

# A Novel for Broadcasting

**B**LINDNESS is always a tragedy. The slow misting out of light and shade, colour, distance and proximity must, for anybody, be like losing half the world. For a painter, though, it must be almost like the loss of life itself. Wyndham Lewis was a considerable artist and critic. He began to go blind noticeably about December, 1950. By May of this year he could make out only lights and shadows and moving objects. Painting, and, of course, criticism, became impossible.

Fortunately, though, Lewis is writer as well as an artist, and blindness seems to have intensified his abilities, and particularly his sense of humour. He uses a dictaphone now, instead of a pen, and finds it no more of a hardship than anything else concerned with his blindness.

Twenty-three years ago Wyndham Lewis began *The Childermass*, the first of what was to be a trilogy of novels.



BBC photograph  
WYNDHAM LEWIS (left) and D. G. Bridson listen to the BBC's recording of "The Childermass"

The first novel was finished, but the second and third parts were never written. *The Childermass* is a serious piece of social criticism. It is thought, by some people, to be Lewis's most brilliantly imaginative work. The story is set "outside Heaven." Two ex-Public schoolboys, the principal characters, are being put through a stiff entrance examination by the Bailiff, and Lewis makes full use of his ability to write subtle and penetrating satire.

Some time ago the BBC asked Wyndham Lewis to adapt *The Childermass* for broadcasting in the Third Programme. He did so with the help of D. G. Bridson, one of the BBC's feature producers, and a poet of some distinction, who visited New Zealand in 1948. The broadcast was a success, and as a result of it, the BBC took the unusual step of commissioning Lewis to write part two of the trilogy.

Commissioned novels, these days, are fairly rare. This one will probably be unique, for the BBC proposes to broadcast it, together with part one, before its actual publication as a book. More than that, the novel will not be heard on the air in its original form. It will be specially adapted by Lewis and Bridson. This is because the BBC feels that only when *The Childermass* is finished as Lewis originally planned it will the best of it be obtainable for broadcasting.

It's a distinctly new step, not only in broadcasting, but also in the business of writing a novel. We've had radio plays, both in verse and prose, talks, histories and documentaries, all influenced by the medium through which they were transmitted. It would be interesting to speculate on what influence that medium might have on the novel.

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## SEARCH FOR A STAND-IN

**F**ROM the *ABC Weekly* we learn that one of the first jobs that Frank Muir and Denis Norden had to do when they arrived back in London from Australia was not to sit down and write another *Take It From Here* script, but to go out and find a stand-in for Joy Nichols. Miss Nichols (or Mrs. Wally Petersen, as she is outside the studios) is expecting a baby in March, and somebody will have to take care of Bentley and Edwards while she's away. Avril Angers deputised for her when, a few weeks ago, she spent a little time in a nursing home. Who will deputise this time is a question that Norden and Muir have to answer. It's a matter, in fact, of *Take Her From Where?*



BBC photograph  
MRS. WALLY PETERSEN

N.Z. LISTENER, DECEMBER 7, 1951.



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