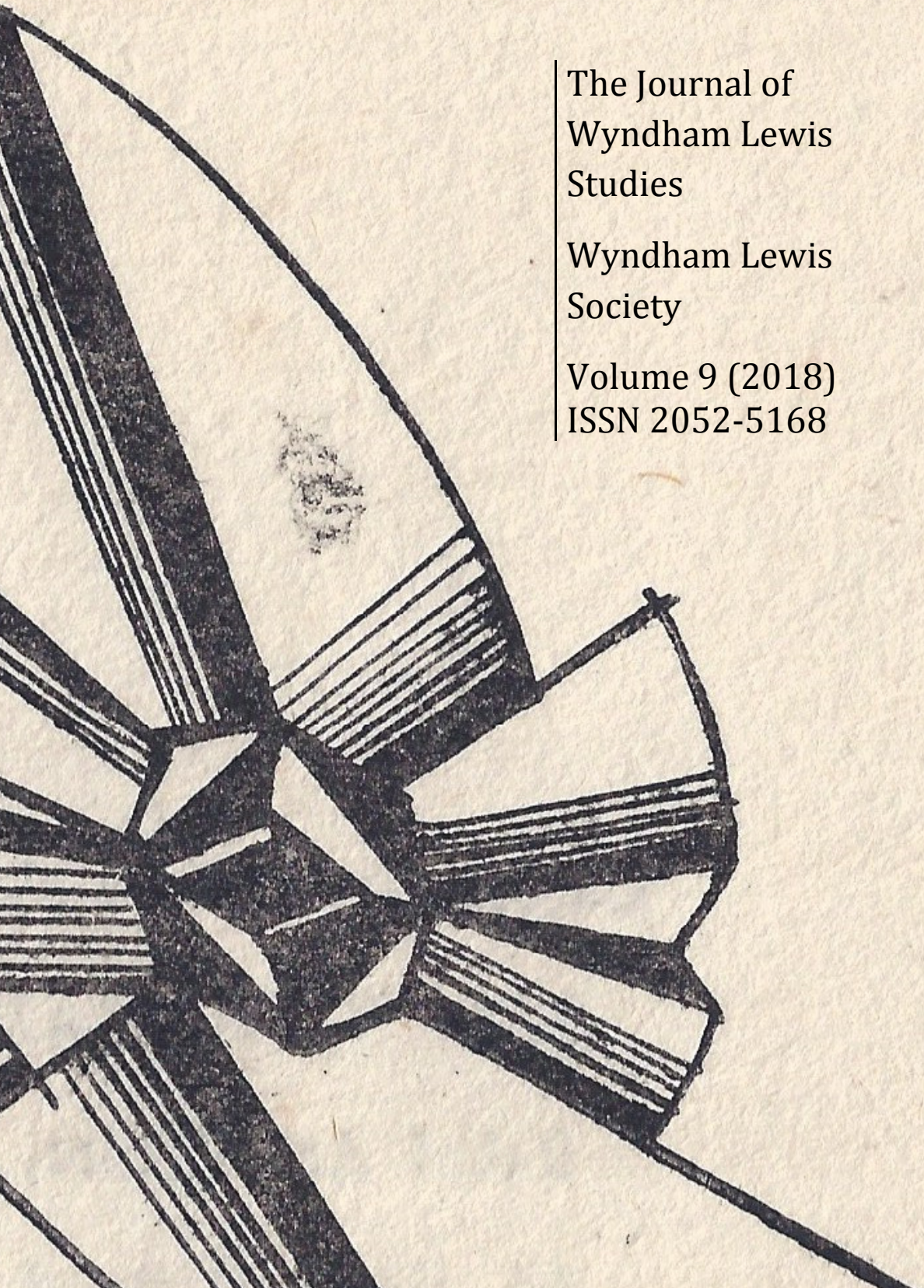

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Wyndham Lewis Society

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Contents

Editorial

In Lewis's 'Preface' to *Tarr* (1918), which was actually written in 1915 in advance of the novel's serialization in *The Egoist* between April 1916 and November 1917, he asked of England's citizenry that 'at the moment of this testing and trying of the forces of the nation, of intellect, of character, [it] should grant more freedom to the artists and thinkers to develop their visions and ideas. That [it] should make an effort of sympathy' (*T1* 14). By these remarks Lewis may have intended to articulate his impatience with what he elsewhere called the 'endless unabating murder and misery' (*B2* 16) of an industrial war machine that had already killed the sculptor Henri Gaudier-Brzeska and recruited both Ford Madox Ford and T. E. Hulme (who would eventually die in the trenches in 1917), and which would soon enlist not only Lewis himself but also fellow modernists like Jacob Epstein and Richard Aldington. On the other hand Lewis may have intended the comment as a rebuff to those whose artistic tastes had limited the opportunities through which a voice like his own might be heard. Whatever the case, it's clear that Lewis viewed the moment in which his request was put forward as one of acute unease and crisis, when the intellectual and artistic visions of Vorticism were being curtailed by forces outside his control.

Reading Lewis's 'Preface' in 2018, it's hard not to think that our current moment of testing and trying forces would benefit from Lewis's constructive scorn. That, indeed, is the position adopted by the writer and Lewis biographer Jeffrey Meyers, whose essay on Lewis's 'cruel satire' closes this special issue of *The Journal of Wyndham Lewis Studies*, which pays tribute to the rhetorically energizing and satirically confrontational complexity of Lewis's most widely read, and arguably finest, novel. We can see in *Tarr* how Lewis had already established himself as nigh-on constitutionally opposed to the reassuring idioms, vocabularies, and emphases of cliché. *Tarr* is in this sense an early example of Lewis's insistent criticism of those who, like the character Percy in his late novel *Self Condemned* (1954), 'never went behind words or underneath clichés or slogans' (*SC* 51). Lewis described the analysis he offered in *The Art of Being Ruled* (1926) as an attempt to get 'outside of the cadres and clichés of any

recognized federated opinion' (*ABR* 319), and *Time and Western Man* (1927) was quite clearly conceived as a book with which to further this very same agenda, with its rejections of 'incontinent, florid and nebulous language' (*TWM* 184) and its criticisms of 'conventional and fixed order[s]' (*TWM* 90) of thought and being. *Tarr* likewise needs to be seen in this context, because the brusquely telegraphic style in which it is written – the 'jagged prose' (*L* 553) Lewis later mentioned in an oft-quoted letter to Hugh Kenner – is itself a bid to cut through habituated, imitative modes of communication. Hence Andrzej Gąsiorek's insistence that '*Tarr* suggests that the encrustations of conventional language – which has become cliché and habit – must be resisted', a confrontation staged by means of an anti-empathic literary style that 'proclaims its contempt for derivative language and, by implication, the second-hand modes of thought to which the objects of [Lewis's] satire remain in thrall.'[1] According to Marshall McLuhan, Lewis's prose style is meant to shock 'the conventional art consumer who [has] long been accustomed to swiftly moving conveyor belts of narrative action and imagery which [arrive] untouched by the human hand and ready for instant and effortless consumption.'[2]

The paradox here, however, is that even those individuals who are constitutionally opposed to cliché need cliché for their oppositional temperaments to have a shape and a purpose. The one defines the other. In this respect, Lewis's 'dynamic, disjunctive, [and] performative' style, as Gąsiorek describes it, can in a certain sense be seen as evidence of the stubborn *presence* of cliché, rather than of its *absence*; of a concern born from a need to continually hunt cliché down and stamp it out.[3] Put another way, we might say that Lewis's performative prose, for all its stylistic flair and inventiveness, guarantees the conceptual existence of cliché by virtue of speaking so insistently against it. Lewis's 'enemy' prose (and pose) needs its enemies for its adversarialism to be intelligible. Think of his self-designation, in *Blasting and Bombardiering* (1937), as Edith Sitwell's '*favourite enemy*', a formula calculated to suggest symbiotic interdependence. As he explains, despite (or because of) their implacable opposition, he and Sitwell have become '*inseparables*' (*BB* 96). A comparable revelation descends upon that walking cliché, Otto Kreisler, in the course of his duel with Louis Soltyk, in which he suddenly experiences a 'cruel and fierce sensation of mixed origin': 'He *loved* that man! But because he loved him he wished to plunge a sword into him, to plunge it in and out and up and down!' (*T1* 270).

In the Preface to *Tarr*, Lewis explains that he had been 'moved' by contemporary events 'to vomit Kreisler forth', thus projecting the blame for his 'hapless protagonist' (*T1* 13) on to the wider culture, while surreptitiously acknowledging a grotesque form of paternity. Lewis certainly relied on clichéd phrasing when it suited him, as David Trotter has pointed out.[4] Indeed, despite his claim in *Rude Assignment* that he had entirely 'abstained from the use of clichés' (*RA* 129) when composing *Tarr*, his portrayal of Kreisler as a monstrous void of self-examination meant that he could not possibly jettison cliché altogether. The novel is in this respect caught up in a further irony: Lewis's prose style gives life to the platitudes and ersatz selves it scorns simply by attending to their imitativeness with such descriptive ingenuity.[5] Ian Patterson has made a similar argument in relation to Lewis's *The Apes of God* (1930), wherein the 'figures paraded before us are denied the possibility of being mere mechanisms or surfaces by the demands Lewis's prose makes on the phenomenology of our reading'.[6] *Mutatis mutandis*, it becomes possible to see how *Tarr* needs cliché for its animadversions against cliché to be feasible in the first place.

The cliché *Tarr* needs above all others, perhaps, is the idea that bourgeois-bohemian leisureliness is indeed something to be mocked. There is very little in *that* gesture which makes Lewis distinctive. To name just two other figures, H. G. Wells and Thomas Mann had recently been there and done it in *Tono-Bungay* (1909) and *Death in Venice* (1912), respectively. What makes Lewis stick out from his contemporaries is the manner, the set of anti-humanistic stylistic manoeuvres, in which the gesture is made. *Tarr* depends for its effectiveness on the contrast that Lewis found so problematic in James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922): that between a series of orthodoxly comic 'types', all of them detectable to varying degrees in preceding works of fiction, and a stylistically dynamic manner of representing them. In his analysis of Joyce's novel, Lewis makes a distinction between 'verbal clichés' and the 'walking clichés' which in his view comprise the bulk of its characters. Lewis's argument is that the style of *Ulysses* denotes 'a very complex, overcharged façade' whose 'surprises of style and unconventional attitudes' conceal 'figures underneath [who] are of a remarkable simplicity' and 'of the most orthodoxly comic outline.' As Lewis puts it: 'The admirable writing will seduce you, perhaps, from attending too closely, at first, to the characterization. But what in fact you are given there, in the way of character, is the most conventional stuff in the world' (*TWM* 93-4).

We'll leave the matter of whether Lewis was right about Joyce to the Joyceans. What's certain is that there is very little that is conventional – in the ordinary sense of *being ordinary* – in *Tarr*, as the essays collected below bear out. First up is Allan Pero's phenomenological reading of the 'necropolitan aesthetics' of *Tarr*. Here, the emphasis falls on how certain ideas about death and the deathly inform not only the storyline of the novel, but also its phenomenological texturing. Then comes David Mulry's celebration of the formal and structural distinctiveness of Lewis's novel. Part narrative appreciation, part narrative investigation, Mulry's article invites us to look again at just how central the titular protagonist of *Tarr* really is, tracking his centrality and co-ordinating significance all the way through the run of the novel. The third article in the present issue is Flora de Giovanni's wide-ranging response to the claim that *Tarr* is a peculiarly Dostoevskian novel. Situating *Tarr* in relation to the forebears Lewis himself pointed out, here the focus is on how scenes and ideas can be detected in Lewis's novel which suggest a Dostoevskian inheritance, one that reminds us of the ways Lewis's writing can profitably be situated in relation to his nineteenth-century European predecessors. Picking up on this same Dostoevskian connection, Udith Dematagoda's interpretation of the careful, highly self-reflexive staging of the idea of 'national allegory' in *Tarr* feels very timely in the current age of resurgent nationalisms, as does Jeffrey Meyers's piece on the value of Lewis's critique in an era of political charlatans, which rounds off the volume.

Indeed, given the subject matter of these last two pieces in the issue, it is hard not to wonder what Lewis would have made of the ideas surging through, and the decisions being taken in, today's world. While this issue of *The Journal of Wyndham Lewis Studies* is offered in celebration of the centenary of the publication of *Tarr* in novel form, it is also meant to suggest, as the work of all of our contributors demonstrates, that Lewis's ideas still speak urgently, one hundred years on, to our most pressing cultural and political concerns.

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N.B. The editors would like to thank David Stoker for his characteristically generous help in proofreading the volume with us, at a very late stage in the production process.

Notes

[1] Andrzej Gąsiorek, *A History of Modernist Literature* (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 282 and 285.
[2] Marshall McLuhan, 'Lewis's Prose Style', in Jeffrey Meyers (ed.), *Wyndham Lewis: A Revaluation* (London: The Athlone Press, 1980): 64-7, at 65.
[3] Gąsiorek, *A History of Modernist Literature*, 284.
[4] David Trotter, *Paranoid Modernism: Literary Experiment, Psychosis, and the Professionalization of English Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 286-7.
[5] As Gąsiorek notes elsewhere: 'It is in the ambiguous space that opens up when the stale language of cliché and stereotype is seen through but is still in force that Lewis finds his material' (*Wyndham Lewis and Modernism* (Tavistock: Northcote House, 2004), 9).
[6] Ian Patterson, 'Beneath the Surface: Apes, Bodies and Readers', in Paul Edwards (ed.), *Volcanic Heaven: Essays on Wyndham Lewis's Painting & Writing* (Santa Rosa: Black Sparrow Press, 1996): 123-34, at 133.

‘Paris hints of sacrifice’: Necropolitan Aesthetics in *Tarr*

Allan Pero

Several of the most immediate and provocative elements of Lewis’s first novel narrate the ways in which the subject’s relation to space is transformed. Here, Paris is figured as a body encasing and containing fluid: Tarr compares a Paris street to ‘a pleasant current, setting from some immense, and tropic gulf, neighboured by Floridas of remote invasions. He ambled down it puissantly, shoulders shaped like these waves; a heavy-sided drunken fish. The houses, with winks of the shocked clock-work, were grazed, holding along their surface thick soft warmth. It poured weakly into his veins’ (*T1* 50). The tumid metaphor is womb-like, yet strangely porous. On the one hand, Tarr’s body is carried by the city current; on the other, his body, its veins and capillaries, are permeated by the fluidity of the heat provided by the streets themselves. But the problem of permeability is also ascribed to Bertha. Tarr views her as a ‘lymphatic’ (*T1* 49) intrusion beneath his skin; his feeling for her is perforce ambivalent since she can be understood either as healthful, carrying lymph to his heart, or as a constitutive threat to his psychic immune system – one that his body must work to reject by slowly secreting ‘*this famous feeling of indifference*’ to her (*T1* 49). This impulse is consistent with Tarr’s contention that the personality of others is a kind of disease, and that ‘We all are sicknesses for each other’ (*T1* 72).

Indeed, the city’s very rhythms are at moments conceived as a potential phenomenological threat; as is the case in several of Lewis’s works, subjects wander the metropolis in search of a dwelling, a refuge, and, most persistently, a shell from which to retreat from the barrage of stimuli that overwhelms them. In *The Arcades Project*, Walter Benjamin persistently figures interior spaces as shells, which become one of the text’s prevailing motifs:

> The original form of all dwelling is existence not in the house but in the shell. The shell bears the impression of its occupant. In the most extreme instance, the dwelling becomes a shell. The nineteenth century, like no other century, was addicted to dwelling.

> It conceived the residence as a receptacle for the person, and it encased him with all his appurtenances so deeply in the dwelling's interior that one might be reminded of the inside of a compass case, where the installment with all its accessories lies embedded in deep, usually violet folds of velvet. What didn't the nineteenth century invent some sort of casing for![1]

The sureness, the sense of safety afforded by buildings, rooms, even the body itself, is rendered purely provisional. The privation of spaces for rest is a challenge to the pleasures of nostalgia; space, according to Henri Lefebvre, 'unleashes desire' but fails to resolve itself in the object.[2] I contend that what has been so often read in Lewis as a Marinettian privileging of what Peter Bürger has called the 'armoured subject' is instead a stinging interrogation of the modern subject's desire for shells, and of the kinds of spaces most conducive to the creation of art.[3] In this respect, Lewis is less interested in technology, or in the various technological determinisms that modernism gave rise to, than in an aesthetics that would return cultural control to the hands of artists and writers. Tim Armstrong, in *Modernism, Technology, and the Body: A Cultural Study*, argues that, for Lewis, unthinking valorization of '[m]echanical extension is beside the point; the real issue is artistic control, and correspondingly technique'.[4] It is thus by re-imagining 'a technology of writing, in performative criteria, that the machine age best expresses itself.'[5]

In a famous passage from the novel, Tarr visits Bertha at her apartment, and they look over photographs, grim, mocking reminders of their former happiness. For Bertha, the photograph of Tarr she has placed on her table has an affective, even phenomenological effect on the objects that surround it:

> She went on with a trivial rearrangement of her writing-table. This had been her occupation as he appeared at the gate beneath, drawing her ironical and musing eye from his image to himself. A new photograph of Tarr was being placed on her writing table flush with the window. Ten days previously it had been taken in that room. It had ousted a Klinger and generally created a restlessness, to her eye, in the other objects. (*T1* 53)

It is not insignificant that the photograph has ousted a reproduction of a Klinger image; we are told later that the Klingers she possesses are but weapons in a psychological arsenal, deployed along with a bust of Beethoven and Breton jars to manipulate Tarr into a confession of love, if not a submission to it (*T1* 72-3). (Here, one could speculate which Klinger reproductions she might own: 'Angste' or 'Abduction' [both 1893], or perhaps 'Kuss' [1887]). The 'restlessness' produced by the photograph's presence would suggest that she has to some extent absorbed a logic of stillness and deadness that is perhaps inherent to photography. The photograph's stillness, a technological artefact of Tarr's having been captured by the camera in her flat, stands metonymically as a marker of her desire to hold on to him. But in turn, the disquiet of the surrounding objects would suggest a kind of transference. Tarr's restlessness, itself an affective index of his liveliness, has been deadened, rendered spectral by the act of photography. The moment the photographer takes the picture is one that Roland Barthes describes as a 'death in which his gesture will embalm me.'[6] As a result, his erstwhile vivacity is affectively transferred to the different objects in the room; the photograph's permanence simultaneously mocks Tarr's desire to be free, or, at least, free of her, even as it would, in sentimental terms, seem to reduce him to what Heidegger calls *Ge-stell* – the framing of the world by technology that reduces the subject to a 'standing-reserve', enslaved in this case primarily by the demands of romance, rather than those of technology.[7] Even for Bertha, his anxious restiveness cannot be utterly mastered by photographic technology; in being spatially framed, his affect is merely displaced.

The anxiety is deepened by his looking at a photograph of the couple together; this absurdly romantic effigy of their relationship prompts Tarr's deeply problematic reflection on the nature of masculine and feminine subjects:

> He was remembering Schopenhauer. It was of a Chinese puzzle of boxes within boxes, or of insects' discarded envelopes. A woman had in the middle of her a kernel, a sort of very substantial astral baby. This baby was apt to swell. She then became *all* baby. The husk he held was a painted mummy-case. He was a mummy case, too. Only he contained nothing but innumerable other painted cases inside, smaller and smaller ones. The smallest was not a

> substantial astral baby, however, or live core, but a painting like the rest.=His kernel was a painting. (*T1* 58-9)

The permeability we have thus far encountered becomes more acute in the collapse of inner and outer, in the blurring of distinctions that represent the body as a constituent element of distinguishing subject from other. In this comparison, the body re-emerges as a series of Möebius-like mummy-cases, enveloping the rattling kernel (or soul) of an otherwise dead, empty subjectivity. In his reading of this passage, David Dwan opens up the possibility that if the painting at the 'core' of the self is the artist's work, then the 'metaphor of the self as artwork gestures towards a radical form of freedom in which the project of self-determination is not constrained in advance by an essential core: even the content of the self must be self-determined if Tarr's autocratic ambitions are to be realised.'[8] But the insistence upon utter self-determination is precisely what generates Tarr's anxiety about his always impinged-upon freedom; in this logic, the extinguishing of desire, perhaps of the living self, is concomitant with the desire for freedom.

What is fascinating and disturbing is that Bertha's body somehow defies this process: the misogyny that swirls around her mummy-like flesh renders her more stable; her image, at first glance, does not seem to require the tropological complexity and anxiety that Tarr's does. But it does suggest that in Tarr's mind, woman as symptom of man is, if you will, ontologically pregnant. If so, then paternity in effect does not have a symbolic function and exists only as a lure, one meant to ensnare the man. This anxiety warrants critical attention, but for now, I want to consider the following: What is happening to the subject's relation to space? Spiralling out from Tarr's kernel (which is itself a dead thing, a simulacrum *in potentia*) is a series of virtually identical boxes, whose ostensible purpose is contradicted by its failure to provide stability.

Yet this fantasy dovetails neatly into Tarr's theory of art: '*deadness* is the first condition of art. […] The second is absence of *soul*, in the sentimental human sense. The lines and masses of the statue are its soul. No restless, quick flame-like ego is imagined for the *inside* of it. It has no inside. This is another condition of art; *to have no inside*, nothing you cannot *see*' (*T1* 299-300). In his analysis of this passage, Peter Bürger contends that Tarr's declaration is the logical end of an aesthetic programme in which 'the production of the artist precedes that of the work' (Bürger, *DM* 130). This assertion is an overstatement of Lewis's own claims regarding

the artist as the original subject in art; indeed, it utterly conflates Lewis with Tarr, a move that blunts the force and nuance of Lewis's persistent interest in deadness as a condition of art.

By way of example, I will turn to a relatively neglected text in the Lewis canon. He evinces an almost happy excitement in *The Diabolical Principle and the Dithyrambic Spectator* (1931) over Elliot Smith's *The Evolution of the Dragon* (1919), an anthropological study of the origin of art. Death, in Smith's view, forms the basis of art in ancient cultures. (I should mention that Lewis concentrates primarily upon Egyptian art and culture, which was then routinely assumed to be one of the origins of civilization.) Lewis's fascination with Smith's argument revolves around three problematics: doubling, mimesis, and death itself. Why is death posited as the origin of the work of art? Because of the Egyptian mania for what Lewis, following Didorus, calls 'concrete necromancy' (*DPDS* 174); that is, how contact with the dead evolved into the creation of statuary. In this way, art is fundamentally thanatological; art begins with the desire to preserve the body, to understand the means with which continuity can be held in suspension and embalmed to keep it from decay. The desire to preserve is transformed by the aesthetic process into the artefact: the goal of the artist, then, is not to produce himself as artist in order to produce the artwork; rather, the artist's objective consists in the paradoxical union of life and death: 'Indeed, in dynastic Egypt, *art* comes nearer to *life* than at any other recorded period: and apparently for the reason that it was *death*' (*DPDS* 180). But Lewis's approval circles around the ambiguity of the enterprise: that death had not yet been buried by an avalanche of vitalistic simulacra, that death retains the power of ambivalence.

If we compare Lewis's position with that of Jean Baudrillard, who sees death as having been rendered utterly 'ideological', Lewis sees an opportunity to recover the power of death in art as resistance.[9] As his gloss of Smith's argument reveals, Lewis is not interested in privileging the artist. At one point in *The Diabolical Principle*, he admits that it does not really matter whether the artist comes first; what is important is that death prompts the artist's appearance (*DPDS* 188). Instead, he announces (after Smith) the problem of the artist's absorption by the artwork. In this regard, Lewis's thinking is akin to that of Adorno, in that the relation of the artist to the art (in death's space) is a form of identification that is 'not that of making the artwork like himself, but rather that of making himself like the artwork.'[10] In sum, the artwork cannot be reduced to an ideal-ego, an imaginary projection on the part of the subject to ensure his mastery

of its form. The artwork's lack of interiority, then, posits a negative space giving shape and extension to exteriority; in tandem, the tension between them becomes the constituent condition of form itself. Like Maurice Blanchot, Lewis is interested in 'absence' prompted by death, the crab-like movement toward the act of creation that comes 'under the attraction of the outside.'[11]

Although Bürger does insist that Lewis/Tarr acknowledges the need for formlessness, like Adorno and Paul Valéry, he again misses the point of Adorno's privileging of form, of exteriority in the artwork. The articulation of the artwork is not rendered 'complete', as Bürger insists, by the exigencies of form (Bürger, *DM* 130). Rather, it is that form itself, its lines and masses, is an implicit acknowledgment of the formless. For Adorno, the formless is the grotesque, an external resistance that prevents form from lapsing into sterility (Adorno, *AT* 46). Lewis also recognizes the power of the ugly in the production of modern artworks as an essential component of the problems posed by and in modernism. In 'The Artist Older than the Fish', a section of *The Caliph's Design* (1919), Lewis declares that the artist's function is 'to create – to make something; and *not* to *make something pretty* […] In any synthesis of the universe, the harsh, the hirsute, the enemies of the rose, must be built in for the purposes as much of a fine aesthetic, as of a fine logical, structure' (*CD* 66). Of course, it goes without saying that for Lewis, the artist's formal goal is to produce deadness, not to be dead. But this difference only demonstrates the fact that in *Tarr*, the artist's relation to death requires greater scrutiny.

In *The Space of Literature*, Blanchot explores the connection between the suicide and the artist. The planning of a suicide is a means of distraction from the attraction of death. The vigilance, the mode of self-interrogation that obsesses the suicide, is used to forestall the confrontation with death itself. The suicide, for Blanchot, hopes to master death by (an)aestheticizing his relation to it. In other words, the suicide uses any number of techniques (rituals, letter-writing, and offerings) to construct a frame around death.[12] I want to emphasize that Blanchot is not suggesting that the impulse to create art is a pathological condition; rather, he is saying that, in their respective projects, artists and suicides test or wager upon a singular form of possibility; the leap beyond that includes a radical reversal that precludes representation, since there is no return from death. The crucial difference between the artist and the suicide is this: the reversal is oriented for the suicide toward its end; for the artist, the artwork 'seeks this reversal as its *origin*' (Blanchot, *SL* 106).

Blanchot's insight is anticipated in Lewis's fascination with death and its connection to the evolution of the artist; the artist, like the embalmer, hopes to capture and maintain for eternity the moment of 'living death' (*DPDS* 180).

The distinction Blanchot makes between the suicide and the artist may very well summarize the difference between Kreisler and Tarr. Consider the moment when Kreisler posts the letter declaring his intention to shoot himself – the narration evokes the ancient Egyptian idea of death, but with a twist. We are told: 'His life might almost have been regarded as a long and careful preparation for voluntary death. The nightmare of Death, as it haunted the imaginations of the Egyptians, had here been conjured in another way' (*T1* 164). For Kreisler, death 'was not to be overcome with embalmings and Pyramids, or fought within the souls of children' (*T1* 164). Rather, his fate is sealed as if by an immobile 'race of statues', who eschew the building of a pyramid, and are working to sacrifice Kreisler, casting his living 'flesh in Death's path instead of basalt' (*T1* 164). In his fantasy of mastering death, Kreisler 'would have undoubtedly been a high priest among this people' (*T1* 164). But as we know, Kreisler's plan does not come off; his plans to shoot himself, or, alternatively, to be shot by Soltyk, fail, and he ultimately hangs himself in his cell, after which his body is summarily 'thrust […] savagely into the earth' (*T1* 286).

One of the serious obstacles to this triumph over death in art is the deadness of the eye, of the gaze of the dead object. It became the tell-tale sign of its greater resemblance to death than to life. The eye (or perhaps more properly, the *gaze*) is figured as the space of death in art that, for a period, could not be made to live. It was an aporia or 'lacuna in human ingenuity on the hither side of which, like an island nation, art prospered' (*DPDS* 183). Thus, the eye of the dead object is estranged from the subject; the dead eye is the irreducible kernel that functions as the conduit between subject and other. The conflict between the eye and the gaze is, as we have seen, an acknowledgment of the resistance that inheres even in identification. What Lewis suggests in his remark about the deadness of the eye is not only that the artwork functions as a *fascinum*, as an evil eye that frustrates the mastery of the artist over his material, but also that the eye itself resists the mastery of the cogito. This lacuna in the subject, through which death can pass, is the penetrating gaze of the object, or what Adorno calls the 'expression' of non-identity in the artwork (Adorno, *AT* 110-12). It is this gap that so fascinates Lewis. The fraught

relation of the artist and embalmer to death manifests itself in the production of doubles, those compensatory gestures that attempt to arrest the power of death (even as they celebrate it).

What is the nature of this doubling? It posits the alterity of death as a place, a site that ironically substantiates the reality of everyday life. 'To regard the image in the mirror,' Lewis contends, 'or the thought or image in the mind, as being as real as its original – or the shadow as the substance – has characterized everywhere the primitive mind. […] The egyptian [*sic*] Other-world was such a *double*. The *Ka* [aesthetic spirit] was a double. And the statue of the portraitist was in the nature of a shadow' (*DPDS* 186). As a result, the erection of the Ka-house troubles death's relation to place, not space. The form of the cadaver becomes, as it were, its own place. In its obliqueness, death is, like the gaze, perspectivally other because its representation implies a turning away from death that is experienced not only by the subject, but also by the spirit of the dead object. This aversion (in order to produce a version) occurs in using the body as a model. The artist must constantly avert his gaze from the subject of representation in order to privilege the hereness, or the proximity, of the object. The limits of the artist's or embalmer's phenomenological relation to death turn them back toward themselves, to the production of *natures mortes*. When the desire to capture the paradox of death is reflected back upon the artist or embalmer, when the creative act is unacknowledged by the dead, the cadaver takes on the image of itself. The body becomes a cenotaph, marking the monumentality of the image, even in the absence created by death: the effect is a doubling – it is, in Walter Benjamin's famous phrase, 'the death-mask of its conception.'[13] The cadaver is so absolutely (resolutely?) itself that it 'resembles itself' (Blanchot, *SL* 258-60).

In turn, the doubleness prompted by death, in the movement of the spirit from the corpse to its image, excites fascination and duplicity. To create a double for the spirit to inhabit in death is a recognition of death's spatial otherness. Thus, the basis for the spirit of the artwork occurs in the concern for housing the departed spirit of the body. In this way, the spirit of the artwork is understood as a shuttling between the cadaver and its compensatory double; Lewis sees the creation of the double as 'suitable quarters' for the soul, the creation of 'an independent existence of something that is *you* or *I* apart from our bodies, both sleep and death providing their corroborative evidence' (*DPDS* 191). In this manner, the double's immanence is an explicit admission that the spirit is

both transcendent and immanent.[14] It is the immanent mediation provided by the double that sustains the tensions in the artwork. Now, we are positioned to see the two bodies as a relational tableau.

The conscious construction of death's space is a means of turning toward death as a mode of intentionality. Our conscious need to acknowledge the otherness of death suggests that we are produced by a consciousness outside ourselves. As a result, the artist produces (in this instance) an exterior representation, a place that sustains the possibility of an intimacy with death. Justus Nieland has nominated this dimension of Lewis's thought 'eccentric', but in a specific sense: for Nieland, 'eccentric feeling' functions as a means of resisting the twin lures of mimesis and sympathy, which reduce or depersonalize the subject into types – in its bellicose externality, Lewis's work is an attempt to resist 'feeling's irreducibility to identity, its pre-discursive status, its openness to contingency and change.'[15] This paradoxical concept of external intimacy is part of Lewis's commitment to maintaining the sphere of consciousness in the modern subject. In order to forestall what he perceives as the semantics of solipsism in modernism's blind exaltation of the unconscious, he posits a spatial theory of the subject that strangely parallels Jacques Lacan's notion of *ex-timité*, the realization that the unconscious is not merely interior, but is also exterior, located in the other.[16] The subject is then structured both by her relation to the other as outside, and to objects as virtual antennae of affects generated by subjects. Incidentally, the egoism of an unmediated relation to the unconscious as purely interior is precisely the point of Lewis's polemical attitude to the 'Time-doctrine' (*TWM* 392-5).

According to Blanchot (and Lewis), the idea of making the two deaths coexistent is an illusion; that is to say, the illusory aspect of the double is a desire to conflate the physical death of the body with its representation. In this schema, the artist and the embalmer encounter the impossible death (which resists representation); this encounter is the repetition, the persistence of the 'demand' that the artwork places upon them (Blanchot, *SL* 55). This demand is the aesthetic puzzle that requires solving. As we have seen, Lewis centres the demand of the work around the resistance of the eye to representation, to making it life-like. He concedes that, at the moment the enigma of the eye is resolved – that is, by avoiding the problem of the gaze – the artworks that follow become inherently less interesting (*DPDS* 183).

But let us follow up more closely the problem of mimesis that lurks in the death/art model I have been exploring. Under particular circumstances, the production of the artwork can be understood as paranoiac. If death, in Lewis's view, produces the artistic doublings that form a shell on the surface of the object (the wrappings of mummification, the trappings of sculpture and portraiture), then the work provides a representation of wholeness even as the corpse collapses into amorphousness. A paranoiac relation is set up in which the artwork is simultaneously passive in its submission to the artist/embalmer's desire, whilst affectively rendering the artist/embalmer passive in his fascination. In Adorno's terms, the artwork is the *Schein* (or semblance) that articulates the epistemological aspect of mimesis *without* closing the distance (or field of tension) between subject and object. Indeed, the more expressive the artwork becomes, the more the semblance of the artwork's self-sufficiency is threatened. However, this semblance is necessary to the apparition of the non-identical (as resistance). It is this moment in the development of Western art that interests Lewis, the enigma that revolves upon the semblance of death-in-life. Semblance's triumph over the expressive deadness of the eye is a cause for mourning: it is the loss of expression in the artwork to semblance, which veils or obliterates death's alterity. The need to reproduce the lost object in death can be understood, in aesthetic terms, as the motivational force of the death drive. Of course, the irony of the subject's relation to pleasure is linked to the desire to repeat; the loss of the object or moment of pleasure spurs the subject (for our purposes, the artist/embalmer) to attempt to obliterate the fact of the loss in the production of the artefact, the compensatory double. This artefact is, to invoke Benjamin once more, 'the death-mask of its conception.'

Indeed, Lewis's excitement about Smith's text is informed by the recovery of the conventions that surround the development of art. These conventions reappear in the form of a death-mask. The rediscovery of these conventions is akin to a death-mask that commemorates the face, which stands metonymically not only for the body, but also for the subject. In this way, the artwork gives death its form. Conventions are re-exploited for their value to artworks as autonomous objects, apart from the identity-thinking of the empirical. But what is the relation of these conventions to the death drive? The tension that persists in the artwork is the failure of its death mask, as it were, to stand absolutely as an enduring moment of pleasure; the meaning imparted to the

unrepresentable moment of death, to the impossibility that underscores it, devolves from pleasure to anxiety. For Lewis, the anxious pleasure of the artwork, the possibility of generating resistance, is the basis of its claim to the status of art. In other words, cultural production is fuelled by a particular relation to the death drive; one sacrifices oneself, one's psychic life, to move beyond the pleasure principle in the hope of mastering death itself. The liminality of the artist, in Lewis's configuration, can be comprehended as the ecstatic experience of living on the border of the pleasure principle, of 'living as much in one world as in the other' (*DPDS* 194). Thus, the production of art-as-repetition is a means of existing in what one of Lacan's students first called '*l'espace de l'entre deux morts*', or 'the zone between two deaths.'[17]

For Tarr, the perceived limit of the body is no longer registered by the stability of inside and outside, that sense of orientation (here/there; I/You) that phenomenology assigns to the subject. As Lewis puts it in *The Art of Being Ruled* (1926), 'The trinity of God, Subject, and Object is at an end. The collapse of this trinity is the history also of the evolution of the subject into the object or of the child back into the womb from which it came' (*ABR* 27). In effect, the contestations inherent to Lewis's dualism fall within the dizzying space of what one might call de-gestation, erasing the affective distinction between subject and object. In its stead, he proposes a kind of aesthetic and critical *metaplasis*, a kind of transformation of one form of adult tissue into another (*E1* ix). The body's materiality is invoked as the basis of critique, fostering an alternative theoretical explanation of the means by which the body becomes intelligible to the subject, with the goal of developing a vocabulary that will offer new potentialities to the artist-subject. Thus, in Lewis's novel, the borderline of the subject is written arbitrarily; Tarr energetically attempts to alleviate spatial (and masculine) anxiety by repeatedly placing himself in a never-ending succession of mummy-cases, creating finally a vast city – or necropolis – that nevertheless fails to house him adequately.

Had We But Room Enough and Time

Lewis's insistence on the importance of rooms thus establishes the territory over which his characters will play out their conflicts. As Scott W. Klein explains: 'In *Tarr* rooms reflect not simply the partitioning of a violent private from a repressed public arena, but the specific ethos of the

individuals who inhabit and create them.'[18] More specifically, Thomas Kush has rightly argued that while the characters 'project their personalities onto their rooms, they also adopt from them a climate of thought.'[19] In this narrative, the crammed descriptions of rooms do not function merely as a slavish gesture to realism; instead, the rooms themselves are enlisted in the psychic struggle between characters. For example, Bertha's rooms seem to conspire with her in the psycho-sexual waltz she and Tarr perform together:

> She suffered from the incomplete, unsymmetrical appearance her life now presented. Everything spread out palpably before her, that she could arrange like a roomful of furniture, was how she liked it. Even in her present shake-down of a life, Tarr had noticed the way he was treated as material for 'arrangement.' But she had never been able to indulge this idiosyncrasy much in the past. This was not the first time that she had found herself in a similar position. Hence her certain air of being at home in these casual quarters, which belied her.
>
> The detested temporary dwelling in the last few days had been given a new coat of sombre thought. Found in accidental quarters, had she not been over-delicate in not suggesting an immediate move into something more home-like and permanent? […] Cunning efforts to retain him abounded. But she never blamed or turned on him. (*T1* 56-7)

Here, the problem of distinguishing one's body from one's environment becomes a source of tactical anxiety – even Bertha's passivity apparently provokes reason for suspicion. Rhythmically, the experience of the room is psychologically altered; its appearance metaleptically takes on her emotional suffering, hinting at, but never quite becoming, a metaphor for her psychic state. The room is fraught with conflictual frequencies that are constantly switching, resisting, and absorbing the energies of repetition. As a result, thought itself merges with the space, and occasions a radical kind of suasion; the room is transformed into a rhetorical stratagem. Rooms are literally *topoi* in Lewis's works. They are not merely receptacles for or sites of argumentation. Rather they absorb, by a kind of affective osmosis, the noetic content of arguments that, although unspoken, hector the subject spatially. Bertha fills her *topos*, her theatre of conflict, with props, ready-to-hand for their unconscious suasive value.

Objects are used to harness and control the rhythmic flow of bodies, and vice versa. Tarr's suspicion of Bertha's motives not only shapes his performance of indifference, but also points toward the mimetic paradox that informs his approach to her. When he, 'in imitation of her' (*T1* 57), gently chastizes Bertha for failing to kiss him, he 'drew her ungraciously and roughly into his arms, and started kissing her on the mouth. She covered him, docilely, with her inertia. He was supposed to be performing a miracle of bringing the dead to life. Gone about too crudely, the willing mountebank, Death, had been offended' (*T1* 58).

The implications of this passage require some unpacking. Clearly there is a war of indifference being staged, with Tarr having been surprised by Bertha's own execution of disengaged ennui; his miming of her usual stratagem of projecting guilt in order to prod his lagging desire produces an inverted mirror of the very indifference he wishes to claim. In effect, Tarr is confronted by precisely what he wants, and summarily rejects it by assaulting Bertha in what becomes a successful attempt at undermining her defences. When she breaks into sobs, admitting her love for him and begging him to tell her that that love is returned, his mind turns protectively to remembering the passage from Schopenhauer I discussed earlier. As Faith Binckes has noted, the clichés that inform the melodrama of their words are persistently belied by their narration, with its metaphors 'ricocheting around, juxtaposing effects and implications.'[20] One of these effects is, in narrative terms, the clash between the inhuman, or the coldness of indifference, that is perceived as a counter-measure to Humour, which Tarr claims 'paralyses the sense for Reality and wraps people in a phlegmatic and hysterical dream-world, full of the delicious swirls of the switch-back, the drunkenness of the merry-go-round – screaming leaps from idea to idea' (*T1* 43).

In other words, the ricocheting that occurs in the narration of Tarr and Bertha's encounter is figured as the hysteria – the 'screaming leaps from idea to idea' – that informs a humorous approach to intimacy. Apart from its misogyny, the problem with Tarr's theory of Humour is that, as the ensuing scene demonstrates, his being taken by surprise both by Bertha's 'indifference' and the genuine force of her emotion is actually conditioned by his own dead, 'inhuman' affect. That is to say, the tidy distinction he draws between indifference and Humour breaks down into the paradoxically 'phlegmatic and hysterical dreamworld' he wishes to escape, even as he produces it. Of course, it is not surprising that Tarr treats hysteria, like the metropolis, as a 'feminine' space or symptom

(think of the Greek words for womb: *hysteron* and *matrix*). Indeed, Bertha's rooms are experienced by Tarr as a 'phantasmagoria' (*T1* 55). Consider as well that in Lewis's works, rooms and objects, indeed their very shape and positions, are libidinally invested. So if the body, which has been extended spatially into rooms, buildings, and cities, is the site of staging desire, then the hysteric's challenge to mastery assumes a spatial dimension. Lewis explicitly adverts to the fact that the hysteric, who necessarily enjoys too little, must use objects as props, as symptoms, if you will, to articulate what must otherwise be unspeakable desire.

The fact that Bertha and Tarr persevere in this neuropathic valse, while effectively missing each other in the process, confirms that the hysteric's desire is doomed to pass through its object, that the rhythms of space (sound, gesture, collision) fail to coalesce into satisfaction. But lest we imagine that this configuration is merely a misogynistic reflection of 'Woman' as inherently pathological, we should remind ourselves that Tarr's problem is that of the obsessive. That is, his psyche is the site of staging self-sacrifice. His relentless postponement of his own desire (marked by his numerous hesitations about his relationship to Bertha, to Kreisler, to Anastasya, even to remaining in Paris) argues for his obsessive need to keep his desire to himself, as he manufactures obscure, irrational reasons for blocking the space of the encounter with various objects of desire. This impulse determines Tarr's own deathly relationship to sex: 'Sex even with him, according to his analysis, being a sort of ghost, was at home in this gross and bouffonic illusion. Something had filled up a blank and become saturated with the blankness' (*T1* 55). For Tarr, Bertha's symptomatic relation to him is perforce spatial and spectral at the same time; the 'blankness' that saturates his desire for her is tantamount to the as-yet blank canvas ominously lurking at the core of the apposite mummy-cases.

By comparison, Kreisler is the psychic inversion of Tarr; for him, art has an inside, or, at least, a crypt – his paintings would seem to hide the holes into which the dead have been thrust:

> Kreisler's room looked like some funeral vault. Shallow, ill-lighted and extensive, it was placarded with nude and archaic images, painted on strips of canvas fixed to the wall with drawing pins. Imagining yourself in some Asiatic dwelling of the dead, with the portraits of the deceased covering the holes in which they had respectively been thrust, you would, following your fancy, have

> turned to Kreisler seeking to see in him some devout recluse who had taken up his quarters there. (*T1* 77)

The funereal space that makes up Kreisler's room is a grotesque parody of Tarr's aesthetic theory. If Tarr believes that the artist is expected to be as cold as death, producing art with no inside, then Kreisler functions as the embodiment of the absurd failure of this logic – his pseudo-art merely masks the presumed mummy-cases of the necropolis he not only inhabits, but personifies: as artist, his eye does not function as a resistant gaze, transposing its *fascinum* on to the artwork. Instead, we are told that 'Objects – cocottes, newsvendors, waiters – flowed through Kreisler's brain without trouble or surprise. His heavy eyes were big gates of a self-centred city. It was just a procession. There was no trade in the town' (*T1* 84). The only thing that stops behind the gates of his city are the dead. As inversions of each other, both men would seem to be destined to function as rivals for Bertha's affection – yet that, too, is grotesquely lampooned both by Tarr's unsteady 'indifference' to her and Kreisler's violent rape of her. Their rivalry is largely spatial, rather than sexual; as Leon Betsworth has argued, the liminality of the café spaces they frequent makes certain forms of aggression possible that other spaces cannot: 'Occupying a position on both sides of the public/private sphere, the café transcends but critically does not dissolve the border between the two states.'[21] Tarr can be as sardonically and intrusively polite as he likes when cornering Kreisler at his *Stammtisch*, but the results are quite different when he later visits Kreisler in his room. His campaign is cut short, and he is almost immediately ejected:

> For a man to be ordered out of a room that does not belong to him always puts him at a disadvantage. Should he insist, forcibly and successfully, to remain, it can only be for a limited time. He will have to go sooner or later, and make his exit, unless he establish himself there and make it his home, henceforth; a change of lodging most people are not, on the spur of the moment, prepared to decide on.=The room, somehow, too, seems on its owner's side, and to be vomiting forth the intruder. The civilized man's instinct of ownership makes it impossible for any but the most indelicate to resist a feeling of hesitation before the idea of resistance in another man's shell! (*T1* 240)

Here again, we encounter the way in which Lewis confers to spaces a psychological, even unconscious function. If the 'room, somehow, too, seems on its owner's side, and to be vomiting forth the intruder', Lewis would seem to be asserting the exterior dimension of the unconscious; its effects are not felt exclusively through denotation, but rather in the connotative use of space. Tarr hoped to have the same effect his photograph was to have for Bertha. He hoped to function as an 'obstacle' in Kreisler's path, generating an affective restlessness that would drive Kreisler into the open, back into public sparring places like the café – but his plan is frustrated by the belligerence of the room and its occupant. The Lewisian psyche is thus not primarily affiliated with fantasies of 'depth', but is a kind of body, absolutely tied to the exploration of and resistance to material spaces and objects. This materiality, architectural and somatic by turns, which he so often calls a 'shell', is the result of an ongoing process, an accretion of layers that, in Judith Butler's phrase, 'produces the effect of boundary, fixity, and surface we call matter.'[22] The implications of this paranoiac conception of space, of the conflation of inside and outside, can be explained as the hysterical and obsessional transmutation of that space.

Ennui, Work, and Nostalgia

Lewis is so attuned to the complexity of the subject's often painful relation to space that his accounts take on the metaphors of a romance fraught with suspicion. These characterizations assume, if nothing else, that for the modern peripatetic subject, space cannot help but be one of the problems of modernity:

> =A new room was a thing that had to be fitted into as painfully as a foot into some new and too elegant boot. The things deposited on the floor, the door finally closed on this new area to be devoted exclusively to himself, the blankest discomfort descended on him. To undo and let loose upon the room his portmanteau's squashed and dishevelled contents – like a flock of birds, brushes, photographs and books flying to their respective places on dressing-table, mantelpiece, shelf or bibliothèque; boxes and parcels creeping dog-like under beds and into corners, taxed his character to the breaking point. The unwearied optimism of these

> inanimate objects, the way they occupied stolidly and quickly room after room, was appalling. Then they were *packed up* things, with the staleness of a former room about them, and the souvenir of a depressing time of tearing up, inspecting, and interring. (*T1* 204)

The objects would seem to be imbued with sentient being, as they make their incursion upon the unfamiliar space; yet they carry the burden of the spaces they have vacated, even as they evince an 'unwearied optimism'. Lewis's fascination with the affective dimension of one's belongings was so strong that he virtually plagiarizes this passage from his 'Unlucky for Pringle' (1911). Compare: 'The unwearied optimism of these inanimate objects, how they occupied stolidly and quickly room after room, was appalling. Then they still had the staleness of the former room about them, and the souvenir of a depressing hour of tearing up and packing' (*UP* 30). Such attacks are consistent with the use of commodities as weapons in the spatial rhetoric of sexual politics we saw earlier with Bertha. In this instance, commodities are also burdened by nostalgia; having been torn from the space that formerly gave the owner a kind of security, the objects nevertheless fail, in the eyes of their owner, to conform to their subsequent 'home'. But the contradiction is curious – what Tarr seems to bemoan in the objects is the quality he lacks: adaptability. In a space too vast, too antiquated for its current purpose, Tarr must then plump for the ameliorative force of memory: 'He would no doubt pack it eventually with consoling memories of work. He started work at once, in fact. This was his sovereign cure for new rooms' (*T1* 205). So the discomfort produced by the room would seem to be its emptiness, but in Lewis's works, space is never simply empty. The space is already filled, experienced spatially as anxiety; in this respect, the psychic connection between the body and space becomes clear. The space produces a structure through which Tarr can secrete meaning: for him, it is the sacrifice of working. He can transform the feeling of apprehension, the shock of the new, by encoding it with the production of another space. This process is, in effect, the extensional challenge faced by the obsessive: how to make the rituals, the concrete nature of work, function as mastery of the space. The success of 'work' is contingent upon the space's ability to mirror or repeat the affective imperatives of its owner. Thus, we see in this passage the need to reproduce the lost moment of recognition that might have imbued the space and its occupant with a mutually ratified identity.

Tarr's re-acquaintance with the phantasmagoric 'human current' of the city is marked by the novelty of the ever-same. The diversions and amusements of Paris by turns soothe and sicken; vexed by a headache, he realizes that had it been 'an absolutely novel scene, he would have found stimulus in it. But it was like a friend grown indifferent, or something perfectly familiar with the richness of habit taken out of it' (*T1* 206). Entertainments, like the spectacle of commodities so painstakingly described by Benjamin, lose their lustre when the subject is unable to orient himself through commodities. The effect is a virtual parody of the uncanny. For Tarr, the wonder of these amusements does not lie in their novelty, but in their overwhelming familiarity, rendered *unheimlich* by the draining of habit. His spatially triggered *ennui* infects him with the compulsion to wander, like a double 'who had been idling impatiently while he worked. He promenaded this companion in "Montmartre by Night," without improving his character' (*T1* 207). Constantly besieged by the impulse to relieve his *ennui*, Tarr considers and rejects the possibility of hiring one of the sex workers who ornament the quarter.

The repetition that pervades his experience of the city (and of the room that will not be calmed by memory) disables him, and prevents him from deriving sustained satisfaction from work. The problem is that rather than focus on the work's demand, on the sacrifice of himself to the demand of the artwork, Tarr works for the sake of staving off anxiety and *ennui*. The result of his work is merely 'a witty pastiche' (by its description, it is perhaps a pastiche akin to Lewis's own style), but nothing more substantial (*T1* 206). So the illusion of mastery sanctioned by work fails as Tarr, the inept flâneur, cannot recognize himself in the, for him, fetishized spaces of Paris. Although he works at putting space into practice (with its capacity to reassure the subject, to reflect what makes the subject imagine is likeable about himself), he cannot reckon with the psychic problem posed by representations of space (which demands a constant reconsideration of one's place in the city). Tarr's flight from Bertha would seem to argue that he has 'transcended' the immanent bonds of their relationship, and that he is now able to break free. However, his bid is unsuccessful because he tries to use those aspects of her appearance that he finds repellent by performing rather than feeling his 'indifference' to her. His satirical attitude only reinforces, rather than dismantles, his identification with her. Since he cannot comfortably admit his desire for her, he remains haunted by the 'ghost' of sex (*T1* 55). She

becomes the ghostly double, an undead representation of his own that he cannot escape.

By relocating to another quarter of Paris, Tarr loses contact with the sites of memory, of those associations that connect him to Bertha. He exacerbates his paranoia (of which his inability to work is a symptom) by wandering a section of the city that resists identification. Why? Because there are no personal memories encrypted in this section of the metropolis, where the montage of stimuli holds no promise of orientation. As a result, even the idea of mass transit haunts him. He constantly watches as taxis and buses make their way speedily throughout the labyrinth of Paris. Always thinking of Bertha, Tarr finally yields to the impulse to take the bus to 'Quartier du Paradis'. (Interestingly, Tarr gives this quarter the nickname 'Quartier Berthe' in the 1928 version of the novel.) The difficulty of this decision is explained thermodynamically: 'it needed in a way as much of an effort, in the contrary direction, to get back, as it had to get away' (*T1* 207). But the paranoia of the relationship resumes with the resolve to return; despite the fact that both he and Kreisler behave like magnetic counters, shuttling to and fro across the field of desire, Tarr cannot find any sustained solace in work (*T1* 206-7). Spatially, desire's effect on the subject is disorienting. Lewis titles this experience a 'Megrim' (which refers variously to 'migraine' or, more significantly, to 'vertigo' – the two are often related) of Humour. The solid basis upon which the subject builds a sense of identity reveals itself to be, in a Lewisian twist, a false bottom. The fact that Bertha sustains her spatial position produces a strange inversion: that, like Tarr, she is disoriented, and that she too longs for the lost object of desire.

Paris: City of Memory, City of Sacrifice

Tarr's reintroduction into Bertha's quarter is immediately satisfying. Memory is able to reassert an apparently seamless, even forensic, connection to space – now, Bertha's (once-dreaded) friends become 'delightful landmarks' (*T1* 211). The fact that Bertha continues to be a presence (at the level of praxis, she is kept at a 'proper' imaginary distance) means Tarr can re-examine his relationships to Anastasya and the city. In their promenades about Paris, the importance of the crowd and memory becomes manifest, as the watery metaphors return to the narrative:

> The streets around these gardens, in which he had lodged alternately, were so many confluents and tributaries of memory, charging it on all sides with defunct puissant tides. The places, he reflected, where childhood has been spent, or where, later, dreams of energy have been flung away, year after year, are obviously the healthiest spots for a person. But perhaps, although he possessed the Luxembourg Gardens so completely, they were completely possessed by thousands of other people! So many men had begun their childhood of ambition in this neighbourhood. His hopes, too, no doubt, had grown there more softly because of the depth and richness of the bed. A sentimental miasma made artificially in Paris a similar good atmosphere where the mind could healthily exist as was found by artists in brilliant complete and solid times. (*T1* 232-3)

So the architectural spaces of the city, its façades, streets, and parks, are suffused by memory. The marvel of Paris lies in the rhythms of dead memory that form a patina upon the space. The term 'puissant' returns, but it is now located in memory itself, whose tides, formed by the streets surrounding the Luxembourg Gardens, are now paradoxically dead, 'defunct'. Placated by this montage of remembrance, Tarr can, however artificially, get his bearings again. He realizes that this truth exists for the crowd as well – the urban landscape is a site that prompts what Proust coined the *mémoire involontaire*. Here (as Benjamin reminds us), memory materializes itself unbidden to the subject; these sudden shocks are provoked by the rhythms of city crowds.[23] These shocks and collisions produce both recognition and resistance in that the crowd is impelled by the fact that the recollection cannot be tied to ownership, while the subject is driven by an anxiety of being absorbed by the mass. Hence Tarr's contention that 'in Latin countries you have a democracy of vitality, the best things of the earth are in everybody's mouth and nerves. *The artist has to go and find them in the crowd.* You can't have "freedom" both ways. I prefer the *artist* to be free, and the crowd not to be "artists"' (*T1* 234). In this conception, the possibilities for art's deadness paradoxically reside in the extimate, or as Nieland would put it, 'eccentric' vitality lurking in the crowd.

Tarr's apprehension of the crowd is based upon the metonymic relation of part to whole; the dynamism, the shocks, indeed, the very possibility of the modern artist are produced by the crowd, with its

sentimentality, its 'soul'. Yet this insight, Tarr's identification with the crowd, is marked by paranoia. For if the crowd becomes the artist, then the artist's function as observer and critic evaporates. This anxiety of evaporation also appears in *Blasting and Bombardiering* (1937): Cantleman, a conductor of 'crowd experiments', whose movements are compared to 'a freelance cinema-operator' (*BB* 81), experiences what he describes as an 'authentic shock' when immersed in the crowd. The anxiety of this confluence is a 'married feeling' whose only antidote is divorce (see *BB* 81-6). In order to sustain the privilege of perspective as 'other' to the crowd, the artist must synecdochally stand for, even absorb, the crowd himself. Not surprisingly, Lewis argues in 'The Artist As Crowd' (1932) that important artists are not, in any substantial sense, individuals at all: 'they are, as a matter of fact, a very great and numerous crowd' (*CHC* 174). The insistence upon the artist's ontological 'difference' is based on an anxiety of displacement – that the crowd will degenerate into types, leaving no room for the artist.

But more important for Tarr, the sacrifice of individuality by the artist is part and parcel of what makes art possible. Georg Simmel makes a similar point in *The Philosophy of Money*; that the 'essential meaning of art lies in its being able to form an autonomous reality, a self-sufficient microcosm out of a fortuitous fragment of reality that is tied with a thousand threads to this reality.'[24] In Simmel's view, the totality of the crowd is at odds with the totality of the individual. This anxiety is registered *par excellence* in Paris, 'which', Tarr insists, 'is the creation of the crowd' (*T1* 234).

Yet the difficulty Tarr encounters is twofold; he must first have an individuality to sacrifice to the demand of the artwork, and must perforce distinguish himself from the crowd prior to extinguishing himself in the name of the artwork. But in cleaving to 'the fetish within', he insists upon an individualism that necessarily keeps him from art, making him marry Bertha, who proves herself 'a Roland for his Oliver' (*T1* 311); having been raped by the now-dead Kreisler, she now carries his child. In effect, the 'astral baby' has produced a stalemate in its battle with the kernel that is a painting (*T1* 58-9). Tarr will sacrifice everything to art, it seems, except sex – an impulse he regrets for having 'humanized […] too much' (*T1* 314). In his striving to dehumanize sex, Tarr hopes to transform it into something eccentric, extimate. In effect, it is the struggle with the performance of eccentricity that matters more to Tarr than the actual or perhaps authentic feeling of eccentricity itself. In part, Tarr would seem

to have intuited that death – or at least, the death drive – lurks in the heart of sex, and in this respect, his behaviour would be consistent with his aesthetic philosophy. Even as he fulfils his old obligation to Bertha, one that he can finally carry out precisely because he can disavow any sentimental attachment to the child, he continues to claim the role of artist. But there is an unacknowledged split or gap in the nature of his performance of eccentricity. His 'eccentric soul', we learn in the 1918 Egoist Press edition of the novel, continues to require 'doses' of Bertha to eventually cure or wean himself from her, but his proposed cure does not lead to art.[25] On the one hand, he enjoys the surplus satisfaction provided by sex; whilst on the other, his inability to master (or be mastered by) the death drive at the level of art condemns him to repeating the conditions whereby he fathers more children. In attempting to maintain the thanatic tension that, by his own lights, is crucial to the production of art, Tarr conflates repetition with brute reproduction. In the novel's hectic conclusion, even this bulwark against sentimentality is belied by his subsequent fathering of three more children – this time with Rose Fawcett. 'To produce is the sacrifice of genius' (*T1* 235), Tarr claims. But in the logic of swagger sex, to reproduce is the sacrifice of art, but to what end? To hold on to the rattling, dead kernel of eccentricity – in sum, the necropolitan trade name of one's genius.

Notes

[1] Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1999), 221.

[2] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), 97.

[3] Peter Bürger, *The Decline of Modernism* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 1992), 127-36. Hereafter Bürger, *DM*.

[4] Tim Armstrong, *Modernism, Technology and the Body: A Cultural Study*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 86.

[5] *Ibid.*, 87.

[6] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 13.

[7] Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*, trans. William Lovitt (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1977), 19-21.

[8] David Dwan, 'The Problem of Romanticism', *Essays in Criticism*, 65.2 (April 2015): 163-86, at 168.

[9] Jean Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, trans. Iain Hamilton Grant (London: Sage Publications, 1993), 181.
[10] Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 17. Hereafter Adorno, *AT*.
[11] Maurice Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, trans. Susan Hanson (Minneapolis: University Of Minnesota Press, 1992), 32.
[12] Maurice Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 104–5. Hereafter Blanchot, *SL*.
[13] Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings, Volume 1: 1913-1926*, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press), 459.
[14] Lambert Zuidervaart, *Adorno's Aesthetic Theory: The Redemption of Illusion* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), 189.
[15] Justus Nieland, *Feeling Modern: The Eccentricities of Public Life* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 25.
[16] Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: The Ethics of Psychoanalysis (Book VII)*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Dennis Porter (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997), 139.
[17] Ibid., 320.
[18] Scott W. Klein, *The Fictions of James Joyce and Wyndham Lewis: Monsters of Nature and Design* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 119.
[19] Thomas Kush, *Wyndham Lewis's Pictorial Integer* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1981), 73.
[20] Faith Binckes, "'Harsh Laughter": Reading *Tarr*', in Andrzej Gąsiorek and Nathan Waddell (eds), *Wyndham Lewis: A Critical Guide* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015): 35-48, at 39-40.
[21] Leon Betsworth, "'A serious place": Wyndham Lewis, *Tarr*, and the Café', *Textual Practice*, 31.4 (2017): 725-46, at 736.
[22] Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), 9.
[23] Walter Benjamin, 'On Some Motifs in Baudelaire', in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 159-63.
[24] Georg Simmel, *The Philosophy of Money*, trans. Tom Bottomore and David Frisby (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), 494-5.
[25] P. Wyndham Lewis, *Tarr* (London: The Egoist Ltd, 1918), 287. See *T1* 420.

‘This […] feeling of indifference’: Tarr’s Importance in Lewis’s Narrative Design

David Mulry

In his late autobiographical work, *Rude Assignment* (1950), Wyndham Lewis noted the incongruence of naming his novel *Tarr*. He suggested that doing so had been a mistake since the focal point of the essay was the young German artist, and argued that the novel ought to have been ‘called “Otto Kreisler” rather than “Tarr”, who is a secondary figure’ (*RA* 165). Working titles, and the core of the novel as it develops – according to Paul O’Keeffe’s treatment of the inception and genesis of the novel in his afterword to the 1990 Black Sparrow edition of the 1918 version of the novel – focus on the figure of Kreisler. This is implied at least in the draft title ‘Otto Kreisler’s Death’, and even after Lewis adds the narrative frame oriented towards Tarr’s perspective, it emerges again in the new working title, ‘Between Two Interviews’ (*T1* 361-2).[1] Despite Tarr’s nominal importance, the working title seems once again to point to the heart of the fiction, Kreisler’s story as the focus of the novel, while the Tarr narrative is relegated to book-ends. Despite this marginal role, the figure of Tarr dominates much of the critical discussion of the book, though contemporary reviewers were troubled by his function in the novel. Rebecca West in *The Nation* dismissed him variously as ‘a mouthing theorist’, and ‘a dummy, as dead as Wyndham pleases’, while the unsigned note in *The English Review* wrestled with the novel as perhaps a ‘cry of distress or cynicism’, but nonetheless as a mystery ‘which Tarr himself does little to unravel’.[2] West went on to say of the novel: ‘To the layman it would seem singularly remote from anything recognizable as an English novel but for the accident that the English tongue has been more or less used in writing it’.[3] She was correct, but the novel’s foreignness (she suggests a Slavic quality) is there because Lewis achieves an effect that was quite new through his characterization and treatment of Tarr, through striking choices in his narrative design, and bold innovations in character and form.

Tarr occupies centre-stage in the novel’s opening sequence. He is the controlling consciousness of the ‘Overture’, during which we meet many of the novel’s lesser characters and are introduced to the bohemian

crowd in Paris. Even the naming of the opening section, with its allusion to the opening of a musical composition, references its preliminary and independent nature. This becomes evident in the architecture of the novel when Tarr is dropped entirely and disappears until close to its end. After an absence of over a hundred pages he re-emerges, determined to try to sever ties once and for all with Bertha, and we find him in new lodgings bridling against a 'bristling host of incertitudes' (*T1* 204). It would be tempting to say that as his consciousness controls the opening, at the end, once again, he becomes the controlling perspective of the novel, but that would be misleading. He re-enters the current of the plot, after Kreisler rapes Bertha, 'with the glee of a boy on a banal holiday excursion' (*T1* 208) and painfully at odds with the tone of the narrative he rejoins.

Throughout the latter stages, as Kreisler moves towards his death, Tarr, the eponymous hero of the text, remains on the periphery of the main action, and his re-emergence in the novel is largely eclipsed by the rising action of Kreisler's precipitous duel and suicide. Lewis himself, in his Preface to the 1918 Egoist publication of the novel, sets in motion the enduring challenge of Tarr's narrative role *vis-à-vis* Kreisler. There, he first attempts to distance his fiction from the context of the First World War, dismissing Kreisler as 'a German and nothing else', and then proclaims Tarr 'the individual of the book' contradicting the position he was later to take in reevaluating the title and apparent focus of the narrative.[4] T. S. Eliot, in his contemporary review of *Tarr* in *The Egoist*, suggested that 'there is an invisible conflict in progress all the time, between Tarr and Kreisler, to impose two different methods upon the book'.[5] Lewis's own early commentary on Tarr's role in the novel does little to clarify the relationship between the two characters and their respective roles in the story, though he notes that the Egoist edition was 'disfigured' by the preface (*RA* 162). It is cut from the 1918 edition.[6]

The problem Lewis creates in what amounts to early obfuscation surrounding these characters is that Kreisler is the more dynamic of the two; his difficulties with finances, his alienation from his father, his proclivity to social and sexual violence, and his eventual suicide all dominate the text, as Kreisler struggles against his self-destructive fate in what Lewis himself characterized as both a 'Russian' and a 'Nietzschean' novel.[7] Tarr, on the other hand, as the 'individual of the book', wrestles with the vulgar allure of Bertha's attractions, while Lewis imbues her with a bourgeois banality described as a 'trap' with the 'charm of a vulgar wall paper, a gimcrack ornament' (*T1* 39). The close of the tale sees each

character assigned their particular and individual fate. Kreisler commits suicide in a grotesque flourish that echoes the desperate Hamlets of nineteenth-century Russian fiction.[8] Tarr rescues Bertha Lunken at the end of the novel, in a gesture that somehow manages to be both expansively generous and cruel. The remarkable conclusion to the tale has Tarr marry Bertha to legitimize her child with Kreisler but live separately in an open relationship with Anastasya. His marriage proposal is stoic from a certain perspective, bourgeois from another, but it is also cynical and ruthless. Tarr himself describes his early plans to leave Bertha as 'wicked', though 'no blacker than most of his ingenuities' (*T1* 49), but presumably his eventual arrangements are worse since they offer the humiliation of a sham-marriage coupled with open abandonment.

It is hardly surprising that the juxtaposition of Tarr and Kreisler is variously represented in critical responses as the key to reading the text. Robert Currie, in 'Wyndham Lewis, E. T. A. Hoffmann, and Tarr' (1979), examines the novel as a performative dramatic tension played out against the romantic tradition and that of an emergent modernism.[9] Alan Starr, on the other hand, in 'Tarr and Wyndham Lewis' (1982), agrees with the dichotomy between the romantic tradition and emergent modernism(s), but proposes a *doppelgänger* motif by suggesting that 'Kreisler is a portrait of the young Lewis as a mature man', while Tarr is, 'symmetrically, a portrait of the mature Lewis as a young man'.[10] Such a reading is supported by confessions from Tarr himself; speaking to Hobson, Tarr notes that his life is so compartmentalized that 'the best friend of my Dr. Jekyll would not know my Mr. Hyde, and vice versa' (*T1* 31). Lewis's own Vorticist manifesto statements offer an intriguing aesthetic which is evocative of the fundamental differences between the two characters: 'opposite statements of a chosen world', a 'violent structure of adolescent clearness between two extremes' (*B1* 31).

There are compelling elements in such readings, but they are contingent on textual relationships of counterbalance and opposition, and they really only make sense if Tarr and Kreisler are drawn together in the architecture of the narrative, so they seem 'twin halves of one august event' as Hardy conceived of his fatal opposites in 'The Convergence of the Twain' (1920), his poem describing the sinking of the *Titanic*.[11] There, he imagines the iceberg's glacial birth and the fashioning of the ship in the yards of Belfast, presenting them moving ineluctably towards one another with their sinister twinned fates. If Tarr and Kreisler occupied that same sort of narrative dynamic, and the plot of the novel were drawn

in such a way that their character interactions drew them closer to their shared doom, their relationship would make more sense for such types of critical responses to the novel seeking to elucidate what, 'No mortal eye could see / The intimate welding of their later history'.[12] But they do not. Michael Levenson notes the near symmetrical elegance of Lewis's plot architecture, comparing it to the 'kernel of a Jamesian novella'.[13] But he also notes that Lewis eschews the elegant resolutions of a 'rigorous geometry of emotions' and self-consciously fractures audience expectations.[14]

One might wish to argue that Tarr's initial abandonment of Bertha makes her receptive to Kreisler's advances, and sets up the sequence which winds Kreisler about her fate, but that stretches to a breaking point Tarr's role in the sequence which is really dominated by Kreisler's frustrated obsession with Anastasya. Moreover, Tarr does not play a corresponding role in the final part of the novel in general, or in Kreisler's individual tragedy in particular, since his gaze is both limited and inward, and he is not privy to much of what the audience learns. Tarr, as much as the audience may expect otherwise, is no Baudelairean *flaneur*. Where he has the opportunity actively to be involved in Kreisler's narrative either as an observer or indeed as an actor (and realize what Levenson describes as those intricate Jamesian geometries of design), Lewis actively resists the gravitational pull of his two characters. Instead, he draws the two characters apart; throughout, while Kreisler, the *Kreisel*, or spinning dynamo of the plot, drives the action, Tarr remains passive, aloof, and indifferent.[15] These fundamental differences underlie the deep fracture in the narrative and reveal its method. In practice, this is in part because the characters spend relatively little time together, but more importantly because the way the narrative is structured means that Tarr consistently rejects opportunities to interact with Kreisler. When they do meet, their narrative inclinations pull in different directions. It is a relationship of omission and indifference that is central to Lewis's narrative design in the novel.

It is tempting, looking at *Tarr*'s construction, to wonder about the accretion of the framing narrative to Kreisler's core. Is *Tarr*, like Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim* (1900), which for some readers never satisfactorily survives its broken-backed story structure to cohere into one sustained narrative, a story that ran away from Lewis structurally over its long composition so that the result is ungainly, occasionally unfocused, and unnecessarily difficult? Is it a tightly conceived novella of Kreisler's spiral

towards suicide, stretched out, complaining the whole time, to novel length? Or is it a cleverly conceived and closely constructed modernist novel that deserves its place in narrative innovation in the early twentieth century alongside Conrad's anachronic narrative shifts, Woolf's liquid streams of consciousness, and Joyce's anarchic and flamboyant dexterities? The simple answer to that latter question is yes. Through *Tarr*, Wyndham Lewis achieves something very special.

* * *

Tarr's role in the novel is limited to the early sequence where he meets Hobson, then Butcher, then Lowndes, tasking each of them with the problem posed to him first by Hobson that consumes him through the early part of the novel: What should he do about his engagement to Bertha Lunken? The novel, framed by Tarr's story, begins with the problem of his engagement to Bertha, and his attempt to free himself from it as a commitment; it ends with his utility marriage, and his subsequent divorce. In that sense the (ironic) framing arc of the novel, the marriage arc of the nineteenth-century realist novel, is perfectly and conventionally realized. But the story is neither quite *bildungsroman* nor *kunstlerroman*. More importantly, if Tarr's narrative arc is so central to the story, why then is his role so peripheral?

Tarr and Kreisler only appear together (and then briefly) about two thirds of the way through the novel, after Tarr has abandoned Bertha, and after Kreisler has befriended and raped her, and once again befriended her. Tarr returns to the plot to formalize his dropping of Bertha as fiancée and romantic interest, and he spends a short while chaperoning Bertha and Kreisler (or being chaperoned by Kreisler, depending on one's perspective) as a means of utterly relinquishing whatever claim he still has upon her and disentangling himself from her story. Kreisler is reasonably mystified by Tarr's behaviour and motives upon his reappearance, and grows increasingly irritated by his lingering presence. It would be tempting to argue that he picks a fight with Soltyk because of his irritation with Tarr, but, in reality, Tarr seems to have little to do with the sequence. Kreisler remains tormented by Soltyk's relation-ship with Anastasya and frustrated by his own failure with her. He picks a fight with Soltyk stirred by a perceived slight when he meets them walking in the *Rue de Paradis*. Here as elsewhere, Tarr plays, at best, a marginal role. Largely indifferent

to Kreisler's character, he is a reluctant bystander to the drama that unfolds. For much of it he is nowhere to be seen.

The sequence that directly leads to Kreisler's duel with Soltyk is telling in terms of Tarr's relationship with Kreisler. Part VI, 'Holocausts', begins with an odd admission that Tarr did not have the 'go to initiate anything' (*T1* 247). Instead, the suggestion is he would 'gradually take over the business' only 'once a farce was started' (*T1* 247). If we take this at face value, we might assume that it anticipates Tarr's delayed role in the framing narrative, and his importance at the close. However, it doesn't really do justice to his role there. The farce that begins at the Café Souchet, after all, is something that Tarr is very reluctant to participate in, and he does not 'take over the business' once it is begun. On the contrary, although when he arrives at the Café Tarr imagines himself driving events, he quickly discovers this is false. As he pursues Kreisler to effect a final separation once and for all between himself and Bertha, he stumbles into an altogether different narrative sequence over which he has no control, one where Kreisler assaults Soltyk and challenges him to a fatal duel. Here, Lewis is masterful in disrupting narrative norms and expectations. Tarr, who expects to drive the narrative, and who the reader expects to assume control over the narrative, is brought to the fore by Lewis to realize the immanent potential of the novel, and is denied and marginalized in the same movement.

The effect is a powerfully unstable narrative perspective, and Lewis goes further – fracturing narrative geometries created, for example, by the introduction of Soltyk rather than Tarr as an alternative double for Kreisler's anarchic and destructive behaviour. Soltyk's fate, though ostensibly a surprise in the novel, is by no means random. In fact, in keeping with Edwardian perspectives on Polishness, and an acerbic insight into *émigré* and bohemian communities, it is something of an inevitability from the moment he is introduced. Poles figure repeatedly in *fin-de-siècle* fiction as victims or villains, marginalized figures of exile, and scoundrels and revolutionaries. Lewis himself documents the shifting attitudes towards Polishness in 'The "Pole"', his 1909 satirical essay for Ford Madox Ford's (Hueffer's) *English Review*, in which he describes in unflattering terms the influx of itinerant Poles in Europe.[16] He describes them as romantic wastrels who appear content languishing in poverty at the mercy of patronage and the generosity of others, or as degenerates and *farceurs*, or as volatile, incendiary, and violent types.[17]

Kreisler notices Soltyk relatively early in the novel where he is introduced as a 'young Russian, half Polish, who occasionally sat amongst the Germans at the Berne' (*T1* 89). The quibble over nationality that Lewis repeats from his earlier essay reflected the reality of a partitioned Poland which wasn't to achieve statehood until 1918.[18] Soltyk is a Russian citizen, but an ethnic Pole. His appearance in the plot, just as Kreisler is refused financial support from Volker, sets up a scapegoat for the German's rage later in the novel. He is to be the burnt offering (as the section title 'Holocausts' implies). Soltyk is an unwitting antagonist for the impetuous violence of Kreisler's broader existential frustrations, but, significantly in terms of narrative structure, Soltyk allows Lewis to disengage Tarr from the main events of the plot. Tarr, only recently returned, is no more than a perturbed onlooker; he is effectively marginalized and detached through the entire episode as the narrative continues without him. But it is his disengagement that prevents the novel from reverting to conventional modes of storytelling as the audience reasonably expects; it is the disengaged Tarr frame that makes the narrative architecture of the story modern rather than a westernization of the 'superfluous man' trope where Tarr is little more than a modern Pechorin, cynical, jaded, aloof, but at the heart of the action, and a reluctant key figure in the climactic duel in Mikhail Lermontov's *A Hero of our Time* (1840).

Tarr, freshly returned to the novel after his prolonged absence, watches events unfold by chance from the periphery. As Kreisler's disaffected alienation clashes against Soltyk's compromised honour, Tarr manages completely to avoid almost acting in the scene. Tarr's disengagement is so palpable and comically dull that the narrator notes that Tarr doesn't fully understand the scene as it evolves because he is 'so busy with his own feelings' (*T1* 248). He watches the action unfold passively as Kreisler confronts the group of young men in the Café Souchet, and concludes he is 'without the sphere of interest; *just* without it' (*T1* 249). That marginal position is emblematic of his place in the broader fiction, and momentarily reassuring in the scene, until Kreisler moves. Then Tarr fears that he has strayed too close to the vortex of violence and become suddenly and unwittingly caught up in the action. The language surrounding Kreisler remains dynamic and active even where verb construction is passive. He 'sprang up. His head was thrust forward' giving him all the impulse of reflex action (*T1* 249). In response to Kreisler's dynamism, Tarr imagines himself under assault, and shifts in

his seat to defend himself, but his movements are unresponsive and automatic, and he is described as 'dazed': 'Tarr mechanically moved his hand upwards from his lap to the edge of the table on the way to ward off a blow. He was dazed by all the details of this meeting, and the peculiar miscarriage of his plan' (*T1* 249). Even in the midst of what he perceives as an urgent threat, Tarr is practically inert. He remains seated during the whole sequence, both 'dazed by all the details' caught up in his own thoughts, and frustrated that his plans (to engage Kreisler and somehow foist Bertha Lunken off on him) no longer drive the narrative.

The moment echoes Tarr's run-in with Kreisler in the previous chapter (chapter 8 in 'A Megrim of Humour'), where his pursuit of Kreisler begins to fray the German's nerves until he orders Tarr from his sight:

> 'Raus! Out! Quicker! Quicker!!=Quick!'
>
> His last word, 'Schnell!' dropped like a plummet to the deepest tone his throat was capable of. (*T1* 240).

The incongruity between the two is striking here. Tarr toys with the idea of remaining, but, in a delightfully perverse scene, gets caught up in mannered farce and questions of nicety and nuance. What is the social etiquette of remaining after being 'ordered out of a room that does not belong to him' (*T1* 240)? The moment is a wry and perhaps misogynist echo of Tarr's remaining in the vicinity of Bertha, the room a yonic image over which the two men squabble for possession and occupation. But in any case it catches Tarr off guard. He hesitates, a 'tumultuous hesitation' (*T1* 240) Lewis tells us, but any such emotion is internalized and repressed, and in the end Tarr is a passive onlooker who merely observes while Kreisler goes to retrieve a dog whip.

As Kreisler searches for it, Tarr is described as 'school-boy like, left waiting there, at Kreisler's disposition' (*T1* 241). But when Kreisler returns, Tarr is further diminished, as Kreisler brandishes the whip that he keeps 'for hounds like [him]', and Tarr flees the scene (*T1* 241). Kreisler too is mocked in the scene, inexpertly fumbling with the whip. But Tarr is paralysed by the moment, tormented by an ecstatic fumbling for the right action, an exquisite paralysis as he is caught between going and staying. Would it be cowardly to flee? Would it be manly to confront and resist Kreisler? Later Tarr rationalizes that the whip is only brandished after he has begun to leave, and is caught in the awkward situational

irony of wondering how he should behave in the moment. It is a painful scene, uncomplimentary towards Tarr, vicious, funny, and brutally honest. Briefly he contemplates a struggle with Kreisler that he imagines playing out with a kind of droll buffoonery, but he leaves meekly, chastened by the moment and 'extremely dissatisfied with the part he had played in this scene' (*T1* 241).

The descriptors are telling throughout the sequence. Tarr moves with 'strained slowness' and feels like a 'discomfited pub-loafer', or a 'music-hall comedian' (*T1* 241). The lack of gravity and earnestness is repeated later when he supposes that Kreisler imagines him merely a 'blagueur' or fool (*T1* 242). Tarr struggles with his 'unreadiness, his dislike for action, his fear of ridicule' the whole time, and while he attempts to laugh at himself and the situation, the laughter is hollow and bitter (*T1* 242). With this sense of failure, he dogs Kreisler's steps to the Café Souchet the following night, and the reader is invited to assume (conventionally) that Tarr and Kreisler are moving towards a violent climax – perhaps he will redeem himself? perhaps he will be humiliated? But his palpable indifference consumes him there too, and instead Soltyk becomes Kreisler's foil.

As the scene of violence and the challenge of the duel plays out in front of Tarr, his understanding of what is happening continues to lag behind events even some time after their initial conclusion. Impressionist elements of delay align his confusion with the reader's as Kreisler is escorted from the café and as the group of men he had assaulted expostulate and complain. His reluctance to act is part of a pattern that defines Tarr throughout the novel. Tarr, alarmed at first, thinking he is to be drawn into Kreisler's violent orbit, finds himself ineluctably drawn instead into the serious ongoing drama of Soltyk's assault.

Here too, though, Tarr's disengagement is tangible. 'Relieved' not to be one of the principals of the scuffle, he is nonetheless enveloped by the subsequent action when, observed 'watching the discussion' (*T1* 251) he is approached to act as Kreisler's second in the affair of the duel by Bitzenko. Again the response is telling, not so much for what Tarr does, as for his determined detachment from the impetus of the story which seeks to engage Tarr in Kreisler's climactic conflict. Just as when he is confronted by the dog-whip, in the café, Tarr shrinks from becoming entangled in the awful momentum of Kreisler's actions. He initially declines Bitzenko's request to act as Kreisler's second, and when pressed, and perhaps fearing a scene, backs down and reluctantly agrees to do so

'temporarily for a few minutes' (*T1* 252) arguing that he is scheduled to leave Paris and cannot delay his departure. It is the same lie he has previously told Bertha to explain why he can no longer see her, and it seems to come easily to Tarr to avoid being drawn into Kreisler's drama.

Tellingly, however, Tarr cannot help but wonder what he might have done if, instead of Soltyk, Kreisler had decided to challenge him. As he contemplates the changed circumstances, the reader is teased with the ghost of a more conventional plot that Lewis intimates is there, and then discards. In that speculative narrative iteration, Tarr plays out his own humiliation in front of others, and with Soltyk's vivid example in front of him, he contemplates how he might have been struck in the face and spat at for refusing to answer Kreisler's challenge. It is a powerful and provocative piece of meta-narrative. Through it all, despite the imagined humiliation, Tarr cannot see himself accepting the challenge of the duel; he is honest enough, however, when he tries on the reasoning that Englishmen do not duel, to quickly abandon it. Tarr is horrified by Kreisler's violence and unnerved by his own proximity to it. He quickly relinquishes his role as second, and, despite entangling himself in Kreisler's personal affairs for an uncomfortable moment, is nowhere to be seen when the dreadful parody of the duel plays out. Instead we next see him two days after, briefly discussing Soltyk's murder with Anastasya only to be interrupted by the spectacle of Bertha Lunken. She haunts the closing chapters as, in swift sequence, Tarr pursues and is then seduced by Anastasya, and then discovers Bertha's pregnancy and marries her.

The end of the novel resolves Tarr's relationship with Bertha, through a sham marriage of duty and (in)convenience. From a certain perspective, it is the first real action that Tarr engages in. Resolute and swift, Tarr sets the wedding in motion and marries Bertha in a narrative blur. For a conventional novel it is a fitting end, after all, neatly resolving the conflict of the opening sequence which revolves around the trying question of Tarr's engagement (and what he should do about it). But in a conventional novel the marriage would have accompanied some moral lesson, or a realization that tilts Tarr towards maturity and growth, or towards the prospect of stoic suffering or self-effacement. It offers none of these. Instead, it is enigmatic and dissatisfying. In what amounts to an embedded post-script of just 200 words, the narrator describes how Tarr reveals to Anastasya the fact of his marriage to Bertha, parries her complaints, notes his subsequent divorce, and recounts their short childless affair. Then he documents his marriage to Rose Fawcett (along

with three children), and the spectre of his emerging affair with Prism Dirkes. Rose Fawcett and Prism Dirkes are introduced as though the reader should be familiar with them and perhaps we are, since they seem to be representations of type, merely virtual echoes of Bertha and Anastasya repeated. They are, nonetheless, arbitrary characters whom the reader has never met. Lewis's ending is abrupt, perhaps even shocking in its own way. In a satirical take on *Tarr* for *The Guardian* newspaper's Digested Classics series, John Crace closes his ironic truncation of the novel as follows:

> 'I'm pregnant with Kreisler's baby,' cried Bertha.
>
> 'Then I shall marry you,' said Tarr, 'and carry on seeing Anastasya at tea times. Maybe that's better for my Art after all.'
>
> So Bertha and Tarr got married. They divorced within two years. Tarr continued to see Anastasya but remarried a woman called Ruth Fawcett. He still never produced any Art. So he could have written this.[19]

The absurd pastiche mocking Lewis's ending comes in close to the word count of the original and is more or less true to its careless and frivolous tone.

As a gesture, the marriage proposal itself is fascinating. Tarr initiates the proposal without hesitation, and without much thought as far as the reader knows. He acts in a way that seems almost at odds with his character throughout where we have watched him hesitate, vacillate, and disappear. The marriage proposal is simultaneously an act of kindness (or duty) and cruelty. Tarr offers to marry Bertha without demur upon learning of her being pregnant with Kreisler's child. In doing so he rehabilitates and protects her reputation, and in another novel his gesture of sacrifice might almost efface the character himself in defence of bourgeois morality. Alternatively, Tarr might reasonably be expected to reject Bertha in her moment of vulnerability, as Lermontov's anti-hero, Pechorin, rejects Princess Mary for whom he has just fought a duel, because his disaffection and sceptical disengagement will not allow him to retreat into conventionalisms. Here, though, Lewis resists ruthless bohemian egoism where Tarr might stand as 'a portrait composed of all our generation in their full development' in the manner of Pechorin as assessed in Lermontov's author's note.[20] But he also dismisses merely

conventional bourgeois morality; 'it is not a moral tale' (*RA* 165), Lewis reminds us simply in *Rude Assignment*.

Tarr is aware of the threat of Bertha's pregnancy to his reputation and standing (he was known to be engaged to her before he withdrew and much of his latter engagement with Bertha seems motivated by ensuring that his reputation is not sullied by his behaviour towards her). The risqué talk of 'swagger-sex' is bold and chaffs against bourgeois convention, but in this novel it is not particularly new.[21] What are new, however, are the narrative choices Lewis makes. He once again rejects the gravitational pull of conventional, and perhaps at this point, melodramatic form, as Tarr stipulates that their marriage is to be a marriage of appearance alone to preserve Bertha's reputation, while he reserves the right to live with Anastasya.[22] If Bertha is grateful for his action, Anastasya is angry in turn with him, because his actions render her vulnerable. What if she were to fall pregnant, she asks? Having married, Tarr would be unable to legitimize their child, should it come to that. The intriguing question remains, however: Why does Tarr, who resists action throughout the frame narrative, suddenly, and apparently impulsively, act in the way that he does?

* * *

Tarr's gesture at the close of the novel is intriguing and potentially puzzling, since he is such a static figure confronted with the dynamo of Kreisler's spontaneous action. His willingness to engage with Bertha's predicament, his willingness to commit to a personal action (at some level it feels like a personal sacrifice) seems inconsistent with the Tarr we see in the opening sequence who traverses a landscape where Lewis mercilessly satirizes the expatriate artists of the Knackfus Quarter (and Tarr himself) as failed artists, and failed men.[23]

Rebecca West, as we have already seen, in her contemporary review of the novel in *The Nation*, dismissed Tarr as a 'mouthing theorist' and a 'dummy'. The insights reflect the paralysis and inaction of the opening sequence, where we learn a great deal about Tarr that later seems more significant. He first meets with Hobson, reluctantly. Their meeting, a grudging acknowledgement of recognition, is described with vicious humour as an uncomfortable inertia: 'They sat for some minutes with stately discomfort of selfconsciousness, staring in front of them' (*T1*

22).[24] Lewis is at his best in such situations, his insight profound, and his language waspish and darkly comic, but even here, while we may not notice its significance on the first reading of the novel, Tarr's relationship with Hobson for all its combative nature, is remarkably passive. This is evident in the climax of their short discussion, a pale parodic foreshadowing of Kreisler's and Soltyk's conflict at the end of the novel (evidence, once again of Levenson's observation of the elegant Jamesian geometries that Lewis approaches in his narrative construction).[25] Tarr even fantasizes briefly about seizing Hobson 'by the throat' (*T1* 35). An echo of the scene repeats later in the novel when (replaced as his proxy) Soltyk's 'hands flew at Kreisler's throat. His nails made six holes in the flesh and cut into the tendons beneath' (*T1* 272). Notably when Soltyk stands in for Tarr in the narrative he is capable of action. Tarr's own contemptuous knocking off of Hobson's hat and then hurrying away without 'troubling to wait for the results of this action' (*T1* 35) is a very pale parodic imitation of Soltyk's later violence towards Kreisler.[26]

Hobson sets up the central concern of the outer frame of the novel with a barbed verbal thrust, after a series of escalating jabs between the two: 'Don't you like Germans?=You've just been too intimate with one […].=Are you an "official fiancé?" And if so, what is that, may I ask?' (*T1* 24). Tarr responds as though stung by the comment, the narrator noting that 'it was evident' that 'Tarr was taken aback' (*T1* 24). He follows with a lecture of sorts where he relates the sex urge to the function of the artist. Even in his defence, however, he confesses to an appetite for 'a coarser, more foolish, slovenly taste' than even 'J. W. M. Turner' [*sic*] and thus elevates himself compared to Hobson, whom he chides for idleness as an artist, and to Turner himself, but as a decadent (*T1* 30). He closes the exchange with Hobson, after mocking his dress, his hair, his effete education, and his general air of constructed bohemianism, with the muted act of violence where he knocks his hat off, having resolved earlier to make him 'pay' (*T1* 31).

Where Hobson is described as an artistic poseur, Tarr's next encounter is Butcher, a 'bloody wastrel enamoured of gold' (*T1* 36). Tarr takes some pleasure in recounting how he turned Butcher's artistic aspirations towards business, so that he was prevented from becoming 'arty and silly' (*T1* 36). Tarr immediately turns the conversation to his discussion with Hobson, and Butcher pokes knowingly at Tarr's fresh wound: 'You're not engaged to be married, are you?' (*T1* 37). Twice Tarr asks if he should marry Bertha, and his persistence suggests perhaps that

he is looking for assent. With Butcher, who lives on the monetized fringes of the expatriate bohemian community, Tarr is less embarrassed than with Hobson, who has pretensions of the flamboyant 'Art-touch' (*T1* 22). Even Butcher argues against Bertha, however, with the simple injunction that unless Tarr can imagine himself with her for the long term, he should disentangle himself. Tarr's play on language makes the pun of choice sound like a military campaign, as he takes pains to 'dis-engage' and stay that way (*T1* 43). Like the end of the novel, Tarr's behaviour in its opening is characterized by hesitation, introspection, and paralysis. The close of each chapter in the Overture rests on Tarr determining to break off his engagement with Bertha, but successive chapters show him distracted by friends and acquaintances, alternative commentators who offer momentary distractions from the work 'in front of him with Bertha' as he revisits the premise to see how (and perhaps whether) he should act (*T1* 45).

The pattern continues in the exchange with Lowndes where Tarr goes next to test his relationship with Bertha against one more opinion, or to put off the troublesome work of dealing with Bertha. Tarr's catalogue of bohemian 'artists' finishes with Lowndes who is dismissed as having 'just enough money to be a Cubist' (*T1* 45). Sounding like an inside joke, it suggests a fringe position (though Tarr later identifies himself as a Cubist, too) that can only be sustained with a little independent income suggesting that there is no real market for the art. Lowndes offers a dissenting view of Tarr's relationship with Bertha. He confesses to liking German women, but like the other expatriates Tarr encounters on his journey, he is presented as a sham. The portrait of Lowndes focuses on his poor production juxtaposed against his self-importance, and his eagerness to be interrupted where he might discourse about his work instead of actually getting down to work. When he asks after Tarr's own work, Tarr confesses to not doing much at the moment either, and, later in the Overture, he puts off a visit to his own studio. In the course of the entire book, while we occasionally hear Tarr discourse effusively about art and sex and masculinity, we barely see him act, and we observe him painting just once, and that briefly on a piece he describes as a 'diversion,' and a 'witty pastiche' of three young men, 'naked youths […] with rather worried Greek faces' (*T1* 206). The painting, vaguely classical in form rather than modern, is a nod to Lewis's ironic tone and perhaps the arranged figures of Tarr, Kreisler, and Soltyk. It is also not Tarr's principal work; the audience sees nothing of that. We see much the same implied critique in the momentary confusion over current fads when

Lowndes notes that he's glad to be interrupted in his work since he's 'rather off colour' (*T1* 46). Tarr is quick to ask 'Off colour? What is the matter with colour now – ?' (*T1* 46). As Lowndes corrects him, pointing to the common idiom, 'No, I mean I'm seedy', Tarr merely mumbles shamefacedly, caught and suddenly exposed in his own pretensions: 'Oh, ah. Yes' (*T1* 46).

Tarr confesses his disappointment with Lowndes, and in a fascinating aside that means little as the reader first encounters it, Lowndes rejoins: 'Where are you having lunch? I thought of going down to Lejeune's to see if I could come across a beggar of the name of Kreisler. He could tell you much more about German women than I can. He's a German. Come along, won't you? Are you doing anything?' (*T1* 48). Like the opportunity to wind about the plot and influence action in the closing duel sequence, Tarr has the opportunity to meet Kreisler early on in the Overture. In both instances, while the architecture of the plot repeatedly invites his meaningful participation and engagement in Kreisler's narrative arc, Tarr declines, utterly indifferent to Kreisler and his story. Here, as later when he refuses to become Kreisler's second in the duel, he removes himself from the scene leaving Lowndes 'wounded […] by the brevity of Tarr's visit' (*T1* 48). When he steps out into the street, steeling himself for the visit to Bertha, Lewis describes Tarr like a swimmer clinging to a rock outside of a shop. Then, when he is ready to push out into the current, all agency gone, Tarr 'let[s] himself drift down it' (*T1* 49).

Such inertia is most evident in the closing sequence of the Overture when Tarr, following the current rather than seeking her out, sees Bertha at last. Both characters compete to see who might prevail in a contest for the most profoundly disaffected insouciance. Bertha looks at him with a 'humorous indifferent query', while he in return feels hurt to be met in such a way when he is attempting to pull off his own 'swaggering indifference' (*T1* 51). Throughout, Lewis notes the fatal inertia that Tarr wallows in as he tries, and largely fails, to extricate himself from his engagement to Bertha. Bertha provides an intriguing counterpoint to Tarr throughout chapter 4 of the Overture. She matches him emotionally, and converses with him in a way that diminishes him as a child in the relationship (he occupies a similar relationship with Kreisler later). In return he responds with a 'set sulky stagnation' (*T1* 53), and '[m]ore inaction' (*T1* 55), and is stung by 'this impasse of arrested life' wherein he stands 'sick and useless' (*T1* 60). Bertha is passive too in the sequence,

but she takes control of the argument by focusing on Tarr's domesticity, and here, as elsewhere in the relationship, '[a]ll her hope centred in his laziness. She watched his weaknesses with a loving eye' (*T1* 56).

Tarr's attempt to make a breach with Bertha goes poorly – he is betrayed by his emotional ties to her and to the bourgeois knick-knacks of her lodgings that he mocks elsewhere. In a moment of extraordinary frankness that foreshadows his cynical marriage to her at the close, he announces that he's trying out something new: '*It was a feeling of complete indifference as regards yourself.*' (*T1* 63). While the slight has the potential to wound, Bertha's response is practised and scornful: 'Oh, is *that* all?' (*T1* 63).

When challenged with his affections for Bertha in the opening of the novel, and questioned over his engagement, Tarr protests that his engagement is a matter of form only. His early actions once again are a pre-vision of the novel's close. He might be engaged to Bertha, but the engagement itself is merely a matter of convenience, and one meant to satisfy the scrupulous bourgeois principles of his fiancée: 'I let her announce our engagement or the reverse just as she likes', Tarr remarks to Hobson: 'That has been our arrangement from the start. I never know at any given time whether I am engaged or not. I leave all that sort of thing entirely in her hands' (*T1* 25).

The opening sequence is marked by the same kind of passivity and paralysis that Tarr displays in his dealings with Kreisler, and it suggests, ironically, that his action at the end of the novel is perhaps inaction after all. His nominal engagement in its opening pages is, after all, merely a foreshadowing of his sham marriage at its very end. In fact, marrying Bertha as he does with a mistress in plain sight, he manages to keep his bohemian credentials, but, more importantly, he is able to remain aloof from the kind of intimacy (with Anastasya) that might jeopardize his independence. The unconventional marriage allows him to embrace the 'swagger sex' of his liaison with Anastasya (where, true to character, she takes the initiative and seduces him). However, the relationship with Anastasya can go no further. It is stalled by Tarr's action and unlikely to amount to more than an affair with the legal commitment to Bertha acting as a prophylactic for any future emotional or civil ties. If we take Tarr at his word, then his marriage to Bertha at the end is hardly a direct action at all; after all, as he confesses early on, he leaves 'that sort of thing entirely in her hands'. It is, instead, a way of inhibiting change, because it ensures that neither engagement nor marriage with Anastasya is feasible any

longer, and it effectively arrests Tarr in a moment of fractured narrative time.

Lewis teases the reader with the notion that Tarr is perhaps an emerging man, a self-proclaimed 'Artist', 'a new sort of person; the creative man' (*T1* 29). The prospect of growth and change through the narrative offers the tempting prospect of the *bildungsroman* and *kunstlerroman*, and arcs of conventional character development, but Lewis destabilizes such readings through his choices in narrative design, and through the plot and character conventions that he systematically resists and revises. Tarr is surrounded by the language of paralysis and indifference throughout the novel, while Kreisler is driven by impulsive action. Like Turgenev's figures of Hamlet and Don Quixote, they are caught in a polarity that offers a compelling dynamic, rich in opportunities for symmetries and affinities of plot and character, but it is Lewis's consistent refusal to allow Tarr to participate that makes the novel modern. It is fundamentally the same mechanism that Joseph Frank observes in his ground-breaking essay on modernism, 'Spatial Form in Modern Literature' (1945). There, noting stylistic innovations in Eliot and Pound, Frank observes that each poet 'attempted in their major works' to 'undermine the inherent consecutiveness of language, frustrating the reader's normal expectation of a sequence' in order to make readers approach the text as a spatial rather than a chronological experience.[27] Lewis does not 'undermine the inherent consecutiveness of language', but he certainly arrests and subverts expectations of character and plot, and 'frustrates the reader's normal expectation of a sequence' in the resulting narrative.

Tarr's early encounters leading towards his meeting with Bertha are shaped by inertia and indifference, and his later half-hearted pursuit of Kreisler is motivated by it too. An opportunity to meet with Kreisler during his chat with Lowndes is refused, and Tarr carefully avoids becoming embroiled in Kreisler's duel, though the mechanism for him to do so in each case is available. In fact, it would be more natural in each case that Tarr might follow through. Lowndes is angry with him for cutting short his visit, and Bitzenko is initially determined to see Tarr serve as Kreisler's second. Certainly, the reader probably inclines towards the idea that these two figures ought to be intricately connected, ought indeed to slip cleverly into the kind of intricate plotting that winds their two fates about each other. But even then, Tarr's place in Kreisler's story is subverted and assumed by a surrogate, Soltyk, who assumes Tarr's role

in the narrative where Tarr's indifference removes him from it. Lewis's novel cleverly teases such choices, evoking familiar conventions and expectations for the reader, but ultimately rejecting them. Lewis does this sometimes violently, and sometimes subtly with affected indifference, creating a haunting novel of sharp angles and oppositions and with an unnervingly hollow core in which Kreisler and Tarr, rather than shaping one another's fate, perform an absurd and lonely dance about each other without really touching each other's lives. The effect is something altogether new: encompassing the alienating effect that West notes in her contemporary review, and the 'invisible conflict' that Eliot observes, the result is a text that subverts expectations so that it is simultaneously frustrating and refreshing, indifferent and compelling.

Notes

[1] O'Keeffe notes an intermediary title, 'The Bourgeois Bohemians', as well, as the story developed (*T1* 362).

[2] Rebecca West, 'Humour Alive and Dead', *The Nation*, 107.2772 (17 August 1918): 175-6, at 176; unsigned review, 'Tarr. By Wyndham Lewis. (The Egoist, Ltd.)', *The English Review*, 118 (September 1918), 239.

[3] West, 'Humour Alive and Dead', 176.

[4] P. Wyndham Lewis, *Tarr* (London: The Egoist Ltd, 1918), x. Lewis renders an apology for his preface to the 1918 Egoist edition of Tarr in *Rude Assignment*, where he notes that the worst of it was motivated by the environment of the war, and confesses, simply: 'I blush' (*RA* 162).

[5] T. S. Eliot, 'Tarr', *The Egoist*, 5.8 (September 1918): 105-6, at 106.

[6] The cancelled section of the Prologue from the Egoist edition of *Tarr* is reproduced in the Black Sparrow Press edition (see *T1* 360 and *T2* 285-9).

[7] 'I was for some years spiritually a Russian – a character in some Russian novel' (*RA* 161), Lewis recollects in *Rude Assignment*, noting there too *Tarr*'s debt to Dostoevsky, along with Nietzsche, whom Lewis describes as an 'immediate source of infection' (*RA* 162) in his pessimistic depiction of German culture.

[8] Alongside Lewis's comments about his debt to writers such as Dostoevsky and Gogol, and traces reminiscent of Mikhail Lermontov's anti-hero, Pechorin, there is perhaps an echo of Turgenev's character dynamics in *Tarr*. In his essay 'Hamlet and Don Quixote', Turgenev reveals a narrative method that revolves around two contrary, iconic character types: the melancholy Prince of Hamlet, and the idealistic and impulsive Don Quixote. Turgenev portrays them as 'two opposite types of human nature […] – the ends as it

were of the axle on which it turns' ('Hamlet and Don Quixote', trans. Lena Milman, *Fortnightly Review*, 62 (1894): 191-205, at 191). I have examined this curious character pairing in relation to Joseph Conrad's *Under Western Eyes* (1911), another novel noted for its debt to Dostoevsky (see my ""Twin Antitypes": Conrad's Secret Sharers and Turgenev's "Hamlet and Don Quixote"', *The Conradian*, 36.1 (Spring 2011): 46-57). But the relationship between Tarr and Kreisler seems to suggest an innovative reconfiguration of the pair. Kreisler is melancholy but impulsive, while Tarr is idealistic, but incapable of action.

[9] Robert Currie, 'Wyndham Lewis, E. T. A. Hoffmann, and *Tarr*', *The Review of English Studies*, 30.118 (May 1979): 169-81.

[10] Alan Starr, 'Tarr and Wyndham Lewis', *ELH*, 19.1 (Spring 1982): 179-89, at 185.

[11] Thomas Hardy, 'The Convergence of the Twain' (1912), in *Collected Poems of Thomas Hardy* (London: Macmillan & Co, 1919), 288-9 (at l. 30).

[12] *Ibid.*, ll. 26-7.

[13] Michael Levenson, 'Form's Body: Wyndham Lewis's *Tarr*', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 45.3 (September 1984): 241-62, at 241.

[14] *Ibid.*

[15] See Michael Wutz, 'The Energetics of *Tarr*: The Vortex-Machine Kreisler', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 38.4 (Winter 1992): 845-69 for further discussion of Kreisler as an expression of Vorticism and machine form, where Wutz suggests that Tarr is the final manifestation of Kreisler's machine energy.

[16] Lewis notes their presence in Paris, but especially Brittany in his sardonic treatment of the type. The detail is unfortunate since the essay appears alongside a serialization of Joseph Conrad's 'Some Reminiscences', where the émigré Pole notes his own early encounter with France and his youthful adventures in Marseille. Conrad's first published story was 'The Idiots' (1896), set in Brittany, after Conrad had honeymooned there. Lewis's essay came about the time Ford's and Conrad's hitherto close relationship began to fray, and the treatment of Poles alongside Conrad's reminiscences presumably did little to help.

[17] P. Wyndham Lewis, 'The "Pole"', *The English Review*, 2.6 (May 1909): 255-65.

[18] *Ibid.*, 255.

[19] John Crace, '*Tarr* by Wyndham Lewis', *Digested Classics*, The Guardian (4 June 2010). Available at: www.theguardian.com/books/2010/jun/04/tarr-wyndham-lewis-digested (accessed 12/06/2018).

[20] Mikhail Lermontov, *A Hero of Nowadays*, trans. John Swinnerton Phillimore (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd., 1920), 18. Subsequently translates as *A Hero of Our Time*.

[21] It echoes, for example, Grant Allen's novel of the new woman from 1895, *The Woman Who Did*, with its challenging social message of a woman who defies social convention and eschews marriage altogether, and its documentation of the more or less predictable woes that befall her as a result and end in her suicide. Allen's novel was well known and controversial. It was made into a silent film in Britain in 1915.

[22] Lewis's biographer, Jeffrey Meyers, points to elements of biographical experience in *Tarr*, but notes ironically that corresponding circumstances in Lewis's personal life were rather different. The figure who Meyers suggests corresponds closely to Bertha, Ida Vendel, actually bore Lewis a child, but rather than marry her to legitimate the child, he abandoned both mother and child immediately after the birth (see Jeffrey Meyers, *The Enemy: A Biography of Wyndham Lewis* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980), 22).

[23] See John Rodden's discussion of the failure of Lewis's figures according to the paradigms of the artist set up by Otto Rank in 'Wyndham Lewis's *Tarr*: Portraits of the Failed Artist', *The Journal of Wyndham Lewis Studies*, 2 (2011): 68-104.

[24] The scene is richer and more darkly comic in the 1918 Egoist Press edition of the novel: 'They sat for some minutes with what appeared a stately discomfort of self-consciousness, staring in front of them. – It was really only a dreary, boiling anger with themselves, with the contradictions of civilized life, the immense and intricate camouflage over the hatred that personal diversities engender' (Lewis, *Tarr* (The Egoist Ltd), 2).

[25] Tarr's encounter with Hobson even takes place in the Rue de Paradis, while Kreisler's later encounter with Soltyk that leads to the duel takes place in the Quartier de Paradis.

[26] Echoes run through the opening section like musical phrases that will repeat more fully in the main composition, like the momentary fear that Bertha has of Tarr and 'something criminal and quick in his eyes' so that she suddenly fears him 'as though she had admitted somebody too trustingly to her rooms' (*T1* 72).

[27] Joseph Frank, 'Spatial Form in Modern Literature: An Essay in Two Parts', *The Sewanee Review*, 53.2 (Spring 1945): 221-40, at 227.

A Psychological Dynamism of the Boa-Constrictor Type: *Tarr* and Dostoevsky

Flora de Giovanni

Ever since its publication in 1918, *Tarr* has been associated with Fyodor Dostoevsky. This is demonstrated by the contemporary reviews of T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, and Rebecca West, and confirmed by later critics, such as Geoffrey Wagner, Timothy Materer, and Paul Edwards, who, concentrating particularly on the figure of Otto Kreisler and on certain scenes in which Lewis clearly drew inspiration from the Russian writer, have been quick to see in the novel the palpable presence of *The Double* (1846), *Notes from Underground* (1864), and *The Devils* (1872). The aim of my essay, however, is to take the argument further: in my opinion, not only does Lewis borrow thematically from incidents in Dostoevsky's fiction, he also takes as a structural model the character depiction and narrative construction for which the Russian was near-unanimously criticized at the time. If this is so – and this is the aspect that I consider most interesting – Lewis viewed his forebear in a way that differed significantly from the other British writers of a period characterized by Dostoevsky mania, who, though convinced of his greatness, were nonetheless unable to recognize his artistry. As Lucia Aiello notes, 'Dostoevskii was generally presented as a "genius" whose talent, however, resided in something other than his artistic accomplishments. Dostoevskii the Nihilist, the philosopher, the prophet, the epileptic, etc., prevailed for a long time over Dostoevskii the artist, with no small consequence for the manner of his reception in Britain and in Europe generally'.[1] Whilst his contemporaries condemned Dostoevsky's careless writing and the supposed shapelessness of his works – which Henry James labelled 'fluid pudding' – Lewis seemingly perceived the originality of his form and its potential for innovation.[2] He thus used Dostoevsky to confer a structure on *Tarr*.

The Dostoevsky Cult

Dostoevsky's reception in Britain can be divided into three stages: 'the first years' (1881-88), when some shorter fiction and major novels such as *Crime and Punishment* (1866) and *The Idiot* (1869) were translated; 'the interval' (1889-1911), a period of relative neglect in which previously translated works went out of print; and the so-called 'Dostoevsky cult' of 1912-21, the decade in which Constance Garnett translated almost all of his works. Peter Kaye reminds us, however, that most English novelists 'first became acquainted with Dostoevsky through French translations'.[3] Garnett was encouraged in her enterprise by Arnold Bennett, a prominent figure in the literary establishment, who promoted a cultural policy of deprovincialization aimed at remedying Britain's insularity. The country showed itself to be more than ready to appreciate Russian culture (as demonstrated, for example, by the extraordinary popularity of Sergei Diaghilev's ballets) and to make it an object of interest and debate. British readers thus pondered whether the 'Slavic soul' was fully comprehensible to a European, whether it was more Eastern or more Western, and symbolically graded Russian authors on the basis of their compatibility with the West. In accordance with a model in which the charms of diversity competed with a sense of cultural superiority, Turgenev was the most accessible and similar, Dostoevsky the most unruly, excessive, and alien, as again suggested by the judgements of Henry James, who admired the former for the mastery and refinement of his writing and criticized the latter for a combination of formal sloppiness and disregard for social hierarchies.[4]

To those who study his penetration across the Channel, Dostoevsky's popularity seems linked principally to the dramatic changes taking place in Edwardian England, the certainties of which, later definitively swept away by the First World War, were already wavering. It is this sense of collapse, of apocalypse, that the Russian writer seems capable of representing, simultaneously voicing emotions whose expression was prohibited by contemporary conventions.[5] Thus, invested with a liberating potential capable, in the common perception, of drawing on depths inaccessible to canonically trained writers, Dostoevsky appeared to the English reader as a barbarian, a primitive uncontaminated by the literary tradition, who gave voice to his own spiritual torments, thus expanding the domain of art. He also revealed himself capable of drawing psychological portraits of extraordinary power, whose pathological

excesses were sometimes ascribed by readers to the author himself, confusing autobiography and fiction. It is thanks to these unrestrained characters, devoid of that reassuring balance resulting from the social pressures and literary conventions to which British readers were accustomed, that he earned his reputation as an explorer of primordial emotional and spiritual zones, unknown to European culture proper.[6] And since he could not be classified as belonging to the tradition of the novel, 'his works were assumed to be unshaped by artistic intent', as Kaye puts it (Kaye, *DEM* 7).

Dostoevsky's withdrawal of a directive authorial presence in relation to characterization, his chaotic fictional technique, with its frenzied pacing and incongruous commingling of disparate elements, and his lack of restraint and disregard for stylistic elegance proved a stumbling-block for novelists such as Bennett, Joseph Conrad, E. M. Forster, John Galsworthy, and Virginia Woolf (Kaye, *DEM* 26). Even Constance Garnett called him a careless writer.[7] Acclaimed, as we have seen, as a mystic, a psychologist, a prophet, and much more, but only marginally as a novelist, he was considered irredeemably uncouth by an audience whose horizon of expectations, modelled on the examples of Conrad and James, did not encompass the heterogeneity that turned out to be his distinctive feature:

> To an audience that often equated literary art with stylistic beauty, upholding the conviction of James and Conrad […] that fiction must resonate with a melodic, unifying authorial voice, Dostoevsky proved aesthetically deficient. The stylistic, structural, linguistic, social and thematic heterogeneity of his literature, attributes heralded by [Mikhail] Bakhtin as essential to the novel, merely confirmed the audience's expectations of artlessness. (Kaye, *DEM* 22)[8]

As Aiello convincingly argues, the Dostoevsky cult can be better understood if located within 'a transitional period oriented towards new expressions of the novelistic genre'.[9] These are the years, in fact, in which novelists tied to tradition, like Bennett, and proponents of renewal, like Woolf, confronted one another, clashing over the drawing of character, associated with two openly conflicting concepts of narrative. The dispute, which lasted from 1917 to Bennett's death in 1931, reached its apex in the 1920s when he questioned Woolf's 'reality gift' for character-making,

and she called him a 'materialist', in other words someone who focused on externalities, attacking him as the exponent of a realism now incapable of describing the changed reality of the contemporary world.[10] According to Woolf, the writer's task was instead to delve into 'the dark places of psychology'.[11] In order to do so, a new novelistic form was needed, one that disregarded the accepted literary conventions of novel writing still observed by Bennett.[12] Surprisingly, Dostoevsky was called upon by both sides in support of their respective positions. Bennett, who, alone among critics, had contextualized his works in the tradition of the European novel, contrasted him with the modernists – and therefore with Woolf and James Joyce – whose excessive preoccupation with form he considered sterile. The Russian novelist seemed to him to possess a range of qualities absent from the contemporary literary scene: an empathetic realism, an elevated moral conscience, a capacity to penetrate the human soul, a remarkable dramatic talent. He thus used Dostoevsky as a bulwark against the rising tide of ethical and ideological change, certain that literature could hold back chaos and the intrinsic disharmony of the modern world. Woolf, by contrast, considered him an ally in dismantling the Edwardian novel and authorizing the experimentation that was being developed by the writers of her generation: his psychological studies, particularly the rendering of the tumults of the psyche characteristic of his writing, made him an alternative to the narrative of nineteenth-century origin, which Woolf considered to privilege descriptions of exteriority, a tendency that she fiercely attacked in her essays of the 1920s.

But despite their largely divergent opinions, Bennett and Woolf agreed on one thing: the Russian writer, though undoubtedly great, failed to sufficiently consider form and produced imperfect, disordered works, lacking in harmony. According to Bennett, he wrote novels that were unbalanced and poorly constructed both in terms of overall design and individual detail, while Woolf considered him to lack discipline and an aesthetic sensibility, seemingly failing to discern the intimate coherence of his fiction in the context of the frenetic pace of his narration, and his foregrounding of violent conflicts between characters. Like Woolf, readers of the time were perplexed by the convulsive unfolding of the plot and the stormy group scenes; but, I would ask, does Lewis not use similar techniques in *Tarr*, a novel that, not coincidentally, he claimed to have written in part as a figurative Russian?

Lewis the Russian

Returning after six years spent on the continent and particularly in Paris, which he considered 'his university',[13] Lewis made his debut on the crowded London arts scene literally dressed as a Russian, as recalled by Ford Madox Ford (then Hueffer), to whom he introduced himself in 1909. Wishing to make himself an immediately recognizable figure, he relied in part on his eccentric dress – a steeple-crowned hat, a coat with no revers, a black cape over his shoulders – to display his cosmopolitan education, signalling his difference from local bohemians afflicted by provincialism.[14] Describing himself at the start of his career as 'a moujik who bought his clothes in Savile Row' (*BB* 273), he was determined to become what Pound later described, in his review of *Tarr*, as 'that rarest of phenomena, an Englishman who has achieved the triumph of being also an European.'[15] Naturally this was not just a matter of outward appearances: 'I was for some years spiritually a Russian – a character in some Russian novel. As such I made my bow in London – to the deeply astonished Ford Madox Hueffer' (*RA* 161). His exterior was thus the visible outcome of an intellectual passion, which turned out to be long lasting: his encounter with Russian literature at the start of the century, thanks to the French translations, revolutionized his approach to life and opened up to him a whole spiritual world – the fruit of the most extraordinary explosion of creativity since the Renaissance, characterized by an ethos midway between West and East, as Lewis himself said.[16]

Aware of 'being in between' cultures, Russian writers seemed, precisely for their partial detachment from European society, capable of accurately measuring who belonged to it *in toto*, 'conscious also of something like a mission […] as the purveyors of sincerity to the over-institutionalised European' (*RA* 158). This sincerity, which allowed them to access a deeper layer of reality beneath conventions, was a less conspicuous feature of European literature, and perhaps in particular British Edwardian literature, with respect to which Lewis's identification with the Russian spirit guaranteed him a centrifugal and liberating force.[17] As a consequence, rather than representing an opportunity for moral reflection, reading Dostoevsky instead gave Lewis the chance to delve into the revelatory excesses of the human spirit: 'since I was not interested in problems of good and evil, I did not read these books so much as sinister homilies as monstrous character patterns, often of miraculous insight' (*RA* 158). Terms such as 'sincerity' and 'insight' seem to locate

the attractions of Russian literature for Lewis in a penetrating and unattenuated realism, subversive with respect to Edwardian conventions, which tended to shield the reader from psychological distress. Moreover, judged by the standards of the gentleman's code of propriety and self-possession, Dostoevsky appeared lacking in decorum to the English, whose 'narrative traditions mirror[ed] the customs of an entire nation grounded in materialism and a restrictive social hierarchy' (Kaye, *DEM* 81). As Lewis wrote in 1917, his contemporaries seemed sure that 'only *gentlemen* […] were worth writing about.'[18] *Tarr,* by contrast, did not feature 'a world of gentlemen and ladies' (*BB* 88).

The novel, then, was inspired by Dostoevsky, and necessarily characterized itself as alien to the British tradition. Lewis avoided the rhetorical flourishes that adorned contemporaneous British fiction, showing an unusual indifference to bourgeois rules and an equally unusual scepticism about the innate goodness of the human race, two notions that late Edwardian realism had difficulties in shedding. And, summing up the specifically Dostoevskian aspects of his novel, he listed 'the intricacy of the analysis of character and motive, and a comprehension of that never failing paradox, *the real*, in contrast with the monotonous self-consistency of what man invents without reference to nature, in pursuit of the ideal' (*RA* 166). The most important feature shared by the two writers, then, is confirmed as an idea of realism that does not shrink before the paradoxes and contradictions of human nature, that does not strive to find coherence where none exists – in other words a realism that is not reticent, which generates ambivalent and intimately antithetical characters, capable, for example, of enjoying their own degradation, like the protagonist of *Notes from Underground* or like Kreisler; and which, in holding together incongruent and incompatible aspects, may easily take on grotesque overtones.

It is perhaps thanks to his conception of the absurdity of life, its intrinsic irrationality and contradictoriness – a foundational aspect of his poetics from the outset – that Lewis can understand the heterogeneous and complex world of the Russian writer and share his mode of representation, without experiencing his plurality as disquieting and chaotic, or as the consequence of a lack of professional mastery.[19] It was Kreisler himself, the most Dostoevskian of *Tarr*'s characters, who particularly disorientated British readers, unused to stories based on a central character's self-destructive sickness, and equally unused to literary works so indifferent to questions of good and evil as to treat the death of

a key character as no more than 'a tragic game' (*RA* 165). As we have seen, Lewis did not read Dostoevsky from a moralistic perspective, and encouraged readers to approach his own novel in a similar way, implicitly identifying himself with his model: 'This condemned man hero, or rather protagonist [Kreisler], is expected to awaken neither sympathy nor repulsion in the reader – for it is not a moral tale' (*RA* 165).

If we peruse Lewis's two autobiographical texts, *Blasting and Bombardiering* (1937) and *Rude Assignment* (1950), in search of statements that might shed light on his rapport with Dostoevsky, we cannot fail to note a slight discrepancy between the two. Both are defined by Aaron Jaffe as 'promotional memoirs', but also represent an attempt to credit the author as one of the creators of modernism, on a par with Eliot, Joyce, and Pound, the other 'Men of 1914' who were universally considered the movement's tutelary deities by the 1930s.[20] It is therefore unsurprising that Lewis, whose inveterate egotism is well known, constructed a bombastic, larger than life image of himself. Nonetheless, though both autobiographies downplay the influence of the Russian, the former takes a more extreme position, clearly stating that he did not use Dostoevsky as a model in writing his novel. Certainly, he is proud of the comparison but in hindsight he seems to emphasize above all its beneficial contribution to his lionization (*BB* 89). *Blasting and Bombardiering*, however, is a book written under the impetus of economic hardship and therefore aimed at a general audience not necessarily interested in literary issues. Returning to the subject in *Rude Assignment* – the 'account of [his] career as writer and artist' (*RA* 11) – he seems more disposed to acknowledge Dostoevsky's influence, particularly on the initial phase of his career, though he does not fail to distance himself from him:

> In form *Tarr* does resemble somewhat a Dostoevsky novel. Not only is this the case in the nature of the subject, but to some extent in the treatment. Its dynamism is psychological, of the boa-constrictor type – a steady enveloping compression. Although there is much action, it is the mind not the senses that provide it.
>
> The parallel to Dostoevsky must not be exaggerated though […]. The writing, with its abruptness and for that time a new directness, its strong visual notation, is as unlike as possible the Dostoevsky diffuseness. (*RA* 161)

But the peculiarity of *Tarr*, according to Lewis, does not derive solely from Dostoevsky: a contribution is also made by his talent as a painter and, above all, that dynamism of Futurist origin that Vorticism had purged of Marinettian sentimentality and interpreted instead in intellectual terms. If, according to the author's intentions, the novel was to be 'a piece of writing worthy of the hand of the abstractist innovator' (*L* 552), during its composition he found himself taking an increasing interest in the life of his characters, so that to show them in action, driven by their passions, he must partially abandon the abstraction that he had initially intended to try out (*RA* 139). He thus resorted to dynamism, in the shape of a psychological impulse that advanced the plot, compressing it and systematically absorbing it. This notion suggests the endogenous movement of a novel whose action is triggered by the conflagration of extreme and long suppressed inner states, similar to those commonly ascribed to the Russian writer's characters. *Tarr*, however, does not simply replicate Dostoevsky's form *tout court*. Indeed, Lewis recognizes the defect most commonly ascribed to his model – the lack of economy, the indiscriminate willingness to include, unmitigated by the principle of selection – and sets out to correct it. He therefore entrusts himself to an immediate, brusque writing style, rich in visual images, that responds to the typically Vorticist need for order and stylization, evoking the bridled energy, the arrested dynamism (which we could also describe as *compressed*, influenced by the image of the boa constrictor), which is one of the movement's key concepts.

The Comparison with Dostoevsky: Early Reviews and Later Criticism

Dostoevsky's presence in *Tarr* was quickly recognized by critics, and in September 1918 Eliot already spoke of this as a commonplace. In August 1918 Rebecca West had reviewed the novel in *The Nation* and, after denying that it was 'a cleverish pastiche of Dostoevsky' as it might appear on an initial reading, stressed its serious and profound interest in the human soul, very similar to that of the Russian.[21] Even earlier, in March, in *The Little Review*, Pound described Lewis as 'the only English writer who can be compared to Dostoevsky', before hastily turning the comparison to the advantage of the Anglo-Canadian: 'his mind travels with greater celerity, with more unexpectedness, but he loses none of Dostoevsky's

effect of mass and of weight'.[22] Eliot went even further in the same direction, downplaying the superficial affinities between the two authors, to state that what mattered were the differences and not the similarities. *Tarr* – which, for Eliot, was not a true novel, but should be placed somewhere between genres – stood out for a method that, *contra* Dostoevsky, did not rely on inclusivity, lack of selection and the accumulation of details:

> In contrast to Dostoevsky, Mr Lewis is impressively deliberate, frigid; his interest in his own personages is wholly intellectual. […] Perhaps inhuman would be a better word than frigid. […] The direct contact with the senses, perception of the world of immediate experience with its own scale of values, is like Dostoevsky, but there is always the suggestion of a purely intellectual curiosity in the senses that will disconcert many readers of the Russian novelist.[23]

As in the brief note by Pound, known as the impresario of high modernism, the review by Eliot, one of its most authoritative theorists, also emphasized the new, highlighting Lewis's Vorticist features of rapidity, detachment, intellect, and dehumanization. The comparison with Dostoevsky remained in the background, in some sense guaranteeing his greatness through the partial resemblance to a recognized writer. The image of *Tarr* outlined by Eliot is not very different from that developed by Lewis himself many years later in *Rude Assignment*, where, as we have seen, Dostoevsky seems to be moulded to a dry, direct, dynamic style, losing his specificity to the point of being absorbed into Lewis's own writing. Similarly, the author's painterly eye, which influences his writing, and his intellectual approach, which privileges the mind over the senses, prevent us from comparing *Tarr* too closely to the works of the Russian, instead placing the emphasis on its originality. It seems as if Lewis, interpreting himself in hindsight to assess his place among the leading artists of modernism, took account of the judgements expressed at the time by those later recognized as the creators of the movement, in order to sanction the innovative and experimental nature of his work through the support of *auctoritates*.

Ultimately, Eliot denies to Lewis the status of novelist – as he had denied the status of novel to *Tarr* – conferring upon him instead that of the 'most fascinating personality of our time'.[24] In his writing, then, there

remains a primordial energy, unknown to other writers, that Lewis re-expresses in modern terms. Ascribing to him two apparently antithetical characteristics – the ability to go beyond civilization and the ability to fruitfully employ its tools – Eliot describes him as out of time, simultaneously primitive and modern, whilst also implicitly recognizing his aspiration to overcome the conventions of that narrow and teetering realism that set great store precisely on the notion of civilization. Nonetheless, Eliot also sees in *Tarr* a variation on the typically Dostoevskian theme of mortification, identifying in the characterization of Kreisler 'a study in humiliation' and thus suggesting a comparison already in some ways made by Rebecca West, who had likened Kreisler to the character of Stavrogin in *The Devils*.[25] The comparison has been taken up by later criticism, starting from Geoffrey Wagner's pioneering study of 1957, in which the parallel with Stavrogin, though recognized, is downplayed on the basis of the different socio-economic status of the two characters. Other scholars soon joined Wagner, but saw analogies between Kreisler and Golyadkin in *The Double*; these comparisons are effectively recapitulated by Paul O'Keeffe in the afterword to his edition of the 1918 *Tarr*, though he notes that 'the Kreisler narrative is an inversion of the Russian model. Lewis's brutal, larger than life protagonist is the complete antithesis of Dostoevsky's pathetic little civil servant' (*T1* 381).[26]

However, if we compare episodes, atmospheres and characterization, it becomes evident that attempting to establish precise relations of filiation between any specific text by the Russian writer and *Tarr* is to miss the point, as Lewis in fact draws inspiration simultaneously from several of his works, appropriating and combining them. Thus, *malgré* Rebecca West, his novel *is* in effect 'a pastiche of Dostoevsky', and each of the parts that can in some way be seen as based on the Russian appears to be constructed by hybridizing several narratives. For example, Kreisler's insane conduct in sneaking into the Bonnington Club uninvited is reminiscent of Golyadkin's unexpected and unwanted arrival at the dance in honour of Klara Olsufyevna. Yet in other ways his wild dance with the widow, hurled against the other dancers, suggests some of Stavrogin's bizarre and inexplicable behaviours. The latter, for example, drags Pyotr Pavlovitch around by the nose, and at the dance hosted by the Liputins repeatedly kisses the lady of the house on the mouth, a demonstration of the wild lack of control that disseminates a climate of dangerous anarchy around him. Though the slap that Kreisler publicly inflicts on the innocent Soltyk is an act reminiscent of Stavrogin, the kiss

that Kreisler demands to avoid a duel – an outlandish request for peace – reminds us instead of Golyadkin junior kissing Golyadkin senior; and the mutual dislike immediately triggered between the Golyadkins appears to be reflected in the instinctual and unmotivated mutual dislike between Lewis's two characters (though Soltyk is effectively the victim and not the persecutor of the protagonist). The duel itself, marked by Kreisler's unusual behaviour, is reminiscent of that between Artemy Pavlovitch Gaganov and Stavrogin. Though the latter is described as 'this duelling bully from the capital' due to his extreme aggression and quickness to react to insult, on this particular occasion, though repeatedly provoked, he spurns the challenge and finally resolves to fire into the air, further humiliating his challenger.[27]

Kreisler's powerful and statuesque physique also resembles Stavrogin. Contradictory and unpredictable, sensual and nihilistic, both kill people in duels, share an urge for public mortification, and finally hang themselves. Stavrogin marries Marya Timofeevna, the lame and mentally defective servant, while Kreisler carefully stages his own social disgrace at the Bonnington Club: 'Only humiliation he knew awaited him in that direction. […] But he wanted to suffer still more […] The bitter fascination of suffering drew him on' (*T1* 124). The 'pleasure of despair' is also the central theme of *Notes from Underground*, in which the nameless narrator (who also fantasizes continually about fights, blows, and duels) participates uninvited at the dinner held in honour of Zverkov.[28] In the text we see the motif of worn, tatty, spotted clothing, unsuited to such a society event: 'Then I gave my clothes a close inspection and found that everything was old, worn out, threadbare: I'd really become terribly slovenly. […] The main problem was the huge yellow spot right on the trouser knee. I anticipated that this spot alone would deprive me of nine-tenths of my personal dignity'.[29] Lewis introduces the same motif in the second part of *Tarr*, the title of which, 'Doomed, evidently – the "frac"', alludes to the garment that Kreisler has pawned, leaving him with no other choice than to appear at the Bonnington Club inadequately dressed, anticipating his own humiliation: 'He already saw their faces in fancy, when he should ring their bell and present himself, old morning suit, collar none too clean, dusty boots. All this self-humiliation and suffering he was preparing for himself, was wedded with the thought of retaliation' (*T1* 124).

Tarr and Dostoevsky: A Structural Kinship

The examples above, though approximate and partial, nonetheless identify some significant thematic similarities. However, it is also important to identify the structural analogies between the two authors, resulting from the fact that Lewis followed Dostoevsky's example, drawing inspiration from the way he constructed his novels. We should thus turn our attention to characterization, and above all to the structure of Lewis's plot and the arrangement of the scenes that engineer its progress. In any case, character and structure are closely connected in *Tarr*: the former's loss of coherent identity is accompanied by the shattering of the form of the novel as we know it.[30]

As is well known, the double is a theme dear to Dostoevsky. According to Bakhtin, he usually dramatized the inner conflict of a character by shifting the duality to the outside and turning it into a dialogue with an alter ego, a caricature, a double.[31] Lewis's novel stands out for the presence of similar figures, such as Soltyk, who reveals himself to be a double in the name initially chosen for him – Partikoff, or 'part' and 'head' – in an early phase of the composition of *Tarr* in which the parallel with Dostoevsky's writing was deliberately pursued (see *T1* 381). Soltyk plays the role of parodic counterpart to Kreisler, with whom he contends for the friendship of Volker and the attention of Anastasya. Through his very presence he highlights the other's defects and *défaillances*, because he is a more socially adept, refined version of Kreisler. The comparison, unfavourable to the protagonist, provokes in him that envy and resentment from which the action springs:

> Soltyk physically bore, distantly and with polish, a resemblance to Kreisler. His handsome face and elegance were very different. Kreisler and he disliked each other for obscure physiological reasons […]. In some ways, then, Soltyk was his efficient and more accomplished counterpart, although as empty and unsatisfactory as himself. (*T1* 90)

Nonetheless, during the laborious composition of the novel – marked by many additions and alterations – Soltyk's original role as double became at least partly obscured by the relationship between Tarr and Kreisler. These characters, in accordance with a recognized and practised narrative scheme, divide control over the plot and fundamental attributes between

them: art and life, Vorticism and Futurism, mind and body, intellect and passion, ego and id.[32] The plot thus proceeds thanks to a clash between opposites. The characters are sharply antithetical to one another, to the extent that Fredric Jameson, after noting the defective status of individual identity in the form of modernism espoused by Lewis, describes them as a 'pseudo-couple' because 'the symbiotic "unity" of this new "collective" subject, both reduplicated and divided all at once' can come to life only through competition, which constitutes 'the relational or dialogical axis [upon] which "characters" become the merest poles'.[33] The partners in the pseudo-couple simulate a psychological unit: they are not active and independent subjects, but nor do they succumb to the schizophrenic fetishization that characterizes the contemporary consciousness. They should be understood above all as a structural expedient that preserves the narrative, as an antidote to the plotlessness threatening the novel. The use of the pseudo-couple thus shows that, in contrast to the mainstream of modernism which focuses on individual experience, Lewis advances a collective and intersubjective countertrend that also counts Dostoevsky among its exponents, not coincidentally, since the latter's 'passionate intermonadic dialogues struggle to overcome […] an endemic ego-deficiency or identity failure', as Jameson puts it.[34]

Another feature connected to the notion of collective and intersubjective identity is Lewis's habit of populating the novel with figures who fade into each other – a fate inescapable even to those who stand in clear contrast to one another: as Michael Levenson notes, with Soltyk's appearance on the scene, 'Tarr and Kreisler cease to be polar terms'.[35] Having obliterated the boundaries of the I, the characters mingle and become confused with one another, no longer configurations of unique and well-defined traits but rather temporary *states*, provisional *conditions* that can be transmitted to others, contaminating them and making them resemble one another. Thus Lewis's technique can be described as comparative and transitive, because it is based on a series of identifications and oppositions through which the protagonists are constantly compared. On the one hand, they are presented as possessing contrasting features; on the other, they share a series of common characteristics that differ in degree, quantity, and intensity. Like Kreisler and Soltyk in the passage quoted above, Bertha and Anastasya are constantly compared: both large, but one heavier; both blonde, but one darker; both romantic, but one more conventional. Revealing in their inner selves a contradictory, unstable, flexible identity, Lewis's characters

play several roles, wear several masks. Just as Kreisler states, 'I am a hundred different things' (*T1* 226), Tarr echoes him: 'I am not a strict landlord with the various personalities gathered beneath my roof' (*T1* 32).

This inner plurality and changeability is not reconciled or normalized in a novel that belongs to the dialogic tradition, and therefore does not pursue a sense of the ego's authenticity and coherence, but rather considers multiplicity an advantage. In *Tarr*, the characterization seems to be fully realized in the loss of control, in the episodic but significant excesses of the 'wild body' that abandons itself to a senseless anarchy, while the dissolution of the I is accompanied by the disintegration of the traditional narrative form. The scenes in which characters abandon themselves to unruly behaviour are also those that trigger the action. In turn, the action seems to progress, as Lewis himself suggests, by individual knots, by successive strangulations that ruffle the surface of a novel that is essentially philosophical – very *spoken*, we might say.[36]

From this perspective, Kreisler's visit to the Bonnington Club can be considered a fundamental turning point in the plot.[37] It is in scenes such as this that Dostoevsky's presence is particularly apparent: by collecting various characters (Fräulein Lipmann, Bertha, Anastasya, and Soltyk), who converge to bicker, cause a scene, and generally behave in an incongruous and aggressive manner, the dance at the Bonnington Club takes the form of a typical conclave scene, which Leonid Grossman defines as one characterized by fights, scandals, hysteria, blows, and fits of rage, a formula through which Dostoevsky typically brings together the main characters, making them interact in their explosive diversity.[38] Though some critics have considered these scenes to be the principal defect of Dostoevsky's narratives, judging them improbable, artificial, and gratuitous, they are nonetheless typical of his way of writing. Indeed, as Bakhtin reminds us, Dostoevsky always uses these scenes to engender new and unexpected plot shifts, as a function of his tendency to concentrate the action through a compression of time and space at moments of crisis.[39]

The Russian writer derives this theatrical approach to the text from his tendency to conceive of the world in spatial rather than temporal terms, preferring categories such as coexistence and interaction to development, and organizing his materials within a single temporal framework through the principle of juxtaposition. As Bakhtin explains,

> [t]his trait finds its external expression in Dostoevsky's passion for mass scenes, his impulse to concentrate […] as many persons and themes as possible in one place at one time, that is, his impulse to concentrate in a single moment the greatest possible qualitative diversity. Hence also Dostoevsky's urge to observe in a novel the dramatic principle of unity of time. And hence the catastrophic swiftness of action, the 'whirlwind motion', the dynamics of Dostoevsky. Dynamics and speed here (as, incidentally, everywhere) represent not only the triumph of time, but also the triumph over time, for speed is the single means for overcoming time in time.[40]

This terminology and these principles – 'dynamics', 'speed', 'whirlwind motion' – will be familiar to readers of Lewis, and suggest that we should avoid over-hastily ascribing key features of *Tarr* exclusively to its author's Futuro-Vorticist precepts, and thus underestimating Dostoevsky's role in the construction of the narrative. If we continue to read Bakhtin, we are provided with further points of contact that support the hypothesis that Lewis had a deep understanding of the poetics of the Russian writer. Bakhtin rightly notes that in those scenes characterized by scandals and eccentric behaviours, whose origins can be traced back to Menippean satire, the norms usually governing human conduct implode. Their place is taken by the logic of the carnival, which involves the overturning of recognized hierarchies, the daring coexistence of opposites, the provisional familiarity of strangers – a logic that also pervades Lewis's conclave scenes.

There are numerous scenes of this type in Dostoevsky's novels. In *The Devils*, for example, these include the gathering at Varvara Petrovna's house, in which Stavrogin, who has married Marya Timofeevna, earns himself a slap from Shatov, causing Lizaveta Nikolaevna to faint; and the disastrous party at the Lembke house, which ends with Julia Mikhaylovna fainting, a fit of madness on the part of the head of the family, and the news of the fire in which the Lebyadkin brothers die. In *The Double* there is the dance in honour of Klara Olsufyevna, in which Golyadkin turns up uninvited and, criticized by everyone for his uncivilized behaviour, is energetically shown the door (the first appearance of his double seems to be a direct consequence of this episode). In *Notes from Underground*, the dinner for Zverkov is full of tension, hostility, and menacing possibilities of blows and duels. It is precisely when the narrator follows his old school

fellows to a brothel, and they shun and mock him, that he meets Liza, whom he treats with cruelty, marking the peak of his abjection. According to Kaye, Dostoevsky and Virginia Woolf share the same tendency to make parties a moment of fundamental contact between dissimilar characters and contrasting points of view. But whilst the latter never abandons civility and decorum, with the consequence that such conflicts, frustrated desires, and contradictions find an outlet exclusively in the intimate sphere of the character, via the technique of the inner monologue, Dostoevsky, by contrast, breaks down the barriers between the public and private persona and expresses inner tumult in an outwardly scandalous and striking form, creating a widespread state of anarchy. Indeed, for Dostoevsky 'private consciousness can only become known in a public forum', as Kaye puts it (Kaye, *DEM* 93).

In accordance with his 'external approach' to characterization, which represents his most original contribution to modernist poetics and his principal counter-measure against the introspective novel of Joyce and Woolf, Lewis, the 'Personal-Appearance Artist' (*MWA* 95), visualizes the psychological states of his characters through theatrical attitudes, gestures, and words, and through comparison with others, a comparison often marked by tensions and by odd and exaggerated behaviours. And, just as in Dostoevsky, the plot of *Tarr* revolves around highly animated scenes, which lead to what we can describe as the crucial events of the story. *Tarr* is a novel framed by theoretical debates, dominated by dialogue in those parts of the text in which the titular protagonist holds the stage, which takes off in plot terms thanks to scenes such as the party at Fräulein Lipmann's home, the dance at the Bonnington Club, and the attack on Soltyk at the Café Souchet, which results in the exterior set-piece of the duel. Each example is crowded and constructed around explosive contrasts, dominated by chaos and senseless violence, and characterized by a decidedly grotesque tone that shares in, and accentuates, the logic of subversion that typifies the carnivalesque. And Kreisler, who rages through each incident, is explicitly described in the 1928 version as 'a vast Magog of Carnival' (*T2* 80).

By organizing the plot in this theatrical way, Lewis, like Dostoevsky, often concentrates the salient encounters inside closed spaces barely able to contain the tension released by the contact between characters. Above all, the scene at the Bonnington Club is genuinely Dostoevskian, because it borrows the motif of the character who, though uninvited, imposes himself on a meeting from which he has been

excluded, like Golyadkin or the nameless narrator of *Notes from Underground*. Isolated and extraneous when he arrives, he has become an enemy by the time he is thrown out, heaping humiliation upon humiliation and confirming his own condition as a rejected outsider. Kreisler, who clearly aims at self-annihilation, behaves accordingly, completely disregarding the etiquette of the club. He breaks all the rules, subverting them as required by the logic of the carnival and consequently attracting the hostility of those present. He arrives without an invitation, unsuitably dressed, and behaves vulgarly, groping the female guests and insulting the hostess, Fräulein Lipmann, who eventually throws him out. But his most serious infraction occurs during the dance, a stylized activity based on an ordered sequence of steps and harmonious contact between bodies, of which he stages a disconnected and chaotic version. Throwing himself into the waltz as if it were 'a more primitive music', Kreisler abandons himself to a wild dance, transforming him into a pure mechanism of movement, a vortex that disseminates a forcefield around it, exemplifying the dual role of 'gyrating sex-machine' and 'narrative vortex-machine' that Michael Wutz ascribes to him.[41] As the narrator reports, Kreisler took Mrs Bevelage

> twice, with ever-increasing velocity, round the large hall, and at the third round, at breakneck speed, spun with her in the direction of the front door. = The impetus was so great that she, although seeing her peril, could not act sufficiently as a brake on her impetuous companion to avert the disaster. Another moment and they would have been in the street, amongst the traffic. (*T1* 148)

There is a strong echo here of the spectacular tenor of contemporary Futurist theorizing, as set out in the manifesto, 'Variety Theatre' (published in *The Daily Mail* on 21 November 1913), which emphasized the importance of 'swift, overpowering dance rhythms', the aim of provoking 'bickering and wrangling', the presence of 'men and women who are notoriously unbalanced, irritable, or eccentric and likely to provoke an uproar with obscene gestures, pinching women, or other freakishness'.[42] Equally Marinettian is the follow-up scene, in which Kreisler pushes his partner against the other dancers, making a collision inevitable:

> She [Mrs Bevelage] realised they were going to collide with the other lady. The collision could not be avoided. […] The widow veered frantically, took a false step, tripped on her dress, tearing it, and fell to the ground. – They caused a circular undulating commotion throughout the neighbouring dancers, like a stone falling in a pond. (*T1* 155-6)

However, the motif of the dance, though certainly perfected by the influence of Futurist body-madness, is already typical of Lewis: it is an expression of the wild body that, given its animal nature, is fully endowed with the sense of absurdity in which all philosophies worthy of the name are rooted. This is demonstrated, for example, by 'The "Pole"', his first short story, published in 1909 and therefore written when the author was 'spiritually a Russian', to quote his own account. Here two characters make peace between themselves by dancing in a manner that anticipates Kreisler: 'their two gaunt and violent forms whirling round the narrow room, quite indifferent to the other dancers, giving them terrible blows with their driving elbows, their hair sweeping on the ceiling' (*CWB* 217).

The collision between bodies forced into an unwanted and inevitable contiguity is also reminiscent of the shove that the protagonist of Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground* gives the hated officer on the Nevsky Prospect, or the irritating and inopportune physical contact that Golyadkin inflicts on those invited to Klara Olsufyevna's dance in *The Double*, arising from his attempts to reach the hostess: 'On his way he stumbled into some counsellor, treading on his foot, at the same time he stepped on the dress of a respectable old lady and tore it slightly, bumped into a man with a tray, elbowed somebody else'.[43] Just as this conclave scene is followed by the first appearance of the double, marking the start of Golyadkin's precipitous descent into madness, so the evening at the Bonnington Club lays the foundations of Kreisler's ruin, setting off an unstoppable death spiral. Here he comes into contact with Bertha, whose glib romanticism initially attracts her to his self-destructive behaviour, and whom he will later rape. He also encounters Anastasya and Soltyk, whose apparent intimacy feeds into the irrational animosity that later drives him to challenge the Pole.

Equally crucial is Dostoevsky's presence in the second conclave scene, in which Soltyk is slapped by Kreisler, resulting in a frantic consultation to decide the terms of the duel that must follow the insult. And not only because once again Lewis reunites in one place various

characters connected by a hidden antagonism, such as Tarr, Kreisler, Soltyk, as well as the duelists' shouting seconds, a conglomeration that triggers the succession of events that ends with Soltyk's accidental death and Kreisler's suicide. The sequence seems inspired by Chapters 4 and 5 of the second part of *Notes from Underground*, in which the narrator imposes his presence at the dinner for Zverkov, creating tension and attracting the scorn of his former school fellows, to the point that, driven by anger, the narrator imagines his revenge in detail:

> No! I'll just walk in and give him one [slap … I'll] pull Zverkov along by the ears! No, better by one ear, I'll haul him right round the room by one ear. Very likely they'll all start beating me and throw me out. In fact, that's almost a certainty. Let them – I'll have delivered the first slap: that's my prerogative and according to the code of honour that's everything. He'll be branded for life and no amount of blows will ever wipe out that slap – only a duel. He'll *have* to fight.[44]

Whereas the protagonist of *Notes from Underground* fantasizes, Kreisler actually carries out what the other merely wishes to do. Lewis seems almost to have worked on the Dostoevskian core and expanded it, developing it into a complex series of events that start with the blow inflicted on Soltyk in the café:

> There were two blows – smack – smack; an interval between them. He [Tarr] could not see who had received them. […]
>
> Conversation had stopped in the Café and everybody was standing. The companions of the man smacked, too, had risen in their seats. They were expostulating in three languages. Several were mixed up with the garçons, who had rushed up to do their usual police work on such occasions. […]
>
> Kreisler receded in the midst of a band of waiters towards the door. He was resisting and protesting, but not too much to retard his quick exit. […]
>
> The young man attacked and his friends were explaining what had happened, next, to the manager of the Café. (*T1* 249-50)

This is the start of the long negotiation that leads to the duel, the illicit and incongruous resolution of the dispute, the ancient nobility of which

seems irreparably questioned: on the one hand Lewis presents Bitzenko, Kreisler's unflappable and professional second, who attempts to create a heroic and solemn atmosphere around the challenge; on the other, Soltyk's friends, surprised and agitated by this unexpected turn of events, who consider it simply the grotesque and frenzied initiative of a drunkard. But the uniform toing and froing of the seconds, who negotiate, confer, and then continue negotiating, engenders an atmosphere of officialdom that seems to draw into its orbit, without any possibility of escape, Kreisler's reluctant adversary.

Subsequently, the ritualized and disciplined procedure of the duel is duly carnivalized by Lewis through Kreisler's bizarre demands. He asks Soltyk first for a sedative tablet and then for a kiss which, as we have seen, recalls that given by Golyadkin junior to Golyadkin senior. Just as Kreisler had deliberately ignored the rules of the dance, he now ignores the equally rigorous and irreproachable rules of a duel that he had initiated, adopting an incomprehensible attitude perhaps inspired by a desire to humiliate his adversary, on the model of Stavrogin with Artemy Pavlovitch Gaganov. Following his absurd requests, the scene changes radically and the rigorously formalized conflict is replaced by a disorderly clash, the umpteenth triumph of a body-madness halfway between slapstick comedy and a saloon brawl in a Western, in which the exasperated Soltyk wraps his hands around his rival's neck, who, in turn, grabs his hair while the seconds exchange blows, fall down, wrestle, and are separated: 'The field was filled with cries, smacks and harsh movements' (*T1* 273). This unexpected turn of events does not, however, prevent Soltyk from being killed by an accidental pistol shot as Kreisler, who believes him to be still alive, prepares to fight the corpse that has fallen on top of him. The duel, which according to its Latin etymology (*duo* and *bellum*), means 'a war for two', symbolically governs all the dyadic relationships in the text, beginning with the initial argument between Tarr and Hobson,[45] and finding most complex realization in the shared antagonistic model that governs the behaviour of the two protagonists, Tarr and Kreisler, whose duels are conducted, respectively, on the planes of word and action. Now, taking on its literal meaning at the high point of the narrative, the duel becomes an instrument of death – a double death, we might say, since Kreisler's suicide is a direct consequence of Soltyk's murder. After this, with Kreisler having left the scene, the narrative drive is exhausted and the story peters out in a lengthy *denouement*, the final chapter of Part Six and the entirety of Part Seven, which contain no action at all.

Although, as critics have noted, Dostoevsky is visible in Lewis's work in the undeniable resemblances between characters, atmospheres, and situations, it is in the conclave scenes that his presence becomes manifest in the most evident and original way. Following the Russian's example, Lewis constructs his plot around these key scenes from which the action springs, demonstrating that he has undergone an influence that goes beyond the contents, to affect the very structure of the novel. The fact that these scenes are clad in Futurist garb, sometimes strikingly so, is a mere surface detail, because their deeper function ultimately betrays their Dostoevskian origin. It is less, as the author himself attests, the subject of *Tarr*, as the ways in which this subject is treated structurally that make it a novel in some sense *a là* Dostoevsky – surprisingly, perhaps, since the Russian author was criticized at the time precisely for his supposedly open and unbalanced form, as most obviously exemplified by the chaotic conclave scenes. It was Bakhtin who later recognized in these scenes the distinctive mark of his art, judging them integral to the narrative and intimately coherent in their carnivalesque logic. Lewis's reading of Dostoevsky therefore evinces a critical acumen that often seems to have eluded his contemporaries. He reveals himself capable of identifying in Dostoevsky's works a paradigmatic alternative to the monologic novel of the European tradition, recognizing that the Russian's apparently unrestrained and heterogeneous narrative universe is in fact the outcome of a radical rethinking of the genre *per se*, a rethinking to which Lewis also devoted himself.

Notes

[1] Lucia Aiello, 'Fedor Dostoevskii in Britain: the Tale of an Untalented Genius', *The Modern Language Review*, 98.3 (July 2003): 659-77, at 659.

[2] Henry James, *Selected Letters*, ed. Leon Edel (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1987), 400.

[3] Peter Kaye, *Dostoevsky and English Modernism 1900-1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 11. Hereafter Kaye, *DEM*. Kaye takes up the periodization proposed by Helen Muchnic in *Dostoevsky's English Reputation (1881-1936)* (1939). For his part, he extends the inquiry to the entire 1920s, thus covering a decade during which the debate over the novel in England was particularly heated. Nonetheless his study, which focuses on Conrad, James, Galsworthy, Bennett, Lawrence, Forster, and Woolf, does not mention Wyndham Lewis.

[4] Gilbert Phelps, 'The Early Phases of British Interest in Russian Literature', *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 36.87 (June 1958): 418-33, at 420.
[5] W. L Leatherbarrow, *Dostoevskii and Britain* (Oxford and Providence: Berg, 1995), 29-30.
[6] Gilbert Phelps, *The Russian Novel in English Fiction* (London: Hutchinson's University Library, 1956), 171.
[7] Richard Garnett, *Constance Garnett. A Heroic Life* (London: Faber and Faber, 2009), 266.
[8] On Dostoevsky's rapport with the monologic novel, see Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 8: 'From the viewpoint of some monologic canon for the proper construction of novels, Dostoevsky's world may seem a chaos […]. Only in the light of Dostoevsky's fundamental artistic task [i.e. constructing a polyphonic world], can one begin to understand the profound organic cohesion, consistency and wholeness of Dostoevsky's poetics.'
[9] Aiello, 'Fedor Dostoevskii in Britain', 664.
[10] Virginia Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf – Volume 2, 1920-24*, ed. Anne Olivier Bell and Andrew McNeillie (London: Penguin, 1988), 248; Woolf, 'Modern Fiction' (1925), in *The Essays of Virginia Woolf – Vol. IV: 1925-1928*, ed. Andrew McNeille (London: The Hogarth Press, 1984): 157-65, at 158.
[11] Woolf, 'Modern Fiction', 162.
[12] See Arnold Bennett's 'Is the Novel Decaying?' (1923) and Virginia Woolf's 'Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown' (1924) and 'Modern Fiction' (1925).
[13] Timothy Materer, *Wyndham Lewis the Novelist* (Detroit: University of Missouri Press, 1976), 14.
[14] Peter Brooker, *Bohemia in London. The Social Scene of Early Modernism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 10.
[15] Ezra Pound, 'Tarr', *The Little Review*, 5.11 (March 1918), 35.
[16] Unfortunately, I have not been able to ascertain which translations of Dostoevsky Lewis read. To my knowledge, he only mentions the matter once, when he states: 'As a student in Paris, in French translations, I first read all these Russian books' (*RA* 157). Although Lewis approached Dostoevsky in French, like most European authors of his time, he may well have re-read him in English once back home, while still working on *Tarr* or in later life. As we have seen, almost all of Dostoevsky's fiction became easily available in England between 1912 and 1921 thanks to Garnett's translations. However, the issue appears to be of little importance to him: in *Rude Assignment*, he writes that he has recently re-read *The Possessed* (as he termed it) and some other Russian novels but he does not say whether in English or French. Nonetheless, since I aim not for a close textual comparison but at demonstrating the overall similarity between characters, incidents, and scenes as

evidence of Dostoevsky's powerful impact on Lewis's early career, it seems to me that the lack of any reliable information about the editions he actually read does not affect my argument.

[17] Philip Head, 'The Transfiguration of "Russian" Lewis', *The Journal of Wyndham Lewis Studies*, 3 (2012): 93-122, at 97.

[18] Wyndham Lewis, 'Imaginary Portraits', *The Little Review*, 4.2 (June 1917): 22-4, at 24.

[19] As early as the first issue of *BLAST* (1914), in the section entitled 'The Exploitation of Vulgarity', Lewis states his intention to make the stupidity of the human race, and the imperfection and conflicts of modernity, the subjects of his art.

[20] Aaron Jaffe, *Modernism and the Culture of Celebrity* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 194.

[21] Rebecca West, 'Tarr', *Agenda: Wyndham Lewis Special Issue*, 7.3-8.1 (Autumn-Winter 1969-70): 67-9, at 67.

[22] Pound, 'Tarr', 35.

[23] T. S. Eliot, 'Tarr', *The Egoist*, 8.5 (September 1918): 105-06, at 105.

[24] *Ibid*., 106. Perhaps because, as he argued five years later in '*Ulysses*, Order and Myth', the last true novelists were James and Gustave Flaubert.

[25] *Ibid*.

[26] On the similarities between *Tarr* and Dostoevsky, see Geoffrey Wagner, *Wyndham Lewis. A Portrait of the Artist as the Enemy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), 241-2; Materer, *Wyndham Lewis the Novelist*, 172; and Paul Edwards, *Wyndham Lewis: Painter and Writer* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 47.

[27] Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Devils*, trans. Constance Garnett (Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 2005), 44.

[28] Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Notes from Underground and The Double*, trans. Ronald Wilks (London: Penguin Classics, 2009), 8.

[29] *Ibid*., 62.

[30] Michael Levenson, *Modernism and the Fate of Individuality* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991), 142. See also Paul Peppis, 'Anti-Individualism and the Fictions of National Character in Wyndham Lewis's *Tarr*', *Twentieth Century Literature*, 40.2 (Summer 1994): 226-55, at 239.

[31] Among Dostoevsky's characters to whom scholars attribute various doubles is Stavrogin, who is 'duplicated', during the narrative, by Peter Verkhovensky, Shatov, Kirillov, and Fedka (Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 127-8).

[32] Andrzej Gąsiorek, 'Wyndham Lewis: *Tarr*', in David Bradshaw and K. J. H Dettmar (eds), *A Companion to Modernist Literature and Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006): 402-10, at 406.

[33] Fredric Jameson, *Fables of Aggression: Wyndham Lewis, the Modernist as Fascist* (London: Verso, 2008), 58. Jameson places Lewis within the narrative tradition that Bakhtin terms 'interpersonal' or 'dialogical', as opposed to the modernism marked by the discovery of the interior monologue and aimed at exploring the consciousness, as Lewis's form focuses on relational rather than individual experience, a 'countertrend [that] strikes in the direction of the collective' (39-40).
[34] *Ibid*., 40.
[35] Levenson, *Modernism and the Fate of Individuality*, 138.
[36] *Cf*. O'Keeffe, 'Afterword' (*T1* 364), according to which Lewis may have converted two essays written in 1911 into the opinions that Tarr expresses during the course of the novel, in his debates with Hobson, Butcher, and Anastasya.
[37] This is demonstrated by the attention devoted to it by various critics, who agree on its centrality while otherwise interpreting the novel in different ways. Both Levenson and Wutz see this scene as a sort of matrix of the entire work. *Cf*. Levenson, *Modernism and the Fate of Individuality*, 143, and Michael Wutz, 'The Energetics of *Tarr*: the Vortex-Machine Kreisler', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 38.4 (Winter 1992): 845-69, at 850. See also Peppis, 'Anti-Individualism and the Fictions of National Character in Wyndham Lewis's *Tarr*', 240.
[38] *Cf*. Leonid Grossman, *Dostoevskij artista*, (Milano: Bompiani, 1961), 46.
[39] Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 146.
[40] *Ibid*., 28-9.
[41] Wutz, 'The Energetics of *Tarr*', 850-51.
[42] Lawrence Rainey, Christine Poggi, and Laura Wittman (eds), *Futurism: An Anthology* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009), at 160 and 163.
[43] Dostoevsky, *Notes from Underground and The Double*, 153.
[44] *Ibid*., 74-5.
[45] See Scott W. Klein's introduction in *T2*, at xv.

'National Allegory' as Negative Dialectic in Wyndham Lewis's *Tarr*

Udith Dematagoda

Fredric Jameson's alembicated book on ideology in Wyndham Lewis's work is marred by a brash and incongruous subtitle ('The Modernist as Fascist'), which has the effect of overshadowing some of the subtle distinctions and insights made within. The most significant of these is the observation that 'Lewis was an internationalist, the most European and least insular of all the great contemporary British writers.'[1] Lewis had a more profound knowledge of European cultures and languages than most of his contemporaries, having travelled extensively around Europe as a young artist in lieu of finishing his formal education at the Slade School of Art. Lewis's friend and collaborator Ezra Pound once remarked that he was the 'rarest of phenomena, an Englishman who has achieved the triumph of being also a European.'[2] Lewis was not an ideal cosmopolitan, however. In 1916, prior to serving as a bombardier and subsequently as an artillery officer during the First World War, he wrote to Major Robert Gregory in the hope of obtaining a commission in a more 'advantageous' branch of the service. He enumerated his qualities thus:

1. Prodigious command of French tongue
2. Profound knowledge of French people
3. No sentimentality about or particular fondness for French people[3]

Such chauvinistic (and humorous) sentiments are of course what one has been compelled to expect from the author of *Hitler* (1931), a man dubbed by W. H. Auden in *Letter to Lord Byron* (1937) as 'that lonely old Volcano of the Right'.[4] Lewis also once wrote for the British Union of Fascists magazine in 1937:

> You as a fascist stand for the small trader against the chain store; for the peasant against the usurer; for the nation, great or small, against the super-state; for personal business against Big Business; for the craftsman against the Machine; for the creator against the

> middlemen; for all that prospers by individual effort and creative toil, against all that prospers in the abstract air of High Finance or the theoretic ballyhoo.[5]

It is the author of lines such as these who persists in the outraged scholarly imagination, while his contemporaries have been largely sanitized of their own questionable political allegiances. However, to paraphrase Jameson in his criticism of György Lukács, such a thing as pure error is impossible within the world of culture and society, and thus to hold an author's entire *oeuvre* as reflective of an ephemeral (and later retracted) political tendency is manifestly disingenuous.[6]

With this in mind, it is worthwhile to re-examine *Tarr* (1918), Lewis's first and best novel, which Jameson describes as a 'national allegory' (Jameson, *FA* 15). Jameson further notes that 'the use of national types projects an essentially allegorical mode of representation in which the individual characters figure those more abstract national characteristics which are read as their inner essence' (Jameson, *FA* 90) and thereby serves as a cultural critique. Within this critique, and through analysis of the narrative apparatus of the work, Jameson sought to discover the ideological roots of Lewis's 'protofascism' (Jameson, *FA* 15), and the attendant nationalistic chauvinism that such a designation implies. In contradistinction to this analysis, it is my contention that *Tarr* is hostile to the idea of nationalism as conceived by the prevailing individualist and determinist ideologies of Lewis's time, as Paul Peppis has shrewdly identified – but also posits the stubborn persistence and durability of nationalist ideologies and their capacity to mutate.[7] This hostility is expressed through many layers of ambivalence and irony – and the final impression given is one of an apparent ideological indeterminacy, one that reflects Lewis's self-description as the most 'broadminded "leftwinger" in England' and the peculiar vacillations of his political outlook (*BB* 340). I intend to demonstrate that in *Tarr*, Lewis ruminates on the insufficiency of concepts of nationalism to adequately describe phenomena which consistently modify and transmute – and how it may be necessary to reinterpret the way we approach *Tarr*'s 'national allegory' as a consequence.

Nationalism is an ideology, like many others, which is aesthetically constructed – a product of the artistic impulse and creative imagination. Benedict Anderson, in his seminal 1983 work *Imagined Communities*, gave his definition of the nation as:

> an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.[8]

Anderson theorizes that the creation of the nation state in Europe (a recent invention in world-historical terms) and of nationalism itself was made possible through the expansion of print culture. Print capitalism was a voracious system of commodity production that thrived on expansion and the acquisition of new markets, which consequently facilitated communication between peoples of certain geographical areas who shared a common vernacular spoken language. Print-languages based on these vernaculars were created, and they would eventually come to replace Latin's liturgical function. This had the effect of allowing large groups of peoples, who often spoke many related but differing forms of a single language (who in conversation may not even be able to communicate), to engage with one another through the medium of print. 'In the process', Anderson maintains, 'they gradually became aware of the hundreds of thousands, even millions, of people in their particular language field, and at the same time that *only those* […] so belonged. These fellow readers, to whom they were connected through print, formed, in their secular, particular, visible invisibility, the embryo of the nationally imagined community' (Anderson, *IC* 44). It allowed them, in short, to 'think' the nation into existence.

The world depicted in *Tarr* is to some extent the product of this extended historical process of linguistic and nationalist atomization, where the representatives of different nations, long formed through mutual identification and now concerned primarily with the justification of their existence, are compelled to co-habit within a central cultural capital. From the outset, it is clear that such a co-existence is neither peaceful nor utopian, but tumultuous and unpredictable. It is not a world of mutual aid and comfort, but one of pursuance and competition. This is evident from the opening section, which describes a fictionalized version of Montparnasse, a quarter 'given up to Art':

> Its rent is half paid by America. Germany occupies a sensible apartment on the second floor. A hundred square yards at its centre

> is a convenient space, where the Boulevard du Paradis and the Boulevard Kreutzberg cross with their electric trams: in the middle is a pavement island, like vestige of submerged masonry. Italian models festoon it in symmetrical human groups; it is also their club.
>
> The Café Berne, at one side, is the club of the 'grands messieurs du Berne.' So you have the clap-trap Campagnia tribe outside, in the Café twenty sluggish commonsense Germans, a Middle West group or two, drinking and playing billiards. These are the most permanent tableaux of this place, disheartening and admonitory as a Tussaud's of the Flood. (*T2* 7)

The effect of this introductory passage is quite peculiar. From the outset, the undulations of language, tangents, syntactical breaks, and pauses within these sentences jerk the reader in, and then spin them around, as if to offer a glimpse of the coming vortex – prefiguring the dialogic texture of the narrative to come, whilst obviating the possibility of a neat and ordered dénouement. The specific components of these 'disheartening' and 'admonitory' tableaux, nestled somewhere between the Garden of Eden and Calvary Hill, reveal an awareness of the prevailing hierarchy of nations and interests within this Parisian artistic microcosm.[9] Its rent is 'half-paid' by America, where the disaffected and disenfranchised of Europe once fled to escape the stultifying structures of nation and class – only to eventually be drawn back into its various conflicts; the wealth of the new world sustaining the entropy and corruption of the old. The invocation of German *Menschenverstand* in the country's figurative occupation of a 'sensible' second-floor apartment is here perhaps ironic, at once summoning the enduring stereotype of Teutonic prudence and restraint – and then subsequently forcing it into confrontation with recent history. *Tarr* was a work written, after all, in the run up to the First World War, revised during it, published at its close; and then again in almost completely revised form in 1928. Although it may be set in the years before the War, it cannot help but have the sense of a work written with retrospective sullenness.

The Café Berne is filled with mid-western Americans and more Germans, with the 'clap-trap' southern Italians congregating outside. The book's opening amply reflects the 'cosmopolitan complexity', which Faith Binckes notes in her analysis of the work.[10] There are, however, two significant omissions in this introductory scene. The first are the English, whom we will meet only on the next page in the figures of the protagonist

Fredrick Tarr, and his *bête noire* Alan Hobson. The second are the French, absent from this scene, and largely within the novel itself as major characters. The reasoning behind both these omissions is, I believe, important to understanding the two contradictory facets of Lewis's complex attitude towards nationalism. I shall allude later to how the absence of the English in this opening hints at how *Tarr* is a work that challenges the author's own prejudices and allegiances to national identity. However, throughout the narrative the absence of French figures, despite the Parisian setting, effectively highlights the foreignness of the other characters to one another, and to their surroundings. Despite Jameson's assertion that in *Tarr* 'abstract national characteristics' have an 'inner essence' – Lewis's elaboration of the interior lives of various characters is intended to question if there actually exists a determinist form of national identity, or whether such forms are constantly in flux and merely interfere with a conception of individual selfhood.

Andrzej Gąsiorek posits that *Tarr* is a novel preoccupied with abjection and *ressentiment*, and is set in:

> a world characterized by the struggle for prestige and power, with violence lurking just below the surface of social relations […] it suggests that identity must be formed within this world. In *Tarr*, identity is neither monadic nor stable; it is in process, forming and reforming itself through interaction with others.[11]

Indeed, the rigidity of national identities, and the deliberate reliance upon the clichés of national temperaments, is unstable within the book's narrative apparatus. Characters, though seemingly reflecting facets of their national culture, exist in a state of unrest – highly mediated by, and contingent upon, the perception of the reader. This complexity is apparent primarily in the multilingual nature of communication between characters, which makes use of a variety of cross-cultural idiomatic phrases and aphorisms. These instances occur almost as slippages, involuntary utterances that attempt to ascribe symbolic order to the imaginary chaos of attempted communion between nationalities and cultures. Such a communion differs radically from that which initially brought peoples together as individual 'nations', simply because there is no pre-existing language that can be mobilized to express it. A national communion, Anderson maintains, was also the product of a shared 'mass ceremony', but one that was limited at its very basis: the most

megalomaniacal and messianic nationalist would never conceive of a future time where all of humanity would be brought under the aegis of one nation as equals. Representations and productions of national identity accumulated over time, deriving from linguistic and cultural affirmation which produced a communal literature of romance, initially in the form of the novel, and then in the form of the newspaper:

> The significance of this mass ceremony – Hegel observed that newspapers serve modern man as a substitute for morning prayers – is paradoxical. It is performed in silent privacy, in the lair of the skull. Yet each communicant is well aware that the ceremony he performs is being replicated simultaneously by thousands (or millions) of others of whose existence he is confident, yet of whose identity he has not the slightest notion. (Anderson, *IC* 35)

The attempt to interrogate and dismantle the monotony of this limited imaginary communion, and to suggest another more polyphonic discourse in its place, was perhaps the central purpose of *Tarr* as a whole – even if this purpose is ultimately unsuccessful. The majority of the characters whom we encounter express national traits, and their attendant aesthetic tastes, benignly. They are presented to the reader as a compendium of foibles and minor peccadillos towards which Lewis often compels the reader to adopt an attitude of mocking derision; the English are not exempted from this, as we shall presently discover – yet Lewis's attitude towards his own nation was somewhat more complex. However, the character of Otto Kreisler, in contrast to the other characters in the novel, has a more belligerent conception of romantic nationalism. It is within the character of Kreisler, and his exaggerated *ressentiment* and thirst for self-destruction, that Lewis's critique of nationalism centres.

We first encounter Kreisler in his room, which variously resembles a 'funeral chamber' and a 'rock-hewn death-house', shaving and flicking the lather on to a crumpled newspaper:

> His face, wearing, it is true, like a uniform the frowning fixity of the Prussian warrior, had a neglected look. The true bismarckian Prussian would seek every day, by little acts of boorishness, to keep fresh this trenchant attitude; like the german student with his weekly routine of duels which regimen is to keep courage simmer-

> ing in times of peace, that it may instantly boil up to war pitch at the merest sign from the german War-Master. (*T2* 65)

From the outset the association of Kreisler with a doom-laden, deathly aesthetic is entirely deliberate on Lewis's part. As T. J. Clark remarked in his re-appraisal of *Imagined Communities* in 2006, we are often reminded 'that nationalism regularly thrives on doom. Apocalypse is one of its modes.'[12] Throughout the narrative, the militaristic 'bismarckian Prussian' aspects of Kreisler's personality border on caricature, but still manage somehow to hold their integrity, and in the end form a complex picture of psychopathology that is both plausible and incisive. Significantly, Kreisler is also in the presence of newspapers at various points in the book, which he takes to reading a 'great deal' (*T2* 78) as his debts accumulate and he becomes more isolated from Ernst Vokt, the Liepmann circle, and his compatriots at the Café Berne. And when dining at the Restaurant Vallet: 'Usually his meal passed in impassable inspection of his neighbours when he was not reading the newspaper' (*T2* 82). That Kreisler alternates between the clandestine inspection of others and the reading of his newspapers (which we can safely assume are German language) is also significant – placing his solitary communion and national myth production against the foreignness that surrounds him. Yet Kreisler is alienated not only from the foreign environment in which he has found himself, but also from his fellow countrymen – who by all accounts do not appear as encumbered with the weight of national self-image and expectation:

> Otto's compatriots at the Café were sober and thoughtful, with some discipline in their idleness: their monthly monies flowed and ebbed, it was to be supposed, small regular tides frothing monotonously in the form of beer and glasses of cheap sekt. This rather desolate place of chatter newspapers and airy speculative art-business had the charm of absence of gusto, of water-lilies, of the effete lotus.
>
> Kreisler was purer german, of the true antiquated grain. He had experienced suddenly home-sickness, not for Germany, exactly, but for the romantic stiff ideals of the german student of his generation. It was a home-sickness for his early self: like the knack of riding a bicycle or anything learnt in youth, this character was easily resumed. Gradually he was discovering the foundations

> of his personality: many previous moods and phases of his nature were mounting to the surface, now into a conscious light. (*T2* 103)

One cannot help but notice in the above extract the curious phrasing 'chatter newspapers'– newspapers that supposedly bristle with energetic dialogue, and thus stand in stark contrast to the more morose literary material of Kreisler. The distinction is, furthermore, configured in unmistakably libidinal terms; where the masculine, virile, 'purer' German Kreisler – who we are often reminded is large and physically imposing – holds himself apart from the effeteness and femininity of his contemporaries, who, it is implied, have been corrupted by their foreign cosmopolitan surroundings. We are to assume that his compatriots at the Berne, or Ernst Vokt who feels that their countrymen are 'improving', feel no less German than Kreisler, despite being in thrall to the foreign aesthetic influences of the 'speculative art business' (*T2* 103*).* Yet somehow they speak 'a language and expressed opinions he could not agree with' (*T2* 75); they extol the virtues of Fauvism and Cubism – modern avant-garde movements that he considers degenerate and anathema to his national conception of romantic beauty. There is, as ever, an underlining violence to his blustering pronouncements. When asked what he means by the word 'beautiful' he replies with a mocking description of Cubist aesthetics that simultaneously comes across as a physical threat: 'What do I call beautiful? How would like your face to be as flat as a pancake, your nostrils like a squashed strawberry, one of your eyes cocked up by the side of your ear?' (*T2* 75*)* The identification and elaboration of such a reactionary aesthetic attitude, and the implication that belligerent nationalism lies at its root, sounds a prescient forewarning of future events – almost predicting the sordid history of Nazi-era exhibitions of '*Entartete Kunst*' that were to come.

It is Kreisler's contact with, and disapproval of, his compatriots that cause him to feel a yearning for the 'romantic stiff ideals' of his student years, presumably spent in the company of a militaristic *Burschenschaft* society, revelling in conventional forms of patriotism and nationalism. Throughout the narrative, Kreisler's conventional tastes and unsophisticated opinions are the subject of derision – as are many of his actions. As T. S. Eliot remarked in his review of *Tarr* in *The Egoist*, 'Kreisler is a study in humiliation'.[13] Nevertheless, Kreisler masochistically courts and actively seeks out such humiliation, a trait reflected most distressingly in a half-remembered anecdote from his childhood, where

hazy recollection makes him unsure whether he took part in the events or merely observed them. It is a scene from the schoolroom, where one boy stabs his neighbour in the hand with a pen-knife – only for that boy to hold out his hand to demand that he do it again and again in order 'to delect himself with the awful feeling of his own black passion' (*T2* 109). There does not exist a more succinct allegorical representation in literature of the irrational yet unrelenting ritual of self-flagellation that is intrinsic to all nationalisms, its fundamental sense of 'doom'. Yet the implication of this depiction is often overlooked – that humiliation and *ressentiment* are readily absorbed into the *Bildungsroman* of national narratives, contorted to fit an account which, in the end, will always reflect an unalloyed heroism; grotesque abjection becomes courageous, embarrassing humiliations become epic betrayals. The national mythos evolves, mutates and persists – despite everything.

There is too much pathos to Kreisler's predicament for us to say that the reader is invited only to mock Lewis's unflattering portrait of a German who seemingly cannot break free from the constraints of his own nationalistic *ressentiment*. Those who remain concerned with Lewis's 'protofascism' would, not without cause, feel uncomfortable with the author's injunction to sympathize with Kreisler's plight – as his largely autobiographical protagonist does: 'Tarr's sympathies were all with Kreisler. […] deep square races were favoured by him: and Kreisler was an atavistic creature whom on the whole he preferred. Some of his passion for Bertha flowed over on to her fellow countryman' (*T2* 253). Given his contemptible and despicable actions, this is an incredibly risky narrative strategy. Nonetheless, it is similar to that employed by Dostoevsky in the character Nikolai Stavrogin – Kreisler's closest fictional predecessor. In *The Devils* (1872), Stavorogin is a handsome, virile, but somewhat parasitic and idle aristocrat. He is lauded as a potential world historical 'great' man by his friends on both sides of the political divide, and hyped to one day lead their respective causes. He returns from abroad supposedly contaminated and 'possessed' by foreign ideas, and chooses to do nothing but engage in increasingly odd, obscene, and humiliating behaviour. Such behaviour leads most to think he is simply insane. However, in a significant chapter, supressed from the original publication, Stavrogin confesses to a brutal paedophilic rape, which subsequently leads to his victim's suicide. Among other things, it chillingly reveals a calculating lucidity in his moral turpitude. It is perhaps the

darkest of the many portraits of idealism corrupted and potential wasted by a purported moral degeneracy on which the author was fixated.

Dostoevsky had first-hand experience of corrupted idealism, having been implicated in the progressive, Western-inspired Petrashevsky Circle, condemned to death, given a last minute reprieve while literally facing the firing squad, and sent into a prolonged Siberian exile among brutally violent criminals. Unsurprisingly, he returned both politically and spiritually transformed – or traumatized, depending on one's interpretation. It is hardly any coincidence, then, that the majority of his novels often feature a similar narrative arc of transgression, perdition, and salvation. But where other novels permit a glimpse of this salvation, *The Devils* dispenses with the urge to provide succour. Sigmund Freud, who was an admirer of his work, offered an austere assessment of Dostoevsky's 'moral strivings':

> After the most violent struggles to reconcile the instinctual demands of the individual with the claims of the community, he landed in the retrograde position of submission both to temporal and spiritual authority, of veneration both for the Tsar and for the God of the Christians, and of a narrow Russian Nationalism – a position which lesser minds have reached with smaller effort […]. Dostoevsky threw away the chance of becoming a teacher and liberator of humanity and made himself one with their gaolers.[14]

Lewis also had great admiration for this particular Dostoevsky work, but if there is a stylistic affinity between the two writers it is to be found in the technique identified by Mikhail Bakhtin as *heteroglossia* – the ability to successfully depict a polyphony of opposing discourses within a text. In this, the novel is profoundly Dostoevskyan, but it is self-evident that Lewis had something else in mind for his own work. If there is a moral purpose to *Tarr*, it is precisely that a vulgar 'narrow' nationalism is the domain of lesser minds, and more importantly for Lewis – that it springs from aesthetic mediocrity. The most significant manifestation of this is to be found not in Kreisler's art, about which we can only speculate, but in his attitudes towards women. We are informed that his one 'great optimism' was a 'belief in the efficacity of women' (*T2* 86). For him, they serve a similar function to the pawnshops he frequents when in dire need. They are a 'vast dumping ground for sorrow and affliction', where one

may place oneself temporarily 'in exchange for the gold of the human heart':

> Womenkind were Kreisler's Theatre, they were for him art and expression: the tragedies played there purged you periodically of the too violent accumulations of desperate life. (*T2* 86)

The notion that such an attitude derives from his national temperament is of course deliberate; a by-product of the melodramatic German romantic tradition of *Sturm und Drang* typified in works such as Goethe's *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* (1774), but somehow become more vulgar and sordid – as is often the case when literature and art are adopted as totemic manifestations of a patriotic spirit. In this particular vein, love for Kreisler 'always meant unhappy love, with its misunderstandings and wistful separations'; he approaches love as he does the duels he fought in his student days, 'stoically certain that blood would be drawn' (*T2* 87) – and where he is duty bound by the contrived national mythos, like those copy-cat young men once in thrall to *Wertherfieber*, to follow the hapless hero's grim fate. As Kreisler flees after an ignoble bungled duel in which he has behaved contrary to his putative code of honour, his first thought is to flee back across the border to Germany: 'The nearness of his home-frontier began to rise like a wall in front of him. This question had to be answered: Did he want to cross the german frontier? Did he really want, having reached it, to cross it?' (*T2* 245). He does not cross it. He resolves to give himself up – seemingly not wishing to sully his 'Fatherland', and the real father who resides within it, with the dishonour he has brought upon himself.

He eventually hangs himself in a misguided act of fealty to a vague, fabricated, and mediocre nationalist aesthetic. As Anderson has posited, it is difficult to surmise the reasoning behind such acts, and the supposed evolution of societies and the transformations of consciousness do not 'explain the attachment that peoples feel for the inventions of their imaginations – or […] why people are ready to die for these inventions' (Anderson, *IC* 141). Joseph Conrad perhaps best expressed this fatalistic intransigence at the heart of nationalism. His commitment to his Polish patrimony never faded, despite the unique course of his life – born in Ukrainian Poland, exiled to Russia with his father, running off to sail on French and English ships for his entire adult life, and settling in a country in which he never ceased to feel like a foreigner. 'I need to keep my

thinking inviolate as a final act of fidelity to a lost cause', he wrote to his friend, the socialist politician and adventurer R. B. Cunninghame Graham (8 February 1899): 'It's all I can do. I've thrown my life to all the winds of heaven, but I have kept my way of thinking. It's a little thing – it's everything – it's nothing – it's life itself.'[15]

In the depiction of Kreisler's tragi-comic demise, which derives its pathos from its futile absurdity and incomprehensibility, rather than from its poignancy, Lewis evidently means to question the purpose of nationalism. Or rather, nationalisms in general – because it would be erroneous and too convenient for us to assume that he had in mind only German nationalism. The vulgarized national mythos is, after all, only sustained and revitalized when brought into opposition with others. Once again the motif of the newspaper reappears when Kreisler seeks in desperation to solicit a loan from Lowndes:

> The moment his eye had fallen upon Master Lowndes, the probable national opulence of this acquaintance had occurred to him as a tantalizing fact. All the wealth of the Indies festered in the pockets of this Englishman. […] Their acquaintance, such as it was, throve on national antithesis. (*T2* 96)

The observation that their acquaintanceship developed through 'national antithesis' is particularly important, since it underlines the dialectic relationship which Lewis perceived within competing nationalisms. This was, however, in no way related to a platonic or Hegelian dialectic mode – it is not constructive. It is Kreisler's national pride that makes him recoil:

> The complacent health and humoristic phlegm with which this kind grinned and perambulated through life charged Kreisler with the contempt natural to his more stiff education. He saw behind Lowndes the long line of all the Englishmen he had ever known. 'Useless swine!' he thought. 'So cheerful over his average middlingness and mean as a peasant I bet!' (*T2* 97)

The characteristics that Kreisler perceives and finds irritating in Lowndes are those of an opposing national temperament, judged from the outside: national opulence, wealth derived from colonial possessions, and a 'humoristic phlegm' which belies a grudging parsimoniousness. Kreisler is channelling Lewis's own ambivalent attitude towards Englishness, as

apparent in the opening interaction between Tarr and Hobson. In the end, Kreisler wishes to 'purify himself in rudeness, and wash out the traces of his earlier civility' (*T2* 98). As Kreisler becomes unresponsive, Lowndes becomes engrossed in his own newspaper – in silent communion with his own national mythos – before taking his leave. As previously mentioned, the English are absent from the introductory description of the 'Vitelotte Quarter' but are amply represented by the autobiographically-inflected protagonist, whose opinions were misconstrued as a form of jingoism in early reviews of *Tarr*. Rebecca West remarked that the work depicted Germans 'the whole of whose beings are oriented towards ugliness.'[16] The English are cast, from the outset, as detached outsiders and observers of European folly, intellectually and culturally superior – a sense amply communicated in the tenor of the conversations. This does escape Jameson's notice: he notes that 'Tarr himself, with his observer's aloofness from his setting […], dramatizes the security of the liberal and counterrevolutionary class compromise of the British tradition from the seething and politicized history of the continental states' (Jameson, *FA* 95).

Yet it is my contention that Lewis wrote himself as Tarr in order to question these national and ideological allegiances. The novel, *Tarr*, was begun some years before the War, written in its midst, and completed at its conclusion. At the outset of the conflict, Lewis viewed England as 'a potential source for the regeneration of European culture', as Gąsiorek notes of the descriptions of England in the first issue of *BLAST* (1914):

> Blasted for its climate, geographical isolation, reliance on sport and humour, Victorian heritage, and provincialism, England was displayed in all its phlegmatic torpor. Paradoxically, however, this stagnation was represented as the larval state from which the winged creature of a renewed culture could take flight.[17]

By the end of the War, Lewis had survived without any major wounds or deformities – but having seen the demise of many of his contemporaries and collaborators, such as T. E. Hulme and Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, the psychological toll was undoubtedly significant. Consequently, the cautious optimism of England's role as harbinger of cultural change was replaced by a realization that the 'post war' would only produce 'a backsliding of the intellect throughout the civilized world […] glaringly

demonstrated in the continued impoverishment of artistic expression, not in one art, but in every art' (*BB* 259).

Such shifts in attitude are anticipated in the evolution of the protagonist, Tarr, from the beginning of the narrative to its conclusion, from imperious optimism to pragmatic cynicism. Tarr's extended conversation with Alan Hobson – whose character, mores, and opinions (aesthetic and ideological) are given to be anathema to his own – is significant in this respect. This portrayal is distinctly acerbic, and reflects the contradiction in Lewis's own life, his sense of alienation from English society and its class system; born in Canada to an American father and British mother, privately educated but enduring impecunious circumstances throughout his life, possessing connections to the establishment but stubbornly remaining at its peripheries. Lewis wanted *Tarr* to represent the sum of his literary talent and to give account of his distinct worldview: he wished to finish the work quickly in case he was killed in the trenches. It was not a work of maudlin patriotism. Hobson, a thinly disguised facsimile of the critic Roger Fry, acts as an outlet for his pent-up frustration and resentment towards the Bloomsbury set – the most influential of the English 'bourgeois bohemians' (*T2* 110). The First World War was a conflict from which the majority of that group had exempted themselves, through connections and influence. This fact was not lost on Lewis, as he observed in his first autobiography:

> The 'Bloomsburies' were all doing war-work of 'National importance', down in some downy English county, under the wings of powerful pacifist friends; pruning trees, planting gooseberry bushes, and haymaking, doubtless in large sunbonnets. One at least of them, I will not name him, was disgustingly robust. All were of military age. All would have looked well in uniform. (*BB* 184)

The hopes that English artists such as himself and the others who once gathered in the Vienna Café would head a future regeneration of European culture were dashed by the chaos and destruction of the War. Lewis realized that the sclerotic English class system coddled and protected its wealthy elites, in spite of their purported anti-establishment rhetoric and progressive views. They 'had money and we hadn't', Lewis recounted bitterly; 'ultimately it was to keep them fat and prosperous – or thin and prosperous, which is even worse – that other people were to risk their skins' (*BB* 185). The 'ambitious and jealous cabal' of

Bloomsbury made the artistic and literary worlds of England into 'the afternoon tea-party of a perverse spinster' (*BB* 273). If Kreisler's story is, according to Jameson, one of a 'national inferiority complex' (Jameson, *FA* 91), then the brief story of Alan Hobson is of a national superiority complex. The implication is that both complexes are undeserved and have unstable foundations. The hypocrisy and insular, chauvinistic provincialism of England is encapsulated in the character of Hobson, and his over-reliance on what T. S. Eliot described as the distinctly English trait of humour.[18] Men of Hobson's pedigree, it is implied, merely play at the bohemian lifestyle – a lifestyle which is, moreover, supported by the plundered wealth of colonialism. In the 1918 edition of *Tarr*, Hobson's father is described as a wealthy merchant on the South African Cape.

Nonetheless, despite Tarr's contempt for the bourgeois English intelligentsia and its modes and manners, we can surmise that the protagonist is still under its influence. It is after his initial conversation with Hobson that the determination to break with Bertha Lunken comes about. At the outset, Tarr is perturbed by Hobson's assessment of his association with Germans, and his engagement to Bertha. To Hobson's accusation that he likes the 'national flavour', Tarr responds:

> 'Sex is nationalized, more than any other essential of life, Hobson, it's just the opposite of art there: in german sex there is all the german cuisine, the beer-cellar, and all the plum-pudding mysticism of german thought. But then if it is the *sex* you are after that does not say you want to identify your being with your appetite: quite the opposite. The condition of continued enjoyment is to resist assimilation. A man is the opposite of his appetite.' (*T2* 12)

Tarr struggles to convincingly reconcile this pose of detached individualism with his fairly conventional romantic entanglement. His opinions are characterized by an indulgent self-reflexivity which is fixated upon his own purported genius, and his view that women are mere appendages to his masculine creativity. The strength of the more spiritual artistic energies, we are informed, must always supersede those of the corporeal and the libidinal. Such skewed assumptions, which are evidently misogynistic, are later brought into question with the introduction of Anastasya Vasek, who is the protagonist's intellectual and sexual equal. The cosmopolitan Anastasya, who is in possession of several linguistic and national identities but expresses no interest in any of them, is in stark

contrast to the staid, 'pure unadulterated romanticism' (*T2* 27) of Bertha Lunken, who is watched over by her bust of Beethoven. Unlike Anastasya, Bertha tacitly accepts the passive role within her own rendering of the national mythos. Despite Tarr's bid to break free from the confines of a 'nationalised' sex into a more cosmopolitan 'swagger sex' (*T2* 257), his resolve to marry his 'official fiancée', Bertha, pregnant with another man's child, and to keep Anastasya as his mistress (in addition to the brief glimpse of a future life given at the very end), leave us in no doubt that he has accepted the bourgeois conventions which he dismissed at the beginning, and has effectively succumbed to 'assimilation' (*T2* 12).

The issue of anti-Semitism hangs over *Tarr*, and its presence further problematizes the already complex issue of nationalism. Of particular note is the presence of the undisguised anti-Semitic caricature, the 'rat-like' Jan Pochinsky – who takes it upon himself to bring the duel between Kreisler and Soltyk to a head, immediately taking his leave afterwards. It is an accumulation of many layers of anti-Semitic trope, of the suspicious and conspiring Jew who is duplicitous and shifty, without honour or a sense of duty to his countrymen or friends. Such a depiction stands in contrast to Lewis's more positive appraisals of 'cosmopolitan complexity'. It is, furthermore, doubly disconcerting when we acknowledge that the character was 'arbitrarily' inserted into the narrative only in the 1928 version of the novel, as David Ayers has pointed out.[19] Lewis's anti-Semitism reflects the pathologically obsessive and paranoiac aspects of his personality; and true to its schizophrenic form, it is highly unstable and inconsistent. Many of Lewis's friends and collaborators, such as David Bomberg and William Rothenstein, were Jewish – and his pamphlet of 1939, the unfortunately titled *The Jews: Are They Human?,* is a relatively uncomplicated work of philo-Semitism. Nevertheless, the meaning of the arbitrary anti-Semitic portrait in *Tarr* is fairly unequivocal, as Ayers concisely details:

> The semitic outsider and rat-like infiltrator is a parasite, presiding over the destruction of the West, abandoning the Europeans to a vortex of self-destruction, like a rat leaving a sinking ship. The nature of the parasite is such that it transforms not only Soltyk, but the whole tendency of *Tarr*; and, as the Jew-enemy, transforms the author himself into counter-conspirator and Enemy.[20]

The notion of cosmopolitanism, which is elsewhere celebrated in *Tarr*, has often been a problematic element in discussions of anti-Semitism. The sinister charge of 'rootless cosmopolitanism' (*bezrodnyi kosmopolit*) derived from an officially sanctioned anti-Semitic campaign in Stalinist Russia between 1948-1953. The phrase was eventually used to justify the purge of medical doctors, the majority of whom were Jewish, implicated in a non-existent plot to murder Stalin. The phrase had its roots in the liberal nationalism of nineteenth-century critic Vissarion Belinsky, who used it to describe writers whose work lacked a distinctly Russian character. How then can *Tarr* celebrate cosmopolitanism and mock the restrictive ties of national conditioning and mythology, whilst such an anti-Semitic caricature exists?

We have observed how the 'national allegory' which Jameson identified takes centre stage in *Tarr*, compelling even the most cursory of analyses to acknowledge its unwieldy presence. As previously mentioned, Kreisler is an effective representation of the baroque violence at the heart of nationalism, because Lewis has depicted him in such a way as to be always bordering on caricature, without completely committing to it. Unlike the numerous other German characters in the novel, he does not merely reflect his character through mannerisms and pre-occupations, social conventions, and obedience to received opinion. Kreisler instead acts as a conduit for the atavistic violence of German nationalism and its cultural stereotypes; the militaristic fraternities of the *Burschenschaften*, the obsessive and aggressive preening of outward appearance, the morbid fixation with ritualistic suicide, and a sexual violence which is the obverse of its obsession with romantic beauty. Similarly, it is difficult not to see within the acerbic depiction of Hobson an equally damning indictment of the arrogance, corruption, hypocrisy, and unwarranted superiority of the English.

Despite Lewis's apparent disavowal of an allegorical purpose for *Tarr*, it remains tempting to view Kreisler's violence as representative of the violence that was perpetrated by his country in the First World War, given Lewis's explanation that the 'myriads of Prussian germs, gases, and gangrenes released into the air and for the past year obsessing everything, revived my quiescent creation' (*T2* 286). Kreisler's rape of Bertha – in all of its wretched violence and degradation – becomes, as Geoffrey Wagner claimed in an early critique, 'symbolic of the social rape Lewis thinks the Germans would like to effect on the society of nations.'[21] Further, the more pronounced presence in the 1928 version of the despicable and

wholly deliberate anti-Semitic caricature demands to be read as an allegorical representation of a malevolent conspiracy, where the Jew is ultimately culpable through his indifference, detachment, and inhuman 'racial' otherness for causing the disastrous breakdown in diplomacy between otherwise civilized and brotherly 'nations' that preceded the First World War.

However, since the bulk of the novel was written prior to the beginning of the War, it is difficult to pinpoint the exact ways in which the conflict informed Lewis's rendering of Kreisler's heinous crimes; and indeed the exact extent to which Lewis's emergent anti-Semitism manifests itself in the post-war version. There is, indeed, a distinct shift in Lewis's thinking in the decade separating the 1918 and 1928 versions; between a guarded optimism over the possibilities of cosmopolitanism, and the pessimism of his post-war outlook. In any case, overarching readings tend to overshadow the subtleties and contradictions within the novel, which continually undermine a reading of *Tarr* as a 'national allegory'. The most convincing refutation of these readings has been made by Peppis, who posits that *Tarr* aims to oppose both the deterministic form of nationalism which underpins racial essentialism, and the individualist philosophy espoused by both the editors of *The Egoist* (where the book was first serialized), and by Tarr himself. Peppis maintains that the characters' attempts to conform to national character are invariably 'thwarted by their unique psychological compulsions, transforming them into national caricatures, grotesque distortions of national types' (Peppis, *AF* 255). Individual characters, such as Kreisler and Bertha, possess a psychological complexity that disrupts a reading of their stories as mere allegories. These characters are not, according to Peppis, 'stereotypical Germans':

> Caught between personal compulsions and national conventions, between individualist activity and determinist passivity, they become human grotesques, farcical caricatures of the national types of the self-sacrificing romantic and the disciplined militarist. No 'racial critique', then, *Tarr* trounces its moment's accounts of nationality as the comforting fictions of a race of beings too chaotic to realize their desperate dreams of stability. (Peppis, *AF* 250)

Such an account is eminently plausible, and furthermore effaces the need for simplistic modes of analysis which derive from reading *Tarr*

merely as 'national allegory'. If it were to only be considered in this way, several additional categories must be appended which would inevitably detract from its effective polyphonic heteroglossia. However, Peppis goes on to conclude that the 'literary investigation' of national character in *Tarr* anticipates the 'much later "deconstructions" of the category of nationality and its reductive stereotypes by uncovering their implication in established regimes of power' (Peppis, *AF* 252). It is of course tempting to see the novel as a breakdown of the binary interpretations of nationalism offered by contemporary determinist and individualist ideologies, one which exploits the contradictions and instabilities inherent within each to reveal their hierarchical tension. Yet such a speculative interpretation is insufficient when we consider that the issues of nationalism in *Tarr* cannot be broken down into a neat binary oppositional hierarchy. One cannot, for example, simply say that Lewis opposes both the determinist conception of nationality that relies on an essentialist conception of behaviour, and the individualist notion of autonomous selfhood which is stronger than national or 'racial' conditioning – thereby revealing the inadequacy of each in interrogating 'established regimes of power.' The presence of the unguarded and entirely intentional anti-Semitic theme in the 1928 edition makes such an optimistic interpretation problematic. Such a strategy would imply that the established regime of power which Lewis wished to uncover was the perennial anti-Semitic trope of an 'International Jewish Conspiracy'.

We therefore require a different method of interpreting *Tarr*'s 'national allegory', one which maintains the novelty of Peppis's historicist interpretation, and takes into account *Tarr*'s hermeneutic elusiveness, without recourse to the speculative indeterminacy of a deconstructionist reading. A hint towards such an interpretation was provided by Lewis himself. In the political treatise *Left Wings Over Europe* (1936), written during Lewis's most problematic political period, he gives an interesting summary of what a man requires to understand the nature of political crises:

> He must be prepared to wrestle with Marxian dialectic, the Cabala, the marcionite heresy, the astronomical mathematics of High Finance, before he can begin to appreciate what this or that 'crisis' *really* signifies. (*LWE* 151-2)

References to the medieval heresy of Marcion, the 'Cabala', and 'High Finance' again highlight an undercurrent of anti-Semitism in Lewis's thought, but the form of this sentence is also of significant interest here. Indeed, the inclusion of multivalent adverse factors, in addition to the negation of a positive outcome *ab initio*, is suggestive of the philosophical model theorized by Theodor Adorno in his 1967 work, *Negative Dialectics*. The aim of Adorno's post-Second World War book, written, much like *Tarr*, with retrospective sullenness, was to create a system of thought that reflected the anxiety and pathology inherent within philosophical speculation itself; one which did not begin with, nor expect to arrive at, a predetermined outcome that was positive or constructive. Adorno suggested that thought, at its fundamental level, is

> an act of negation, of resistance to that which is forced upon it; this is what thought has inherited from its archetype, the relation between labor and material. Today, when ideologues tend more than ever to encourage thought to be positive, they cleverly note that positivity runs precisely counter to thought and that it takes friendly persuasion by social authority to accustom thought to positivity.[22]

Such a system can be viewed as pessimistic, but this does not reduce its determinacy – nor its ability to interrogate the most anomalous and irrational human impulses, actions, and behaviours. Lewis's thought, evidenced in *Tarr*'s elusive 'national allegory', was characterized by a persistent fixation on negation, and by an unmitigated self-reflexivity that was willing to entertain aberrant and pathological modes of thinking in the service of an immanent critique of social problems. The Negative Dialectic is focused on contingency, which was also a perennial concern for Lewis – evidenced by a heterogeneous body of work that still resists facile ideological categorization. Lewis was preoccupied with historical, political, and artistic contingency – and gave free rein to speculative thought in all of these matters. The consequences of this thinking were frequently undesirable and remain difficult to digest. Yet Lewis's ability to revise, retract, recant, and expunge previously held theories and thoughts is proof of an intellectual honesty not common among fascist ideologues and intellectuals. As Alan Munton noted, Lewis's idiosyncratic ideological journey was 'left-right-left', and was 'an exploration of possibilities, not a direction decisively taken.'[23]

Lewis's allegory of national identities is contradictory and fragmentary, precisely because he conceived of nationalism as a negative dialectic; it is simultaneously critical of its absurdities, yet protective of its eccentricities; it acknowledges that the very ideology of nationalism itself is an illusory construct, but somehow seems to argue that imaginary ideologies (once conceived) become vitally important for their subjects. Through such an analysis we are confronted with a dialectic in which nationalism is the thesis; cosmopolitanism its antithesis – and anti-Semitism its synthesis. To read *Tarr*'s 'national allegory' as an anticipatory form of negative dialectic is to acknowledge the utility and efficacy of some of Lewis's critiques of nationalism, without absolving him of responsibility for his own questionable ideological positions and prejudices.

Notes

[1] Fredric Jameson, *Fables of Aggression: Wyndham Lewis, the Modernist as Fascist* (1979; London: Verso, 2008), 88. Hereafter Jameson, *FA*.

[2] Ezra Pound, *Literary Essays* (New York: New Directions, 1968), 424.

[3] Paul O'Keeffe, *Some Sort of Genius: A Life of Wyndham Lewis* (London: Pimlico, 2000), 176.

[4] W. H. Auden, *Letter to Lord Byron* (1937), in *The English Auden: Poems, Essays, & Dramatic Writings*, ed. Edward Mendelson (London: Faber, 1977): 169-99, at 198.

[5] Wyndham Lewis, 'Left Wings and the C3 Mind', *British Union Quarterly*, 1 (January-April 1937): 22-34, at 22.

[6] Fredric Jameson, 'Reflections in Conclusion', *Aesthetics and Politics*, trans. Francis McDonagh (London: New Left Books, 1977): 196-213, at 201.

[7] Paul Peppis, 'Anti-Individualism and the Fictions of National Character in Wyndham Lewis's *Tarr*', *Twentieth Century Literature*, 40.2 (Summer, 1994): 226-55. Hereafter Peppis, *AF*.

[8] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (1983; London: Verso, 2006), 5-6. Hereafter Anderson, *IC*.

[9] On 'Boulevard du Paradis' and 'Boulevard Kreuzberg', see Scott W. Klein's (*T2* 292).

[10] Faith Binckes, '"Harsh Laughter": Reading *Tarr*', in Andrzej Gąsiorek and Nathan Waddell (eds), *Wyndham Lewis: A Critical Guide* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015): 35-48, at 41.

[11] Andrzej Gąsiorek, *Wyndham Lewis and Modernism* (Tavistock: Northcote House, 2004), 25.

[12] T. J. Clark, 'In a Pomegranate Chandelier', *London Review of Books*, 28.18 (21 September 2006): 6-8, at 8.
[13] T. S. Eliot, 'Tarr', *The Egoist*, 8.5 (September 1918): 105-6, at 106.
[14] Sigmund Freud, 'Dostoevsky and Parricide' (1928), *Complete Psychological Works*, Vol XXI (London: Hogarth, 1961): 173-94, at 177.
[15] Joseph Conrad, *The Selected Letters*, ed. Laurence Davies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 116.
[16] Rebecca West, 'Tarr', *Nation*, 23 (10 August 1918). Reprinted in *Agenda*, 7/8 (Autumn-Winter, 1969): 67-9.
[17] Gąsiorek, *Wyndham Lewis and Modernism*, 15.
[18] See Eliot, 'Tarr'.
[19] David Ayers, *Wyndham Lewis and Western Man* (London: Macmillan, 1992), 140.
[20] *Ibid*., 143.
[21] Geoffrey Wagner, *A Portrait of the Artist as the Enemy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), 237.
[22] Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (London: Routledge, 1973), 19.
[23] Alan Munton, 'From Proudhon to Hitler (and back): the Strange Political Journey of Wyndham Lewis', *E-rea: Revue electronique d'etudes sur le monde Anglophone*, 4.2 (2006). [http://journals.openedition.org/erea/220; DOI: 10.400/erea.220] (accessed 11/03/2018).

Wyndham Lewis's Cruel Satire

Jeffrey Meyers

In our time, when our democratic systems fail and we elect ludicrous leaders like the political clowns Johnson and Trump – the former bent on destroying his country's economy, the latter on courting brutal dictators and ruthless murderers abroad – no amount of reasoned political commentary seems to help.[1] We must deflate their pompous egos, expose the lies and cruelty that lurk beneath their false promises and retrograde ideas. Both are easy targets of toothless comedy, but what we need now is cruel satire, an invective that can salve our anger as well as express it. As Wyndham Lewis declared, 'These times require a voice that naked goes, / Without more fuss than Dryden's or Defoe's' (*CPP* 91). Contemporary satirists should look to Lewis for ways to attack the status quo and electrify an audience sunk in apathy and despair.

Lewis had a roller-coaster career and parabolic reputation. He was the leader of the Vorticists before serving in the First World War, author of six ambitious political, critical, and fictional works in the late 1920s, alienated from the dominant Left-wing mood in the 1930s, forgotten *émigré* to Canada in the 1940s and blind creator of his masterly novel *Self Condemned* in the 1950s. Like the insulted and injured characters in Dostoevsky, he reacted violently to the mildest criticism. His personality was harsh and uncompromising, suspicious and bad-tempered. His pitiless satires were abusive and insulting, slashing and savage. Careless of propriety, he was always eager to make outrageous accusations. Lewis had good reason to be angry. He was goaded to fury by lack of recognition, frequent humiliation and serious illness. His books were suppressed and he was sued for libel; he suffered grinding poverty and had to hide from creditors. W. H. Auden's brilliant couplet in *Letters from Iceland* (1937) captured Lewis as the enraged and isolated Enemy, fighting the prevailing literary and political tides and upholding conservative values: 'There's Wyndham Lewis fuming out of sight, / That lonely old volcano of the Right.'[2]

In his verbal, pictorial, and written assaults Lewis was a crusader against cant and hypocrisy, a volatile and temperamentally intolerant man who felt driven to condemn the corrosive evils of the literary world. Armed with invective, he moved through the hostile terrain like a sniper

through a battlefield. Following Georges Buffon's 'The style is the man himself', he argued that a corrupt style reflected a flawed character. Assuming his Enemy persona, he used threats and mockery to expose intellectual pretensions, pompous religiosity, *faux-naiveté*, and critical blindness. He employed his tongue, brush, and pen to retaliate against rivals, enemies, and even friends who tried to help him. Zeroing in on vulnerable targets, he sought revenge, wanted to wound, and was never happier than when he tasted blood. Later in the century, Louis-Ferdinand Céline, John Osborne, and Gore Vidal continued Lewis's satiric tradition. But no editor today, in our age of stifling political correctness, would dare to publish Lewis's fierce assaults. Inevitably, he managed to hurt himself as well as his victims and to alienate almost everyone he knew. But his satires enlivened his culture and upheld artistic standards while his endless quarrels and conflicts stimulated him and inspired his art.

Despite his self-destructive impulse Lewis had considerable insight into his own complex character. In his book-length satiric poem *One-Way Song* (1933) he bitterly connected his menace to his disregard:

> And still and all, we know the invisible prison
> Where men are jailed off – men of *dangerous* vision –
> In impalpable dark cages of neglect[.] (*CPP* 53)

In the sardonic and pathetic conclusion to his novel *The Vulgar Streak* (1941) – reflecting Lewis's own near-fatal illness – the hero Vincent Penhale, after a series of disasters, hangs himself. Existentially alienated, he pins a note on his chest that reads: 'Whoever finds this body, may do what they like with it. *I* don't want it' (*VS* 230). (Lewis probably knew that when the painter Jules Pascin hanged himself in Paris in 1930, he left a grim note to his mistress, '*Pardon, Lucie*', written on the wall with his own blood.)

His most revealing self-portrait, *Wyndham Lewis as a Tyro* (1920-21), depicts a grimacing figure with a cantilevered hat placed against a bright mustard background. Dressed entirely in black, with thick neck, jagged eyebrows, sharply cut eyes, blade-like nose, snarling lips, gleaming gravestone teeth, and defiantly jutting chin, Lewis mocked both the viewer and his fierce public persona. Yet paradoxically, he also revealed his tender feelings by praising in print a complete pictorial contrast to his own self-image, William Hogarth's *Shrimp Girl* (c. 1745), which portrays a smiling, red-cheeked, wholesome, and quintessentially English woman.

Throughout his life Lewis both resented and depended on wealthy patrons, and repaid their generosity with habitual disdain. He released his bile in his satiric novel *The Apes of God* (1930) by exclaiming: 'it is impossible to devise anything sufficiently cruel for […] the invulnerable conceit of a full stomach and fat purse' (*AG* 255). When one monthly handout failed to arrive on time, Lewis sent the artist Edward Wadsworth a postcard that angrily demanded: 'Where's the fucking stipend?'[3]

Lewis envied Kenneth Clark's bountiful private income that came from his family's textile mills in Scotland and – while Lewis was stranded and starving in wartime Canada – Clark's well paid and posh position as Surveyor of the King's Pictures. Playing on the zoological and curatorial meaning of 'keep', Lewis asked: 'How about "Keeper of the People's Pictures"? We've got a "Keeper of the King's." I think it's absurd that because I don't have a cotton-mill I can't keep something' (Meyers, *EBW* 273) – though he wasn't able to keep anything at all. Lewis also envied Augustus John's success with critics, patrons, and women. He could not resist shooting an amusing barb at his rival's teeming harem of pregnant wives, mistresses and natural children, and insisted: 'Beneath John's roof is the highest average of procreation in France' (*L* 35).

When his young disciple and friend Hugh Gordon Porteus refused to let Lewis dictate the contents of Porteus's enthusiastic book about him, Lewis complained, 'When you began to piss against my leg I should have chased you away.' The good-natured Porteus ignored the insult and remained loyal. Sexual jealousy recurred during Porteus's affair with a Jewish girl whom Lewis knew. Apologetically quoting *Tarr* (1918), Porteus said, 'I only go to her to get milked.' Missing the allusion to his own novel, Lewis thought it referred to an exotic perversion. He then invited Porteus to dinner and after they had consumed three bottles of wine mischievously said, 'Now sit with my wife and show her what you do with Helen.' As if on stage, Lewis pretended to leave the room and then tiptoed back to spy on them. Porteus did not dare offend his jealous master and behaved impeccably (see Meyers, *EBW* 203-4).

Like Alexander Pope and the satirists of the eighteenth century, Lewis mocked the physical deformities of writers he disliked. G. K. Chesterton was swollen; Edith Sitwell, who insulted him when he visited her country house, was skeletal. Referring to the human caricatures on English pottery, Lewis called the elephantine, overheated and controversial Chesterton a 'ferocious and foaming […] Toby-jug' (*TWM* 363). While condemning the vanity and snobbery of his favourite target, Lewis

wrote: 'Sitwell had practically no hair. She was so round-shouldered that it almost amounted to a hump. She was hollow chested, with a long frozen nose, down which she looked and sneered to show her father was a baronet' (Meyers, *EBW* 115).

The Apes of God satirized champagne bohemia (that foreshadowed the radical chic of the 1960s) and the failed artists who try to imitate divine creativity. Sitwell, portrayed as Harriet Finnian Shaw, suddenly turns up in a destructive tempest and tears off Lady Truncheon's skirt: 'a haggard figure appeared as though from nowhere, almost out of the air. In a flying leap this angular female form descended […]. The train and all the dress from the waist, stayed – torn from her, upon the floor, in her wake. The flying harpy, in her embroidered gold, with a sinister tiara, stood in the middle of this ruin' (*AG* 487-8). This ludicrous episode mocked Edith's pride in her aristocratic demeanor.

In his portrait of *Edith Sitwell* (1935), like Dean Swift with a brush, Lewis painted her with hooded eyes and cylindrical neck. She is dressed in a green and gold costume that seems made of tin foil, and reflects the metallic motif of the robotic tubes that extend from her sleeves. Since she thought her hands were her finest feature, Lewis omitted them entirely. His riveting but pitiless portrait reveals Edith's withdrawn, bloodless, and rather dehumanized character.

After the art-impresario Roger Fry had swindled him out of a lucrative commission at the Ideal Home Exhibition in 1913, Lewis nourished a lifelong hatred of the narcissistic Bloomsbury cabal. In *The Apes of God* he condemned them for ritually praising the mediocre, Frenchified pictures of their cohorts – Fry, Duncan Grant, and Vanessa Bell: 'All are "geniuses," before whose creations the other members of the Club, in an invariable ritual, must swoon with appreciation' (*AG* 123). Comparing Fry to Charles Dickens's unctuous and hypocritical villain in *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1844), he called him 'the Pecksniff-shark, a timid but voracious journalistic monster, unscrupulous, smooth-tongued and, owing chiefly to its weakness, mischievous' (*L* 50). In *The Roaring Queen* Lewis portrayed Virginia Woolf as the virginal Rhoda Hyman and usefully deflated a reputation that is still puffed up today. He castigated her as that 'great weary queen' who would lead us into a highbrow feminist fairyland, and called her a precious, snobbish literary fraud with that 'drooping, intellect-ravaged exterior of the lanky and sickly lady in Victorian muslins' (*RQ* 80).

American writers also felt his whiplash. Lewis's essay on William Faulkner attacked his scandalous, crowd-pleasing novel *Sanctuary* (1931). Lewis's witty oxymoronic subtitle, 'The Moralist with a Corncob', alluded to the perverse propensities of the impotent Popeye, who rapes a girl with a corncob. But Faulkner, he felt, could not be a moralist if he were crude and sensational. Lewis also deflated the irritating 'Stein-stutter' and mind-numbing repetitions of *The Making of Americans* (1925) by comparing Gertrude Stein's prose to repulsive food and slimy snakes, to 'a cold suet-roll of fabulously-reptilian length […] the same heavy, sticky, opaque mass all through, and all along' (*TWM* 59). He inflicted a fatal wound by simply declaring: 'the work of Miss Stein' is '*dead*' (*TWM* 61) and ordered her to '*get out of english*' (*DPDS* 7-8).

Exaggerating his criticism for comic effect, Lewis denigrated Hemingway as 'The Dumb Ox'. He attacked Hemingway's terse style by emphasizing the infantile indebtedness to his literary midwife and burdened him with Stein's faults: 'this brilliant Jewish lady has made a *clown* of him by teaching Ernest Hemingway her baby-talk!' According to Lewis, Stein had 'strangely hypnotized him with her repeating habits and her *faux naif* prattle', though he had 'never taken it over into a gibbering and baboonish stage as has Miss Stein' (*MWA* 24, 26). Lewis continued his animal imagery by portraying Hemingway's characters as derivative, passive, and stupid: 'Hemingway invariably invokes […] a dull-witted, bovine, monosyllabic simpleton', a 'lethargic and stuttering dummy', 'a super-innocent, queerly-sensitive, village-idiot of a few words and fewer ideas' (*MWA* 27-8). After nursing his wound for thirty years, Hemingway retaliated in the posthumously published *A Moveable Feast* (1964) by proclaiming that Lewis had the eyes 'of an unsuccessful rapist.'[4] Though no one could ever tell a rapist from his eyes, Hemingway's bitter phrase hit home and has continued to harm Lewis's reputation.

Lewis's friends – Ezra Pound, James Joyce, and T. S. Eliot – admired him and considered him their intellectual and literary equal. They included him among their trailblazing 'Men of 1914' and Pound and Eliot shared his Right-wing political views. Yet he also attacked them. Lewis thought the devoted Pound (who was acutely aware of contemporary writing) was trapped in the past. He called Pound an 'intellectual eunuch' (*TWM* 68), a trotter through time and untrustworthy critic who 'has never loved anything as he has loved the dead' (*TWM* 69). Lewis unfairly rejected the stunning virtuosity of *Ulysses* (1922) as 'a sardonic catafalque of the victorian world', 'eternally cathartic, a monument like a record

diarrhoea' (*TWM* 90). Finally, Lewis dismissed Joyce with a fruity comparison: 'Joyce is like an over-mellow hot-house pear, with an attractive musical delivery, but he bore[s] me' (*L* 190).

In *One-Way Song* Lewis wickedly mocked the desiccated religiosity of Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922):

> I seem to note a roman profile bland,
> I hear the drone from out the cactus-land:
> That must be the poet of the Hollow Men:
> The lips seem bursting with a deep Amen. (*CPP* 58)

Later on, he gleefully deflated the pomposity of Eliot, who had always tolerated his mercurial moods and been a great supporter of his work. As the ecclesiastical Eliot hardened into a national monument while Lewis slaved away in obscurity, he proudly exclaimed that when he invited Eliot to dinner, 'he doesn't come *in here* disguised as Westminster Abbey' (Meyers, *EBW* 323). Lewis's destructive attacks on these three great writers revealed their weaknesses without admiring their strengths.

Two of my interviews with Lewis's victims cast light on his unremitting attacks. In *The Apes of God*, Lewis portrayed the handsome, bisexual Stephen Spender (a member of another group formed with Auden and Cecil Day-Lewis) as Dan Boleyn, 'a beautiful, effeminate, moronic nineteen-year-old would-be poet and potential "genius"' (Meyers, *EBW* 179). When I asked Spender if he were the model for Boleyn, he wryly agreed that the character, a complete idiot, was indeed based on himself. Unlike most victims, the modest and good-natured poet was amused rather than offended by his satiric portrait.

Though the story-writer and critic Victor Pritchett had written favourable notices of his books, Lewis mistakenly insisted that Pritchett thought his monumental *Human Age* trilogy was not a serious novel. Pritchett told me that at a BBC party in May 1955 to celebrate the radio broadcast of that work, the then-blind Lewis, holding a grudge about the supposedly negative review, seized Pritchett's hand and pretended he was entangled by an octopus. This sucking, adhesive handshake recalled Lewis's comical description of the defective products of Roger Fry's arty workshop: 'when they took up an Omega candlestick they could not put it down again, they held it in an involuntary vice-like grip. It was glued to them and they to it' (*RA* 134).

Lewis's caustic wit and whip-cracking prose, combined with the extreme ferocity of an Old Testament prophet, recall another great English satirist. Samuel Johnson's perceptive conclusion to the life of his friend Richard Savage was written with the sharp insight of one who knew the pain of being an outsider: 'The insolence and resentment of which he is accused were not easily to be avoided by a great mind, irritated by perpetual hardships, and constrained hourly to return the spurns of contempt, and repress the insolence of prosperity; and vanity may surely readily be pardoned in him, to whom life afforded no other comforts than barren praises, and the consciousness of deserving them.'[5] Lewis was also willing to wound but, unlike our leaders, he sharply focused his scorn. His caustic and corrosive assaults on received ideas revived the toxic sword-thrusts of Swift and Pope, of George Crabbe and Lord Byron. Lewis condemned the political correctness of his age, the supporters as well as the perpetrators of bankrupt ideas and inferior art. More than ever we need contemporary satirists who, like Lewis, understand how our decaying democracy infects our culture.

Notes

[1] Editors' Note: This apparently anachronistic reference to the election of Boris Johnson as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom is explained by the fact that Jeffrey Meyers's article was added to the 2018 issue of *The Journal of Wyndham Lewis Studies*, which is currently going to print approximately a year behindhand, in August 2019.

[2] W. H. Auden, *The English Auden: Poems, Essays, & Dramatic Writings*, ed. Edward Mendelson (London: Faber, 1977), 198.

[3] See Jeffrey Meyers, *The Enemy: A Biography of Wyndham Lewis* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980), 113. Hereafter Meyers, *EBW*.

[4] Ernest Hemingway, *A Moveable Feast* (1964; London: Arrow, 1996) 97.

[5] Samuel Johnson, *The Lives of the Poets: A Selection*, ed. John Mullan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 317.

Book Reviews

Emmett Stinson, *Satirizing Modernism: Aesthetic Autonomy, Romanticism, and the Avant-Garde* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 223 pp. £28.99 (pb).

In *Satirizing Modernism* (2017), Emmett Stinson (of the University of Newcastle, Australia) situates Thomas Love Peacock's *Nightmare Abbey* (1818) at the head of a subgenre of satire Stinson terms *avant-garde satires of the avant-garde* (hereafter AGSotAG), which includes Wyndham Lewis's *The Apes of God* (1930), William Gaddis's *The Recognitions* (1955), Gilbert Sorrentino's *Imaginative Qualities of Actual Things* (1971), and Evan Dara's *The Easy Chain* (2008).

Some features that distinguish this type of satire from, especially, seventeenth- and eighteenth-century British writing are: flat characters presented without psychological penetration; absence of an ethical/moral base; no plot arcs; a focus on how the avant-garde disappoints by being unoriginal and puffed up about itself; self-reflexivity; autonomy; undercutting of authorial power; and, as romantics are ostensibly replaced by modernists and late modernists, the undermining of any stable position within and without fiction.

'By questioning the legitimacy of the rules that form the basis of satiric critique,' Stinson states near the end of his study, 'these satires undermine their own authority and seek to problematize the relation between satirical critique and the ethical grounds that are meant to secure its meaning' (183). As an examination of the changeable nature of satire, *Satirizing Modernism* contains persuasiveness and weight, even if one does feel that the fog covering the demarcation lines between modernism and postmodernism has not been better dispelled here than by previous theorists.

The chapter titles provide succinct descriptions of Stinson's argument: 'Introduction: Autonomy, Satire, Romanticism, Avant-Garde'; 'The Romantic Satire of Romanticism: Thomas Love Peacock's *Nightmare Abbey*'; 'Modernism Against Itself: Wyndham Lewis's *The Apes of God*'; 'Exhausting Modernism: Satire, Sublimity, and Late Modernism in William Gaddis's *The Recognitions*'; 'Aporia and the Satiric Imagination: The Limit-Modernism of Gilbert Sorrentino's *Imaginative Qualities of Actual*

Things'; and 'Conclusion: Satire and Radical Apophasis in Evan Dara's *The Easy Chain*', followed by a bibliography and index. Choosing a small set of works to consider has pros and cons: while Stinson can better focus, in only 217 pages, on a sample set of works to illustrate his thesis and also, for instance, to bring new insights into textual influences on Lewis's novel, contrarily, mention of additional exemplars of AGSotAG, even if only gestured at, would have broadened and deepened the range and scope of his case, if perhaps exposed the ideas to wider scrutiny from scholars attached to additional writers.

In the 'Introduction', Stinson declares that a 'renewed scholarly interest in modernist autonomy' (2) has emerged over the last decade after the slow decline of polarizing debates between, among others, Lukács, Adorno, Benjamin, and Brecht (as they discussed, among other topics, the politics of writing, fascism, reactionary views, and elitism) and postmodern theorists like Jameson and Huyssen (who 'associated autonomy with a retrograde or conservative modernist aesthetics' [3] that had been replaced by 'a postmodern heteronomy' [3]). Engaging with a vast body of thought to do with the 'four key terms' (43) of this book – satire, autonomy, romanticism, and the avant-garde – Stinson establishes his position while allowing space for alternative viewpoints on, for example, how autonomy is regarded by modernists and postmodernists. The first allows that authorial intention must play a part, while the second states that the text 'invites creative, readerly interpretation' (5).

Though he prefers basing his case on modernist and late modernist works, Stinson is understandably cautious when it comes to intentionality. He is conscious that art works are objects in the world and often make (if inadvertently) a political statement. Yet aesthetics takes precedence, and it is often aligned with principled, if occasionally logically inconsistent, positions about satire's evolving purpose, beginning with prelapsarian views of the world that posited, even in their absence, what might be termed a reclaimable Utopia, and moving to a world that shimmers like a mirage as contemporary 'late modernist' (45) writers, interrogating past practices as deliberately as they examine their own, compose novels embracing contingency and indeterminacy. The practitioners Stinson looks at did not approach the issue of autonomy, for example, with as much formal discipline as commentators might hope: 'For Gide and Lewis, autonomy is both treated with high seriousness as a legitimate aesthetic goal and ironized, appearing as little more than a necessary-but-impossible ambit claim that posits the work of art's radical freedom' (11).

This is not either/or thinking. 'My argument is that these aporias constitute a uniquely modernist version of autonomy, which appears in the work's capacity to overcome its internal contradictions in order to present a complex, polysemous aesthetic whole that is totalizing' (11).

Stinson begins by considering *Nightmare Abbey*. In his view, this novel at the same time rebuts elements of romanticism, and the melancholy humour frequently found in such works; shows how romanticism 'anticipates many elements of avant-gardism' (184); and, through its form, is an example of an artwork that is comprised, in large part, of other artworks. The novel doesn't contemplate how society should be improved through upending vices but, instead, regards literature itself as a target. 'Taken in concert, the textual oddities within *Nightmare Abbey* introduce a slippage between satirical language and the authority of the satiric persona: not only are linguistic utterances revealed as complex assemblages of sources and intertexts, but also the absolute authority of any statement remains in doubt, because all statements may either be creatively reappropriated or be subjected to further metacommentary' (66). This is an important step in the 'genuinely new reconception of the purpose and form of satire' (82) that splits satire – 'an inherently conservative genre' (184) – into groups, including Stinson's contemplative subgenre practitioners that analyse 'their own complicated relationship to tradition' (91) in full view of readers.

The Apes of God is 'the strongest example of this new subgenre of postromantic satire that wrestles with the contradictions of the modernist avant-gardes' aesthetics' (93), with Pierpoint, the novel's never-seen figure, occupying a stratum insulated from the criticism the satire voices. Stinson's discussion of the tradition of simian satire as a 'literary genre of particular importance for the intellectual life of the eighteenth century' (101) informs his reading of the novel, and it leads to the previously 'unnoticed' (103) stimulus that E. T. A. Hoffmann's 'The Report of an Educated Young Man' might have given Lewis. 'Hoffmann's story', according to Stinson, 'bears a close resemblance to Pierpoint's "Encyclical"' (102), as each contains documents 'presented as copies of an absent original' (102). In Pierpoint's case the letter is a duplicate, while Hoffmann's contains a copy of the original. Space doesn't permit a fuller summary of this close textual reading, but one major point is that, through Lewis's calculated recycling of Hoffmann's story, *The Apes of God* deliberately 'makes itself guilty of the very failings for which it attacks its satiric targets, thereby levelling the distinction between it and the objects

of its satire' (104). In a bold metanarrative manoeuvre, it renders Lewis as yet another 'ape of god, who has appropriated Hoffmann's hundred-year-old critique of pseudo-artists […], rather than producing an original work of art' (104). While Stinson sees 'a residue of traditional satiric judgment' (105) in the novel's judgments on successful versus unsuccessful art, he underlines the point that the deep level of 'unoriginality' (104) attempts to 'deactivate its satiric critique' (104) and turn the novel into 'autocritical satire' (105). There is much here for Lewis scholarship to engage with.

Gaddis is the successor to Lewis's approach, though there are significant differences: 'whereas Lewis employed a recursively self-ironizing satiric judgment to revise the avant-garde, *The Recognitions* amplifies the indeterminacy of its satiric judgment for the purpose of generating a prolonged textual uncertainty that, in many cases, cannot be decisively resolved. The novel presents a wearied disinclination to disambiguate these indefinite judgments' (121). Satire as a social good, as a corrective to a failing society, is farther away than before. 'I will also argue that *The Recognitions* attacks exhausted, modernist concepts in order to reassert them apophatically in a purified form' (121). Art trumps 'logical discourses' (121) and this, again, privileges aesthetics – an aesthetic that, necessarily, carries with it a worldview. What Gaddis posits in his first novel is a 'radical indeterminancy' (126) whereby its own satire is affirmed and denied in the same breath. What results, among other things, is that 'the validity of satiric judgment is rendered indeterminate' (126), leaving readers to choose (or unable to choose), again defying a simple either/or decision.

Readers of *The Apes of God* will see resemblances in the party scenes and the portrait of Greenwich Village bohemians in *The Recognitions*, as well as in the treatment of artists in Sorrentino's *roman à clef*, *Imaginative Qualities of Actual Things*. There is also a harsh tone present in both United Statesian novels – present more consistently in Sorrentino's oeuvre; it appears intermittently in Gaddis – that reminds one of Lewis's slashing humour. These similarities are germane, as both novels 'marshal the negativity of satiric critique to indirectly express positive concepts' (160), though '*Imaginative Qualities* advances a very different notion of aesthetic autonomy that cannot be viewed as either escapist or a reconfigured aestheticism' (160). It avoids any connection to the ethical world since, as Stinson quotes Sorrentino as saying, it is a '"useless"' (155) work. (In 'Sample Writing Sample' from *The Moon in Its Flight* [2004], Sorrentino's narrator says: 'This is how literature works, if "works" is the word' [106])

The absence of ethical and educational content presents a gap that is filled by 'performative and playful' (157) features, but that doesn't mean there aren't lessons in how the novel operates. The tethers to real people Sorrentino knew who are openly mocked are also denied, establishing 'an uncertainty about their ontological status – a gesture that undermines the text's capacity to place them in relation to a grounded discourse' (163). One character is apparently based on another character in the same book. Sorrentino has destabilized the text and firmly separated art from life.

This will strike readers as postmodern in intent and achievement, and Stinson goes to great lengths to classify *Imaginary Qualities of Actual Things* as possessing features of both, but inclined to late modernism. When he writes about 'late modernism' (121) as a period – if periodization must be used – or stage that 'refers to the fraught cultural contradictions that appeared once the modernist avant-gardes had been absorbed into European and Anglophone high culture' (121-2), the lines between modernism and postmodernism remain blurred. Readers will ask if Stinson is convincing on this contentious topic. They may also wonder if, in closing with a discussion of Evan Dara's *The Easy Chain*, he is on firm ground. While admitting that this recent novel 'does not appear to meet the criteria' (186) for AGSotAG, since it concentrates not on artists but on 'the cultural and economic elites in Chicago of the early 2000s' (187), he maintains that its techniques – for example, blank pages, Rabelaisian lists, allusions, and multiple voices – connect it to its predecessors. 'Although there is very little explicit engagement with art or aesthetics in the novel, I would suggest this omission presents another form of apophasis and that the work of art is actually the novel's secret content – a point signaled by a series of indirect references within the text' (190-91) that are seen in the thematic merging of art and economics through the text's reliance on Ezra Pound's poetry and his Social Credit theories. The main character, Lincoln Selwyn, takes his name from Pound's *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*, and like Pierpoint in *The Apes of God*, he is 'an absent figure in the text' (190). (His last name chimes in with the character Wyatt Gwyon from Gaddis's *The Recognitions* as well.) *The Easy Chain* 'presents a particular paradox, because the gesture that would seem to disqualify it as a candidate for [AGSotAG] (its omission of the avant-garde), also signals its place in the genre, since this is a form of apophasis characteristic of self-reflexive satire' (192). For Stinson, the negation of negation, a 'program' (190) found throughout the novel, results in '*positive* content' (190, italics in original), and that, combined with its dialogue with modernism via Pound

and Lewis, and how it examines life and art, provide sufficient evidence to bring Dara's work under his subgenre.

Emmett Stinson concludes his study with a summation of what avant-garde satires of the avant-garde seek to achieve: they 'reveal the complexity of relations between the social and the fictional, while simultaneously refusing any closure that would reduce the work of art to its conditions of possibility' (193). In like manner, *Satirizing Modernism* does not assume to be the last word on several complex issues, but in an enlivening fashion offers new thoughts to encourage further investigation of certain novels whose fullest meanings have yet to be discovered.

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Independent Scholar

Andrew Gaedtke, *Modernism and the Machinery of Madness: Psychosis, Technology, and Narrative Worlds* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), xi + 246 pp. £75.00 (hb).

'Once,' according to a curious account, Wyndham Lewis and the poet Roy Campbell went out for a meal that was plagued by strange suspicions. The pair 'had been dining at some restaurant when Lewis leaned forward and told [Campbell] they must talk more quietly. "There's a man at a table behind listening to everything we say." Campbell had looked around the restaurant on all sides. There was no one within six tables of them.'[1] Whether or not this anecdote from early 1920s London is true, it speaks to a prevailing concern in the study of Wyndham Lewis, which has found social, political, and now ontological significances in his reported paranoiac tendencies.[2] In *Modernism and the Machinery of Madness: Psychosis, Technology, and Narrative Worlds*, Andrew Gaedtke makes a convincing intervention by appealing to historically contemporaneous clinical discourses, arguing that Lewis's 'paranoid patterns' instead coalesce into 'a form of ontological activism', rallying against the psychological and cultural discourses that reduced the mind to a machine (10, 43). Gaedtke claims that the experimental fictions of Mina Loy, Anna Kavan, Muriel Spark, Flann O'Brien, Evelyn Waugh, and Samuel Beckett, as well as Lewis, all share 'a radical uncertainty over ontological differences between the human and the machine, the living and the dead, the self and the world', and that this uncertainty can be clarified by positioning these writers within historical discourses of new media, schizophrenia, and phenomenology (10).

The first chapter, 'Fables of Regression: Wyndham Lewis and Machine Psychology', explores *The Art of Being Ruled*, *Time and Western Man*, *The Childermass*, and *Snooty Baronet*, all texts whose complex relations to Behaviorism and its mechanical explanation of psychology have divided critics. Gaedtke considers the existing attempts to compare Lewis with J. B. Watson's 1919 'Psychology as the Behaviorist Views It', but also looks beyond this comparison in order to consider new literary and cultural contexts. The character of Satters in *The Childermass*, for example, is compared with the account of 'Renee' in Swiss psychiatrist Margaret A. Sechehaye's 1951 *An Autobiography of a Schizophrenic Girl*. Like René Descartes, and like Pullman and Satters, Renee suffers a loss of conviction that the humans she walks among are not mechanical automata. The cultural-historical materials Gaedtke introduces are compelling: the trade-marking of the 'Psycho-Phone' in 1927, for example, coincided with Lewis's mysterious warning that 'People feel themselves being influenced,

but their brain and not their crystal set is the sensitive receptive instrument' (1).

Gaedtke introduces Lewis to a wide array of interlocutors. Among those interlocutors are Bertrand Russell, whose critique of Watson is compared with Lewis's; American psychologist Robert Yerkes, whose theory of mental engineering Lewis cites in *Time and Western Man*; Theodor Adorno, whose writings on radio are comparable with Lewis's collapsing of subject and object in *The Childermass*; Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, whose account of 'strong theory' helps to characterize the 'scalar expansion' of paranoiac thought; and Marshall McLuhan, whom Lewis personally knew and whose works on mass communication 'have much in common with Lewis's late 1920s writing' (42, 43). The risk with Gaedtke's heteroglossic organization of his material is of course the same risk that he smartly identifies in Lewis's late 1920s texts, where the individual voice is threatened by an anonymizing ocean of sound in which it might become lost. The risk not only pays off, but draws our attention to a fascinating undercurrent in the book, which is the relationship between Gaedtke's technological objects of study and the methods of literary criticism itself.

As Gaedtke is well aware, and points out, by studying the impact that cultural suspicions of technological influence had on literary texts, he is effectively writing about the 'influence' of 'influence'. In other words, this critical inquiry into theories of influence must confront, as it often very acutely does, its *own* reliance on certain theories of influence. For example, if from a literary historical perspective we want to say that Hyperides (in *The Childermass*) '*gives voice to* an ontological anxiety' that was prevalent at the time, are we to understand this instance of 'giv[ing] voice' as itself a kind of Kittlerian transmission (49, 57)? The difficulty of defining precise channels of cultural influence is a question that all literary criticism with a cultural historical dimension must confront, and it looms particularly large when Gaedtke studies the 'influence' of technological influence on literature. Rather than avoid this complex issue, Gaedtke draws our attention to it with admirable clarity, including in one of the most striking paragraphs of his 'Introduction' (6).

Some considerations could usefully be added here on the gendered connotations of influence. Lewis's work appears frequently in Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *No Man's Land* as paradigmatic of a masculinist modernism motivated by a deep anxiety about the rise of women's literary production.[3] In a cultural atmosphere lacking male authority, Eliotic

'hollow men' could become receptacles for female 'influence'. In a 1921 discussion of 'the New Epoch' Lewis complained of 'a sort of No Man's Land atmosphere' (*TY1* 3), and to the obvious military connotations of that phrase we could add its association of a lack of male authority ('No Man's Land') with the kind of ontological non-distinction in which Gaedtke is interested ('a sort of … atmosphere'). In *Three Guineas*, Virginia Woolf points out the extent to which 'influence' is aligned with women in the patriarchal cultural imaginary. Woolf discusses the prevalence of that alignment in discussions about the First World War, complicating the apparently common supposition that women had the power to 'influence' politicians.[4] A future study might reflect on the role of gender politics in cultural anxieties about gender.

In his second chapter, 'Influencing Machines', Gaedtke offers one of the first ever readings of Mina Loy's posthumously published novel *Insel*. Gaedtke's critical self-reflexivity is sustained here. It is tempting to argue that in *Insel* the author's mind 'becomes simply another technological medium', Gaedtke writes, since this would in turn suggest that Insel and his analyst, Mrs. Jones, have merged and each become a part of the same complex writing machine, which would make the text neatly illustrative of Kittlerian media theory (78). Yet Gaedtke insists that while such a 'collaborative assemblage' does exist in the novel, it is equally predicated on the ultimate (and quite un-Kittlerian) separation of Jones and Insel. Jones is, after all, able to tell her story about Insel with a degree of narrative distance from him (78-9). Loy's novel relies on the idea of distance as well as that of attachment, then, which parallels this chapter's own responsible approach to interdisciplinarity: while literary studies and media theory can be part of the same collaborative assemblage, the difference between the two fields is also maintained, so that the investments of each domain can be balanced against one another to often very powerful effect.

Like *Insel*, Waugh's 1957 *The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold*, based on the author's suspicions about the BBC transmitting thoughts to him, is concerned with a widespread 'Influencing Machine Delusion' (80). The act of narration is itself connected to health, since Gilbert Pinfold's composition of his story is clearly an element in his own recovery, yet one that also 'marks an ontological difference between the world of Pinfold's delusion and a frame world of the novel' (92). Gaedtke's project of connecting delusion to narrative worlding is enhanced in the chapter on Spark and Kavan. Focusing on Spark's novel *The Comforters* and Kavan's

short story collection *Asylum Piece*, Gaedtke confronts, as these works also do, the tendency of psychiatry to reduce the mind to a mechanism, and the depersonalization of patients that such a reduction entails. Gaedtke's strong argument here is that the delusion for which patients are treated is reified in the language of the institutions that claim to cure them. The book hits upon one of its very best and sharpest moments as its over-arching critique of diagnostic practices takes a deconstructive turn: if extreme reductionist materialism is a hallmark of delusion, it is simultaneously a hallmark of clinical claims to rationality.

This deconstruction of the sanity-madness opposition is developed in the fourth chapter, titled 'Flann O'Brien and Authorship as a Practice of "Sane Madness"'. In O'Brien's *The Third Policeman*, the police begin stealing the bicycles of townspeople who have come to believe they are being merged, mentally and physically, with their bicycles. Echoing his earlier argument about Lewis, Gaedtke frames this theft not as mere institutional corruption, but as a fight against 'a peculiar form of *ontological* corruption' (138). But where Gaedtke reads Lewis chiefly as a satirist, O'Brien is understood to be making a more sincere existential suggestion: having 'satirically stage[d] the paranoid logic that grounds identity', the novel can actually 'suggest alternative ways of being in the world that are not founded on the conditions of aggression and persecution' (43, 141). That optimistic turn continues into the final chapter, which is about Beckett. Beckett's radio dramas eschew the individual subjectivity that Lewis, Loy, Waugh, and Kavan all tried to salvage, and in so doing they begin to make understandable the loss of individual personhood that the medical profession had insistently placed beyond the reach of human understanding and empathy (155). If Gaedtke seems partly to be rehearsing George Eliot's nineteenth-century argument that literature can expand our range of moral sympathies, this claim is made more concrete by its historical positioning and opposition to medical frameworks that isolate the mentally ill. Specifically, Gaedtke argues that *Rough for Radio I* and *Embers* each contest psychiatrist Karl Jaspers's foundational 1913 claim that the experience of the schizophrenic is entirely 'un-understandable'. Beckett's radio dramas lead Gaedtke to suggest that late modernist literature, but also contemporary neuro-fiction, might be said to 'simulate' lived experience in a way that makes possible the 'radical empathy' now gaining traction in both psychiatry and literary studies.

By constellating its case studies with historical and contemporary cultural, philosophical, and medical writings on worlding, unworlding,

hyper-reflexivity, and depersonalization, *Modernism and the Machinery of Madness* invites us to look again at the defining features of 'late modernism' from a clinical perspective, while also harnessing the literatures in question to launch a powerful and subtle critique of diagnostic frameworks, both historically and in the present. The book's self-reflexive awareness of its own critical methods valuably draws our attention to the debts literary criticism itself owes to historically produced concepts of channelling, influence, and transmission.

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Notes

[1] Jeffrey Meyers, *The Enemy: A Biography of Wyndham Lewis* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980), 371.

[2] Campbell diagnosed Lewis with a 'persecution mania' (*ibid.*). See also David Trotter, *Paranoid Modernism: Literary Experiment, Psychosis, and the Professionalization of English Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 284-325.

[3] Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century – Vol. 1: The War of the Words* (New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press, 1988), 130.

[4] Woolf interrogates the conditions for this 'influence' and its socio-economic transformations, describing the 1919 Sex Disqualification Act as a 'right of such immense value to the daughters of educated men that almost every word in the dictionary has been changed by it, including the word "influence"' (Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas*, ed. Anna Snaith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 100).

Jerome Boyd Maunsell, *Portraits from Life: Modernist Novelists and Autobiography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 304 pp. £20.00 (hb).

Jerome Boyd Maunsell's new book, *Portraits from Life*, is a wide-ranging and fascinating exercise in literary biography that examines the autobiographies of Joseph Conrad, Henry James, Ford Madox Ford, Edith Wharton, H. G. Wells, Gertrude Stein, and Wyndham Lewis, in the context of their life and writing. Recent years have seen a rise in work that focuses on the historically received modernist novelist as a highly crafted, even artificial cultural presence, which arrives in contemporary criticism already mediated by historic engagement with publicity, narrow promotional networks, and commercial interests. Rod Rosenquist's *Modernism, the Market, and the Institution of the New* (2012) and Aaron Jaffe's *Modernism and the Culture of Celebrity* (2009) are both examples of books that have powerfully exposed the complexities of authorial self-representation in the early twentieth century, when artists and their collaborators were acutely aware of the potentially permanent public legacies that were accreting around them. Boyd Maunsell's work arrives as a welcome alternative intersect to this important field. Focusing throughout on the titular 'life' of his chosen subjects, his method is fundamentally biographical, drawing on existing profiles of canonical authors, and new archival work, to situate the autobiography as a psychological event in their creators' lived experiences. The context of textual genesis is tightly framed around the authors' idiosyncratic methodologies of composition and personal friendships, and, as such, emerges on the whole as a kind of re-biographization, allowing the double lens of autobiography and biography to overlap as distinct but closely related 'portraits'.

Given the ambitious breadth of authors covered, standing at no fewer than seven, it is immediately obvious that the work holds great value to the subject specialist wishing to enrich their knowledge of other writers. Equally, a subject specialist on one of the featured authors may arrive to find much they already know in their corresponding chapter. *Portraits*, however, sets out in its introduction to assemble 'a group portrait, revealing the interactions *between* the seven writers it depicts' (5). It is candid about its role as 'an experiment in biography […] rather than a critical study', that 'aims to tell a story' (6). Each chapter develops its narrative in the context of a working relationship of some kind, from Conrad and Ford through their novel *Romance* (1903); Stein and Ford through his role as her agent; Wells's savage satire of James in *Boon* (1915) following James's criticism of his work (123); James's close friendship with Wharton, whom he called 'the pendulum' and 'the devil-dancer'; and

Lewis's now legendary appearance at Ford's house with bundles of manuscripts for *The English Review*. These biographical threads are more tightly pulled in some chapters than others, especially when it comes to Ford, who along with James appears in the 'portraits' with the most frequency and potency. This reflects their status in the literary world: Ford, as the prolific writer and organizer, appears everywhere as a facilitator and castigator, whereas the older James, at times referred to in the book by his nickname 'The Master', is a literary monument looming over the next generation. Likewise, Lewis's sporadic, often hilarious eruptions into the other chapters likewise reflects his typical portrayal as an exotic, unpredictable outsider.

Like a good biography, formal pronouncements on the nature of autobiography itself unfold gradually, as lessons are learned from each individual tale. Concepts and maxims that help to demarcate limits and functions of autobiography are harmoniously drawn from the approaches and vocabularies of the authors themselves. In Chapter 1, "'The Secret of My Life'", on Conrad, *Portraits* finds that his 1906 autobiography *The Mirror of the Sea* contains many 'expressively repressed moments and shards of conversation, evocative of a whole system of thought and feeling which […] lay at the foundations of his self-image' (17). This leads to the statement that '[a]ll autobiographies and memoirs are tinged by distortions, omissions, alterations, selections, impressions, and artful reshapings' (18). Conrad 'came to understand the literary power of factuality', and 'intuited how much of this factuality was semi-illusory'. *Portraits* then repurposes the title of Conrad's short novel *The Shadow-Line*, which originally meant the misty zone that separates our childhood memories from the oblivion of infancy, as a 'liminal' barrier between what a reader perceives as fact and perceives as fiction and applies it to a reading of the 'loosely associative' *A Personal Record* (1912). The concept re-emerges later (67), in the Ford chapter, to describe his flagrant crossing of it in his depiction of Wells in *The New Humpty Dumpty* (1912).

All the chapters in *Portraits* revolve around such a biographical hinge. For Conrad, this was a grappling with the personal veracity of his memory, but for James, in Chapter 2, the psychological struts of autobiography are privacy and family. While also discussing *A Small Boy and Others* (1913) and skirting over *Notes of a Son and Brother* (1914) and *The Middle Years* (1917), the attention here is largely on the unpublished 'Family Book'. This unusual, highly personal project was itself a group biography drawn from James's own reminiscence and the correspond-

ence of his immediate family, including his brother William James and cousin Minny Temple. He found this difficult however, as the 'externally placid' James '[w]ith all his experience in novelistic point of view […] knew he could only write about William from his own vantage point' (45). James's novelistic method is said to use memory by 'converting and distilling experience', so he could 'use artistically everything that happened' (48). Many will be familiar with the fact that the transformational power of an observation, along with its associated emotions, is nowhere dramatized better than in James's *The Turn of the Screw* (1898). This primacy of the feeling of memory, rather than its details, was appreciated by his contemporaries: Frank Swinnerton, in his review of *A Small Boy*, writes of 'the inexpressible candour of his primary perceptions, made difficult for us only by the consummate analysis of their interplay'.[1] *Portraits* develops this by again drawing from personal anecdote and expression. It discusses a memory of Wells, who describes William James peeking over the fence at the Jameses' neighbour, G. K. Chesterton. Henry's subsequent refusal to invade his privacy is said to indicate his 'embrace of the randomness', of how he came to possess his family's letters, but also of how he passively received the incoming phenomena of the world that laid the foundation of his art (58).

In Chapters 3 and 4, on Ford and Wharton respectively, the dulcet coherence of an analysis so tightly bound to the authors' lives does leave the reader wondering what could come from a more explicit intervention into the complex social hierarchies of knowledge that straddle autobiographical expression. Titled "'For Facts a Most Profound Contempt'", Chapter 3 frames Ford's well known penchant for fabrication through the etymological spectres of the Latin verbs *facere* (to make, do) and *fingere* (to devise, invent), whose similarities allow us to mark 'the gradations found along' their line of connection (64). In this informative section, which develops Max Saunders's thesis that all of Ford's books together can be read as a colossal autobiography, *Portraits* introduces *No Enemy: A Tale of Reconstruction* (1929), which consists of a poet called Gringoire relaying his war experiences to a 'Compiler', who informs the reader of what has been said. Later in the book, this system breaks down and they begin to bicker directly and through footnotes (80). The profundity of such a text feels undervalued given the aeration *Portraits* allows the fact/fiction problem through Ford in this chapter, as it threatens to blow apart assumptions about authorial intentionality in Ford's writing via its suggestive portrayal of power relations as conduits

of knowledge. Likewise, the astonishing divergence between Wharton's *A Backward Glance* (1934) and 'The Life Apart' (known as the 'Love Diary') in their divulgence of sexually and romantically explicit scenes between the author and Morton Fullerton, seems to not so much beg as beseech the question of how much of what was published was down to gender politics.

However, this is not a complaint, and in fact *Portraits* should be celebrated for how, in a very biography-like way, it leaves such tantalizing gaps for new research by exposing connections and drawing attention to ironies in passing. Yet as biography, *Portraits*, through its own literariness, must make a reader aware that they are reading an additional layer of a narrativistic shell which invites scrutiny of the neatness of its presentation. The chapters generally follow the course of an author's life, and occasionally go beyond it (as in Chapter 5, where Wells's unfinished third volume of *Experiment in Autobiography* (1934) was edited and published by his son, Gip, in 1984). This creates a fitting impression of natural inconclusiveness, and as discussed, formal analysis of autobiography punctuates, rather than bookends, the arguments. Still, there are times when the fictionalization of the past so sensitively probed by *Portraits* is employed within its own 'Portraits from Life'. Mid-way through the book, Ford is quoted as having seen Gertrude Stein driving at 'snail pace' in her Ford car, which, according to biographer James Mellow, was impossible as she could not drive at that time (90). *Portraits* intelligently suggests that this scene is a semi-intentional visual articulation of Stein's enhanced status compared with Ford's after she had published *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (1933). Slowly but surely, the great lady was leaving Ford in her relentless wake, creating a tension he would pictorialize imaginatively. While cleaving much more closely to documented fact, *Portraits* tends to engage in its own fictive extrapolations, which are perhaps intellectually risky. An example of this might be seen in the earlier visualization of James dictating to his typist Theodora Bosanquet, where he is described as 'working on the memoir, pacing up and down each morning in the dim room to the rhythmic clacking of the Remington', evoking the image of a hypnotist's metronome, and enhancing the portrait-building in that chapter of James as a meditative, dreamlike explorer of his own compelling imagination (49).

The final chapter, on Lewis, is an excellent summary of Lewis's autobiographical manoeuvrings and a good introduction to *Blasting and Bombadiering* (1937), for which he is less well known than *The Apes of God*

(1930) and *Self Condemned* (1954), both of which show varying degrees of satirical engagement with biography and autobiography respectively. Given Lewis's useful appearances in earlier chapters of the book, it is appropriate that his own writing takes its place, and the insertion of perspectives on Lewis by Ford and Stein breathe new life into scenarios and characterizations that have become most familiar since the publication of his major biography by Paul O'Keeffe and the heftiest work of critical appreciation, Paul Edwards's *Wyndham Lewis: Painter and Writer* (2000), nearly twenty years ago. However, for those familiar with these studies, the substance of the chapter on Lewis remains somewhat cursory and has not benefited from time in either of the largest archives that hold his papers. Its importance to the volume lies rather in bringing together the interconnected episodes of Lewisian interjection that complete the biographical portraiture of the other six subjects in their respective sections.

Portraits from Life is an unusual book that is vindicated as an 'experiment' in the biographization of autobiography. Its title is remarkably fitting, leaving it impossible to doubt that the seven chapters are indeed 'portraits', and that they are certainly 'from life'. This is not a volume which seeks to settle empirical scores or substantively to increase material knowledge, but one which changes the space of our vantage point subtly enough for new realizations to manifest themselves from the already known. In doing so, it invites the reader to bring their own wisdom to the broad array of scenarios played out in its narratives. As a narrative, at times one's guard must be raised against the smoothness with which the biographical art can marry descriptions of historical events with holistic judgements of texts, which are not quoted from in detail. Fortunately, the pulse and openness of the book's overall argument is itself a good defence against such pitfalls, especially when dealing with such wily purveyors of misrepresentation as Lewis, Ford, and Wells. Throughout, the various hinges around which the psychology of auto-biographical method pivot, be it the 'relativity of personality' for Wharton (105) or the 'bottom nature' for Stein (151), become the memorable eddies of intermingled biographical rivers. They should become fascinating departure points for new avenues of literary enquiry.

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Note

[1] Frank Swinnerton, 'General Literature', *The Blue Review*, 1.2 (June 1913): 128-33, at 130.

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JWLS Abbreviations

Where appropriate, Lewis's visual works and paintings are tagged to the drawing, painting, and plate numbers in Michel's catalogue (see *MWL*).

ABR	*The Art of Being Ruled* (1926), ed. Reed Way Dasenbrock (Santa Rosa: Black Sparrow Press, 1989).
ACM	*America and Cosmic Man* (London: Nicholson and Watson, 1948).
AG	*The Apes of God* (1930; Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1981).
ALW	*Anglosaxony: A League that Works* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1941).
AIP	*America, I Presume* (New York: Howell, Soskin, 1940).
B1	*BLAST 1* (1914), ed. Wyndham Lewis (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1981).
B2	*BLAST 2* (1915), ed. Wyndham Lewis (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1981).
BB	*Blasting and Bombardiering: An Autobiography* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1937).
C	*The Childermass: Section I* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1928).
CD	*The Caliph's Design: Architects! Where is your Vortex?* (1919), ed. Paul Edwards (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1996).

CHC	*Creatures of Habit, Creatures of Change: Essays on Art, Literature and Society, 1914-1956*, ed. Paul Edwards (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1989).
CPP	*Collected Poems and Plays*, ed. Alan Munton (Manchester: Carcanet, 1979).
CWB	*The Complete Wild Body*, ed. Bernard Lafourcade (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1982).
CYD	*Count Your Dead: They Are Alive! Or, A New War in the Making* (London: Lovat Dickson, 1937).
DPA	*The Demon of Progress in the Arts* (London: Methuen, 1954).
DPDS	*The Diabolical Principle and the Dithyrambic Spectator* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1931).
DY	*Doom of Youth* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1932).
E1	*The Enemy 1* (1927), ed. Wyndham Lewis / David Peters Corbett (Santa Rosa: Black Sparrow Press, 1994).
E2	*The Enemy 2* (1927), ed. Wyndham Lewis / David Peters Corbett (Santa Rosa: Black Sparrow Press, 1994).
E3	*The Enemy 3* (1929), ed. Wyndham Lewis / David Peters Corbett (Santa Rosa: Black Sparrow Press, 1994).
EWL	Paul Edwards, *Wyndham Lewis: Painter and Writer* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000).
FB	*Filibusters in Barbary: Record of a Visit to the Sous* (London: Grayson and Grayson, 1932).
H	*Hitler* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1931).
HA	*The Human Age, Book 2: Monstre Gai*; *The Human Age, Book 3: Malign Fiesta* (London: Methuen, 1955).

HC	*The Hitler Cult* (London: Dent, 1939).
JAH	*The Jews: Are they Human?* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1939).
JB	*Journey into Barbary: Morocco Writings and Drawings*, ed. C. J. Fox (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1983).
L	*The Letters of Wyndham Lewis*, ed. W. K. Rose (London: Methuen, 1963).
LF	*The Lion and the Fox: The Role of the Hero in the Plays of Shakespeare* (London: Grant Richards, 1927).
LWE	*Left Wings Over Europe: Or, How to Make a War About Nothing* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1936).
MDM	*Mrs Dukes' Million* (1908-09; Toronto: Coach House Press, 1977).
MF	*Malign Fiesta* (1955; London: Calder and Boyars, 1965).
MMB	*The Mysterious Mr Bull* (London: Robert Hale, 1938).
MWA	*Men Without Art* (1934), ed. Seamus Cooney (Santa Rosa: Black Sparrow Press, 1987).
MWL	Walter Michel, *Wyndham Lewis: Paintings and Drawings* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1971).
OG	*The Old Gang and the New Gang* (London: Desmond Harmsworth, 1933).
P	*Paleface: The Philosophy of the 'Melting Pot'* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1929).
P/L	*Pound/Lewis: The Letters of Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis*, ed. Timothy Materer (New York: New Directions Books, 1985).

RA	*Rude Assignment: An Intellectual Autobiography* (1950), ed. Toby Foshay (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1984).
RH	*Rotting Hill* (1951), ed. Paul Edwards (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1996).
RL	*The Revenge For Love* (1937), ed. Reed Way Dasenbrock (Santa Rosa: Black Sparrow Press, 1991).
RP	*The Red Priest* (London: Methuen, 1956).
RQ	*The Roaring Queen* (1931; London: Secker and Warburg, 1973).
SB	*Snooty Baronet* (1932), ed. Bernard Lafourcade (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1984).
SC	*Self Condemned* (1954), ed. Rowland Smith (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1983).
SSG	Paul O'Keeffe, *Some Sort of Genius: A Life of Wyndham Lewis* (2000; London: Pimlico, 2001).
T1	*Tarr* (1918), ed. Paul O'Keeffe (Santa Rosa: Black Sparrow Press, 1990).
T2	*Tarr* (1928), ed. Scott W. Klein (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).
TY1	*The Tyro 1*, ed. Wyndham Lewis ([April] 1921).
TY2	*The Tyro 2*, ed. Wyndham Lewis ([March] 1922).
TWM	*Time and Western Man* (1927), ed. Paul Edwards (Santa Rosa: Black Sparrow Press, 1993).
UP	*Unlucky for Pringle: Unpublished and Other Stories*, eds C. J. Fox and Robert T. Chapman (London: Vision, 1973).

VS *The Vulgar Streak* (1941), ed. Paul Edwards (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1985).

WA *The Writer and the Absolute* (London: Methuen, 1952).

WLA *Wyndham Lewis on Art: Collected Writings, 1913-1956*, eds Walter Michel and C. J. Fox (London: Thames and Hudson, 1969).

WLtA *Wyndham Lewis the Artist: From 'Blast' to Burlington House* (London: Laidlaw and Laidlaw, 1939).

Additional abbreviations used in this volume:

Adorno, *AT*

- Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998).

Anderson, *IC*

- Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (1983; London: Verso, 2006).

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- Maurice Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989).

Bürger, *DM*

- Peter Bürger, *The Decline of Modernism* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 1992).

Jameson, *FA*

- Fredric Jameson, *Fables of Aggression: Wyndham Lewis, the Modernist as Fascist* (1979; London: Verso, 2008).

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- Peter Kaye, *Dostoevsky and English Modernism 1900-1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

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Peppis, *AF*

- Paul Peppis, 'Anti-Individualism and the Fictions of National Character in Wyndham Lewis's *Tarr*', *Twentieth Century Literature*, 40.2 (Summer, 1994): 226-55.

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Contents

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