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# You Must Be a Duet in Everything: An Examination of the Body in Wyndham Lewis's Tarr

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*2005-2006 Penn Humanities Forum on Word & Image*, Undergraduate Mellon Research Fellows.

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# You Must Be a Duet in Everything: An Examination of the Body in Wyndham Lewis's Tarr

**Abstract**
Wyndham Lewis is a much-ignored Canadian born British artist who alongside Ezra Pound, TS Eliot, Virginia Woolf, and James Joyce (all of whom he was friends with at various points in his life) helped form what we now call English High Modernism. Along with Ezra Pound in 1914, he founded the only avant-garde English art movement: Vorticism. Lewis was in his early thirties by that time, and had already joined and left the Bloomsbury Group. Although Vorticism is Lewis's creation that gets him the most attention, his work defies classification: the list of his writings contains literature, philosophy, sociology, political science, journalism, short stories, art critiques, two autobiographies, travel essays, drama, and poetry, and he edited numerous journals, while he painted dozens upon dozens of paintings and drew feverishly before he went blind in the early 1950s. His visual style in his paintings ranges from 'normal' representational portraits, to cubist, futurist, Vorticist, and various non-representational styles.

**Comments**
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# 'You Must Be a Duet in Everything:' An Examination of the Body in Wyndham Lewis's *Tarr*

**Lindsey Schneider**
**College 2006**

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Undergraduate Humanities Forum Mellon Research Fellow

Final Project Paper
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The body is sung about, ranted about, abused, cut about by doctors, but never talked about. If you will give me the license of a doctor and not keep seizing my hand (not out of pain but modesty) as the patient seizes the dentist's, I will examine one or two points and prescribe treatment. It is not, however, the body that is ailing, but our idea of the body.

Wyndham Lewis, *The Complete Wild Body*

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## I. Introduction

Wyndham Lewis is a much-ignored Canadian born British artist who alongside Ezra Pound, TS Eliot, Virginia Woolf, and James Joyce (all of whom he was friends with at various points in his life) helped form what we now call English High Modernism. Along with Ezra Pound in 1914, he founded the only avant-garde English art movement: Vorticism. Lewis was in his early thirties by that time, and had already joined and left the Bloomsbury Group. Although Vorticism is Lewis's creation that gets him the most attention, his work defies classification: the list of his writings contains literature, philosophy, sociology, political science, journalism, short stories, art critiques, two autobiographies, travel essays, drama, and poetry, and he edited numerous journals, while he painted dozens upon dozens of paintings and drew feverishly before he went blind in the early 1950s. His visual style in his paintings ranges from 'normal' representational portraits, to cubist, futurist, Vorticist, and various non-representational styles.

The interest for this project is the visual figuration of the body in Lewis's novels; as a visual and literary artist, this research necessarily draws upon the formation of bodies in his artworks and the imaginative bodies of his literary characters. Because of the wide range of Lewis's styles and figurations, a pseudo-genealogy of a certain period of his writing is in order, as it relates to this research. In 1910-1911, he completed a series of short stories called *The Wild Body*, and this collection is extremely important for my research because it almost explicitly outlines his theory of the primitive and laughter. In *The Wild Body*, Lewis shows an attraction to peasants, circus performers, the disposed and the itinerant, but he is always distancing himself aesthetically from these subjects. His fascination with the carnivalesque realms of society stems from the representation of pre-civilized humanity, observing them as a detached anthropologist-artist: 'The artist, in his defiance of Fate, has always remained a recluse, and the enemy of such orgaic participation [in] life.'[1] Rather than seeing some sort of heroism in the primitive, he preserves them comically as symbols of humanity's tragic fate, bound to the prehistoric condition of the past.

Around the time that *The Wild Body* was completed, Lewis wrote a short story entitled 'Otto Kreisler's Death,' and then about a year later decided to turn it into a novel: he considered it the budding of his first great art-novel. Otto Kreisler is a German art student living in Paris, who runs out of money and eventually tragically dies. Lewis began to realize that this was not enough for a novel, so he bookended the story of Kreisler with the story of Tarr, creating a dialogic

[1] Wyndham Lewis, *Complete Wild Body*, ed. Bernard Lafourcade (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1982) p 194-195

narrative. Tarr is Lewis's hero of individualism, his perfect artist who spouts polemical rants at the beginning and end of the text outlining Lewis's aesthetic theory. The two stories, concerning two individuals, intersect only in a few places in the novel. Tarr, the shell, surrounds the story of Kreisler, the bodily organs of the text that drive the central action of the novel. Kreisler appears as the machine that generates and constructs the progression of the text, whilst Tarr surrounds this textual body with polemical rants that are presumably from Lewis's own mouth, as Tarr is described as one of his 'showmen' in the Preface.[2] In 1916-1917 it was serialized in the journal *The Egoist* in the issues following the serialization of Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist*. The novel, after numerous rewrites, was finally ready for publication in 1918, while Lewis was serving in the War.

The years from 1914 (with the founding of the Vorticist movement) to the early 1930s were his most avant-garde, stylistic, and creative years, defined by a purely visual approach to writing. During these years the literary and social criticism that he published outlined a philosophical system centered on the idea of the Individual and the Crowd. Lewis fashioned himself to be as the ultimate Individual, the ingenious artist who stands above and against the mindless masses as a cultural totem pole. After Lewis's break with the Bloomsbury group in the early 1910s, he began a series of satirical pieces that mocked a range of aesthetic, political, and philosophical ideologies; he became the self-professed enemy of his time. In the early 1930s this ideal of his own individualism (versus the fated crowd) morphed into a fascist ideology, resulting in the publication of a few books in support of Hitler. Despite the innovative literature and paintings he produced before and after these trembling, fascist war years, Lewis emerges as a forgotten and ignored figure of High Modernism. Fredric Jameson's brilliant study on his fascist literary stylings, *Fables of Aggression* published 1979, made it acceptable to delve back into Lewis's works. A trickle of full-length studies followed Jameson's, inspired by the re-publication of his works by Black Sparrow Press in the early-1980s, but a lot of these re-readings of his literature seem misguided. Lewis's oeuvre is approached from stances considering political ideologies as scholars move towards the immense body of writing through the lens of what Andrew Hewitt labeled 'fascist modernism.' Bernard Lafourcade comments in his essay 'The Taming of the Wild Body' that 'studies of Lewis's work have sadly neglected what ought to have formed the basis of their investigations—the early period.'[3] His early writings have been buried by the weight of his immense literary output after his Vorticist period. The early writings are rife with Modernist

[2] Wyndham Lewis, *Tarr: The 1918 Version*, ed. Paul O'Keefe (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1990), p 15
[3] Bernard Lafourcade, 'The Taming of the Wild Body,' in *Wyndham Lewis: A Revaluation*, ed Jeffrey Meyers (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1980), p 68 (pp 68-84)

meanings and stylizations, and form the artistic basis for the rest of Lewis's writing life; it was here, in these early years, his literary vision is at its clearest and purest.

It is nearly impossible to consider Lewis's early writing—and *Tarr* in particular—without considering the impact of Vorticism, and its origins in Futurism. Both of these avant-garde movements will be discussed in detail in the following sections, particularly in relation to Futurist hysterical, whirling simultaneity (the representation of numerous temporal states in one image) and the Vorticist energetic freezing of this motion (the representation of *one* temporal state from shifting spatial positions, a sort of cubist-futurism). In *Tarr*, Lewis breaks the whirl into stop-images representing the final stage of the vortex, the apex of expressionistic energy and incisiveness. Vorticism was an energetic stopped motion, where the diagonal Futurist lines were held in a relentless rigidity.

The harsh black outlines of color planes become the focus and not the color planes themselves; it is the boundaries separating and holding together the cubist-futurist form that produces and maintains the meaningful rigidity. These boundaries are present beyond Lewis's visual figuration and experimentations, and allow easy analogies between his visual artworks and his novels. The boundaries in *Tarr* form the various dualisms that break apart the coherent psyche: space and time is placed in opposition to 'clock' time, bodily experience topples persistent rational consciousness, stylized speech combats degraded everyday language, performative principles of the body trump objective reality, and the visual is distinctly separated from the auditory. This fragmentation was not introduced firstly with the publication of *Tarr*, as in *The Enemy of the Stars* written in 1914, he writes 'she paled, rendered quite speechless…her glassy look shivered to atoms.'[4] As Hugh Kenner writes with regard to his paintings, 'Art and Energy moved into sudden conjunction; forms filled his spaces…oblique lines sprang from points of radiation to reverse the thrust of traditional perspective which tapers or dwindles towards a point of vanishing, but they bounded forms such as traditional perspective bounds, and so could capitalize on traditional principles of design.'[5] It is the lines themselves—the points of intersection—where meaning is found.

This essay considers the various dualisms the Lewis is complicating and subverting—inside and outside, mind and body, subject and object, destruction and creation, death and birth—in light of the main driving dichotomy: laughter (satire) and tragedy. The method through which Lewis's characters turn from comic to tragic, and back again, will be analyzed in terms of the

[4] enemy of the stars p 230
[5] Hugh Kenner, *The Pound Era* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1971), p. 232

narrative treatment of embodiment. It is the grotesque body, immobilized into Vorticist caricatures of the human being, which produces both the comic and tragic elements of the novel; the Tyronic body unites both extremes of this duality. In an early Vorticist manifesto, Lewis writes:

> 9. We only want Humour if it has fought like Tragedy.
> 10. We only want Tragedy if it can clench its side-muscles like hands on its belly, and bring to the surface a laugh like a bomb.[6]

The deep meaning of the body is discovered through a reversal of the bodily high and low stratum, through the unification of the bawdy laughter with the central human tragic elements. The tragic, comic, and the body will be evidenced and explored through the characteristics of Renaissance carnival as discussed by Bakhtin in an effort to illustrate the possibility of transcendence in Lewis's various ideologies concerning aesthetics, embodiment, and individuation.

Lewis took great pride in the aesthetics of literary style, often appearing more concerned with linguistic texture and force than with coherent, systematic concepts and plot. His novels are an amazing series of contradictions, both between novels and within novels, and it is these inconsistencies that question the project of recent scholarship to 'make sense' of Lewis, to 'understand' his fascist moves. *Tarr*, which consists of two main autonomous characters, is structured with a parallelism, a duality, of characters rather than a clearly delineated conceptual framework. Tarr and Kreisler do not directly conflict with one another, but rather coexist, echoing the statement in the manifesto 'BE THYSELF' in *BLAST*, the first Vorticist journal:

> You must talk in two tongues, if you do not wish to cause confusion…
> There is nothing so impressive as the number TWO.
> You must be a duet in everything…
> Why try and give the impression of a consistent and indivisible personality?
> There is Yourself: and there is the Exterior world, that fat mess you browse on.
> You knead it into an amorphous imitation of yourself inside yourself.
> Sometimes you speak through its huskier mouth, sometimes through yours…
> Hurry up and get into this harmonious and sane duality.[7]

Lewis sought to blend the philosophically disparate individual ego and material world, mind and body, physical body and literary body. It is to these dualities, to the 'harmonious and sane duality' that this essay will turn, using Lewis's statement in *Time and Western Man* as a guide: 'This

[6] Wyndham Lewis (Ed), 'Vorticist Manifesto,' in *BLAST 1* (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1981), p 31
[7] Wyndham Lewis, 'Vortex No. 1: Be Thyself' in *BLAST 2* (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1981), p. 91

natural matching of opposites within saves a person so constituted from dogmatism and conceit. If I may venture to say so, it places him at the center of that balance.'[8]

The text itself constrains various dualities, and the narrative will be analyzed in terms of its imaginative and concrete aspects: the printing of words and their imaginative signification. Jameson based his study on the idea that meaning situated on the levels of text and representation did not agree in *Tarr*, that there was an irreconcilable gulf between the narrative and the words themselves. The answer to this break is not to separate completely the imaginative meaning and physical look of the text, but rather to find a method of dealing with this 'duet' without assigning a 'consistent and indivisible personality' to the novel. There must be a way to reconcile the two artistic tongues Lewis is working with (the visual and the literary) and within those tongues, the dualities that he is complicating.

My project attempts to face his satirical laughter on its own terms as a literary and artistic function, and uses an analogy to Mikhail Bakhtin's analysis of carnivalesque laughter in *Rabelais and His World* to explain the destructive and constructive force of such laughter. The body is central is this discussion, and the return to its primal elements is represented in the positions of the laughing body. The 'immense mechanical energy,' in Fredric Jameson's words, of Lewis's characterizations and sentences will be read in terms of the narrative aesthetics of embodiment, where meaning and truth are made central.[9] This essay addresses what Elizabeth Grosz terms the 'conceptual blindspot' in philosophical and literary enquiries: the body.[10] The body (both the body of the text and the bodies of its characters) is capable of harnessing and wielding the 'two tongues' to attain a spiritual and aesthetic height. As Lewis wrote in the essay 'Tyros and Portraits,' 'a laugh, like a sneeze, exposes the nature of the individual with an unexpectedness that is perhaps a bit unreal. This sunny commotion of the face, at the gate of the organism, brings to the surface all *the burrowing and inferior broods* which the individual may harbour.'[11] Laughter, then, has the power to raise deeper levels of consciousness, inner and more authentic creativity, and the 'natural' instincts to the outside; it is the force that allows us to come into contact with and understand the relationship between the inner soul and outer material body. In *The Wild Body*, Lewis writes that 'it is the chasm lying between Being and Non-Being, over which it is impossible for logic to throw

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[8] Wyndham Lewis, *Time and Western Man* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), p 137
[9] Ibid, p. 25
[10] Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Towards a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), p 3
[11] Wyndham Lewis, *Complete Wild Body*, ed. Bernard Lafourcade (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1982) p 354, my emphasis

any bridge, that, in certain forms of Laughter, we leap.'[12] The absurd, grotesque laughter allows us to bridge the gaps that logic can't, like mind and body, being and nothingness, body and soul, inner and outer, and so provides a sort of revelatory nature. Rabelaisian carnival and grotesque provides the mechanism through which this leap this taken. Grotesque laughter *is* the line that fixes the various states of fragmentation and bifurcation into a meaningful, stopped motion image that *can* be understood, and therefore transcended.

In the novel, laughter is very closely associated with the task of artistic production; at points the artwork is characterized as a long drawn-out spasm of laughter, and in other places Lewis labels laughter itself an artwork. Lewis writes in *The Wild Body* that 'the most gigantic spasm of laughter is sculptural, isolated, and essentially simple.'[13] This project breaks up the function of laughter in relation to the artwork (with the body being a very specific, and highly important, piece of artistic creation): firstly, the formation of the artwork in general and Lewis's stylistic literary production will be considered in terms of the various modernist fractures of subjectivity; secondly, the main guiding duality in *Tarr* of Art and Life will be discussed to highlight the body as spiritual creation; and lastly, Lewis's grotesque laughter and grotesque character bodies will be analyzed in order to approach the second guiding duality in *Tarr*, tragedy and humor.

David Peters Corbett and Hugh Kenner are perhaps the only critics to have studied at some length the significant link between Lewis's figuration in painting and the grotesque as associated with Renaissance carnival. Kenner defines the grotesque as 'an energy which aborts, as if to express its dissatisfaction with available boundaries;' we can see in the printing of the First Vorticist Manifesto and the cubist-lines of the Tyro that these boundaries are enforced by rigid black lines, and yet almost avoided and undermined through a splintering of forms.[14] Lewis himself recognized the parallels between his own writing and that describing the grotesque carnival, referring in 'A Soldier of Humour' to the 'medieval analogy.'[15] Indeed, *The Wild Body* is full of such grotesque, reconstituted bodies:

> Morton was by this time a little screwed: he showed signs that he might become difficult. He insisted on producing a packet of obscene photographs, which he held before him fan-wise, like a hand of cards, some of them upside down. The confused

[12] Wyndham Lewis, *Complete Wild Body*, ed. Bernard Lafourcade (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1982) p 157-158
[13] Wyndham Lewis, *Complete Wild Body*, ed. Bernard Lafourcade (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1982) p 151
[14] Hugh Kenner, *The Pound Era* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1971), p. 232
[15] Wyndham Lewis, *The Wild Body: A Soldier of Humour and Other Stories* (New York: Haskell House, 1970), p 42

> mass of bare legs and arms of the photographs, distorted by this method of holding them, with some highly indecent details occurring here and there, produced the effect of a siamese demon.[16]

Corbett points to the Tyro character that Lewis 'invented' in his portraiture in the early years of the 1920s, but fails to trace the grotesque body to Lewis's work before the War where Morton and his fellow creations had already been physically broken apart and reconstituted. Corbett does produce, however, a fascinating discussion of how the Tyro's grotesque grin stood in for the grief of the English after the War, and stood to ease and mask the immense mourning in those years, without exploring fully Lewis's birthing of the stylized Tyronic body.[17]

Tyros are always presented in a domestic setting (*Praxitella* is on a comfortable chair, the two Tyros in *The Reading of Ovid* are at a kitchen table) and are not engaged in any direct movement or action. Rather, they are caught in a twisted gesture at an odd moment, facing us, the spectator, with a malicious and scintillating grin. They represent psychic potential for emotion and not its realization. As I hope to show, in the broken, reformulated, grinning Tyro, Lewis merely aggregated all of the features of his early fiction; this 'new' figure combined the grotesquerie of Kreisler and the angled cubist styling of his earlier Vorticist writings of *BLAST* and *Tarr*, to produce an unconventional visual figuration. As the Tyro was birthed in the years of Lewis's writing of *Tarr*, the text seems to be a working-through of many issues relating to the grotesque and satire introduced in *The Wild Body*. The grin that obliterates, destroys, and rebuilds reality into a machine was already present in Anastasya, and Kreisler already was the objectified, comic body of the puppet personified by the Tyro.

The aggressive bared teeth are the primary feature of the Tyro, designed as monstrous, enlarged, vertically stretched human bodies that can rise above and supercede all other human forms: they are Lewis's Nietzschean Supermen. As this essay will show through the story of Kreisler and Tarr, the Tyros are Supermen because they possess the regenerative ability of laughter, the ability to rise above their essentially tragic existence and tragic characterizations. In Lewis's arguably most famous Tyro painting, *The Reading of Ovid*, the connection between Lewis's fictions of the period and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* becomes obvious: Lewis is subverting and manipulating the natural, raw surface of the body. In the manipulation of the body—the formation of the aestheticized body—lies the power to transcend the grief of the First World War, and more profoundly, the material and mortal nature of the body.

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[16] Ibid, p. 57

[17] David Peters Corbett, 'War and Wyndham Lewis's Tyros' in *Wyndham Lewis and Art of Modern War*, ed. David Peters Corbett (NY: Cambridge University Press, 1998)

## II. The Fragmentation of the Body and the Artwork

Conventional, or canonical, modernism resorts to a sort of psychical dissolution through solipsism and schizophrenic disillusion to deal with the fracture of the subject, which is then played out in the physical presentation of the text. Lewis takes a different stance, which relies upon an active and aggressive system of figuration. The canonical modernist hero or antihero is primarily internally fractured, whereas Lewis remains at an external viewpoint, resulting in a fracture that is experienced and viewed in the physical movements of his characters. He presents bodies that whirl through the text freely against an unstable rational environment. The active and aggressive system of figuration in *Tarr* signals perhaps the birth of the postmodern (or just a different modernism) through a stress on the production of bodies and texts, on the relationship between signifier and signified, in a predominantly discontinuous time-space world. In this way, Lewis questions issues of representation not only in modernism, but also the very idea of signification itself and the possibility of a coherent aesthetic ideology.

Lewis hinges on the line separating an inevitably referential realist language—unmediated representation—and the language of complete abstraction. In his 'intellectual autobiography,' *Rude Assignment*, Lewis states that during the Vorticist years 'it became evident to me at once…when I started to write a novel, that words and syntax were not susceptible of transformation into abstract terms, to which process the visual arts lent themselves quite readily. The coming of the war and the writing—at top speed—of a full-length novel ('Tarr') was the turning point. Writing—literature—dragged me out of the abstractist cul-de-sac.'[18] The numerous rewritings of *Tarr* before its eventual publication resulted in a stripping of the novel from its 'fleshly verbiage,' and it begins to stand on its own skeleton.[19] The nakedness of the literary 'flesh' is hardened into masculine prose, separated syntactically by the forceful insertion of the mechanical, mathematical '=.' The body is a plastic surface to be manipulated by the mechanical vision of the artist, and Lewis indeed molds the textual body at will. The novel began to take on what Lewis terms 'straightforward' language; however, with Lewis's penchant to incorporate invented German words into the text, it is difficult for us today to recognize this 'straightforward' language.[20] Abstraction ultimately leads to a dead-end both creatively and

[18] Wyndham Lewis, *Rude Assignment: An Intellectual Autobiography*, ed. Toby Foshay (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1984), p 139
[19] Wyndham Lewis, *Rude Assignment: An Intellectual Autobiography*, ed. Toby Foshay (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1984), p 139
[20] Ibid

intellectually, and forces Lewis to realize the differences between the art of the novel and the art of the painting. Although less visually abstract than *BLAST* or *Enemy of the Stars*, *Tarr* does still retain some abstract qualities, as will be proposed, with the '=' symbol. Lewis, in his writing of *Tarr*, did not particularly abstract the language itself (as in the novels of Beckett) but did have visual abstraction in mind.

Fredric Jameson characterizes world of *Tarr* as 'a world of fragments reorganized into active, anthropomorphic entities, an intermittent chaos of messages from all angles of space, an intolerable solicitation of shifting sub-involvements into which we are plunged up to the eyes.'[21] At the Bonnington Club dance in *Tarr*, things rush up and flit away rapidly, time is restructured to a point where it becomes irrelevant; Lewis takes the estrangement of the familiar to the extremes of laughter and humor. The events of the novel are presented to us in structural shells: dances, duals, contests, transactions, and so on. In a structured event, individuals unwittingly come into specific contact with one another, and the body cannot help hitting its boundaries as in a pinball machine. As Giovanni Cianci writes, 'in defiance of any purely utilitarian and purposive notion of corporality, he hurts the bodies into wild, violent rhythms, whipping then up into riotous, Dionysiac dance.'[22] In this way, Lewis's characters are not whole organic beings but each is an amalgamation of actors, in so far as the character *acts*: 'A group does not observe at all: it *acts*. That is how it thinks. To think is to be split up.'[23] There is then no single uniform self, but rather a series of interactions with the staged textual environment. The artwork, then, is a reordering of parts, a reconstituted shell that routinely dislocates the notion of character and unfastens pieces from the whole body, reflecting Lewis's statement in *BLAST 2* that art is 'not active; it cuts away and isolates. It takes men as it finds them, a particular material, and works on it.'[24]

Lewis's sentence production, as Jameson so aptly wrote, is presented as 'a symbolic act in its own right, an explosive and window-breaking *praxis* on the level of the words themselves.'[25] His odd word choice, invented German, and iconic use of the '=' symbol as punctuation eludes a syntactical hierarchy and presents sheer multiplicity. The heterogeneous forces at work in the text are forced to congeal into sentences, paragraphs, and texts as a *composition*, echoing the warring

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[21] Fredric Jameson, *Fables of Aggression: Wyndham Lewis, the Modernist as Fascist* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), p 45

[22] Giovanni Cianci, 'A Man at War: Lewis's Vital Geometries' in *Volcanic Heaven: Essays on Wyndham Lewis's Paintings and Writings* ed. Paul Edwards (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1996), pp. 11-24, p. 17

[23] Wyndham Lewis, *Rude Assignment: An Intellectual Autobiography*, ed. Toby Foshay (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1984), p 76

[24] Wyndham Lewis (Ed), *BLAST 2* (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1981), p 70

[25] Fredric Jameson, *Fables of Aggression: Wyndham Lewis, the Modernist as Fascist* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), p 8

planes and angles of cubism. Each sentence is presented as a visual collage of word-objects, and these compositions of transparent words can only create meaning by being shoved next to another transparent word. These visual word-collages were advanced by F.T. Marinetti, the leader of Italian Futurism; he wrote that 'the rush of steam-emotion will burst the sentence's steampipe, the valves of punctuation, and the adjectival clamp. Fistfuls of essential words in no conventional order. Sole preoccupation of the narrator, to render every vibration of his being.'[26] Language itself does not become merely a site of contestation, but rather the negotiation of these competing sites of meaning and achieve, in Marinetti's words, 'a marvelous synthesis and share.'[27]

The '=' symbol is not meant merely to fracture sentence structure, but rather sets up a new system of meaning and signification by setting up dual sentences; two sentences being jammed up against one another, conjoined by the symbol of equality, echoes the harnessing of dualities and opposites within the text. The 'marvelous synthesis' is achieved when the author uses these word-collages to 'render every vibration of his being:' in Lewis's case, this being is the bearer of dualities. The painterly relationship is the key to understanding the relationship between the levels of abstracted meaning in *Tarr*, as the artist regularly contemplates the relation between object perceived and eye, the object and the subject. This method of negotiating the word and the image recalls Lewis's statement in *Men Without Art* about the relationship between style and substance: 'It is *style* that checkmates subject-matter every time, and turns to naught the beauty-doctor laws of the metaphysician.'[28] It is through style—through the object—that the artist overcomes theoretical subjectivity in order to completely express his true inner emotions.

Lewis refused to accept wholesale Marinetti's slogans of automobilism and idolization of the machine-for-machine's-sake, refusing to leave nature altogether: 'Every living form is a miraculous mechanism…and every sanguinary, vicious and twisted need produces in Nature's workshops a series of mechanical arrangements extremely suggestive and interesting for the engineer, and almost invariably beautiful or interesting for the artist.'[29] The organic is not directly opposed to the machine, but rather has the potential to become its own machine of production. In *The Art of Being Ruled*, an important piece of philosophy and social criticism completed in 1926, his primary objection to Futurism was the strict dualism of machine and body, calling it 'a

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[26] FT Marinetti, '' in Umbro Apollonio (Ed.) *Futurist Manifestos* trans. Robert Brain et al (New York: Viking, 1973), p 98

[27] FT Marinetti, 'Geometric and Mechanical Splendor and the Numerical Sensibility,' in Umbro Apollonio (Ed.) *Futurist Manifestos* trans. Robert Brain et al (New York: Viking, 1973), p 154

[28] Wyndham Lewis, *Men Without Art*, ed. Seamus Cooney (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1987), p 85

[29] Wyndham Lewis, *The Soldier of Humour and Selected Writings* (New York: New American Library, 1966), p. 249

megalomaniac creation:' 'The essence of the Futurist form of thought is an accumulation on the *individual* of all the instruments of physiological extension of "interpenetrations" of which life is susceptible. But if we *control* a thing, it is *us*.'[30] The issue is not, then, so much the machine itself but rather the artistic control of the machine, and such 'machine-mindedness' is to be realized in the rhythm and word apposition rather than the mere mention of rivets and driving belts. The typographical emphasis in Lewis's novel attempts to establish a link between the machine and the textual body, a 'technology of *writing*' in Tim Armstrong's words.[31] Lewis controls the mechanical elements of language, maximizing the utility of punctuation, and in doing so controls the embodied text: he becomes its Maker and not just its author.

Futurism advocated a visual style emphasizing a temporally progressing changelessness through the representation of numerous states of the same object within the same picture plane: the simultaneous representation of an object. Simultaneity in literature was an expansion of Mallarmé's typographical emphasis, a poetic project meant to reflect the imagery invoked by the poem in the physical printing of its words. This is directly the 'visible lyricism' of Appollinaire, or in Poggioli's terms, 'a graphic-figurative correspondence between the manuscript or printed poem and the sense of imagery of that poem.'[32] The Futurist movement followed these lyrical poetics by waging war on syntax in order to free words; words could then blend in unexpected combinations, furthering their expressive power whilst revealing new strata of meaning previously ensnared in the various standardizations of language and grammar. Simultaneity literally meant 'the synthesis of *what one remembers* and of *what one sees*,' achieved by the scattering or breaking apart of objects and words within the artwork.[33] The Futurist simultaneity was most often portrayed in the visual arts in paintings of motion, the most famous of which being Giacomo Balla's *Dynamism of a Dog on a Leash* in which reality is shown as a series of still images, paralyzed and yet in motion. Tarr's artistic vision dismembers objects within time-space reality, and is coincidentally similar to Balla's: he sees reality like 'like the sanguine of an Italian master in which the leg is drawn in several positions.'[34] Poetic unity as achieved through disintegration is reaffirmed in Pound's Vorticist Manifestoes in *BLAST*, in which he regularly advocated a free verse, an artistic stance that was

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[30] Wyndham Lewis, *The Art of Being Ruled*, ed. Reed Way Dasenbrock (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1989), p 191

[31] Tim Armstrong, *Modernism, Technology, and the Body: A Cultural Study* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p 87

[32] Renato Poggioli, *The Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Gerald Fitzgerald (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), p 134

[33] Ibid, p. 47

[34] Wyndham Lewis, *Tarr: The 1918 Version*, ed. Paul O'Keefe (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1990), p 52

decided upon in conjunction with Lewis and his own break from traditional syntax and punctuation.

Kreisler's distinctive drawing of Bertha, the one piece of visual art that is completed within *Tarr*, parallels this simultaneity: 'She saw side by side and unconnected, the silent figure drawing her and the other one full of blindness and violence. Then there were two other figures, one getting up from the chair, yawning, and the present lazy one at the window—four in all, that she could not bring together somehow, each in a complete compartment of time of its own.'[35] The same imagery is to be found in Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase* (1912) and Lewis's own *Smiling Woman Descending a Stair* (1912). As Kreisler is drawing Bertha, he is described as:

> Nerves, brain and the whole body were still spinning and stunned, his muscles teeming with actions not finished, sharp, when the actions finished. He was still swamped and strung with violence. His sudden immobility, as he stood there, made the riot of movement and will rise to his brain like wine from a weak body. Satisfaction had, however, stilled everything except this tingling prolongation of action.[36]

It is this 'tingling prolongation of action' here that is fascinating in its simultaneous expansion and contraction of time and movement, an ambiguous image that recalls the clenched-but-still Vorticist moment. Although in *Tarr* Kreisler is essentially immobilized, Lewis's earlier fiction reflects the unending Futurist explosion of energy into a continuous multiplication of its subject. In *Enemy of the Stars*, he describes how a character gets up, 'whirling around without reason, like a dervish, with his ruined umbrellas shaken at arm's length.'[37] In *Tarr*, Lewis breaks the whirl into stop-images representing the final stage of the vortex, the apex of expressionistic energy and incisiveness.

Lewis's literary styling reflects Marinetti's linguistic collages in the consideration of the physical space of the narrative—how the words are positioned on the page—as just as important as its imaginative, referential, and symbolic aspects. In his linguistic collages of 1912, Marinetti varied punctuation, including the '=' symbol Lewis was to copy in *Tarr* and *BLAST*, to achieve 'geometrical and mechanical splendour' and to hasten 'the grotesque funeral of passéist Beauty.'[38] Lewis imagined Vorticism as responding to the hysterical nature of Futurist paintings, 'where momentum is dissipated in the shattering of forms and the explosion of volumes. Here [in Vorticism] by contrast, the energetic, dynamic, thrusting effect suggested by the diagonals of the

[35] Ibid, p 194
[36] Ibid, p 192
[37] Enemy of the Stars 283
[38] FT Marinetti, 'Geometric and Mechanical Splendor and the Numerical Sensibility,' in Umbro Apollonio (Ed.) *Futurist Manifestos* trans. Robert Brain et al (New York: Viking, 1973), p 154

Futurist lines of force is held in perpetual tension by the lines of which clearly delimit its boundaries.'[39] The boundaries—the '=' symbol and the harsh black outlines in his paintings—were meant to recontain and immobilize the intense energy of the work of art and create an arrested eruption of linguistic energy. As this analysis will show, these boundaries do not prevent against the irrational and instinctual, rather they enhance the absurdity of language.

The jarring, disturbing effect of Lewis's punctuation and syntax produce a sort of textual abstraction and represent the final stage of the vortex. There is some mechanical process through which the text becomes abstracted. As Lewis reflects in *Men Without Art*, 'art consists…in a *mechanizing* of the natural. It bestows its delightful discipline upon our aimless emotions: it puts its gentle order in the place of natural chaos: it substitutes for the direct image a picture.'[40] The natural, authentic reality is broken up into bits through language and perspective, and presented in its constituent parts. The abstract visual nature of Lewis's writing relates to his adherence to Schopenhauer's conception of art, rather than Bergson's more popularized notions of artistic duration. In one of his essays dealing with the Tyro, 'Essay on the Object of Plastic Art in Our Time,' Lewis quotes Schopenhauer:

> While science, following the unresting and inconstant stream of the fourfold forms of reason and consequent, with each end attained sees further, can never reach a final goal nor attain full satisfaction, any more than by running we can reach the place where the clouds touch the horizon; art, on the contrary, is everywhere at its goal. For it *plucks* the object of its contemplation out of the stream of the world's course, and has it isolated before it.[41] (my emphasis)

Art for Schopenhauer pauses at a particular thing and 'plucks' it out of the course of time into the stilled vortex of artistic non-temporality. Lewis adapts Schopenhauer's 'plucking' to counter the canonical Modernist convention of Bergsonian impressionism: 'The object…is plucked so far as will enable it to breath and live…the "plucking" consists in *abstracting* it. When it has been abstracted it is not quite what it was in the stream. It is always a *different* thing…yet, it is that particular thing, still, that it was in the stream.'[42]

It is not the subjective stream of things that is important for Lewis, as it was for Woolf and Joyce, but rather the extraction of the identity of one object. One needs only to open *Tarr* to any

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[39] Giovanni Cianci, 'A Man at War: Lewis's Vital Geometries' in *Volcanic Heaven: Essays on Wyndham Lewis's Paintings and Writings*, ed. Paul Edwards (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1996), pp. 11-24, p 17

[40] Wyndham Lewis, *Men Without Art*, ed. Seamus Cooney (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1987), p 129

[41] Schopenhauer qtd in Wyndham Lewis's 'Essay on the Objective of Plastic Art in Our Time' in *Wyndham Lewis on Art: Collected Writings 1913-1956*, Eds Walter Michel and CJ Fox (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1969), p 208

[42] Ibid, p. 212

given page to find numerous examples of the effects of this abstracted sentencing; for instance, the first page reads:

> The Knackfus Quarter is given up to Art. =Letters and other things are round the corner. =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 Boulevard Pfeifer 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.[43]

The sectioned off, curt sentences sometimes do flow into one another and would progress logically without the '=,' however, the jarring punctuation splits sentences off from one another. His breaking up and sectioning off of words within paragraphs enacts a breaking apart of the body of the text; detaching and segregating parts of the body become central to Lewis's literary art.

The cutting up of the literary body (both in the text on the level of meaning and appearance) parallels the progressive invention of the Tyro in Lewis's painting; as Corbett writes, 'the melting of the public faces into tears of agony is displaced by the metallic hardness of a false and hysteric calm.'[44] The English post-war feeling of immense grief and suffering make up these 'public faces,' which Lewis transforms into a 'metallic' stillness, an agon of rigidity and silence. This 'calm' is manufactured and contrived, and as a system of figuration some machine of production (some *design*) guides its creation. Wees found evidence that Lewis himself echoed his writing style: when speaking, he would break his sentences into stiff and formally pronounced phrases separated by impressive pauses.[45] This self-fashioning as the 'masculine artist' seems to serve as a protective shell against the social and political situation of those years, and as such is not a persona that entirely 'plucks' him from the social milieu, but rather is situated in a dialogue with post-World War I Europe.

His imagistic style symbolizes a fight against the totality and unity of reality; the fragmentation of sentences leads not to the creation of a hierarchical universe, nor does it foster the sense of social comprehensiveness characteristic of realism. In *Tarr*, the stripping down of adjectives and a revisioning of punctuation was in effect a war waged on the emasculating parts of speech that blunted the force of language. In *The Art of Being Ruled*, Lewis wrote that 'hatred of the *word* goes hand in hand with hatred of the intellect, for the *word* is, of course, its sign.

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[43] Wyndham Lewis, *Tarr: The 1918 Version*, ed. Paul O'Keefe (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1990), p 21

[44] David Peters Corbett, 'War and Wyndham Lewis's Tyros' in *Wyndham Lewis and the Art of Modern War* ed. David Peters Corbett (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998) p 115

[45] William Wees, *Vorticism and the English Avant-Garde* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972) p 145-146

Language is one of the things to be broken up—a stammer, a hiatus, an ellipsis, a syncope, a hiccup, is installed in the midst of the verb, and the mind attacked through its instrument.'[46] This 'hiccup' is a willful breaking apart of language forms in order to unfetter meaning and expression—albeit only masculine expression—through the use of parataxis, the '=' symbol. In pre-Revolution Russia, the satirist Eugeni Zamyatin's manifesto advocates parataxis, stating that 'syntax becomes elliptical, volatile: complicated pyramids of periods are dismantled and broken down into the single stones of independent clauses'.[47] In these early years, Lewis is writing in 'independent clauses,' phrases that were meant to stand alone and form elliptical prose movements.

When Bertha announces that she is pregnant, the moment is emphasized physically in the text as a moment of separation with black bars blocking up the page. The narrative refuses to textualize the event and place it within the general flow of sentences: 'This event rose up in opposition to the night [Tarr] had just spent, his new promises and hope of swagger sex in the future. =He was beaten. | "Whose child is it?" | "Kreisler's."'[48] These malicious black lines break up the linearity of the text, physically disjointing the reading experience and the temporal plot structure. Lewis prevents us from overcoming his style in order to sort out the narrative into a linear stream with meaningful actions that follow a causal course.

Internal mysteries are subordinated to external mysteries, as Lewis's brand of modernism entails a persistence on seeing as the only method to situate the self in the environment and decipher the clues of meaning. As critic Alistair Davies warns, 'we must not attribute to Tarr that inner spiritual depth, that moment of tragic insight…with which classical or Christian fiction concludes…We understand him, from his appearance, from his surface, as a true Self, who has been able to…surmount the banality and inauthenticity of the culture which surrounds him.'[49] Lewis's external approach to writing relies on the eye rather than the more emotional organs of sense and cognition, and forces characters like Tarr to be defined by shifting appearances rather than emotions. However, his treatment of Kreisler allows for a tragic meaning to be found in his shifting appearances, and it is the same tragic meaning Lewis infused in his Tyro paintings. As

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[46] Wyndham Lewis, *The Art of Being Ruled*, ed. Reed Way Dasenbrock (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1989), p 339

[47] Eugeni Zamyatin, 'On Literature, Revolution, and Entropy' in *The Idea of the Modern in Literature and the Arts* ed. Irving Howe (New York: Horizon Press, 1967), p. 178

[48] Wyndham Lewis, *Tarr: The 1918 Version*, ed. Paul O'Keefe (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1990), p 311

[49] Alistair Davies, '*Tarr*: A Nietzschean Novel.' in *Wyndham Lewis: A Revaluation*, ed Jeffrey Meyers (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1980), pp. 107-119, p. 118

Lewis bellows in *Men Without Art*, 'I am for the Great Without, for the method of *external* approach—for the wisdom of the eye, rather than that of the ear.'[50]

The 'wisdom of the eye' renders people into things quite comically: to look around and see not scheming, quarreling, untrustworthy human beings but simply a collection of objects reading, walking, and talking. The work of art, to Lewis, is fundamentally precious because it is an object, beyond any human division. The art object draws its special power from the fact that of all things it seems the most intimately entangled with subjectivity, and becomes itself when, in spite of its manufacture by humans, it seems as remote and distant as any other thing. This, in turn, reminds us of how different, strange, and powerful the quiet of the material world is, and yet how easy it is to become part of that world of objects. Artistic vision is for Lewis a process of establishing meaning in the quiet world of objects by rendering *all* an object. It is the objectified knowledge of others—external knowledge—that is given preference in this world. The comic transformation of bodies in *Tarr* into purely external shells, the 'Personal Appearance Artists,' completes Lewis's assertion that 'every time we open our eyes we envelop the world before us, and give it *body*, or its quality consisting of *objects*.'[51] We break up the exterior world into objects by differentiating matter visually and erecting our own bracketing '=.' In doing so, we weave a network of exteriority *within* ourselves through self-definition by affinity to these objects. This constant interplay between the external objects and their reflection in the shaping of the self creates a world in which 'we live in a zone midway between things and ourselves, externally to things, externally also to ourselves.'[52]

The persistence of externality in the novel probes, as Elizabeth Grosz has written, the problematical process of establishing subjectivity and objectivity:

> The epistemological value of sight is based on the clarity and precision of the images of which it is composed. An image, traditionally, has three characteristics: it presents a manifold field or set of events in terms of simultaneity (it is the only non-temporal or synchronic sense); it functions at a distance, setting up a space or field between the seer and the seen, the physical and the psychical; and it does not imply or presume causality (because the other senses are momentary and occasioned by events, vision is ongoing and need not be focused or caused by any object).[53]

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[50] Wyndham Lewis, *Men Without Art*, ed. Seamus Cooney (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1987), p 105

[51] Wyndham Lewis, *Time and Western Man* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), p 394; 'Personal Appearance Artist' is a phrase Lewis used to describe himself in *Men Without Art*

[52] Henri Bergson, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, trans. Cloudesley Brereton and Fred Rothwell (New York: Macmillan, 1911), p 154

[53] Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Towards a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), p 97

Grosz argues that the body is then amenable to being invested with meaning because sight provides, scientifically, 'the raw elements, the data necessary for the production of knowledge.'[54] Lewis's external viewpoint relies upon visual acuity in order to set up characterizations and even words themselves on the level of the text, and ultimately, according to Grosz, is a simplification of the relationship between world and body. If there is meaningful contact in the novel, it is contact that ruptures systems of individuality and society instead of building them. This contact is not the flowing, continual, impressionistic experience that Grosz ascribes to the nature of vision, but rather it is the visual contact with one specific frozen image, one frozen body. Lewis's characters are primarily described in the narrative by their visible actions and expressions—which do not necessarily reflect inner psyche—and ultimately, by the state of their *skin* or *shell*. Grosz describes the skin as 'the ground for the articulation of orifices, erotogenic rims, cuts on the body's surface, loci of exchange between the inside and the outside, points of conversion of the outside into the body, and of the inside out of the body,' as the site of all physical experience. The skin is the no-man's-land between the inner mechanized body and the external world, and is the means by which others can visually establish the image of the body as a complete entity.

The first condition for survival in Lewis's thought, like the first condition of art, is a certain degree of artificiality in the building up of one's own protective 'skin' or persona. The 'true' nature of life and emotion, he believed, was the real danger. The geometric, static, and reverberate forms in his paintings and writings reflect this quality, as they are primarily constructions: 'If the actor himself ceases to *act*, and *lived* his acting, he would then be purging himself. He would soon cease, if he *acted* or *lived* at any considerable pitch of emotion, either to act or live any more.'[55] The definition of the self is based upon these acts, the immobile façades of characterization that the body springs into action, instead of embodying a deeply spiritual self-knowledge. Although Lewis maintains a sharp distinction between Art and Life—as will be critiqued further—this theory of character façade does parallel Tarr's theory of art based upon such '*deadness*:'

> *Deadness* is the first condition of art. A hipopotamus' armoured hide, a turtle's shell, feathers or machinery on the one hand; *that* opposed to naked pulsing and moving of the soft inside of life, along with infinite elasticity and consciousness of movement, on the other…The second is absence of *soul*, in the sentimental human sense. The lines and masses of the statue are its soul…It has no inside…Instead, then, of being something

[54] Ibid, p 97

[55] Wyndham Lewis, *The Art of Being Ruled*, ed. Reed Way Dasenbrock (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1989), p 108

> impelled like an independent machine by a little egoistic fire inside, it lives soullessly and deadly by its frontal lines and masses.[56]

This '*deadness*' is constructed by the plucking of the thing from its contextual life; it is a process of producing a series of synecdoche ('the armoured hide of the hippopotamus, the shell of the tortoise, feathers and machinery') that ultimately abstracts the piece from the whole and renders it an *object*. The constructed shells created through the guise of synecdoche become the language of bodily movement, and as such, the gesturing machine becomes primary.

Although art, and the characters by proxy, exists 'soullessly and deadly by its frontal lines and masses,' there is still the possibility of delving into its soul to discover the guiding principle behind creation. Lewis does sometimes afford this possibility, as when Kreisler is gazing at Anastasya:

> She held all the imagery of a perfect world. =There was no pathos anywhere in her form…The upper part of her head was massive and intelligent. The middle of her body was massive and exciting. There was no animalism-out-of-place in the shape of a weight of jaw. The weight was in the head and hips. =But was this not a complete thing by itself?[57]

Anastasya is at once dissected into bodily planes and shapes, and yet, she is capable of being seen as 'a complete thing by itself.' The geometric lines of the bodily image *can* be regarded as a whole with a coherent, 'complete' meaning beneath and aside from its initial '*deadness*.' The fragmentation and abstraction of the body within the artwork contains the possibility for unity.

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[56] Ibid, p. 299-300

[57] Wyndham Lewis, *Tarr: The 1918 Version*, ed. Paul O'Keefe (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1990), p 300-301

## III. Art versus Life: Tarr and the Production of the Exterior Body

Goethe separated people into two species: puppets, the machine-like majority of men, and natures, the individuals capable of transcending their mechanistic bodies. Dostoyevsky, whom Lewis cites in *Rude Assignment* as one of his key influences in the writing of *Tarr*, separated the same two groups into the ordinary and the extraordinary. In *The Art of Being Ruled* Lewis explains, 'today there are, in fact, two species and worlds, which incessantly interfere with each other, checkmate each other, are externally at cross purposes. They speak the same language…but they do not understand each other.'[58] Communication between the puppets and natures—Crowd and Individual in Lewis's terminology—is impossible because of an insurmountable gap between the two worlds, but natures are however dangerously attracted by the puppets, 'owing to the development of machinery, the pressure on the "natures" increases. We are *all* slipping back into machinery, because we *all* have tried to be free.'[59] The machine analogy unites the two worlds of puppets and natures within the modern world, and forms a definite stance from which critics, like Tim Armstrong, can unite and analyze the concerns of the various Modernist literary movements.

This section is a study of Tarr, whom Lewis fashions as an Individual, in light of his artistic and social reliance on forms and appearances in the process of individuation. His character has often been read as an adolescent or Dandy figure, in an attempt to correlate his artistic unproductiveness through the course of the novel and his sexual ineffectiveness. Although both of these possibilities (the adolescent and Dandy) will be addressed, the primary interest in Tarr for this study is his reliance on the physical, material body as *just* that. As Toby Avard Foshay has written, 'marked by the alienation of intellect from the senses, Tarr is estranged from his own deeper creative will.'[60] He is an unproductive artist because he is incapable of expressing himself outside of the realm of appearances; he fashions his body as to appear as the Individual, and in doing so becomes the straight man of this decidedly comic-tragic novel. As will be discussed in the upcoming sections, imagination and creativity is only accessible through laughter and comic tragedy: 'Comedy being always the embryo of Tragedy, the director nature weeps.'[61] For Tarr,

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[58] Wyndham Lewis, *The Art of Being Ruled*, ed. Reed Way Dasenbrock (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1989), p 125

[59] Ibid

[60] Toby Avard Foshay, *Wyndham Lewis and the Avant-Garde: The Politics of the Intellect* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992), p 57

[61] Wyndham Lewis, *Tarr: The 1918 Version*, ed. Paul O'Keefe (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1990), p 68

laughter is a 'retrogression,' and 'must be given up,' leading to his artistic ineffectiveness and failure to individuate.[62]

The Art / Life dichotomy that structures *BLAST* is presented here as an agon, with sex being the defining characteristic of Life; Kreisler wants to 'get out of Art and back into Life…more exact[ly] *back into sex*' whereas Tarr attempts to detract Life in order to become a better painter, because he believes that 'with most people, not describable as artists, all the finer part of their vitality goes into sex.[63] The Art / Life dichotomy results in the same pitfalls as all dualisms: this bifurcation infers that the two categories are irreducible and incompatible, whereas in truth they arise out of one another and cannot exist without the other. Tarr avoids Life and tries to avoid sex as well, although he cannot become complete in doing so because he fails to resolve the debate between detachment and sensual immediacy.[64] The Art / Life dichotomy is conflated within the novel through the contact of characters who remain in either domain: as Tarr comes into contact with Kreisler and Bertha, it is almost as if Art and Life themselves clash. In his essay 'Dean with a Swift Brush: The Tyroist Explains his Art,' Lewis writes that he wants to 'bring back art into touch with life—but it won't be the way of the academician.'[65]

In the opening stages of the novel, Tarr tries to break off his relationship with Bertha in quite a mechanical manner, treating the situation like an overly organized business meeting. His failure in actually leaving Bertha seems to be due to his inability to actively negotiate detachment and sex, and indeed the scene begins with a 'mirage,' a confusion of immanent perception: 'The leaden brilliant green of spring foliage hung above him, ticketing innumerably the trees, sulky smoke volumes from factories in Fairyland. Its novelty, fresh yet dead, had the effectiveness of an unnecessary mirage. The charm of habit and monotony he had come to affront seemed to have coloured, chemically, these approaches to its home.'[66] The mechanical coolness with which he greets Bertha extracts him from viewing the world as it is, placing him within his own inescapable subjective reality. Tarr attempts to form his body to *be* him, through a series of molded appearances, and in doing so becomes 'overintellectualized,' in Jameson's words, and ultimately succumbs to the 'invincible power of sex.'

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[62] Ibid
[63] Ibid, p 302, 29
[64] Fredric Jameson, *Fables of Aggression: Wyndham Lewis, the Modernist as Fascist* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), p 88
[65] Wyndham Lewis, *Complete Wild Body*, ed. Bernard Lafourcade (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1982) p 359
[66] Ibid, p 51

As Tarr attempts to leave Sex (intended sensuality) and enter into Life, he is faced with negotiating Life by instinct—unconsciously—alone rather than by will. However, he is incapable of acting on pure instinct because he is too concerned with pure artistic imagination and will; his subordination of the material body (the realm of Sex) to the imaginative body (the realm of intellectual Life) renders his ineffectual in action. According to Bergson, the mind cannot simultaneously conceive of and perform an action; therefore action always has to be instinctive.[67] In the formation and conception of the artwork—as in the formation of the body—the artistic will must be instinctually enacted, and as Lewis wrote in 'Long Live the Vortex!,' art depends upon intuitive and not manufactured production:

> We want to leave Nature and Men alone.
> We don't want to make people wear Futurist Patches, or fuss men to take to pink and sky-blue trousers.
> We are not their wives or tailors.
> The only way Humanity can help artists is to remain independent and work unconsciously.
> WE NEED THE UNCONSCIOUSNESS OF HUMANITY—their stupidity, animalism, dreams.[68]

The swing of material and soul, conscious and unconscious, Life and Art, is played out in the formation of the artwork, and Lewis's primary interest in the world of forms and his self-presentation as the 'Personal-Appearance Artist' in *Men Without Art* negotiates the boundaries of these dualities. He is able to reconcile action (the instinct) with the conscience (purposive acts) through the imagination, but his inability to artistically create inhibits an easy merger of the mind and body.

Tarr's life is a complex series of oscillations between possibility and failed will, which ultimately leads to a general feeling of queasy loneliness: 'Nausea…Sex surged up and martyred him, but he held it down rather than satisfy himself.'[69] The novel ends not by Tarr empowered and rising above the bourgeois body (which is based in Life), but rather with an incompleteness, which Tarr recognizes in saying 'I'm the new animal, we haven't found a name for it yet. It will succeed the Superman. Back to the Earth!'[70] Tarr, in attempting to cast off the 'husk and armour' of clichéd character types, shows that the resulting appearance of this system of self-fashioning *must* be an

[67] Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. Arthur Mitchell (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1975)
[68] Wyndham Lewis (Ed), 'Long Live the Vortex!' in *BLAST 1* (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1981), p 7
[69] Wyndham Lewis, *Tarr: The 1918 Version*, ed. Paul O'Keefe (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1990), p 207
[70] Ibid, p 307

original piece of art and not merely an 'armature.'[71] The ability to reshape and re-present the natural body through a predominantly mechanical process, like the addition of clothing, is essentially an aestheticizing and mechanizing of the body. This aestheticizing of the body affirms Lewis's statement that 'art consists…in a *mechanizing* of the natural. It bestows its delightful discipline upon our aimless emotions: it puts its gentle order in place of natural chaos: it substitutes for the direct image a picture.'[72] This mechanizing of art is not akin to factory lines and piston rods, rather it is the process of establishing identity through a privileging of certain aspects of the persona, thus forming synecdoches of the unified human personality.

Tarr proclaims that the 'first creation is *the Artist* himself. That is, a new sort of person: the creative man.'[73] From here, the parallels with the theatrical, performative personality of the dandy figure are unproblematic. In the preface to the novel, Lewis proclaims that Tarr is his 'showman,' and according to Christine Hardegen, 'in *Tarr* all of life seems to be staged.'[74] This discussion of the dandy must first be cautioned: Tarr is not the dandy as it has come to be understood in the twentieth-century after the emergence of homosexual subcultures, rather its theatrical nature is to be treated as molded appearance and not as a connotation of a specific sexuality. Jessica Feldman describes to the dandy as 'an artificial, polished surface—cultural arrangements—announced as primary, as constitutive of self. I am what I choose to be.'[75] However, the Dandy is not all surface. He holds the possibility of subverting the materialist, prescriptive body by denying a biological determinism of the self; self-identification is achieved by treating the body as a raw surface, not as a preconditioned biological thing. In this way, he is complex and dualistic: 'military in bearing and discipline, the dandy is also fragile and whimsical as a butterfly,' and constantly vacillates between the two gendered constructions of the body in a persistent state of becoming.[76]

The process of self-creation signals Bergson's idea of the élan vital, the creative, spontaneous impulse that created the universe and exists as an ongoing process. The agon is between the creative impulse to perpetually refashion the body and the inert dead mass of the material body: 'The impetus of life…consists in a need of creation. It cannot create absolutely, because it is confronted with matter, that is to say, with the movement that is the reverse of its

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[71] Ibid, p 42
[72] Wyndham Lewis, *Men Without Art*, ed. Seamus Cooney (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1987), p 129
[73] Wyndham Lewis, *Tarr: The 1918 Version*, ed. Paul O'Keefe (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1990), p 29
[74] Christine Hardegen, 'Actors and spectators in the theatre of war: Wyndham Lewis's First World War art and literature,' in *Wyndham Lewis and the Art of Modern War* Ed. David Peters Corbett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p 68 (article is pp. 58-77)
[75] Jessica Feldman, *Gender on the Divide* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), p 13
[76] Ibid, p 3

own. But it seizes upon this matter, which is necessity itself, and strives to introduce into it the largest possible amount of indetermination and liberty.'[77] There is a constant tension between the dynamic and static, intelligence and intuition, matter and spirit in such creation. Tarr's appearance—his bodily shell—suggests this tension between the dynamic and the static, matter and spirit:

> A man is always his *last* appetite, or his appetite before last; and that is no longer an appetite. =But nobody *is* anything, or life would be intolerable, the human race collapse. =You are me, I am you. =The Present is the further projection of our steady appetite. Imagination, like a General, keeps behind. Imagination is the man.[78]

Creative force drives progression through a constant regeneration of 'appetite,' or will. Tarr's own bodily perception and formation (with 'screaming leaps from idea to idea') is encased in a series of Vorticist stop-motion appearances, as a procession of present forms and impulses become immobilized into the past like a string of paper dolls.[79]

Tarr conceives of art as a baby birthed from the gap between the material and the imagination, and art begins to exemplify a possible bridge between the élan vital and dead masses. Through the élan vital Tarr states that 'Flaubert built up his Bouvard et Pécuchet with maniacal and tireless hands. It took him ten years. That was a long draught of stodgy laughter from the gases that rise from the dung-heap? He had an appetite like an elephant for this form of mirth.'[80] The work of art is an immobilization of the 'steady appetite.' Flaubert's laughter becomes *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, and the process of writing is presented as a drawn-out act of imagination accessed and performed through laughter. Lewis reminds us that the act of artistic creation is equally an act of the imagination and the body:

> A complicated image developed in his mind as he stood with her. 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. The baby was apt to swell. She then became *all* baby. The hush 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.[81]

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[77] Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. Arthur Mitchell (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1975), p 274
[78] Wyndham Lewis, *Tarr: The 1918 Version*, ed. Paul O'Keefe (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1990), p 26
[79] Ibid, p 43
[80] Ibid, p 26
[81] Ibid, p 58

These nesting identities within this conception of the bodily outer shell resemble the weakness of Lewis's philosophical spatialization, as it is a world breathlessly reborn every second, yet constantly stillborn: 'There is such and such a thing, or person, one moment, then it ceases to be.'[82] Tarr's body is stillborn in its Vorticist flux at every moment, and its perpetual reinvention never achieves the goal Lewis sets it: the spiritual beyond of the Individual. He remains the 'lonely phallus.' Geoffrey Gilbert associates this lonely sexuality, the 'lonely phallus,' with something 'strangely masturbatory' due to some psychoanalytic repression.[83] This reading seems to divert attention away from the physicality of the descriptions of Tarr, substituting psychoanalysis for materialism instead of negotiating the two. The act of Tarr's sex violently emerging—as it 'surged up'—is the violent sudden recognition of the body as a strange and disordered thing, not merely an adolescent fiddling.[84] Tarr is presented as an artist in the process of becoming the Individual, the uncommon artistic hermit-genius. Gilbert's reading instead suggests that Tarr *is* an adolescent, that his achievement of Individual-status is hindered by immaturity. This reading lends Tarr a solidity of personality that he does not possess: it infers that Tarr is merely on the path to mature wholeness, he is just at a different level of development. Rather, he is always in a stopped-image performance of wholeness, and these images are necessarily fleeting. This is not a sign of mental or sexual immaturity, as the progression of stilled personas suggests that each one temporally follows the last (the 'steady appetite') but do not every hierarchically progress towards maturity. They are, instead, nesting cases, and the only possibility for transcending these 'mummy cases' is to discover the 'kernel,' the painting that would unite the inner creative spirit with the layers of external unconscious action.

The masculine body in Lewis's work is not presented as a stage of gendered and sexual maturity, but rather it is a state of stasis and form in opposition to the feminine flux and formlessness. The masculine stasis is exemplified by the Vorticist stop-motion Tyronic body. Lewis's objection to Futurism can be rethought, then, to mean that the Futurist explosion of energy was essentially feminine, whilst his Vorticist bracketing masculinizes. If feminine is negatively characterized by formlessness, then the opposite, positive term is not the masculine, but rather art and its power to stabilize and freeze forms. Lewis conceived of art as dead, inorganic matter that comes alive under the touch of the artist; the dead feminine formless marble is shaped into a meaningful and static form.

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[82] Wyndham Lewis, *Time and Western Man* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), p 394

[83] Gilbert, Geoffrey. 'Intestinal Violence: Wyndham Lewis and the Critical Poetics of the Modernist Career.' *Critical Quarterly* 36(3) 1994 pp 86-125

[84] Wyndham Lewis, *Tarr: The 1918 Version*, ed. Paul O'Keefe (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1990), p 207

The gendered body is a site of artistic creation, where antinomies such as feminine and masculine can be played out. At dinner, when Anastasya first meets Kreisler, she is depicted as 'a traveling circus of tricks and wonders, beauty shows and monstrosities. Quite used to being looked at, she had become resigned to inability to avoid performing. She possessed the geniality of public character and the genius of sex.'[85] From such statements critics have labeled Lewis's work as openly and unbearably misogynistic. Jameson offers a better appraisal of Lewis's logic of sex, stating that 'the peculiarity of his sexual ideology is that, while openly misogynistic, and sexist in the obvious senses of the word, it is not for all that phallocentric.'[86] It is not phallocentric for the express reason that the feminine is seen as the raw bodily material out of which the masculine forms itself and *then* becomes distinguished. This becomes clear when reading Lewis's description of Tarr's sentiments towards sex:

> Woman and the sexual sphere seemed to him to be an average from which *everything* came: from it everything rose, or attempted to rise. =There was no mysterious opposition extending up into Heaven, dividing Heavenly Beings into Gods and Goddesses. There was only one God, and he was a man. =A woman was a lower form of life. Everything was female to begin with. A jellyfish diffuseness spread itself and gaped on the beds and in the bas-fonds of everything. Above a certain level of life sex disappeared, just as in highly organized sensualism sex vanishes.[87]

The connection of 'woman and the sexual sphere' throughout Lewis's fictions and critical writings offers the assumption that masculinity is hegemonic and therefore invisible to 'sex,' yet the 'renunciation of sex, and its hollow and onerous privileges, is not the unlikeliest road to a relatively free human condition.'[88]

Gilbert's classification of Tarr's body as adolescent seems to ignore Lewis's own branding of him as the masculine artist responding to the 'new' meanings of masculinity:

> The sex distinction has become very much diminished. A period of sex-fusion having set in, sex *qua* sex has lost its importance. Few well-dressed men today could derive any advertisement or advantage from being "manly." Few well-dressed women are required to be "womanly." It is not on the sex-contrast, in short, that success depends in the social context of life, either for a man or a woman, but rather the contrary. A manly

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[85] Ibid, p 100

[86] Fredric Jameson, *Fables of Aggression: Wyndham Lewis, the Modernist as Fascist* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), p 97

[87] Wyndham Lewis, *Tarr: The 1918 Version*, ed. Paul O'Keefe (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1990), p 313-314

[88] Wyndham Lewis, *Creatures of Habit and Creatures of Change: Essays on Art, Literature and Society 1914-1956*, ed. Paul Edwards (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1989), p 127

> man today (the cave-man or policeman) is confined to the vast underworld of the artisan, footballer, and possibly clerk. Anywhere else his rôle is that of a clown.[89]

The 'jellyfish diffuseness' is not adolescence, but rather is the feminine 'meaningless average' that Tarr speaks of earlier in the text, which forms the base materials from which masculinity is cultivated.[90] Sex is non-differentiated; it is no longer masculine versus feminine, but both categories are ultimately reducible to one another in Lewis's philosophy. The designation of the birth of art as an 'astral baby' means that artistic impulses spring from and overpower the feminine, affirming Alistair Davies's comment that 'the artist confronts and surmounts Death and Nothingness through the masculine powers of formation and creativity.'[91] Even Tarr's own body appears to be made of formless, mortal substances, and through a shaping of this raw material he fashions his masculine body: 'A strange figure occurred to him; he felt like a man, with all organs, bones, tissues complete, but made of cheap perishable stuff, who could only live for a day, and then die of use.'[92] Tarr's ineffectuality when it comes to sex relations is not due to an adolescent temperament, but rather that his own sexual body is constantly being reconditioned out of the 'jellyfish diffuseness' into a masculinity.

The process of establishing identity through a series of nesting 'mummy case[s]' out of the feminine raw flux echoes the Vorticist procedure of bracketing simultaneity. These successive shells of persona allow for a constant renewal of the body, thereby denying any sort of categorization or 'natural' and coherent identity. These shells will always be visualized as distinct steps, or layers, each in constant static mutation. The body is not seen as an unchanging entity, but rather a material thing that shifts through time with the *appearance* of unchangingness: the body is always in the act of staging the illusion of coherence. This illusion is the product of Tarr's conception of his body as a piece of art, which is 'identical with the idea of permanence. It is a continuity and not an individual spasm. Life is the idea of the person.'[93] The theatricality and performative nature of the body of the Individual lends itself to an analogy with the flame:

> As a burning candle, the permanence of the flame is a permanence, not of substance but of process in which at each moment the 'body' with its 'structure' of inner and outer layers is reconstituted of materials different from the previous and following ones so the

[89] Ibid, 101
[90] Wyndham Lewis, *Tarr: The 1918 Version*, ed. Paul O'Keefe (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1990), p 27
[91] Alistair Davies, '*Tarr*: A Nietzschean Novel.' in *Wyndham Lewis: A Revaluation*, ed Jeffrey Meyers (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1980), pp. 107-119, p. 117
[92] Ibid, p 122-123
[93] Ibid, p 299

> living organism exists as a constant exchange of its own constituents and has its permanence and identity in the continuity of this process.[94]

Our perception of the body, like the flame, is constantly shifting form, and yet being in the world among others seems to require an attempt at a consistent identity. Lewis conceives of art and the body as existing 'soullessly and deadly by its frontal lines and masses,' but like the flame these 'frontal masses' are relentlessly morphing into new creations. Only the expression of its inner spirit, its identity as a flame, remains fixed. In the journal *Egoist*, John Cournos utilizes an analogy with the automobile to illuminate the interaction between inner spirit (interpretation) and outer appearance (representation): the automobile is an organized body that retains its individuality and appearance no matter what speed it is traveling.[95] As the Appearance Artist, Tarr's body is immobilized into an 'organized' body of sorts, reappearing at different temporal points in the same form. Tarr conceives of art as an impermanent thing, an 'astral baby' that will swell and change shape. The living body and art undergo a sort of death at every moment, and like the flame is rebuilt and restructured: 'It is the God, or soul, we say, of the man. It always has existed, if it is a true statue…Death means the perpetual extinction of impertinent sparks. But it is the key to life.'[96]

The realization of appearance allows us to forge what Lewis termed the 'only terra firma in a boiling and shifting world,' the self which 'must cohere for us to be capable at all of behaving in any way but as mirror-images of alien realities, or as the most helpless and lowest organisms, as worms or sponges.'[97] The sort of ideal self-knowledge Tarr is liable to achieve is that of his 'kernel,' painting; because Tarr never addresses the spirit of his 'kernel,' he is lingering on the surface of all of his accumulating shells of identity instead of realizing the inner, 'true' self. Tarr remains 'mirror-images of alien realities,' as he attempts self-definition in opposition to others. Tarr is defined in the novel quite explicitly in opposition to Bertha and Kreisler, as he is not-woman and not-failed-artist; he is meant to be the 'masculine artist' who stands in for the work of art. He *attempts* to become the Individual, who 'in addition to being anti-natural, is anti-traditional, anti-physical (which is included no doubt in being anti-natural), anti-realist: is anti-historic (no

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[94] Hans Jonas, 'Spinoza and the Theory of Organism,' in *The Philosophy of the Body: Rejections of Cartesian Dualism*, Ed. Stuart F. Spicker (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1970), p. 55

[95] John Cournos, 'Gaudier-Brzeska's Art' *Egoist* Sept 1 1915, 2(9), p 137-138

[96] Wyndham Lewis, *Tarr: The 1918 Version*, ed. Paul O'Keefe (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1990), p 298

[97] Wyndham Lewis, *Time and Western Man* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), p 136

respect for time), and in conclusion, unsympathetic to the ordinary hearty specimen of humanity, who is of course too near to nature to suit him.'[98]

In the first part of the novel, we are introduced to Tarr as he engages in a polemical, ideological battle with Hobson, and this early characterization in opposition to Hobson informs his actions throughout the text. Tarr remains a 'gray mixture' as he attempts personal growth and movement by bouncing off the personalities of acquaintances: 'Tarr had a way of beginning a reply with a parrot-like echo of the words of the other party to the dialogue; also of repeating *sotto voce* one of his own sentences, a mechanical rattle following on without stop.'[99] A personality formed through echoes is a personality of antonyms and oppositions: doubles and doppelgängers. Numerous early scholarly readings of the text focused on Tarr and Kreisler as Dostoyevskian doubles of each other; however, the two main characters seem thrown together instead of set against one another. It is only Kreisler who has a true doppelgänger in Soltyk: 'They had perhaps crapped in the dressing rooms of Creation for some particularly fleshly covering, and each secured only fragments of a covered garment. In some ways, then, Soltyk was his efficient and more accomplished counterpart, although as empty and unsatisfactory as himself.'[100] Soltyk and Kreisler are shown to be doubles made of the same innards, wrapped in different clothing; Kreisler is powerless to escape his tragic tie with Soltyk, and he will remain 'Doomed, Evidently' to face Soltyk at a duel. Tarr's near-doubles—Hobson, Bertha, and Anastasya—will be analysed here in order to outline the particular manner of his individuation.

The meeting with Hobson provides an opportunity for Tarr to satirize the Bougeois-Bohemian crowd, the anti-Individual, fashionable frauds. Hobson is a Cambridge lad of Cambridge appearance, with what Tarr believes is a ridiculous haircut covered with an even more ridiculous hat, and carries all of the ideologies of the intellectual feigning an artistic identity. He is the new crowd of artists whom Lewis railed against in his later satirical novels, the 'Apes of God' in the novel of that title: the shallow artistic and literary mechanics. It is clothes that broadcast intellectual and artistic fraudulency, as Tarr articulates to Hobson: 'You are systematizing and vulgarizing the individual. =You are not an individual. You have, I repeat, no right to that hair and that hat, you are trying to have the apple and eat it, too. =You should be in uniform, and at work, *not* uniformly *out of uniform*, and libeling the Artist by your idleness.'[101] The dress of the

[98] Wyndham Lewis, *Rude Assignment: An Intellectual Autobiography*, ed. Toby Foshay (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1984), p 40
[99] Wyndham Lewis, *Tarr: The 1918 Version*, ed. Paul O'Keefe (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1990), p 26
[100] Ibid, p 90
[101] Ibid, p 34

new Bourgeois-Bohemian subculture of artists, which persists to this day in 'Indie' styles, is a mode of appearance that *attempts* individuality by forming a crowd who then can only be sham individuals. In the scene with Hobson, Lewis himself displays a strong identification with Tarr, a similar nostalgia and adoration of the Individual as the true artistic singularity: 'But Hobson, he considered, was a crowd. =You could not say he was an individual. =He was a set. He sat there, a cultivated audience. =He had the aplomb and absence of self-consciousness of numbers—of those who know they are not alone. =Tarr was shy and the reverse by turns. He was alone. The individual is rustic.'[102]

The difference between the Individual's clothing and the Crowd's clothing is the method with which it is chosen, the ideology of what Grosz calls the 'inside-out' and 'outside-in' bodily marking. In the outlook of outside-in bodily inscription—the outlook of Hobson—Grosz remarks that 'bodies become emblems, heralds, badges, theaters, tableaux, of social laws and rights, illustrations and exemplifications of law, forming and rendering pliable flesh into determinate bodies, producing the flesh as a point of departure and a locus of incision, a point of "reality" or "nature" understood as prior to, and as the raw material of, social practices.'[103] In Tarr's opinion, the Bourgeois-Bohemians are false because he strives for the opposite. An inside-out formation of the body imagines the body's physical appearance as a representation of its inner intellectual and artistic impulses. The élan vital is able to subdue, mark, and control the material body, allowing artistic drives to become primary.

Tarr believes that Hobson (the vacuous flâneur) and Lowndes (the hand-me-down cubist) are the inauthentic types that inhabit the artistic landscape, and yet he seems himself unable to become his own ideal of the Artist or Individual. He never succeeds in breaking up with Bertha and escaping Life until after the events in the novel, as we are told in a final note. Particularly during the course of his dialogue with Hobson, Tarr's polemical rants possess various inconsistencies, and it almost seems that he himself does not realize these inconsistencies. His theory on the relation between Art and Sex begins with the two as a duality, but under the strain of Hobson's accusations he angrily begins to conflate the two. Paul Peppis, in his discussion of individualism in Lewis's novels, concludes that Tarr 'seems more a person playing at Individualism than a true Individualist.'[104] Even Lewis's conception of Hobson is riddled with

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[102] Ibid, p 29

[103] Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Towards a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), p 118

[104] Paul Peppis, 'Anti-Individualism and the fictions of national character in Wyndham Lewis's *Tarr*,' Twentieth-Century Literature, Summer 1994, p 235

slight irregularities, as he writes: 'Hobson, in spite of these fashions, was not an imbecile. =He had passed four years at the University of Cambridge…He had been untrue to his rascally sinuous body every since. But this body stopped in front of Tarr of its own accord. It slunk up, ashamed of its plight, its gait, its clothes.'[105] This is not to insist that Lewis or Tarr hold any sort of reverence for Hobson, rather that the classifications of male and female, or Individual and Crowd, are not absolute categories. It is Hobson's Bourgeois-Bohemian inauthenticity that conflicts with Tarr's sense of artistic individualism, even if that individualism is itself built upon an unsound foundation.

Tarr's conception of himself as not-Hobson is followed in the novel with his identification as not-Bertha and not-Anastasya to varying degrees, but it is important to state that Bertha and Anastasya are not distinctly collapsed into the category of 'woman' against which Tarr can then establish himself as 'man.' Both Bertha (his girlfriend) and Anastasya (Kreisler's love interest, whom Tarr begins to fancy) are both reduced at different times to paintings or sculptures in Tarr's aestheticizing vision. This reduction is not simply Tarr's artistic creativity and imagination taking hold, rather it cuts much deeper to signify his particular vision of ideal reality: 'Bertha's arms and shoulders were bare, her hair hanging in wisps and strips: generally, a Salon picture was the result.'[106] Following the collapse of the feminine-masculine dichotomy already discussed, these characterizations of the two female characters as art works particularly cannot be read simply as a reduction of the feminine to dead matter by the masculine objectifying gaze. Objectification in the world of Lewis's fictions—although heavily weighted towards masculine ownership—is not entirely the product of one sex gazing upon the other sex. As Lewis writes in *Men Without Art*, sex distinctions are not products of easy objectification or generalization because all dualisms are shadowy opposites:

> Now there is one obvious division or opposition staring you in the face…that is *the classification by gender*: the Masculine and Feminine departments of the universe. Is it necessary for us to repeat here for the thousand and first time how illusory this division is found to be, upon inspection…I am afraid that a great deal of what might be termed *sex-nationalism* is to be met with, though certainly there are some very enlightened women, just as there are a handful of enlightened men, who frown on, and smile at, such working-up of hot party-feelings.[107]

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[105] Wyndham Lewis, *Tarr: The 1918 Version*, ed. Paul O'Keefe (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1990), p 22
[106] Ibid, p 192
[107] Wyndham Lewis, *Men Without Art*, ed. Seamus Cooney (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1987), p 131

By evading and critiquing such '*sex-nationalism*,' Lewis argues for the body as a site for the upholding *and* conflation of oppositions and analyses, as the playing field on which the material and the artistic can battle for control.

Despite the plainly misogynistic statements throughout his body of writing, Lewis insists upon the feminine power of the gaze, as Bertha herself at one point visualizes Tarr and Kreisler as 'welded into one.'[108] Bertha is portrayed as the weaker female character, whilst Anastasya intellectually rivals and threatens both Tarr and Kreisler. Bertha's identity is literally split apart throughout the novel, but not because of a comparison to the stronger Anastasya: '*She* found here, in her room, was very different from *she* found outside, in restaurant or street.'[109] Although Lewis breaks apart the bodies of his male characters through sentence structure, syntax, and synecdoche, this bifurcation of Bertha is seen as a sign of inner weakness, a rare Lewisian glimpse into the psychology of a character. Anastasya, on the other hand, is a powerhouse of a woman, an intellectual wolf in sheep's clothing whom Tarr finds immensely attractive: 'This larger machine of repressed, moping senses, did attract. To take it to pieces, bit by bit, and penetrate to its intimacy, might give a similar pleasure to undressing Bertha!'[110] He wishes to deconstruct their bodies, to unravel their mysteries. Anastasya could be said to represent intellect and Life, whilst Bertha is associated with sensuality and Sex. Tarr's interactions with the two form a dialectical relationship between Art-Life and Art-Sex, a dialectic he never quite resolves or comprehends.

The comparison of Bertha and Anastasya to marble statues and paintings is a dissection of the body that collapses the boundaries between organic and inorganic matter. Feldman, in her discussion of the dandy, states that for such a male character as Tarr 'physical love is vulgar and ugly…because it means losing a vital, composed isolation. If the dandy is cold and pure, why not 'mate' him with his own kind: a statue. The statue will not metamorphose into life, because the dandy's imperturbability freezes all movement.'[111] This is the vortex, a form of art with immobility at its center. Feldman's assertion also speaks to Tarr's ineffectual relationships with women, his semi-adolescent inadequacy, because he can only imagine and visualize women as statues: he cannot understand them beyond aesthetics. When Tarr finds Anastasya waiting for him in his apartment, the description of her 'apparition' is almost romantic in its simple artistic beauty: 'The moonlight came heavily through the windows. In a part of the room where it did not strike he became aware of an apparition of solid white. It was solid white flowed round by Naples Yellow.

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[108] Wyndham Lewis, *Tarr: The 1918 Version*, ed. Paul O'Keefe (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1990), p 181
[109] Ibid, p 185
[110] Ibid, p 214
[111] Jessica Feldman, *Gender on the Divide* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), p 33

=It crossed into the moonlight and faced him, its hands placed like a modest statue's.'[112] The rendering of women into art statues allows them to be read as pure surface, reflecting the '*deadness'* of art that Tarr speaks of:

> A statue, then, is a dead thing; a lump of wood or stone. Its lines and masses are its soul. Anything living, quick and changing, is bad art, always; naked men and women are the worst art of all, because there are fewer semi-dead things about them. The shell of the tortoise, the plumage of a bird, makes these animals approach nearer to art. Soft, quivering and quick flesh is as far from art as an object can be.[113]

Tarr is able to envision Anastasya and Bertha's bodies as the '*deadness'* of art, whilst his own body struggles to become more than 'soft, quivering and quick flesh.' There is something nearly mythic about such descriptions, paralleling Cinzia Sartini Blum's statement that Marinetti in his own fictions was 'examining the connection between Woman in her mythical form (as Magna Mater, eternal feminine) and woman in her social, historical reality (as partner in modern family and sexual relations).'[114] It seems that Lewis is not directly opposing the inorganic Magna Mater of the statue with the organic 'flesh' of Bertha and Anastasya in their moving, living bodies, but rather is collapsing the two into a vision of reality unique to the artist.

The 'flesh' of the body can be seen as a sort of nakedness—its pre-immobilized feminine state—and it is this nakedness that Tarr combats with his subjective artistic reality. Peter Brooks comments that 'the moment of complete nakedness, if it is ever reached, most often is represented by silence, ellipsis;' Lewis deals with this ellipsis by forging a male nude that is heroic, not erotic, and Kreisler embodies this heroism in his permanently distended muscles.[115] As a masculine structure this body remains nothing more than a construction, as he writes in *The Art of Being Ruled*:

> The large, bloated, and sinewy appearance of the male…is partly the result of manual work or physical exercise, but is the result as well of thousands of years of ACTING THE MAN. The more muscular frame of the male, and his greater hardihood, are illusions, like everything else about him, provisionally and precariously realized, but no more stable than the muscular development produced by some intensive course of physical exercise, resulting in the inflation of this system of muscles or that. He is

[112] Wyndham Lewis, *Tarr: The 1918 Version*, ed. Paul O'Keefe (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1990), p 306
[113] Ibid, p 299
[114] Cinzia Sartini Blum, *The Other Modernism: F.T. Marinetti's Futurist Fiction of Power* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), p. x
[115] Peter Brooks, *Body Work* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 19

> blown out by vanity into a *bigger* and *bonier* creature than his consort…*He is in reality just the same size, and of just the same sort.*[116]

The masculine body has been developed out of the feminine 'jellyfish diffuseness' for so long, and *acted* masculine for so long, that it has begun to *seem* objective and natural. In reality, masculine and feminine bodies are differentiated through existential work; in the world of Lewis's fictions, they are produced through the work of the artist, always remaining *productions.*

The meanings of Tarr's artistic renderings of women interact in interesting ways to the vision of Kreisler: women are '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.'[117] As he is trying to get '*back into sex,*' he begins to realize through his interactions with Bertha, and Anastasya in particular, that women are reflecting pools for his own 'flesh' and formlessness. He is similarly subjected to the artistic gaze, as when with Anastasya he 'moved in his chair stiffly; he ached as though he had been sitting for his portrait. The analogy struck him. Had he been sitting for his portrait?'[118] Because Anastasya is a powerful female, it could be said that her aesthetic influence renders his living body into the immobile artwork, thereby masculinizing her through this control and feminizing Kreisler's 'flesh.' It is Kreisler's own artistic vision here that becomes problematized with relation to Anastasya; '*Deadness'* and the 'flesh' are not separate categories for Kreisler, as they are for Tarr. During a conversation with Tarr about Bertha, Kreisler says that 'she has an innocent face, like a Madonna. But she is a prostitute.'[119] He grasps the connection between the mythical Madonna and the real woman of everyday existence, and as such Bertha is seen to embody both the 'high' and 'low' femininities. As Lewis recalls later in *Rude Assignment*, Kreisler's 'sexual superstitions supplied the motif in his ritual of self-destruction.'[120] In *Tarr*, Kreisler comes to regard Tarr as part of Bertha, a sort of masculine extension of her,' and after this realization he explodes into a mad rage: 'I *will* have her. *I will have her!'*[121] It in unclear whether he wishes to possess Bertha-in-herself or the Bertha-with-Tarr package, or if he wants Bertha-as-Madonna or Bertha-as-prostitute. These distinctions are

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[116] Wyndham Lewis, *The Art of Being Ruled*, ed. Reed Way Dasenbrock (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1989), p 250
[117] Wyndham Lewis, *Tarr: The 1918 Version*, ed. Paul O'Keefe (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1990), p 100
[118] Ibid, p 105
[119] Ibid, p 225
[120] Wyndham Lewis, *Rude Assignment: An Intellectual Autobiography*, ed. Toby Foshay (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1984), p 164
[121] Wyndham Lewis, *Tarr: The 1918 Version*, ed. Paul O'Keefe (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1990), p 226

irrelevant because Kreisler desires to possess control over the 'high' *and* the 'low'—the '*deadness' and* the 'flesh'—achieving individualization and knowledge through a sort of double-speak.

Tarr's molding of the masculine body out of the feminine raw material, and the resulting caricatured 'mummy case' exterior, is not directly contrasted with the body of classical art. Returning to the statement that 'you must talk in two tongues' discussed earlier, Lewis abandons the requirement of the classical artist to present an organically unified work of art, created through a unified artistic persona: they both can be fractured. The style of Kreisler's painting of Bertha—with its multiplication of bodies—becomes robbed of the classical nobility of the female nude, and, in scholar Thomas Kush's words, 'beyond this satiric thrust, the painting expresses a serious view of the human condition as a compromise between the aspiring spirit and the recalcitrant body.'[122] This unity of the spiritual and material bodies is not a merging of the two, but rather in Lewis's conception of modern art the transcendental and the material remain parallel, alongside one another.

The 'mummy case' exterior and its splintered surface is constantly proclaimed as something modern because of its ability to stand alone as a fractured body; yet, as Lewis seems to be telling us, it is the few moments when the spirit and material collide that modern transcendence is possible. In his essay 'Reality and Its Shadow,' Emmanuel Lévinas addresses the Art / Life dichotomy, stating that 'the artist has given the statue a lifeless life, a derisory life which is not master of itself, a caricature of life…*Every image is already a caricature*.'[123] Classical art for Lévinas 'corrects the caricature of being—the snub nose, the stiff gesture. Beauty is being dissimulating its caricature.'[124] Modern art, in its 'petrification of the instant,' dwells on the sadness and tragedy of classical art, without celebrating its beauty. It is stuck in the realm of caricature, unable to properly explain existential being beyond the stiff gesture. Lewis morphs the modern body into the Tyro, the pinnacle of 'petrification' and grotesque stillness, and this body able to connect with the classical notion of spirit only through laughter and satire. The modern world in *Tarr*, with all of these petrified caricatures, becomes 'a wild world, not of uniform men and women, but of very divergent and strangely-living animals.'[125]

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[122] Thomas Kush, *Wyndham Lewis's Pictorial Integer* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Research Press, 1981), p 69

[123] Emmanuel Lévinas, 'Reality and Its Shadow,' *Collected Philosophical Papers* trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburg, Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 1998), p. 9

[124] Ibid, p. 8

[125] Wyndham Lewis, *Tarr: The 1918 Version*, ed. Paul O'Keefe (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1990), p 199

## IV. The Grotesque and Laughter: A Comic-Tragic Portrayal of the Body

In the social events of *Tarr*—particularly Frau Lipmann's Bourgeois-Bohemian dance—Kreisler becomes the primitive, and resembles the body stripped bare of the girdles of socialization. This can be taken quite literally, as due to financial difficulties he is 'tragically' unable to get his 'frac' out of pawn, as such, according to the title of the second part of the novel, 'Doomed, Evidently:' 'The fatality, far from being masked, is advanced.'[126] He is the raw, undressed body swinging violently through the space of the narrative. On the verge of hilarity, Kreisler inspires laughter and becomes the grotesque in the novel. This grotesquerie provides the Rabelaisian reversal of the bodily spheres that inspires Kreisler to realize his 'kernel,' which is tragedy. The wrenching forth of spirit lying within the 'mummy case' is an attempt at transcendence. The following discussion will attempt to outline the method in which the carnivalesque body is necessarily tragic because it is always 'Doomed, Evidently,' and yet is able to realize the creative spirit.

Tarr at times is 'just a devouring machine,' or a 'released automaton,' and is the mechanized body; however, he is ultimately not defined by the underlying organs of movement and instead is able to project his desires and actions through polemical rants.[127] He is not consistently reduced to his physical organs as the site for meaning, as is Kreisler who is an 'abstracted, distant, and baffling' character, frequently described physically and psychologically as 'dazed and machine-like.'[128] Kreisler tramples through his various actions in the novel, acting as a 'large rusty machine' that shatters the wholeness of the textual body enveloping him. He is a battering ram, creating comic collisions with other characters. In this sense, Kreisler affirms Lewis's statement in *Men Without Art* that 'men are sometimes so palpably machines, their machination so transparent, that they are *comic*, as we say.'[129] The interactions between Kreisler and Volker, his financier, highlights Kreisler's destruction of other character's wholeness, and exposes his whimsical manner in doing so:

> He was a property of Nature, or a favorite slave, untidy and aloof. Kreisler so real and at home was like a ghost sitting there beside him, for Ernst Volker. He had not had the time to solidify yet in Paris by all rights, and yet was so solid and accustomed at once. This body was in Paris now! –with an heroic freedom.

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[126] Wyndham Lewis, *Rude Assignment: An Intellectual Autobiography*, ed. Toby Foshay (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1984), p 165
[127] Ibid, p. 70
[128] Ibid, p. 198, 197
[129] Wyndham Lewis, *Men Without Art*, ed. Seamus Cooney (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1987), p 95

> Volker began looking for himself. He picked up the pieces quietly. This large rusty machine of a man smashed him up like an egg-shell at every meeting. His shell grew quickly again, but never got hard enough.[130]

Kreisler's mechanical body and gestures invades and conquers the artificial, constructed skin of Volker. Despite his obliteration-function, Kreisler is shown to still be a construction, albeit of different material. Lewis's satirical vision of the body is not a reduction of the socialized body to the primitive image, but rather these satires are terrifying and impersonal forces, embodied by Kreisler, sweeping the field of the text.

Kreisler is a vitalistic, irrational character who vacillates between erotic and comic. Kreisler, at the Lipmann dance, is the clown of the carnival, and stands apart from the other participants because he is improperly dressed and is judged by Frau Lipmann to be drunk (even though he is sober). He has a 'certain disquieting element,' and his 'eyelids flap like metal shutters, rather than winking.'[131] In this mechanized moment he is unable to control his body's movement through time and space; in Quéma's brilliant line, he is 'like a cork tossed by the turgid element of a vortex.'[132] His movements temporarily lift the plot out of its semi-chronological frame, with the exhilarating sense of an apocalyptic ending that approaches with increasing rapidity:

> He took her 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, a disturbing meteor, whizzing out of sight, had not they met the alarmed resistance of a considerable English family entering the front door as Kreisler bore down upon it…The rush took Kreisler and his partner half way through, and there they stood embedded and unconscious for many seconds. The English family then, with great dignity, disgorged them, and moved on.[133]

These movements recall the functions of the stylized angles of the Tyro paintings and the '=' symbol within the novel as the 'whizzing' dance motions are immobilized by the Vortex—the English family.[134] Ever-increasing commas and sentence breaks break up the sentences, and this overly emphasized choppiness is antagonistic and forceful.

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[130] Wyndham Lewis, *Tarr: The 1918 Version*, ed. Paul O'Keefe (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1990), p 84
[131] Ibid p 147, 131
[132] Anne Quéma, *The Agon of Modernism: Wyndham Lewis's Allegories, Aesthetics, and Politics* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1999), p. 45
[133] Wyndham Lewis, *Tarr: The 1918 Version*, ed. Paul O'Keefe (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1990), p 148
[134] Wyndham Lewis, *The Wild Body: A Soldier of Humour and Other Stories* (New York: Haskell House, 1970), p 30

Bergson, in his study of the comic, asserts the basic thesis that '*the attitudes, gestures and movements of the human body are laughable in exact proportion as that body reminds us of a mere machine.*'[135] The '*mechanical inelasticity*' of the body is revealed in this reduction to a machine, and out of this mechanical stillness the humor of Kreisler is born.[136] In *The Wild Body*, Lewis attempts to define the comic, and mirrors this reduction of the body to the mechanical:

> The root of the Comic is to be sought in the sensations resulting from the observations of a *thing* behaving like a person. But from that point of view all men are necessarily comic: for they are all *things*, or physical bodies, behaving as *persons*. It is only when you come to deny that they are "persons," or that there is any "mind" or "person" there at all, that the world of appearance is accepted as quite natural, and not at all ridiculous.[137]

The important slight deviation from Bergson's theory is that for Lewis all humans are things first: every individual is inherently satirical. Bergson highlights the inelasticity of the body because it reveals the process of establishing the body as an object. For instance, the scenario of a man slipping on a banana peel is comic because it was an action unforeseen and unwilled by the man. His body, as it clunks to the pavement, is humorous because he cannot stop his body from falling and therefore his body becomes an automaton. Lewis writes in *The Wild Body* that the comic is when 'the man's body was not him.'[138] In order to avoid such a comic scenario, it is vital that the body remains pliable so as to react sufficiently to the banana peel in time and catch itself, and indeed, throughout everyday life we are primarily elastic bodies. Kreisler never has an elastic body, and as such is always prepped for such comic slippages.

The numerous references to Kreisler's muscles distinguish him from Tarr whose *intellect* 'was full of sinister piston rods, organ-like shapes, heavy drills.'[139] Kreisler undertakes very few actions that are not directed by another being—he is a puppet—and his 'piston rod' *muscles* are always flexed into stiff gestures. As Frau Lipmann throws him out of the party because of his supposed drunkenness and reckless dancing, Kreisler's body is prepared for action but 'things remained vague:' 'He had been again beating the air. This should have been a climax, of blows, words, definite things. But things remained vague…[Kreisler curses at her] The hissing, thunderous explosion was the last thing in vocal virulence. =The muscles all seemed gathered up

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[135] Henri Bergson, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, trans. Cloudesley Brereton and Fred Rothwell (New York: Macmillan, 1911), p 29
[136] Ibid, p 10
[137] Wyndham Lewis, *The Wild Body: A Soldier of Humour and Other Stories* (New York: Haskell House, 1970), p 246
[138] Ibid, p 250
[139] Wyndham Lewis, *Tarr: The 1918 Version*, ed. Paul O'Keefe (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1990), p 111

at his ears like reins, and the flesh tightened and white round his mouth.'[140] His muscles frequently are unable to release themselves into an explosion. He is ineffective in action because his body is immobilized into the hard lines of the Tyronic body: 'His muscles were still full. They symbolized his uselessness…like his vigorous muscles and his deadness, there was the same contradiction; his mechanical obstinacy as regards Anastasya, and his comic activity at present to get to the dance.'[141] In the plucking of his muscles from the rest of his body, Lewis presents Kreisler as more than a whole organic being, as he is then an amalgamation of all of the actions produced (and not produced) by these rigid muscles. Kreisler's body-as-machine always shifts between movement, action, and immobility; these states allow the body to act and react, and to discover through action its meaningful elements. Beneath the smiling façade and the permanent protraction of the muscles is the actually dismembered Tyronic mind and body, and as Corbett states, 'no sooner is that "truth" brought into focus than it dissolves again into "action," into the frenetic hilarity of neurotic displacement that gleams from the virulent color and the flashing teeth of the reformulated body, mutated into a machine.'[142]

Laughter aimed at the mechanical body composed of momentum and rigidity signals a disjuncture between the real positioning of the body and anticipated movement. It is these gestures that become the center of the Bergsonian and Lewisian absurd, because laughter is directed not at actions but at the dislocated bodily gesture: 'action is intentional or, at any rate, conscious; gesture slips out unawares, it is automatic. In action, the entire person is engaged in gesture, an isolated part of the person is expressed, unknown to, or at least apart from, the whole of the personality.'[143] Pure, willed action is in direct proportion to the emotion or will that inspired it, whereas with gesture there is no proportionality between affective and material concerns, and the body contorts into preset shapes with an explosive, automatic power. Gesture in the realm of comedy relies upon the exaggeration of facial features (the mouth in particular) as the face reforms itself into a caricature, constructing the grinning mask of the Tyro. According to Bakhtin, the mask is frequently associated with 'joy of change and reincarnation, with gay relativity and with the merry negation of uniformity and similarity; it rejects conformity to oneself. The mask is related to transition, metamorphoses, the violation of natural boundaries, to mockery and familiar

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[140] Ibid, p 159
[141] Ibid, p. 111
[142] David Peters Corbett, "War and Wyndham Lewis's Tyros" in *Wyndham Lewis and Art of Modern War* ed. David Peters Corbett (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 120-121
[143] Henri Bergson, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, trans. Cloudesley Brereton and Fred Rothwell (New York: Macmillan, 1911), p 143

nicknames…It is based on a particular interrelation of reality and image.'[144] The mask transitions the body from one state to another, bringing rigid, dead bodies back to life again whilst maintaining their deathly stillness.

As Kreisler first enters the salon of Frau Lipmann before the dance, he asserts that his '"smokkin" leads a very independent life;' his mask of clothing is separated from him. In this scene he watches from afar the entrance of Anastasya: 'There were rustlings and laughter in the hall for some minutes. Social facts, abstracted in this manner, appealed to the mind with the strangeness of masks, each sense, isolated, being like a mask on another. Anastasya appeared. She came out of that social flutter astonishingly inapposite, like a mask come to life.'[145] The mask is important in the scene because it is a ready-made shell that can be slipped into and out of, and allows characters to shift between subjective and objective existence. As Bergson writes, 'all *character* is comic…that mechanical element which resembles a piece of clockwork wound up once and for all and capable of working automatically. It is, if you will, that which causes us to imitate ourselves…Every comic character is a *type*. Inversely, every resemblance to a type has something comic in it.'[146] It is out these monstrous caricatures that the grotesque body emerges, and in its birthing emits the piercing laugh of the Tyro.

The inelastic, masked body is marked as eccentric, as an 'individual or collective imperfection which calls for an immediate corrective. This corrective is laughter, a social gesture that singles out and represses a special kind of absentmindedness in men and in events.'[147] The laughter produced by Kreisler's inflated and swelled muscles is a utilitarian and *social* action; laughter at these Bergsonian comic gestures regulates the social body by purging itself of its unbending members, the individual stones that will eventually plunge the social ship into satirical darkness. In this way, laughter, as Bergson writes, 'appears to stand in need of an echo—it requires a society, not isolation, of the individual. Listen to it carefully: it is not an articulate, clear, well-defined sound; it is something which would fain be prolonged by reverberating from one to another, something beginning with a crash, to continue in successive rumblings.'[148]

When the absurd is pushed towards the grotesque, the body is not placed in direct opposition to the social body, and on the contrary, the individual body becomes the site for social

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[144] Mikhail Bakhtin. *Rabelais and His World* trans. Helene Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p 39-40

[145] Wyndham Lewis, *Tarr: The 1918 Version*, ed. Paul O'Keefe (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1990), p 132

[146] Henri Bergson, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, trans. Cloudesley Brereton and Fred Rothwell (New York: Macmillan, 1911), p 148

[147] Ibid, p. 87-88

[148] Ibid, p. 5-6

death and regeneration: the categories of individual and collective are collapsed. In Rabelaisian carnival, the body revels in its bodiliness, and it is the centrality of the body in the upside down world of Renaissance carnival that Bakhtin emphasizes in the carnival's social power. The carnival is described as a revolution in itself, albeit a temporary revolution not sanctioned by any church or state or social institution but by a force pre-existing concurrent powers: it always has been and always will be. During this revolution various energies are purged as the high and the low are sublimated; the hierarchical social order is not exactly absolved but rather inverted, as a peasant is chosen as the carnival king. The carnivalesque dressing of the body, and the preference of the lower bodily stratum (bawdy sexuality) over the higher, more 'civilized' aspects of society parodies the tragic sacred body. In the appearance of the carnivalesque body, the folk become cunning, bawdy, blasphemous, and drunk, reveling in degeneracy and bodiliness; Kreisler undergoes this same transformation during the course of the dance, where he is luring women into violent dances, using language and laughter to confuse and subvert intentions, whilst he is improperly dressed (he is in his street clothes, his 'low' outfit) and appearing drunk.

As Bakhtin writes, 'the "swing" of grotesque realism, the play of the upper and slower sphere, is strikingly set into motion; the top and the bottom, heaven and earth, merge into that image.'[149] The grotesque body is eventually dissected, and the mouth stands as the primary site for the swapping of the lower and upper spheres, as these spheres are merged into one, forming a bodily central image. However, as Bakhtin notes, 'the grotesque body…is a body in the act of becoming. It is never finished, never completed; it is continually built, created, and builds and creates another body. Moreover, the body swallows the world and is itself swallowed by the world.'[150] The exaggeration of in-mechanisms (eating and drinking) and out-mechanisms (defecation and sex) creates this inversion of the bodily and social spheres. The gaping mouth is the ancient symbol of death and destruction—and the bared teeth are naturally aggressive—but it also can be a symbol of rebirth. The ambiguity of this symbolic meaning reflects the subsumption of both extremes (death and birth) into one single gesture of the body. The movements of Kreisler echo this ambiguity, where the state of the body stands in for the breakdown of social normative behavior and the birthing of the animalistic, mechanistic man. Lewis freezes the '"swing" of grotesque realism' of which Bakhtin writes, immobilizing the motion of Kreisler into an eerie, terrifying grin. In the grotesque world, the mouth becomes the body part that is dissected from

[149] Mikhail Bakhtin. *Rabelais and His World* trans. Helene Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p 163
[150] Ibid, p. 317

the rest of the body and stands in for the body: 'It dominates all else. The grotesque face is actually reduced to the gaping mouth; the other features are only a frame encasing this wide-open bodily abyss.'[151]

The laughter of the carnival is an opposition to the official world that does not just breaking apart systems, but builds new structures and bodies. In its ritual purging mechanism, structures are upset and reformulated. Bakhtin links carnivalesque laughter very closely with freedom, and therefore laughter is seen to hold a progressive, liberating power. The universal scope of laughter (as everyone produces the same 'has' and 'hees' across cultural boundaries) and corrosive effect on politics and society rubs ill social systems off the stage of history. Bakhtin believed, in the writing of *Rabelais and His World*, that this power could be harnessed to the then-forgotten Russian Revolution, as carnival forms 'present the victory of this future over the past…The birth of the new…is as indispensable and as inevitable as the death of the old…In the whole of the world and of the people there is no room for fear. For fear can only enter a part that has been separated from the whole, the dying link torn from the link that is being born.'[152] Lewis's laughter produces this sort of fear, as it is a splitting off of the individual from the crowd and not the unifying force as Bakhtin imagines it. In *Tarr* laughter socializes people by rendering them eccentric, and therefore sets up a barrier between the individual and the crowd: it is satirical and mocking in tone. After the Renaissance, laughter in relation to the carnival grotesque lost its deep philosophical impact and took on a much narrower sphere, whereas in the Rabelaisian world of carnival certain facets of worldly meaning were only accessible through laughter. The question becomes, in the shift from gay and joyful laughter to satirical and mocking laughter, does Lewis fail in *Tarr* to regenerate and rebuild, or only further fracture and fissure the textual and personal body?

The answer might be clarified by returning to *The Wild Body*, where Lewis grapples with issues of Rabelaisian carnival laughter quite explicitly, in that one of his characters 'knows the brutal *frisson* in contact with danger that draws the laugher up from the deepest bowel in a refreshing unearthly gush.'[153] In a concluding pseudo-manifesto to the collection, 'Inferior Religions,' Lewis describes how the stories were an attempt to catalog the soul as released through grotesque laughter: 'The soul lives in a cadaverous activity; its dramatic corruption

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[151] Ibid, p 317

[152] Mikhail Bakhtin. *Rabelais and His World* trans. Helene Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p 88

[153] Wyndham Lewis, *The Wild Body: A Soldier of Humour and Other Stories* (New York: Haskell House, 1970), p 160

thumps us like a racing engine in the body of a car. The finest humour is the great play-shapes blown up or given off by the tragic corpse of life underneath the world of the camera. This futile, grotesque, and sometimes pretty spawn, is what in this book is snapshotted by the imagination.'[154] He continues to 'catalogue the attributes of Laughter,' and it worth reproducing this list so as to highlight the many connections with the regenerative function of Rabelaisian laughter:

1. Laughter is the Wild Body's song of triumph.
2. Laughter is the climax in the tragedy of seeing, hearing, and smelling self-consciously.
3. Laughter is the bark of delight of a gregarious animal at the proximity of its kind.
4. Laughter is an independent, tremendously important, and lurid emotion.
5. Laughter is the representative of tragedy, when tragedy is away.
6. Laughter is the emotion of tragic delight.
7. Laughter is the female of tragedy.
8. Laughter is the strong elastic fish, caught in Styx, springing and flapping about until it dies.
9. Laughter is the sudden handshake of mystic violence and the anarchist.
10. Laughter is the mind sneezing.
11. Laughter is the one obvious commotion that is not complex, or in expression dynamic.
12. Laughter does not progress. It is primitive, hard, and unchangeable.[155]

Laughter is very closely related to tragedy here because it is seen as tragedy's feminine raw material, and as such effects the same sort of cathartic purge of emotions through the union of the carnival 'mystic violence' with the 'anarchist' fragmented body. It is a violent 'sneezing' (philosophically and physiologically) that can be performed throughout time because it is 'primitive, hard, and unchangeable,' and is then universal in scope like the Rabelaisian. The violent 'sneezing' of laughter reveals the individual below the social shell, as Lewis himself writes 'a laugh, like a sneeze, exposes the nature of the individual with an unexpectedness that is perhaps a little unreal. This sunny commotion in the face, at the gate of the organism, brings to the surface all the burrowing and interior broods which the individual may harbour.'[156] Lewis reacts against the contemporary impotence of laughter by trying to reestablish the old, unifying, progressive, regenerative laughter linked with the grotesque.

Because the grotesque body is reduced to its dominant feature—the grin—and is never complete, the sites of bodily regeneration become essential. Bakhtin states that the two most essential, regenerative body parts are the bowels and the phallus, which are able to allow the material body to overstep itself through the formation of an in-out mechanism. This is the same

[154] Ibid, p 239
[155] Ibid, p 23-237
[156] Wyndham Lewis, *Wyndham Lewis on Art: Collected Writings 1913-1956*, Eds Walter Michel and CJ Fox (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1969), p 188

mechanism that Tarr prefers to Hobson's out-in mechanism. As the bowels and phallus expel, the mouth swallows, forming the closed circle of generation and regeneration on which the carnival grotesque is based. Because of their central role in this rejuvenation, the bowels and phallus are able to detach themselves from the body in order to take on lives of their own, explaining Lewis's hyperboles and synecdoches of carnival feast and sex. The dismembering functions of the body become central, including sex, pregnancy, eating and so on; Lewis utilizes these bodily functions in order to characterize Tarr and Kreisler.

By linking the grotesque and comic with food and sex, I believe that Lewis attempts to reinstate what Bakhtin labels the 'double-faced fullness of life,' to show that its unity lies in breaking down all dualities and distinctions of the body. Tarr is reduced to the 'lonely phallus,' Kreisler and Anastasya relate food and sex, the production of art is termed an 'astral baby,' and Kreisler admits that his 'frac' is able to live a life of its own.[157] The phallus is particularly important in the grotesque because it is the organ that allows the body to outgrow itself (figuratively and literally) and can conceive of a second body. Its exaggeration and hyperbole signals a substitution of the bottom for the top. It is important here to note how the image of art springing from Tarr's womb (the 'astral baby') is grotesquely comic, as Bakhtin notes that 'the earthly element of terror is the womb, the bodily grave, but it flowers with delight and a new life' in the carnival.[158] During the course of the novel, Tarr seems incapable of producing any piece of art whatsoever, and it could be said that his anxiety towards his art stems from his terror of his lower stratum—his 'lonely phallus'—the site of carnivalesque regeneration.[159] The 'double-faced' quality that *is* the 'fullness of life' is comprised of the old and the new, the bottom and top, negation and affirmation, death and birth; whilst Tarr seems to run from the 'double-faced fullness of life,' Kreisler hastily approaches the tragic death and the artistic birth.

The various analogies to food throughout the novel, in particular, highlight Lewis's return to the primitive aspects of society and the individual: food is the fuel of life. TS Eliot once characterized Lewis's prose as 'thick and sooty, clogging the whole intestine,' invoking the metaphoric ingestion of words to suggest the link between food, culture, and text.[160] In his book *Distinction*, Pierre Bourdieu confirms this link by stating that to understand culture is to understand it as 'flavours of food,' that is, *through the body* (figuratively and literally) cultural

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[157] Ibid, p 30, 58
[158] Mikhail Bakhtin. *Rabelais and His World* trans. Helene Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p 92
[159] Wyndham Lewis, *Tarr: The 1918 Version*, ed. Paul O'Keefe (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1990), p 30
[160] TS Eliot, 'Contemporanea,' in *Egoist* June-July 1918 vol 4, p 84

symbols and meaning are absorbed.[161] In the scene where Kreisler meets Anastasya at the café during dinner, the sensations of consumption become paramount to the understanding of the body, culture, and reading. Kreisler guides Anastasya, who has only been in Paris for a week, through the menu, which he describes: 'At the head of each list you will find simple dishes; elemental dishes, I might call them! (Elementare Platten!) This is the rough material from which the others are evolved. Each list is like an oriental dance. It gets wilder as it goes along. In the last dish you can be sure that the potatoes will taste like tomatoes, and the pork like a sirloin of beef.'[162] To go down the list of dishes is to go into more abstract levels of taste, where the food being cooked is metamorphosed beyond recognition into an end product. The food becomes a 'duet in everything,' as the naming of the dish no longer properly refers to its raw contents because its referential meaning is altered. The swallowed does not stay swallowed in what Lewis calls the 'habitual indigestion of reality;' we will always try to reverse the metamorphosis of the new body to discover its primal elements, to ritually purge art, culture, and our bodies of the constructed layers of persona. [163] It is an individual instinct and social need, in Lewis's view, to get back to 'elemental dishes,' to the materials in order to regularly expunge ourselves of false, abstracted meanings. The '*deadness*' of art and its 'frontal lines and masses' *is* a return to the aesthetic raw material, and it is there that the spirit lies.

Like Marinetti's (in)famous Futurist statement 'war—the world's only hygiene,' Lewis asserts that it is the willfully violent laughter, the grotesque laughter, that is the artistic 'world's only hygiene.'[164] As he writes in *The Wild Body*, laughter is directly correlated with force and will, and draws out the 'primitive' realities of modern man: 'Violence is of the essence of *laughter* (as distinguished of course from smiling wit): it is merely the inversion or failure of *force*. To put it in another way, it is the *grin* upon the Deathshead.'[165] Laughter democratizes society in the Rabelaisian world of carnival, and in Kreisler's Modernist world, laughter is where the tension between the individual and social plays out. Kreisler is immobilized at the Lipmann dance when Anastasya begins to laugh at him, and this single laugh marginalizes him, preventing him from laughing back or speaking:

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[161] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique on The Judgment of Taste* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 1

[162] Wyndham Lewis, *Tarr: The 1918 Version*, ed. Paul O'Keefe (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1990), p 98-99

[163] Ibid, p 204

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[165] Wyndham Lewis, *The Wild Body: A Soldier of Humour and Other Stories* (New York: Haskell House, 1970), p 158

> =That laugh has driven him foaming, fugitive and confused, into the nearest chair. He could not turn round and retaliate at the time. The door being in front of him, he vanished, as Mephistopheles might sink with suddenness into the floor, at the receipt of some affront, to some sulphurous regions beneath, in a second; come to a stop alone, upright; stick his fingers in his mouth nearly biting them in two, his eyes staring: so stand stock still, breathless and haggard for some minutes: then shoot up again, head foremost, in some other direction, like some darting and skulking fish, to the face of the earth…=Yet he didn't move, but sat on staring in front of him, quite forgetful where he was and how long he had sat there, in the midst of a hot riot of thoughts.[166]

Anastasya's laughter pierces Kreisler's 'imaginary life,' causing him to confront material reality and material sex: 'Anastasya's laughter had upset and ended everything of his 'imaginary life…For the first time since he had first set eyes on her he realized her sex…=He wanted to *kiss* her now. He must get his mouth on hers: —he must revel in the laugh, where it grew!'[167]

Kreisler's recognition of Anastasya's sex upsets his dreamy artistic world; as Lewis writes in *Time and Western Man*, 'artistic expression is a dream-condition, and its interpretations must be kept clear of sex-analysis, or else the dreamer passes over immediately into waking life, and so we get no art, and are left with nothing but sex on our hands.'[168] His awakening into 'objective' reality—the reality in which he does not have a chance with Anastasya—obliterates his artistic energy and leaves him defenseless. This realization about Anastasya and the arousal of his sexual energy alters his perception of the party entirely, arguably beginning the downward swing of his tragic involvement in the novel: 'Everything for a second time, was quite ordinary, but *not* electrically ordinary, almost hushed, this time. =He had become a practical man, surrounded by facts.'[169] The laughter of Anastasya has the distinct ability to eradicate any fantasy Kreisler has about being with her, and it leaves him feeling empty, materialized in his body and in the factual world: it has purged Kreisler's world of all its false elements. Through Anastasya's laughter and his own, Kreisler unites his body with the universal body; he possesses the body of the carnival man whose laughter evokes and performs the flipping of the bodily stratums to release new meanings.

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[166] Wyndham Lewis, *Tarr: The 1918 Version*, ed. Paul O'Keefe (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1990), p 154
[167] Ibid, p 156-157
[168] Wyndham Lewis, *Time and Western Man* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), p 33
[169] Ibid, 157

## V. Conclusion

The carnivalesque body is the site of a trans-human physical continuity that ultimately works against all social structures and stratification: it is the clashing of the personal and social bodies. The narrative moves towards an overarching bodily image by deploying another, unruly body; the plot emerges at the points where these two bodies are imagined and related to each other. These two competing bodies could be said to be those of Tarr and Kreisler, the masculine and feminine, Kreisler and Soltyk, or any number of opposing bodies Lewis constructed within the text. Paul Ricoeur in *Time and Narrative* imagined plot working in a similar way, suggesting that the plot would spring from the gap between interior and exterior worlds—two competing sites—and that the body makes this gap meaningful. In doing so, Ricoeur sublimates the body within a particularly modern way of envisioning plot, but the origins of this form of modernity can be traced back to Bakhtin's description of the Renaissance grotesque: 'The events of the grotesque sphere are always developed on the boundary dividing one body from the other and, as it were, at their points of intersection. One body offers its death, the other its birth, but they are merged in a two-bodied image.'[170] The grotesque 'two-bodied image' that Bakhtin describes could also be seen as the amalgamation of the material body and the imaginative body. These two bodies can be further analogized in *Tarr* as the inner mechanized body and the outer cultural bodies. It is the interplay between these two bodies that originates and puts into motion the plot, and in particular, Kreisler's self-destruction.

Kreisler is the tragic character in the novel, as his self-destruction leads to a sad, lonely death by hanging in jail (his punishment for dueling—and murdering—Soltyk). As he hangs, the last thing that he is conscious of, we are told, is his tongue, reminding us that after the arbitrarily chosen character façade disappears, the material body persists. Kreisler can be said to have failed because he did not recognize that the nothingness that is the body—the '*deadness*' that is 'the first condition of art'—is a 'natural' thing: he 'became offended with his phlegm. All this instinctive resistance to the idea of Death, the indignity of being nothing.'[171] It is the moment, as in Greek tragedy, when the mortal realizes that he truly is 'Doomed, Evidently,' and that upon death he is no more than he was living: a body that was *capable* of reaching and understanding the transcendental meaning of existence.

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[170] Mikhail Bakhtin. *Rabelais and His World* trans. Helene Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p 322

[171] Wyndham Lewis, *Tarr: The 1918 Version*, ed. Paul O'Keefe (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1990), p 299, 269

In an earlier moment of pure desperation as his finances are failing him, Lewis creates an imaginary society for which Kreisler would be the King, a society in which 'instead of rearing smooth faces of immense stone against it, you imagine an unparalleled immobility in life, a race of statues, throwing flesh in Death's path instead of basalt.'[172] The moment of his death is the penultimate reversal of the bodily stratum, as the material body fails and thereby cuts short the psychological life; in death the '*deadness*' of the body overtakes and out-exists the spiritual and cognitive bodies. Tarr, on the other hand, calls out with Anastasya to 'Bless Waste, Heaven Bless Waste! =Hoch Waste!,' embracing the material base reality of the body as its site of meaning.[173] He lacks the ability to incite tragic laughter; the incapability of uniting with the 'beyond' of existence through laughter leaves Tarr jammed in the world of pose, appearance, shell, and mask. He does not possess the skill, which Kreisler wields wonderfully, to use these shells and postures in a Bergsonian light to rouse grotesquerie and throw flesh in Death's face, uniting with all those who have and will have rejoiced in such figurative carnivals. Meaning is not in a soul that is directly opposed to the material body, rather it is the collision and unification of the soul and body—through a harnessing of dualisms—that provides the opportunity for transcendence.

Tarr is a semi-satirical character who cannot negotiate the divide of the Art / Life relation, and this dialectic is criticized by Lewis in 'Vortex: Be thyself" in which he states that you must 'talk with two tongues.' Tarr is unable to do so because he is a caricature caught in the Apollonian and Dionysian impulses (ascetic art / sexual life), unable to muster up enough power to re-contain the 'sane duality.' According to Kush, 'Tarr fails in acting solely on theory, while Kreisler succeeds disastrously in converting dream into action.'[174] Lewis is advocating a position outside of such dualities, outside of the system of dichotomous discourse, obliterating the self / other, individual / collective, authentic / inauthentic, material / spiritual, and art / life bifurcation of meaning and the resulting limitations on possibility. In nearly satirizing (or at least making them appear slightly ridiculous) the characters of Tarr and Kreisler, Lewis is attempting to escape the boundaries of philosophy and literature, falling into the conceptual abyss between Nietzsche and Derrida. He is searching for the transformations in consciousness available only after Derrida began deconstruction, which by definition must be able to maintain two contradictory affirmations simultaneously and 'talk with two tongues.'

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[172] Ibid, p 164
[173] Ibid, p 302
[174] Thomas Kush, *Wyndham Lewis's Pictorial Integer* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Research Press, 1981), p 72

Lewis's satire, laughter, and grotesquerie attempt to bridge a series of dualities through a sublimation of categorical boundaries: the body is not made up of simply inner and outer substance, but rather an entire system of interlocking 'kernels' and 'mummy cases.' The body has become essentially tragic, made up of fractured images of something that was once thought to be whole. Corbett has commented that 'the bodies of the Tyros on their wooden chairs in their neutral space, dissolve almost subliminally on closer inspection. They suggest the idea of mutilation, as the chair legs become crutches and stumps on which the figures hobble or bob.'[175] The fragility of the body is replaced in Lewis's paintings and novels with a fantasy of its impregnability, a delusion of a protective shell, manifesting itself in Tarr's illusion of the Individual and the metal barring of the text to ward off feminine languaging. Kreisler is fully metamorphosed into his environment, fluidly shifting in and out of the women at the Lipmann dance, in and out of spaces. The sadness of Kreisler rests in his grotesquerie and Lewis's descriptions of the shell of the tragic, laughing body in *The Wild Body* is infused with this Kreislerian sadness:

> My body is large, white and savage. But all the fierceness has become transfigured into *laughter*. It still looks like a visi-gothic fighting-machine, but it is in reality a *laughing* machine. As I have remarked, when I laugh I gnash my teeth, which is another brutal survival and a thing laughter has taken over from war. Everywhere where formerly I would fly at throats, I now howl with laughter. That is me.[176]

The mechanized body is built in response to the 'war'—here a fictional war, but there is also a hint at the First World War—as a method of combating the destruction of the idea of the natural body, a destruction invented and continued throughout Modernism. Whilst Joyce and Woolf were cutting up the body into its subjective and objective elements, Lewis was building a bulwark against such easy distinctions; he busied himself with inventing new interruptions (the '=') of the natural textual body, which functioned to shatter both the subjective and objective categories for a unique recombination.

*Tarr* is not entirely satire nor tragedy, as neither of these impulses are controlled and sustained throughout the text; Lewis provides only snaps of pure satire and tragedy as he conducts a carnivalesque laughter directed at all, with the grinning Tyro acting as his spokesman. The characters are caught in a menacing silence of repressed violence, which was to continue throughout Lewis's literary career. It is a hysterical silence, as in *The Revenge for Love*, 'of such a

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[175] David Peters Corbett (Ed), "War and Wyndham Lewis's Tyros" in *Wyndham Lewis and Art of Modern War* (NY: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p 120

[176] Wyndham Lewis, *The Wild Body: A Soldier of Humour and Other Stories* (New York: Haskell House, 1970), p 4

quality that if it continued a very little longer, spontaneous combustion must occur in response to it.'[177] The laughter in *Tarr* is both a cathartic purge and a metallic stillness. The Lipmann party is the prelude to the deluge of satires that were to follow *Tarr*, all of which perpetuate Lewis's Enemy-status whilst effecting a Bergsonian checkmating of the ridiculous Bourgeois-Bohemian pose. These satirical characters, however, possess an 'exuberant hysterical truth,' which the bodies of Tarr and Kreisler are meant to exemplify:

> Boswell's Johnson, Mr. Veneering, Malvolio, Bouvard and Pécuchet, the 'commissaire' in *Crime and Punishment*, do not live; they are congealed and frozen into logic, and an exuberant hysterical truth. They transcend life and are complete ciphers, but they are monuments of dead imperfection. Their only significance is their egoism. So the great intuitive figures of creation live with the universal egoism of the poet. This 'Realism' is satire. Satire is the great Heaven of Ideas, where you meet the titans of red laughter; it is just below intuition, and life charged with black illusion.[178]

The initial '*deadness*' of such characters is enacted and reinvigorated through the eyes of the poet, the artistic gaze that at once kills and resurrects. Tarr himself, with his quenched artistic drive, has the *ability* to bring about the 'swing' of grotesque realism that makes the 'Heaven of Ideas' possible, as when he is analogized to Don Quixote, the Master Dreamer:

> His sardonic dream of life got him, as a sort of Quixotic dreamer of inverse illusions, blows from the swift arms of windmills and attacks from indignant and perplexed mankind. He, instead of having conceived the world as more chivalrous and marvelous than it was, had conceived it as emptied of all dignity, sense and generousness. The drovers and publicans were angry at not being mistaken for legendary chivalry and châtelaines. =The very windmills resented not being taken for giants! The curse of humour was in him, anchoring him at one end of the see-saw whose movement and contradiction was life.[179]

In his individualistic, artistic dreams Tarr does not understand the material life into which he is thrown, because life is full of 'contradiction.' According to Nietzsche, in *The Gay Science*, only the aristocrat of the spirit, who is free from the self-torture of herd mentality, and who, consequently, combines great instinctual energies with great creative energies, has the potential for true freedom. True understanding and transcendence (the true freedom) is accomplished through the material, subjective experience of things (like the body); the potential to achieve true freedom is

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[177] Wyndham Lewis, *The Revenge for Love*, ed. Reed Way Dasenbrock (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1991), p 237

[178] Wyndham Lewis, *The Wild Body: A Soldier of Humour and Other Stories* (New York: Haskell House, 1970), p 235

[179] Wyndham Lewis, *Tarr: The 1918 Version*, ed. Paul O'Keefe (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1990), p 243

accomplished through a combination of instinct *and* creativity, the will *and* the consciousness. It is laughter, mostly in the forms of satire and grotesquerie, which would allow Tarr and Kreisler to deconstruct the separate realms of imagination and reality to escape the 'see-saw' and properly forge an artistic body through their unification. They are searching for the Vorticist ideal: 'No clear cut lines, except on condition of being dual and prolonged.'[180]

Lewis deploys fragmentation not by vague analogy to the supposed chaos of the modern world, but as part of an ascetic discipline in which thought is defamiliarized and transformed by an encounter with its own borders: the '=,' '|,' 'mummy case' or harsh black lines separating the color planes of the Tyro. In satire and the externality of his prose, Lewis is creating a literary landscape that is inherently self-caricaturing through a deconstruction of characters into puppets. Every character is made into an image, and every image in the novel is broadcast as a caricature. As has been shown, these caricatures unwittingly become comic in their reliance on gesture, setting up an unending system of satire in the novel. Lewis' novel exemplifies the crazy play between the high and the low body, the inner and outer psyche, and in doing so portrays the inherent absurdity of the human condition:

> It is comparatively easy to see that another man, as an animal, is absurd; but it is far more difficult to observe oneself in that hard and exquisite light. But no man has ever continued to live who has observed himself in that manner for longer than a flash. Such consciousness must be of the nature of a thunderbolt. Laughter is only summer-lightning. But is occasionally takes on the dangerous form of absolute revelation.[181]

The fracturing of the body is the most absurd feature of modern man, and generates his contradictory nature; Lewis's inability to control the body's fracturing into contradictions—exploding like laughter—and the powerlessness to render it into classical beauty are the novel's most decidedly modern features. The force of laughter to highlight the body's broken nature *can* bring us in touch with some form of transcendence, but it is a transcendence that is just as terrifying and impermanent as the 'sane duality.'

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[180] Wyndham Lewis, 'Vortex No. 1: Be Thyself' in *BLAST 2* (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1981), p 91

[181] Wyndham Lewis, *The Wild Body: A Soldier of Humour and Other Stories* (New York: Haskell House, 1970), p 245

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