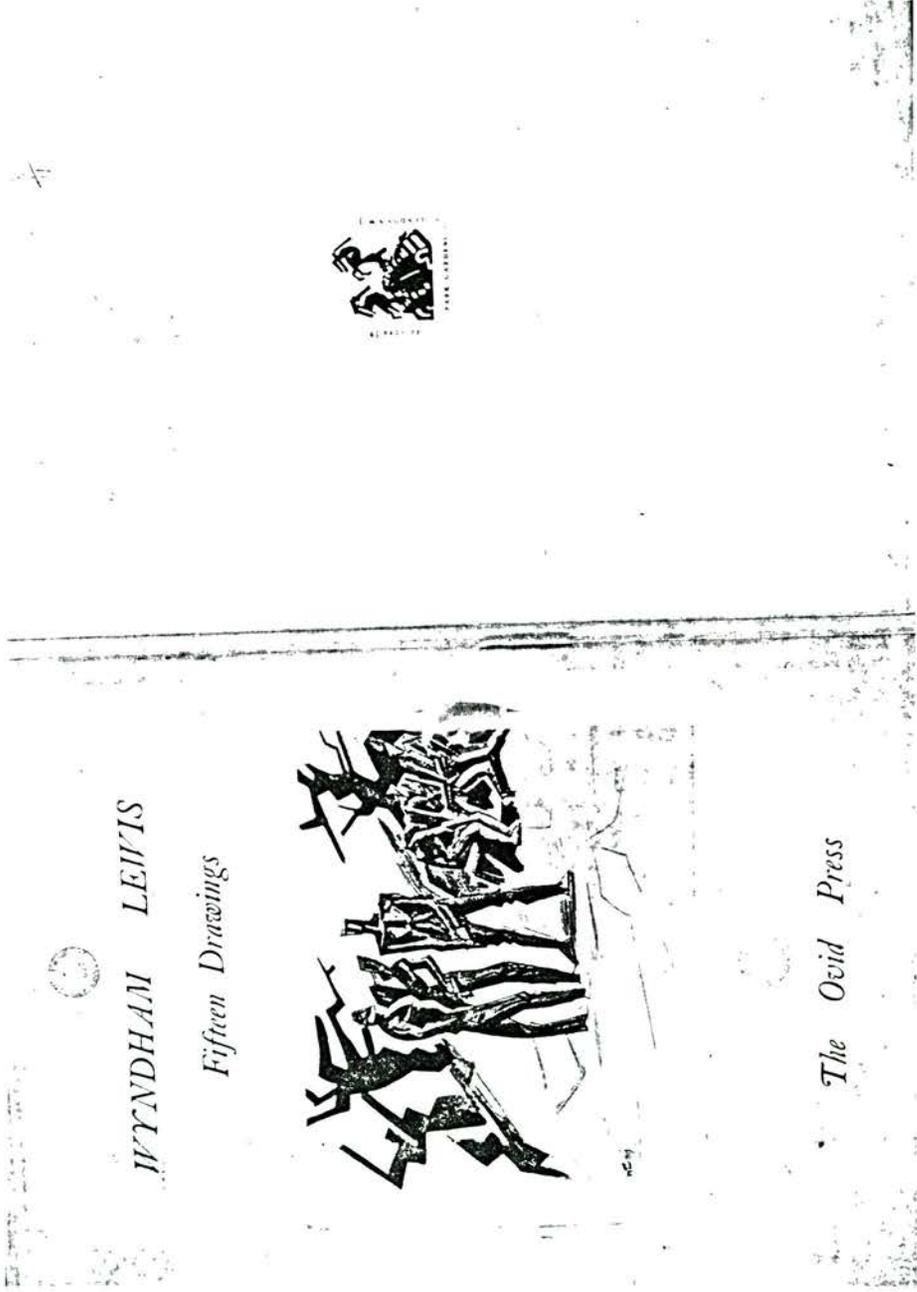


Fig. 36. W. Lewis. The Front Cover of the Portfolio of Fifteen Drawings. A3 size. Ovid Press. Nat. Lib. of Scotland. 1919.

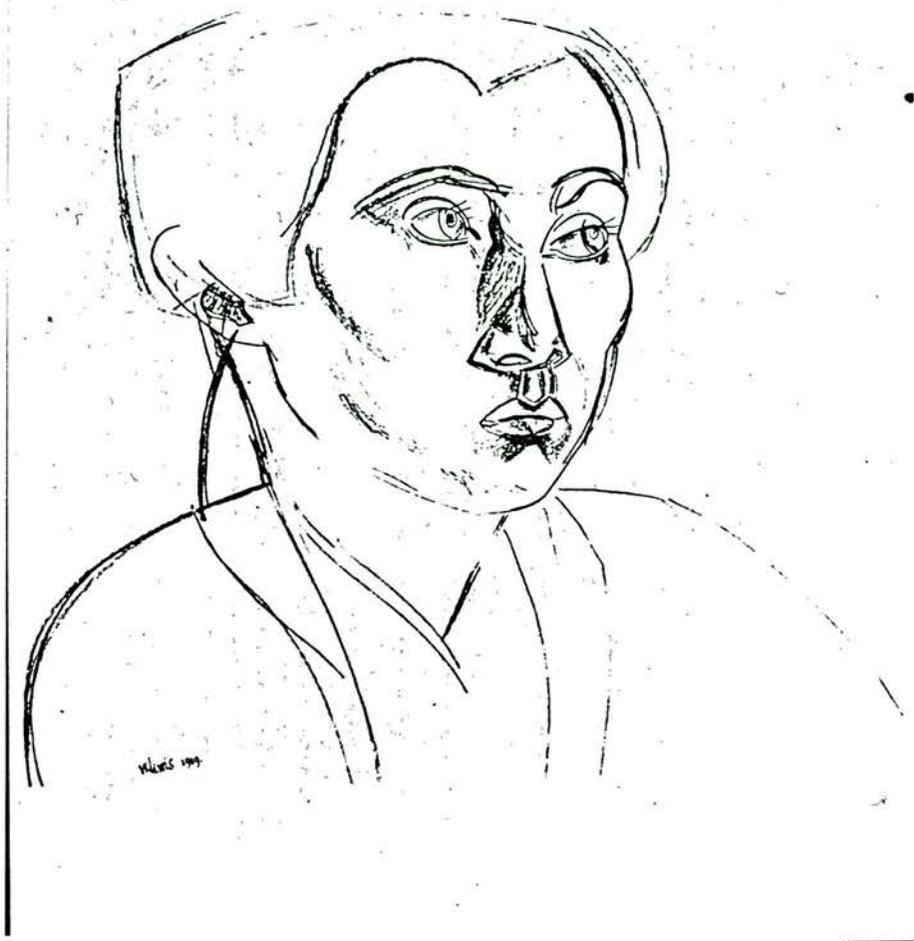


Fig.37

W.Lewis.

Head II.M.333.Original pencil.
Print line-block printed in black.
Portfolio of Fifteen Drawings. Ovid
Press .27.5cmx30cm. 1919.

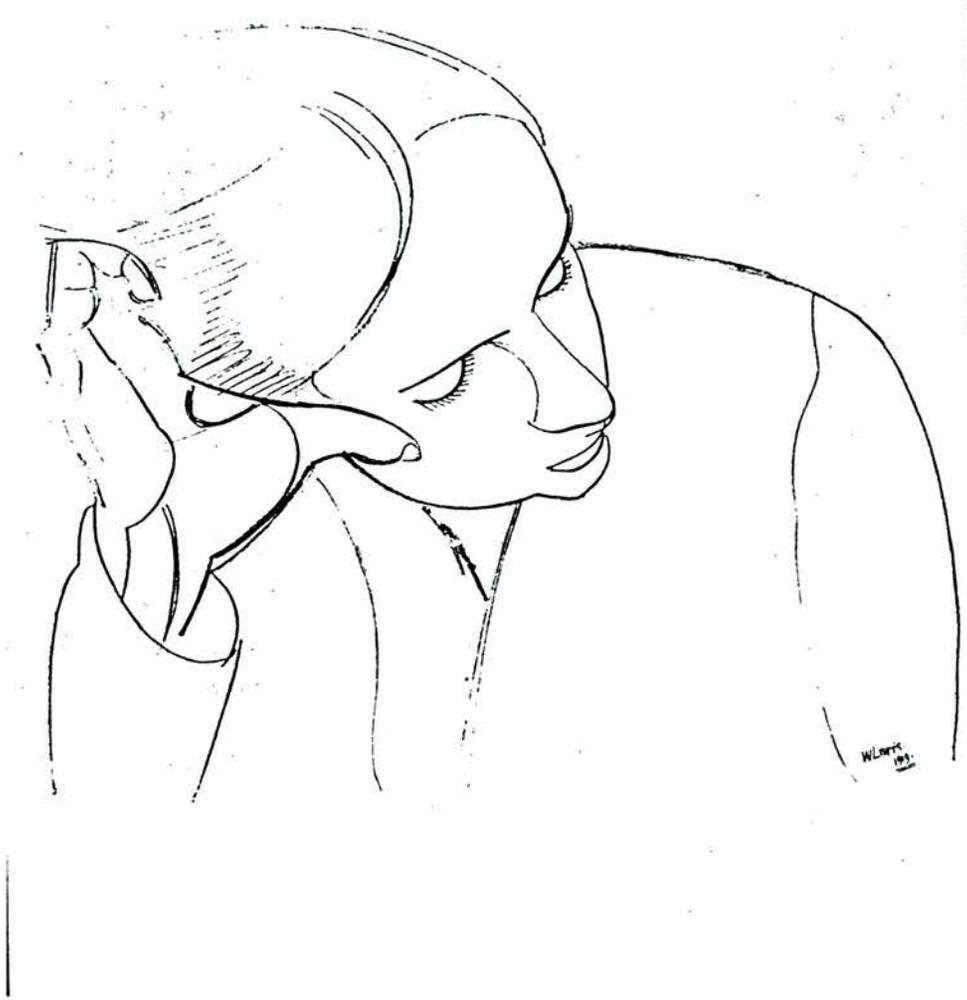


Fig.38.

W.Lewis.

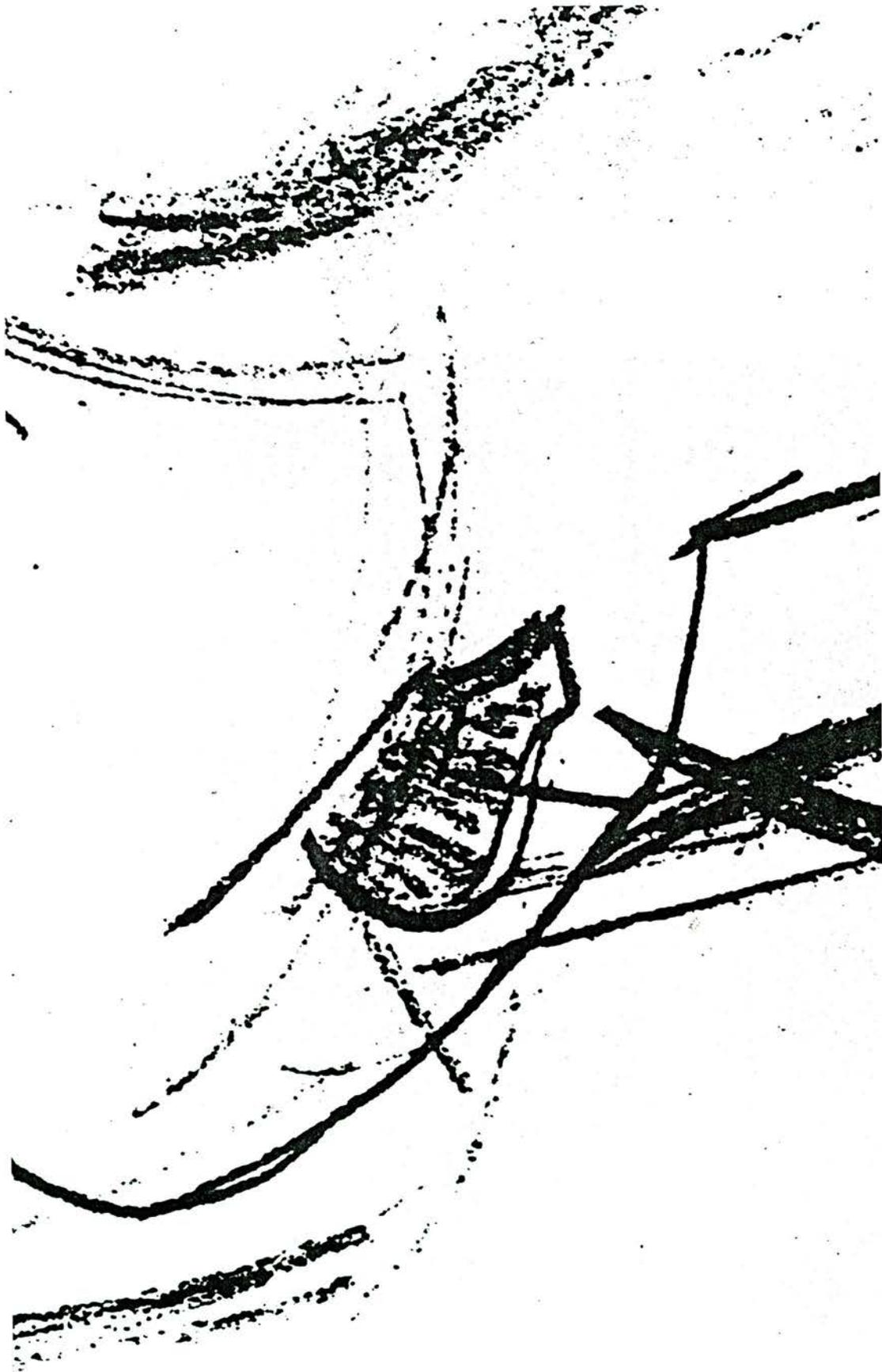
Head I.M.332.Original pencil.
Print line-block printed in black.
Portfolio of Fifteen Drawings. Ovid
Press. 25cmx32cm. 1919.



Fig.39.

W.Lewis.

Ezra Pound M.344.Original charcoal
Print line block printed in black.
Portfolio of Fifteen Drawings.
Ovid Press.26.5cmx32cm. Also
reproduced in the Apple 1920
page.97, and the Dial,September
1920,facing page 283.



W. Lewis.

Detail of Head I print, showing deterioration of line, where pencil used in original has not been appropriate.

Fig. 40.



Fig.41.

W.Lewis.

Detail of Head II print, showing deterioration of line, where pencil used in original has not been appropriate.

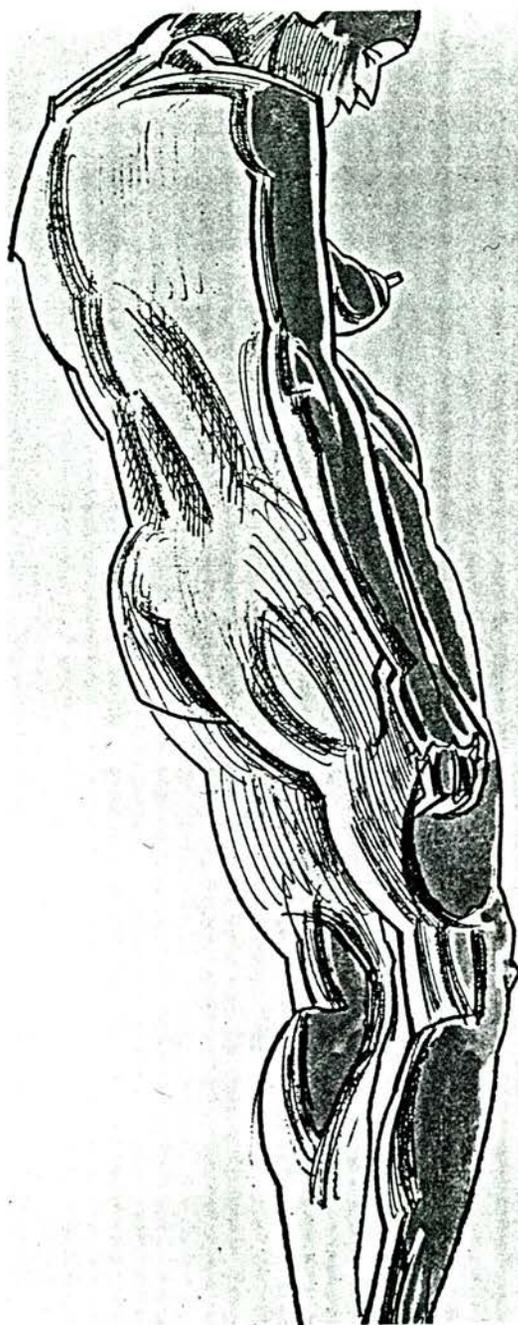


Fig.42.

W.Lewis.

Nude III.M.341.Original,Chalk,pen
and ink, watercolour. Print line
block printed in black,colour off-
set litho.Portfolio of Fifteen
Drawings. Ovid Press.
19cmx33.5cm.1919.

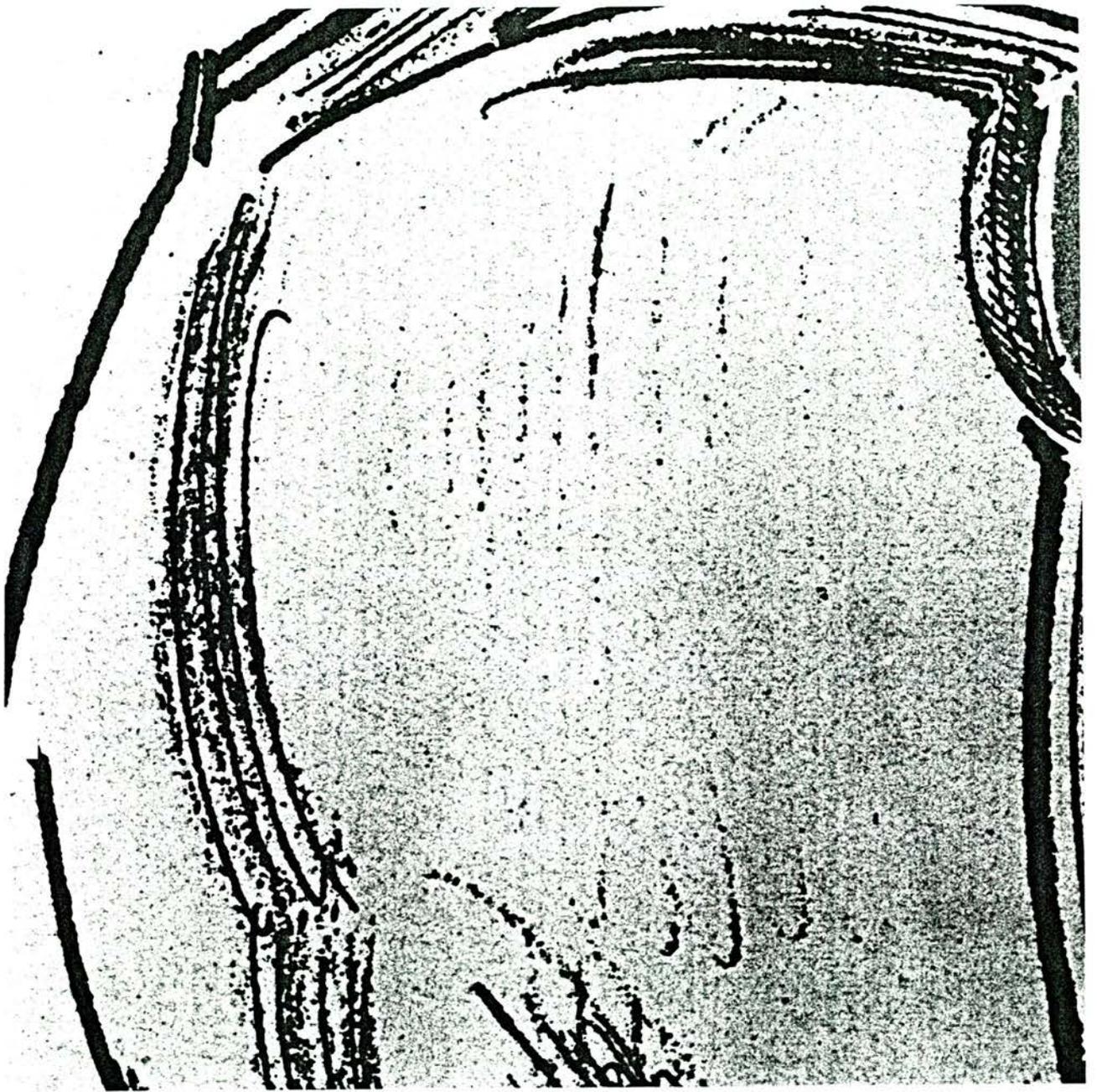


Fig.43:

W.Lewis.

Detail of Nude III. showing
deterioration of line in drawing of
the model's back.



Fig.44.

W.Lewis.

Blue Nudes .M.120.Original, Pen
and Ink. Print line block, printed
in blue. Portfolio of Fifteen
Drawings.Ovid Press.
18cmx21.5cm.1912-13.

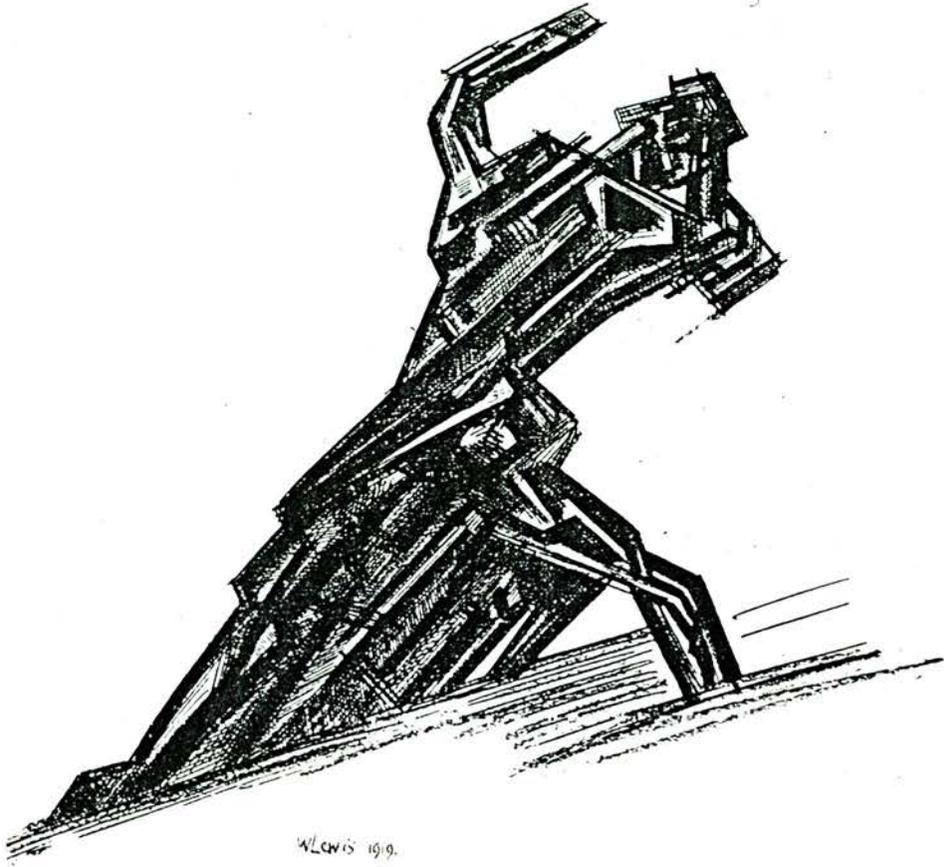


Fig.45.

W.Lewis.

Timon of Athens I.M.359.Original
Pen and Ink .W.K.Rose Collection.
Line block printed in black.
Portfolio of Fifteen
Drawings. Ovid Press. 26.5x23cm.
1919.



Fig.46.

W.Lewis.

Timon of Athens II M.174.Original,
Pen and ink. Print line block
printed in black.Portfolio of
Fifteen Drawings. Ovid Press.
11.5x16.5cm.1914.



Fig.48. W.Lewis.

The Group M.331.Original Pen and Ink watercolour.Print Half-tone printed in burnt umber. Portfolio of Fifteen Drawings. Ovid Press. 23x18cm. 1919.

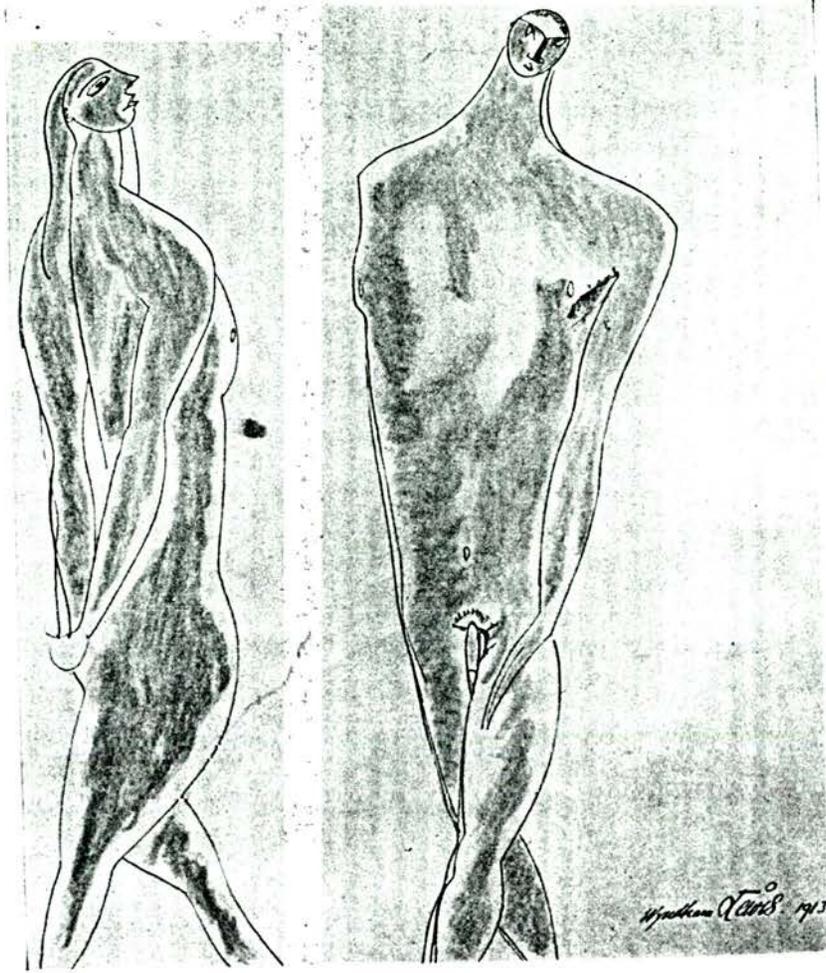


Fig.49.

W.Lewis.

Post Jazz.M.150.Original Pen and ink wash.Print Half-tone block printed in black.Portfolio of Fifteen Drawings.Ovid Press. 19cmx23cm .1913.

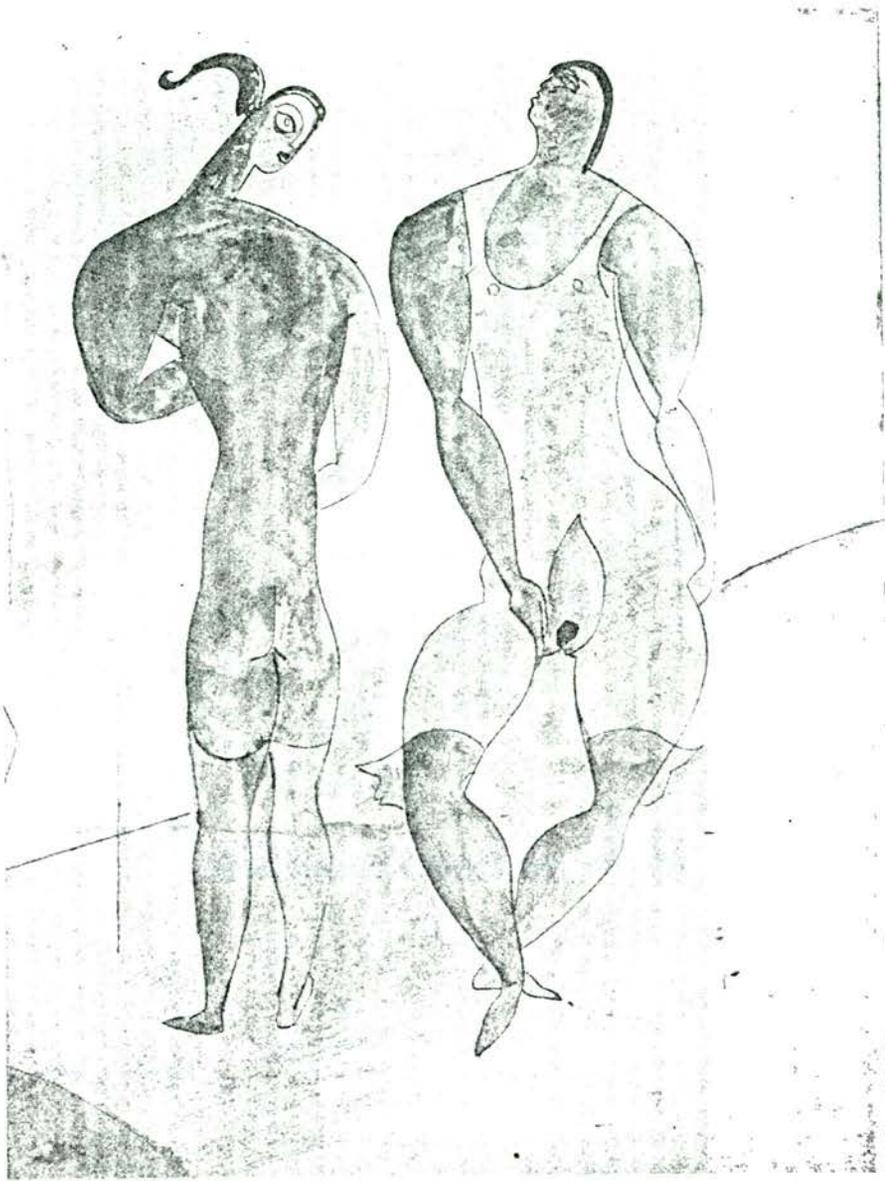


Fig. 50.

W. Lewis.

Seraglio. M. 84. Half-tone printed in yellow ochre. Portfolio of Fifteen Drawings. Ovid Press. 23cmx30.5cm. 1912.

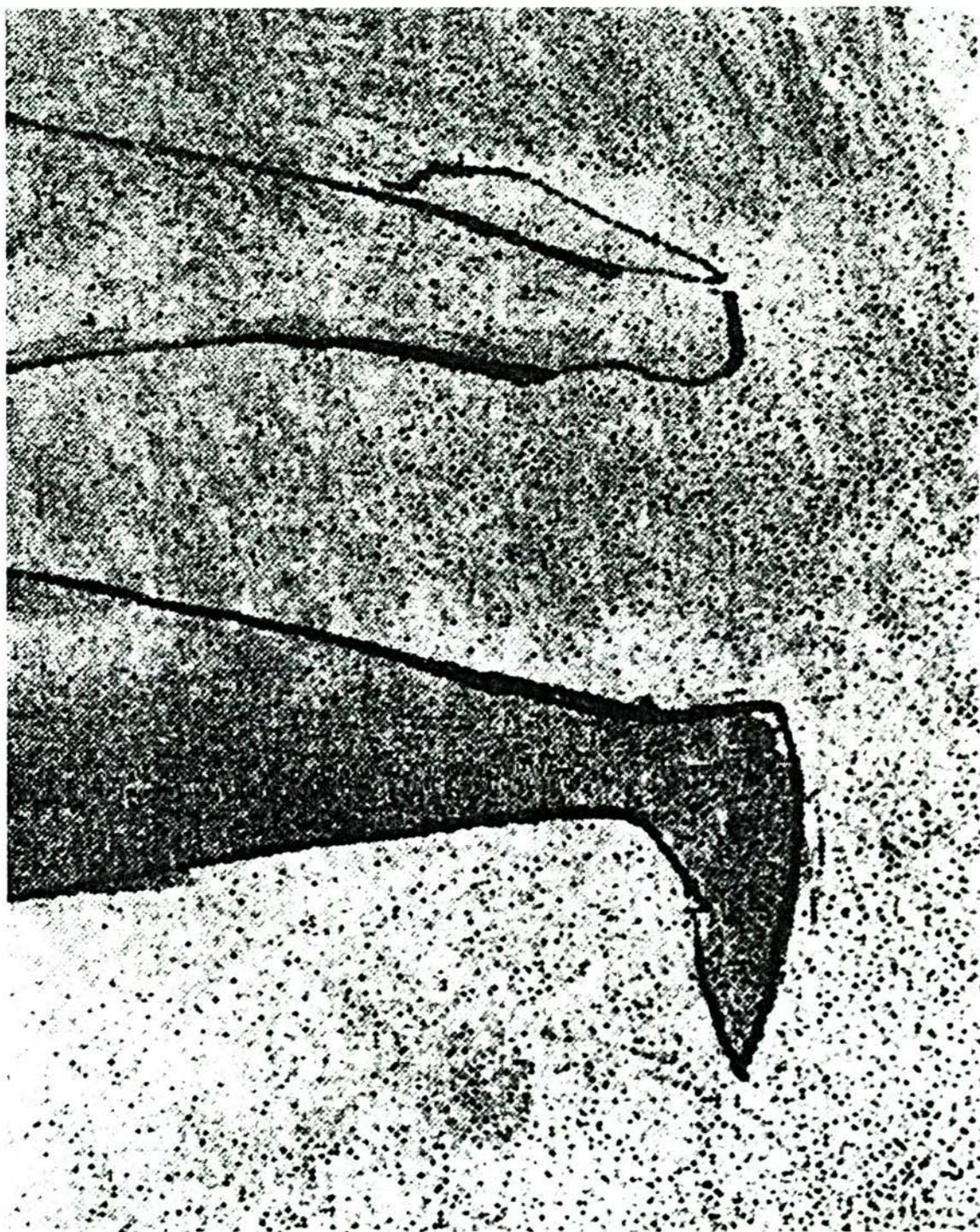


Fig. 51. W. Lewis. Detail of Seraglio, showing fault in screen when printed.

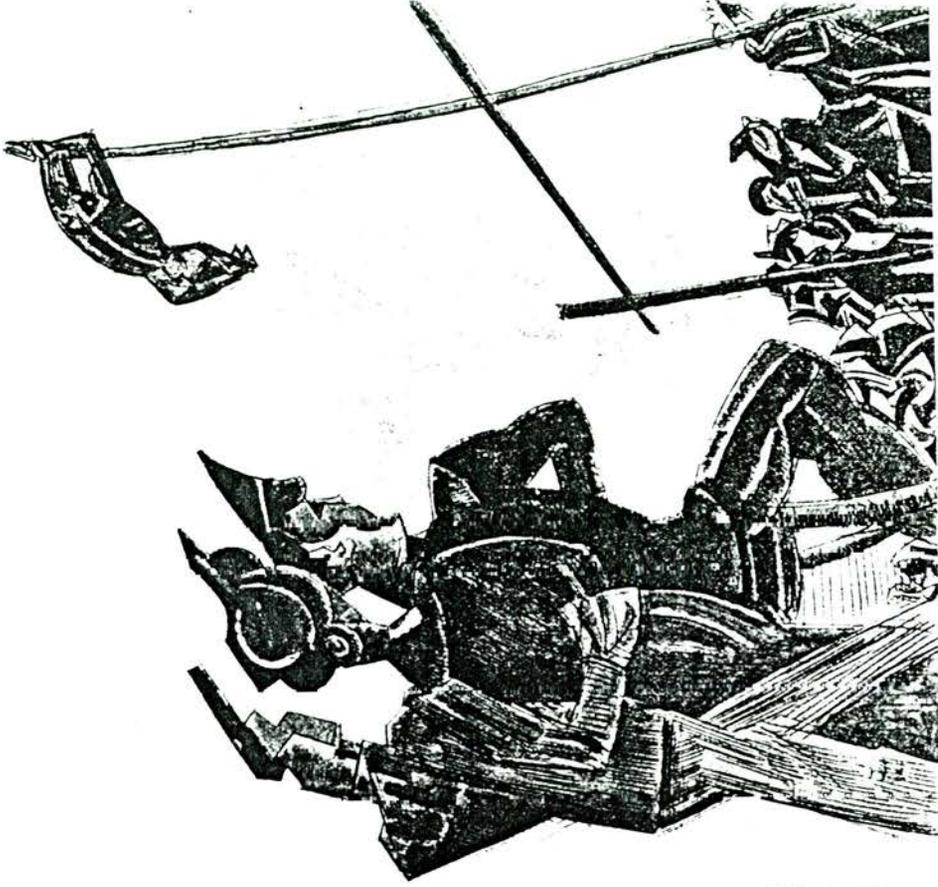


Fig. 52. W. Lewis.

The Pole Jump M. 344. Half-tone and
Line block printed in black.
Portfolio of F-fteen
Drawings. Ovic Press. 32x23cm. 1919.



W. Lewis.

Fig. 53. Detail of The Pole Jump. showing tonal contrast in foreground figures by use of half-tone screen.



Fig.54.

W.Lewis.

Detail of The Pole Jump. showing
feint lines of earlier sketch of
pole vaulter possible by use of
Half-tone screen.

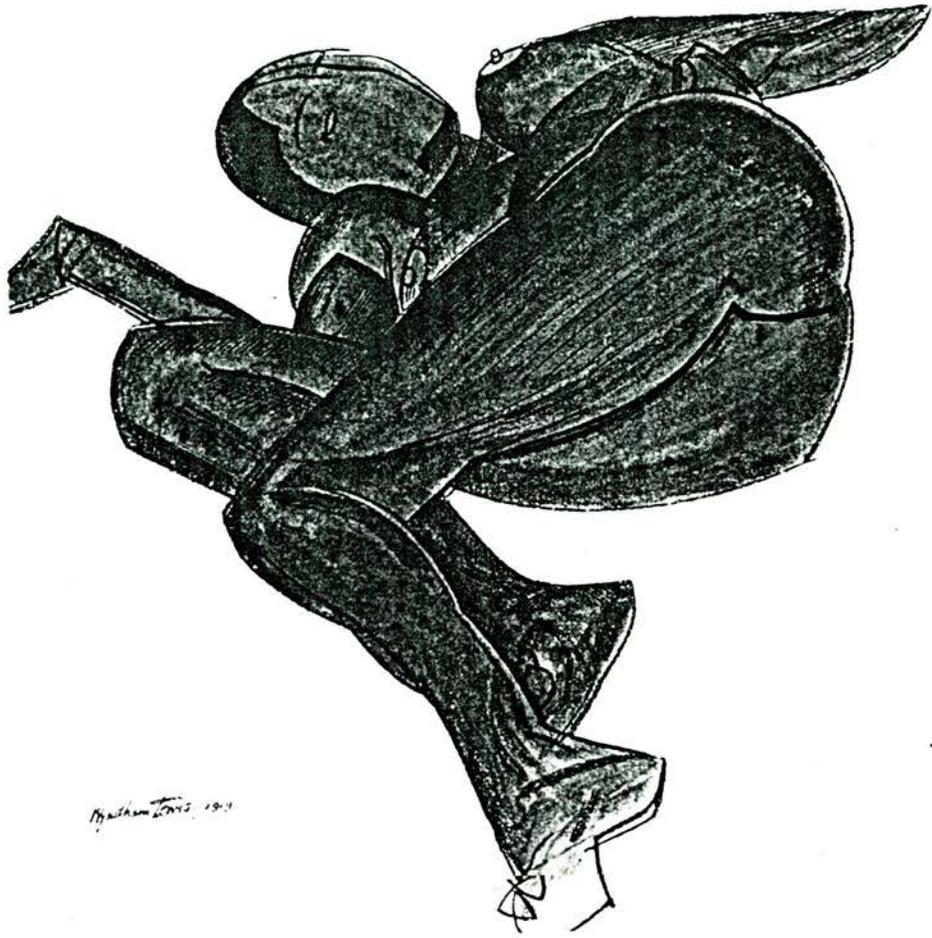


Fig.55.

W.Lewis.

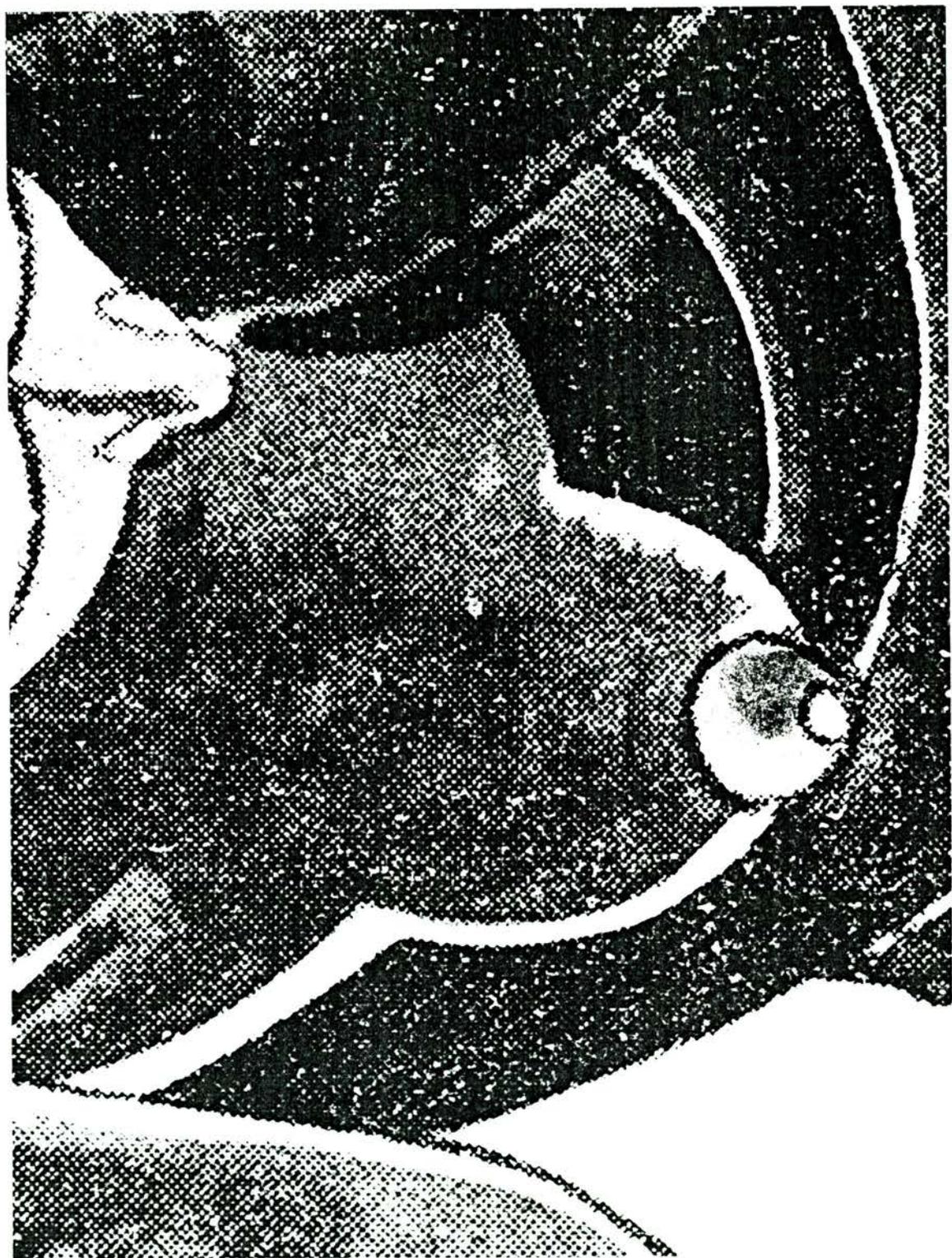
Nude I.M.339.Original pen and ink, chalk, watercolour. Leeds City Art Gallery. Print Half-tone block printed in black with water colour washes. Portfolio of Fifteen Drawings. Ovid Press 17.5cmx23cm. 1919.



Fig. 56.

W. Lewis.

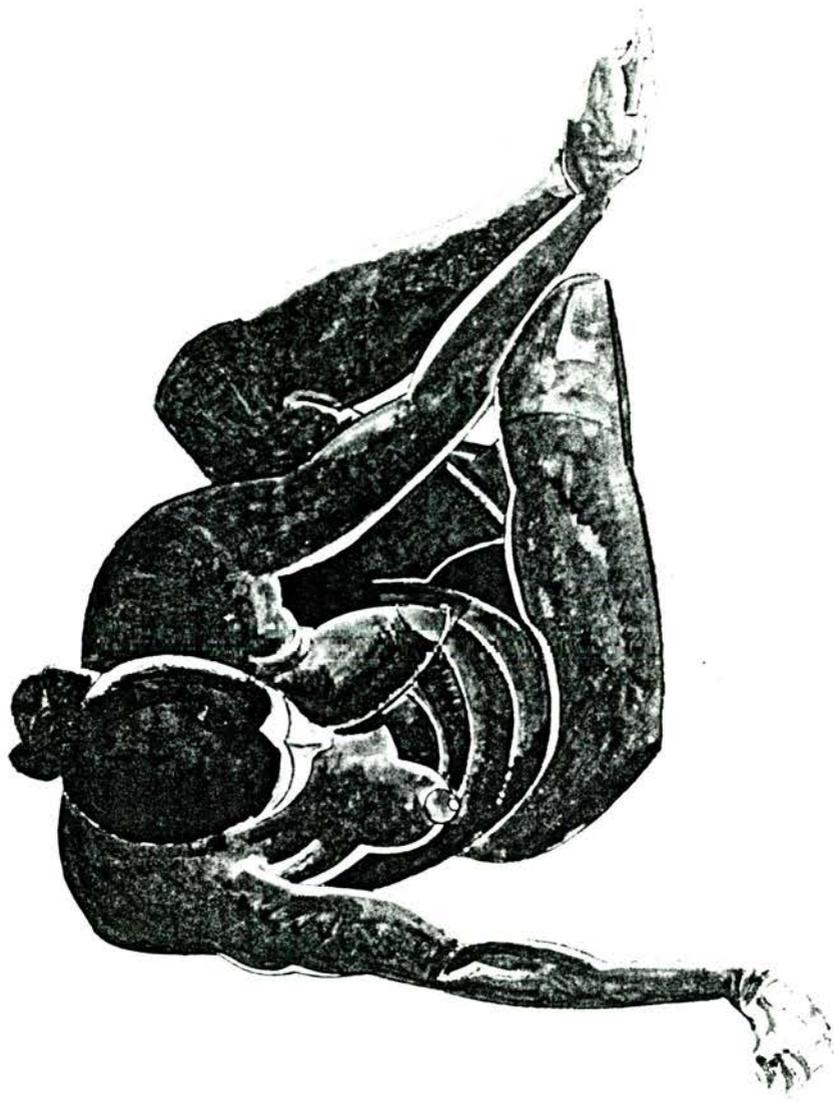
Nude II. M. 340. Print Half-tone block printed in black with Half-tone colour, and watercolour nipples. Portfolio of Fifteen Drawings. Ovid Press. 23x17.5cm. 1919.



W. Lewis.

Detail of Nude II showing the use of a cut-out, line block negative for the coloured areas.

Fig. 57.



W. Lewis

Fig. 58.

W. Lewis.

Nude II Original black chalk and watercolour. Manchester City Art Galleries. 28cmx38cm. 1919.

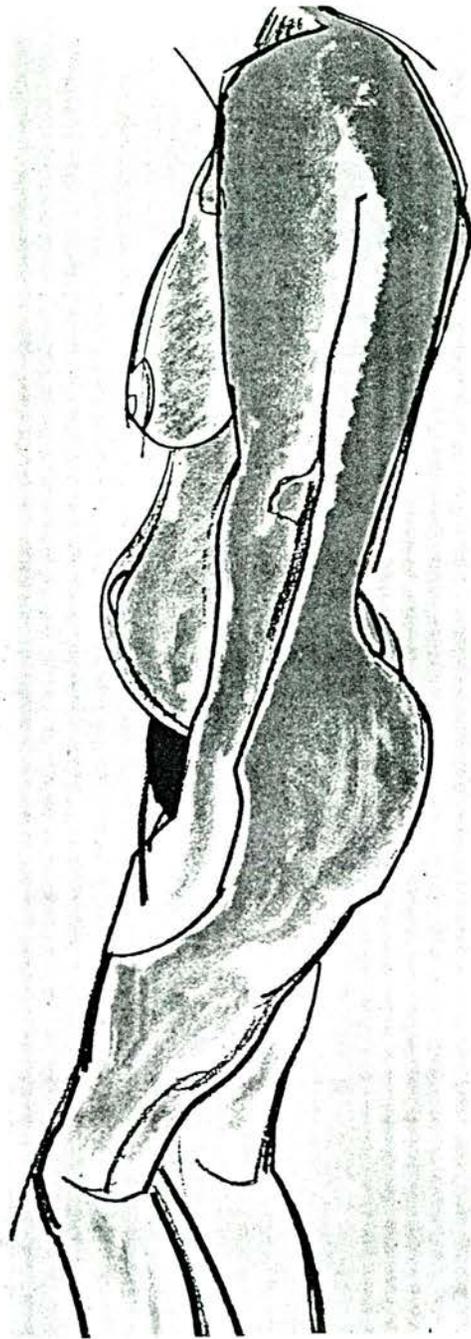


Fig.59.

W.Lewis.

Nude IV. M.342.Original,chalk or charcoal, watercolour.Print line block printed in black with colour added via photographic off-set lithography.Portfolio of Fifteen Drawings.Ovid Press.20x33.5cm.1919.

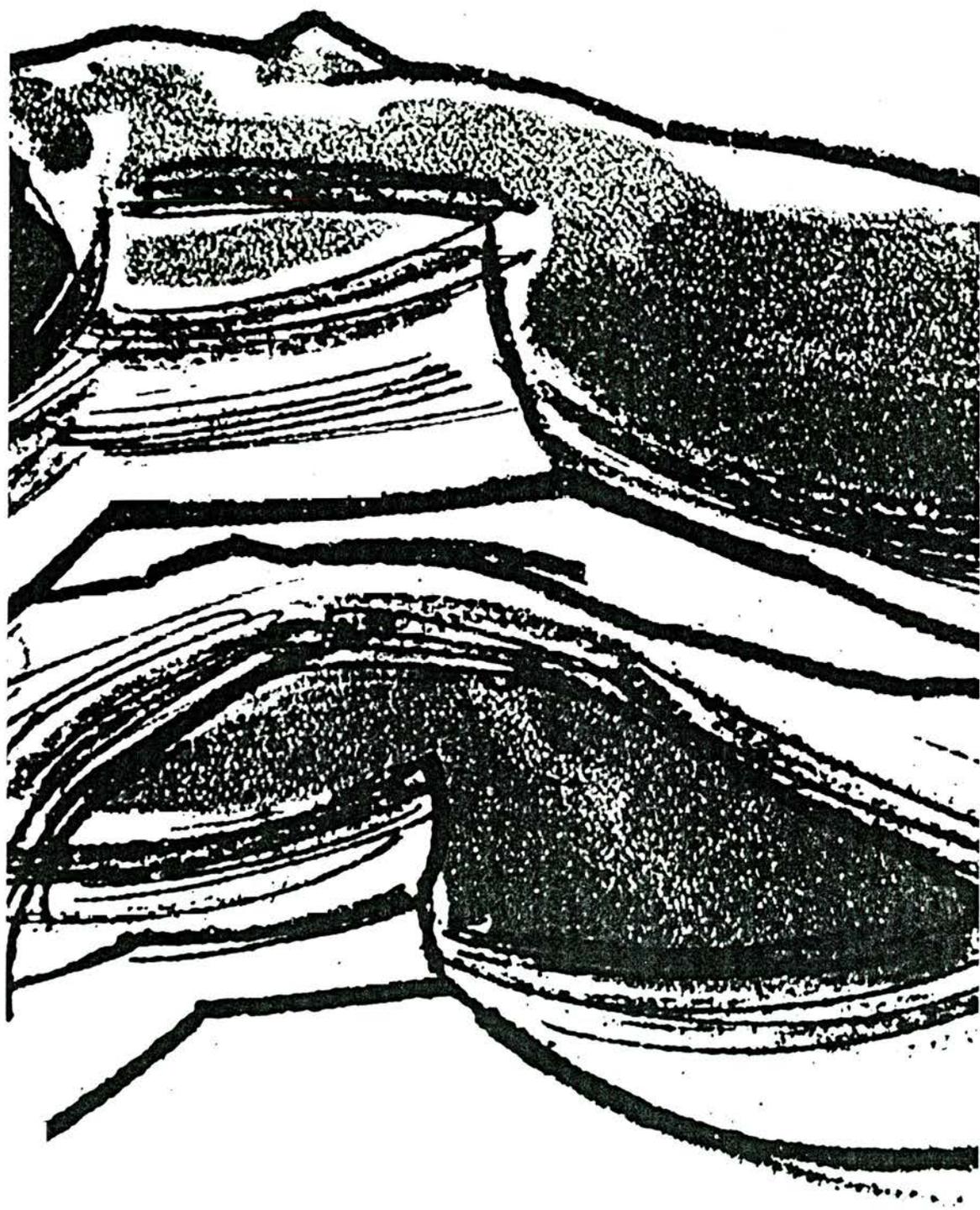


Fig. 60.

W. Lewis.

Detail of Nude III, showing thin film of ink applied in coloured areas indicating use of photo offset litho.



Fig.61.

W.Lewis.

Detail of Nude IV. showing the ability of off-set litho when applied to coloured areas reproduces brush work of original drawing in detail.

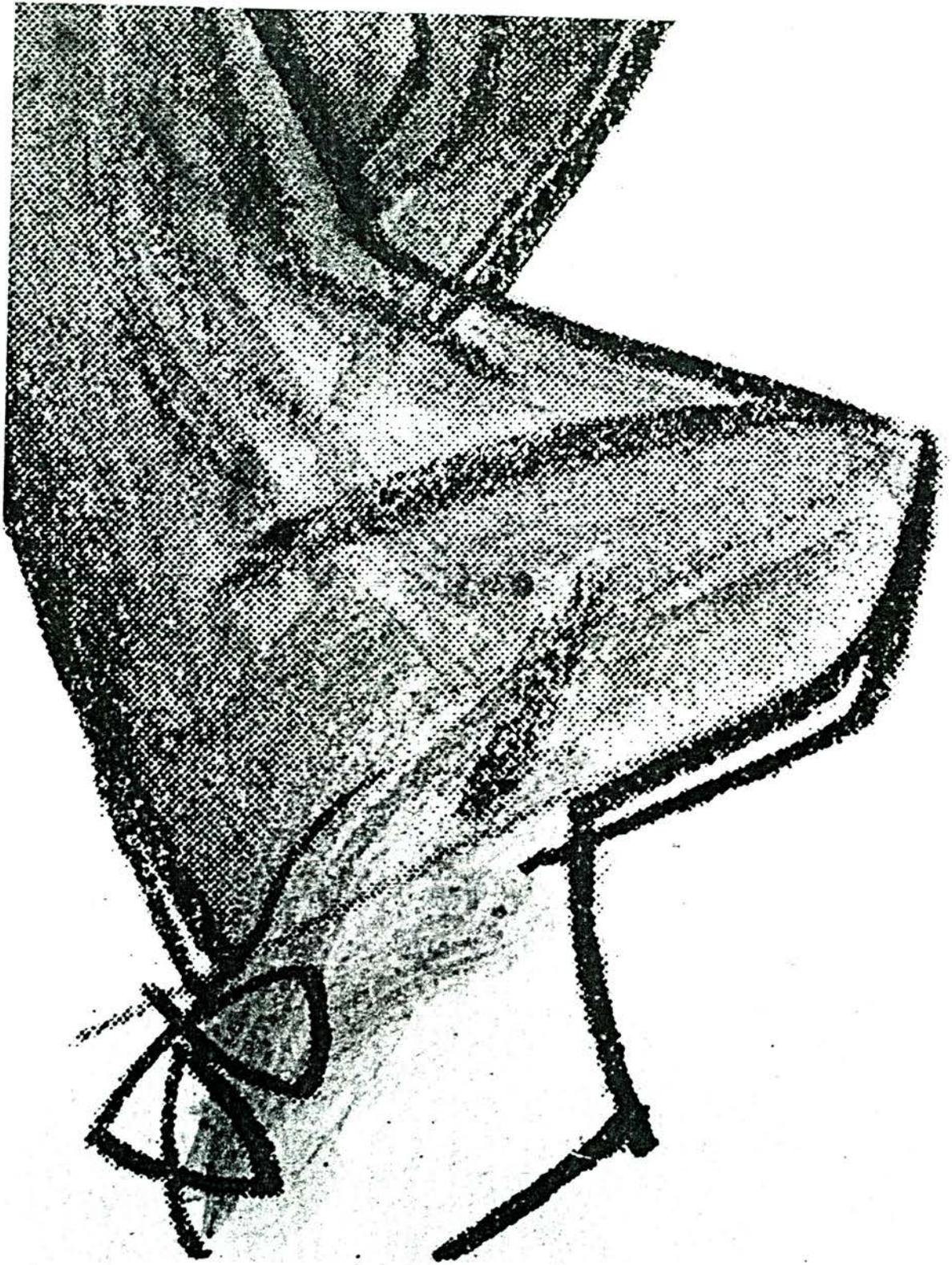


Fig.62.

W.Lewis

Detail of Nude I. showing the hand
application of a watercolour wash.



Fig. 63. W. Lewis.

Detail of G.K.Chesterton. from
30 Personalities and a Self
Portrait portfolio 1932. Sowing
use of collotype process, and the
detail in tonal areas not possible
with a half-tone process.

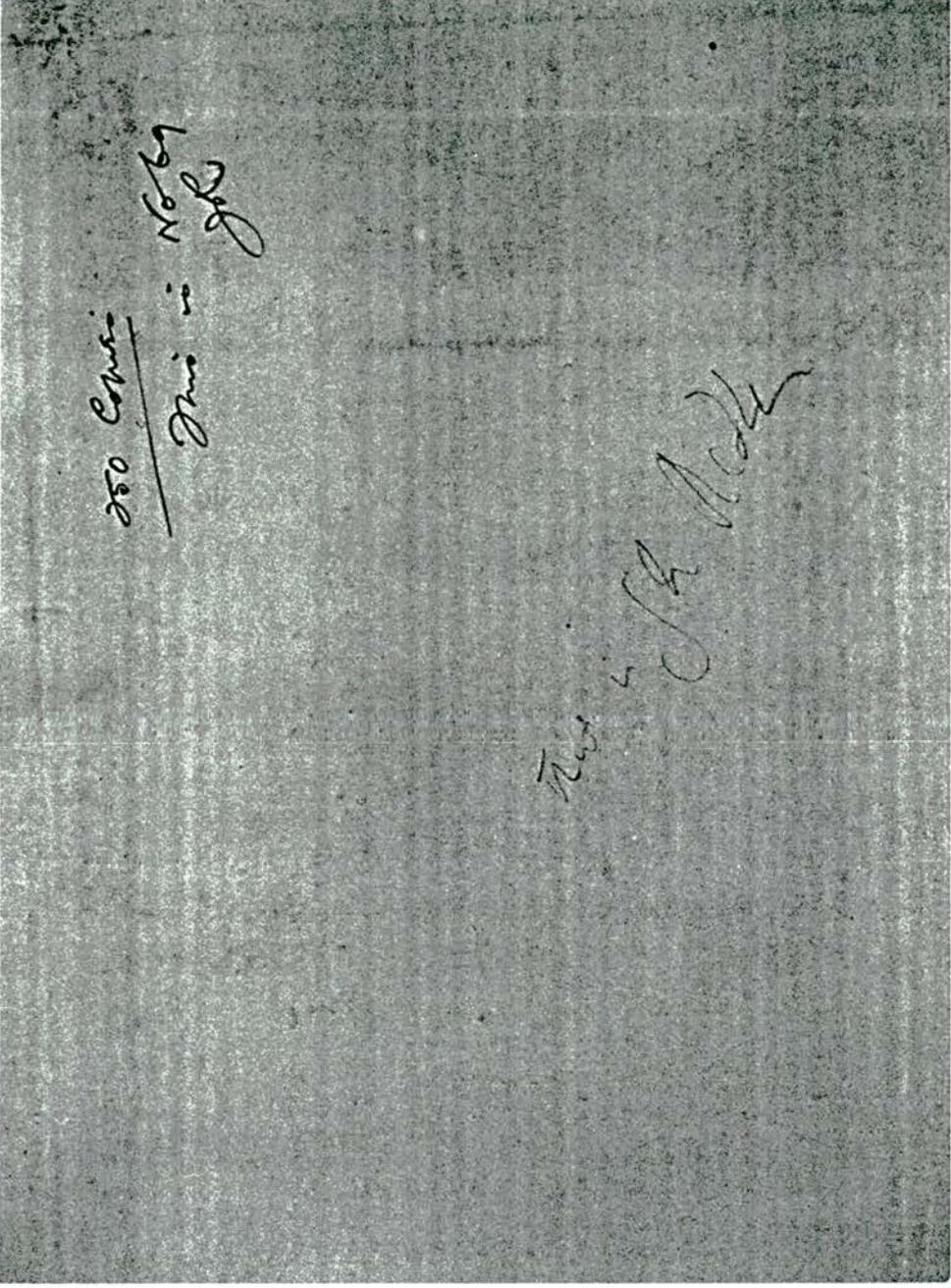


Fig. 64. J. Rodker.

Detail of back cover of Portfolio of Fifteen Drawings showing Rodker's signature and copy number out of 250.

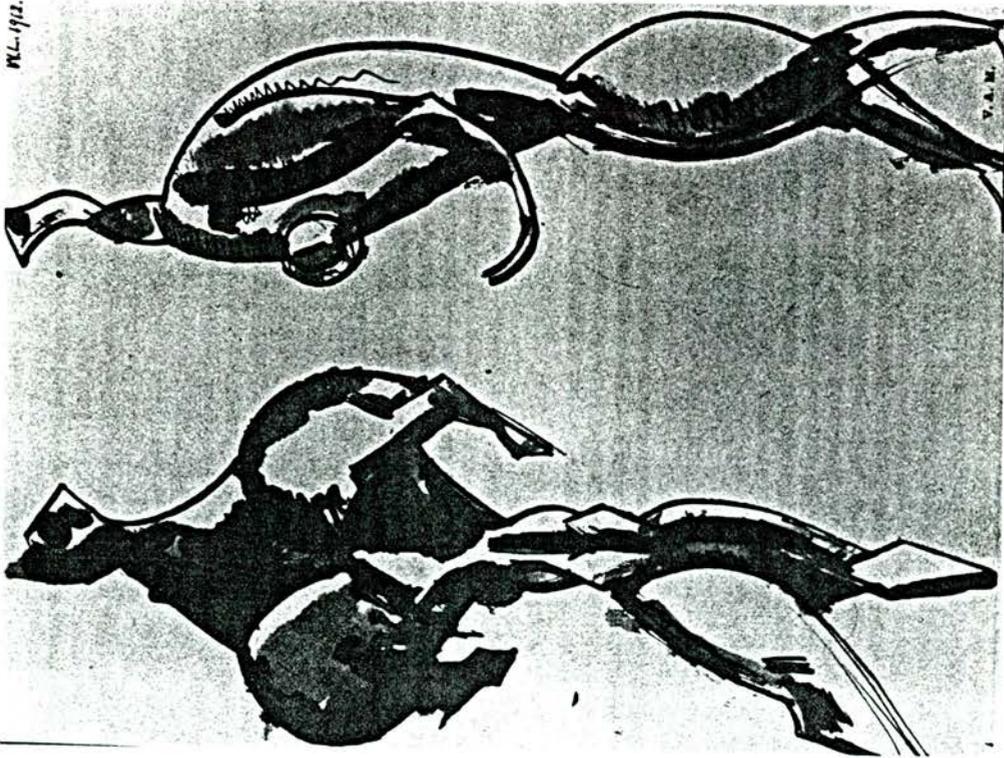


Fig. 65. W. Lewis.

Chickens. M. 43. Pen and ink wash. 25.5cm x 20cm. Victoria and Albert Museum. 1912.

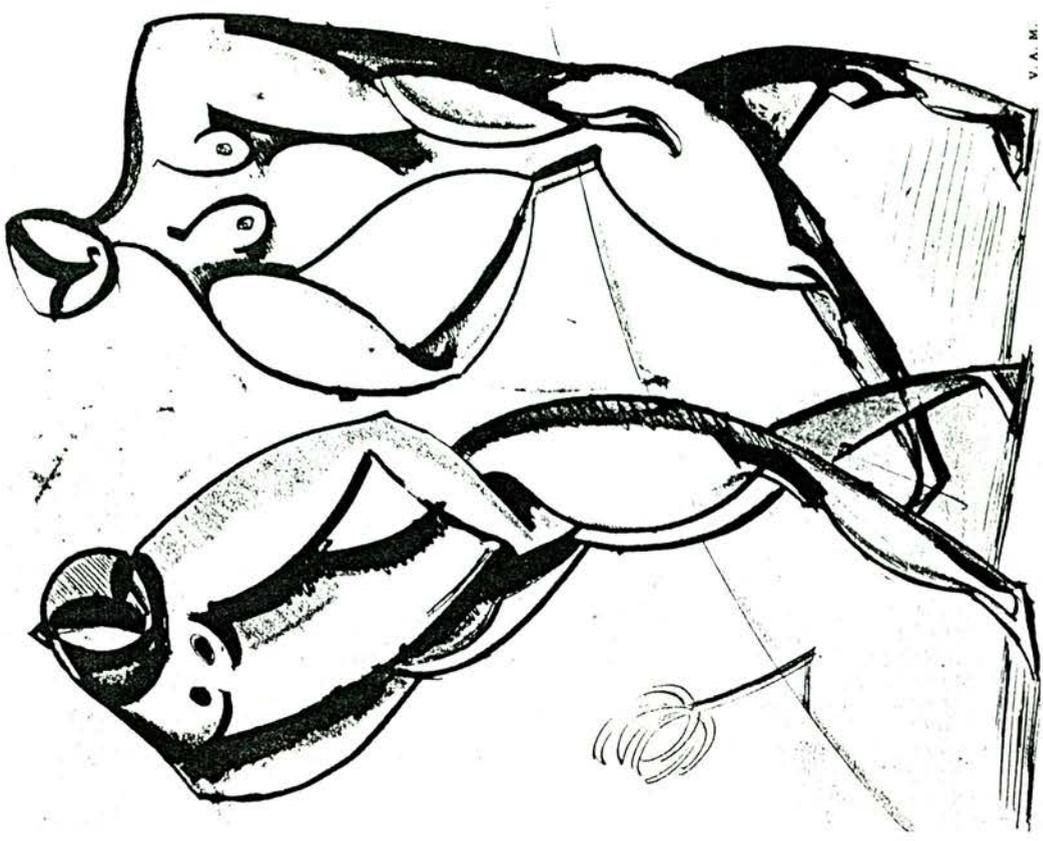


Fig. 66. W. Lewis.

Courtship. M. 45. Pen and Ink, chalk 25.5 x 20.5cm. Victoria and Albert Museum. 1913.



Fig.67.

W.Lewis.

Second Movement .M.152, Pen and Ink
watercolour.25x 20.5 cm.Victoria
and Albert Museum.1913.

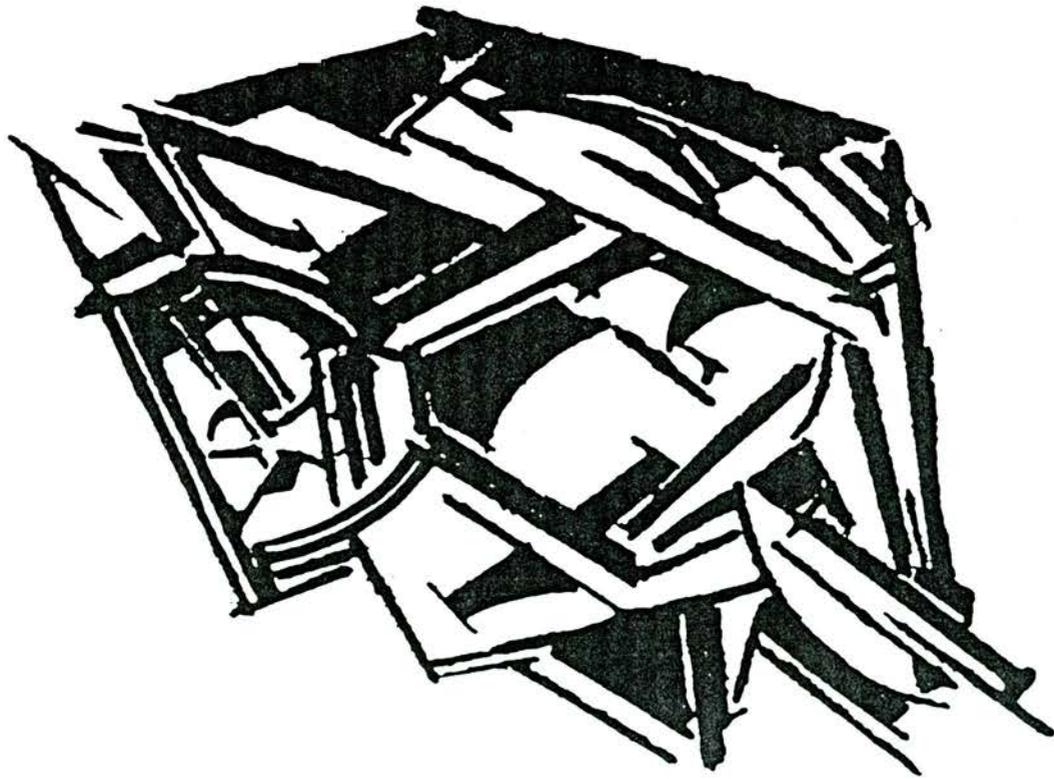


Fig. 68. W. Lewis.

Illustration from *Timon*
of Athens Portfolio Cube Press
Victoria and Albert, 1913.



Fig. 69. W. Lewis.

The Front Cover of *Timon of Athens*
Portfolio, Cube Press, Victoria and
Albert Museum, 1913.



Fig. 70.

W. Lewis.

A Battery Shelled. M. P. 25. oil on canvas. 6ft x 10ft 5 inch. Imperial War Museum. 1919.

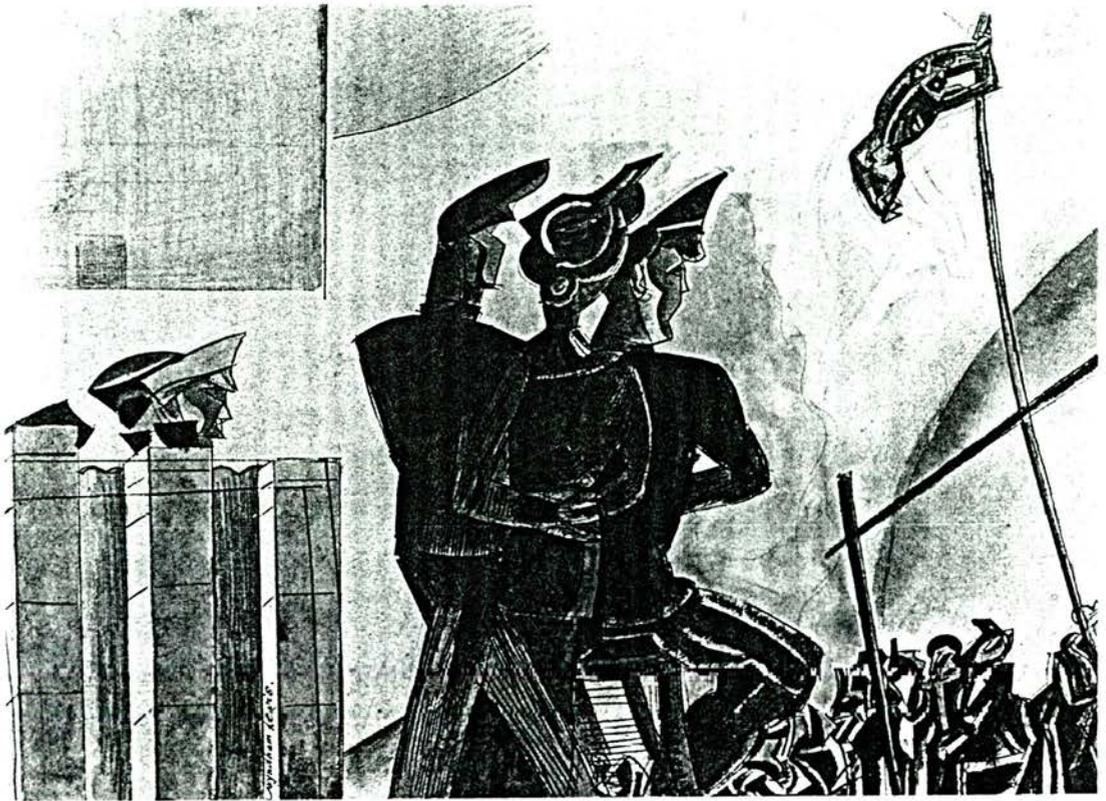


Fig.71.

W.Lewis.

The Pole Jump. Pencil, pen, ink, watercolour and gouache. A later version of the original reproduced in the Portfolio of Fifteen Drawings Anthony D'Offay. 1929.



Fig.72.

W.Lewis.

Dancers(Ballet Figures).M.367.
Black chalk and wash.38x51cm.Graham
gallery,New York.1919-1920.



Fig.73.

W.Lewis.

Lovers With Another Figure. M.403.
Black chalk, pen and ink,
watercolour wash. 28x45.5cm.
John.M.MacLeod. 1920.



Fig.74.

W.Lewis.

Red Nude.M.351.Pencil and
watercolour. 56.5x41.5cm. The
British Council ,London.1919.

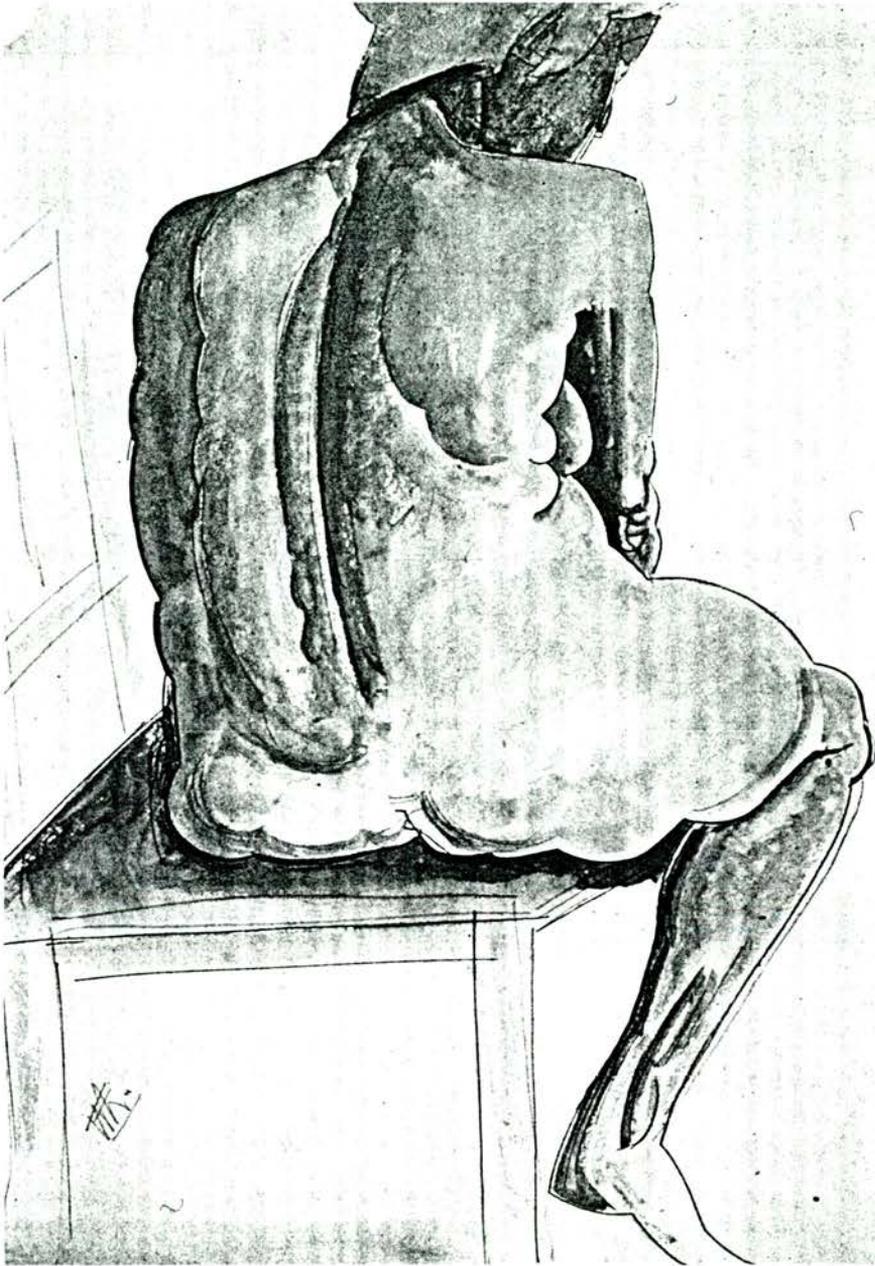


Fig.75.

W.Lewis.

Red Nude Seated.M.353.Pen, ink,
pencil,wash. 37.5x26cm. Andrew
Dickson White Museum of Art,
Cornell University.1919.



Fig. 76.

W. Lewis.

Seated Nude. M. 355. Pencil, Charcoal wash. 37.5x26.5cm. Cecil Higgins Art Gallery, Bedford. 1919.



Fig.77.

W.Lewis.

The Lascar. M.336 .Pen and ink wash. 30.5x26.5cm. Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester. 1919.



Fig.78.

W.Lewis.

Crouching Nude.M.365.Black chalk on
grey paper. 29x23cm. Tate Gallery,
London.1919-20.



W. Lewis

Fig. 79. W. Lewis. Crouching Women. M. 366. Black chalk and wash. 28x38cm. Tate Gallery, London. 1919-20.



W. Lewis. 1919.

Fig.80.

W.Lewis.

Stooping Nude. M.357. Pencil
37x23.5cm. Hawkes Bay and East
Coast Art Society, New Zealand.
1919-1920.

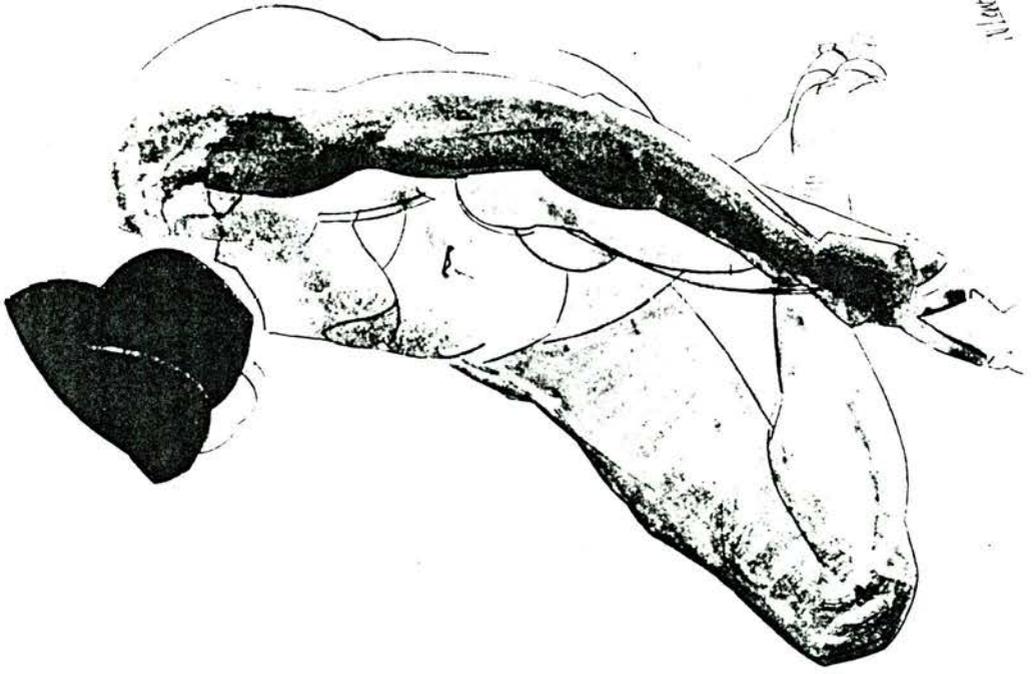
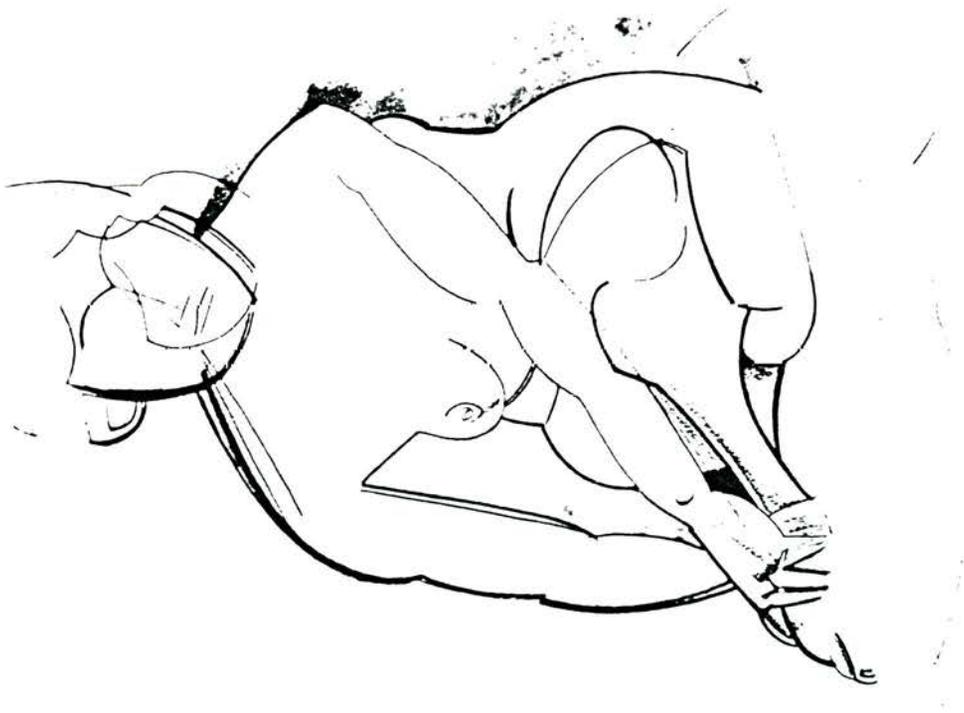


Fig. 81. W. Lewis. Nude, Pencil and watercolour. 28.2x 42.5cm. Anthony D'Offay, 1919-1920.



Seated Nude. M. 378. Black chalk, pen and ink wash. 25.5 x 35.5 cm. Walter Michel. 1919–1920.

W. Lewis.

Fig. 82.

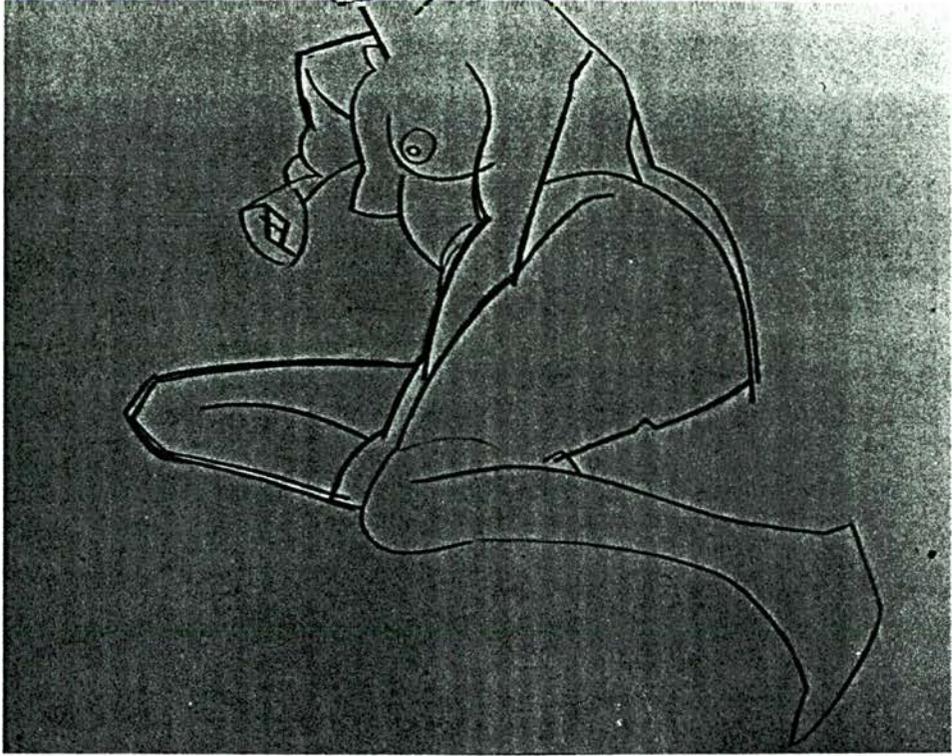


Fig.83. W.Lewis. Seated nude.M.377. Black chalk.
33.x38cm. Walter Michel. 1919-1920.



Fig.84. W.Lewis. Reclining Nude.M.376. Pencil
wash. 28x37.5cm. Ashmolean Museum,
Oxford. 1919-1920.



Fig. 85.

W. Lewis.

Girl Reclining. M. 330. Black
chalk. 38x56cm. Tate
Gallery, London. 1919-1920.

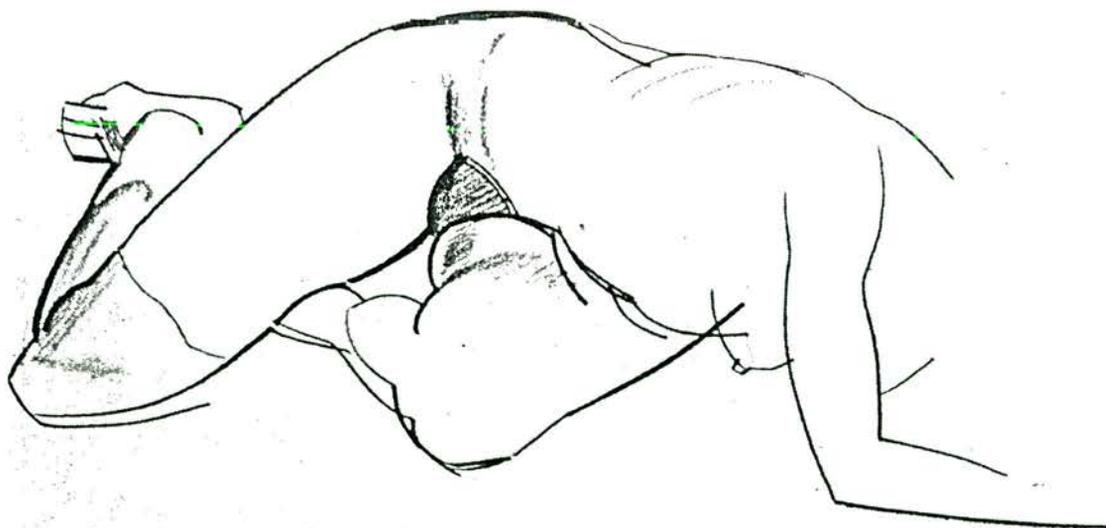


Fig.86.

W.Lewis.

Reclining Nude.M.374. Black
chalk. 23x32.5cm. Walter.Michel.
1919-1920.

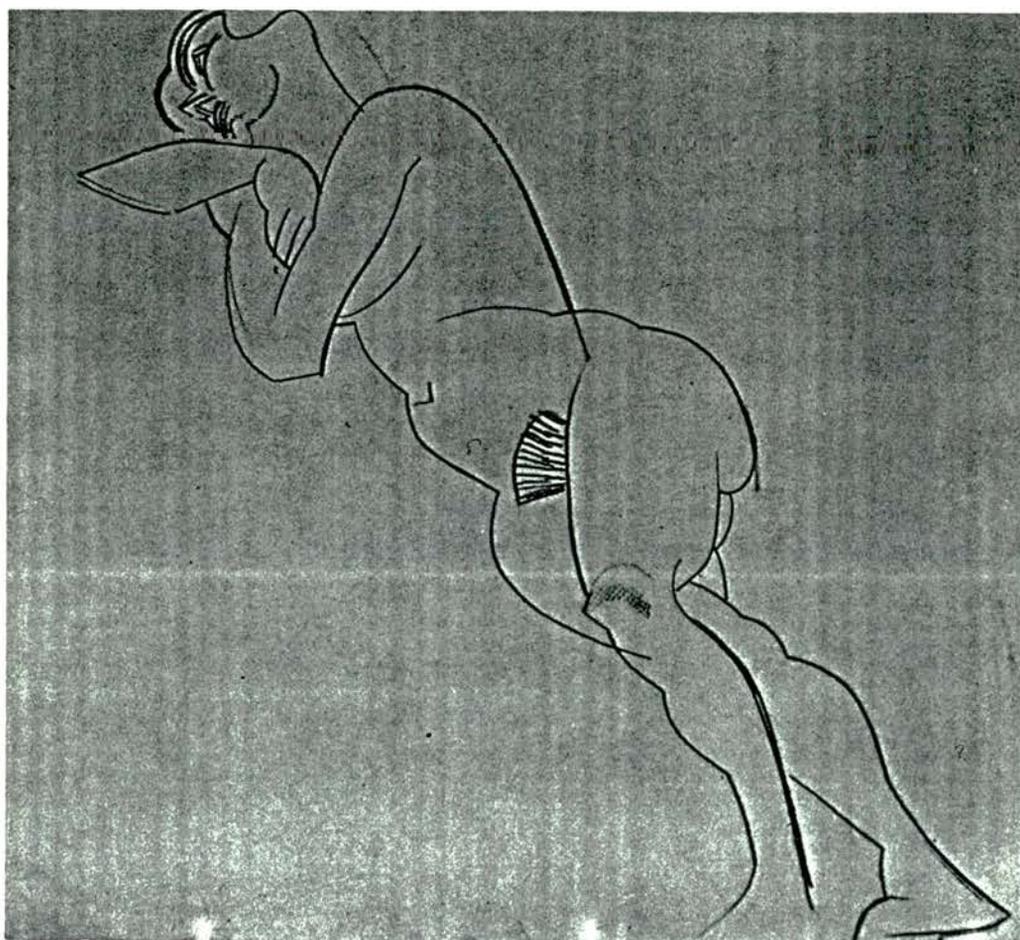


Fig.87.

W.Lewis.

Nude.M.375.Black Chalk. 38x43cm.
Andrew Dickson White Museum of
Art. Cornell University.1919-1920.



Fig.88.

W.Lewis.

Seated Nude. M.380. Pencil wash.
38x49cm. 1919-1920.



Fig.89.

W.Lewis.

Seated Nude. M379. Black
chalk. 34.5x39.5cm. Mrs.Vernon van
Sickle.1919-1920.



Fig.90.

W.Lewis.

Reading .M.350.Pencil watercolour,
red chalk. 51x35.5cm. Manchester
City Art Galleries.1919.



A Woman Student

By Wyndham Lewis

Fig.91.

W.Lewis.

A Women Student.M.360.Chalk and
Pencil. Appears in Art and
Letters. Winter 1920.



Wyndham Lewis.

Woman with a Cat.

Fig.92.

W.Lewis.

Women with a Cat M.361. Appears in
Art and Letters.Spring 1920,p.7
1919.

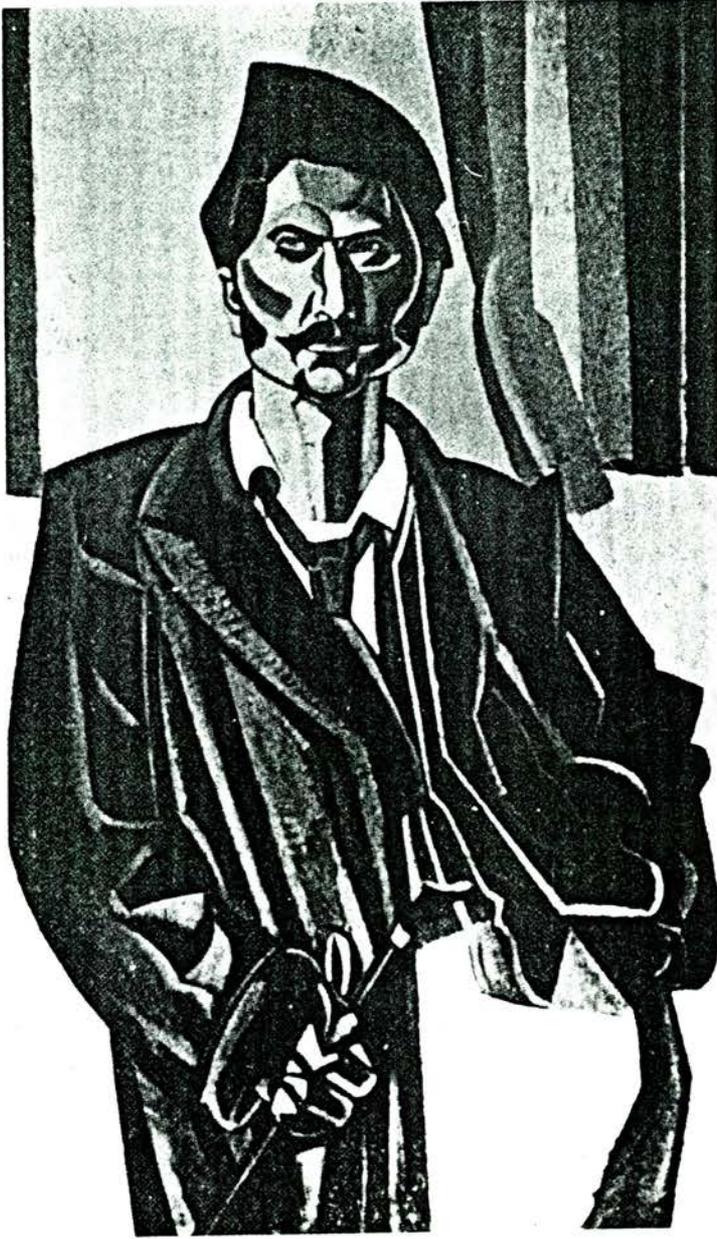


Fig.93.

W.Lewis.

Portrait of Ezra Pound, M.26. oil on
canvas. over life size. lost.
Appeared in Goupil Salon 1919.



Fig.94.

W.Lewis.

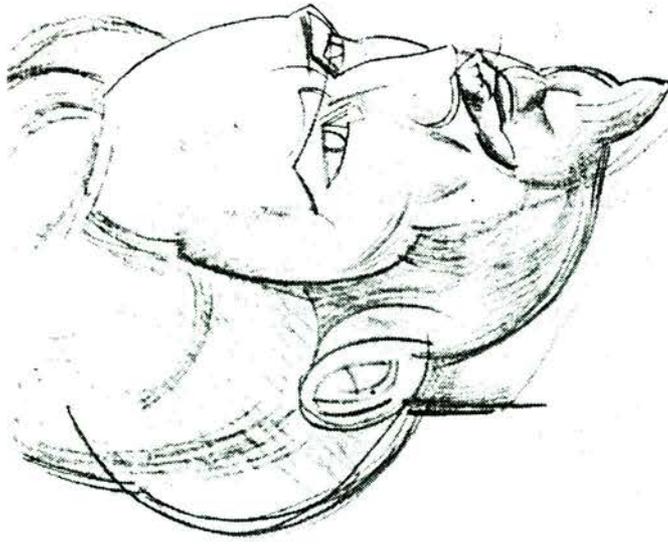
Portrait of Ezra Pound, M.412.
"Inscribed at a later date, Wyndham
Lewis 1920." Michel.



Fig.95.

W.Lewis.

Ezra Pound. M.414. Black chalk.
31x33cm. Owned by Omar Pound.1920.



Wynneham Lewis.

(Head of Ezra Pound).

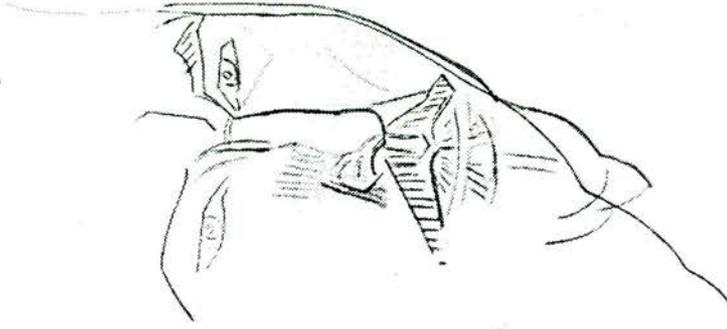
Fig. 96.

W. Lewis.

Head of Ezra Pound. M. 411. 1920.

Fig. 97.

W. Lewis.



Wynneham Lewis.

Ezra Pound. M. 349. Pencil and wash. 29x26.5cm. Estate of Agnes Bedford. "Inscribed W.L. and at a later date, "of Ezra Pound 1914. "Michel. 1919.