

<b>Institution: Bath Spa University</b>
<b>Unit of assessment: UoA29: English Language and Literature</b>
<b>Title of case study</b> 'Wyndham Lewis Portraits' (National Portrait Gallery) and 'Wyndham Lewis 1882-1957' (Juan March Foundation, Madrid)
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>This study addresses the impact of Professor Paul Edwards's research into the painting and, to a lesser extent, the writing, of Wyndham Lewis (1882-1957), the British painter, novelist and polemicist, through two major exhibitions of Lewis's artwork. Large attendances and press coverage of these exhibitions indicate a significant change in understanding and increase in knowledge of Lewis's work as a result. Edwards's impact is an excellent example of the strategy of engagement with the heritage industries that is important in the overall research strategies of English Literature and Creative writing.</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>For more than twenty years, Paul Edwards has been researching the work of Wyndham Lewis, a major figure in British artistic and literary life in the first half of the twentieth century. This culminated in 2000 in the publication of the first monograph - <i>Wyndham Lewis: Painter and Writer</i> - dedicated to all aspects of his work. In a review of this book in the <i>Guardian</i>, Edwards was described as 'probably the world's leading Lewis scholar'. The nature of the research was interpretive, and it involved reading all of Lewis's published work, viewing as many of his paintings as possible, and archive work in three major research collections in the US (Cornell, Buffalo and Texas).</p> <p>Edwards's monograph had a transformative effect on Wyndham Lewis studies, as the first to cover all aspects of Lewis's dauntingly multifarious activities as a painter, novelist, critic and polemicist, and to relate them to each other in a coherent critical narrative. The research illuminated a consistent metaphysical concern in Lewis's work, and identified its continuing critique of the recurrence within modernism and modernity of the Romantic desire for transcendence. Where the research has been most influential, however, is its sheer thoroughness in demonstrating that close critical attention to Lewis's oeuvre reveals a creator at least as complex as his literary peers – and one more closely attuned to the culture of modernity than most of them. The result has been a burgeoning of specialist studies into particular aspects of his work and an increased interest in making the work accessible to the public (as in the exhibitions described below).</p> <p>Over the period, public knowledge about, and interest in, Wyndham Lewis's work has been transformed, and this is certainly at least partly because of Edwards's many research publications and other activities in Lewis studies, the field in which he is the leading authority worldwide. In the last decade Edwards has been responsible for an upsurge of interest – both in academia and among the wider public – in this remarkable and controversial figure.</p> <p>Edwards joined Bath Spa in September 1993 as a research fellow and was appointed to the permanent post of lecturer the following year. He was awarded the title Professor of English and History of Art in 2001 for his work on Wyndham Lewis (referees Professor Hugh Kenner, Professor Lisa Tickner and Professor Peter Nicholls). Edwards retired in February 2013 and was made Emeritus Professor later that year.</p> <p>Edwards's research at Bath Spa continues to have impact: the Modern Art Press have commissioned him to produce a <i>catalogue raisonné</i> of Lewis's visual work, and OUP have asked him to submit a prospectus (as potential General Editor) for a critical edition of his writing in over forty volumes. The recent appointments of Wright and Binckes demonstrate the department's continuing commitment to research in the field of twentieth-century Modernism, and to the public dissemination of that research.</p>

### 3. References to the research

- 1) Monograph **Paul Edwards, *Wyndham Lewis: Painter and Writer*. 2000.** In *The Observer* George Steiner hailed this book as 'an awesome monograph', while David Trotter in the *London Review of Books* labeled it 'the standard point of reference in debates about the overall shape and status of Lewis's work'.
- 2) Exhibition **Paul Edwards and Richard Humphreys, curators. 'Wyndham Lewis Portraits' (July to December 2008), National Portrait Gallery, London.**  
 Exhibition website: [www.npg.org.uk/wyndhamlewis](http://www.npg.org.uk/wyndhamlewis) and video: [www.podcast.tv/video-episodes/wyndham-lewis-at-national-portrait-gallery-3593025.html](http://www.podcast.tv/video-episodes/wyndham-lewis-at-national-portrait-gallery-3593025.html)
- 3) Exhibition catalogue **Paul Edwards, with Richard Humphreys, *Wyndham Lewis Portraits* (London: NPG, 2008). ISBN 9781855143951.** The catalogue (112 pages) provides details of the exhibition and a discussion of Lewis's achievement which draws on and encapsulates his previous work in *Wyndham Lewis: Painter and Writer*, making the case for Lewis's importance and a portraitist and identifying him as a key figure among the 'Men of 1914', the key Modernist group which includes T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound and James Joyce.  
 The exhibition was discussed enthusiastically in the national press, including *The Times* (1 July 2008), the *Sunday Times* (6 July 2008), the *Independent* (7 July 2008), the *Daily Telegraph* (8 July 2008), and the *Guardian* (12 July 2008)
- 4) Exhibition **Paul Edwards, chief visiting curator. 'Wyndham Lewis 1882-1957' (2 Feb – 16 May 2010) Fundacion Juan March, Madrid.**  
 A video of the exhibition: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=87S9QBf\\_Bfk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=87S9QBf_Bfk)  
 The 'Juan March Foundation Press Coverage Document: Wyndham Lewis 1882-1957' lists a large number of positive reviews in the Spanish press.
- 5) Exhibition catalogue **Paul Edwards, et al., *Wyndham Lewis 1882-1957*. Madrid: Fundación Juan March 2010, (410 pages).** [Edwards's contribution to this book include: 'Creation Myth: The Art and Writing of Wyndham Lewis', pp. 22-31, 'Wyndham Lewis the Artist' (pp. 96-223, 266-93), 'Wyndham Lewis the Writer': (pp. 302-37), 'Wyndham Lewis: An Anthology' (pp. 343-61) and 'Texts on Wyndham Lewis' (pp. 363-70).] This catalogue, like Edwards's previous published scholarship, makes the case for Lewis's major status as a Modernist writer and painter, arguing that the artist was 'a single-handed avant garde movement'.
- 6) Essays (in Spanish): **Paul Edwards. 'Wyndham Lewis y el *Timon de Atenas*', in *William Shakespeare and Thomas Middleton, *Timon de Atenas* (tr. Angel-Luis Pujante), pp. 11-21.* Essay; also responsible for placement of WL plates. And **Paul Edwards, introductory essay, *Blast: Revista del Gran Vortice Ingles* tr .Y. Morato. Madrid: Juan March, 2010.****

### Grants

- Knowledge Transfer Fellowship. Arts and Humanities Research Council. May 2007-July 2008. Value £9055.
- Curatorial research grant. Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art. 2009. £5000.

#### 4. Details of the impact

Edwards was approached by the Director of the National Portrait Gallery in 2006 to curate jointly with Richard Humphreys (of Tate Britain) an exhibition of Lewis's Portraits. The exhibition comprised 55 works and a display of about 40 books. A catalogue, (*Wyndham Lewis Portraits*) was written principally by Edwards. Curating involved selecting works, devising a rationale based on the research in Edwards's monograph and translating this into an arrangement of the works with accompanying wallboards and captions. Briefly, the thesis of the exhibition was that Lewis's portraiture revealed a modernist idea of identity as multiple and strategic – in relation both to the artist's depictions and to sitters themselves. A day school aimed at a generally educated public was also held (12 July) at which Edwards spoke, and Edwards also delivered a public lecture on 10 July.

The impact of the exhibition and its publication was primarily cultural, but there was also an economic dimension. The National Portrait Gallery expected a public attendance of 20,000 visitors, but the final attendance was almost 40,000. The exhibition catalogue (approximately 90% of which was written by Edwards) also went into an unexpected second printing. The catalogue remains as a resource for future cultural impact. A microsite for the exhibition remains online at <http://www.npg.org.uk/wyndhamlewis/>. During the exhibition the site received over 43,000 page views.

In assessing the benefits of the exhibition to them in an evaluation report submitted to the AHRC at the conclusion of the Knowledge Transfer Fellowship held by Edwards for his work on the exhibition, the National Portrait Gallery listed the following:

- increased visitor numbers,
- new markets/audiences,
- new networks/relationships,
- new collaborations.

Cultural benefits are not in themselves quantifiable, but the exhibition, directly and indirectly, reached a large section of the public. What was most noticeable about the reception in the press (and numerous blogs) was the degree to which the exhibition confounded critical expectations and enlarged understanding of the work of the painter Wyndham Lewis. Known mainly as a pioneer abstractionist, a virulent satirist, and with a reputation for offensive political views, Lewis showed through his portraits a sensitivity and humanity that many reviewers could not easily reconcile with their presuppositions. In this sense, the exhibition had a 'revisionist' effect, not only on Lewis's reputation, but also on the profile of English art in the twentieth century.

The exhibition received over 175 press acknowledgements (excluding listings):

- National Press 106
- Regional Press 46
- Art Specialist Press 18
- International Press and Websites 5.

In addition it was discussed on 3 Radio programmes:

- *Front Row*
- *Night Waves*
- *Saturday Review*.

The exhibition was covered by all major national newspapers and more specialist papers like *The London Review of Books* and the *Times Literary Supplement*, as well as *The Burlington Magazine* and *Modernism/Modernity*.

The second exhibition, 'Wyndham Lewis 1882-1957' was held at the Fundación Juan March (Madrid) 2 February to 16 May 2010. Paul Edwards was visiting curator, having been approached by the director of the gallery following the 10 July 2008 lecture at the NPG. This exhibition was the largest and most comprehensive ever held of Lewis's work, with over 150 paintings and drawings. Over 50 books, magazines and exhibition catalogues were also displayed. The objective was to present to an international audience the work of a major but neglected avant-gardist in all its phases. The rationale, and the interpretative material were founded in Edwards's research as published in his monograph, but other scholars from Spanish universities, from Richard Humphreys of the Tate (again) and from the Universities of Birmingham and Plymouth contributed to the catalogue (the principal author again being Edwards).

Edwards was chiefly responsible for the choice of works and the organisation of the exhibition into sections. Design was by the Fundacion itself, but Edwards gave significant input to the final hang. The project involved writing about 70,000 words aimed at a non-specialist audience.

Both of these exhibitions were a direct result of Edwards's research. His monograph and other activities led to the contacts from the respective galleries, and his curatorial and authorial role in both cases meant that the interpretation given to the exhibits (as well as their selection) was in large part a direct result of the account of the contours of Lewis's achievement worked out in that primary research.

Attendance by the public to this free exhibition was approximately 150,000. There was extensive coverage in the Spanish press.

#### **5. Sources to corroborate the impact**

- 1) 'Press Coverage Report: Wyndham Lewis Portraits', Tate Gallery, 2008. Available from the University on request.
- 2) 'Juan March Foundation Press Coverage Document: Wyndham Lewis 1882-1957', Juan March Foundation, 2010. Available from the University on request.
- 3) The Twentieth-Century Curator, The National Portrait Gallery, London.
- 4) Exhibitions Coordinator, Fundacion Juan March, Madrid.
- 5) 2 CDs with still photos and video of the Madrid exhibition. Available from the University on request.
- 6) National Portrait Gallery Exhibition (2008) website: <http://www.npg.org.uk/wyndhamlewis/>.
- 7) Video of the NPG exhibition: [www.podcast.tv/video-episodes/wyndham-lewis-at-national-portrait-gallery-3593025.html](http://www.podcast.tv/video-episodes/wyndham-lewis-at-national-portrait-gallery-3593025.html)
- 8) Video of the FJM exhibition: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=87S9QBf\\_Bfk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=87S9QBf_Bfk)