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**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

**The Fascist Literary Criticism in Wyndham Lewis's *The Jews, Are They Human?* (1939)**

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**ABSTRACT**

This scholarly inquiry delves into Wyndham Lewis's *The Jews Are They Human?* (1939), a pro-Semitic book through the lens of Nathan Waddell's ideologies, which focuses on the intersection of literature, politics, and cultural criticism during the rise of fascism. Waddell's scholarship highlights how Lewis's work navigates the complex terrain of fascist literary discourse, engaging critically with the ways in which literary criticism was employed as a tool of propaganda and ideological control. Drawing on Waddell's insights, this analysis explores how Lewis's satirical critique targets the absurdities of anti-Semitic rhetoric and the broader manipulations of fascist cultural criticism. In a broader sense, this paper argues that, as articulated by Waddell, Lewis's approach is not just a rejection of fascist ideology but a deeper engagement with the mechanisms of literary criticism that fascism sought to exploit. Lewis's work uses irony, parody, and counter-narratives to expose the pseudo-scientific racism and myth-making central to fascist criticism, revealing the ethical failings of intellectual complicity. By scrutinizing how Lewis subverts the language and tactics of fascist critics, this analysis illuminates his broader project of reclaiming literary criticism as a space for resistance against oppressive ideologies.

**KEYWORDS**

Wyndham Lewis; Fascist Literary Criticism; Antisemitism; *The Jews, Are They Human?*

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**1. Introduction**

Renowned for his outstanding versatility as a highly polemical avant-garde advocate of fascism and modernism within the literary sphere, Wyndham Lewis (1882–1957), a British writer, painter, and critic, despite his political isolation, endeavored to rectify his previous missteps, faux pas. As the looming inevitability of the next European conflict, World War II, became increasingly apparent by 1939, Lewis sought to absolve himself through the publication of two works aimed at distancing himself from his controversial past and the events and environment surrounding it. The former of these works, his repudiation of *Hitler* in 1931, marked the beginning of a decline in his tarnished reputation and was titled *The Hitler Cult* (1939). The latter, a satire addressing antisemitism titled *The Jews Are They Human?* (1939) further exemplified his efforts to disassociate himself from past affiliations. Written on the eve of World War II, these books reflect Lewis's critical examination of the era's dominant ideologies on the promulgation of Nazi aryanism versus Nazi antisemitism, which culminated in the Holocaust.

*The Jews: Are They Human?*, an antifascist text, has been treated particularly poorly in this regard; the title is, in fact, an allusion to G. J. Renier's *The English: Are They Human?* (1931) rather than a literal questioning of Jewish personhood. Lewis's book was, moreover, reviewed negatively by the British Union Quarterly and enthusiastically welcomed by the *Jewish Chronicle*<sup>1</sup>. (Waddell, 2016, p. 88)

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<sup>1</sup> a London-based Jewish weekly newspaper

According to this perspective, Wyndham Lewis's *The Jews, Are They Human?* (1939), (a political novel on prejudice or discrimination against Jewish people), represents a disturbing intersection of literature and fascist ideology, highlighting the capacity of literary criticism to serve as a platform for extremist political views. Written against the backdrop of rising fascism and widespread anti-Semitism in 1930s Europe, Lewis's work exemplifies how literary texts can be manipulated to reflect and reinforce fascist principles, including racial superiority, authoritarianism, and cultural chauvinism. Known for his sharp, often polemical style, Lewis uses his literary prowess to engage with and, at times, propagate the fascist discourse of his time, revealing how the boundaries between art, criticism, and ideology can blur dangerously. Walter Laqueur shares this view, stating:

The idea of Judaism is the idea of world fascism. The Old Testament was fascist; so were Moses, King Solomon, and virtually all other Jewish leaders from the very beginning. The Jews had always been chauvinist aggressors and mass murderers.... Hitler and the other Nazi leaders had been mere puppets in their hands.... They had connived with Hitler at the destruction of poor Jews during the Second World War, but the number...killed had been grossly exaggerated. The aim of this intrigue was to get international sanction for the establishment of the state of Israel. But Israel was a mere sideshow; the real aim was world domination. (Laqueur, 1993, p. 107)

More broadly, in *The Jews, Are They Human?* (1939), Lewis employs a mix of irony, satire, and direct commentary to critique Jewish identity, often veering into overtly anti-Semitic territory. His work serves not only as a literary text but also as a form of cultural criticism that aligns disturbingly with fascist ideology, making it a significant, if troubling, artifact of its time. The text's engagement with fascist thought underscores the ways in which literary criticism can extend beyond aesthetic judgment, functioning instead as a tool of political influence and ideological reinforcement. Lewis's writing reflects a broader trend within fascist literary criticism: the use of literature to validate and perpetuate exclusionary and hierarchical social orders.

This critical approach reveals how literature, far from being an innocent or neutral art form, can be deeply complicit in the dissemination of harmful ideologies. The analysis of Lewis's work through this lens challenges readers to reconsider the role of the critic and the ethical dimensions of literary engagement, particularly when dealing with works that seek to legitimize or normalize fascist ideologies. By examining the ways in which Lewis intertwines literary form with fascist content, this study highlights the broader implications of literary complicity in political extremism, prompting a reevaluation of the power dynamics at play in the intersection of art, criticism, and ideology.

## **2. Review of Literature**

The study of Wyndham Lewis's *The Jews, Are They Human?* (1939) through the lens of fascist literary criticism has sparked considerable debate among scholars, given the controversial nature of Lewis's engagement with extremist ideologies. Existing literature on the topic largely focuses on the interplay between Lewis's literary techniques and the broader fascist cultural milieu of the 1930s, exploring how his work reflects and reinforces the ideological currents of his time. This review synthesizes key scholarly perspectives on Lewis's text, highlighting the complexities and contradictions inherent in his approach to fascist criticism and the ways in which his work contributes to the understanding of literature as a tool for political influence.

Critics such as Tyrus Miller and David Trotter have explored the intricate relationship between Lewis's aesthetic practices and his political beliefs, arguing that Lewis's work often blurs the line between satire and endorsement of fascist ideas. Miller contends that *The Jews, Are They Human?* (1939) is emblematic of Lewis's broader literary project, which frequently engages with reactionary and authoritarian themes, positioning his work within the broader context of fascist modernism (Miller, 1999). Trotter similarly argues that Lewis's writings reveal an unsettling proximity to fascist ideology, not merely as a political stance but as a cultural critique embedded within his literary form (Trotter, 2003). These scholars emphasize that Lewis's work cannot be easily disentangled from the fascist discourse it engages with, as his rhetorical strategies often serve to undermine any clear moral or ethical position against anti-Semitism.

Another significant contribution to the literature comes from Paul Edwards, who examines Lewis's complex and often contradictory portrayal of Jewish identity. Edwards (2000) suggests that Lewis's attempt to critique anti-Semitism is undermined by his own deep-seated biases and the text's frequent lapses into caricature and stereotype. Edwards argues that Lewis's critique is superficial, serving more as a reflection of contemporary fascist thought than a genuine interrogation of prejudice (Edwards, 2000). In this fashion, this perspective is echoed by Fredric Jameson, who situates Lewis within a broader tradition of modernist writers whose work is entangled with reactionary politics. Jameson highlights the ambivalence of Lewis's critique, noting that his ostensibly ironic approach often reinforces the very ideologies it purports to challenge (Jameson, 1981).

In this light, scholars such as Rebecca Beasley have further explored how Lewis's engagement with fascist ideologies reflects broader trends in literary criticism of the period. Beasley discusses how Lewis's work exemplifies the ways in which fascist criticism

sought to co-opt literature as a means of cultural control, using literary texts to promote exclusionary and hierarchical worldviews. Beasley argues that Lewis's rhetorical strategies, including his use of satire, irony, and polemic, are not merely literary devices but also mechanisms of ideological persuasion that align with fascist attempts to reshape cultural narratives. This perspective underscores the role of literary criticism in reinforcing fascist ideologies, highlighting the dangerous potential of literature as a tool of political influence (Beasley, 2007).

Overall, the literature on Wyndham Lewis's *The Jews, Are They Human?* (1939) underscores the complexities of his engagement with fascist criticism, highlighting the ways in which his work both reflects and critiques the ideological landscape of his time. Scholars have consistently pointed to the ambivalence and contradictions within Lewis's text, noting how his literary approach often blurs the boundaries between critique and complicity. This body of scholarship serves as a crucial framework for understanding the broader implications of fascist literary criticism, illustrating the intricate and often troubling relationship between literature, ideology, and political power.

### 3. Methodology

This research employs a qualitative research methodology, focusing on a close textual analysis of Wyndham Lewis's *The Jews Are They Human?* (1939) through the lens of fascist literary criticism. The primary objective of this methodology is to explore how Lewis's work reflects and engages with fascist ideologies, specifically anti-Semitism and authoritarianism, and how these elements are embedded within his literary form and rhetorical strategies. To achieve this, the current research integrates a critical approach that combines textual analysis with ideological critique, drawing on key theoretical frameworks from fascist literary criticism and cultural studies.

#### 3.1. Textual Analysis

The core of the research involves a detailed examination of Lewis's text, focusing on its language, narrative structure, and rhetorical devices. The analysis pays particular attention to how Lewis constructs his arguments about Jewish identity and how these arguments align with or diverge from contemporary fascist discourse. By closely reading passages that address Jewish stereotypes, cultural criticism, and Lewis's ambivalent stance towards anti-Semitism, this study seeks to uncover the implicit and explicit ways in which fascist ideologies are woven into the text. The textual analysis also considers the use of irony, satire, and polemic as literary techniques that complicate the reader's understanding of Lewis's ideological position.

#### 3.2 Ideological Critique

To situate Lewis's work within the broader context of fascist literary criticism, the study employs Waddell's ideological framework, which examines how literary texts reflect and propagate specific political ideologies. This involves analyzing how Lewis's portrayal of Jewish identity and his engagement with fascist themes correspond to the ideological underpinnings of fascist thought, such as racial purity, cultural hierarchy, and authoritarianism. Waddell's framework is instrumental in identifying the ways in which Lewis's work both critiques and reinforces fascist ideologies, revealing the complex interplay between literature and political power. The ideological critique also examines the socio-political context of the 1930s, considering how the rise of fascism influenced literary production and criticism during this period.

In *The Jews: Are They Human?* Lewis complained that in the late 1930s, it was "well-nigh impossible to open your mouth without being called a fascist" (Lewis, 1939, p. 29). Lewis had by this point given his enemies plenty of reasons to refer to him as such, including, apparently, the title of the very book in which he made this remark. (Waddell, 2016, p. 87)

Through this multi-faceted methodological approach, the study seeks to provide a comprehensive analysis of *The Jews: Are They Human?* (1939) as a work of fascist literary criticism. By examining the text through close reading, ideological critique, comparative analysis, and engagement with secondary scholarship, the study aims to uncover the complex ways in which Lewis's work reflects, critiques, and complicates the ideological currents of his time. This methodology not only illuminates the literary dimensions of fascist criticism but also contributes to a deeper understanding of the broader cultural and political landscape in which such works were produced.

The pre-critical assumption that fascist literary criticism can be described in terms of a principled commitment to a stable corpus of texts and authors or to a fixed matrix of specific literary features does not survive a systematic encounter with instances of such criticism. (Knellwolf & Norris, 2008, p. 77)

#### 4. Results and Discussion

*The Jews, Are They Human?* (1939) by Wyndham Lewis is a provocative and contentious work that grapples with the question of Jewish identity against the backdrop of 1930s Europe, a time marked by the rise of fascism and rampant anti-Semitism. Written during a period of escalating racial and political tensions, the book serves as both a critique and a reflection of the extreme ideologies that permeated the era. Although Lewis attempts to position himself as a critic of anti-Semitic attitudes, his work is deeply contradictory and often reinforces the prejudices it ostensibly critiques. The book is structured as a polemical essay that oscillates between satire and serious commentary, reflecting Lewis's complex, often ambivalent stance towards the fascist ideologies that were gaining traction during his time. As Lewis confesses: 'I neither regard the person of Jewish race as a devil nor as a darling' (Lewis, 1939, p. 16).

While Lewis initially appears to mock the absurdity of anti-Semitic stereotypes, his critique often collapses into a reinforcement of the very biases he claims to oppose. His portrayal of Jewish people, filled with caricatures and generalizations, aligns disturbingly with the fascist propaganda of the period. The title itself, *The Jews, Are They Human?* (1939) suggests a provocative challenge to dehumanizing anti-Semitic narratives, but the content frequently undermines any clear condemnation of such views, making the text a troubling piece of literary and cultural history. The work reflects Lewis's broader engagement with the political and social debates of his time, where his flirtations with fascism and authoritarian ideas were often masked by his self-styled position as an iconoclastic and contrarian intellectual.

In the broadest and most schematic sense, *The Jews, Are They Human?* (1939) remains a controversial work because it exemplifies how literature and criticism can serve as vehicles for ideologies that are both destructive and divisive. It provides a window into the complexities of Lewis's thought and the broader cultural currents of the 1930s, illustrating the dangers of using literary art as a platform for extremist beliefs. The book is an unsettling reminder of how cultural figures, even those who appear to be satirists or critics, can become complicit in the spread of harmful ideologies, and it invites ongoing reflection on the responsibilities of writers and critics in politically charged times.

##### 4.1. *The Jews, Are They Human?* (1939): Confronting Antisemitism

Unlike his critique of Aryanism, Wyndham Lewis's *The Jews, Are They Human?* (1939) directly tackles the rampant antisemitism of his era. In this work, Lewis confronts the prejudices and stereotypes that underpinned discrimination against Jews, questioning the moral and logical foundations of these biases. Through thoughtful arguments and reflections, he strives to humanize Jewish people and counter the dehumanizing rhetoric prevalent at the time. Lewis's approach is both analytical and compassionate as he delves into the historical and cultural origins of antisemitism, critically examining the justifications used to marginalize and oppress Jews. By directly addressing these prejudices, Lewis seeks to encourage critical thinking and promote a more inclusive and humane viewpoint.

Antisemitism was a core aspect of Adolf Hitler's ideology, profoundly influencing his beliefs and policies. It was a fundamental component of Nazi ideology, which had a clear and systematic approach to dealing with the Jewish population. In exploring the political dimensions of this issue, Zygmunt Bauman in *Modernity and the Holocaust* (1989) highlights that antisemitism is not just a belief system but also a series of actions. Bauman defines it as hostility toward Jews, characterized by viewing them as an alien, hostile, and undesirable group, and the behaviors that arise from and perpetuate these negative perceptions (p. 35). As Lewis states:

"Jews are news." It is not an enviable kind of limelight that beats upon the chosen people...This is because Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Czech-Slovakia, and other countries are freezing out their Jewish minorities by means of what has been described as "cold pogrom" ...The government of those foreign countries regard their Jewish citizens "undesirables." It is the intention of the Hitler government, for instance, to have made Germany *Judenrein*<sup>2</sup> in two years' time. (Lewis, 1939, p. 7)

This is substantiated by the fact that antisemitism was deeply entrenched in the political rhetoric of the Weimar Republic, and under the Nazi regime, Jews were subjected to open harassment, discrimination, and violent attacks by political thugs. In Nazi Germany, antisemitism was not only an expression of hatred but also a deliberate policy that culminated in the genocide of millions of innocent people. From 1933 to 1945, under Adolf Hitler's leadership, the Nazi regime unleashed a wave of aggressive anti-Semitic actions that inspired similar movements around the world. In France, groups like the *Cagouards* (the "Hooded Men") led antisemitic efforts, while in Hungary, the Arrow Cross Party—a fascist group that controlled the Hungarian government from

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<sup>2</sup> Free of Jews. Clearing all Jews out of a specific German area or European community, the overriding goal of the "Final Solution." (Michael & Doerr, 2002, p. 226)

October 1944 to April 1945—followed suit. In England, the British Union of Fascists (BUF) spread anti-Semitic propaganda, and in the United States, organizations such as the German-American Bund and the Silver Shirts promoted similar ideologies. The Nazis viewed Jews as subhuman, likening them to parasitic fungi that threatened the German nation, and sought a "Final Solution to the Jewish question" (German: "*Endlösung der Judenfrage*"). This so-called solution involved the systematic extermination of European Jews, targeting individuals of all ages and backgrounds with the aim of eradicating them entirely. According to Nazi ideology, which framed Jewish identity as biologically determined, the persecution and elimination of Jews were seen as essential to the purification and preservation of the German people. The Nazis believed that those of Jewish descent possessed traits that were inherently harmful to European or 'Aryan' culture, and thus, their eradication was portrayed as necessary for the survival and refinement of the German nation (Lewis, 1931, p. 38). In *Mein Kampf*, Chapter XI: Nation and Race, Adolf Hitler asserts that by destroying the personality and racial integrity of a people, the main barrier to the dominance of inferior individuals is eliminated, and according to him, the Jew represents this obstacle (Hitler, 1992).

Having dismissed the *Judenfrage* in 1931, in *The Jews: Are They Human?* he echoed the language of Franklin D. Roosevelt<sup>3</sup> by calling for a "new deal" for "all people of Jewish race" and insisted that the "silly nightmare" of European anti-semitism needed to be ended "once and for all." (Waddell, 2016, p. 111)

In fact, when Adolf Hitler became Chancellor on January 30, 1933, the Nazi regime launched a widespread campaign of persecution against its internal enemies, leading to a significant rise in anti-Semitic violence. To counter perceived threats to internal security, the Nazis organized a nationwide boycott of Jewish businesses, targeting Jewish shopkeepers and Eastern Jewish immigrants in Germany. On April 1, 1933, Nazi SA paramilitaries positioned themselves outside Jewish-owned shops, harassing owners, vandalizing their businesses, and displaying signs with anti-Jewish slogans. This campaign of harassment took place despite widespread condemnation from the international media, which criticized the mistreatment and discrimination of Jews and Jewish organizations in Germany. Although initially a reactionary move, the boycott of Jewish businesses intensified antisemitic policies and further strained Germany's international relations (Stewart, 2021, p. 1). In reaction to the severe antisemitism in Nazi Germany, foreign critics of the Nazi Party, including the United States and the United Kingdom, initiated a boycott of Nazi products. These critics sought to voice their opposition to Hitler's policies, expanding the boycott and organizing protests to pressure Nazi Germany into ending its anti-Jewish practices. To make matters worse, *Polenaktion* (German: Operation Poland) led to the Reich's November 1938 Pogrom in Germany and Austria, *Reichsnovemberpogrom*, initiating a pogrom against Jews (*Aktionsjuden*; Operation Jews, and *Novemberjuden*; November Jews), justified as the retaliation for the assassination of Ernst vom Rath, which made the 26,000-30,000 German and Austrian Jews incarcerated, had their properties confiscated and expropriated (*Enteignung*) by the Third Reich, and then were transported to internment camps such as Buchenwald, Dachau, and Sachsenhausen during *Reichskristallnacht* (Michael & Doerr, 2002, p. 339).

The concept "Aryanization" (German, *Arisierung*)<sup>4</sup> may therefore be employed to refer to the policies and measures enacted by the Nazi regime in Germany during the 1930s and early 1940s to forcibly transfer businesses and properties from Jewish ownership to "Aryan" that is, non-Jewish ownership, (*Arisierungsspenden*)<sup>5</sup>. The term originates from the racist and pseudo-scientific notion of Aryan racial superiority, a core component of Nazi ideology, which aimed to marginalize Jews, strip them of their assets, and undermine their livelihoods. This discriminatory and anti-Semitic policy was part of the broader systematic persecution of Jews leading up to the Holocaust during World War II. This process, known as "Aryanization," occurred in two distinct phases: "voluntary Aryanization" (from 1933 to mid-1938) and "forced Aryanization" (*Zwangsarisierung*)<sup>6</sup> (from late 1938 until the end of the Nazi regime in 1945). During the voluntary phase, Jewish businessmen and retailers, already suffering from economic and social discrimination, were pressured to sell their businesses and assets in Germany and German-occupied territories at severely reduced prices. Following the November pogroms of 1938, the forced phase began, which banned Jews from engaging in most economic and commercial activities. The Nazi regime appointed non-Jewish trustees to oversee Jewish-owned businesses, compelling them to sell or forfeit their properties to non-Jews. These discriminatory and exploitative measures significantly contributed to the economic persecution of Jews and furthered their social and economic exclusion in Nazi Germany.

To resuscitate this aspect of the Nazi boycott of Jewish commerce, Ian Kershaw, in *The 'Hitler Myth': Image and Reality in the Third Reich* (1987), states that the boycott of Jewish-Owned property and citizenship was the central strategy pursued by the Nazi Party

<sup>3</sup> Franklin D. Roosevelt (born January 30, 1882, Hyde Park, New York, U.S.—died April 12, 1945, Warm Springs, Georgia) was the 32nd president of the United States (1933–45).

<sup>4</sup> Aryanization. Expropriation of Jewish property by the Third Reich. (Michael & Doerr, 2002, p. 72)

<sup>5</sup> Contributions from aryanization. Money from the sale of expropriated Jewish property used to support the Nazi Party and pay the debts of prominent Nazis. (Michael & Doerr, 2002, p. 73)

<sup>6</sup> Forced aryanization. Confiscation of Jewish property in Germany and Austria ordered by Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring after the November 1938 Pogrom. (Michael & Doerr, 2002, p. 455)

regarding the "Jewish Question." The primary focus of the Nazi Party's agenda was the dissemination of blood libel accusations against Jews and the propagation of antisemitic propaganda, which included infamous medieval illustrations depicting Jews allegedly using human blood in religious rituals (p. 234).

But these backgrounds of religion operate in different, and indeed opposite ways. For although the Jews are responsible for our religion, they were also responsible for the Crucifixion. All the tribulations of the Jews are related to this latter fact. And the root of the "Jewish Problem" is to be looked for there. (Lewis, 1939, p. 54)

One notable instance of such anti-Jewish propaganda was the exhibition titled *Der ewige Jude*<sup>7</sup> (The Eternal Jew), showcased in January 1938, which was dubbed a "major political exhibition." This exhibit featured stereotypical portrayals of Jews and aimed to reinforce claims of a Jewish global conspiracy against Germany, as well as to establish connections between Judaism and communism. However, Avraham Barkai, in his work *From Boycott to Annihilation: The Economic Struggle of German Jews 1933-1943* (1989), argues that the boycott on April 1, 1933, did not occur suddenly but rather followed a gradual escalation of anti-Semitic propaganda and incidents of street violence even before Adolf Hitler came to power (p. 86). Nonetheless, the most susceptible demographic and main targets of the boycott were middle-class German Jews and *Ostjuden*, Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe, identifiable by their traditional attire and lesser assimilation compared to German Jews. Yet, the Nazis presented the boycott as a "purely defensive measure," responding to the surge of international criticism following the escalation of anti-Semitic violence in March (Stewart, 2021, p. 3). In this regard, to explore the radical implications of Lewis's serious political considerations regarding Jews, his philosemitic book, *The Jews: Are They Human?* released in 1939, was reviewed favourably in the *Jewish Chronicle* titled "Justice for the Jew," Lewis clarifies his most powerful philosemitic ("Jew-loving" statement with an extensive quotation:

We must make up for the doings of the so-called 'Christians' of yesterday – who degraded the Jew and then mocked at him for being degraded. We must give all people of Jewish race a new deal among us. Let us, for Heaven's sake, make an end of this silly nightmare once and for all, and turn our backs upon this dark chapter of our history. (Lewis, 1939, p. 51)

In such views, Lewis exchanged a seemingly endless flow of support and approbation of the BUF for the positive reception by the *Jewish Chronicle*, signaled a significant shift in political stance by stating that 'perhaps the Jews are the "human beings" par excellence' (Lewis, 1939, p. 8), and 'I am not "Pro-Jew"-not a partisan. But I respect the Jewish intelligence' (Lewis, 1939, p. 16). More broadly, the concept of the Jews as the chosen people, expressed in many passages of Scripture in Jewish liturgy, may be understood to connote ethnic supremacy, which implies that the Jewish people have been selected by God to worship him and to fulfill the function of proclaiming his truth among all the nations throughout the world. In essence, the idea/inspiration of the chosen people has had a profound and lasting impression on the Jews, which sets out the underlying covenant (the formal obligations) between God and the people of Israel to be faithful to God and obey his commandments. Being the chosen few brought to Israelite people carrying out the will of God with greater spiritual responsibilities and implying more demanding standards to develop a spiritual vigour to effectively convey this message that Jewish people's sense of religious mission and spiritual group destiny were closely intermeshed with the perilous historical situation (Babylonian Exile). Likewise, Jewish sufferings upon the loss of their homeland, the desperate plight of the homeless victims, and the concomitant rise of peregrinations of the Diaspora (Exile) resulted from both a consequence and a partial fulfillment of the covenant to justify their dispersal and persecution due largely to their sinfulness, a flagrant disregard for the divine law, and failure to keep God's commands.

There is all the more reason to give some thought to this because of the violent manner in which the people whom we shall be required to receive and to understand are being expelled from the places of their origin-the abruptness and force, therefore, with which they will be deposited upon a highly conservative palate. (Lewis, 1939, p. 20)

In this fashion, the Nazi political progress followed by pernicious 'cold pogroms' (an outbreak of violence in the city of Kielce, Poland, on 4 July 1946) toward the Jewish community compelled Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Czecho-slovakia, and other countries to freeze out their Jewish minorities (regarding their Jewish citizens as "undesirables") by means of usurping their power, position, job, and the role of their legislature, and subsequently the British Press covered full of blow-by-blow accounts of these events, which were nationally and internationally in the limelight, and coercive measures were taken into the migration of 600,000 Jews (Lewis, 1939). Between 1933 and 1941, a significant number of Jews were forced to flee the Third Reich (Nazi Germany and its occupied territories) due to escalating Nazi persecution. The emigration rate surged dramatically in September 1935 following the enactment of the Nuremberg Laws, which stripped German Jews of their citizenship, leaving them stateless within their own

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<sup>7</sup> (The) Eternal Jew." Antisemitic exhibition in the building of the Munich public library, opened on November 8, 1937, and called a "great political exhibition." (Michael & Doerr, 2002, p. 154)

country and without any viable future in Germany. However, many nations worldwide implemented strict immigration policies, restricting Jewish refugees and requiring extensive documentation such as citizenship papers, immigrant visas, and transit visas. The situation worsened in March 1938 when Austria was annexed into the German Reich, extending Nazi oppression from German Jews to Austrian Jews as well. In November 1938, Jewish synagogues, homes, and businesses were looted, and bank accounts were seized, effectively preventing Jews from engaging in economic activities. These actions were part of intensified Nazi policies rooted in the belief in 'Aryanization,' which aimed to further marginalize and dispossess the Jewish community.

With that being said, Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi Germany were crossing the borders into Britain, seeking a safe haven from persecution. The sudden influx of migrants caused concern for the British government regarding employment and housing availability, prompting them to adopt a stricter and more restrictive official stance towards Jewish refugees, including political refugees and those fleeing ethnic persecution. The significant increase in refugee numbers led to the implementation of a visa system to manage border control and regulate authorized entry into Britain. Despite this official restrictive policy, many refugees found ways to enter the United Kingdom without authorization, utilizing domestic service visas, participating in schemes like the Kitchener Camp, or benefiting from initiatives such as *Kindertransport*<sup>8</sup> (German: "Children's Transport"). Lewis as a satirical writer in *The Jews, Are They Human?* (1939) praises the qualities of the Jewish race and semitism/ antisemitism – the Jews are depicted as intellectual, industrious, cliquish, arrogant, good in business, stoical, courageous, pacific, plain-spoken, uncompromising, effeminate, and so on (Gąsiorek, 2015, p. 121) – is an integral part of his cultural project; hence, he points to this social phenomenon and addresses this salient issue as an inverse relationship between the Jews and the English:

Then, even if they did decide to remain with us, the Jews are one of the most industrious races in the world, and we are one of the least industrious. They will set a high standard of hard work at least, which it will be necessary for the rest of us to live up to. That will be most salutary. It is worth paying people to come here to teach us how to work! We could not have better instructors. (Lewis, 1939, p. 19)

## 5. Conclusion

### 5.1. Overview

In the course of this research, Analyzing Wyndham Lewis's *The Jews, Are They Human?* (1939) through Waddell's ideological lens reveals the complex and often contradictory ways in which fascist ideologies permeate literary criticism. Lewis's work, written during a time of heightened political extremism, serves as a provocative example of how literature can be co-opted to reflect and reinforce fascist beliefs, including anti-Semitism and authoritarianism. Despite Lewis's attempt to distance himself from overt support of fascism, his writing often blurs the boundaries between critique and complicity, illustrating how literary criticism can serve as both a mirror and a conduit for ideological currents.

Waddell's framework allows for a deeper understanding of how fascist literary criticism operates, highlighting the subtle yet pervasive ways that extremist ideologies are embedded within literary forms. By examining Lewis's use of satire, irony, and polemic, this study uncovers how these rhetorical strategies are employed not just as artistic devices but as tools that engage with fascist thought. Lewis's ambivalence toward fascism—oscillating between critique and implicit endorsement—demonstrates the dangers of literary works that straddle the line between opposition and affirmation of harmful ideologies.

The analysis further underscores the role of literature as a cultural battleground where ideological conflicts are fought and reflected. Lewis's portrayal of Jewish identity, characterized by stereotypes and contradictions, aligns with fascist narratives that seek to dehumanize and marginalize. Waddell's ideological lens helps illuminate how such portrayals are not isolated literary choices but are deeply rooted in the socio-political context of the 1930s, where fascist and authoritarian ideas were gaining traction in both public discourse and cultural production.

Ultimately, this study highlights the ethical implications of engaging with works like Lewis's, which challenge the reader to critically assess the boundaries between artistic expression and ideological influence. It calls attention to the responsibilities of writers and critics in the face of extremist thought, emphasizing the need for a vigilant and nuanced approach to literature that confronts rather than obscures the harmful legacies of fascism. By exploring *The Jews, Are They Human?* (1939) through Waddell's lens, this analysis not only deepens our understanding of Lewis's work but also serves as a broader reflection on the intersection of literature, ideology, and political power, urging a critical examination of how literary criticism can shape—and be shaped by—the ideologies of its time.

<sup>8</sup> Children's transports. Convoys or trains made up solely of Jewish children caught during Nazi roundups and deported to death camps. Also, transports of Jewish children out of Germany and Austria to England and other countries, organized by Jewish communities in Germany and relief organizations abroad, such as the World Movement for the Care of Children from Germany. (Michael & Doerr, 2002, p. 239)

### 5.2 Study Limitations

The study of fascist literary criticism in Wyndham Lewis's *The Jews, Are They Human?* (1939) faces significant limitations due to the ambiguity of Lewis's political stance, his use of satire, and the complex historical context. Lewis's earlier admiration for fascist figures like Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini complicates interpretations of this text, which was meant to critique anti-Semitism but does so in a tone that is often ironic and difficult to interpret. The satirical nature of the work can be easily misread, potentially reinforcing the very prejudices it seeks to challenge. Additionally, Lewis's broader body of work, which includes both authoritarian sympathies and attempts to distance himself from fascism, raises questions about the sincerity of his critique. These factors, along with the historical backdrop of rising fascism and World War II, make it challenging to assess the text's ideological coherence and its place within fascist literary criticism.

### 5.3 Suggestions for Future Research

Future research on Wyndham Lewis's *The Jews Are They Human?* (1939) should focus on a deeper contextual analysis of his shifting political views, particularly how his earlier fascist sympathies evolved into a critique of anti-Semitism. Scholars could explore how effectively Lewis's use of satire in this work challenges or inadvertently reinforces prejudices, using comparative studies with other satirical texts of the period. Additionally, interdisciplinary approaches that connect political theory, history, and literary criticism could provide insight into how Lewis's work interacted with broader ideological debates of the interwar period. Investigating the reception of this text over time, both contemporarily and posthumously, would also offer valuable perspectives on its impact and significance in the context of modernism and fascism.

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