Dennis Brown

Intertextual Dynamics within the Literary Group—Joyce, Lewis, Pound and Eliot

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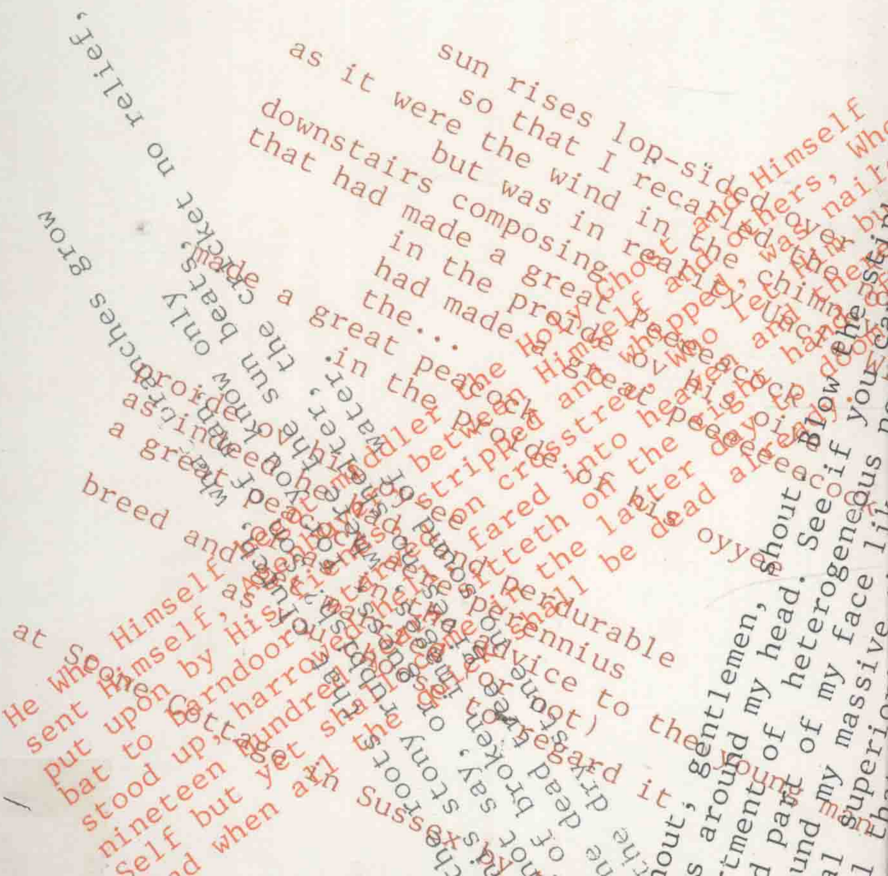

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The Men of 1914

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Preface

In the Preface to my recent academic book *The Modernist Self*, I proposed, for a follow-up, to make my next venture a study of the interpsychic mechanisms whereby a Modernist discourse was constructed. This book is the result. It focuses on four key writers of the Modernist movement; however, it is more about intertextual influence than psychological mechanisms as such. I am grateful to my onetime postgraduate student Marilyn Miller-Pietroni (psychotherapist and editor of the *Journal of Social Work Practice*) for pointing me in the direction of group-psychoanalytic literature: my rather basic reading of this informs some of my interpretations of what the Men of 1914 were about. I am also grateful for the continuing interest of Hatfield Polytechnic lecturers and students in my work – and, in particular, for some brilliant suggestions by our part-time MA student Keith Miller in response to lectures based on my early work for the book. My colleague Jean Radford gave support and encouragement when I showed her early chapters and Eric Trudgill (of Hatfield) and Patrick Grant (of the University of Victoria) have again given advice and encouragement after reading my entire first draft. My one-time English teacher J. E. Lindsay and my ex-colleague Alexander Hutchisson both boosted my confidence at important moments during the writing, while my unknown Macmillan's reader offered some cogent advice about my original Introduction which I have followed in the main.

I am extremely grateful again to Margaret Carpenter who typed ongoing sections of the book, as they were written, with great speed and accuracy despite her heavy work-commitments. I wish, too, to thank Dorothy Koenigsberger who, as Humanities Research Coordinator, provided an ethos of scholarly effort and interdisciplinary discussion out of which this book was written and which contributed to whatever it has achieved, in finally incalculable ways. Alan Weir, of the Polytechnic, was also a valued inspiration through his interest in a year that was difficult for both of us. Most of all, I must thank my wife Sam for genuine and selfless enthusiasm for a project that could have divided rather than united us, but for

her love – and Darren and Andrew (and Heidi) who tolerated, with good humour, the punctuation of their weekend leisure by my manic typing.

This book was initiated as a registered Research Project of the Hatfield Polytechnic Research and Consultancy Committee: I should like to acknowledge its continuing support for such ventures despite the politically-imposed dissipation of our academic efforts into nonsenses such as 'cash-generating' short courses. The writers whose texts form the subject of this book strove, in peacetime and World War, to create a literature which would be honest to both the possibilities and problems of twentieth-century life. The study of that literature is now under threat by both right-wing dogmatists (who artificially restrict the numbers of Humanities students) and left-wing populists (who prioritise social theory over creative art). I believe the works of Joyce, Lewis, Pound and Eliot are an implicit rebuke to both materialistic positions. The book is written partly in that conviction. My next book will turn to consider the spiritual crisis inherent in both the Modernist and Postmodernist situations under the title: *The Death of God and the New Life.*

DENNIS BROWN

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Introduction

Intertextual Dynamics is a book which focuses on textual manifestations of mutual influence within the core group of English literary Modernism. In some respects, then, it constitutes quite conventional academic criticism and adds to previous scholarship, for instance on the relationship between Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot or the influence of *Ulysses* on *The Waste Land*.[1] My chief contribution, on this plane, is to argue for the stylistic influence of the early Vorticist prose of Wyndham Lewis on key texts of Joyce, Pound and Eliot and to reaffirm Lewis's important role within the Modernist venture. However, the close study of such intertextual influence has led me to a distinctly unconventional hypothesis which informs the overall discussion. The hypothesis is this: that the main literary texts of the Men of 1914 (as Lewis called them)[2] should, in important ways, be considered less in terms of individual stylistic development than as a series of moves within an overall intertextual group-game. The game, built up in terms of mutual appreciation and rivalry over some fifty years in all, is predicated on a common assumption – that each writer is involved in a concerted project to create new literature for the new age, our own. The book thus proceeds from the basis of normal literary scholarship to develop an innovative theoretical thesis with regard to the possible object of literary study.

The conventional research work here speaks for itself and is open to the usual kinds of refutation – in terms, say, of partiality, coincidence or overemphasis. I am more interested in the radical potentiality of the overall argument, since I do not know of any other criticism which has considered texts or writers in quite this way. The lack of a psychoanalytically-aware 'group perspective' on literature may be largely due to the fact that, historically, English literature has not been characterised by strong group-activity, certainly in terms of theoretical movements – the Lake School of poets notwithstanding. Hence we are used to considering authors as individuals, even individualists, who slowly develop out of early intellectual and stylistic influence to create distinctive works

in a process of literary self-determination. Such thinking is not, of course, confined to the realm of literary criticism; it seems to inform, for instance, academic publishing-ventures such as the Fontana 'Modern Masters' series, and can be evidenced in typical academic syllabuses for Philosophy or History of Ideas as well as Literature degrees. With respect to the Men of 1914, Joyce, Lewis, Pound and Eliot, such an approach is already encapsulated in some notable book-titles: for instance, *Joysprick*, *The Enemy*, *The Solitary Volcano* and *The Invisible Poet*.[3] Such emphasis, valid in many cases, becomes distortive where group-activity is virtually predominant. Books such as James Watson's *The Double Helix*[4] persuade me that this can be commonplace in science – especially at highly-collaborative laboratories like the Cavendish. At the same time, since the Second World War there has been a great deal of psychological investigation into the dynamics of work-groups which indicates the powerful bonding which can take place in group-situations. I shall argue that the Men of 1914, despite their strikingly individual personalities, were galvanised by Ezra Pound into a distinctive literary work-group, and that their varied texts demonstrate strong group-assumptions and mutual influence. The evidence will be provided throughout the book as a whole.

However, my overall theoretical hypothesis has not sprung, fully-armed as it were, out of old-style critical scholarship. The last twenty years or so have witnessed a dramatic, and sometimes disorientating, upsurge of theorisation within literary criticism and this book could not have been written outside that context – as some of my reference notes attest.[5] Nevertheless, the argument of *Intertextual Dynamics* is concerned more, in the end, with what seems to me at work in the texts addressed than with literary theory as such. In this sense, the book is essentially inductive and implicitly committed to the (ultimately) canonical idea that some texts matter a great deal more than others for the purpose of genuine enlightenment. In general, I have tried to let group-influence speak itself, through the texts, rather than impose an initial methodology on my material. The obvious methodology to have used was suggested by the studies of groups and group-work initiated by such psychologists as Wilfred Bion, and Foulkes and Anthony.[6] However, it soon became clear to me that the Modernist texts which were my primary interest tended to express, at creatively-*aware* levels, those group-dynamics which psycho-analysts interpreted from *unconscious* behavioural interchange. In

particular, the four writers seemed almost over-insistently aware of the predominant assumption of their work-group: that they were all collectively involved in a project of literary renaissance – in psychoanalytical terms, the fantasy of birthing the group-Messiah[7] (although, as we shall see, there was disagreement as to the gender of the new 'text-child'). Specific texts such as *Enemy of the Stars*, *Ulysses*, *The Waste Land*, *The Cantos*, *The Childermass* and *Finnegans Wake* are essentially preoccupied with making the 'NEW',[8] and, in fact, their experimental discourse not only breaks wholly new aesthetic ground but implicitly challenges the assumptions of any methodology or theoretical discourse – whether critical or psychoanalytic – which would seek to interpret and control their meanings. So my aim is less to theorise the hermeneutic implications of the texts than to demonstrate how meanings, here, are built up in intergroup participation, influence and struggle. This will add a new dimension to the understanding of the nature of Modernism and also cast further light on that vogue notion, Postmodernism, whose meaning, by definition, depends on how we understand the modern.

Intertextual influence is, then, at the heart of the book. Irrespective of the larger argument, I seek to make a scholarly case for specific instances of the influence of texts upon each other. Some examples of such influence are the following: that of *Enemy of the Stars* and *Tarr* on aspects of *Ulysses*, *The Waste Land* and the *Cantos*; that of *Ulysses* on *The Waste Land* and the *Cantos*; that of *The Waste Land* on the *Cantos* and *Finnegans Wake*; that of Pound's 'Exile's Letter' on Eliot's 'Journey of the Magi'; and that of 'Work in Progress' on Lewis's *The Childermass*. At the same time, the book attempts to map a great deal of intertextual reference where actual stylistic influence is less at issue. This, quite naturally, occurs mostly in later texts when the 'mythology' of the group is well-developed: *The Apes of God*, *Finnegans Wake* and the later *Cantos* are particularly rich fields of such group-reference while 'Journey of the Magi', *Murder in the Cathedral* and, to an extent, *Four Quartets* seem to incorporate group-reference in a considerably-disguised form. A great variety of instances of group 'talk-back' will be collated throughout the book.

At the same time, the changing dynamics of the four writers 'groupography' (Joyce's term)[9] will be traced as the argument progresses chronologically. Some of the main stages of group-development are as follows: in 1914 Pound gathered the group

together under his leadership, with Lewis as the most aggressively radical writer and aesthetician, whose example exercised powerful influence on the other three artists; by the early 1920s Joyce's *Ulysses* had begun to marginalise Lewis's contribution, radically influencing Eliot and Pound; by the mid-1920s Pound had left London and Paris behind him to live in Italy and he largely relinquished his leadership role, a role which Eliot slowly assumed, while Lewis took his revenge on Joyce by publicly attacking *Ulysses*; by the early 1930s only Joyce remained preoccupied with purely aesthetic renewal (in the form of 'Work in Progress' – material for the future *Finnegans Wake* – which Pound disowned as fruitless), while Lewis adapted his art to social satire and polemic, Eliot developed his as religious meditation and Pound restricted his to economic propaganda; from then on Eliot, as publisher and as editor of the *Criterion*, acted as group-trustee and chief interpreter, as the group broke up through differences and eventually deaths, with many later texts nevertheless recapitulating mutual group-dynamics and abounding in intertextual reference. Such developments will be charted in considerable detail, and with a great deal of textual evidence, as the book proceeds.

The reality of this notional group, it should be said, is not vitiated by any other influences or relationships affecting the individual members – any more than, say, the dynamics and morale of a soccer team are called into question by the pub, club or family-life of the constituent players. As will be shown, the various members all met each other at various times, but the validity of the group-notion by no means depends on such encounters. For the power of group-feeling was essentially provided by the fantasy fellowship and rivalry generated by Pound's primarily-mental construct, which associated them together as the four leading writers of their generation – and, indeed, the four men would communicate to each other far more in terms of their literary texts than their table-talk. The symmetry of the group – a fourway dynamic predicated upon two rival novelists and two rival poets – partly explains its mythic power to each individual, such that it virtually became a family-displacement for each of these individualistic 'exiles'.[10] Pound, as founder, encourager, provider and publishing entrepreneur, exercised an extraordinary leadership, as literary father and mother, which effectively bonded the group as an intellectual family. But, as is the way of groups, his final relinquishing of this role did not lead to the group's total dissolution, but to a

replacement-bid – with Eliot, the doyen of English letters by this time (and a future Nobel Prize winner), as the natural successor. Thus, despite geographical distancing and the changes wrought by time, the group-mythology lived on while any of the men remained alive – the notion of a finally timeless shared adventure in which four artistic 'Magi' were attendant at the birth of the modern, and witnessed its crucifixion in the waste No Man's Land of the Great War. As literature, Modernism essentially consolidated itself around these two experiential poles of birth and death; and the Men of 1914 – far more formidable and authoritative as a group than the Garsington or Bloomsbury sets – would be the chief interpreters and mythologisers of these contrastive and momentous twentieth-century experiences. Without the Men of 1914, it might well be said, there would have been no meaningful English literary Modernism.

The initial foundations of my argument are somewhat elaborate and prodigal of reference notes. This seemed to me inevitable. The main study of intertextual dynamics (Chapters 3–6) was written first – and very fast[11] – as the momentum of discovery bore me along: I have decided to retain the slightly breathless pace and style as fitting to the intertextual struggle traced in those chapters. However, the tensions of influence I chronicle there could only have been founded in a context of mutual interest, expectation and trust, and the first main chapter (2) endeavours to describe that context, and the place of each writer within it, quite thoroughly – at a time before the main period of intertextual struggle began. Chapter 2 especially seeks to address itself to the transformative aspirations of the era 1900–14, and to the high prestige accorded to master-writers in that period – which all four artists strove to attain from their earliest literary ventures. In effect, through Pound's organisation, the Men of 1914 virtually 'canonised' each other, as prophets of the New, and from the standpoint of the 1990s, when poets and novelists have far less prestige (and hubris),[12] this group-morale needs to be historically placed in some detail. This I have attempted to do, as well as to give an account of the early writing of Joyce, Lewis, Pound and Eliot, before Pound organised them as a group.

The progression of the book is essentially (and inevitably) chronological.[13] At the end of each chapter I describe, in biographical terms, the relations between the writers at evolving stages. However, the momentum of the argument is generated by progres-

sive challenges and responses of specific texts as the group-game proceeds. Hence the third chapter centres on Lewis's early prose-Vorticist challenge and the textual responses of the other three writers; Chapter 4 is dominated by the phenomenon of *Ulysses* and its effect upon Eliot, Pound and Lewis in turn; Chapter 5 is initiated by Joyce's next radical move, in 'Work in Progress', and discusses the reactions and new stylistic directions of the other three men; while Chapter 6 is again built up around Joyce's last contribution, with the publication of the completed *Finnegans Wake*, and the late developments of Eliot, Lewis and Pound. As we might expect, the most dynamic period of textual interchange was in the first decade or so of the group's formation, say 1914–24. The beginning of 'Work in Progress', most particularly, marked the start of a parting of the ways; yet, as we shall see, the presence of intertextual allusion continues in the works of the four men until Pound's last cantos in the late 1950s. The book traces, then, the history of a literary 'family' and their influence one upon the other, in intertextual terms. And, at certain points, I also hint at a family secret which perhaps adds a touch of literary *scandale* to an already contentious argument. A separate book would be needed to trace the overall influence of the Men of 1914 upon the work of Samuel Beckett. However, I seek to evidence at certain points, *en passant*, that with respect to intertextual influence on the great texts he wrote in the 1950s and 1960s, Beckett is revealed not as the heir to Joyce, the legendary Master, but to Wyndham Lewis – Joyce's acknowledged prose rival.

My book is inevitably indebted to the biographies of each '1914' writer[14] and is written out of the context of some forty years of critical discussion about the modern movement.[15] However, while some critics have made much of the shared intellectual climate of the time, or specific forms of influence (for example Pound's editing of *The Waste Land*), no one has so far treated the four key writers of the period as a group, in terms of intertextual groupwork, and Lewis has rarely been given his due as Modernist at all. The book, which in a sense follows on from my earlier study *The Modernist Self*,[16] seeks both to focus on intertextual influence at the heart of Modernist literature and to reinstate Lewis as Modernist. In this, as I have already suggested, I appear to have written the first study of any group of writers in English which is aware of psychoanalytic group-theory and reads texts as a species of group-sharing and conflict. The justification for such a project must lie in the whole

of the evidence and argument that follows. However, I can imagine that some readers may already be reacting with radical scepticism to my claims. To spare such a reader the labour of first reading my founding chapter, I suggest s/he turns first to the two sections 'Shem's Choice' and 'Riverrun' (pp. 125–32 and 158–65), in particular, to see if the battery of coded allusions quoted there, from one of the most apparently individualistic texts ever written, may persuade him or her that there is an argument to be made.

2

To Announce a New Age

ANTENNAE OF THE RACE

James Joyce, Wyndham Lewis, Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot were all children of the 1880s. Joyce was born on 2 February 1882 in a south Dublin suburb; Lewis on 18 November of the same year, on board a yacht docked at Amherst, Nova Scotia; Pound on 30 October 1885 in Hailey, Idaho, a tiny frontier town; Eliot on 26 September 1888 in St Louis, Missouri.[1] Only six years, then, separated the ages of the four individuals who, more than any other writers in English, conspired to create literary Modernism and transform the 'decadent' aestheticism of their birth-decade into the prophetic experimentalism of the 1920s. Each aspired to artistic greatness at quite an early age. In his self-portrait, Joyce shows his persona, Stephen, as fascinated by words from infancy and an assiduous composer of poems during adolescence; at Rugby School, Lewis became known as a 'frightful artist'[2] and proceeded straight to the Slade School of Art; Pound also embarked early on his ambition to know more about poetry than 'any man living'[3] and, in *Hilda's Book*, wrote teenage lyrics to the future poetess H. D.; and Eliot, whose mother wrote poems (one of which, *Savonarola*, Eliot would later arrange for publication), brought out eight issues of his own magazine, *The Fireside*, when eleven years old, and contributed early work to the *Smith Academy Record* when seventeen.

Each of the Men of 1914, in pursuance of ultimately aesthetic aims, embarked on courses of Higher Education – Joyce at University College Dublin (later at the Sorbonne), Lewis at the Slade, Pound at the University of Pennsylvania (then at Hamilton College), and Eliot at Harvard and later at Oxford. Each of them, too, tended to find friends (and rivals) among other creative artists during their early years: Joyce with Oliver St John Gogarty, Lewis with Spencer Gore, Pound with William Carlos Williams and H. D., and Eliot with Conrad Aiken. And each of them achieved a degree of aesthetic reputation at their respective institutions – Joyce by

corresponding with Ibsen, Lewis as the 'best draughtsman at the Slade since Augustus John',[4] Pound as knowledgeable enthusiast for Provençale lyrics and Eliot as intellectual *poète maudit*, who impressed Bertrand Russell by comparing Heraclitus to Villon in a philosophy seminar. On completion of their courses of study, each set about building an artistic career – Joyce as poet and story-writer, Lewis as story-writer and painter, and Pound and Eliot as poets and critics. All of them had produced significant work by the time Pound began to organise them as a creative work-group in 1914.

Even before they became grouped together, all of the Men of 1914 were both self-consciously and unconsciously men of the new century – a peer-group Robert Wohl has characterised (in international terms) as 'the generation of 1914'.[5] As Wohl suggests, they were the first such group to think of themselves in specifically generational terms, as distinct from 'the old men' – a division made decisive when war came – and, on the aesthetic front, it was this generation which brushed aside *fin de siècle* weariness and replaced it with rampant artistic ferment. Lewis would later record how Ford Madox Ford found the *BLAST* group a 'haughty and proud generation' and admitted that 'we were a youth racket'.[6] He continues: 'Europe was full of titanic stirrings and snortings – a new art coming to flower to celebrate or to announce a "new age"'. And, indeed, if Conrad, Yeats and Ford himself (most notably) had negotiated an uneasy transition from nineties' aestheticism to Edwardian impressionism, it was Joyce, Lewis, Pound and Eliot who would constitute the new revolutionary movement which heralded the twentieth century's countdown to the double-millennium. And as Ford helped to launch 'les jeunes' in his *English Review* so did A. R. Orage in *The New Age* – a periodical whose title encapsulated the aspirations of the young generation. It was precisely the sense of a new age which informed the pages of *BLAST* 1 and 2 in 1914 and 1915. If Vorticism was never quite Futurism, it was the sense of a galvanic future that gave to both movements their inspiration. Poets needed 'a new technique, a new convention, to turn ourselves loose in', T. E. Hulme asserted.[7] The Men of 1914 set out with a similar challenge in the name of the future. 'Our . . . Risorgimento . . . will make the Italian Renaissance look like a tempest in a teapot',[8] Pound declared. Eliot, with his friend Conrad Aiken, looked forward to 'the immense, the wonderful future' which they felt was 'theirs to create'.[9] In *BLAST* 1 Lewis asserted: 'WE ONLY WANT THE

WORLD TO LIVE, and to feel its crude energy flowing through us'.[10] And Joyce was to write of his early prose that it was 'the first step towards the spiritual liberation in my country'.[11]

These men's sense of the future had political, social and moral dimensions, yet their chosen arena of challenge was specifically aesthetic. From a Postmodernist viewpoint, their sense of art's importance must appear highly inflated. How could they seriously believe that the world would be changed through the writing of poetry or fictional prose? In this, they were partly the heirs of such nineteenth-century literary prophets as Coleridge, Carlyle, Ruskin, Dickens and Morris. It was still assumed that the words of a great man of letters must have the power to bring enlightenment and liberation. Who read such words, or how the readers might, in fact, have an effect upon the great economic, political and social mechanisms of the age seems rarely to have bothered the 'generation of 1914' before the war. What mattered was to find new literary forms of expression to convey the sense of a new 'modern' reality. Artists, Pound insisted, were 'antennae', 'litmus papers', 'barometers', 'thermometers', 'steam-gauges' or 'seismographs'[12] – they showed the contemporary world in its true reality and so could act as a guide to the future. Not until much later would Pound begin to realise that few people, except some other writers, were noting what the instruments registered – let alone trying to apply the readings to the state of the world. It was Auden's generation which came to acknowledge that 'poetry makes nothing happen'; it was Joyce's which believed that the writer could reforge the 'conscience' of the 'race'.[13]

In this exalted idea of the importance of literature, neo-Paterian aestheticism became joined up with the institutional growth of 'English Literature' itself. All four of the Men of 1914 grew up with the grand notion of Art, and a belief in the inherent value of the Aesthetic, at the centre of their thinking. The legacy of the 1880s and 1890s is important here – not only in terms of aesthetic creation but also in terms of artistic appreciation. Works of art history, musicology and literary criticism were important constituents in their education. Pound's first decisively Modernist poem, for instance, would evoke Venus through the pages of the art historian Reinach, while in the twenties he would allow himself a diversion from the developing *Cantos* to write a *Treatise on Harmony*.[14] Lewis studied the history of art and conscientiously sketched from the masters in the National Gallery, the Louvre and the Prado. Eliot