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D.S. Tulyakov

«THE ATTEMPT AT OBJECTIVITY»: MODERNISM IN WYNDHAM LEWIS'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY

The article considers Wyndham Lewis's autobiography Blasting and Bombardiering *(1937) as an instrument for reassessing modernism and representing it to the wider readership of popular literature. Lewis's employment of autobiography to conceptualise modernism and position himself within/towards it is a step away from his criticism where modern subjectivity, historical approach to the self, and fictionalisation of autobiography are repudiated. Such change was motivated not only by Lewis's intention to make money on the audience's taste for autobiographies and at the same time raise his profile in the recent literary history. The choice of genre also reflects Lewis's post-war disillusionment with transformative yet detached modernism, with whose aesthetic standards the writer, nevertheless, wanted to maintain association. In this context, the populist intent of the autobiography can be seen as a means of rethinking the failed modernist attempt at objectivity. With the help of the form of autobiography, Lewis playfully subjects to detachment modernism itself, undermining the assumptions of its commitment to difficulty, elitism, and autonomy and highlighting the related tensions within his own aesthetics.*
Keywords: autobiography, modernism, Wyndham Lewis, popular literature, subjectivity.

1. Introduction

Modernist fiction stands in an ambiguous relationship to autobiography. One of the most prominent features of autobiography is its ability to account for the "inward realm of experience" of its author [1. P. 823], and the overall value and specificity of the genre are intrinsically connected with this "'insider' quality" [2. P. 5]. On the one hand, an emphasis on the inwardness of the experience is a key characteristic of modernist literature, or at least of some its best-known novels. Much of modernist fiction is considered in terms of the "inward turn" towards subjectivity and exploration of mental processes [3. P. 118–122]. On the other hand, the fact that the inward experience narrated in autobiography belongs to its author, who is, in this case, identical to the narrator and the protagonist [4. P. 5], means that the distance between a literary work and its creator is minimised. This distance, however, is no less a crucial feature of modernist literature than its supposed "inward turn" as one of the strongest associations of modernism is with artifice and aesthetic self-consciousness [5. P. 25]. Therefore, even when dealing with the "inward realm of experience," modernists are expected to value sophisticated and oblique artistic forms rather than straightforward "autobiographical" narration about their own personal experience and emotions.

T.S. Eliot characteristically claims that "the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates" [6. P. 21]. Emphasis on such separation does not define modernism in general but rather distinguishes the variety of modernism "based on highly antisubjectivist or impersonal poetics" [7. P. 27]. If what is common to the modernism of Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, Wyndham Lewis, and Joyce (or, in Lewis's famous coinage,

"the Men of 1914") is their refusal to inquire into the self's inner realm [8. P. 251], then it is hardly obvious why they had anything to do with autobiography, where such inquiry is natural and inevitable. The fact that Lewis was the only modernist of this group who not only disputed the extremities of subjectivism but also wrote autobiographies makes his place within this canon unique and requires explanation.

As a rule, a modernist engagement with autobiography is conceptualised in terms of literary experiment and movement away from the conventions of the genre. Max Saunders has recently argued for the great significance of autobiography in modernist and modern literature, claiming that "modern English literary history is shaped by its conflicting responses to life-writing" [9. P. 10]. His analysis of a broad range of authors including Marcel Proust, James Joyce, Gertrude Stein, and Ezra Pound shows that modernists criticised, reinvented, and played with autobiography in their fiction [Ibid. P. 293]. This is also true, perhaps, to a slightly lesser extent, with respect to modernist autobiography, which is generally taken to contest the received generic conventions and oppose the traditional narrative of the self's development and fulfilment. Maria DiBattista and Emily O. Wittman observe that modernist autobiographies often focus on short periods of time instead of addressing the author's life up to the point of writing, choose seemingly insignificant episodes for the narration, interfere with the sequence of events and chronology, disfigure the story by omissions and divagations, and "colonize" unfamiliar formats, such as travel writing and promotional materials [10]. Overall, modernists are expected to transform some received standard of autobiography into a characteristically unusual and challenging work by rethinking the concepts of the self and the personality, experimenting with style, narration, and genre of their life-writing.[1]

However, privileging the most daring and original modernist life-writing does not account for autobiographies which, being written by a modernist artist and concerning modernism thematically, are less experimental or do not put formal innovation on display. This is the case with the first of Wyndham Lewis's autobiographies, *Blasting and Bombardiering: Autobiography (1914–1926)* (1937), a book where the author examines his experience as a soldier and an artist in the years from 1914 to 1926[2]. Although habitually quoted in the histories of English modernism and the studies of Lewis's painting and writing, *Blasting and Bombardiering* has been seldom discussed in detail, perhaps, because of the very turn from the high modernist artistic experimentation to a more popular mode of expression it represents. Modernism and popular culture, however, were never mutually exclu-

[1] For instance, William Butler Yeats's writings collected in volume *Autobiographies* (1955) represent the condition of "modernist fragmentation and alienation" of the individual [11. P. 76]; Gertrude Stein's *Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (1933) effects a "major shift to modernist autobiography by eschewing the romantic conception of the autobiographical subject … to construct herself as a modernist work of art" [12. P. 177]; and H.D.'s memoir *Tribute to Freud* (1956) "refuses smoothness and linearity in favor of formal experimentation such as repetition, correction, juxtaposition, and an apparent randomness" [13. P. 254].

[2] Before *Blasting and Bombardiering,* Lewis published an untitled short piece about his early years as a writer in a collection of autobiographical essays by different authors, *Beginnings* (1935). In 1947 Lewis finished his second full-length autobiography, *Rude Assignment: A Narrative of my Career Up-to-Date* (1950).

sive and absorbed, influenced, and mediated each other in a variety of ways [14. P. 744]. In fact, Lewis's autobiography, which was addressed to a wide audience, appeared in the context of several "modernist memoirs" of the late 1920s and 1930s which sought to provoke a wider readership's interest in modernism by making the authors who insisted on impersonality and detachment look more personal and familiar [15. P. 37–38]. What makes Lewis's case special is that for him autobiography was not a forced concession to the mass literature of the day but rather a logical step in the development of his modernism.

As a rule, the critics of *Blasting and Bombardiering* focus on the selectivity and bias in Lewis's account of his past [16. P. 92; 17. P. 232], which are explained by his intention to attract the "ordinary" readers and to convince them that he is a no less important figure in the literary history than such better known modern writers as Pound, Joyce, or Eliot [18. P. 38–40; 19. P. 201–202]. However, Lewis's autobiography is more than a belated attempt at self-promotion and historical revision. It can also be interpreted as a satire on the history of modernism, which Lewis depicts as a movement so utopian and short-lived that, unable to make a real impact, it can only exist as a historical attraction [18. P. 74–76]. Drawing on Rosenquist's recognition of the satirical dimension in *Blasting and Bombardiering*, I argue that this autobiography is uniquely modernist because in it Lewis simultaneously elaborates his understanding of what the authentic modernism was supposed to be and challenges the viability of this conception under the present conditions. The genre of popularly written autobiography allows Lewis not only to promote himself and his account of modernism but also to achieve proper detachment from this movement. Thus, when reassessing modernism, Lewis both remains true to the key principle of detachment, which he locates in the writing of "the Men of 1914," and undermines it catering for the audience and pursuing his pragmatic goals.

The following section starts by considering Lewis's reflections on the problems concerning the modern self, subjectivity, and autobiography, all of which raise the question why Lewis decided to write a book of this genre. It is then argued that Lewis's relationship to his readership underwent a gradual change, which effected a shift from criticism to an autobiography whose pragmatic focus is in stark contrast with the principles expressed in this criticism. It is further suggested that Lewis, nevertheless, struggles to maintain continuity between the idea of modernism in his critical writings and his autobiography, which is why it is possible to interpret the latter as an important next stage in his evaluation of modernism, not just a book of self-promotion hastily written for the market. In sum, *Blasting and Bombardiering* is productively conflicted in that it produces a stereoscopic objectified assessment of modernism, allowing Lewis to locate himself both within and outside it.

2. Subjectivity and Autobiography in Lewis's Criticism

Much of Lewis's criticism published in the late 1920s and early 1930s is devoted to the problems concerning the modern self and its "peculiar condition of 'subjectivity'" [20. P. 103]. Although Lewis does not often associate his repudiation of the modern type of subjectivity with autobiography, his criticism implies a partial devaluation of the autobiographica *226*as well. As a rule, Lewis mentions

autobiography in a negative context, as a manifestation of the deluded modern subjectivity and not as a valuable means of individual expression.

According to Lewis, the modern subject has recently undergone a major crisis: surrounded by the uniformity of the modern industrial, political, and cultural phenomena, people are no longer capable of holding stable and independent beliefs. The modern self is deprived of a viable public sphere and, therefore, restricted to its own mental world, which makes it not only limited but also highly suggestible and fundamentally inauthentic. To be a person under the conditions of modernity means to be a superficial product of the democratic promotion of individuality, which in fact is constantly being robbed of any freedom by stultifying industrialisation, deceptively impartial progress, ubiquitous advertisement, and run-of-the mill production of mass culture and the media. The subjectivity peculiar to this condition is bound up with the inability to think outside the dominating system of thought, which makes a personal opinion the opposite of a truly personal expression. As a consequence of the industrial unification and the mass model of subjectivity imposed by it, "personal expression is recognized only on condition that it is agreed not to be the expression of a person, and that there is no person, in short, there at all" [21. P. 120].

Although Lewis is not in principle against personal or subjective expression, his criticism suggests that modernity leaves almost no place for an individual capable of such an expression. The possible exception is the artist, whose standpoint Lewis adopts to criticise modernity. The artist's subjectivity, however, is inseparable from impersonality [Ibid. P. 174] and, as Lewis at length explains in his essay "'Detachment' and the Fictionist," is channelled into art [Ibid. P. 227–230], not autobiography.

Lewis not only denounces the inauthentic subjectivity and the modernity it is contingent upon but also sketches a model of the self which is unaffected by the latter's adversary influence and can act with more independence. The self which can resist the suppressive impact of modernity and make its own use of it is a prerequisite of an artistic, or any profoundly creative, intelligence. Moreover, the self is of great significance not only to the artists but to everyone–to 'us'–because it is "our only terra firma in the boiling and shifting world," which "must cohere for us to be capable at all of behaving in any way but as mirror-images of alien realities" [22. P. 132]. Other than coherence, the ideal self is characterised by "consciousness and responsibility" [21. P. 130], reliance on intellect [20. P. 78–80], and a degree of individualism, which designates not "an individualist abortion, bellowing that it wants at all costs to 'express' itself", but "a constancy and consistency in being, as concretely as possible, one thing—at peace with itself, if not with the outer world" [23. P. 62]. Summarising Lewis's positive account of the self, Andrzej Gąsiorek describes it as "structural and trans-historical", with an emphasis on "organisation, order, and stability" [24. P. 5–6]. The modern artist, then, is responsible for producing art which corresponds to this conception of a consistent and detached self.

Lewis did not expect autobiography to embody this vision of the self. On the contrary, when he set out to criticise the destructive tendencies in modern art and thought, subsuming them under one heading as manifestations of relativistic, dependent on fashion, passively receptive, artistically impotent, and subjectivist "Time-mind," he denigrated autobiography by saying that, along with history and

biography, it is "more truly than anything else, the proper expression of … *chronological* philosophy" [22. P. XVIII]. Later on, Lewis makes his point about the connection between "Time-philosophy" and autobiography clearer in his discussion Proust. Lewis maintains that autobiography is similar to history, which is always selective, never impartial, and always ideological, because it is also "an account of the Past, seen through a temperament of certain complexion, and intended to influence its generation in this sense or in that" [Ibid. P. 247]. Moreover, the trouble with history, exacerbated by its scientific prestige, is that it can be easily presented and perceived as unconditional truth and thus can be used as an instrument of ideological manipulation akin to advertising. The same applies to autobiography, "the history of a person written by himself," which is, essentially, merely "propaganda for all that the 'time'-hero has favoured" [Ibid. P. 248]. In Proust's novels, which Lewis considers his autobiographies, the author turned himself "into a historical personage" [22. P. 249]. What is wrong with such artistic method is that, according to Lewis, by valorising the subjectivity of the author's past experience, the resulting work both misleads the reader and misrepresents its subject. Above all, Lewis declares Proust's novel invalid as a work of art because its obsession with the past precludes creativity and removes it from the concerns of the present, making it hardly valuable for anyone but its author in his "private mental cave" [20. P. 103].

Lewis believed that if art was to offer a more penetrating and critical insight into the human self, it had to differ in method from autobiography. If the self is taken to be a solid, consistent and organised unity, then art, "a constant stronghold … of the purest human consciousness" [Ibid. P. 23], can do justice to it better than a first-person historical account. This does not mean that autobiography is worthless, but, in Lewis's view, such attempts as Proust's to turn it into art (a novel) are destined to fail. For this reason, Lewis criticises Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), claiming that because its author is "fundamentally autobiographical … scrupulously and naturalistically so," his accurate representation of his childhood and youth "is not promising material" [Ibid. P. 98]. Unlike Proust's, Joyce's "autobiographical" book is not accused of being propaganda of the subjectivist viewpoint. This time Lewis criticises the autobiographical element of the novel for stimulating what he sees as passively copyist attitude in Joyce's writing.

It bears repeating that Lewis's rejection of autobiography is far from wholesale. In fact, it concerns not autobiography as a genre, but mostly the uncritical and inartistic use of a romanticised history of the author's life in a work of fiction. In a similar vein, when Lewis opposes "*chronological* philosophy," he wishes not to entirely cross out the history of the humanity, but to endorse a rational account of it where past is not merged with present, remaining "a Past in which events and people stand in an imaginative perspective, a *dead* people we do not interfere with, but whose integrity we respect" [Ibid. P. 223].

Surprisingly, Lewis begins *Blasting and Bombardiering* not by reiterating this carefully maintained difference between autobiography and art but, on the contrary, by claiming that any autobiography is inescapably "a kind of novel" and that he is merely the "hero" of his [25. P. 1]. Thereby, from the outset of Lewis takes an approach which, according to his own criteria, is most likely to result in an inaccurate and deceptive picture of his personality and past, not unlike the one exempli-

fied in Proust's fiction. Even if the autobiography did not misrepresent its author, as, according to Lewis, Joyce's book does not, it would only be an inferior novel hardly worth the artist's effort.

Thus, *Blasting and Bombardiering* is written against some of its author's ideas concerning the self and modern art as its most productive form of expression. Lewis seems to write an autobiography despite his conviction that it is likely to be just bad art; that excessive attention to one's subjectivity deforms the self instead of reinforcing its essential integrity; that writing a history, including the history of one's self, is an ideological act.

This contradiction can be explained if we consider *Blasting and Bombardiering* not as something created for aesthetic appreciation but as an instrument of promotion of its author and his conception of modernism. In this case, the autobiography's shortcomings as a novel, which Lewis was ready to admit,[1] turn into the features that provide its author with the opportunities to create publicity for himself and at the same time address the intricacies of literary modernism.

3."Becoming a 'Popular' Author"

It is accepted that Lewis's principal intention in *Blasting and Bombardiering* was to give an account of modern art and literature in 1914–1926 that would emphasise his significance within it. Critics agree that the autobiography was a reaction to the neglect Lewis faced after the war, lagging behind the better-known modernist writers like Joyce or Eliot [18, 19, 27]. To correct this underestimation, Lewis turns his autobiography from a book of gossip stories and reminiscences about his famous contemporaries [28] into a "project of retrospective reconstruction" [19. P. 202] aimed at recovering his pre-war artistic reputation and revisiting, alongside his personal experience, the history of modernist literature. This project involved many difficulties because Lewis wanted to restore some of his faded avant-garde fame while at the same time conveying his disillusionment with pre-war attempts at truly transformative revolutionary art and to occupy an honourable place alongside Pound, Eliot, and Joyce in the literary history while retaining the position of an independent artist and critic of modernism outside the fashionable mainstream. However, what is remarkable is not only the trouble Lewis took to make his uneasy case [18. P. 39–40], but also his turn from intellectually demanding criticism to autobiography, which, as the foregoing analysis suggests, contradicts the stance Lewis had earlier taken towards subjectivity, art, and autobiography. The following section traces the process which eventually led Lewis to addressing the unsophisticated readership of autobiographies.

In *Blasting and Bombardiering*, Lewis famously notes: "It is somewhat depressing to consider how as an artist one is always holding the mirror up to politics without knowing it" [25. P. 4]. It is a perfect expression of Lewis's profound disenchantment with the modernist art after the First World War. Incapable of enacting radical social and cultural change, which was the ultimate objective of Lewis's pre-war avant-garde movement Vorticism and on which he insisted harder than

[1] In a letter to Julian Symons, Lewis wrote: "Very naturally, a page of a novel, such as *The Revenge for Love*, takes me as long to write as twenty pages of *Blasting and Bombardiering*—except where the latter demands more formal attention" [26. P. 247].

ever in the post-war pamphlet *Caliph's Design* (1919), art is defined here as a mere reflection of what it is unable to alter. By this Lewis did not mean that art should be abandoned altogether, only that this limitation has to be recognised and considered if modernism was to retain anything of the revolutionary drive which had brought it to life. This is why in the late 1920s and early 1930s Lewis works out "'critical' modernism," accusing the advanced contemporary authors of practicing art "that simply offered 'new styles', or that, pretending to rebel against the conformism of the bourgeois society, was actually saturated with regressive and imitative ideology" [29. P. 126–127].

Lewis repeated that his criticism was written not for the highbrow public, but for "the general educated man or woman" (Lewis 1993: xi). His aim was to propose a system which would allow them "to read any work of art presented to them, and, resisting the skilful blandishments of the fictionist … understand the ideologic or philosophical basis of these confusing entertainments" [20. P. 109]. By the time Lewis was working on his autobiography, however, he became sceptical about the possibility of such enlightenment. He acknowledged that his criticism "treated of topics which only a handful of people in England know or care anything about" and noted: "I might as well have been talking to myself all that time" [25. P. 5].

It is more likely that by "all that time" Lewis means his period of increased philosophical and critical activity in the late 1920s and early 1930s rather than all his career up to the moment of writing. Still, if we consider this early avant-garde phase as well, the dynamics of Lewis's relationships with his readership may be roughly sketched as follows. In the Vorticist journal *BLAST* (1914–1915) Lewis proclaimed that the modern art he was bringing to England "will not appeal to any particular class, but to the fundamental and popular instincts in every class and description of people" and this way will "make individuals, wherever found" [30. P. 25]. Vorticism was not an art to be appreciated by an already existing audience; it was supposed to elevate the most promising people from the audience by transforming them into the only state that makes such appreciation possible—into individuals. Lewis expected his later criticism to fulfil a task similar to the function he had earlier ascribed to art (although it is important to remember that *BLAST* was a "review" which contained criticism as well as art and fiction). For instance, in the introduction to *The Art of Being Ruled* (1926) Lewis states that this book "is not written for an audience already there, prepared to receive it, and whose minds it will fit like a glove" and, therefore, it "must of necessity create its own audience" [31. P. 13]. *Blasting and Bombardiering*, then, marks Lewis's refusal to attempt to transform his readership into a critically informed audience of independently thinking individuals by means of political, philosophical, and literary criticism. Lewis declares that in his autobiography he leaves his sophistication aside in order to convey his first-hand experience: "Life is what I have gone out to get in this book" [25. P. 4].

Indeed, *Blasting and Bombardiering* is not a manual for exposing the workings of ideology, although the story Lewis tells is partially about its pervasiveness, as the remark about art mirroring the politics shows. Instead, by "becoming a 'popular' author" [Ibid. P. 5], an autobiographer, Lewis wanted to talk to the audience in such a way that they would finally listen. His objective was to make sense of modernism and of his involvement with it and to communicate this sense to the com-

mon reader. This aim required a reversal of his previous critical approach because this time Lewis did not need to arm his readers against unwilling acceptance of received judgements. On the contrary, he made a great effort to persuade the readers of his autobiography that his understanding of modernism is informed, accurate, and should be trusted unconditionally. Lewis promises to "fix for an alien posterity some of the main features of this movement. No one is better fitted to do so … I was at its heart. In some cases I was *it*" [25. P. 257]. Thus, Lewis presents his subjectivity not as a handicap, but as a guarantee of trustworthiness of his account of modernism. The reader is supposed to take Lewis's word for it, not recognise its historicism, which he criticises elsewhere for being propaganda.

4. Detachment and the Autobiographer

Curiously, while claiming to be as close to modernism as possible and using this claim to assume narrative authority, Lewis insists that his autobiography is based on the principles of detachment and order, which are foundational in his conception of the organised and independent self and in his idea of modernist art. In the introduction, Lewis explains that he is focusing on the war and the post-war periods because they are over and "can be written about with detachment, as things past and done with" [Ibid. P. 2]. One of the purposes of the book, then, is to "get away from war," writing about which autobiographically "may be the best way to shake the accursed thing off, by putting it in its place, as an unseemly joke" [25. P. 4]. For Lewis, the war is "a magnet" and the post-war is its "magnetic field" [25. P. 307], which should be neutralized with the help of proper "inspection" and "*revision*" and "a principle of order" [Ibid. P. 6]. Likewise, the modernism of Pound Joyce, Eliot, and Lewis–according to the latter, the most significant writers of their generation–is claimed to stem from detachment: "What I think history will say about the 'Men of 1914' is that they represent an attempt to get away from romantic art back into classical art, away from political propaganda back into the detachment of true literature" [Ibid. P. 252]. Thus, Lewis equates the artistic efforts of the modernists with his own intentions in *Blasting and Bombardiering*, representing both his autobiography and the modernist art as attempts to achieve detachment from the politics and the world of thoughtless "*action*" [25. P. 266].

Lewis also points out that the principles which underlie his autobiography are in line with his specific modernist strategies. For instance, Lewis's statement that he is "a fanatic for the externality of things" [25. P. 9] alludes to the theory of satire and the "*external* approach" [23. P. 103], which he discussed in *Men without Art* (1934). Also referring to his criticism, in the last chapter Lewis reminds the readers about his hostility to "time-philosophy" and apologises for his "inveterate obtuseness where all that is historic and chronological is concerned. It is because I cannot see things as *biography*" [25. P. 272]. This statement contradicts Lewis's earlier definition of his autobiography as "self-history" [Ibid. P. 7] or "private history" [Ibid.. P. 19] and is hardly justified by the autobiography itself, in which the author is obsessed with separating "his own career and 'epoch' … into periods" [18. P. 40]. Nevertheless, these remarks show that Lewis made a great effort to foster a continuity between the autobiography and the modernism that preceded it.

This asserted continuity, however, is maintained in a peculiar way. Deborah Parsons, observing that in *Blasting and Bombardiering* Lewis attempts to create

"an at least *formally* 'impersonal' autobiography, in which the past is presented less through subjective 'reminiscences' than the relation of externally focused scenes and conversations," is quick to add the book is "in actual fact anything but impersonal" [19. P. 201]. Indeed, in the beginning of his autobiography, Lewis establishes a conversational narrative tone, asks the reader to permit him "a certain informality" [25. P. 8], and performs accordingly throughout most of the book. The function of this informality, however, is not so much to diminish the distance between the author and the reader as it is to defamiliarise the experience presented in the autobiography. It has been suggested that Lewis approaches his war memories "from a detached and ironic point of view" [32. P. 76] and that carelessness and occasional sarcasm of Lewis's recollections may, in fact, mask a trauma [33. P. 20; 34. P. 50–52][1]. Lewis was able to establish ironic distance from his expired avant-garde personas, including the "leader of the 'Great London Vortex'" [25. P. 35–40], the society "lion" [Ibid. P. 50–53], and "the 'author of *Tarr*'" [Ibid. P. 89–95], by employing a tone of familiarity very different from the high modernist impersonal tone one might expect.

The strategy of self-distancing, however, suggests that the aim of *Blasting and Bombardiering* is not only to create another public persona for its author while expressing a profound disillusionment with artistic avant-gardism and scepticism about ideology critique. The genre of autobiography also allows Lewis to assess modernist art from an outside, non-highbrow and unambitious point of view. More specifically, Lewis uses his book to simultaneously make a key claim about modernism and illustrate it. The claim is that after the war "artistic expression has slipped back into political propaganda and romance," making first-rate modernist art no longer possible [Ibid. P. 252]. *Blasting and Bombardiering*, an artist's autobiography, is a demonstration of this impossibility: "The attempt at objectivity has failed. The subjectivity of the majority is back again" [Ibidem].

Even though Lewis insists that truly modernist art, which would appeal to the public and transform the society while remaining sufficiently detached from its dominant ideology, was a utopia, his employment of the autobiographical implies that *Blasting and Bombardiering* is itself somewhat modernist. If it is impossible to get "away from political propaganda back into the detachment of true literature," as "the Men of 1914" were struggling to do, then what should be objectified and evaluated with detachment is this failed modernist project itself. Lewis's autobiography serves exactly this purpose as it avoids both the elitist complexity of some of Lewis's critical works and the highbrow idiosyncratic style of his fiction. The autobiography, thus, communicates Lewis's critical vision of modernism to the general readership in 'their' genre, both emphasising this movement's unfulfilled significance and revealing its limitations.

[1] In his memories of war Lewis cultivates an image of himself as an emotionally uninvolved observer who "experienced none of the conscience-prikings and soul-searchings, none of the subtle anguish" of the other writers about the war [25. P. 8] and instead "filled the notebook with Stendhalian observations" [25. P. 53] and read Proudhon in the trenches [Ibid. P. 152]. It does not mean, though, that Lewis did not recognize the human tragedy of what happened, even if at first it had not been obvious to him [Ibid. P. 63].

5. Conclusion

Blasting and Bombardiering is a peculiar instance of modernist autobiography where most features typically defined as modernist are absent. This autobiography is not an "assault on traditional notions of what a self, indeed what life, is" [10. P. XII] because Lewis believed that such an assault, which he also recognised in the writing of his modernist peers, is harmful to the self and should be resisted. Nevertheless, the most remarkable feature of Lewis's autobiography–its unexpected adjustment to the readership of mass literature–does not follow from the elaborate critique Lewis proposed in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Neither Lewis's conception of the consistent, detached, and independent self nor his conviction that a valid modernism must be an objective artistic expression opposed to propaganda and capable of advancing actual social change can help to explain his sudden turn to autobiography.

One way to look at the unsophistication of *Blasting and Bombardiering* is to interpret it as a gesture against the experimentalism of the modernisms which, unlike his own, managed to gain popularity and appreciation. On the pragmatic level, Lewis may have written his autobiography to foreground his role as one of the modernism's originators and to earn more money by attracting an audience wider than the readership of his criticism and fiction. It may help to explain why Lewis decided to write a biased history of himself despite the fact that in his own estimation it would only amount to a second-rate novel exhibiting all the weaknesses of the "chronological philosophy." At the same time, Lewis's intention was also to conceptualise and soberly reassess modernism, which was nipped in the bud by the First World War and therefore had not been able to fulfil its objective to forge an aesthetics of detachment and independence. In this context, Lewis's choice of the genre may be considered as a self-reflexive commentary about the unattainability of these highbrow modernist aspirations and the necessity of a more direct address to a less sophisticated reader.

The concept of detachment, which binds together Lewis's conception of the self and of modernist art, is also crucial in his autobiography. Lewis invites his readers to see modernism as a thing "past and over" [25. P. 2] and this way re-enacts the modernist principle of detachment in an unusual context. Setting aside aesthetic innovation and nuanced ideology critique in order to write an autobiography, Lewis manages to achieve the ultimate detachment from modernism and occupy a position on its very edge. In *Blasting and Bombardiering*, Lewis at the same time moves away from the modernist practice and continues it by other means, criticises it for its futility and popularises its principles, proves it dead and brings it to life.

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«ПОПЫТКА БЫТЬ ОБЪЕКТИВНЫМ»: МОДЕРНИЗМ В АВТОБИОГРАФИИ УИНДЕМА ЛЬЮИСА.

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Дмитрий С. Туляков. Департамента иностранных языков Национального исследовательского университета «Высшая школа экономики» (г. Пермь). E-mail: dstuliakov@hse.ru
Ключевые слова: автобиография, модернизм, Уиндем Льюис, популярная литература, субъективность.

В представленной статье автобиография У. Льюиса «Подрывник и бомбардир» (1937) рассматривается как инструмент переоценки модернизма и его репрезентации для широкой аудитории читателей популярной литературы. То, что Льюис прибегает к жанру автобиографии, чтобы концептуализировать модернизм и занять позицию извне/изнутри него, свидетельствует об отходе автора от критики современного типа субъективности, исторического подхода к индивидуальности и фикционализации автобиографии в других его работах. Эта перемена вызвана не только стремлением Льюиса заработать на популярности автобиографий и укрепить свое положение в истории современной литературы. Выбор, сделанный Льюисом в пользу автобиографии, отражает также его разочарование в идее революционного и в то же время беспристрастного модернизма, с высокими эстетическими стандартами которого автор тем не менее хотел сохранить взаимосвязь. В этом контексте установка автобиографии Льюиса на популяризацию может рассматриваться как переосмысление неудавшейся попытки модернистов достичь в своем творчестве эстетической объективности. При помощи автобиографии Льюис дает модернизму оценку со стороны, переворачивая модернистские установки на усложненность, элитарность и автономность и указывая на соответствующие противоречия в собственной эстетике.

В разделе «Субъективность и автобиография в критике Льюиса» на основе анализа рефлексии автора о субъективности (которая в условиях современности становится все более типизированной и проблематичной) и автобиографии (идеологизированной репрезентации «я», противоположной искусству) делается вывод, что обращение автора к этому жанру в определенной степени противоречит его собственным критическим установкам. В разделе «Превращаясь в "популярного" автора» рассматривается процесс постепенного изменения отношения Льюиса к его читательской аудитории, в результате которого автор переходит от критического письма к автобиографии, чьи прагматические установки резко контрастируют с некоторыми принципами, изложенными в более ранних работах Льюиса. В разделе «Беспристрастность и автобиограф» показано, что Льюис тем не менее прилагает значительные усилия для того, чтобы выстроить взаимосвязь между своей критикой и автобиографией, что дает основания рассматривать «Подрывника и бомбардира» не только как книгу, наскоро написанную для удовлетворения читательского спроса на автобиографии, но и как серьезное концептуальное переосмысление модернизма.