



## **CLARA THOMAS ARCHIVES**

**Inventory of the  
Wyndham Lewis Collection**

**Inventory #F0584**

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## F0584 - Wyndham Lewis Collection

**Fonds/Collection Number:** F0584

**Title:** Wyndham Lewis Collection

**Dates:** 1913-2003, predominant 1957-1980

**Extent:** 0.04 m of textual records

**Biographical Sketch/  
Administrative History:** Wyndham Lewis (1882-1957) was an artist, novelist, critic and self-styled rebel. Born on a boat off the coast of Nova Scotia in to an American father and English mother, Lewis spent his early childhood living in Maritime outports until the family returned to England where his parents separated in 1893. Often in an antagonistic relationship with his Canadian origins, Lewis frequently referred to Toronto a "sanctimonious ice box" to correspondents during his residency in the city during WWII. Lewis is perhaps best known as the chief instigator of the Vorticist art movement in England, a form of Cubo-Futurism, which flourished prior to WWI. The editor of the celebrated avant-garde magazine BLAST, Lewis, along with his friend Ezra Pound, stood out as a leader of the movement, particularly because of his penchant for controversy and provocative stances. Although he spent the majority of his adult life in England, Lewis had several periods where he had a direct engagement with Canadian society. During WWI, he escaped active duty as a bombardier working instead as a war artist, where he was responsible for creating significant works of art for the Canadian War Memorials Fund, notably A Canadian Gun-Pit (1918) which resides in the National Gallery of Canada. During WWII he and his wife found refuge in Canada where he supported himself as a portrait painter in Toronto and as a teacher at Assumption College in Windsor, Ontario. In fact, his novel Self-Condemned (1954) is set in Momaco, a fictionalized Toronto. He and his wife resided at the Tudor Hotel on Sherbourne Street from 1940 to 1943, until a hotel fire forced them to move. Lewis's writing and art have had significant influence on major Canadian figures, most notably the author Sheila Watson and the media theorist Marshall McLuhan. Befriended by McLuhan during WWII, Lewis had a significant impact on McLuhan's theories on media and in particular his concept of "the global village" and the study of the mechanical environment as a teaching machine. After the war Lewis and his wife returned to England where he continued to write criticism and published a semi-autobiographical novel "Self-Condemned." Wyndham Lewis went completely blind in 1951 and died in England in 1957.

**Scope and Content:** Collection consists of archival material included in the Wyndham Lewis Collection. Consisting of batches of letters from Lewis' widow, Anne Wyndham Lewis (Froanna), news clippings on various aspects of Lewis' public activities (book reviews, criticism, artwork, obituaries), and promotional material relating to his publications (publishers' advertisements, inserts, and other ephemera).

**Custodial History:** Much of this collection is made up of items related to the work and influence of Wyndham Lewis from a variety of sources. The provenance of many of these materials is unclear. Many of these letters or pieces of ephemera may have been acquired by Hugh Anson Cartwright in the course of his activities as an antiquarian book dealer as well as a collector of Lewis' work.

**Restrictions on  
Access and Use:** There are no restrictions on access.

**Finding Aid:** File list is available.

**URL of Finding Aid:** <http://archivesfa.library.yorku.ca/fonds/ON00370-f0000584.htm>

**Accruals:** The fonds comprises the following accessions: 2010-051. No further accruals are expected.

**Associated Material:** Other archival fonds or collections related to Wyndham Lewis can be found at Cornell University's Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections (collection number 4162), the Cyril James Fox fonds at the University of Victoria's Special

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Collections, the Sheila Watson fonds at the University of St. Michael's College and the Marshall McLuhan fonds at Library Archives Canada.

**Physical Condition:** Materials are in good condition, some foxing on pages.

**Provenance Access Points:** Lewis, Wyndham, 1882-1957

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