THE MACHINERY OF SELF

IDENTITY, MODERNITY AND REPETITION

IN THE

CRITICAL THEORY

OF

WYNDHAM LEWIS

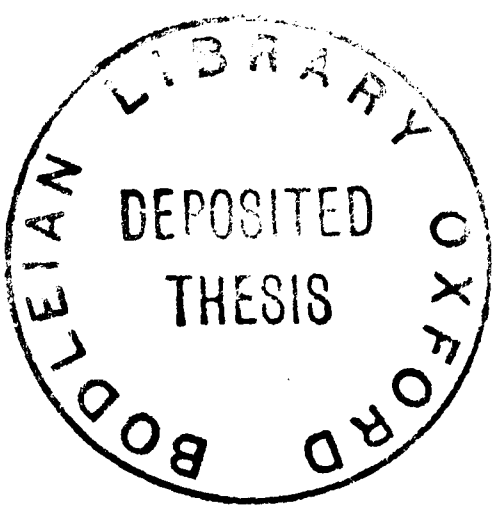
Charles LaTrobe Graham Blake

Wadham College

University of Oxford

DPhil in English Language and Literature

Hilary Term 2005



ABSTRACT

The Machinery of Self:
Identity, Modernity and Repetition
in
the Critical Theory
of
Wyndham Lewis

Charles Blake

Wadham College, Oxford

DPhil in English
Language and
Literature

Hilary Term 2005

Of the major literary modernists writing in English in the early years of the twentieth century, arguably the most misunderstood and critically neglected has been Wyndham Lewis. It is the contention of this dissertation that Lewis should be reassessed, not only as a vitally important writer and artist, but also as one the most significant critical theorists of modernity. Accordingly, the central aim of this dissertation is to demonstrate that Lewis, whose oeuvre extended from fiction, drama, poetry and literary criticism to radical experimentation in painting and drawing, to a considerable range of non-fictional, political and philosophical writings which would now be classified as critical and cultural theory, was not only a highly significant theorist of his own period, but also, pre-emptive of many of the concerns that have come to be identified with postmodernism and its aftermath. The essence of this untimeliness, it is argued, lies firstly with his consistent engagement with the

nihilism that he believed to be the engine of modernity, and secondly, with his creative deployment of the ideas of a range of continental philosophers from Kant and Schopenhauer to Nietzsche and Bergson to counter that nihilism and – in Nietzsche's terminology – to "overcome" it. In the process, and particularly in his exploration of temporality and spatiality as they configure human identity, Lewis provided a philosophical commentary on the modern that in many ways paralleled and prefigured the intellectual trajectory of major twentieth century thinkers such as Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin, and subsequently, Gilles Deleuze and Jean Baudrillard. The genealogy of these parallels and pre-figurations will be traced through the use of the concept of repetition as it is deployed by Lewis in his critical theory and fiction, from his early short stories to his final theological fantasies.

Acknowledgements

This dissertation would not have been possible without the initial encouragement, patience and critical response of Dr. David Bradshaw of Worcester College, Oxford, Prof. Christopher Butler of Christchurch College, Oxford, and Dr. John Kelly of St John's College, Oxford, and the sustained critical response and constant support of Dr. Linnie Blake of Manchester Metropolitan University.

Where does consciousness begin, and where end? Who can draw any line? Is not everything interwoven with everything? Is not machinery linked with animal life in an infinite variety of ways? The shell of a hen's egg is made of a delicate white ware and is a machine as much as an egg-cup is... A 'machine' is only a 'device.'

Samuel Butler[1]

Descartes called animals *machines*: they had not the rational spark. But men use their rational spark so unequally, and are so much machines too, on the face of it, that generalization is a very superficial one—one that you would expect in "the antechamber of Truth" (as Leibniz called cartesian philosophy), but not in Truth's presence.

Wyndham Lewis[2]

Chronos is the present which alone exists. It makes of the past and future its two oriented dimensions, so that one goes always from the past to the future—but only to the degree that presents follow one another inside partial worlds or partial systems.

Gilles Deleuze[3]

---

[1] Samuel Butler, Erewhon (London: Penguin, 1970) 173-174.

[2] Wyndham Lewis, Time and Western Man (1927; Santa Barbara, CA: Black Sparrow Press, 1993) 303.

[3] Gilles Deleuze, The Logic of Sense, Mark Lester with Charles Stivale (New York: Columbia UP, 1990) 77.

CONTENTS

	Abbreviations	7
	Introduction	9
Chapter One	The Art of War	66
Chapter Two	Inhuman Geometry	120
Chapter Three	Time and Motion	171
Chapter Four	Death and Repetition	208
Chapter Five	Agon of the Stars	249
Chapter Six	Satanic Laughter	295
	Conclusion	363
	Bibliography	372

Abbreviations

The following abbreviations will be used to refer to specific editions of works by Wyndham Lewis cited in this dissertation, and referred to in the text in parentheses by the initials indicated, followed by page numbers:

ARB — The Art of Being Ruled. 1926. Ed. Reed Way Dasenbrock. Santa Barbara, CA: Black Sparrow Press, 1989.

B_1 — BLAST No.1 1914. Santa Barbara, CA: Black Sparrow Press, 1989

B_2 — BLAST No.2: War Number. 1915. Santa Barbara, CA: Black Sparrow Press, 1983.

BB — Blasting and Bombardiering. 1937. London: John Calder Ltd, 1982.

C — The Childermass. 1955. Rev. ed., London: Jupiter Books, 1965.

CC — Creatures of Habit & Creatures of Change: Essays on Art, Literature & Society 1914-1956. Ed. Paul Edwards. Santa Barbara, CA: Black Sparrow Press, 1989.

CPP — Collected Poems and Plays. Ed. Alan Munton. Manchester: Carcanet Press, 1979.

CWB — The Complete Wild Body. Ed. Bernard Lafourcade. Santa Barbara, CA: Black Sparrow Press, 1982.

DP & DS — The Diabolical Principle and the Dithyrambic Spectator. London: Chatto and Windus, 1931.

H — Hitler London: Chatto and Windus, 1931.

MB — The Mysterious Mr Bull. London: Robert Hale, 1938.

MF — Malign Fiesta. 1955. London: Jupiter Books, 1966.

MWA — Men Without Art. 1934. Ed. Seamus Cooney. Santa Barbara, CA: Black Sparrow Press, 1987.

P Paleface: The Philosophy of the "Melting Pot". London: Chatto and Windus, 1929.

RA Rude Assignment: A Narrative of my Career up to Date. 1951. Ed. Toby Foshay. Santa Barbara, CA: Black Sparrow Press, 1984.

SB Snooty Baronet. 1932. Ed. Bernard Lafourcade. Santa Barbara, CA:
Black Sparrow Press, 1984.

T_1 Tarr. 1918. Ed. Paul O'Keefe. Santa Barbara, CA: Black Sparrow Press, 1990.

T_2 Tarr. 1928. Rev. ed. London: Penguin Books, 1982.

TWM Time and Western Man. 1927. Ed. Paul Edwards. Santa Barbara, CA: Black Sparrow Press, 1993.

WLOA Wyndham Lewis on Art: Collected Writings. Ed. Walter Michel and C.J. Fox. London: Thames and Hudson, 1969.

Chapter One

Introduction

> The kind of screen that is being built up between reality and us, the 'dark night of the soul' into which each individual is relapsing, the intellectual shoddiness of so much of the thought responsible for the artist's reality, or 'nature' today seem to point to the desirability of a new, and if necessary shattering, criticism of 'modernity' as it stands at the present. (P 106)
>
> ...if light is the element of violence, then one must contest light with a certain other light, in order to avoid the worst violence....[4]
>
> Nihilism stands at the door: whence comes this uncanniest of all guests?[5]

Although Wyndham Lewis frequently claimed to have found or to have adopted a position based, as this study will demonstrate, on the aesthetics of vision and the metaphysics of repetition as the primary determinants of his social and fictional ontology, the rebarbative political orientation towards "some modified form of fascism"[6] that he appeared to favour in the late 1920s and 1930s has often been cited, by his acolytes at least, as one of the more persuasive

---

[4] Jacques Derrida, "Violence and Metaphysics," Writing and Difference, trans. Alan Bass (1978; London: Routledge, 1990) 117.

[5] F.W. Nietzsche, The Will to Power, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale (1967; New York: Vintage Books, 1968) 7.

[6] This citation is from a chapter entitled "Fascism as an Alternative" in The Art of Being Ruled, where the complete sentence reads: "And yet for anglo-saxon countries today some modified form of fascism would probably be best." (ARB 321)

explanations for his all too evident neglect within the canon of twentieth century literary studies. However, while his ill-judged and often self-contradictory political assertions in the inter-war period[7] may well have contributed to the conspiracy of silence that Lewis believed had enveloped him in his own lifetime, as a number of critics have since indicated, this in itself is hardly justification for that silence in the years following his death in 1957. This is especially so when these assertions are set against the background of political extremism explored and promoted, often in shrill and highly provocative terms, by some of his now far more illustrious friends, colleagues and contemporaries.

There are the more obvious examples: Pound and Eliot, or Lawrence and Yeats in the English canon not to mention Heidegger, Benn, and Jünger in Germany D'Annunzio and Marinetti in Italy or Celine in France, most of whose literary, critical or philosophical writings have by now been scrutinized, debated and re-appraised against their more extreme exhortations in the hope of projecting some small shaft of illumination into the almost palpable darkness implicit in the relationship between certain forms of experimental art or thought and the politics of the far right in the first half of the twentieth century.[8] With a relatively

---

[7] As, for instance, in his articles on emergent Nazi-ism in 1931 written for Time & Tide, and collected in the volume Hitler. See, by way of example, the chapter entitled "Adolph Hitler, a Man of Peace," in Wyndham Lewis, Hitler (London: Chatto & Windus, 1931) 44-51.

[8] The literature on this is vast. For some general examples which have been invaluable to this study, however, see: Ernest Nolte, Three Faces of Fascism: Action Française, Italian Fascism, National Socialism (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1965); John

modest collection of exceptions, however, such reconsideration does not yet appear to have been the case for Wyndham Lewis on anything like a comparable scale.[9]

Harrison, The Reactionaries: W.B. Yeats, Wyndham Lewis, Ezra Pound, T.S.Eliot, D.H. Lawrence (London: Victor Gollancz, 1971) ; Alastair Hamilton, The Appeal of Fascism: A Study of Intellectuals and Fascism (London: Anthony Blond, 1971); Elizabeth Cullingford, Yeats, Ireland & Fascism (New York: New York UP, 1981); Cairns Craig, Yeats, Eliot, Pound and the Politics of Poetry (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1982); Alice Yeager Caplan, Reproductions of Banality: Fascism, Literature and French Intellectual Life (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986); Robert Casillo, The Genealogy of Demons: Anti-Semitism, Fascism, and the Myths of Ezra Pound (Evanston, Ill: Northwestern UP, 1988); Russell A. Berman, Modern Culture and Critical Theory: Art, Politics and the Legacy of the Frankfurt School (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989); Victor Farias, Heidegger and Nazism, ed. Joseph Margolis and Tom Rockmore, trans. G. R. Ricci (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1989); Jean- Francois Lyotard, Heidegger and "the jews" (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990); Phillipe Lacoue-Labarthe, Heidegger, Art, Politics, trans. Chris Turner (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990); Andrew Hewitt, Fascist Modernism: Aesthetics, Politics, and the Avant Garde (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1993).

9 The most significant critical and scholarly appraisals between Lewis's death in 1957 and the end of the century were: Hugh Kenner, Wyndham Lewis (London: Methuen & Co., 1954); Geoffrey Wagner, Wyndham Lewis: Portrait of the Artist as Enemy (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957); and then, after something of a hiatus, D.G.Bridson, The Filibuster: A Study of the Political Ideas of Wyndham Lewis (London: Cassell, 1972); Robert T. Chapman, Wyndham Lewis: Fictions and Satires (London: Vision Press, 1973);Timothy Materer, Wyndham Lewis the Novelist (Detroit: Wayne State U.P, 1976) and Vortex: Pound, Eliot , and Lewis (Ithica and London,: Cornell U.P., 1979); Fredric Jameson, Fables of Aggression: Wyndham Lewis, the Modernist as Fascist (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1979); Reed Way Dasenbrock The Literary Vorticism of Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis: Towards the Condition of Painting (Baltimore: John Hopkins U.P., 1985); SueEllen Campbell, The Enemy Opposite: The Outlaw Criticism of Wyndham Lewis (Athens: Ohio U.P., 1988); David Ayers, Wyndham Lewis and Western Man (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1992): Toby Foshay, Wyndham Lewis and the Avant-Garde: The Politics of Intellect (London: McGill-Queen's U.P., 1992); Tom Normand, Wyndham Lewis the Artist: Holding the Mirror up to Politics (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1992); Vincent Sherry, Ezra Pound, Wyndham Lewis, and Radical Modernism (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 1993); Scott W. Klein, The Fictions of James Joyce and Wyndham Lewis: Monsters of Nature and Design (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1994). Later publications within this period such as Paul Edwards, ed. Volcanic Heaven: Essays on Wyndham Lewis's Painting and Writing (Santa Rosa,: Black Sparrow Press, 1996); David Peters Corbett, ed. Wyndham Lewis and the Art of Modern War (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998); and especially, Paul Edwards, Wyndham Lewis: Painter and Writer (New Haven, Conn: Yale UP, 2000), would seem to indicate that this situation may now be changing, in large part due, undoubtedly, to Edwards's tireless promotion of Lewis's cultural and critical importance.

This comparative critical neglect of Lewis is doubly curious in that whether as a diagnostician of modernity and its discontents, as a one-man factory of the English avant-garde, or as a satirist of the contemporary mores of London's literary society, his importance was rarely underestimated by those writers who have subsequently been designated their own constellations in the firmament of English literary modernism. One has only to recall D.H Lawrence's acerbic response to Paleface,[10] for example, or Virginia Woolf's melodramatic reaction to Les analysis of "Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown" in Men Without Art, and her rumoured response to his apparent caricatures of her in The Roaring Queen and The Revenge for Love, [11] for instances of both his casual malice (Lewis had no qualms whatsoever about exploiting the *ad hominem* possibilities of literary criticism where the living were concerned) and in the latter case, its amplification within the closed milieus of Bloomsbury or Chelsea.[12] On a more positive note, the immense praise lavished on Lewis by distinguished peers such as Pound, Yeats and Eliot should not be forgotten when considering the significance of his work for the contemporary field of creative prose and what has subsequently been designated as modernist critical theory. Eliot, for example, took every

---

[10] Lawrence's most overt attack on Lewis may be found in D.H.Lawrence, "Introduction to Edward Dahlberg's Bottom Dogs," in Phoenix: the Posthumous Papers of D. H. Lawrence, ed. Edward D. McDonald (London: Heinemann, 1936) 271. On Lewis as the model for the artist Duncan Forbes in Lady Chatterley's Lover, see Jeffrey Meyers, The Enemy: A Biography of Wyndham Lewis (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980) 144-145, and Wagner 152 n30.

[11] Meyers 162-166.

[12] Relations between Lewis and the Sitwells were rather more complex. See Meyers 114-116.

opportunity to promote the author of Tarr on its appearance as subsequently, and in one late article on Lewis from the 1950s, maintained the consistency of his earlier assessment by describing him, apparently without reservation, as "our most important living novelist."[13] Even bearing in mind Eliot's characteristic generosity to those he wished to support from the literary avant-garde, this is surely a very bold claim to be made by so major a poet and critic on behalf of a neglected colleague. Equally, the mixed compliment paid to Lewis by Joyce in his "panglossian" engagement with him across the pages of Finnegans Wake[14] as well as Yeats's enraptured, albeit rather puzzled response to the first published volume of his speculative theological fantasy, The Childermass,[15] (as well as to Time and Western Man and The Art of Being Ruled)[16], and the similarly positive assessment of H.G. Wells to the same volume,[17] and Rebecca West to Tarr,[18]

---

[13] T. S. Eliot in The Hudson Review (Winter, 1955) n.d. Cited in Wagner ix.

[14] See especially, Wagner 168-188, and Klein, passim. There is a growing volume of secondary material on the Joyce-Lewis relationship, literary and otherwise, a valuable summary (up to 1994) of which may be found in Paul Edwards, "Wyndham Lewis versus James Joyce: Shaun versus Shem," in Sarah Briggs, Paul Hyland and Neil Sammells, ed. Reviewing Ireland: Essays and Interviews from 'Irish Studies Review' (Bath: Sulis Press, 1998) 164-174.

[15] See W.B. Yeats letter to Lewis (RA 136-137 & 141n.6); Lewis to Yeats, The Letters of Wyndham Lewis, ed., W.K. Rose (London: Methuen & Co, 1963) 181-183.

[16] Timothy Materer, "Lewis and the Patriarchs: Augustus John, W. B. Yeats, T. Sturge Moore," in Jeffery Meyers, ed. Wyndham Lewis: A Revaluation (London: The Athlone Press, 1980) 51-55; Meyers, The Enemy 156-157. For background to the relationship between Yeats and Lewis, see Peter Caracciolo and Paul Edwards, "'In Fundamental Agreement': Yeats and Wyndham Lewis," Yeats Annual 13, ed. Warwick Gould: Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1997) 127-174.

[17] "You have a mind alien to mine. But I find myself more and more deeply impressed by your vivid imagination, your power of evocation and your profound queer Humour." H. G. Wells letter to Lewis; cited in Hugh Gordon Porteus, Wyndham Lewis: A Discursive Exposition (London: Desmond Harmsworth, 1932) 4-5. See also, Lewis to Wells, in Rose 180.

would seem to indicate that the "lonely old volcano of the right"[19] as W.H. Auden once described him, has, and for whatever reasons, been somewhat unfairly treated by posterity.

The purpose of this study is not, however, to engage directly with the vagaries of academic fashion so as to suggest Lewis, currently the most obscure of the so-called "Men of 1914," for canonization along with Joyce, Pound and Eliot,[20] or indeed Yeats, Lawrence or Woolf, in the contemporary vision of the ascendancy of English literary modernism. Indeed, whilst his literary productions will be referred to and engaged with throughout this dissertation, it is on his critical and theoretical writings, and specifically what he termed his "philosophical criticism,"[21] rather than his fiction per se, or indeed his remarkable work in the plastic arts, that the following contextualization of Lewis within and beyond modernity will be focusing its attention.

---

[18] Rebecca West, rev. of Tarr by Wyndham Lewis, Nation 107. 17 Aug. 1918: 176.

[19] W. H. Auden, "Letter to Lord Byron," The English Auden: Poems, Essays and Dramatic Writings 1927-1939, ed. Edward Mendelson (1977; London: Faber & Faber, 1986) 198.

[20] Cyril Connolly in 1969 suggested that the "Lewis Lobby" was growing more influential, and wondered whether "in future will we talk about 'Eliot, Joyce, Pound and Lewis's?" If so, that "future" has yet to arrive. See Cyril Connolly, The Sunday Times 30 Mar. 1969: 11.

[21] On the possible origins of Lewis's notion and use of "philosophical criticism," see Wagner 3: n.2.

To claim a restricted focus on a seemingly specific sub-genre within Lewis's oeuvre such as "philosophical criticism" is not, however, as it might initially appear, to suggest restricting a reading to works that advertise their philosophical credentials explicitly, nor is its selectivity indicative of an approach arbitrarily imposed on the oeuvre itself. For while some of his writings: Time and Western Man, obviously, but also the first half of The Childermass and sections of Paleface and The Diabolocal Principle, as well as a later work such as The Writer and the Absolute, are very evidently concerned with issues of a broadly philosophical nature, and with commentary on those issues, it is a fundamental characteristic of the Lewisian text that these concerns refuse to stay bounded within a specific representational frame, and tend to permeate or penetrate everything he wrote. These concerns tend, that is, to confound fixed generic distinctions at every turn, and that, indeed, as Lewis would affirm in a variety of modes on a variety of occasions in his writings, is part of their figural and structural function within his work.

One of the consequences of this dissemination of philosophical and meta-philosophical commentary through a variety of often conflictual styles, registers and levels in his writing is that the reader first approaching Lewis's "philosophical criticism" in search of thematic continuity or formal argument is faced with a series of problems. To begin with, Lewis's constant attempts to establish links or correspondences between what might initially seem to be

entirely incommensurable phenomena, his almost pathological tendency towards reiteration, self-quotation, and self-contradiction, his unwavering bellicosity towards certain philosophical schools and the cultural, artistic and political movements he seemed to believe derived from them, together with his militant assertions of the value of "common sense" as he finds it, for example, in the immaterialism of Bishop Berkeley, or the satirical neo-Lamarkianism of Samuel Butler, may appear to this hypothetical reader at best to undermine the often startling insights that undoubtedly occur in his critical prose, and at worst, to allow those insights to descend into a chaos of complete unintelligibility. From these tendencies alone, it is then far from surprising that F.R. Leavis, hardly a friend to philosophical speculation at the best of times, and especially when he felt it challenged the sanctity of literary criticism, or in the case of Lewis, the sanctity of D.H.Lawrence, whose visceral tendencies Lewis had attacked in Paleface, could claim of him that:

> he stands in a paradoxical, high-pitched and excited way, for common sense; he offers us, at the common sense level, perceptions of uncommon intensity, and he is capable of making 'brilliant' connexions. But 'what we ordinarily call thinking' is just what he is incapable of.[22]

While there may be occasions when even the most well-disposed reader of Lewis's critical or theoretical volumes may feel that Leavis has a point, Lewis's own comments on his itinerant apprenticeship in philosophy and its importance to his personal and intellectual development, especially as that development was

---

[22] F.R. Leavis, The Common Pursuit (1952; London: Peregrine Books, 1962) 243.

later affected by his experience in the trenches, go a long way towards explaining the underlying motives for this opacity and seeming disconnectedness in his expositions. In particular, and as they will be considered in the opening chapter of this dissertation, these comments help to illuminate the way in which the style of his expression of philosophical ideas and arguments through a visuo-spatial arrangement of concepts based, at a theoretical level, on what I have termed a principle of repetition, rather than on one of logical or dialectic progression, a style that has confounded so many of his readers over the years, can be shown to have both a genealogy and a justification.

In adopting this focus on the philosophical dimension of Lewis's writings, and in particular, on his radical deployment of the concepts of vision and repetition as fundamental principles whereby space, time and human identity might be reconfigured within and beyond the modern age, so as to overcome what he clearly considered the nihilism underpinning modernity, it should be made clear from the outset that it is not the intention of this study to suggest or to argue that his fictional writings subsist in a realm independent of his criticism and theory, and must therefore be approached according to a distinct set of criteria appropriate to purely literary expression. The unashamedly didactic quality of much of Lewis's literary, dramatic and satirical writing, its interweaving of critical, philosophical or political assertion with the more conventional techniques of fictional development, would, anyway, make it very difficult to justify such an

approach, at least from any of the more traditional angles of critical exposition. Neither, however, is it the intention of this study to take the opposite position and to adopt, at least uncritically, the weaker "post-structuralist" or perhaps more precisely, "deconstructivist" versions of textual perspectivism, which, and whatever their internal diversity of method and object, have conventionally worked according to the assumption that all literary texts will generate propositions containing a theory of their own functioning, just as all non-literary texts will include stylistic elements that enable them to be treated as fictions: a pathos towards the idea of the text which derives, as is so often attested, largely from a particular reading of Nietzsche.[23] Rather, and in relation to Nietzsche's influence on Lewis in particular, as well as on contemporary philosophy, meta-philosophy and critical theory, it is to point out that such generic distinctions in Lewis's work are systematically undermined by virtue of the particular style of intervention that he exploits with considerable gusto and delight in both his literary and critical texts. It is a style of intervention, it will be argued here, whose constant attention to the philosophical implications of space, time and multiplicity in written discourse and the visual image as extrapolated by Lewis in his critical theory from his reading of the consequences for modernity of the

---

[23] For exemplary uses of Nietzsche in this regard, see Jacques Derrida, Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles, trans. Barbara Harlow (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979); "Otobiographies: The teaching of Nietzsche and the Politics of the Proper Name," trans. Avital Ronell, The Ear of the Other: Otobiography, Transference, Translation, ed. Christie V. McDonald., trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Schocken Books, 1985); Paul De Man, Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke and Proust (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1979) 79-131; Sarah Kofman, Nietzsche and Metaphor, trans. Duncan Large (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1993).

"Copernican" revolution inaugurated by Kant, through the philosophical pessimism of Schopenhauer, to the transhuman speculations of Nietzsche and Bergson—openly exploits a certain species of auto-deconstruction.[24] It is a species of auto-deconstruction whose practice, moreover, in direct contrast with much late twentieth century deconstructive thought, is to twist violently and deform the so-called "metaphysics of presence" initially highlighted by Derrida in his early work on Husserl, [25] rather than to seek merely to unravel its operation in the production of truth, fictionality or representation in written discourse. It is a style of intervention that will, for these reasons, be approached both mimetically in relation to Lewis, as well as from a series of perspectives that have also been described as post-Nietzschean in their general orientation, in the violence that they might do to such generic boundaries as are defined by the terms "fiction" or "critical theory" or "philosophy."

At the same time, and by the same token, it will be argued that far from merely reducing fiction to philosophy or philosophy to fiction or to critical theory, Lewis

---

[24] On Lewis and literary deconstruction, see Philip Head, "The Enemy as Deconstructionist?" Wyndham Lewis Annual (1994): 42-48.

[25] On the issue of "presence" and Husserl, see Jacques Derrida, Introduction, The Origin of Geometry by Edmund Husserl, trans. John P. Leavey Jr. (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1989); and, Speech and Phenomena, and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs, trans. David B. Allison (Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1973). The deployment of the idea of a "metaphysics of presence" in literary criticism generally was greatly influenced by the introductions to deconstructive methods and methodologies by, for example, Jonathan Culler, On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983) 89-109; Christopher Norris, Deconstruction: Theory and Practice (London: Methuen, 1982) 42-55.

was, throughout his career, engaged in a form of parallelism between the fictional and the philosophical, between the creative and the conceptual. This was a deliberately vertiginous parallelism, which aimed in both cases to set up a system or machinery for the critical invention of concepts and affects, of objects and processes of both thought and sense, but approached this dual aim from different perspectives and with different tools. It was a parallelism, moreover, which, as I will demonstrate, can be most productively illuminated through reference to the philosophical and literary explorations of one of the most prominent post-Nietzschean thinkers of the latter twentieth century, Gilles Deleuze, whose work, both alone and with his colleague Felix Guattari, together with critical thinking of Theodor Adorno and Walter Benjamin, will provide the theoretical and philosophical underpinnings of this study.[26]

Of the studies which have so far treated this philosophical dimension of Lewis in any detail, for example: E.W.F.Tomlin's brief sketch of his philosophical influences, one of the few places in which Schopenhauer is considered,[27] Paul Edwards's and Alistair Davies's discussions of Lewis and Nietzsche;[28] Geoffrey

---

[26] Contrasts and distinctions between Derrida and Deleuze in regard to Nietzsche and the notions and methodologies of deconstruction and presence/absence have generated a considerable amount of commentary since Deleuze's death in 1995. For an overview of the salient issues, see Constantin v. Boundas, ed. Angelaki 5:2: Rhizomatics, Genealogy, Deconstruction, (Aug 2000), passim.

[27] E.W.F.Tomlin, "The Philosophical Influences," in Meyers, ed. Revaluation 29-46.

[28] See Paul Edwards in 'Wyndham Lewis and Nietzsche: "How much Truth does a Man Require?"', Wyndham Lewis: Letteratura/Pittura, ed. Giovanni Cianci (Palermo:

Wagner, SueEllen Campbell and David Ayers on Lewis and Bergson,[29] and Toby Foshay on, once again, Nietzsche, as well as on Stirner,[30] most have tended to consider this dimension either in relation to Lewis's appropriation of its elements for literary expression, or in terms of a more general intellectual history of Lewis and modernism, in which philosophy is treated as merely one of many "characters" on an overcrowded conceptual stage.[31] Both of these general approaches, while often highly illuminating in themselves, nonetheless do Lewis a disservice in terms of the remarkable originality of his approach to the discipline of philosophy itself. For while he may not have had the formal philosophical training of an Eliot, or the polymathic range of a Joyce, or even the technical advantages of the translator and exegesist bestowed all too briefly on his comrade in arms, T.E. Hulme, whose influence on the early Lewis, especially in regard to his discussions of Nietzsche and Bergson, and to a lesser extent Wilhelm Worringer, is undeniable,[32] his exploitation of philosophical ideas was, nonetheless, both highly sophisticated and completely unique in the field of literary modernism.

Sellerio, 1982) 203-217; Alistair Davies, "Tarr: a Nietzschean Novel," in Meyers, ed. Revaluation 107-119.

[29] Wagner 185-188; 222-225; Campbell 94-116; Ayers 18-29.

[30] Foshay 61-71; 94-101; 30-33.

[31] For a useful account of the philosophical dimension of Lewisian criticism in Time and Western Man, see P.J. Bracewell, "Space, Time and the Artist," PhD diss., Sheffield U, 1990.

[32] On the importance of Worringer for Lewis as mediated by Hulmean Modernist theory, see Michael H. Levenson, A Genealogy of Modernism: A Study of English Literary Doctrine 1908-1922 (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986) 94-101.

In terms of Lewis's fascination with nihilism and its consequences, for example, whilst important Lewisian critics such as Hugh Kenner and Toby Foshay have discussed Lewis's relationship with nihilism at some length, and in the case of the latter, have discussed that relationship as mediated by Nietzsche through Heidegger's attempted "completion" of Nietzsche,[33] it has generally been nihilism characterized as an affect, or as a congeries of affects, rather than as a philosophical problem as such, that has been addressed. Thus the notorious conclusion to Men Without Art:

> Regarded as great herds of performing animals (the *behaviourist* view)—small, mischievous, physically insignificant and mentally extremely prone to endless imitation, very susceptible to hypnosis—as individuals and in the aggregate—regarded in that manner our *tricks*—and our 'fine arts are only part of our repertoire of tricks, not necessarily our *finest* tricks, even—are indeed too unimportant a matter to detain us for more so much as the twinkling of an eye. (MWA 231-2)

—has been read by Kenner, for instance, not only as a critique of behaviourist psychology, which it undoubtedly is, but also, because of the enormous instability of Lewisian irony when dealing with questions of the value of the human, as an indication of Lewis's own perspective as itself a kind of nihilism.[34] More pertinent to the broader philosophical issue of nihilism, though, is Lewis's

---

33 Martin Heiddeger, "The Word of Nietzsche: 'God is Dead'," The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays, trans. W. Lovitt (New York: Harper & Row, 1977) 53-112; Nietzsche: Vols 1 - 4, trans. David Farrell Krell (1961; New York: Harper Collins, 1987).

34 Hugh Kenner, Wyndham Lewis (London: Methuen & Co, 1954) 108-117.

underlying obsession, which underpins particularly his work of the twenties, but resurfaces throughout his life, with

> ...the fundamental question of whether we should set out to transcend our human condition (as formerly Nietzsche and then Bergson claimed that we should); or whether we should translate into human terms the whole of our datum." (TWM 110)

It is a question which derives from Kant's famous attempt to reconcile the notion of man as a determined object, capable of scientific scrutiny, on the one hand, and man as a finite and heteronymous subject, on the other; a project which then leads him to his formulation of transcendental idealism in the first extended section of his groundbreaking Critique of Pure Reason. It is an attempted reconciliation, which, however, and for all its brilliance, never quite achieves its aims.[35] As a consequence, Kant inadvertently opens up the disparity between the transience of the human as event, as the unique instance of person-hood, and the purportedly transcendental gaze of philosophy in terms of the human subject as the nexus of consciousness, that becomes the gateway to subsequent notions of the post-human or trans-human in Nietzsche, Bergson and others.[36] And it is

---

35 This has generally been considered the case since F.H. Jacobi's famous comment on Kant's transcendental idealism soon after the publication of the first Critique, in which he suggests that its lack of completion is inevitable, and in so doing, opens up the possibility of nihilism. For a thorough critical survey of responses to Kant from Jacobi and others, see F. Beiser, The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Hegel (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard UP, 1987).

36 For commentary and elaboration on this tendency, see Teilhard de Chardin, The Phenomenon of Man (London: Fontana, 1964); Jean Francois Lyotard, The Inhuman: Reflections on Time, trans. Geoff Bennington & Rachel Bowlby (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991); Keith Ansell-Pearson, Viroid Life: Perspectives on Nietzsche and the Transhuman Condition (London & New York: Routledge, 1997).

this same questioning of the finitude of the human which, in spite of his own ostensible viewpoint, pace Bergson and Nietzsche in particular, that "we are creatures of a certain kind, with no indication that a radical change is imminent" (TWM 110), nonetheless exercises Lewis throughout his critical and theoretical writings. Moreover, it is its exploration in and through fiction and dramatized criticism that results, by way of its being a literary device as much as a philosophical questioning, in the anti-human or inhuman or arguably —and this is so indicative of Lewis's contradictory nature—*post*-human portrayals of individuals and collectivities for which he became so notorious in his lifetime.

From this perspective, therefore, where his fiction or drama or indeed his verse are engaged with directly in this study, it will be in the spirit, if not necessarily to the letter, of one of Lewis's most extraordinary literary creations, the one-legged novelist Kell-Imrie from the satirical thriller, Snooty Baronet, who affirms his own position, and by implication —it could be argued—that of Lewis also,[37] in the following terms:

> I am not a narrative writer. As to being a "fiction" writer, I could not bring myself to write down that I am not that... Such claim as I may have to be a man of letters, reposes only upon the fact that my investigations into the nature of human beings have led me to employ the arts of the myth-maker, in order to better present (for the purposes of popular study) my human specimens. Henri

---

37 Materer 98-111. In its general orientation, therefore, this study is close to the spirit of G. Wagner and of Robert T. Chapman, both of whom focus primarily on the critical thinker over the literary artist.

Fabre dramatized his insects in that way. (SB 16)

As Kell Imrie's observation would seem to indicate, then, and as any extended examination of Lewis's oeuvre will tend to confirm, what Lewis was centrally concerned with throughout his working life, and in both his fiction and criticism, was less myth-making per se, than the construction of a kind of philosophical anthropology, refracted through a tactical, and thereby flexible — and always potentially dissipative — synthesis between the arts of socio-cultural polemic and philosophical criticism, on the one hand, and those of fiction and fabulation, as well as a kind of aesthetic formalism, on the other. But where the tradition of philosophical anthropology, at least since Kant and the subsequent generation of idealists, had been concerned primarily with the centrality of the human to the world of its representations, the Lewisian version was one in which the concept of the human, at least for the masses, whom he invariably appeared to deem to be little more than automata anyway, was to be decentred, and violently so, from its traditional place in the post-enlightenment scheme of things and returned, at least superficially, to its more mechanistic role in the writings of La Mettrie or the Baron De Holbach.[38]

While the armies of vacuous and malevolent puppets who occupy his fiction and

---

[38] See, for instance, Paul Henri Thiry, baron D'Holbach, "No need of theology... only reason...," n.t.; Julien Offray de la Mettrie, "Man a Machine," n.t., The Portable Enlightenment Reader, ed. Isaac Kramnick (London: Penguin Books, 1995) 140-150; 202-209.

criticism might seem to indicate this aggressively mechanistic worldview, however, Lewis was nothing if not ambivalent in his mechanism, as he was also towards the vitalism that he so consistently and explicitly condemned. Nor was he ever entirely consistent in the radical distinction he asserted on many occasions between art, on the one hand, and life, on the other; between the creatures of the text or canvas and those of the phenomenal world, and this inconsistency is as central to his thinking on nihilism as it is to his reconstruction of philosophical anthropology. In his seminal essay "Inferior Religions" from 1917 (revised 1927), for example, part of his Wild Body collection which Eliot described as "the most indubitable evidence of genius, the most powerful piece of imaginative thought, of anything that Mr Lewis has written,"[39] Lewis announced his intention to demonstrate what he described as "a new human mathematic" in which his characters were to be viewed as "little monuments of logic." Of his characters here he can write that they "...are not creations, but puppets... They are only shadows of energy, not living beings. Their mechanism is a logical structure and they are nothing but that." (CWB 150) From examples such as these it is fairly easy to see, pace Kenner, how such deterministic and seemingly reductive assertions in regard to the fictional generality of what is normally taken to be human might be deemed as nihilistic in literary terms, where the configuration of the human through character and narrative, say, is often viewed as being fundamentally representational, rather than consciously artificial.

---

[39] T.S.Eliot, "Tarr," rev. The Egoist V. 8 (Sept. 1918): 105-106.

Lewis, of course, is decidedly for the artificial over the representational, at least in the literary realist sense of individual uniqueness or typicality,[40] and in that sense, his view of the role of the literary character elides with his generally pessimistic vision of modern self in all its mass-produced facticity and consequent suppression of the unique individual. Equally, however, the concern he constantly shows for the blurring of the boundary between the human and the inhuman, between life and art, has as one of its consequences on a philosophical level a de-differentiation between the organic and the material in which agency is retained, effectively, at the level of matter as much as at the level of self-reflexive life or consciousness., and this consequence aligns certain important elements in Lewis's critical theory and aesthetic practice to the very same vitalism he seeks constantly to destroy. Crucially, however, it is a mode of vitalism/anti-vitalism (the apparent contradiction is a characteristically Lewisian trope) which can be most productively decoded through a series of philosophical styles derived from the theories of Deleuze and Guattari, and in particular those of Deleuze, whose own relation to vitalism in both its Bergsonian and Whiteheadian variants[41] is

---

40 On the notion of "typicality" in literary realism, see Georg Lukács, "The Intellectual Physiognomy in Characterization," Writer and Critic, ed. and trans. Arthur Kahn (London: Merlin Press, 1970) 149-188.

41 References to Whitehead recur at various points in Deleuze, notably in his discussions of empiricism and the "event." For an exemplary reading and overview of this dimension in Deleuze, see Alan Badiou, "Gilles Deleuze: The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque," trans. Thelma Sowley, Gilles Deleuze and the Theatre of Philosophy, ed. Constantin V. Boundas & Dorothea Olkowski (London: Routledge, 1994) 51-9.

central to their and his own post-Nietzschean project of nomadology,[42] which is, in itself, remarkable in some its similarities to elements within Lewis's broader project for a critique of modernity.

Deleuze, for instance, at various points proclaimed himself allied to a certain vision of vitalism,[43] and yet, like Lewis, he and Guattari exhibited a consistent fascination with the idea of the machine and the machinic as the touchstones by virtue of which human creativity, intelligence and ontology, and most importantly *value* might be comprehended. In common with Lewis also, Deleuze was fascinated by automata, by the faculty of vision, by repetition, by the problem of the One and the Many (for Lewis the Absolute or God, for Deleuze Univocal Being, in contrast with—in both cases—multiplicity), by the peculiarly non-organic vitalism implicit in Wilhelm Worringer's influential socio-aesthetic theories, by the satirical machinery and aphoristic style of Samuel Butler, and by a certain quality of "barbarism" that he treats with considerable subtlety in his and Guattari's reworking of Marx and Nietzsche's political history, via their reading of

---

42 Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, "1227: Treatise on Nomadology:—The War Machine," A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia, trans. Brian Massumi (London: The Athlone Press, 1988) 351-423.

43 Although it would be entirely wrong and indeed simplistic to see Deleuze as a vitalist. On these distinctions, see Keith Ansell-Pearson, Germinal Life: The Difference and Repetition of Deleuze (London: Routledge, 1999) 4-11.

Freud, Klein and Lacan.[44] Samuel Butler, whom Lewis held in considerable esteem, is especially important in this context insofar as not only does Deleuze effectively base an essential aspect of his philosophy of time and repetition on Butler's notion of habit,[45] but he and Guattari also deploy Butler's naming of "Erewhon" (both "nowhere" and "now-here") as one of the most provocative tools in their political and ethical project,[46] and refer to the Butler of "The Book of Machines" approvingly as the thinker who first undermined the pseudo-distinction between vitalism and mechanism in the post-Darwinian world, in the following terms:

> He shatters the vitalist argument by calling in question the specific or personal unity of the organism, and the mechanist argument even more decisively, by calling in question the structural unity of the machine.[47]

Or, as Butler himself put it:

> In passing, I may say the theory that living beings are conscious machines, can be fought just as much and just as little as the theory that machines are unconscious living beings; everything that goes to prove either of these propositions goes just as well to prove the other also.[48]

---

44 Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, "Savages, Barbarians and Civilized Men," Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen R. Lane (1977; London: The Athlone Press, 1984) 139-271.

45 Gilles Deleuze, Difference and Repetition, trans. Paul Patton (London: The Athlone Press, 1994) xx-xxi; 75; 285; Samuel Butler, Life and Habit (London: Trübner & Co, 1878).

46 Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, What is Philosophy?, trans. Graham Burchell and Hugh Tomlinson (London: Verso, 1994) 100.

47 Deleuze and Guattari, AntiOedipus 284.

48 Samuel Butler, Luck or Cunning: As the Main Means of Organic Modification? An Attempt to throw additional light upon Darwin's Theory (London: A.C.Fifield, 1886) 95.

It is, of course, possible to overstretch such parallels to the point where they become untenable, or where such resemblances as may seem initially striking turn out to be little more than a coincidence of metaphor. In the case of Lewis and Deleuze, however, such resemblances of image or obsession as may be found in their respective works are, I will argue, far more than the product of mere parallels of thought in relation to time, space and identity, and representation and repetition; far more, in this sense, than mere coincidence. For although as a professional philosopher and historian of philosophy Deleuze approached his subject matter with vastly more sobriety, care and rigour than Lewis would have desired for his own polemics, and qualified his comments on vitalism and mechanism by indicating their continually problematic status as concepts and multiplicities, their mutual exploitation of Nietzsche and Bergson, not to mention Butler, and Lewis's random forays into the history of philosophy and metaphilosophy via figures such as Descartes, Leibniz, Spinoza, Berkeley, Hume, Kant, Stirner and Schopenhauer, Alexander and Whitehead, and indeed literary-philosophical figures such as Sade and Proust, generate points of intersection on both a philosophical and a literary level which have tended to be obscured in more conventional accounts or appraisals of Lewis and philosophy thus far, and which need to be reappraised.

In adopting this critical orientation towards a figure who is usually associated with the brief ascendancy of English high modernism, rather, that is, than with the continentally inspired and broadly philosophical debates surrounding the issues of identity and difference, presence and absence, dialectics and repetition, and modernity and postmodernity, this study is, to a large extent, taking its initial cue from certain ideas and assumptions in what is, and in spite of its flaws of selective exclusion,[49] still probably the most sophisticated theoretical analysis of Lewis yet published, Fredric Jameson's Fables of Aggression: Wyndham Lewis, the Modernist as Fascist. Although an extended discussion of Jameson's methodology in his book on Lewis, particularly in relation to the enormous range and specificity of his theoretical sources, is beyond the scope of this introduction, (though Jameson will be discussed in some detail below), what should be made clear at the outset is that in using selected aspects of some of those sources against—or perhaps more accurately, in divergence from—Jameson's usage, it is certainly not the intention of this study to attack Jameson, or indeed the tradition of Marxist critical theory of which he is undoubtedly one of the most eminent and elegant of recent exponents. Indeed, whilst the general perspective of what follows could not be described as Marxist, it will, by the nature of its critical, theoretical and philosophical momentum, its working principles of inclusion and exclusion,

---

49 As listed, for instance by Alan Munton in rev. "Fredric Jameson: fables of Aggression: Wyndham Lewis, the Modernist as Fascist," BLAST 3, ed. Bradford Morrow, Bernard Lafourcade and Hugh Kenner (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1984) 345-351.

and its relational position to the time and place of Lewis's polemical effusions, as well as to the more theoretical effusions of Jameson, involve positive if often unstated recourse to certain aspects of the Marxist tradition of critical thought as redeployed by the hermeneutics of Jameson, at various points in its development.

Neither, however, as the index of proper names evoked thus far should make evident, (along with which should be added the name of Heidegger, who will serve as an important reference point in the delineation and contextualization of Lewis's spatial politics), is it the aim of this study to be either complementary or supplementary to Jameson's work on Lewis, at least not in the weaker sense of those terms as providing a commentary, bibliographical index or extended footnote to a prior work of scholarship. Instead, the intention here and as regards Jameson has been to engage on at least one level of the thesis in a covert exchange with his work, mediated by the philosophical tradition from which both he and Lewis, however differently, and critical theory in general as it has been informed by more recent continental philosophy, have drawn much of their intellectual sustenance. It is an intention, or perhaps more accurately a motive, first ignited in the very early stages of research on this dissertation by a number of assertions that Jameson makes in his book on Lewis and in The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act, on the possible connections between, on the one hand,

what he calls, borrowing rather loosely from Deleuze and Guattari's Anti-Oedipus, the "molecular" and the "molar" levels of the Lewisian text,[50] and on the other, the vastly complex field of politics and aesthetics within and beyond modernity, which Jameson has theorized consistently in his critical writings through reference to his own appropriation and manipulation of the notions of identity, difference and totality, and depth, surface and dialectic.

The subtitle of this dissertation, "Identity, Modernity and Repetition in the Critical Theory of Wyndham Lewis," may, therefore, be understood in the first instance as the result of an extended meditation on Wyndham Lewis on identity and modernity, as well as on Fredric Jameson on identity and modernity in Lewis, in which the theorists or philosophers deployed by Jameson in his analysis of Lewis, as well as in his major theoretical text of the period, The Political Unconscious, with particular reference to Lyotard and Deleuze and Guattari, are here given precedence over Jameson's dialectical incorporation of them into his broader Marxist project. The aim of this inversion being to travel beyond Jameson's totalizing and—paradoxically—restrictive reading of Lewis as an exemplar of the literary expression of a particular phase in the crisis of capitalism to a more general assessment in which Lewis, particularly in his exploration of identity and his use of repetition

---

[50] I follow here the distinctions between the "molar" and the "molecular" in Deleuze and Guattari outlined with clarity and subtlety by Brian Massumi in A User's Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia: Deviations from Deleuze and Guattari (Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 1992) 54-55.

in both the stylistic and the philosophical sense of the term, may be considered not only as one of the foremost figures amongst the small band of British critical and cultural theorists of the twentieth century, but also as a significant pre-emptor of many of the more global concerns, including those of Jameson, (as well as the predominantly continental theorists upon whom he draws), which have subsequently arisen from the ideas of postmodernity and the postmodern.

The term "Identity" may be understood as having both a limited and an extended sense in this instance. Limited, to the extent that it revolves around a Lewisian sense of self that virtually every critic of Lewis from Porteus in 1932 onward has emphasized: this being the radical division in the human design that Lewis consistently drew between personal and social identity, between self and collectivity, and between spatial and temporal ontology, as exemplified in Arghol's lament in Enemy of the Stars, where he claims that: "between Personality and the Group, it is forever a question of cat and dog. These two are diametrically opposed species. Self is the ancient race, the rest are the new one. Self is the race that lost." (CPP 155) Extended, in the sense that the term "Identity" in this study is also employed for similarly negative reasons to those put forward by Theodor Adorno in Negative Dialectics, which as translated and cited by Fredric Jameson, runs as follows:

> In the history of modern philosophy, the word 'identity' has had several meanings. It designated, for example, the unity of personal

> consciousness: that an 'I' remains the same throughout all its experiences. This was what was meant by the Kantian 'I think, which should be able to accompany all my representations...'. Then again identity meant what was supposed to be regularly or nomothetically... present in all rational beings, or in other words thought as logical universality; including the equivalence with itself of every object of thought, the simple A=A. Finally, the epistemological meaning, that the subject and object, however mediated, coincide.

Adorno concludes:

> The first two levels of meaning are by no means strictly differentiated, even in Kant. Nor is this the result of a careless use of language. Identity rather shows up as the zone of indifference between psychology and logic within idealism, itself.[51]

This latter observation is, of course, important to Adorno, as it was and is to most Marxist or Marxian-inspired theorists, including Jameson, inasmuch as his third, epistemological level is often thought to surpass the "indifference" of the first two levels and to link with a further material or economic level which then grounds the dialectical method itself in the real, in history, was similarly concerned with this third level and its relation to the first two in relation to the material or at least the phenomenal realm, though less in an economic or historical sense, than in one in which art, and the expression of artistic value, were simultaneously able to confirm the identity of the artist-intellectual in space whilst preventing the dispersal of that identity in or through time.

---

[51] Fredric Jameson, Late Marxism: Adorno, or, The Persistence of the Dialectic (1990; London: Verso, 1992) 19.

This resistance to the dispersal of identity through time, this ardent chronophobia which, in parallel with his scopophilia, was so heightened in Lewis's sensibility as to become a thread of obsession throughout his thought and works, has profound consequences for his representation of identity within and beyond modernity. And it is primarily through the concept of repetition, understood as both symptom and cure of this obsession, and understood also as both an ontological and figural category—whose composition as image and text haunts the critical theory of Lewis—that these consequences will be examined in what follows. (The notions of "symptom" and "cure" here being understood, it should be stressed, not in the sense of a psychopathology of the author, but rather, in the more extended philosophical sense towards which Lewis often appears to aspire in respect of his literary and philosophical opponents).[52] This is the sense of repetition, for example, noted by Kierkegaard in his eponymous study of the phenomenon, and opposed here to recollection:

> The dialectic of repetition is easy: for what is repeated has been, otherwise it could not be repeated, but precisely the fact that it has been gives to repetition the character of novelty... Recollection is the pagan life-view, repetition is the modern life-view; repetition is the interest of metaphysics, and at the same time, the interest upon which metaphysics

---

[52] A doubling of denotation that has, of course, been unravelled with great dexterity through the evasive term "pharmakon" by Jacques Derrida in "Plato's Pharmacy," Disseminations, trans. Barbara Johnson (1972; London: The Athlone Press, 1981) 61-171. Also of relevance to this use, however, is Nietzsche's deployment of pathological terms. On this, see Malcolm Pasley, "Nietzsche's Use of Medical Terms," Nietzsche: Image and Thought (London: Methuen, 1978) 123-158.

> founders; repetition is the solution contained in every ethical view, repetition is the sine qua non of every dogmatic problem.[53]

Here as in so much of Kierkegaard's writing, it is Hegel who is primarily under attack. It is the Hegelian notion of recollection, a fundamentally neo-Platonic or "pagan" notion in which change can be frozen into representations of concepts within a realm of concepts which, for Kierkegaard, needs to be discredited and replaced by a philosophy which is itself always in motion, always changing, always bifurcating. The category of repetition can be opposed to recollection in the sense that it is concerned with singularities or events rather than generalities or overarching metaphysical systems. In this sense, repetition is concerned fundamentally with difference rather than identity, with novelty and multiplicity rather than similarity. Or, as Gilles Deleuze has put it in his exemplary study of repetition, difference and novelty:

> What becomes established with the new is precisely not the new. For the new— in other words, difference—calls forth forces in thought which are not the forces of recognition, today or tomorrow, but the powers of a completely other model, from an unrecognized and unrecognizable terra incognita.[54]

The evident celebration of change and difference through the notion of repetition in diverse philosophical thinkers such as Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Bergson, Heidegger and Deleuze, or literary figures that Lewis took such

---

53 Søren Kierkegaard, Repetition: An Essay in Experimental Psychology, trans. Walter Lowrie (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1964) 52-53.

54 Gilles Deleuze, Difference and Repetition, trans Paul Patton (London: Athlone Press, 1984) 136.

delight in lambasting such as Stein, Joyce or Woolf, and its negative assessment and relation to death and the demonic in the writings of Freud, or reification and commodification in the work of Lukács, or degeneration in the work of Spengler, has important consequences for any real understanding of the philosophical momentum of Lewis's spatializing thought and practice. The essence of Kierkegaard's point in his philosophical novel Repetition, for example, might be stated as a concern with the manner in which recollection, for all its many charms, is in the end, a way of creating stasis in the world, in consciousness; of spatializing time and objectifying phenomena so that the world becomes a mere spectacle to be regarded, or a set of concepts to be represented; a paralysis in what he calls the "aesthetic" mode of consciousness.[55] Repetition, on the other hand, is concerned primarily with interest, with involvement, with the event considered in its uniqueness in time, or with what Kierkegaard refers to as the "exception." [56]

Heidegger develops this Kierkegaardian opposition in his discussion of the differences between the hermeneutic and vicious circles of interpretation which might be applied to a text or world, and the manner in which interest, (in Heidegger's case, sorge or care), intervenes in repetition, or in hermeneutic activity, to distinguish between the reductive and traditional metaphysical or

---

[55] On the aesthetic mode of consciousness, see Søren Kierkegaard, Either/Or, Vol. 1. trans. David F. Svenson and Lillian Marvin (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1959).

[56] Kierkegaard 133.

ontic reading and the "destructive" phenomenological or ontic/ontological reading which he advocates in Being and Time, and which prepares the ground for the later "deconstructive" readings of Jacques Derrida and others.[57] Or, as William V. Spanos has glossed this connection between the two thinkers:

> Kierkegaard's differentiation of repetition from recollection is fundamentally the same as Heidegger's between the hermeneutic circle of the temporal or existential consciousness (which discloses difference) and the vicious circle of the essentialist spatializing consciousness (which reduces and levels difference and confirms identity).[58]

The point to be noted at this stage in relation to the critical theory of Lewis is the manner in which the idea of repetition is deployed by these philosophical thinkers so as to upset, at least on the most immediate level of interpretation, the traditional metaphysical opposition between time and space in favour of the temporal rather than the spatial. Lewis, of course, moves in precisely the opposite ontological direction, and is centrally concerned with the advocacy of space over time in all its manifestations. In arguing so vehemently for this valorization of space over time, Lewis is consistently drawn by a kind of internal necessity to the philosophical arguments of those like Nietzsche and Bergson who ostensibly work against his valorization of space, so as to provide him with both ammunition and opponents for his rhetorical incursions into

---

[57] The debates over the genealogical relations between Derridean deconstruction and Heideggerian destruktion and Abbauen, are ably summarized by Herman Rapaport in Heidegger & Derrida: Reflections on Time and Language (1989; Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991) 3-9.

[58] William V. Spanos, Heidegger and Criticism: Retrieving the Cultural Politics of Destruction (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993) 63.

what he described as the temporal fixation of the age. A consequence of this form of mimesis is that Lewis rarely confronts his philosophical opponents philosophically per se, but rather, seeks to undermine them through hyperbole and mockery, and most importantly, through a repetition and distortion of their ideas in contexts in which they cannot be realigned to suit a metaphysical generality, but must be thought of in terms of their singularity as what Lyotard and Deleuze have described as the event[59] or, in terms of artistic or literary production, through what Deleuze and Guattari have described as the "percept",[60] and Adorno has described as the "non-identical". Most crucially for the terms and limitations of this study, however, the idea of repetition as the engine of identity-in-process through differentiation, in contrast with a notion of self as a representation of the concept of identity-as-fixed, and as prior to its actualization, provided Lewis with his most consistent theoretical and literary problematic. This was a problematic which he attempted to resolve in a variety of ways, but most importantly for his critical theory, through a radical ontology of the creative and destructive power of the eye.

This outline of identity-in-difference through repetition in conflict with identity-as-fixed links with Adorno's comments on identity referred to above,

---

59 On the event in Lyotard, see Geoff Bennington, Lyotard: Writing the Event (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1988). On the event in Deleuze, see Keith Ansell Pearson, Germinal Life 121-138.

60 Deleuze and Guattari, Philosophy 163-199.

and particularly his notion of "non-identity," for several reasons. To begin with, Adorno highlights identity as a category of thought so as to indicate its inadequacy for thinking, for the mobility of thought, that is, through time and history. What Adorno calls "identity thinking" is, in the first instance, the manner in which unique events and singularities of affect or cognition or agency or exile become subsumed under more general concepts. These general concepts, however, are always inadequate to thinking in any progressive or dialectical sense, insofar as they can never grasp an event or an object in its totality, and hence its reality, in the sense that they must always work to reduce an event or object so that it can fit the concept or concepts under which it has been subsumed. Nonetheless, all discourse requires identity thinking to some degree, as communication and discussion of ideas would be impossible without it. To remedy the necessary incompleteness or injustice of this process, and to return the object or event to some form of totality, and hence reality, in discourse or cognition, Adorno suggests the use of "second reflection" or *eingedenken.* This is a form of non-identity thinking which attempts to review the object or event from a variety of perspectives, and thereby defy the illusionism generated by the conventional expectations of mimetic realism or representationalism, on the one hand, or systematic abstraction, on the other. For this reason, one of the most powerful critical tools available to modern thought is the only apparent mimetic distortion of much modernist art, and especially the kind of art encountered, for example, in Cubism, Futurism or

Vorticism.[61] In this form of representation, the reality perceived in the painting necessarily exceeds the reality that could be perceived of an object such as a guitar or vase or nude or factory or automobile in empirical reality. As Hauke Brunkhorst has described this process using cubist paintings as analogous to Adorno's negative dialectics:

> They present aspects of the thing or object that may exist at once in reality, but can never be perceived, described or represented from the ever-limited and particular point of view of the spectator...They present a way of access to the thing itself (die Sache selbst) in its totality. But this totality of the thing itself can never be represented as an identity object, because the latter has to be broken asunder to present all or many of its non-identical aspects. The totality of the thing itself only can appear-in Adorno's words-as a 'shattered' and 'fragmented' totality.[62]

Fragmentation, then, is perceived by Adorno's non-identity thinking, his negative dialectics, as the exemplar of the process of intellectual and artistic cognition in modernity. Literary and artistic modernism deploys fragmentation, in this sense, as a form of critique of and within modernity, and allows us a dialectical glimpse of that which is still beyond modernity, and which might therefore be able to act as a navigational star through the storms of enlightenment.[63]

---

[61] To a degree, Adorno views artistic abstraction as a corollary of the irreality of concrete human relations under capitalism. At the same time, however, and under the right conditions of reception and cognition, abstract modernism has the capacity to critique such developments. See Theodor Adorno, Aesthetic Theory, trans. C. Lenhardt (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984) 31; 45; 141-142.

62 Hauke Brunkhorst Adorno and Critical Theory (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999) 2.

[63] Adorno, Aesthetic Theory 280.

Lewis is, of course, exemplary in his modernist deployment of fragmentation in perspective, and not only in his literary or plastic experiments, but in his theoretical writings also. Such experiments in the theoretical domain, however, are, as should now be clear, far from being arbitrary or ornamental. For if Lewis was, as has often been noted by his critics, almost systematically unsystematic in his appropriation of philosophers and of philosophical ideas and arguments, he was nonetheless consistently drawn to certain terms and reference points within the technical vocabulary of the discipline, and for reasons that go to the heart of his critical project. His critical and fictional work is littered with allusions to traditional metaphysical oppositions such as the one and the many, being and becoming, appearance and reality, subject and object, mind and body, and so forth, as well as to philosophers whom he usually berates, (with the notable exceptions of Leibniz and Bishop Berkeley), whilst drawing upon their ideas and arguments for seemingly rhetorical or literary impact alone. In general, it is true, he deploys these binary oppositions and critical allusions primarily as weapons in his polemical extemporizations on the flaws in his contemporaries and in consensual thinking in the modern state. But it is a logistical plundering with intriguing consequences for both the style and structure of his philosophical criticism, both of which are designed, in the classic Clauswitzian formula,[64] to be tactical rather than strategic in their

---

64 Carl Von Clausewitz, On War, (1918) trans. J.J.Graham. ed. Anatol Rapoport (1968; London: Penguin, 1982) 172-178.

elaboration and effect. For while he will often initially affect the appearance of rigorous argument in his pamphlets, essays and volumes, the attentive reader is quickly made aware that the internal sequential logic of analysis or dialectic promised by the ostensible format of his pieces is just as suddenly abandoned in favour of a tactical flurry of broad rhetorical sweeps, cunning inductive sallies, calculated retreats, and then re-entrenchments to positions where his adversary in question—usually the subject matter of the discussion—would least expect to find him.

As this tactical invisibility indicates, Lewis was not on the whole concerned with winning the individual battle through careful exposition, but rather with undermining the whole war through acts of terroristic subversion. Yet in spite of this rhetorical preference, his underlying motivation was based on an archetypal philosophical principle, submerged by the generality of modern philosophy until Nietzsche, and revived more recently by twentieth-century thinkers such as Bataille, Klossowski and Lyotard[65] that opposition, agonal thought, rather than dialectic or logic, is a good in itself, a sign of rude health and intellectual energy, an authentic realization of Heraclitus's gnomic utterance that: "War is the father of all and king of all; and some he has shown

---

[65] See George Bataille, On Nietzsche, trans. Bruce Boone (London: The Athlone Press, 1992); Pierre Klossowski, Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle, trans. Daniel W. Smith (London: The Athlone Press, 1997); Jean Francois Lyotard, The Differend: Phrases in Dispute, trans. G. Van Den Abeele (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1988).

as gods, others men; some he has made slaves, others free".[66] While Lewis certainly concurred with this particular aspect of Heraclitean thought, then, to another, the doctrine of eternal flux, of not being able to step into the same river twice, or even once, he opted to become a lifelong enemy. For Lewis, and particularly after the Great War, the considerable legacy of this doctrine of becoming as valorized against being revealed itself increasingly in modernity through the myriad manifestations of what he designated as the "Time Philosophy" or "Time Cult" as it had come to dominate twentieth century Western thought and culture. This time-philosophy expressed itself most virulently in the celebration of internal consciousness in narrative, in the fetishization of youth, race and femininity,[67] and the varieties of primitivism and depth psychology emergent in the early years of the century, and in various theories of space-time and relativity popularized from the work of Einstein. Characteristically, Lewis considered the modern source of this temporal fixation in all its diverse and seemingly incommensurable manifestations to lie with the work of Henri Bergson whom he described as a "philosophical ruffian" and berated with ferocious glee across the pages of his critical books. Bergson's "followers" were represented as the members, whether consciously

---

[66] Charles H. Kahn, The Art and Thought of Heraclitus (1979; Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1983) 67: 207 -210· See also, Paul Edwards's, n. 132 (TWM 557).

[67] This is especially so with the non-Caucasian races. The issue of Lewis and race has generally focused thus far either on the subsumption of class into race, notably by Kenner, or on the accusations of anti-Semitism, most fully by Ayers. On Lewis and Orientalism, or the consequences of the African diaspora, however, little has yet been said. See, however, Sarat Maharaj, "The Congo is flooding the Acropolis," Third Text 15 (Summer 1991) cited in Paul Gilroy, The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness (London: verso, 1993) 140: 242n59.

or otherwise, of his detested time cult—a deeply entrenched system of thought and representation, a dominant ideology, a reactionary nihilism, which operated in covertly forming the cultural assumptions of the age, whether in politics, philosophy or art. In contrast with a number of his contemporaries, however, neither did Lewis have any great respect for what had preceded this nihilism, this vitalism, for the past, or for tradition, at least as represented to the present. Thus in a statement which appears to blast both traditionalism and modernism, Lewis can assert that:

> The services rendered by tradition, in its energetic field-work against the ignorant mob, have been great. But one often is disposed to wonder if much that passes for tradition is upon the side of reason at all. Modernism, which is merely the nervous jingo exaggeration of the more futile novelties of the Zeitgeist, has enucleated it: we see it possessed of a meretricious colour more reminiscent of the revivalist or salvationist army-technique, than of a more scientific, impartial and catholic, temper, for all the prestige of the classical disciplines involved. (MWA 109)

In his all-enveloping sweep across the broad spectrum of the arts and sciences of modernism as well as the condition of modernity itself, it is notable, if by now hardly surprising, how Lewis's critical deployment of the philosophers he both cherished and loathed is often overtly hostile whilst being covertly assimilative. As such, there is some truth in SueEllen Campbell's assertion that:

> Everywhere, Lewis's philosophical position is a sort of mirror image of Bergson's. Creative Evolution argues that intellect inverts the more natural intuition; Time and Western Man implies that Bergson and his followers invert - and pervert - everything that is valuable to our human experience, everything that results from our senses, our thoughts and our dreams. Noisily, Lewis reverses Bergson's values. Silently, at the same time, he appropriates Bergson's categories, constructing his central dichotomy of time and space to agree in almost every respect with that of his former teacher.[68]

Instructive as it is, Campbell's claim here is too general. Lewis's approach to space and time is not merely an inversion of Bergson's, but also a supplement to it via his readings of Leibniz, Berkeley, Kant, Schopenhauer, Stirner and Nietzsche in particular. In pointing out this inversion effect, however, she does hint correctly at the manner in which Lewis's borrowings from philosophy always appear subservient, in practice if not in theory, to his more immediate aesthetic and political concerns. In the manner of an artist in search of new materials, he is always happy to plagiarize wholesale and then to disguise or transform absolutely what has been borrowed to achieve a specific effect, and condemn his sources once that effect has been achieved. At the same time, however, this pragmatism of interest in Lewis is always motivated by a certain and decidedly philosophical pathos towards that process; a pathos which seeks to connect the specific instance of literary or artistic representation directly to the broader critique of modernity in which, as an intellectual, he was continually engaged. In this sense there is a germ of truth, also, in Geoffrey

---

68 SueEllen Campbell, 'Equal Opposites: Wyndham Lewis, Henri Bergson, and their Philosophies of Space and Time', Twentieth Century Literature 29 (1983) 366.

Wagner's mordant summary of Lewis's sweeping contempt for those whom he included in his notorious "Time Cult," when he writes:

> This, in a nutshell, is "time-philosophy" for Lewis. "Organic," "Faustian," "musical," "apocalyptic," "feminine," "dynamic," it is a philosophy he opposes in a series of negatives. Indebted to Spengler, indebted to Bergson, he borrows from his enemies, inverting their convictions. For his is not a positive philosophical approach. It is what can be summarized as Stopping the Rot.[69]

What neither Campbell nor Wagner seriously take into account, however, is the manner in which what Lewis called the "affirmation of this negative principle" connects with his equally enigmatic vision of the "not self" to provide a method of interpretation and production akin both to the negative dialectics proposed by Adorno and, as will be discussed at a later stage in this dissertation, the rhizomatics and nomadology subsequently developed by Deleuze and Guattari. To put it briefly at this stage, however, the "negative principle" advocated by Lewis often seems a straightforward privileging of the objective status of art over the subjective experience of its construction and its objects. For as Lewis notes, initially in a chapter on Spengler from The Enemy, which subsequently appeared in Time and Western Man:

> It is in the detaching of himself from the personal that the Western Man's greatest claim to distinction lies, from the Greeks and early Celts to the present day. It is in non-personal modes of feeling—that is in thought, or in feeling that is so dissociated from the hot, immediate egoism of sensational life that it becomes automatically intellectual—that the non-religious Western man has always expressed himself, at his profoundest, at his purest. (TWM 255)

---

[69] Wagner 201.

Leaving to one side Lewis's ethnocentrism, what one appears to have here is some version of Eliot's notion of impersonality extrapolated so as to embrace an Arnoldian vision of Western culture. The negative method, however, differs from the Eliotic in several important ways. Firstly, although Lewis appears often to define the creative act as a non-personal construction, he is also entirely at home with the contrary notion that all works of art and literature are infused, indeed saturated, with the personality of their creator. Thus where Eliot claims in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" that the poet attempts to escape the contingencies of personality through the act of creativity, Lewis, in an evident response to Eliot whom he describes in Men Without Art as a "pseudo-believer," everywhere asserts the centrality of personality to art.[70] Secondly, where Eliot, at least at his most philosophically consistent, attempts to find a point of dialectical resolution beyond objectivity and subjectivity in relation to poetry and its creation,[71] Lewis is always concerned to maintain a rigid distinction between the two, even to the point, as he will happily admit, of absurdity, understood by him as the comedic correlative of the nihilism which he seeks to foreground in his criticism.

---

[70] Lewis's most sustained criticism of Eliot occurs in Men Without Art (MWA 55-82).

[71] For a detailed assessment of the philosophical background to Eliot's early literary theory see Sanford Schwarz, The Matrix of Modernism: Pound, Eliot & Early 20th-Century Thought (1985; Princeton: Princeton UP, 1988) 155-208.

In this sense, while Lewis undoubtedly belongs to the nexus of intellectual and creative ferment associated with colleagues such as Eliot, Pound and Joyce, the so-called "Men of 1914" with whom he was initially associated,[72] and with whom he is invariably compared and contrasted in much critical commentary, there is always an element to his critical theory and practice which aims to exceed the contingencies of this context, and to do so through rather ambitiously taking on the entire weight of Western culture in modernity in an attempt to remodel it to his own ends. In terms of literary criticism, for example, Lewis clearly holds that criticism alone, and indeed literature alone, can serve no significant purpose, aesthetic or otherwise, but must be placed within a broader cultural and existential context for any real and productive meaning to emerge from the act of engagement. Nor—and this is indicative of Lewis's visual bias and his sustained suspicion of the ascendancy of the text as the primary medium of criticism—can the literary work be satisfactorily distinguished from other serious cultural artefacts. Thus in the preface to Men Without Art, Lewis asserts that:

> As it is with the novel, so it is with the poem, the picture, the play, the film-play, statue or musical composition. All forms of art of a permanent order are intended not only to please and to excite, believe me, Plain Reader, if you are still there, but to call into play the entire human capacity—for sensation, reflection, imagination and will. We judge a work of art, ultimately, with reference to its capacity to effect this total mobilization of our faculties.(MWA 12)

---

[72] The phrase is Lewis's own (BB 249). For background and commentary on these associations, see Julian Symons, Makers of the New: The Revolution in Literature, 1912-1939 (London: Andre Deutsch, 1987), and Peter Nicholls, Modernisms: A Literary Guide (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1995).

Lewis's critical theory asserts that whatever cultural form or object is under analysis, the act of judgement demands that interpretation is not subservient to evaluation in the first instance, nor to the exigencies of genre in the second, nor even to the general notion of the aesthetic in the third. Judgement must involve all faculties, and be able to make links between the artefact and social or cultural contingencies that might initially appear to have little to do with the object under scrutiny. In this understanding, and as the active sense of the term will be used in this study, the critical theorist can be said to adopt a role less of the exegesist or literary historian or literary critic, than of a mediator between the demands of scholarship and criticism, on the one hand, and the modes of expression whereby culture defines itself in relation to such aggregates as society, politics, history, technology, economics, law, ideology, mass media, ethnicity, nationality and public or social identity, on the other. At the heart of my understanding of this inter-disciplinary project, especially as it was initially formulated by the Frankfurt School in the 1930s, but also in a number of adjacent if divergent, as well as subsequent projects concerned with illuminating the relationship between modernity, postmodernity and their representations, from Lukács to Lyotard, and from Benjamin to Derrida and Deleuze and Guattari, is a belief, however variegated its expression, that the work of art can provide, in some unifying or allegorical or parergonal or

heterological sense, a key to that illumination.[73] Or as Lewis himself has it in the introduction to Men Without Art from 1934: "Implicit in the serious work of art will be found politics, theology, philosophy—in brief, all the great intellectual departments of the human consciousness."(MWA 12)

In the light of the broad definition of critical theory given above, and the peculiarities of Lewis's method, this observation is notable for a number of reasons, as is what immediately follows it in his brief peroration to Men Without Art. To begin with, this assertion is typical of Lewis's tendency to plagiarize quite happily from his opponents where others would be considerably more reticent, as well as defining a position which he tended to adopt whenever he was faced with opponents or critics whom he wished to belittle as slaves of a metaphysically engineered conspiracy. The assertion in this case being a near verbatim report of a thorough critical attack on Lewis's cultural conservativism in the third issue of the short-lived Cambridge literary magazine Experiment, whose seven issues were produced under the undergraduate editorship of nascent luminaries such as William Empson, Jacob Bronowski, Hugh Sykes and Humphrey Jennings between 1928 and 1931.[74]

---

73 A rich analysis of this tendency since Kant, understood as a form of mourning for the diremption between the discourses of truth and those of art, may be found in J. M. Bernstein, The Fate of Art: Aesthetic Alienation from Kant to Derrida and Adorno (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992).

74 Copies of the complete run of Experiment may be found in the British Library. Partial runs may be found in the Cambridge University Library, Yale University Library and the National Library of Scotland.

What the writers, describing themselves here merely as the "Five," object to in particular in Lewis in the third issue of this short-lived journal, is the manner in which Lewis calls for the radical separation of politics from art in The Enemy and elsewhere, whilst accusing all of those artists and writers he objects to as quasi-bolshevist hypocrites—a position which he, of course, hyperbolizes still further in the caricatures and fictional landscapes of his novels of the 1930s. They note contra Lewis that "theology and politics are implicit in all significant art," a sentiment which Lewis will adopt wholesale and without apology or reference a few years later for his own ends, in spite of his more characteristic assertion in 1927 of a "belief in the finest type of mind, which lifts the creative impulse into an absolute region free of spenglerian "history" or politics" (TWM 144). Then, having stated in the opening to Men Without Art this central tenet of his rhetorically perverse and ostensibly idealist theory of the relation between the aesthetic and the various faculties of human cognition, knowledge and choice as something that should be obvious to even the dullest of common readers, Lewis moves on in his preface to differentiate between serious or high art and popular culture, as a prolegomenon to his discussion of satire in and around the works of Hemingway, Faulkner and Eliot, and its implications for his own theory of the redemptive power of a specific mode of critical laughter in the face of a predominantly nihilistic modern culture.

What is intriguing about his procedure for such differentiation, is that it brings out two central aspects to Lewis's critical procedures. Firstly, a deployment of ideas as heuristic tools whereby intellectual constructions might be forged and then tested as aesthetically guided experiments in conceptual design. Second, the manner in which Lewis's analysis of both art and popular culture is carried out in terms which would be recognizable to any adherent of critical and cultural theory as it has emerged in the post-war era from diverse sources, but especially from certain varieties of Western Marxism and a fortiori from the more Nietzschean variants of post-structuralism concerned to strip away the veil of assumed transparency which characterizes the production and reception of popular entertainment and mass media, as much as high culture, and reveal thereby the ideological or discursive systems of control or dissemination through which the subject is, in fact, constituted as a passive agent through such assumed transparency. Reflecting on the ways in which such popular cultural artefacts as Frank Richard's corpulent hero of the young male English proletariat from The Magnet, Billy Bunter, as well as the products of Hollywood cinema, have the power to "shape lives," for example, Lewis pre-empts many of the concerns of subsequent theorists of mass and popular culture by noting of responses to Hollywood in particular, that

> the influence upon the mind of the whole nation, adult and juvenile, of the Hollywood film-factory is terrific... Why people find this and analogous facts so difficult to understand astonishes me. Yet a whole barbarous system of conduct, and judgements to match, is *implied* in every flick the kinetic novelletes.(MWA 12)

Such implicit manipulation must be countered, Lewis claims, by a certain critical pathos on the part of the intellectual towards the productions of popular culture, as much as towards the productions of serious art. It is a pathos which seeks everywhere to return the intellectual to the precepts of dynamic modernism promised in the pre-war years, but severely undermined by a certain "cosiness" which emerges in the 1920s in regard to genuine experiment. He writes, for instance, that:

> The principles of intellectual detection—the injunction to look behind everything, however trivial, in the art-field, as a matter of routine, and challenge all "face values"—merely have to be restated every time, for the benefit of the inattentive, and the chronically "comfortable"—the inveterately "cosy."(MWA 12-13)

These concerns introduce the overall thesis of Lewis's study of the role of satire, a mode of expression which successfully combines the autonomy of art with the subversive power of oppositional and mimetic criticism—in modern society. It is a thesis, moreover, as much concerned to map out the realities of human vision and ontology against its more contingent and commodified versions, as promoted for Lewis by the interests of industrial and post-industrial capitalism, the latter of which he analyses with premonitory vigour in works such as Time and Western Man, The Art of Being Ruled, Paleface and The Diabolical Principle and the Dithyrambic Spectator, as it is with the textual ameliorations of that ontology as he perceived them in writers such as Hemingway, Faulkner or Eliot. As such, Men Without Art refuses to be

confined by the disciplinary parameters of literary criticism, just as Time and Western Man is more than just philosophical criticism and The Art of Being Ruled is more then just political criticism. For in his ranging and often fragmented discussions of liberty and repression, rationality and art, and—through constant allusive self-reference—identity and non-identity, Lewis is often quite remarkable in his seemingly inadvertent generation of parallels to the work of Adorno and his colleagues, as well as to a later generation of philosophical and critical theorists in France, Britain and North America. The reason for the existence of such parallels is far from coincidental, in that it has to do with both a pathos and a genealogy, and the provenance of that genealogy is to be located, primarily if not entirely, in the devastating critique of post-enlightenment rationality and progress and the more general legacy of the Kantian revolution that both Lewis and the members of the Frankfurt School, as well as a subsequent generation of Parisian writers, intellectuals and philosophers, found in the writings of Nietzsche.

For these reasons, while the focus of this study will be on the philosophical dimension of Lewis's writing, and specifically on the philosophical lineage since Kant that structures that dimension in terms of a singular dialogue with its elements as they make up what Jürgen Habermas has described, in his controversial attack on a variety of counter-enlightenment and postmodern

thinkers, as "the philosophical discourse of modernity,"[75] I have preferred to use the term "critical theory," rather than "philosophical criticism" as the touchstone from whence Lewis's aesthetic and political ideas will be investigated. For while "critical theory" remains a contested domain in institutions of literary research, arising as it does from the work of Horkheimer in the 1930s[76] to embrace, currently, the relation between literary, political and philosophical approaches to the act of reading, its flexible inter-disciplinarity is peculiarly appropriate for a figure such as Lewis, for whom all the different "departments" of consciousness and their disciplinary expressions were, finally, aspects of a single, over-arching metaphysic, that he sought relentlessly to expose and dismantle. And to this degree, his appropriation of Experiment's comments is entirely appropriate.

In essence, and like his hidden mentor Nietzsche, it will be argued here, Lewis believed absolutely that there was an underlying nihilism to modernity; a nihilism that was, nevertheless, neither final nor irrevocable, but might be countered by the adoption of certain emergent and future-oriented philosophical positions on the question of identity. However, where Nietzsche

---

[75] Jürgen Habermas, The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity trans. Fredrick G. Lawrence (1987; Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990).

[76] Two invaluable historical accounts of the genesis and development of "critical theory" are Martin Jay, The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research, 1923-1950 (Boston: Little Brown, 1973), and David Held, Introduction to Critical Theory: Horkheimer to Habermas (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1980).

chose an acceptance of pure becoming as the mode, or at least the first step, that would lead, in due course, to the *Übermensch*, Lewis often seemed, and in spite of his anti-traditionalism, to be appealing to a more theological, and seemingly transcendent, principle of conflict frozen in eternity. While this might seem to be the case, however, and especially in his final theological fantasies such as Monstre Gai and Malign Fiesta, for most of his career Lewis was too much of a covert Nietzschean to accept the traditional theological view of time and eternity as the realm of the human and the divine respectively. Such an assumption would have been far too transcendental for him. Lewis was, at least up until the Second World War and his stay in Canada, unequivocally for the immanent over the transcendental, for the particular over the universal, for the singularity of the event over the determinations of history or metaphysics, and would not countenance any mediation of these opposites. For that reason, it was opposition itself, and the perception of opposition from the singular perspective of one outside that opposition, and thus able to represent it, that provides the key to his positionality in regard to his vision of twentieth century nihilism and its overcoming. It is a perspective indicated as early as the 1914 edition of BLAST, in a section simply entitled 'Manifesto I' where, alongside the notably more brief contributions from his colleagues, Pound and Gaudier-Brzeska, Lewis sets out to broadcast the main elements of his manifesto for the Vorticist creed. Here he makes the following, decidedly Nietzschean, affirmation:

> 1.Beyond Action and Reaction we would establish ourselves.
> 2.We start from opposite statements of a chosen world.
> Set up violent structures of adolescent clearness between two extremes.
> 3.We discharge ourselves on both sides.
> 4.We fight first on one side, then on the other, but always for the SAME cause, which is neither side or both sides and ours. (B_1 30)

This is an affirmation which he repeats over a decade later in The Art of Being Ruled in a rather less enigmatic and far more chilling form as his prescription for a "beyond-the-good-and-bad-European" (ARB 359), and then more weakly, like a diminishing echo, for the rest of his working life. It is then, this singular perspective, its genealogy and consequences, rather than its development and decline, and especially its attempt in his earlier and more spirited works to set up through philosophical criticism and eristics an ontology of repetition based on a visual model of a spatial multiplicity of selves in conflict, rather than one based on a diffusion of personal identity through time or dialectics, that will be the primary object of interrogation and discussion in this study.

In approaching this complex of themes in Lewis, one is ever mindful of Hugh Gordon Porteus's astute comments in the earliest monograph on Lewis from 1932. Here, in the introduction, he writes that:

> The range and complexity of Mr. Lewis's work—the reflection of a remarkably omnific and responsive mind—make my subject extraordinarily difficult to present effectively

> in a manner simple, logical and direct. I have therefore adopted a plan not unlike that which Mr. Lewis has himself employed, in The Art of Being Ruled: that is, each section explains every section, and not merely an adjacent section. The parts overlap and intersect; and further, this must involve, in the interests of clarity, a certain amount of repetition, and a certain number of digressions—which will certainly appear 'dis-proportionate' but will not, I hope, be thought irrelevant.[77]

After a brief "digression" on the conflict he has encountered between stressing the consistency of Lewis's "vision" overall, on the one hand, and the problem of attempting to describe an evolution in his work to date, as well as attempting to express a sense of development in any study of that work that would not thereby misrepresent it, on the other, Porteus concludes by stating that:

> The order that I have chosen is the best that I can make within the limited dimensions imposed by the book: if I were inscribing the material on the sides of a cube, the surface of a sphere, or even on a continuous belt, a more satisfactory system would be possible. Another dimension would simplify things.[78]

Porteus's observations on the limitations of conventional expository method in relation to Lewis, by which I mean here the linear and progressive elaboration of a set of positions or perspectives which aim towards some coherence of interpretation in terms of their primary object, are apposite to the present study for a number of reasons, several of which have been rehearsed above. Thus, while I do not intend to adopt the faux-spatialist method employed by Porteus

---

[77] Porteus 6.

[78] Porteus 7-8.

(and to an extent by Kenner also), in imitation of his literary and philosophical hero to any great degree in this study, my debt to this rich and seminal reading of Lewis, especially in terms of the need for "digressions" and, more particularly, "repetitions," will be evident in what follows.

To establish the philosophical parameters whereby this reading of Lewisian critical theory as a critique of nihilism as the essence of modernity can be negotiated, chapter one, The Art of War, will be centrally concerned with Lewis's attitude to the discipline of philosophy itself, and in particular, his aggressive appropriation and transformation of certain philosophical ideas which he gleaned especially from his readings of Leibniz, Bergson, Schopenhauer, Kant and Nietzsche. Beginning, therefore, with some observations on the problems of reading Lewis, this chapter will continue with outlines of the major elements in the philosophical theories of these figures and Lewis's reading and use of them, before concluding with a discussion of his notions of excess and aggressivity as generated by his war experiences, and as then applied to philosophical thinking in general. Chapter two, Inhuman Geometry, focuses more specifically on Lewis's ardent chronophobia and its implications for both representations of the fragmentation of human identity within and beyond modernity, and his broader and related tendency towards elitism and misanthropy in social and political theory. Lewis's consistent preference for multiplicity and conflict over totality and synthesis will then be examined through the critical exegeses supplied by

some of his more astute readers from Porteus onwards, with particular attention being given to notions of totality and temporality as developed in the thinking of Heidegger, on the one hand, and Jameson, on the other. The purpose of this latter attention on two apparently polarised thinkers, will be to find a way of positioning Lewis's maverick political and philosophical bias in relation to the critical theory of the political right and the political left in the twentieth century, and thereby prepare for the possibility of an elaboration of his political aesthetics as a singular and progressive response to modernity which, while it partakes of a number of motifs traditionally associated with the right, at the same time pre-empts a number of positions subsequently associated with the post-Nietzschean left.

In chapter three, Time and Motion, the question of modernity itself is addressed with a view to contextualizing the socio-political criticism of Lewis against a background informed not only by distant contemporaries such as Lukács and Heidegger, but also subsequent thinkers such as Habermas and the radical geographer, David Harvey. Consideration here of the central notions of modernity, on the one hand, and the political conditions which obtain to enable those concepts to be articulated, lead, via a brief discussion of Lewis and postmodernism, and a rather more extended excursus on the genealogy of vision in Lewis's "immaterialism," to a direct consideration of Fredric Jameson and the mechanics of his critique of Lewis. The use of Deleuze and Guattari by Jameson

in particular is examined here, and then re-assessed through a more direct deployment of their thinking in relation to Lewis in chapter four, Death and Repetition, where the question of repetition itself is expanded upon, and where the Hegelian elements in Jameson's reading are challenged by the intervention of Nietzsche, Kierkegaard and Freud into the dialectical process. Here, the agon between Jameson and Deleuze is rehearsed against a background in which two main strands of philosophical modernity provide a vivid contrast over their dealings with the question of difference. These two strands are represented primarily, though certainly not exclusively, by the proper names, Hegel and Nietzsche, as both respond to the "Copernican revolution" initiated by Kant's critical philosophy. From here, Bergsonian duration is revisited via his understanding of "pseudo-problems" such as those of "extensive and intensive magnitudes" and "nothingness," which then leads to an extended exposition of Deleuzean thought as it applies to Lewis's position on time and identity and multiplicity, and a concluding section in which varieties of repetition in Kierkegaard, Freud and Nietzsche are canvassed by way of providing and illumination of that position.

In chapter five, Agon of the Stars, some of Lewis's most experimental prose and drama, such as may be found in Enemy of the Stars, The Ideal Giant and The Crowd Master, is discussed as a means whereby his socio-political conspiracy theories link in with his broader aesthetic and metaphysical concerns. The notion

of the "crowd" in Lewis, in particular, is investigated, firstly through his diabolical, proto-fascist flaneur, Cantleman, and secondly, against the elements that he undoubtedly borrowed and transformed from Schopenhauer so as to both affirm his "negative principle" as something more than an aesthetic principle, and establish a role for the concepts of death, nothingness, brutality, the inhuman and parasitic existence within his expressionistic ontology. The chapter also includes a consideration of the position of the radical egoist Max Stirner in Lewis's canon, and the way in which Stirner has been deployed in a highly sophisticated reading of Lewis by Toby Foshay, and concludes with some general considerations of notions of self, collectivity, laughter and homecoming in his critical theory, with particular reference to Adorno.

Chapter six, Satanic Laughter, begins to gather together the various threads of the previous chapters through a probing analysis of notions of futurity and repetition in Lewis, referring here to Baudrillard as much as Deleuze, as they are deployed to counter what he perceived as the nihilism inherent in modernity. Of particular importance here are questions of comedy and tragedy, materialism and idealism, and most centrally: innovation, as these questions preoccupy Lewis from his earliest prose sketches to the theological fictions of Monstre Gai and Malign Fiesta. Through a critical return to the reading of Lewis supplied by Jameson, the question of innovation and novelty is addressed and treated as a product of repetition rather than one of dialectical movement or expansion, thus concluding

with a reading of Lewis that, rather than placing him in a dead end of modernist experiment, rebarbative commentary and right wing social theory, as has so often been the case, recognizes the vital and still relevant contribution he made to the critical theory of modernity and its legacy.

Chapter One

The Art of War

> There really resides in the heart of each of us a wild beast which only awaits the opportunity to rage and rave in order to injure others, and which if they prevent it, would like to destroy them. Hence arises all the pleasure in fighting and war; and it is this which gives the understanding, its special keeper, always enough to do to overcome and to hold it in some measure within bounds.[79]

> The problem of the war machine is that of relaying, even with modest means, not that of the architectonic model or the monument.[80]

> Within five yards of another man's eyes we are on a little crater, which, if it erupted, would split up as would a cocoa-tin of nitrogen. (CWB 152)

That Lewis's interest in philosophy, and especially what is now usually referred to as continental, rather than Anglo-American philosophy, preceded his practice as a writer, is made clear by him in his only partially ironic comments on his youthful enthusiasm for Bergsonian "vitalism" in an unpublished draft chapter for his second autobiography, Rude Assignment, (drastically cut in the final, published version), where he observes of his vagabond years in Paris between 1903 and 1907:

---

[79] Arthur Schopenhauer, "On Ethics," in Selected Essays of Schopenhauer, ed. and trans., Ernest Belfort Bax (London: G. Gell and Sons, 1914) 211.

[80] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, "The Nomadology of the War Machine," A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia Vol. II, trans. Brian Massumi (London: Athlone Press, 1988) 377.

> In Paris I began my education, in many directions. I acquired several languages. I attended Bergson's lectures in the Collège de France—when that little gray-faced man came out of the little door at the back and went to the lecturer's desk none of the audience of fashionable women applauded him more respectfully than myself. *Les données immediates de la conscience* produced a great effect in my just awakened mind. I became a great reader, though formerly I had never opened a book. During these days I began to get a philosophy—and a very bad one, I am afraid. Like all philosophies, it was built up around the will. As an expression of my personality at that time it took the form of a reaction against society. But it was militantly vitalist. (RA 250-251)[81]

Although Lewis, in his monolithic study of what he called the "time-doctrine" in Time and Western Man, (originally, and significantly, entitled The Politics of the Personality, and intended to make up that part of his multi-volume critique of modernity, The Man of the World, this particular section being concerned with "the systematic crushing of the notion of the Subject in favour of collectivism," and the manner in which the discipline of philosophy had been "obediently harnessed to physics and psychology" and " circumscribed to a fashionable and purely political role."[82]), was prepared to admit by the mid nineteen twenties[83] that: "...by students of philosophy Bergson is still read, but by no one else" (TWM 159), and that Bergsonism had, by this stage, come to be seen in the

---

[81] On Lewis's revisions for this chapter, see Toby Foshay's afterword to Rude Assignment (RA 301).

[82] Letter to Charles Whibley in Rose ed. 154-155.

[83] On the writing of Time and Western Man and its process of revision, especially in relation to his vast The Man of the World project, see Paul Edwards's afterword (TWM 491-498).

main as something of an aberration from the intellectual trajectory of modernism, he nonetheless continued to subscribe to the view, first promulgated so aggressively by Julien Benda in 1912,[84] and then within a more specifically theological context by Jacques Maritain,[85] that Bergson needed to be understood as the primary source of all that had gone wrong with modernity and with the modernist project subsequently. Such vehemence is initially somewhat puzzling. For while it was certainly the case that Bergson and Bergsonism enjoyed an extraordinary popularity in Britain and North America as much as in continental Europe in the years leading up to world war one, to the extent that Eliot described Bergsonism as an "epidemic," [86] it is also true, and for reasons that continue to exercise historians of philosophy and culture, that Bergson, (in spite of winning the Nobel prize in 1927), went into a very rapid decline in general and intellectual popularity after the war.[87] That Lewis, following Benda in tone as much as in specifics,[88] should express so consistent a vehemence towards a philosopher who had, effectively, been out of vogue for well over a decade in any significant sense indicates therefore both a problem and a number of possible

---

[84] For background to Benda and his anti-Bergsonian contemporaries, see R.C. Grogin, The Bergsonian Controversy in France, 1900-1914, (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1988).

[85] Jacques Maritain, Bergsonian Philosophy and Thomism, trans. Mabelle L. Andison (1955; New York: Greenwood Press, 1968).

[86] T. S. Eliot, "Commentary," Criterion 12. Oct. 1932: 74.

[87] See their introduction to, Fredrick Burwick and Paul Douglas, ed., The Crisis in Modernism: Bergson and the Vitalist Controversy (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992) 6-7.

[88] See Wagner 185.

explanations: the simplest and most convincing of which has been put forward variously by critics from Wagner to Campbell. In Campbell's suggestive formulation it is, for instance, effectively, that Lewis "doth protest too much," and that his denial of Bergson's influence disguises something absolutely crucial to his own critical and philosophical position.[89] Campbell notes, for example, how Lewis's claim in Time and Western Man that "until I began my scrutiny of the contemporary time-philosophy, I knew him very little," (TWM 159) is severely undermined by a number of facts that Lewis fails to acknowledge, at least in this treatise. To begin with, there is Lewis's close personal connection with T. E. Hulme, whose own translations of Bergson between 1911 and 1913, and numerous commentaries on Bergson's thought for The New Age, posthumously collected by Herbert Read in Speculations in 1924,[90] would have familiarized him with the generalities of the Bergsonian position, even if he had not already attended the philosopher's lectures personally in the early years of the century. Secondly, Lewis quite brazenly appropriates Bergson's theory of comedy before distorting and inverting it in "The Meaning of the Wild Body" for his final version of the stories and essays published in the same year as Time and Western Man, as The Wild Body: A Soldier of Humour and Other Stories; an adaptation certainly pre-empted, also, in the earlier versions of the stories, and

---

89 Campbell, Enemy Opposite 97-116.

90 T. E. Hulme, Speculations: Essays on Humanism and the Philosophy of Art ed. Herbert Read (1924; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987).

especially in "The Soldier of Humour" in its 1917 variant.[91] Thirdly, there is, certainly, more than a grain of truth in Campbell's observation that: "When we look at Bergson with Lewis in mind, Creative Evolution emerges as the hidden model—a model Lewis inverts, and conceals throughout the philosophical arguments of Time and Western Man."[92] All of which would tend to suggest that Lewis, as Campbell suggests, was far more familiar with Bergson at an earlier stage, or at least, with commentary on Bergson, than he wished to reveal. Such a position is indicated even more strongly by the autobiographical content of a letter, cited by Campbell, written some twenty years after the publication of Time and Western Man, in a phase of his life when Lewis was very badly in need of regular paid employment and had applied for a job teaching philosophy:

> Paris, where I went soon after Rugby, was my university. There I followed Bergson's lectures at the Collège de France, and shared the philosophical studies of friends of mine at the Ecole Normale...Bergson was an excellent lecturer, dry and impersonal. I began by embracing his evolutionary system. From that I passed to Renouvoir (sic) and thus to Kant.[93]

If the absence of reference to his artistic studies at the Slade[94] in this condensed account of his education can be taken as merely conventional within the format of the resumé, the apparent dissembling on Bergson, and the description of his

---

[91] See Wagner, 222-227, and Bernard Lafourcade in "The Taming of the Wild Body," Meyers, ed. Revaluation 68-84.

[92] Campbell, Enemy Opposite 98-99.

[93] Cited by Campbell, Enemy Opposite 98.

[94] See Meyers, Enemy 9-11. A brief though revealing account of Lewis's experience at the Slade may be found in the unpublished autobiographical chapter "How One Begins," which is included in the Foshay edition of Rude Assignment (RA 250).

consequent movement via Renouvier to Kant, is suggestive. Renouvier, whose work made a strong impression on William James, and who was far better known in the first decade of the twentieth century than subsequently, was an advocate of what he called "neo-criticism," which was an extraordinary attempt to find a reconciliation between neo-Kantianism, French positivism, British empiricism, Leibnizian monadology and ethical radicalism, whilst avoiding the defiles of Hegelianism and its legacy in German Idealism. More importantly in regard to Lewis, Renouvier published an extremely popular introduction to the philosophy of Kant in 1906, which was, presumably, the staging post on the way to the critical philosophy alluded to by Lewis in his letter.

Lewis's position as regards Kant and the critical philosophy itself will be revisited at a later stage in this chapter in connection with Schopenhauer, and then at various points in the dissertation. The most important point to be grasped at this stage, however, is the manner in which Kant's reinscription of space and time as intuitions in The Critique of Pure Reason, rather than as external, material or noumenal realities, has both a positive and a negative aspect for Lewis. The positive aspect is the manner in which space can thereby, at least within Lewis's reading of the Kantian legacy, be prioritised over time by an act of (radically individuated and internally coherent, albeit multiplicitous,) will. The negative aspect is the manner in which for Lewis the self-understanding of modernity has come to be based on the inverse, on a prioritization of time by an act of

(collective and politicised) will, thus severely curtailing the possibility of the true individualism promised by an earlier philosophical system: the monadology of Leibniz.[95]

Lewis's generalized rejection of some of the varieties of post-Kantian "temporal" philosophy and post-Nietzschean-Bergsonian vitalism then in circulation amongst the intellectual and artistic circles of pre-war Paris is, of course, rehearsed and satirized with vicious delight in Tarr, as, indeed, are aspects of his own initial "militant" enthusiasm for *Lebensphilosophie* and certain species of vitalism, in the early short stories and sketches set in Spain and Brittany.[96] His broad refusal of philosophical styles associated with notions of a generalized will, or of a life force, or of the Unconscious, or of time—as in the idealism of Alexander or the "process" philosophy associated with Whitehead and others[97]—and before them, the cosmic and noumenal Will of Schopenhauer, the radical egoism of Stirner, the transhuman dimensions of Nietzsche's will to power, the libido and Unconscious of Freud, however, also provides some useful insight

---

95 For a discussion of Leibniz and individualism, see Alain Renaut, The Era of the Individual: A Contribution to the History of Subjectivity, trans. M.B. DeBevoise & Franklin Philip (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1997) 61-87.

96 On Lewis's early attachment to "militant vitalism" and its relation to grotesque expressionism of the stories and essays of that period, see Lafourcade, in Meyers, ed. Revaluation 77-84.

97 On process philosophy, see Nicholas Rescher, Process Metaphysics: An Introduction to Process Philosophy (Albany: SUNY Press, 1986); Charles Hartshorne, "Bergson's Aesthetic Creationism compared to Whitehead's," in Bergson and Modern Thought: Towards a Unified Science, ed. Andrew C. Papanicolau and Pete A. Y. Gunter (New York: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1987) 37-58.

into his apparent duplicity, or at least ambiguity, in regard to Bergson and Bergsonism in his critical theory, and this insight in turn helps to begin to illuminate more generally what I have described above as the "genealogy and justification" of his critical method. It is an insight centrally concerned with the manner in which Lewis's apparently random discrimination in regard to theories and theorists he wished to condemn is often far less arbitrary than it might superficially appear, insofar as it is frequently based on a secondary principle or set of secondary principles derived from those theories or theorists themselves, and then filtered through his over-arching principles of ocularcentrism, externalism and repetition

It is important to note in regard to Bergson, for instance, that Lewis's yoking together of so many diverse systems of thought fails to allow any distinction at all between what Burwick and Douglass have usefully described as "early vitalism," which is effectively a kind of animism, in which all matter is infected with a spiritual substance that drives its actualization, and what they term "critical vitalism" which they derive from Bergson and Dreisch, (and to a lesser extent, Nietzsche), and associate with the attempts to reconcile philosophy with the transition from "a matter-based physics to an energy-based physics"[98] at the end of the nineteenth century. This in itself might well be indicative of the confusion of thought in Lewis alluded to by Leavis in The Common Pursuit, but it is also,

---

98 Burwick and Douglass 1.

crucially, of a piece with the kinds of intuitive machinery generated from Bergson's discussions of time and consistency. For one of the essential ingredients of the Bergsonian position, (and one that Bertrand Russell, for example, found extremely problematic),[99] was the potentially paradoxical notion that self-consistency in personal identity and belief is an illusion generated by the substitution of spatial metaphor for the flux of real duration. The reasoning behind this position is, at least at first glance, comparatively straightforward within the terms that Bergson sets up in his earlier writing. It is based on the notion that, in Kolakowski's admirable paraphrase, for Bergson, "time is real."[100] For if time is indeed "real" as Bergson argues, in the sense that the future is merely the anticipation of unpredictability and novelty, of real change, then the experience and recollection of change are the only genuine constants that we have left to us, including the experience and memory of change in theoretical structures and processes. This observation leads Bergson in Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience from 1989 (translated as Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness in 1910), Matière et mémoire: Essai sur la relation du corps avec l'esprit from 1896 (translated as Matter and Memory in 1911), and L'Evolution créatice from 1907 (translated as Creative Evolution in 1911), to develop a theory of experience and memory, of extensity and intensity, of possibility and reality, and of virtuality and actuality,

---

99 Bertrand Russell, A History of Western Philosophy (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1945) 791-810.

100 Leszek Kolakowski, Bergson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985) 2.

which is , according to some critics, remarkably prescient of certain trends in the philosophy of science and related epistemologies nearly a century after their publication.[101] It is a theory admirably summarised by Gilles Deleuze in his influential account of Bergsonism from 1966, where he notes the manner in which Bergson distinguishes between two kinds of what he, following Bergson, describes as "multiplicity," in the following terms:

> One is represented by space... It is a multiplicity of exteriority, of simultaneity, of juxtaposition, of order, of quantitative differentiation, of difference in degree; it is numerical multiplicity, discontinuous and actual. The other type of multiplicity appears in pure duration: It is an internal multiplicity of succession, of fusion, of organization, of heterogeneity, of qualitative discrimination, or of difference in kind; it is a virtual and continuous multiplicity that cannot be reduced to numbers.[102]

In other words, there are events in human consciousness which by their very nature are indivisible into atomic constituents such as are measured in minutes or seconds, which are merely examples of the kinds of inappropriate spatial metaphor which have been used to describe and categorize, and thereby distort, temporal processes. In reality, events experienced as duration cannot be apprehended or correctly understood through metaphors of extension, or extensity, or number, but only through metaphors of intensity or differentiation of kind. What enables us to experience events as being part of continuity in

---

[101] See, for example, Tim Murphy, "Beneath Relativity: Bergson and Bohm on Absolute Time," in The New Bergson, ed. John Mullarkey (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999) 66-81; Ansell-Pearson, Germinal Life 40-76.

[102] Gilles Deleuze, Bergsonism, trans. Hugh Tomlinson & Barbara Habberjam (New York: Zone Books, 1991) 38.

consciousness is our fundamental capacity to recapture the past of experience through memory, of which Bergson indicates three kinds: habit memory, recollection and pure memory.[103]

Habit memory is the most straightforward of the three surveyed by Bergson. We experience habit memory, for example, when we revisit a city or town we have known well, and find that we are traversing and negotiating its streets mechanically, without thought. This form of memory tends to be inscribed in the body, primarily. Recollection is what we normally associate with the capacity to remember events, narratives, images, numbers and so forth. It is by nature representational, and has for that reason been described by John Mullarky as "image memory," in contrast with "pure memory," which as spelled out in Creative Evolution, is the memory of virtuality.[104] What this means for Bergson in terms of durée is that a distinction is required between the manner in which memory traces the line from possibility to realization, on the one hand, and virtuality to actuality, on the other. This distinction, so crucial to both an understanding and, importantly in regard to Lewis, a creative mis-understanding of Bergson, is one central to the thinking of Gilles Deleuze. In effect, (and following Deleuze's reading), possibility and realization are part of a system in

---

[103] The debate as to whether Bergson's theory of memory implies a dualism or a tripartite system is ably summarised in favour of the latter in John Mullarkey, Bergson and Philosophy (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999) 51-57.

[104] Mullarkey, Bergson and Philosophy 51.

which the real is what actually exists, and the possible is what does not exist, but might under the right conditions. Accordingly, the possible is parasitic on the real. The virtual and the actual, on the other hand, are both real, insofar as the that which has been actualised is the possible made real, but that which is virtual is the plane of pure difference as it is experienced in pure memory, as pure past, rather than in image memory. Or, and to put it another way, image memory recollects and represents the past, and in doing so, abstracts and atomises certain aspects of the past through the image. Pure memory of the past, on the other hand, has not recollected or represented anything, and in this sense, pure memory as virtuality, as that process of differentiation prior to actualization, is the past in its reality, rather than in its re-presentation. It is, as Bergson puts it, the interpenetration of past and present experienced through intuition (rather than intellect) as pure duration.

In this understanding, the movement from the virtual to the actual always involves a distortion and corruption of reality in the abstracted form of the image.[105] Paradoxically, therefore, (and again, in Deleuze's reading of Bergson), the identity of the past, and indeed it's reality, lies in its virtuality, its quality of pure difference understood as the principle of differentiation itself. Or as Lewis puts it somewhat contemptuously in his chapter on "Space and Time" in Time

---

[105] Deleuze, Bergsonism 57-8. See also, Gilles Deleuze, Cinema 2:The Time Image, trans. Hugh Tomlinson & Robert Galeta (London: Athlone Press, 1989) 44-155.

and Western Man, and with more than a nod to Walter Pater:

> "Duration" is what occurs when we completely telescope the past into the present, and make our life a fiery point "eating" like an acetylene flame into the future.. "Duration" is inside us, not outside. There is nothing but "mathematical Time" outside us. (TWM 411)

Beyond the paradoxical play of identity and difference that this hypothesis throws into the conceptual arena, and on a more directly intuitive level, (or mystical level, as many construed it), this revelation of durée is potentially liberating. For, as he put it in a famous passage from Creative Evolution: "Action on the move creates its own route, creates to a very great extent the conditions under which it is to be fulfilled, and thus baffles all calculation."[106] Accordingly, if one of the consequences of the genuine intuitive grasp of real duration is the necessary anti-systematic inconsistency that will obtain between Bergson's major works—an inconsistency that Bergson was always happy to admit to—then a second and parallel consequence of the intuitive grasp of real duration is the realization that time, being open-ended, implies that reality itself is forever incomplete, and that personal identity, understood as an aspect of that reality, of duration, is necessarily in the process of constant self-creation.[107] Or, as Bergson put it somewhat dramatically in the final passage of his last major work, The Two Sources of Morality and Religion, from 1932:

---

106 Henri Bergson, Creative Evolution, trans. Arthur Mitchell (London: Macmillan, 1911) ix.

107 H. Wildon Carr, Henri Bergson: The Philosophy of Change (London & Edinburgh: T. C and E. C. Jack, 1919) 14.

> Men do not sufficiently realize that their future is in their own hands. Theirs is the task of determining first of all whether they want to go on living or not. Theirs the responsibility, then, for deciding if they want merely to live, or intend to make just the extra effort required for fulfilling, even on their refractory planet, the essential function of the universe, which is a machine for making gods.[108]

Now, it may well be the case, as some commentators have argued, that the major weakness in Bergson's thinking is the thinking of freedom, which tends to act as an assumption, rather than a proof, in many of his arguments, and is never properly cashed out in his ethics or elsewhere.[109] Be that as it may, there is no doubt that this open-endedness as regards the idea of personal and social liberty, combined with the supposedly anti-intellectualist rigour of his presentations, appealed to Lewis at a very fundamental level in his early years, and retained a certain power over his thinking subsequently. For in spite of his virulent antipathy to all things temporal or intuitive, much of his development of a visuo-spatialist philosophy throughout the twenties in particular, and the various theories of externalism that go along with it in relation to literary and artistic theory, is very obviously an attempt to reconcile what he had initially found attractive in Bergsonism— the enormous potential of creative evolution and durée for notions of self— with an absolute rejection of what he perceived as the homogenizing tendencies of all temporalizing or will-based or life-based

---

[108] Henri Bergson, The Two Sources of Morality and Religion, trans. R. Ashley Audra and Cloudesley Brereton, with the assistance of W. Horsfall Carter (Notre Dame, Indiana: Notre Dame Press, 1977) 317.

[109] Mullarkey, Bergson and Philosophy 24-27.

philosophies. It is in this ontological ambivalence that we find Lewis attempting to locate himself through a form of what has been termed, in relation to Nietzsche, as an "aristocratic radicalism,"[110] a kind of elitism which rejects such creativity for the masses as "romantic" in the negative sense so often promoted in the early twentieth century, yet raises the possibility of such creativity for the true and distinct individual to the highest level of value.

To a large extent, the ontological ambivalence which drives so much of his polemic, and, by extension, his fiction, is the calculated product of Lewis's underlying belief, shared with a number of so-called "vitalists," including such "critical vitalists" as Bergson and Nietzsche, and for some theorists at least, fundamental to the very possibility of modernity since Kant, that the individual is an autonomously generated being.[111] At the same time, to avoid contamination from the generalized Will or the Unconscious, or history, or the social, or facticity as the phenomenologists had it, all of which tended to subsume the individual-as-monad, Lewis demanded that this autonomy be generated only from absolutely differentiated entities, whose relations with one another, as with their place of origin, (whether of class or race, though notably, this does not apply to gender), were always and primarily spatial and plastic in their distribution, rather than

---

[110] The notion of "aristocratic radicalism" originates with George Brandes in his Friedrich Nietzsche, trans. A.G.Chater (London: Heinemann, 1914) 3-56.

[111] On Kant and radical finitude see Michel Foucault on "The Analytic of Finitude," in The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences, trans. Unnamed Collective (1970; London: Tavistock Publications, 1974) 312-318.

temporal and fluid. Because for Lewis:

> All personality is raceless... for the characteristic work of personality is to overcome the mechanical ascendancy of what is imposed on it by birth and environment.[112]

The individual or true "personality" for Lewis —significantly, the two terms are usually interchangeable in his writing, along with the term "self"—is an autonomously created entity with the inherent potential to divorce itself from history, from culture, and from tradition, and more importantly, from what underpins history, culture and tradition, which is the Schopenhauerian Will and its various cognates. He—and it is always quite unequivocally he—aspires towards a condition above and beyond the human; a condition clearly related to the transhuman speculations of both Nietzsche and Bergson.[113] Yet at the same time, the individual in modernity, for the most part, as Lewis observes with considerable frequency, has been less concerned generally with asserting this radical autonomy and potential, than with merely flowing along with the rhythms of the crowd, of the masses. As such, the individual in modernity has become, for the most part, an oxymoron; a single though far from unique example of a mass-produced "personality," rather than a potential *übermensch.*

Lewis's general contempt for the mass of humanity here and elsewhere, (which

---

[112] Kenner 5.

[113] Ansell-Pearson in Viroid Life, and then in Germinal Life, examines the notion of transhumanity in relation to Nietzsche and Bergson, both respectively and in relation to one another.

will be addressed in more detail in chapter three), certainly bears comparison with that of Hulme's ardent anti-humanism, and quite possibly for similar reasons, as does his ambivalence towards Henri Bergson.[114] Indeed, this latter ambivalence in particular, as I have indicated above, provides a rather more complex source of explanation for Lewis' tendency to dissemble where Bergson is concerned, than that provided by Campbell's observation alone. For it is actually in the content of Bergson's thought itself, especially in its motility and mutability, that Lewis is able, paradoxically, to locate the grounds for his own philosophy of stasis and repetition, and it is in this sense dependant upon the systems it condemns to a degree that evidently concerns Lewis greatly, and leads to his almost obsessive condemnation of Bergson and Bergsonism.

To summarize, then: there are four main perceptions of the use of and deviation from Bergson pertinent to an understanding of Lewis's relationship with the philosophy of durée which will be central to the theoretical underpinnings of what follows in this study. The first, paraphrased above, has to do with Bergson's openly inconsistent vision of the nature of reality, and therefore of science and philosophy. It has undoubted parallels with what Nietzsche referred

---

[114] Hulme's generally positive assessment of Bergson is evidenced by the translations he made of the philosopher and his commentaries on Bergson and Bergsonism for The New Age, posthumously collected by Read in Speculations. His initial embrace and gradual shift away from Bergsonism is described in Alun R. Jones, The Life and Opinions of T. E. Hulme (London: Victor Gollancz, 1960) 57-67.

to as the "will-to-truth,"[115] insofar as Bergson clearly views such notions as truth and consistency as contingent on prevailing ontological conditions, in a manner not dissimilar to Nietzsche's more genealogical approach to questions of truth,[116] but is even more closely aligned to the pragmatism of his correspondent William James,[117] who remained one of his most ardent supporters, and who clearly believed that he and Bergson had a great deal in common. Indeed, from Lewis's perspective, and in spite of a qualified respect, even admiration, he demonstrates at times for James, the two have enough in common to indicate the emergence of a new theology:

> the fundamental implication of William James, and the school that has come after him, is that the human intellect should be dispensed with... Where James exults at the death-blow given by Bergson to the "beast"—namely Intellectualism, he is rejoicing in reality at the birth of another "beast"— namely, his sort of God. (TWM 369)

Whatever the comparisons between Bergson's notions of truth and reality and those of Nietzsche and James, [118]what is evidently the case is that Bergson's prioritization of the creative aspects of self, of the manner in which reality is in

---

[115] The "will-to-truth" and its relation to the "ascetic ideal" is investigated most thoroughly in section III in Friedrich Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morality, trans. C. Diethe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

[116] For a comprehensive account of Nietzsche and the question of truth, see Maud-Marie Clarke, Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

[117] Henri Bergson, "On the Pragmatism of William James. Truth and Reality" in Creative Mind: An Introduction to Metaphysics, trans. Mabelle L Andison (New York: Philosophical Library/Citadel Press, 1946) 209-219.

[118] On these relations, see Schwarz 20-49.

the process of being formed by human creativity, secretly appealed to Lewis, whilst every other aspect of Bergson's thought, and especially the emphasis on intuition over the geometrical tendencies of the intellect, gradually came to repel him. Lewis's ambivalence, in this sense —and this tendency is vital in understanding Lewis's deployment of his adversaries— is based less on the content of Bergson's thought itself, than on its position in regard to that content, and its direction of advocacy. Thus, a second point of dialogical contention between Lewis and Bergson arises over the issue of the importance of the image in representation. For, as Martin Jay has persuasively argued, Bergson is a thinker whose general orientation is vehemently anti-ocularcentric, insofar as he tends to equate the faculty of vision with stasis, space and quantification, [119] and with the notion of time as a homogenous and measurable medium, as he locates this notion's modern origin in the critical philosophy of Kant.[120] Accordingly, although he has much to say on the image which appealed to poets and artists of the pre-war generation for a variety of reasons, he is, in the end, closer to the Symbolists in his valorization of a temporal medium such as music, than to the imagists who undoubtedly drew on his writings, via the translations and commentaries of Hulme, for their inspiration. For this reason, he can write (in Hulme's translation of Introduction to Metaphysics), that:

---

[119] Martin Jay, Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth Century French Thought (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993) 190-209.

[120] Bergson, Creative Mind 65.

> No image can replace the intuition of duration, but many diverse images, borrowed from very different orders of things, may, by the convergence of their action, direct consciousness to the precise point where there is a certain intuition to be seized.[121]

A statement such as this, so rich in its aesthetic and artistic possibilities, and sufficiently enigmatic in regard to the evasiveness of its prime object in representation— duration itself— is, perhaps, typical of that aspect of Bergson and Bergsonism that entranced so many poets and intellectuals for a significant period of years.[122] Yet, it is also clear that juxtaposition or montage can only ever induce a sense of what is lacking on the philosophical level, by virtue of the untranslatable visuality of the image. Lewis is, in this sense, correct when he repeatedly attacks Bergson and his followers for their emphasis on the tactile over the visual, and the internal over the external, as when he attacks C. D. Broad and Bertrand Russell on the basis of their adherence to:

> the one great philosophy of the time-school—for them touch is the enemy, not sight...the eye is, in the sense in which we are considering it, the private organ: the hand the public one. The eye estranges and particularizes more than the sense of touch. Its images are of a confusing vivacity, and its renderings are readily more subjective. (TWM 393)

This rather confusing distortion/inversion of Bergsonian thought is typical of Lewis, as is the crucial passage from Time and Western Man when he argues, superficially against Spengler, but more pointedly against Bergson and commentators on Bergson such as H. Wildon Carr, that:

---

[121] Henri Bergson, An Introduction to Metaphysics, trans. T.E. Hulme (Indianapolis: Bobbs Merrill, 1949) 14.

[122] Burwick and Douglass 3-7.

> the mental world of memory, the image world, is not in the nature of things as "intense"— if it is intensity that you want—as the spatial world of the "pure Present" of the classical heyday. The Image is not as strong a thing as the direct, spatial sensation. And the time-world is a world of images: that is one of the main things to remember about it, and to that presently I shall return.(TWM 217-218)

This study, also, will have cause to return to Lewis's notion of the "pure Present." For the moment, however, what is important to note is that such attacks are vehemently pursued by Lewis, in part, because Bergson describes so eloquently the attitude towards space and time that he wished to supersede, and which Lewis wished to maintain and build upon in his aesthetic and social theories. Geometry and space, or at least images of geometry and space, abound in both Lewis and Bergson, as in the following from Creative Evolution:

> the human intellect feels at home among inanimate objects, more especially among solids, where our action finds a fulcrum and our industry its tools; ... our concepts have been formed on the model of solids; ...our logic is, pre-eminently, the logic of solids;...consequently our intellect triumphs in geometry, wherein is revealed the kinship of logical thought with unorganised matter.[123]

Certainly, claims such as these would have appealed to Lewis on an aesthetic level, on the level of imagery. Indeed, had it not been for the fact that Bergson was merely setting up a position in order to demolish it—bearing in mind his belief that the image is a distortion of the real and virtual, an artificially contrived frozen moment plucked from the flow of becoming—Lewis might well have

---

[123] Bergson, Creative Evolution ix.

been more clement in his criticisms. It would be a mistake, however, to view Lewis's antipathy to Bergsonism as purely aesthetically or temperamentally or even whimsically based, as critics such as Wagner sometimes appear to suggest,[124] for there are, I will argue, significant philosophical reasons for his rejection of Bergsonism; reasons which underlie his aesthetic predilections, and by extension, his critical theory also. Nonetheless, it would undoubtedly be a mistake also to downplay or subsume the role of taste and temperament in Lewis's use of Bergson, and especially taste and temperament where politics was concerned. For it is undoubtedly the case that it was the politics of Bergsonism, far more than the metaphysics, that finally led to his rapid demotion in the philosophical hierarchy of modernism. The politics apparently deriving from Bergsonism clearly exercised Lewis a great deal in the twenties and thirties, as they did the one-time Bergsonian T.E. Hulme, the theologian Jacques Maritain, and various figures from the right wing Action Française movement under Charles Maurras, as well as those influenced by the initially left-leaning anarcho-syndicalism of Georges Sorel.[125] Like Nietzsche before him, Bergson was sufficiently complex, sufficiently novel, and sufficiently persuasive in his ideas, to be claimed initially by both the left and the right. In addition, and again like Nietzsche, Bergson

---

[124] In this, he aligns Lewis with French neo-Classicism's ill-thought-through attack on Bergsonism per se. See Wagner 188.

[125] On the significance of Bergson to Sorel, see John L. Stanley in his introduction to George Sorel, From Georges Sorel: Essays in Socialism & Philosophy, ed. John L. Stanley. trans. John and Charlotte Stanley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976) 47-61.

managed to win and retain a popularity in the more intellectually inclined enclaves of an emergent mass-culture; a popularity which was both new and disturbing to the more elitist intellectuals, whatever their political colour. Thus Lewis, unnerved both by the popular reception of these thinkers in terms of the content of their thought, and their capacity to reach such large and varied groups of readers by virtue of their style and seductions, writes in his brief celebration of the genius of Leibniz, that:

> Bergson and Nietzsche have been (without the genius of Leibniz) popular purveyors to the enlightened Everyman of their day. Bergson supplied him with a certificate of "creativeness" and of "uniqueness": Nietzsche with a certificate of "blue blood." What is really essential to press upon the attention of the reader is this: that the least distraction on the part of a great intelligence from his task of supplying pure thought, is fatal. (TWM 290)

So the philosopher of modernity here becomes little more than a "Wizard of Oz" figure for Lewis, once distracted, that is, from the realms of pure intellect by the deliquescent enticements and confectionary glamour of modernity. In addition to this essentially aesthetic objection to Bergson, and within the wider context of the period, while the "creativeness" and "uniqueness" of Bergson might have initially attracted the more elitist amongst European intellectuals, as time moved on; it seems that a significant number of his more rightward-leaning adherents began to distance themselves from what they perceived as a hidden agenda of collectivism, of democracy, of mass cultural momentum, at the heart of the Bergsonian philosophy. And while this certainly does not explain Lewis's overt antipathy to Bergson, it is undoubtedly an important aspect of what later comes

to be something of an obsession in his critical theory.

If Bergson and vitalism were in due course, to become the bêtes noires of his subsequent intellectual and philosophical adventures, his retrospective assessment of three other philosophers whom he also encountered in those years, and one English essayist, is allowed more full and open expression in the published text of Rude Assignment:, when he notes that: "for me Nietzsche was, with Schopenhauer, a thinker more immediately accessible to a Western mind than other Germans, whose barbarous jargon was a great barrier—Hegel, for instance, I could never read."(RA 128) Having stated what is, effectively, an aesthetically guided response to three major figures from the nineteenth-century canon of German philosophy, Lewis then goes on to specify a particular criticism he has, and had then, of Nietzsche:

> A majority of people, I dare say, found in the author of 'Zarathustra' a sort of titanic nourishment for the ego: treating in fact this great hysteric as a power house. At present that is what I like least about Nietzsche: and I was reasonably immune then to the Superman. The impulse to titanism and supernatural afflatus pervading German romanticism has never had any interest for me. On the other hand that side of his genius which expressed itself in 'La Gaya Scienza', or those admirable maxims, rather resembling Butler's 'Notebooks', which he wrote after the breakdown in his health, were among my favourite reading in those years. (RA 128)

Lewis's relationship with Schopenhauer has been touched upon by a number of critics over the years, but not thus far to a degree sufficient to indicate the dependency of much of his critical theory on the philosopher who so profoundly

influenced the thought of figures as diverse as Wagner, the early Nietzsche, Hardy, Mann and Wittgenstein.[126] His account of Schopenhauer in Time and Western Man is, as I have indicated above, mainly critical of the philosopher for his elaboration of the concept of the noumenal Will: a theoretical force or holistic entity whose progeny of "Mystical" doctrines later in the nineteenth and into the early twentieth century were to provide him with many of his most satisfying "exhibits." For Lewis, Schopenhauer's Will was implicitly the same as: "...the 'life-force' of élan vital, the hypostasized 'duration' of Bergson, the Time-god of Spengler, Alexander, Whitehead, etc." (TWM 307)—and, Lewis added elsewhere, the Unconscious of Schopenhauer's disciple Edward Von Hartmann, through to Sigmund Freud, D.H. Lawrence and numerous other cultural luminaries, from Einstein to Charlie Chaplin, who, in one form or another, embodied for him a sense that there was a hidden and homogenous "otherness" beyond the surface of life to which we might have access through an attention to time: an "otherness" which was essentially for Lewis a "will-to-merge," and thereby a denial of the autonomous and monadic self required for genuine intellect and creativity. Schopenhauer's discussion of personal identity, by way of example, exercises Lewis covertly throughout his discussion of the philosopher in that he distinguishes between "character" and "intellect," and effectively states that while each person has a completely individual and unique character, a kind of essence or "true self" distilled from the objectification of the

---

[126] On the cultural influence of Schopenhauer, see Bryan McGee, The Philosophy of Schopenhauer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983) 247-393.

Will and retained throughout our lives, whatever changes might take place in our circumstances, our intellects and apparatus which enables those intellects to function and find across, are entirely contingent and entirely variable.[127] What this implies for Lewis—in a form of philosophical "leap" whose subsequent altitude enables him to focus on the metaphysical landscape rather than the metaphysical details of Schopenhauer's vision— is essentially a kind of animism, functionally identical to Bergson's intuition or Freud's Unconscious, in which intellect and personal identity based on intellect are demoted in the metaphysical hierarchy emanating from its primary source as Will. Thus:

> All the characteristic semi-animistic, mystical-unconscious, present-day perplexities are emphasized in Schopenhauer. His Unconscious or Will informs stones as well as men, and his Will, before animals arrived, can have been little more than an inert mass, as conscious as, or no more conscious than, a planet or an armchair...Yet our "consciousness"... is a less perfect thing than his less conscious instinct. But a bee has this marvellous instinct to the full: and yet we regard ourselves as an improvement on the bees, or any other social hymenoptera. In that we are evidently wrong. For, judged by the standard of this god, the bee is more god-like. (TWM 310-311)

Characteristically when referring to the Will or its cognates, Lewis attempts to bring out what he perceives as the quasi-theological pseudo-reality of its emphasis on intuition or essence or some form of vitalist organicism over the machinery of intellect and imagination. However, it is important to note that while Lewis, in

---

127 Arthur Schopenhauer, The World as Will and Representation Vol. II, trans. E.F.J. Payne (New York: Dover Publications, Inc, 1958) 238-9.

his preference for the machinic trope or figure, was invariably happy to deploy organic metaphors in his negative description and assessment of holistic forces such as Schopenhauer's Will, or, and to take another of Lewis's bête noires, Spengler's parabolic "History," it was not a generally required feature of Lewis's genealogical method that there be any strictly genetic connection between these different manifestations of the Will. What was important to him was that whatever we choose to call it, this Will or Unconscious is essentially an extension of the Kantian "*Ding an sich*," the underlying noumenal reality through which we share, whether directly or by default, the " 'inner life' of other individuals, are indeed identical with them, though outwardly we are cut up into "Thises and That." (TWM 307) Or to put it another way, Lewis held that the underlying Kantian reality to which we can never have direct access had become, in modernity, the repository for every occult or metaphysical substratum, whether Will or Unconscious or Spirit or élan vital, which could find no home in the clear light of perception as it engages with phenomena alone. The hard phenomenalism of Berkeley, for example, and the generally anti-metaphysical momentum of enlightenment thinking, with its emphasis on the ascendancy of science and the rationality of natural religion, had, effectively, been undermined from within by a new and insidious mysticism of the real.

In this, Lewis is suggesting that it is not so much Kant that is at fault, but rather, all those who sought subsequently to fill the lacuna inherited from Kant with

forces that blurred the clear and distinct lines of the intelligent monad suggested by Leibniz, at the fountainhead of philosophical modernity, as the essence of the self. In a letter to T.S. Eliot from 1924 on his projected Man of the World, sections of which he was forwarding to the poet for comment, Lewis notes with characteristic braggadocio that: "it is still rough. For instance, to establish the full relationship of the monad to God (in the Leibnizian sense) I shall require at least three or four pages. And I wish to give a small chart of the vicissitudes of the ego, through Kant down to the 'Critical realists'. "[128] In a letter from the following month, also to Eliot, Lewis adds: "Here is a little more as promised... (The blank pages represent a piece about Kant which I have not given you, as it is only a recapitulation of some of his theories... I aim at a more or less popular audience of course.)"[129]

Whether or nor this aside to Eliot might be considered disingenuous, in his summary of the evolution of the notion of the Will and the suppression of the monadic subject in the second part of Time and Western Man, Lewis is undoubtedly correct to note that Schopenhauer follows what he called Kant's "great achievement" here, his distinguishing of the phenomenal from the noumenal realms. But where Schopenhauer differs from Kant is in his conviction that behind the dream-like phantasmagoria of the phenomenal world

---

[128] Rose 139.

[129] Rose 140.

lies a primal unity of which the principle of individuation is merely a discordant representation. Once manifest as plurality and appearance, as phenomena, the Will, according to Schopenhauer: "...makes the world a permanent battleground of all those phenomena of one and the same will; and in this way the will's inner contradiction with itself becomes visible."[130] In terms of its social, cultural and intellectual consequences for modernity, such a view is clearly anathema to Lewis. For while he readily holds with the notion of conflict as integral to human creativity, it must be a conflict between fundamentally different individuals or intellects if it is to have any value at all. In this sense, for Lewis identity must be derived from difference rather than the other way around, and a metaphysical force which attempts to reduce the clear and distinct intuitions of space, time and identity to a unitary force rather than to any number of differential forces in opposition to one another has a correlative effect on the perception of temporality in which time as much as progress is seen to flow and in which personal identity in its reality as an active force in the world becomes indistinct from the concept of personal identity in its abstraction as a simulacrum. The outcome of this demotion of difference to a derivation from a primal identity is reflected philosophically and culturally for Lewis in the valorization of the temporal over the spatial, and in modernity's obsession with the intuitively subject rather than with that which can be intellectually objectified. Accordingly,

---

[130] Arthur Schopenhauer, The World as Will and Representation Vol. I, trans. E.F.J. Payne (New York: Dover Publications, Inc, 1958) 265-266.

the Will in its various forms has been adopted as a neo-romantic projection, against which he seeks to set his own broadly neo-classical spatialism. Nor, as he frequently notes, is this a strictly modern phenomenon. For it is, as the narrator of The Childermass makes evident, an ancient battle being re-fought in modern context, for "They are the oldest opposites in the universe" (C 153): a statement which prompts Hyperides, the archetypical antagonist, of the time-obsessed Bailiff in this curious mix of fantasy, literary experiment and theological speculation, to accuse his opponent of "illusionism," which for Lewis as much as for his dramatized petitioner here, is the essence of the "time-school" in their melding together of the temporal and spatial in intuition or actuality. When challenged by the Bailiff as to the inference demanded by Hyperides' description of his thought as "magical philosophy," Hyperides responds as follows:

> I use magician in the ordinary sense of illusionist hypnotist or technical trick-performer: and whether your ostensible approach be that of mathematics, biology, medicine, epistemology, or moralistics, is all one. Men find what they desire.... With your convex and concave mirrors and your witches' cauldron, Time, into which you cast all the objects of sense, softening and confusing them in your "futurist" or time-obsessed alchemy, are you not faithful to the traditions of the magician? Is your art, for all its mechanical subtlety, profounder than that of the Protagoras that it took the greatest intellect of the Greek World all his time to confute? (C 153)

Such an attack is typical of Lewis in both its tenor and its agonistic setting. Indeed, as befits a fictionalist, and as I have suggested above, Lewis is invariably happier with such dramatization than the kinds of close argument and allusion that his subject matter would demand in a more formal academic or critical

setting, and it is this tendency, along with his belligerent didacticism, that infuriates readers such as Pritchett or Leavis. At the same time, however, such dramatizations, as Lewis was fully aware, have an ancient and highly respectable provenance, especially in the form of the dialogue which Lewis so often favours. And if it is the case, as it so often seems with his philosophical dialogues in Enemy of the Stars or The Childermass, that Lewis is setting up an opposition only to subvert it by apparently switching sides, if only momentarily, for dramatic effect, then it is fair to say that such a tactic is entirely in keeping with his more general intellectual strategy in the critical and philosophical writings of the twenties and thirties. The point that needs to be clarified here is whether or not this strategy, and its more local tactical operations, as I suggested in relation to Bergson, derive as much from the content with which they deal as from any external or prior design. Or to put it another way: is it the case, as Campbell has suggested, that the more vehemently and obsessively Lewis opposes a position or thinker, the more likely he is to deploy its or their content in his own constructive criticism, fiction or art?

From this perspective, Lewis's reading of Schopenhauer is intriguing for a number of reasons. On the one hand, Lewis clearly deplores the tendency in Schopenhauer towards metaphysical homogeneity prior to phenomena and the realm of active and creative engagement with phenomena. In this, and although he is only generally mentioned in passing, Lewis's philosophical hero is clearly

Leibniz, whose notion of the windowless monad captures perfectly the kind of self and other relationship that Lewis wishes to assert against the various post Kantians with whom he takes issue. For Lewis, Leibniz is both the philosopher "more worthy of admiration" than any other in the modern age (TWM 290), and the ultimate source of the modern notion of the Unconscious (TWM 314-315), as well as the modern notion of the individual, which Lewis wishes to wrest from his enemies in the time-school. Unlike Schopenhauer, for whom the self may be unique, but its intellectual attributes are not, the Leibnizian monadology insists on the uniqueness of selves based on an irreducible atomization of identity itself based on its ultimate rationality within the system.

The ontology here, as Strawson later pointed out, is not strictly that of an ontology of particulars,[131] but it is, nonetheless, an ontology of indiscernibles, and as such, cannot be submerged into a flux or homogeneity. Or, and to phrase it slightly differently, while all intelligent monads—or self-conscious entities—are in some sense identical, they nonetheless maintain a different relationship from one another to all other monads within their purview, and this is what creates space. They retain a different point of view in relation to the objects they perceive, and they perceive with varying degrees of clarity. Thus:

> It is not in the object, but in the modification of the knowledge of the object, that monads are limited. In a confused way they

---

[131] P.F. Strawson, Individuals: An Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics (London: Methuen. 1959) 125-126.

> all go towards the infinite, towards the whole; but they are limited and distinguished from one another by the degrees of their distinct perceptions.[132]

For Schopenhauer, good post-Kantian that he was, space and time are generated by the subject as the *principium individuationis*, on the basis that without space and time no separation between one thing and another would be possible, therefore nothing could be individuated.[133] This, however, applies only to the world of phenomena or representation. The realm of the thing-in-itself or noumena, which for Schopenhauer is the realm of the Will, is not subject to either time or space, and does nor occupy time and space, but is a unity beyond all individuation, and thus in Lewis's terms, a principle of homogeneity rather than one of heterogeneity. As with Kant, for Lewis, Schopenhauer's noumenal realm suffers from its unknowability in experience, and can thereby be commandeered for all manner of metaphysical fantasies, including those in which time becomes the essence of the thing-in-itself, which is effectively how Lewis envisions the genealogy of the Will from Schopenhauer to Bergson, and rather curiously, to Freud also, (for whom the unconscious was as atemporal as Schopenhauer's Will).[134] Leibniz, on the other hand, provides a version of time and space which,

---

[132] G.W. Leibniz, "Monadology" §60, in Philosophical Writings, ed. G.H.R. Parkinson. trans. Mary Morris and G.H.R. Parkinson (1934; London: Dent, 1983) 188.

[133] The full argument that provides the grounds for this adaptation of Kant may be found in Arthur Schopenhauer, On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason, trans. E.F.J. Payne (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court Publishing Company, 1974).

[134] The notion of "timelessness" or Nachträglichkeit in the Freudian unconscious is particularly evident in case studies such as "The Wolf Man," but is only really brought to the fore of psychoanalytic debate by the Lacanian revision of Freud. On the issue of

while it is undoubtedly relational rather than absolute in the Newtonian sense, is not so much the source of any principle of individuation as the aggregate of fundamental particles of self whose overall agreement in perception is the result of the pre-established harmony in this, the best of all possible universes. As Nicholas Rescher has admirably summarized this curious doctrine:

> one can say that the core of Leibniz's theory of space and time is that these are nothing apart from the "things" in them, but owe their existence to the ordering relations that obtain among things. Space and time are thus not pre-existing receptacles which exist independently of and (logically) prior to the existence of entities which are supposedly embedded within them.[135]

The outcome of this particular vision of time and space is that time does not and cannot exist apart from things. It is not so much a force or a flow as a succession of temporal instants to be understood relationally in much the same way as a set of geometrical relations: an understanding evidently more amenable to Lewis than that presented by either Bergson or Schopenhauer.

Although he often appears to group Nietzsche in with the advocates of the Will, particularly through his notoriously ill-used notion of the will to power, there are certain strands of Nietzsche's argument contra such an interpretation which Lewis is evidently aware of and which he just as frequently however covertly incorporates into his own thinking. Central to the question of the relation

---

temporality in Freud and Lacan, see, for example, Malcolm Bowie, Lacan (London: Fontana Press, 1991) 181-193.

135 Nicholas Rescher, The Philosophy of Leibniz (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1967) 88-89.

between power and value in Nietzsche, for example, is the role of becoming and its relationship to the body, to the future and to laughter: and it is this role of the idea of becoming in modernity generally, as much as in Nietzsche, that Lewis attempts to divorce in his work from any controlling idea of primal unity or progression. The supposedly romantic abandonment to becoming as it parallels the invention of a generalized will or the occult machinery of the Freudian unconscious, for example, is responsible for what Lewis describes in his attack on Surrealism and the contributors to the avant garde journal transition as the "Diabolical Principle," which reveals in its obsession with a kind of transcendental apocalypticism, the motif of romantic, satanic revolt.[136] Indeed, those aspects of Nietzsche's writings which lent themselves to an interpretation of the primacy of romantic revolt clearly bothered Lewis in his early writings, not so much in the sense of revolt as a response to absurdity in the Camusian sense (indeed Lewis was later to become a sympathetic if critical reader of Camus),[137] but rather in the way they allowed for their interpretation as "advertisement," as trivial rebellion. On the whole, and particularly as this thinking matured, Lewis appeared to accept Nietzsche's diagnosis of modern nihilism and sought to frame it within his own specific and militant brand of absurdity, and in this Lewis

---

[136] See (DP & DS 24-141). Lewis's discussion here of neo-romanticism, nihilism and diabolism in the arts of surrealism and their forebears is exemplary, in that it describes precisely what so many writers and artists of the period found attractive in the notions of the Satanic and the nihilistic, but adopts a position of critical contempt towards them. Lewis, of course, returns to the issue of demonic nihilism in the second and especially third volumes of The Human Age in the 1950s.

[137] In Wyndham Lewis, The Writer and the Absolute (London: Methuen, 1952) 66-74; 82-83.

undoubtedly pre-empts many of the themes which were to gain ascendancy in post-world war two European thinking, particularly those connected with the drama of the absurd[138] and the more populist versions of existentialism derived, primarily, if not exclusively, from Sartre and Camus.

In this, Lewis is characteristically untimely, insofar as the early twentieth century response to this aspect of Nietzsche's project, both in Britain and on the continent, was often staggeringly misconceived, as was so much else about Nietzsche.[139] In a chapter on George Bernard Shaw for example in The Art of Being Ruled, Lewis rightly reproves the playwright for misrepresenting the philosopher in a discussion of the will to power, which for Shaw suggested power over oneself rather than power over others. Lewis remarks that this version of self-overcoming suggests self-improvement through self-discipline, and "smacks of the YMCA straight talks to young men." Lewis continues: "This sense is certainly not obtained from a reading of Nietzsche's works. 'Power over others' came very vividly into the programme of that philosopher." (ARB 54) He is, of course, entirely correct to invoke the practical aspects of Nietzsche's genealogy of power in relation to the concept of "self overcoming." He is also correct to point out that Nietzsche's rather curious theory of the *übermensch* lends

---

[138] The best discussion of Lewis and the absurd as a category of philosophical humour is in Lafourcade, in Meyers, ed. Revaluation 74-84.

[139] On the early reception of Nietzsche in England, see David S. Thatcher, Nietzsche in England 1890-1914 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970); Patrick Bridgewater, Nietzsche in Anglosaxony (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1972).

itself readily to the tradition of "titanism" which seemed to grip Europe in the aftermath of Napoleon. There are, though, alternative readings of this theory which the distance of hindsight and the experience of twentieth century political dictatorship enable us to foreground against some of Nietzsche's occasionally over-enthusiastic renderings of it as they were subsequently interpreted by some of his rasher disciples. Indeed, it is arguably the imagery which often surrounds the *übermensch*, drawn at least in part from Nietzsche's severe Protestant background—metaphors of "ascent" and "earth," combined with a number of religious terms— which may mislead the reader of this curious entity. Nietzschean style is always, however, highly provocative, in the light of which it seems reasonable to contend that if Lewis's profound respect for commonsense rebelled against the titanic aspects which he rightly discerned in Nietzsche's vision of the *übermensch*, the notion of "overcoming" certainly played an important part in the construction of Lewis's "Soldier of Humour" and his "Wild Bodies". Zarathustra repeatedly recalls the reader to the body, and reminds his followers that the intellect is "something in the body"[140] not a soul. The *übermensch* or man of the future whom Zarathustra in every sense represents, look forward, not backward: "Not whence you have come should hitherto be your honour, but whither you are going".[141]—and intends this forward-looking as an

---

[140] Friedrich Nietzsche, Thus Spake Zarathustra trans. R.J.Hollingdale (London: Penguin, 1976) 61.

[141] Nietzsche, Zarathustra 220.

"overcoming" of nature and of a moribund and decadent culture through an attendance to the immanence of the body and a rejection of the metaphysical other-worldliness inherent, as he discerned it, in both the "Platonic-Kantian" and Judaeo-Christian traditions and in various romantic cosmologies. As Lewis puts it in his Byronic satire "One-Way-Song" from 1933:

> Try and walk backwards: you will quickly see
> How you were meant only *one-way* to be!
> Attempt to gaze out of your bricked-up back:
> You will soon discover what we *One-ways* lack!
> Endeavour to re-occupy the Past:
> Your stubborn front will force you to stand fast!
> (CPP 67)

There are a number of aspects of Nietzsche's work and legacy that remain central to understanding the critical theory of Wyndham Lewis. Some of these have been touched upon here and in the introduction, and others will be elaborated through Lewis's critics in chapters to follow. What must be established at this stage, however, is the manner in which Lewis, while he is never reticent in attacking Nietzsche where it suits his argument, nonetheless, very evidently remains sympathetic to the pathos of much of the philosopher's work. The Nietzsche who could write, for example, that: "Art answers to that instinct in man to transmute unbearable reality into beautiful illusion, and to become like the Greeks, superficial—*out of* profundity."[142]—is very clearly the Nietzsche with whom Lewis felt a profound affinity. Similarly, while he would often rail against Nietzschean concepts such as *ressentiment*, the *übermensch* and the transvaluation of

---

[142] Cited by Peter Putz, "Nietzsche: Art and Intellectual Inquiry," in Pasley 21.

all values as being "advertisements," there is little doubt that the spirit of Nietzsche's antipathy towards the small-mindedness and nihilism of the age was entirely in keeping with Lewis's own. And, while it is probably fair to say that his early reception of Nietzsche was broadly commensurate with that of many avant-garde artists, fictionalists, agitators and propagandists of the period—that is, an essentially practical and deliberately incendiary, rather than a theoretical or philosophical reception, it was one that went directly into and indeed celebrated, if not the more "titanic," then certainly the more nihilistic and anti-nihilistic threads that could be unpicked from the philosopher's published and posthumous writings.[143]

Examples of this celebration in which a particular slant on Nietzschean affirmation, which he elsewhere condemns, and a similar slant on Schopenhauerian pessimism (which he also condemns elsewhere and for genetically comparable reasons), are combined with an initially implicit anti-Bergsonism, abound in the earlier work, and, significantly, are generally retained with only minor conceptual changes in his later revisions. When, for instance, the

---

[143] Lewis was probably familiar with the French translation of The Will to Power published in 1903. The standard English translation to date is undoubtedly Kaufmann's. The first major translation into English in the early 20th century was that of Ludovici, the art critic of The New Age whom both Hulme and Lewis despised, and whom Hulme described as a "queer insect." Ludovici's translation (unsurprisingly in the light of the relations between the two men, see Levenson 121-123), elicited Lewis's unbounded scorn. As he wrote in The New Age in 1914: "His dismal shoddy rubbish is not even amusingly ridiculous. It is the grimmest pig-wash vouchsafed at present to a public fed on husks." Cited by Thatcher, 238. Mistranslations of Nietzsche's texts into English were fairly typical in this period, and Ludovici was undoubtedly one of the worst offenders.

eponymous hero of Tarr asserts his radical anti-humanism to the vacuous Hobson: "I'm a new sort of pessimist.=I think I am the sort that will please!=I am the Panurgic-Pessimist, drunken with the laughing gas of the Abyss. I gaze on squalor and idiocy, and the more I see it, the more I like it.="(T_1 26)—aside from Lewis's typographical experimentation which he soon dropped, Tarr's subsequent meditation on sex and art, Flaubertian stupidity and the distinction between the authentic individual and the man of the masses, is in many ways a rehearsal for the themes which would be developed more fully in the 1920s and 1930s. Similarly, his response to Anastaysa later in the novel, to her sexual teasing of him as a "slave" and a "chimpanzee," is to whimsically exceed Nietzsche by asserting: "No, I'm the new animal; we haven't found a name for it yet. It will succeed the Superman. Back to the Earth!" (T_2 307).[144] Behind such whimsicalities as may be found in Tarr and the early short stories, however, lies a genuine engagement with the complexity of Nietzsche's thought: from the curious notion of eternal recurrence with its desire to surpass the antimony between being and becoming, to the constant interrogation and recreation of value and the value-generating process, to the assumption that truth is an aspect of power to the contempt that Nietzsche demonstrated towards the nationalistic fervour that so animated Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As Paul Edwards has so succinctly expressed it:

---

144 For a discussion of Tarr as a Nietzschean novel, see Alistair Davies in Meyers, ed. Revaluation 107-119.

> Vorticism was a part of an international movement, and even before the war, Lewis was probably interested in Nietzsche's views on nations and on the idea of the "Good European." When war broke out, it seems that he studied Part 8 of Beyond Good and Evil, "Peoples and Countries," quite carefully. Blast, Tarr, war writings like "A Young Soldier" and "The War Baby" are full of overt and covert reference to it.[145]

Along with his close attention to the anti-nationalist aspects of Nietzsche, and his concern with value, Lewis also indicates, both covertly and overtly, an understanding of the will to power that very evidently allows it to be contrasted quite dramatically with the more generalized Schopenhauerian Will that he deems as having been extrapolated from the Kantian Noumena. This is that aspect of the will to power that Deleuze has summarized in his monograph on Nietzsche, in the following, somewhat gnomic, terms:

> Every time we interpret will to power as "wanting or seeking power" we encounter platitudes which have nothing to do with Nietzsche's thought. If it is true that all things reflect a state of forces then power designates the element, or rather the differential relationship, of forces which directly confront one another. This relationship expresses itself in the dynamic qualities of types such as "affirmation" and "negation". Power is therefore not what the will wants, but on the contrary, the one that wants in the will. And "to want or seek power" is only the lowest degree of the will to power, its negative form, the guise it assumes when reactive forces prevail in the state of things.[146]

Controversial though this reading of Nietzsche undoubtedly is, there is little doubt that within the broader scheme of Deleuzean-Nietzschean thinking, its

---

[145] Paul Edwards, "National Allegory, or the Six Unknown: Wyndham Lewis's Internationalism in 1915-17," unpublished ms, 1995, 7.

[146] Gilles Deleuze, Nietzsche & Philosophy, trans. Hugh Tomlinson (1983; London: Athlone Press, 1986) xi.

connections with the concept of repetition[147] undoubtedly links to a number of distinctly Lewisian notions which the latter also derived and adapted from his readings of the philosopher. Especially important here is the Nietzschean idea of the "surplus" so central to his philosophy of life; a notion that allows him to criticize Darwin from a perspective that radicalises rather than dismisses the great evolutionist. On this front, Lewis's understanding of Nietzsche is exemplary for a time in which the philosopher was being so systematically misrepresented. Here, for instance, is Lewis on the will to power:

> The difference between the lyrical strategy of Nietzsche—despairing as it was—and the strategy of defeat of the *mondain* type, was that Nietzsche saw the surplus—because, of course, he *felt* it in his own organism—left over from the darwinian "struggle for existence." He thought that Darwin's struggle for existence, his mechanical brand of evolutionism, was too drab, too utilitarian, and spiritless a picture. There was, for him, a *margin* in this struggle (like Peirce's "chance") which caused it to assume more the character of struggle for something *marginal and over and above* too—a super-something. And this he described as the Will to Power. (ARB 117-118)

In contrast with so many misreadings of the time as subsequently, this is a remarkably succinct and accurate description of one important aspect of this notion. If his early appropriation of Nietzsche was, therefore, largely for the purposes of opprobrious satire, on the one hand, and nihilistic comedy, on the other, even at this early stage Lewis was by no means unaware of the iconoclasm of Nietzsche's attack on that nihilism, nor of its possible consequences. It was not, however, through philosophical contemplation, but rather, as Edwards

---

147 Deleuze, Difference 200-202.

indicates, through the experience of war itself, as Nietzsche would undoubtedly have appreciated, that he gradually and retrospectively deepened his understanding of those consequences. What the experience of war also provided him with was a set of conceptual tools which enabled him to sharpen his awareness of the need to "overcome" that nihilism, as in Nietzsche's vision, although with his own amendments, through an active suspicion of the metaphysical foundations of the European worldview itself as it had evolved from the enlightenment, and as it might be read through its manifestations in art, science, ethics, religion and politics. It was a suspicion that could lead, moreover, if actively pursued, and as Lewis was clearly becoming aware by this stage, to what the philosopher-poet had famously described as a "transvaluation of all values,"[148]—a process of transformation whereby the production of new values, rather than their passive reception, would enable a philosophy appropriate to the nihilistic century that he predicted would succeed him. However, and as is invariably the case with Lewis, while he evidently appreciated the power of Nietzsche's insights into nihilism and its overcoming through a particular style of creative autonomy, his method of probing those insights, especially from the early 1920s on, and as Nietzsche would have approved, had to be peculiarly his own. Because of his professional bias, moreover, and as he so often reminded his readers, this method was to be essentially visual, spatial and oppositional in its

---

148 On the 'transvaluation of all values" see especially Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will to Power, ed. Walter Kaufmann. trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1967).

construction. Thus it is that from around the time of the publication of his first major critical work, The Caliph's Design in 1919, his developing comprehension of modernity as artifice led him by gradual stages to a conviction that the disparate phenomena of modernity, for all practical purposes, could be held together through a kind of metonymic synthesis of its concepts, and, viewed in this way, the resulting "exhibit" as he chose to call it would reveal the deeper movements and currents of the nihilism that in reality connected the seeming disparities between phenomena at a level beyond everyday consciousness. It is a vision, in both senses of the word,[149] of a fundamentally non-dialectical synthesis of concepts based on both resemblance and contiguity, and organized around a series of optical metaphors, that he invites the reader to explore with him in the early pages of his first autobiography, Blasting and Bombardiering:

> You will be astonished to find out how like art is to war, I mean 'modernist' art. They talk a lot about how a war just-finished effects (sic) art. But you will learn here how a war about to start can do the same thing. I have set out to show how war, art, civil war, strikes and coup d'états dovetail into each other. (BB 4)

This retrospective self-analysis is important, in that like everything Lewis writes, it becomes part of a more general project to dismantle the metaphysics of the age through the creation of an artist-philosopher-character who can, in some sense, remain stable whilst all around him collapses into dust and delirium. War, in this

---

[149] Discussion of this ocular (and as much metaphysical as metaphorical) dualism in Lewis originates with Porteus, and has tended to permeate critical writings on Lewis ever since. See Porteus 39-56.

understanding, is considerably more than a mere staging post in that project; however pivotal, it is the expression of a radical transformation of the manner in which modernist and nihilist metaphysics configures itself, and must be responded to by the artist-philosopher-character accordingly.

The war for Lewis was the time when he received, as he put it in Blasting and Bombardiering, his "political education"(BB 186)— an education that would lead him in due course to the theories of the "politics of intellect" that dominate The Art of Being Ruled and sundry essays and pamphlets a decade later. As for so many of his generation, the interminable policy of attrition and sacrifice that characterized the Great War had traumatic consequences for the continuity of experience which, in the case of the writer or artist, is usually essential to the development if not the subject matter of his or her craft. For Lewis, this war, on top of claiming a number of his friends and colleagues in the literary and artistic avant garde, (including the redoubtable T. E. Hulme):

> had robbed me of four years, at the moment when, almost overnight, I had achieved the necessary notoriety to establish myself in London as a painter. It also caught me before I was quite through with my training. And although in the 'post-war' I was not starting from nothing, I had to some extent to begin all over again. (BB 213)

A decade later in his second autobiography, Rude Assignment, Lewis described this new beginning as a move away from the will-to-abstraction which had formerly occupied him:

> The war was a sleep, deep and animal, in which I was visited by images of an order very new to me. Upon waking I found an altered world: and I had changed, too, very much. The geometrics which had interested me so exclusively before, I now felt were bleak and empty. They wanted filling. They were still as much present to my mind as ever, but submerged in the coloured vegetation, the flesh and blood, that is life. I can never feel any respect for a picture that cannot be reduced, at will, to a fine formal abstraction. But I now busied myself for some years acquiring a maximum of skill in work from nature... (RA 139)

These fundamental changes in his perception of and orientation towards the faculty of representation, led too to a radical change of perspective on his own role as an artist and writer, and a deeper immersion in the philosophical sources which had, in his early years, largely if not entirely served the purpose of stimulants to the imagination: "I started as a novelist and set a small section of the Thames on fire. My first book was a novel Tarr (1918). Then I buried myself. I disinterred myself in 1926, the year of the General Strike—but as a philosopher and critic." (BB 5)

To an extent, of course, it must always be accepted that there is invariably a certain dissembling quality to Lewis's retrospective self-analyses which link them to his theories of art and satire in Men Without Art and elsewhere as species of "games".[150] At the same time, it is undoubtedly the case that if philosophy and specifically certain German and French philosophers, and commentators on

---

[150] Most notably in his seminal "Essay on the Objective of Plastic Art in our Time," first published in Tyro No. 2, and subsequently collected in Wyndham Lewis on Art (WLOA 203-205).

them had been important to his early development, then they gained an increasing importance to him as his creative vocation became ever more insecure, both financially and existentially, and ever more ambitious in terms of his vision of modernity and its "overcoming" through a kind of critical and aesthetic montage of literary effects, in which internality and temporality were perpetually displaced in favour of representations of externality and the spatial repetition of philosophical tropes.

What is intriguing about Lewis in this regard, as most of his critics have not, of course, been unaware, is that he did not merely absorb this thought, nor did he debate with it in any conventional philosophically approved manner. Instead, he fought it, and he fought it ruthlessly and relentlessly to gain the upper hand over those he chose to see, on a personal as much as on a professional level, as his philosophical sparring partners, and in certain cases, as his deadly enemies. At the heart of this antagonism lay a particular professional contempt he had for the generality of philosophers, if not their philosophies, as when he notes in a chapter called "Vegetarianism and Capital Punishment" in The Art of being Ruled: "The philosopher is at all times opposed to violence: at least it is very seldom that he is not. Sorel and Nietzsche being exceptions." (ARB 64) This contempt is based on a certain and decidedly Nietzschean view of philosophy as being an abstraction by most philosophers of their own slavery to an ethical principle to the exclusion of the aesthetic principle, which for Lewis is prior to

philosophizing itself.[151] Thus in a moment which recalls no-one so much as Georges Bataille,[152] he observes: "How then is bloodshed or violence to be regarded? Essentially as excess, nothing more." (ARB 64)

This "excess" for Lewis is a kind of overflowing of a more primal impulse, but not, it should be noted, an impulse from the unconscious or any equivalent vitalist force. Rather, it is an appetite, a hunger, which is most decidedly on the surface of life and consciousness, and finds its highest application in art. Thus the ethical, for Lewis, is merely: "...a higher form of the appetite that leads to excess, that leads to the measure of aesthetic delight. Sadistic excess attempts to reach roughly and by harshness what art reaches by fineness." (ARB 65)

While this approach to one of the central domains of philosophy might seem decidedly un-philosophical in any formal or academic sense, neither engaging with ethics in the traditional manner, nor dismissing it as emotivism or non-naturalism after the philosophical fashions of the period,[153] there is, nevertheless, an underlying and indeed philosophically informed logic to this antagonistic procedure which has to do with Lewis's envisioning of a fundamental dualism at the heart of existence itself, and for that reason, at the heart of any expression of

---

[151] Friedrich Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1966) 13-14.

[152] See, for example, Georges Bataille, The Accursed Share Vol.1, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Zone Books, 1991) 45-61.

[153] Contemporary ethical theories are surveyed by Mary Warnock in Ethics Since 1900 (1960; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971) 1-83.

that existence. Thus while he can claim rather imperiously in Time and Western Man, for example, that he does not feel "at all impelled to explain myself when I am examining a mere philosopher," and add that, "he speaks my language, usually with less skill, but much the same as I do" (TWM 136), this characteristic belligerence towards his sources does not express the whole truth of his position. His contempt is not merely an affective or intellectually dogmatic response to his sources and materials, as he often makes clear here and elsewhere, but an essential part of the aesthetic and philosophical momentum that drives his thought and thus, because style and content were always inextricable for him, the engine of his prose. It is also an essential part of his broader project in which discourse on politics, science, personal and social ontology, and aesthetics are intertwined and thereby reformulated as singular objects of attack in the activities of the satirist. The purpose of this procedure is fundamentally materialistic, primarily concerned, that is, with the concrete over the abstract in perception, cognition and expression, as when he explains in The Mysterious Mr Bull the vocational determination behind his virulently anti-metaphysical bias: "The satirist is an artist in destruction: one whose purpose is a more reasonable and beautiful social system...The greatest satirists have always been masters of the physical in all its departments: they are mechanics rather than metaphysicians." (MB 148) This eristic dimension in Lewis's approach to philosophy, his preference for destruction over empathy and for mechanics over metaphysics, is not merely pertinent, but absolutely central to the broader question of personal

and social identity in both his fiction and philosophical criticism, and to the ways in which this question emerges from an interplay between stylistic and structural experiment and theoretical argument in his writing.

Bearing this observation in mind, I will conclude this chapter, as I indicated at the beginning, with a few remarks on reading Lewis as a post-Nietzschean thinker in relation to the philosophical and theoretical trajectory of Deleuze and Guattari. In view of the generally Heideggerian-Derridean use of Nietzsche on Lewis, (especially in the critical exegesis of Toby Foshay which I will be discussed in the following chapter), it is important to begin by pointing out that Deleuze's Nietzsche, far more than Derrida's, and in direct contrast with Heidegger's,[154] can be regarded primarily as a "philosopher of life" rather than one of the text or even of being. He is an exemplary creator of forces and concepts involved not so much in the overcoming of metaphysics per se, or its unravelling, or its impossibilities or aporiai, as in the continuous production of and experimentation with new metaphysical ideas, entities, concepts and drives. Deleuze's distinction from Derrida on this issue, was made clear at a conference on Nietzsche in 1973, where in response to a question concerning the Heideggerian project and its legacy, he claimed that:

---

[154] An invaluable discussion of the French reception of Nietzsche in the latter half of the twentieth century, and its reliance on responses to Heidegger's Nietzsche, may be found in Alan D. Schrift, Nietzsche and the Question of Interpretation: Between Hermeneutics and Deconstruction (London: Routledge, 1990), and Nietzsche's French Legacy: A Genealogy of Poststructuralism (Routledge, London, 1995).

> If I understand you, you say that there is some suspicion on my part of the Heideggerian point of view. I'm delighted. With regard to the method of deconstruction of texts, I see well what it is. I admire it greatly, but I don't see it as having anything to do with my own. I never present myself as a commentator on texts. A text, for me, is only a little wheel in an extra-textual practice. It is not a question of commenting on the text by a method of deconstruction, or by a method of textual practice, or by any other method; it is a question of seeing what use a text is in the extra-textual practice that prolongs the text. You ask me if I believe in the nomad's response. Yes, I believe it.[155]

Deleuze's called his paper at the Cerisy Colloquium "*Pensée nomade*," and this title typifies the nomadic thought or nomadology that he had been developing with his colleague Felix Guattari, and which finds its fullest expression in the two volumes of Capitalism and Schizophrenia from 1972 and 1980 respectively, translated as AntiOedipus and A Thousand Plateaus, and their final collaborative work, from 1991, translated as What is Philosophy. It is a method which can not easily be summarized, insofar as to summarize —and in this they share much with post-structuralism—would be to impose closure and a transcendental authority of interpretation, but it may be exemplified, as in the following from one of Deleuze's most influential writings on Nietzsche from 1973, and one centrally concerned with the issue of nomadic thought:

> An Aphorism means nothing, signifies nothing, and is no more a signifier than a signified: were it not so, the interiority of the text would remain undisturbed. An aphorism is a play of forces, the most recent of which—the latest, the newest, and provisionally the final force—is always *the most exterior.*[156]

---

[155] Cited in Schrift, Nietzsche's French Legacy 63.

[156] Gilles Deleuze, "Nomad Thought," The New Nietzsche, ed. and trans. David B. Allison (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990 4th ed) 145.

This emphasis on exteriority and the "play of forces" is one that readers of Deleuze and Guattari encounter continually, as, of course, do readers of Wyndham Lewis. Whether the senses of "exteriority" evoked in these two cases are comparable, and what such a comparison might reveal, are questions that will be central to what follows—as will Deleuze and Guattari's stated understanding of the role of hermeneutics in the act of reading and, by extension, the act of writing—and indeed, all forms of human creativity and cognition. Again, this understanding can not easily be summarized, but it can be exemplified, as it is in their opening gambit in their influential essay "Rhizome," which eventually formed the introductory chapter of A Thousand Plateaus, and which I will quote from here at some length, as it is integral to an understanding of the intersection between Deleuze and Guattari and Lewis which I wish to propose:

> A book has neither object nor subject; it is made of variously formed matters, and very different dates and speeds. To attribute the book to a subject is to overlook this working of matters, and the exteriority of their relations... In a book, as in all things, there are lines of articulation or segmentarity, strata and territories; but also lines of flight, movements of deterritorialization and destratification. Comparative rates of flow on these lines produce phenomena of relative slowness and viscosity, or, on the contrary, of acceleration and rupture. All this, lines and measurable speeds, constitutes an *assemblage*. A book is an assemblage of this kind, and as such is unattributable. It is a multiplicity... A book exists only through the outside and on the outside. A book itself is a little machine.[157]

Whilst some of the terminology used here would probably have been alien to

---

[157] A Thousand Plateaus 4-5.

Lewis's assertive faith in what he called "common sense," the general sense of what is being stated, deriving to a significant degree from Bergson as much as Nietzsche, is nonetheless in keeping with some of Lewis's attempts to exploit Bergsonism whilst maintaining an aggressively critical distance from the implications of what he understood as Bergsonian vitalism. It is also a fairly accurate description of the curiously repetitive architecture of many of his own critical works, as noted by his earliest serious critic Porteus, and as discussed by his most self-consciously modernist critic, Kenner.

It is instructive in this regard to glance briefly at some of the language employed by Lewis, and especially the language of stasis and acceleration and exteriority, in his attack on Impressionism from the first edition of BLAST from 1914. Here, in a passage from a section entitled "Our Vortex," Lewis establishes his aesthetic credentials as follows:

> We are proud, handsome and predatory.
> We hunt machines, they are our favourite game.
> We invent them and hunt them down.
> This is the great Vorticist age, a great still age of artists.
> As to the lean belated Impressionism at present attempting to eke out a little life in these islands:
> Our Vortex is fed up with your dispersals, reasonable chicken-men.
> Our Vortex is proud of its polished sides.
> Our Vortex will not hear of anything but its disastrous polished dance.
> Our Vortex desires the immobile rythm (sic) of its swiftness.
> (B_1 148-149)

These sentiments, emphasizing Lewis's perennial advocacy of spatialism and

exteriority, and of velocity within and as an effect of stasis, are not merely the essence of Vorticism, but of Lewis's critical and aesthetic theory and vocabulary overall. However, whilst this aesthetic has often been commented on in relation to Lewis's art and fiction, and in the case of Fredric Jameson, Lewis's political expressivity, the *philosophical* dimension of this advocacy, and its genealogy as a following-on from and a reaction to certain selected strands of continental philosophical thinking, has tended to be ignored. Deleuze and Guattari, as Jameson noticed and yet simultaneously denied in his study of Lewis, are enormously useful here, insofar as they develop a philosophical style which, in drawing on Nietzsche and Bergson amongst others, parallels the underlying obsession that Lewis has with the question of time in modernity, and yet approaches this question from a far more diverse system of perspectives than Lewis was able to muster, and from a decidedly different position of advocacy and regard. And it is this difference of position, understood less as a series of static moments than as an "immobile rhythm of swiftness," as a system of differentiation through repetition, through which Lewis's critical theory can begin to indicate its remarkable pre-emption of perspectives that have come to be associated with the discourses of late or post-modernity.

Chapter Two

Inhuman Geometry

> You must talk with two tongues, if you do not wish to cause confusion. You must also learn like a Circassian horseman, to change tongues in mid career without falling to earth... There is nothing so impressive as the number two. You must be a duet in everything. (B_2 91)
>
> I see the task of thought to consist in helping man in general, within the limits allotted to thought, to achieve an adequate relationship to the essence of technology.[158]
>
> Our actual existence...whilst it is unrolled in time, duplicates itself all along with a virtual existence, a mirror image.[159]

From the time of the first BLAST manifesto in 1914, in which he lambasted Marinetti's Futurism on the grounds that its demotion of space to a form of romantic and Bergsonian impressionism revealed its inherently passeist nature, to his vast and widely ranging critique of modern Western culture in the 1920s, and then on—albeit in a more etiolated form—to the late fictional and critical writings of the 1950s such as Monstre Gai, Malign Fiesta and The Demon of Progress in the Arts, Lewis was perennially occupied with the questions raised by the valorization of temporality as the prior intuitive faculty of human experience in modernity. It will be the purpose of this chapter to trace

---

[158] Martin Heidegger, Der Spiegel, N. 26, May 31, 1976, p. 280. Cited by Michael E. Zimmerman, Heidegger's Confrontation with Modernity: Technology, Politics, Art (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990) 41.

[159] Henri Bergson in "Memory of the Present and False Recognition," in Mind-Energy: Lectures and Essays, trans. and ed. H. Wildon Carr (London: Macmillan and Co Ltd, 1920) 135.

through the implications of this valorization both for the social and cultural theory that it generates across and within Lewis's texts, and for the responses that some of his more important critics have offered by way of a clarification of this preference and its consequences for Lewis's critique of modernity. Of particular moment here are the ostensibly disparate worldviews generated from the philosophical and critical arguments of Martin Heidegger, on the one hand, and Fredric Jameson, on the other. These two thinkers are important to developing the discussion of Lewis and modernity-as-nihilism for a number of reasons, but especially insofar as between them, they describe an extreme right-left polarization of the tendency towards totalizing thought (or thinking towards totality) in the twentieth century along decidedly political lines: a polarization which thereby enables a positioning of Lewis in regard to that modernist trajectory in terms of his continuing ambivalence towards visions of totality, and his general preference for those of division, conflict, singularity, duality and multiplicity. For if it is the case, as Pierre Macherey has cogently observed, that:

> To philosophize is perhaps, according to a very ancient conception, to identify oneself with the totality. But if this formula can be retained, it is with the qualification that it cannot be a question of a given identity, whose models an actual thought must reject. The identity pursued by philosophy takes shape through the movement that tends to connect philosophy with all of reality: it is the identity of philosophy's operation.[160]

---

[160] Pierre Macherey, In a Materialist Way: Selected Essays, ed. Warren Montag. trans. Ted Stoize (London: verso, 1998) 37.

—then it is fair to say that Lewis, in his assertion of a radically singular, dual, or multiplicitous notion of identity, spends a considerable amount of energy in his critical writings engaged in a battle *against* the operation of philosophy whilst unashamedly deploying philosophical tools in the process. As he so often asserts, his fundamental reason for engaging in this form of rebarbative proto-deconstruction is primarily to expose what he perceives as the division and multiplicity underlying all notions of totality, to reveal the underlying difference-in-repetition which lies at the essence of his vision of personal and social identity, (at least, that is, for the creative individual whom he seeks to affirm, rather than for "mass" man, whom he merely satirizes or scorns). It is, therefore, this Lewisian sense of the division, fragmentation and multiplicity at the heart of the human design, whether represented in its social, political, cultural, biological, metaphysical or aesthetic manifestation, which will provide the focus of this chapter.

For Lewis, in a series of critical assertions that connect him with the perspectives of a number of those whom Jeffrey Herf has designated as the "reactionary modernists"[161] of the inter-war years, the most destructive aspect of the modern obsession with the temporal rather than the spatial dimension of consciousness was that it was undermining the clear and distinct perception

---

[161] Jeffrey Herf, Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture and Politics IN Weimar and the Third Reich (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

of the creative and sovereign individual in favour of the frenzied perceptions of the crowd. In sharp contrast with this perceived obsession, Lewis sought to prescribe a distinct, autonomous and spatializing model of both the subjective and objective consciousness which should belong to those to whom he referred, borrowing from Goethe, as natures rather than puppets. In The Art of being Ruled, for example, he differentiates between these two models of the modern subject and their extensions into the public world in the following terms:

> Today there are, in fact, two species and two worlds, which incessantly interfere with each other, checkmate each other, are eternally at cross purposes. They speak the same language...but they do not understand each other.... today there is an absurd war between the "puppets" and the "natures," the machines and the men. And owing to the development of machinery, the pressure on the "natures" increases. (ARB 125)

While the evident elitism and general contempt for the "masses" which this passage elicits is not, of course, in itself, unusual amongst European intellectuals of the period,[162] what distinguishes Lewis from writers such as, say, Ortega Y Gasset or T.S.Eliot, is the way in which a systematic and correlative extension is elaborated both from and towards this distinction through the generation of a series of binary oppositions in both his critical and fictional writings, as these oppositions then direct the overall momentum of his thinking and creative practice. These are a series of fundamentally metaphysical oppositions between,

---

[162] See, for instance, John Carey, The Intellectuals and the Masses: Pride and Prejudice among the Literary Intelligentsia 1880-1939 (London: Faber & Faber, 1992).

for example, space and time especially, but also between art and life, depth and surface, power and value, internality and externality, masculine and feminine, and by way of literary analogy in the following passage from The Art of Being Ruled as it concerns the notion of liberty, between poetry and prose. It is an oppositional series that Lewis characteristically fails to develop theoretically, save through the repetition of its context and correlatives, but which remains indicative of the shape of his thought by virtue of that repetition:

> Consciousness and responsibility are prose as contrasted with the poetry of passive, more or less ecstatic, rhythmic, mechanical life. There is, therefore, the intoxicated dance of puppets, and besides that the few natures, as they were called by Goethe, moving unrhythmically, or according to a rhythm of their own, which is the same thing. The conventional libertarianism of a century ago envisaged this latter form of personal freedom, this prose of the individual, as it could be called. The libertarian of today rejects with horror the idea of that "independence." In place of this prose of the individual it desires the poetry of the mass; in place of the rhythm of the person, the rhythm of the crowd. (ARB 130)

Lewis's assertion on the changing nature of the libertarian consciousness in the industrial age leads him to speculate rather pessimistically on the deformations of the notion of agency in the modern era, and especially where the "poetic" masses are concerned. For, as he notes somewhat scathingly a little later on in The Art of Being Ruled, both echoing the conclusions of his friend T.E. Hulme, and adding his own unique gloss to those conclusions:[163]

> The chief thing to remember...is that no one wants to be 'free'... People ask nothing better than to be types,

---

[163] For Lewis on Hulme, see "Hulme of Original Sin," in Wyndham Lewis (BB 99-104).

> occupational types, social types, functional types of any sort...For in mass people wish to be automata: they wish to be conventional: they hate you teaching them or forcing them into "freedom": they wish to be obedient, hardworking machines—as near dead as possible...without actually dying. (ARB 151)

This evident misanthropy does not, however, lead its author to a condition of passive resignation, or spiritual malaise, or transcendental revelation, or apocalyptic nihilism, nor even to a desire to exploit the public or private accidie that such a vision might feasibly induce through an allegiance to archetypal or mythical thinking, as was arguably the case for a number of his contemporaries.[164] Rather, and in a manner which follows on from Nietzsche, and runs in parallel to his contemporary Heidegger in a number of intriguing ways, albeit from the diametrically opposed perspective of the ontological priority of space over time rather than that of time over space,[165] it leads him to celebrate the potential alternative offered by those rare and authentic individuals who both understand their mechanical and temporal aspect and are able to transcend it, first by recognizing the fundamentally metaphysical basis of the modern age as it perceives itself as such, *as* modern, and then by seeking for ways in which to transform it utterly through a process of what Nietzsche had called self-

---

[164] I refer here, of course, to the so-called "mythical" thinking so central to certain stages of the modernist enterprise, in writers from Frazer to Eliot to Jung and Northrop Frye, as it has generally been deemed to oppose "historical" thinking. For a critical discussion and overview of the 20th century, see Marc Manganaro, Myth, Rhetoric, and the Voice of Authority: A Critique of Frazer, Eliot, Frye & Campbell (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1992).

[165] See especially Division Two on "Dasein and Temporality," in Martin Heidegger, Being and Time, trans. John Macquarrie & Edward Robinson (1963; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983) 274-488.

overcoming.

There are a number of variants to this process of creative transformation in Lewis, but overall it is fair to say that personal identity for those he termed "natures" rather than for the "puppets" involves at its most fundamental level a predisposition towards the recognition of self as something that stands apart from time, and that reflexively dissolves the distinction between life and matter in its dealings with art and intellect, but does so according to a dual connotation of the term "life" which, as it refers to the "nature" rather than to the "puppet," signifies a relational geometry of self, rather than an expression of self as existing in or persisting through time. In this sense—and this is one of a number of seemingly paradoxical equations which underpin the critical theory of Wyndham Lewis and often make it appear so contradictory—although life and art are frequently counterpoised in his polemics as fundamentally incommensurable, the "life" of the nature nevertheless approximates to the condition of "deadness" which he consistently celebrates as the primary condition for his aesthetic universe.

In a frequently cited scene from Tarr, for example, the Russian intellectual Anastaysa has posed a series of polemical challenges to the eponymous hero of the novel, with whom she is engaged in a sexual liaison, which question the inconsistencies that she suspects lie at the heart of his theory of the division of

art and life as he has just outlined it to her. In this version,[166] Tarr has claimed over a meal on the Boulevard Rochechourt, that: "Death is the thing that differentiates art and life." He continues: "Art is identical with the idea of permanence. Art is a continuity and not an individual spasm: but life is the idea of a person." (T_1 312) Here Tarr begins to articulate a central theme, a fundamental dichotomy between the mobile and the static, between the spatial and the temporal, that will remain fundamental to Lewis's subsequent fiction and theory. Indeed, as Lewis retrospectively considers his earliest artistic stirrings at the age of eight, a series of stitched notebooks in which the narrative, concerned exclusively with war, is embellished by "stiff and hieratic friezes of heavily accoutred manikins," he notes that: "There is much action in the text, but practically none in its visual accompaniment." (RA 116) This disparity observed by Lewis in an autobiographical fragment as part of his "pattern of thinking," between the visual/static and the textual/temporal aspects of representation will not subsequently, (in spite of a gradual softening and humanizing of that representation from the late 1930s), become reconciled into an easy alliance of co-operative polarities, nor will it resolve dialectically into some form of metaphysical or aesthetic syncretism. Instead, it will remain through alterations of style and expressions as the antagonistic principle which drives the engine of his prose, and which motivates the conflicts and

---

[166] A table of variants in different editions of Tarr has been prepared with meticulous care by Paul O Keeffe, in the republished 1918 edition (T_3 387-425).

resolutions of his narrative designs. As a principle, however, it cannot be tied down neatly to definition or rational explanation. Indeed, it is in an important sense necessarily paradoxical. For example, in the conversation between Tarr and Anastaysa, when he is asked by the female protagonist to define his distinction between life and art, Tarr famously replies: "A picture, and also the actors on a stage are pure life. Art is merely what the picture and the stage scene represents and what we now or any living person as such, do not." (T_2 312) Dissatisfied with this enigmatic response, Anastaysa presses him further: "You say that actors upon the stage are pure life, yet they represent something that we don't. But 'all the world's a stage,' isn't it?" (T_1 312) Tarr then develops his argument by claiming that rather than being a "stage," the world is more accurately a "workshop," and the artist or sculptor must select from this workshop objects that advertise their "deadness."[167] Either that, or they must vampirically drain the living and the vital of life. Anastaysa then inquires of Tarr whether art is "merely" dead, and there follows an assertion that has gained something of an iconic status in Lewis criticism:

> No, but deadness is the first condition of art. The armoured hide of the hippopotamus, the shell of the tortoise, feathers and machinery, you may put in one camp; naked pulsing and moving of the soft inside of life—along with elasticity of movement and consciousness—that goes in the opposite camp... With the statue its lines and masses are equal to its

---

[167] An intriguing parallel can be noted here between Lewis's opposing the theatrical metaphor in favour of the "workshop" and Deleuze and Guattari's well-known preference for the image of the factory-production over that of the theatre-performance in the production of human consciousness and art. See especially, Deleuze and Guattari, AntiOedipus 31-32, in which the production of "paranoiac machines, miraculating machines, and celibate machines" define the artist as "the master of objects.)

> soul, no restless inflammable ego is imagined for its interior: it has no inside: good art must have no inside: that is capital. (T_2 312)

The calculated anti-vitalism illustrated by this passage, indicative as it is of his virulent anti-Bergsonism in this period and beyond, aligns also with Lewis's general view of the ideal feminine—understood as a kind of metaphysical principle—as the living representative of the flux and flow of internal consciousness, in contrast with his view of the ideal masculine as a system defined by external relationships alone. In his encounter with Anastaysa, a woman who, uniquely in Lewis, threatens him both sexually and intellectually, Tarr—as a fragment of the authorial voice, but also as a synecdoche of that voice—is thrown into a crisis in which he must incorporate his inherent misogyny into his elitist social philosophy as a means of justification for his theory of art. In due course, this crisis forces Tarr into his most complete statement on a cosmology founded upon the metaphysical assumptions of gender:

> God was a man; the woman was a lower form of life. Everything started female and most so continued: a jellyfish diffuseness spread itself and gaped up on all beds and bas-fonds of everything: above a certain level sex disappeared just as in highly organized sensualism sex vanishes. On the other hand, everything beneath that line was female. (T_2 327)

Thus sex becomes metaphysical, and is necessarily both abstract and female, whilst art for Tarr, as for Lewis, must be masculine and concrete. Life in its purest form is represented by women, and the male artist or intellectual must purge himself of all aspects of the emotional dimension of sex until he becomes

no more than a lonely phallus, disengaged by virtue of the repetition of the creative act as repetition from all commitment to or absorption in the "diffuseness" of the feminine, the internal or the temporal, through which the products of that repeated act must necessarily disseminate themselves in the realm of phenomena.

The exploitation of associated metaphors of gender and divinity in this passage is highly significant for Lewis's critical theory overall, and will be returned to in the final chapter in relation to his last completed novel in The Human Age sequence — Malign Fiesta. What is more immediately significant at this stage of the argument, however, is that in spite of his radical distinction between life and art here and elsewhere,[168] in terms of the authentic self as a "nature," Lewis's social, aesthetic and onto-theological caricature of his own position through Tarr's polemic corresponds directly to his later assertion in the preface to the second part of Time and Western Man, that: "our only terra firma in a boiling and shifting world is, after all, our 'self.' That 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 as sponges." (TWM

---

[168] For Peter Bürger, the merging of art and life is the defining characteristic of the avant-garde, and it often seems that Lewis is being wilfully perverse in reversing this process in his novels and critical writings, such as The Dithyrambic Spectator. However, as Andrew Hewitt has pointed out in response to Bürger, the very notion of art and life as concepts to merge or distinguish is a product of specific historical circumstances. See, Peter Bürger, Theory of the Avant-Garde, trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: Minneapolis University Press, 1984), and Hewitt, Fascist Modernism 59-66.

132) The "nature" is, on these terms, a figure whose relation with what Kant described in his first critique as the noumenal realm to which we as individuated subjects have no access, is, it often seems, one of an almost supernatural complicity; either that, or it subsists on a purely extensional plane without reference to an intensional relation to the experience of time. At very least, (and deferring engaged metaphysical considerations in favour of the more practical area of representation at this stage), the autonomous core of the creative individual is somehow beyond time and life, and relates thereby to its own potential future according to the intuition of space as a possible trajectory of agency on a chart or graph, or as a line scored on a fictional canvas.

The "puppet," on the other hand, is a merely mechanical man or woman, entirely engaged in the process of life, as he or she perceives it from the window of the present or through the shadow play of the past. He or she is a creature who lacks any degree of genuine reflexivity or detachment from the world of sensation, and is thus unable to postulate the future as anything more than a continuation of the present as it flows through time. Self-consciousness in these puppets is an illusion sustained by a society that conspires to suppress genuine individual freedom by promoting it as self-expression, a conception mirrored in art and literature for Lewis by the varieties of impressionistic and poetic effects that seek to valorize time to the ultimate detriment of space. It is, moreover, a form of control, less ideological than techno-metaphysical in

Lewis's terms, whose power has been greatly extended by the expansion of print and electronic media. Thus it is that in a chapter entitled "The Contemporary Man 'Expresses his Personality'", from The Art of Being Ruled, he can note rather caustically that when an individual with no personality is asked to express it: "It would be a group personality that they were 'expressing'—a pattern imposed on them by means of education and the hypnotism of the cinema, wireless and press (ARB 148). Such a condition, moreover, is not merely the cause, effect or even the by-product of normative or conventional behaviour—indeed, far from it, as he indicates through the numerous "bourgeois-bohemians" who process through the pages of his fiction in various and mechanical states of absurdity, despair, and what Sartre would later describe as *mauvais foi.* Nor is it simply the product of an ideological system or apparatus imposed from above, as a number of his comments on mass media and the spread of capitalism through all aspects of modern consciousness might seem to imply. For so far as these puppets or "contemporary" men of the herd, of the mechanical masses, are concerned, there is no possible escape from the process of standardization integral to the smooth running of the machinery of modernity's supremely replicative functioning. For even:

> Where the avenues of "expression" suggested to him are more "original" and sensational (as in Germany, where the Rhythm-army of naked male life, the Joy Group, or Naked Men's Club of Sun-Pals would perhaps attract him), the case is no different, but he is of course then far more convinced, even, that his personality is being "expressed." But, drawn into one

> orbit or another, he must in the contemporary world submit himself to one of several mechanical socially organized rhythms. (ARB 149)

So even the more overtly "deviant" or "decadent" byways of modernity as exemplified for Lewis by his parody of the sun and hedonism cults which sprang up in the 1920s in certain German male homosexual networks and communities, or earlier by his caricature in Tarr of the pseudo-artists who infected pre-war Paris with an early version of the virus of reactive modernism, are subject, finally, to exactly the same process of standardization as the suburban petit bourgeois and heterosexual couple whom, in a wonderfully pre-emptive passage from Time and Western Man, he projects into a future in which they are domestically absorbed in the flickering images of their own flickering lives:

> Mr. Citizen and his wife are at the fireside; they release a spring and their selves of long ago fly onto a screen supplied in the Wells-like, or Low-like, Future to all suburban villas. It is a phono film; it fills the room at once with the cheery laughter of any epoch required.... And they live again the sandwiches, the tea in the thermos, the ginger beer and mosquitoes, of a dozen years before. (TWM 249-250)

Such, in 1927, is the bleak and anodyne future of the suburban "puppet"-citizen; a world in which the home-movie projector or camcorder or virtual archive has become the sole index to the unique story of an empty and standardized existence. The image of the more dynamically and creatively self-conscious "nature," on the other hand, as it is presented to us in The Art of Being Ruled, is consistent on many levels, as I have suggested, with Lewis's earlier fictional portrayal of the authentically creative individual in the

eponymous hero of Tarr, for example, or more obliquely in the stories and essays appended to The Wild Body, as a creature detached from the world of subjective temporality through his recognition of himself—and this is crucial to an understanding of the imagery of identity in Lewis—as both a machine that can think and act, and yet as a subject who can also divorce himself from the mechanical process of life and thereby objectify his self-perception through art. Thus as early as BLAST 2 from 1915, Lewis presents the reader with a bizarre figure in which the depiction of the personality towards which the artist/nature should aspire, and Lewis is invariably prescriptive in such examples, is transformed into an auto-manipulating topographical figure:

> There is yourself: and there is the Exterior World, that fat mass you browse on .
> You knead it into an amorphous imitation of yourself
> inside yourself.
> Sometimes you speak through its huskier mouth
> sometimes through yours.
> Do not confuse yourself with it, or weaken the esoteric lines of fine original being. (B_2)

Having sketched his anomalous figure, Lewis then intensifies and further dehumanizes the imperative mode in relation to its object:

> Do not marry it, either, to a maiden.
> Any machine then you like: but become mechanical by fundamental dual repetition.
> For the sake of your good looks you must become a
> Machine. (B_2)

There is a paradoxical quality evident here, as there so often is in Lewis, in the way in which the reference to "original being" is both distinguished from the "Exterior World," and at the same time apparently merged into that world as

part of a larger, semi-organic/semi-cybernetic system which functions according to a principle of metonymy and repetition across space rather than one that functions through time. A creature, that is, for whom the exterior is perpetually manipulated by itself as surface rather than through any promptings from the illusory and interior self, or "Great Within," as he caricatures this temporalized and feminine subjectivity by inference in his essay on Henry James from Men Without Art.[169] Yet, at the same time, Lewis is also advising his artist/nature not to confuse the inner and the outer, and to retain a distance from this system in case the inner and the outer become a single homogenous medium. [170]

This ambiguity of effect, then, so characteristic of Lewis's portrayal of the unity, duality or multiplicity of personal identity in terms of antagonistic metaphors of gender, of technics, or of stasis and deliquescence, ties in with a parallel ambiguity in his frequent use of machinic metaphors and images which, on the one hand, maintain the negative connotations more conventionally associated with those who feared the inhuman qualities that the quantification of culture through the mass industrialization of society would bring, whilst

---

[169] (MWA 115-130)

[170] Deleuze and Guattari, commenting on Nietzsche, describe their equally bizarre notion of the Body Without Organs in terms decidedly reminiscent of Lewis's curious figure: "The subject spreads itself out along the entire circumference of the circle, the centre of which has been abandoned by the ego. At the centre is the desiring-machine, the celibate machine of the Eternal Return. A residual subject of the machine..." Deleuze and Guattari, AntiOedipus 21.

simultaneously fetishizing machinic imagery to the extent that it often merged with the human, both in his fiction and criticism, as an object for aesthetic and intellectual contemplation. For example, in a section of Paleface entitled "Every age has been a Machine Age," he can write unequivocally that:

> The hideous condition of the world is often attributed to 'dark' agencies willing its overthrow. But there have always been such devils incarnate...That alone would not account for the unique position of universal danger and disorganization in which we find ourselves all around the globe. (P 250)

Thus

> It is obviously to its mechanical instrument, not to the human will itself, that we must look. Without White Science and the terrible power of its engines, such evil people as always abound would be relatively harmless. (P 250)

And yet on the same page claim that on an aesthetic level the machine has a certain beauty *sub specie aeternitatus* which reflects that of nature and the art of ancient civilisations, as for example when he observes that:

> The question, 'Are machines beautiful in themselves?' has been asked for many years now. What people usually neglect to notice is that all the most splendid plastic or pictorial art is in a very strict sense geometric. Every age has been a Machine Age... All primitive people have proved themselves a sort of aesthetic engineers. (sic) (P 250-251)

In this second example the machine is, effectively for Lewis, the universal and consistent standard by virtue of which good art rather than bad art, plastic or pagan or primitive or "classical," rather than "musical" or "romantic" or impressionistic art, and genuinely creative rather than merely expressive or reactive intellect, agency and design, throughout history, may be judged. If the former denotation of the machine as the agent of modern alienation is one that

had achieved a near proverbial status in contemporary discourse on culture virtually from the beginnings of the industrial revolution itself—one might point to Blake, Carlyle, Marx, Arnold, Nietzsche, Butler, Bergson, Lukács or Heidegger as just a few of the more intriguing reference points as regards the Lewisian critique of the machine and machinic consciousness—the latter, more fetishistic as well as aesthetic denotation, requires more attention and explanation, if only because it is an image of geometric and machinic arrangement as an ideal which he does not merely apply to the objects of perception and cognition, but to the experience of human subjectivity and its divisions and multiplications in everyday life.

Typically, Lewis provides a number of rather contradictory clues as to this seeming ambiguity—or more accurately, divergence—in his use of machinic metaphors, particularly as they are applied to the disjunction he advocates between the realm of art and that of human identity. In its more negative denotation and attendant connotations, for example, his discomfort with the worship of the machine is clearly related to the professional contempt he felt towards Marinetti's Futurism and its various derivatives and parallels in European modernism. For in spite of an initial interest in the bellicose and theatrical energy emanating from Marinetti, focussed as it was on the

dissolution of the barrier between time and space in the machine age,[171] when asked by Futurism's founder and leading propagandist to declare himself a Futurist, Lewis's response, at least as reported by himself some twenty years on, was both defensive and, superficially, somewhat parochial: "...you wops insist too much on the Machine. You're always on about these driving-belts, you are always exploding about internal combustion. We've had machines here in England for donkey's years. They're no novelty to us." (BB 34) Inevitably, this attack must be treated on one level as an *ad hominem* report in a very personal battle that Lewis was waging against virtually all his contemporaries in the avant-garde of the period. But this negative assimilation of the machine is not merely an eristic gesture, at least as Lewis develops his ideas in the two decades following the war. It is, rather, a preface to a more complex engagement with the aesthetic, social, political, and finally, the metaphysical and ontological ramifications of the machine as its representations in art and life are manipulated by forces that predetermine the manner in which those representations then configure human identity itself. And as ever with Lewis, such configuration is characterized by a certain and specific attitude to time—to the past, present and future as existential categories of being which have been arranged to indicate a movement forward, a progression through time, rather than a stasis beyond time. In The Art of being Ruled, for example, he

---

171 "Time and Space died yesterday." Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, "Manifesto of Futurism 1909," in Art in Theory 1900-1990, ed. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992) 147. On time, space and Marinetti, see Hewitt, Fascist Modernism 14-47

notes that:

> It is because our lives are so attached to and involved with the evolution of our machines that we have grown to see and feel everything in revolutionary terms, just as once the natural mood was conservative. We instinctively repose on the future rather than the past. Instead of the static circle of the rotation of the crops, or the infinitely slow progress of handiwork, we are in the midst of the frenzied evolutionary war of the machines. (ARB 23)

The conservative bias which this statement and others like it would seem to confer on Lewis is, however, but one dimension of his broader exposition, which both takes on the cycle of repetition indicated by reference to a simpler, agrarian age, so as to deploy it against more deterministic or evolutionary theories of history, and at the same time, attacks repeatedly any more organicist visions of history. In particular, he is concerned to challenge that organicist nostalgia which was often associated with such post-Viconian cyclicality, and to do so through the geometrical displacement of such images to a realm in which the human subject is similarly spatialized, and provided with attributes which connect it across time and history to representations of the human-as-machine which are geometrical in both form and disposition. These are representations as, for example, his depiction of his "soldier of humour" Kerr-Orr from the Wild Body collection, which is presented to us in the following Lewisian amalgam of laughter, technology and deliberately de-sentimentalized primitivism:

> I know much more about myself than people generally do. For instance I am aware that I am a barbarian. By rights I should be paddling about in a coracle. My body is large, white and savage.

> But all the fierceness has become transformed into laughter. It still looks like a visigothic fighting machine, but it is in reality a laughing machine. (CWB 18)

In terms of direct influence, as in terms of its emphasis on geometry and human technics, this more positive denotation of the machine as the form and surface of primitive ontology certainly bears comparison with T. E. Hulme's reading of abstraction and empathy as two distinct artistic modes in the thought of Worringer,[172] in his "Modern Art and its Philosophy," where he notes rather generally of "more primitive people" that they:

> live in a world whose lack of order and seeming arbitrariness must inspire them with a certain fear...They are dominated by what Worringer calls a kind of spiritual "space-shyness" in the face of the varied confusion and arbitrariness of existence. In art this state of mind results in a desire to create a certain geometrical shape, which, being durable and permanent shall be a refuge from the flux and impermanence of outside nature.... The geometrical line is something absolutely distinct from the messiness, the confusion, and the accidental details of existing things.[173]

Such a perspective on the primitive and the archaic or alien in Western thought, in which the observation of certain archetypal patternings allows for a trans-historical grounding of the human subject, is of course a familiar one in modernity and in modernism, versions of which may be found from Eliot's famous review of Ulysses in 1923, to Cleanth Brooks's Modern Poetry and the Tradition, to Mircea Eliade's The Myth of Eternal Return: Or, Cosmos and

---

[172] William Worringer, Abstraction and Empathy, trans. Michael Bullock (New York: International Universities Press, 1953).

[173] T. E. Hulme "Modern Art and its Philosophy," Speculations: Essays on Humanism and the Philosophy of Art (1924; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987) 86-87.

History, all of whose "orderings" of the literary or artistic or mythic realm as a counter to the chaos of existence have led to their being identified, correctly, as essentially conservative positions, once extrapolated beyond the realm of art into the political sphere as they invariably were, whether directly or by association.[174] To an extent, Lewis's views would seem to coincide with this tendency, inasmuch as his vision of history and collectivism was decidedly conservative in many respects, as elaborated at various points in his major critical works, and as he portrayed it retrospectively in the early fifties and with little evidence of revision through the peregrinations of the deracinated historian Rene Harding in Self Condemned. But Lewis is never quite that easy to pin down. For in spite of his ardent chronophobia and evident political cynicism, Lewis has no time whatsoever for the neo-Platonist, or neo-Kantian, or neo-Hegelian, orderings of myth or tradition associated with the varieties of political and aesthetic conservativism which permeated European thought in the inter-war years and beyond. While he occasionally indicates neo-Classicism as a positive model, for example, he is in no sense a follower of Maurras.[175] Neither does he succumb to the pursuit of an "ideal order" in the Eliotic sense, nor, (and in spite of his frequent allusions to and use of their thought, especially in The Lion and the Fox), to the archetypalism later developed by

---

174 T.S. Eliot, rev. "Ulysses, Order and Myth," Dial (November 1923): 480-483; Cleanth Brooks, Modern Poetry and the Tradition (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1939); Mircea Eliade, The Myth of Eternal Return: Or, Cosmos and History (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971).

175 Wagner 8-13.

myth-critics from the tradition extrapolated into the literary sphere, in the first instance, by Frazer, Harrison and the Cambridge Hellenists.[176]

Indeed, his position on the idea of progress is far from being conservative in any conventional sense of the term, at least on the cultural level, as indeed, his criticism of writers and artists as various as Picasso and Ezra Pound, Joyce and Faulkner, not to mention his own volatile activity in the cultural sphere from the period of BLAST to the speculative theological fictions of the 1950s, makes evident. This combination of artistic experiment and political reaction in itself, of course, might place Lewis in the secure company of a number of his contemporaries on the left as much as on the right. What differentiates him from this company overall, however, is a particular attitude towards the past, present and the future, on the one hand, and towards conflict and contradiction, on the other, which taken together exceed the contemporary patterns of left and right thinking on culture, at least as conventionally rendered. For on a social as well as on an artistic level, and contrary to the indications he sometimes appears to give that might link him to this anti-historical and archetypalist tendency in modernist thought, he is most determinedly for the future and against the past, and yet at the same time

---

176 Lewis presents his thoughts on Frazer and Harrison and myth, art and ritual in The Dithyrambic Spectator, which whilst being centrally concerned with the origins of art, is also, like everything produced on the subject, an aspect of his thesis on the necessary cleavage between self and not-self in aesthetic and intellectual experience. For background to the literary legacy of Frazer et al, see John B. Vickery, The Literary Impact of 'The Golden Bough' (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977).

perversely critical of much that might even now been seen as distinctly avant garde in modernist aesthetics and distinctly progressive in science or politics. Similarly, at least in terms of his own polemical system, he is more than prepared to extend his critical perception of the deformations of temporal consciousness in modernity to embrace not only the more exuberant or formal experimentation of the avant garde, but also that of the realm of popular culture, and in a manner, as was demonstrated in the introductory chapter, that far exceeds the essentially moral indignation of a contemporary such as I.A.Richards, or the degenerative tracts of the Leavises. Such observations have led with some justice to a description of Lewis as a "one-man Frankfurt School of the Right."[177] For Lewis, and in spite of his violently anti-dialectical tendencies, undoubtedly has something in common with the combinatory tendencies of a figure such as Adorno or Horkheimer, for whom the descriptive categories of left or right seem increasingly inadequate.[178] On the subject of the idea of progress specifically, for example, which is, along with anthropocentrism, arguably the main dynamic of post-enlightenment thinking in general, and especially where rationality, technology, science and socio-political theory are concerned, he makes a distinction in "Creatures of Habit and Creatures of Change," an essay on technology, communism and art which

---

177 Reed Way Dasenbrock in his afterword to the Black Sparrow Press edition of The Art of Being Ruled, (ARB 441).

178 Although this depoliticization of Adorno in particular has been contested at length by Jameson. See Fredric Jameson, Late Marxism: Adorno, or, The Persistence of the Dialectic (1990; London: verso, 1992).

appeared in The Calendar of Modern Letters in April 1926, between progress, and change or variety. The essence of the argument here is that what is frequently deemed progress by popular consent is no more than change for its own sake, whether initiated by capitalism or by the parallel revolutionary 'ideologies' of communism and socialism. "Politics," contends Lewis: "has borrowed from Commerce the advertisers' psychology: and in many things the activities of the intellect are also moulded on the system of competitive industry." (CC 145) The outcome of this modernist neophilia as it apes the designs of both commerce and revolutionary politics in the sphere of the intellect is, he argues, a general flattening of the possibility, or at least of the recognition, of any genuine creative change: this being an authentic mode of transition and development whose movement he associates, for example, with the historically notable achievements of figures such as Archimedes, Aryabhata, Ptolemy, Newton and Faraday in the sciences. Progress, he continues, is "essentially a notion of graduated ascent," whereas "change"—in the creative sense that Lewis chooses for this denotation—does not "involve a modification of value, but only of position or accent."(CC 150). What Lewis appears to be most concerned with in this essay and at various points in Time and Western Man, The Art of Being Ruled, The Diabolical Principle and Paleface, is the way in which the idea of progression with its inherent sense of improvement has been appropriated by industrial society to the extent that it is usually no more than a synonym for novelty, and that such an appropriation, in

neutralizing a concern for value—for the idea of better or worse—belongs to an ineluctable drive for the standardization of all human experience. The idea of progress, like that of revolution in Lewis's view, has become little more than a commodity, whose effect is to subsume the creation of value to that of the generation of fashion in ideas, images and discourse generally, thus denying any genuine spiritual advance as can take place in the arts in civilisations in which the highest values are pursued by the strongest individuals. He repeatedly contrasts such a possibility to those societies such as his own which cater to the lowest common denominator and revere the advancement of the group to the detriment of the individual.

Lewis does not exactly deny that things can be improved on a social level for the mass of humanity, which is a kind of progress, nor that efficiency in the distribution of primary goods may not be increased through technological innovation. Rather, he challenges what he perceives as the post-enlightenment notion that progress in any abstract human sense can take place. Or, as he puts it in respect of scientific advance, it is possible to produce "better machines or mean to ends, but not necessarily better things, which are ends in themselves...We are the standard or value makers. It does not follow that they are better because as pure machines they are." (CC 156)

To some extent, Lewis's treatment of the theme of progress in this article falls

into what Adorno once described as the "Subaltern cleverness which refuses to speak of progress before being able to decide: progress in what, on what, and in relation to what..."[179] This "subaltern" tendency, however, has an end in view, however tentatively that end is pursued in relation to the arts, sciences, fashion, and to philosophers such as Bradley, Whitehead and Alexander—which is to locate gaps in the ideological use of the concept of progress so as to expose his target more clearly, that target being, as we have seen, the notion of the group personality as it expresses the underlying will of the times, as this zeitgeist works to further collectivize aberrant individuals into a new Leviathan; although in this case, a Leviathan defined by its horizontality rather than its vertical and hierarchical sovereignty under the aegis of a monarch or leader. Against this generalized will to homogeneity, Lewis promotes a vision of an autonomous, creative, personal ontology whose resistance to the zeitgeist is based on a condition of antagonistic adaptation to rule. An ontology which, he appeared to believe, would enable an active perspectivism on the part of a select few, which would further enable the reconfiguration of modernity along lines which had so far only subsisted in the realm of art.

Such, in outline, from at least the time of the first BLAST manifesto to his self-imposed exile in North America following the outbreak of war, was the central

---

179. Theodor W. Adorno, "Progress," trans. Eric Krakauer, Benjamin: Philosophy, Aesthetics, History, ed. Gary Smith (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989) 84.

problematic that Lewis attempted to express through an evolving generation of images of the autonomous self in which the inner and the outer were either to be strictly demarcated, or rendered as pure exteriority alone. Images in which movement, in the case of the authentic self, in contrast to the deracinated automata he satirized as the exemplification of mass-man in his fiction and criticism, was to be frozen around an absent centre: a point of absolute stasis and nothingness, which directed, controlled and contained the dynamism of its representation. As, for example, in the figure of the vortex, in which, as Lewis put it:

> THE VORTICIST IS AT HIS MAXIMUM POINT OF ENERGY WHEN STILLEST. (B_1)

While this image might have had an instantaneous impact in the restricted form of the slogan or aphorism in BLAST— and this connects it, of course, with the concrete and visual aesthetics of Pound's Imagism[180]—in his more extended writings, whether discursive or literary, and particularly as they deal with the question of identity, the representation of this problematic and its projected reception by the reader necessarily entails a certain tactical and conflictual dualism on Lewis's part. It is a dualism which he fabricates in a variety of modes on a variety of occasions, but which may be observed in action in one of his strongest examples when he describes in the preface to Time and Western Man the procedure of selection whereby the objects of his attention

---

[180] A full discussion of this connection may be found in Reed Way Dasenbrock, The Literary Vorticism of Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis: Towards the Condition of Painting (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1985).

will be ordered in his treatise on the contemporary "time doctrine" that he seeks to denigrate and dismantle. Here, and on the level of personal, rather than social or cultural or even textual identity in any limiting sense, Lewis explains how ontological difference or duality or multiplicity within the psychic economy of self may resolve themselves into the unity required of the writing subject in the promotion of his ideas. And he does this through the portrayal of a radically divided subject that must, of necessity, cohere in conflict, if it is to cohere at all:

> I have allowed these contradictory things to struggle together, and the group that has proved the most powerful I have fixed upon as my most essential ME. This decision has not, naturally, suppressed or banished the contrary faction, almost equal in strength, indeed, and even sometimes in the ascendant. And I am by no means above spending some of my time with this domestic Adversary. All I have said to myself is that always, when it comes to the pinch, I will side and identify myself with the powerfullest ME, and in its interests I will work. (TWM 132-133)

Here we begin to see the splitting of self and its fragmentation through adversarial difference and spatial metaphor that remains one of Lewis's most unique and enigmatic traits, and one which distinguishes him fundamentally from his modernist contemporaries in verse or prose such as, for example, Eliot or Pound, or Joyce or Woolf. For while these eminent contemporaries all, to some extent, differentiate or dissolve subjectivities through a kind of textual polyvocality in their literary writings, none seek to extend that fragmentation or dissipation to their critical and theoretical voices in quite the way Lewis insists upon, nor to suppress the temporal dimension of self-

continuity so vociferously and persistently as Lewis evidently felt essential. Similarly, while Eliot and Pound both stressed form, pattern and symmetry over the messy anarchy of intuition, or the "combat of arrangement" over mere psychic intensity,[181] Lewis extended and hyperbolized this bias in his depictions of human identity to the extent that it became a fundamental ontology, parallel to that of Heidegger's, through which modernity itself, in all its manifestations, could be judged, reconstructed, and then projected into a decidedly non- or post-human future of forms in asymmetrical tension and conflict. It is an image of the projected ideal of Lewisian identity which marries well not only with many aspects of his work as a painter at this time,[182] but also with Julian Symons's eloquent description of the adversarial Lewisian personality itself, when he first encountered him in the 1930s, as: "an alien force, a visitor from a planet where the whole conception of life and its proper ordering was different."[183]

Over the years, the multiplicitous, spatialized, auto-eristic image of the Lewisian subject from the preface to Time and Western Man as it evolved from his experiments in BLAST, has gained something of a definitive status for his critics, and they have responded to it in a variety of ways. It is a diversity of

---

181. Ezra Pound, cited by Nicholls 196; 323n.

182. On Lewis as painter in this period, see Thomas Kush, Wyndham Lewis's Pictorial Integer (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1981)

183. Julian Symons, ed. The Essential Wyndham Lewis: An Introduction to his Work (London: Andre Deutsch, 1989) 2.

response indicative, at the very least, of the way in which the overall opacity of Lewis's model in which identity, conflict, repetition, asymmetry and difference are caught up in a kind of visual aporia, retains its power to stimulate reflection on the very problems it sought at least partially to resolve.

Hugh Gordon Porteus, for example, in the earliest extended study of Lewis in 1932, relates this assertion of the divided self in Time and Western Man, via a reading of Lewis's study of Shakespeare and Machiavelli in The Lion and the Fox, to Lewis's contrast here between the "man of action" and the "genius," and finds the resolution between these two opposites in the figure of the "sophist" or "balanced man" who is at the same time driven—and here he cites Lewis's paratactical Nietzschean pronouncement in BLAST, later to become a section heading in The Art of Being Ruled—to find a perspective "Beyond Action and Reaction." This figure, the sophist as artist, must always exist according to Porteus in an uneasy balance between energy and contemplation in his everyday life. It is a balance, however, which he perpetually strives in some way to go beyond through the act of representation in art. And that, according to Porteus, at least when he succeeds, is what made him the exceptional figure—or "genius"—that Porteus clearly held Lewis to be.

If Porteus's interpretation is largely romantic or neo-romantic in tendency,

(although he would probably have been horrified to see it portrayed in those terms), Hugh Kenner's late high-modernist interpretation of the Lewisian subject is appropriate to the post-existentialist, neo-Freudian, cold war ascendancy of the period in which it was written. For Kenner this image of the fragmented self typifies the specifically Lewisian desire to establish, as he describes it, "...a liaison between two separate processes: combating external phenomena that menace your activities, and dealing with a congeries of impulses within yourself whose interests are not your main ones."[184]

Kenner's psychologistic reading of the split self in his monograph on Lewis has its virtues, specifically his stress on Lewis's ambivalence towards the nihilism that stimulates his creative and intellectual output at the same time as it threatens constantly to undermine the theoretical basis for that output. But what it fails to deal with adequately are the philosophical sources and consequences of this ambivalence, a subject upon which later commentators are more insistent. Toby Foshay, for example, in his excellent study of Lewis and the avant garde, from a perspective heavily influenced by Derrida and Levinas,[185] and more indirectly by Heidegger, bases his reading on a cluster of assumptions with whose broad outlines the present study would not, in any way, wish to disagree:

---

[184] Kenner 60.

[185] Foshay 74-78.

> Wyndham Lewis's avant-gardisme (sic), arising as it does from a Nietzschean vision of modernity as a nihilism, entails not an intellectual politics - that is, some kind of interior polity—but a "politics of the intellect," a grasp that intellectual positions and artistic practises have social-political as well as personal implications. ...As an artist shaped...by the Nietzschean critique of metaphysics, Lewis's criticism and art are the scene of a confrontation between reason and representation that anticipates and illuminates central issues in post-structuralist and postmodernist thought.[186]

In his analysis of the Lewisian fragmented self Foshay takes his cue from Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche, via Sugarman's reading of Heidegger,[187] and raises an important question about the detail of this paradoxical image:

> If a war of dispositions is truly "below the possibility of change," what in the personality stands above the conflict, "allows" the struggle, and then "fixes upon" the essential self as a "will to power"?...By claiming the power to allow the struggle...he assumes a being that is always already beyond time, and for which becoming (the world of change and of suffering) will inevitably be resisted as an indignity.[188]

The heart of Foshay's argument here is that, whilst strongly influenced by Nietzsche overall, Lewis's "rancour against time" is a prime example of the very *ressentiment* that Nietzsche bid his readers to overcome through an existential acceptance and indeed celebration of absolute becoming, and a radical proto-deconstruction of the distinctions between truth and illusion, good and evil, and metaphor and metaphysics, as these distinctions had

---

[186] Foshay 5.

[187] Robert Ira Sugarman, "Rancor Against Time": The Phenomenology of "Ressentiment" (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1980).

[188] Foshay 104.

evolved out of the reactive and other-worldly morality of Judeo-Christian and post-Platonic thinking in Western culture. From this broadly pro-Nietzschean perspective, Foshay asserts that "the internal contradictions of the theory of subjectivity presented by Lewis in Time and Western Man" are something of an anomaly, an incoherence, in contrast with the forms of dualism in his earlier "critical theory and ongoing literary practice."[189] In essence, and at this point in his career, Lewis's ressentiment had temporarily got the better of him.

Foshay's appeal to Nietzschean *ressentiment* as a structuring principle behind much of Lewis's thought on temporality and identity is a compelling one. One has only to recall Nietzsche's attack on those whom in Beyond Good and Evil he calls the "metaphysicians of all ages"[190] whose constant appeal to and overwhelming desire for some transcendental realm or other, has meant that throughout history they have devalued "becoming," and transformed their resentment against the passing of time, the "it was," into various and specious metaphysics of "being." Or as he puts it so dramatically in Twilight of the Idols:

> they all believe, even to the point of despair,
> in that which is. But since they cannot get hold of it, they look for reasons why it is being withheld from them. 'It must be an illusion, a deception which prevents us from perceiving that which is: where is the deceiver to be found?'...'It is the

---

[189] Foshay 104.

[190] Friedrich Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1966) 10.

> senses!'...Moral: escape from sense perception, from becoming, from history, from falsehood...Be a philosopher, be a mummy, represent monotono-theism by a gravedigger-mimicry! And away, above all, with the *body*, that pitiable *idée fixe* of the senses![191]

While this is quite correct, there is, however, another aspect to *ressentiment* that Foshay touches upon but never develops—quite possibly because of his reliance on Heidegger's Nietzsche—and that is Nietzsche's reiterated desire in his posthumously collated texts, to "impose upon becoming the character of being—that is the supreme will to power...,"[192] and to do so via his doctrine of eternal recurrence or return. For Heidegger, this de-contextualized aphorism from The Will to Power suggested that a final judgement could be made on Nietzsche's projected attempt to supersede metaphysics and establish a new ontology of power. The shape of Heidegger's judgement here was that Nietzsche had towards the end of his life failed to escape from a mutated form of Platonism which, and whatever its intentions, devalued becoming and re-established, by default, the assumptions and desires of the "metaphysicians of the ages" that he had almost simultaneously deplored. In which case, according to Heidegger's interpretation, Nietzsche had failed to find a way out of metaphysics and had become all that Zarathustra had inveighed against so

---

[191] Friedrich Nietzsche, "'Reason' in Philosophy," Twilight of the Idols/The Anti-Christ, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin, 1968) 35.

[192] Nietzsche, The Will to Power 330.

passionately a few years before.[193]

For all Heidegger's undoubted influence on the way in which Nietzsche has been received by subsequent generations of philosophers, literary critics and critical theorists, and his desire to complete through fundamental ontology what he felt Nietzsche had left undone, there is an alternative way of reading this and similar passages from Nietzsche, and one arguably more in keeping with the consistency of his attack on metaphysics, not to mention Lewis's curious ontology as it at least partially derives from this attack. This is to view the desire to stamp the mark of being on becoming less as a reversion to *ressentiment*, than as way of showing how the revenge against time that structures and drives modern consciousness and desire for Nietzsche, and is an expression of modernity's underlying nihilism, also provides a route through which the subject can challenge the vertigo that temporality induces in the subject directly, by transforming it into something else, and doing so through the affirmation of what Nietzsche termed the *amor fati*.[194] In essence, the appeal to eternal recurrence in this case is not an appeal to being in the transcendental sense of the term as it derives from Plato or Christian theology,

---

[193] Martin Heidegger, Nietzsche Volume One: The Will to Power as Art, trans. and ed. David. F. Krell (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979) 5-20; "Who is Nietzsche's Zarathustra?" trans. Bernd Magnus, in Allison 64-79.

[194] Friedrich Nietzsche, The Gay Science, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1974) 223; "Why I am so Clever," Ecce Homo, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin, 1979) 68.

but rather, a way of reconceiving identity altogether—in the broader philosophical sense as it includes subjectivity, as well as the concept linking unity and multiplicity— through difference and repetition, and in a manner which bypasses dialectical resolution or sublation, as found in the tradition inherited specifically from Hegel that Nietzsche so resolutely opposed. This, at least, is an adumbration of the argument of Gilles Deleuze, for whom:

> Eternal return cannot mean the return of the Identical because it presupposes a world (that of the will to power) in which all previous identities have been abolished and dissolved. Returning is being, but only the being of becoming. The eternal return does not bring back 'the same', but returning constitutes the only Same of that which becomes. Returning is the becoming-identical of becoming itself. Returning is thus the only identity, but identity as a secondary power; the identity of difference, the identical which belongs to the different, or turns around the different. Such an identity, produced by difference, is determined as 'repetition'. Repetition in the eternal return, therefore, consists in conceiving the same on the basis of the different.[195]

Before the implications of this reading can be properly assimilated to the forward movement of this discussion, more yet needs to be developed on Fredric Jameson's Hegelian reading of Lewis through Deleuze and Guattari, and Deleuze's rejection of Hegel and use of Bergson, on the one hand, and the philosophical idea of repetition in its various manifestations, on the other. These will be dealt with in the following two chapters. Suffice it to say, for the time being, however, that contra Foshay's charge of incoherence, and from a

---

[195] Deleuze, Difference 41

broadly Deleuzian perspective, this study holds that Lewis's model of subjectivity in the preface to Time and Western Man is less a contradiction in itself than an experiment,[196] whose consequences, if not always clearly apparent in terms of his immediate argument and its context, can be seen retrospectively as having a substantial significance when that argument is repositioned within a broader contextualization of modernity and its critique.

This is a contextualization of modernity, a version of which is attempted by David Ayers, though from a very different perspective to that of either Foshay or this dissertation. Ayers opens his study of Lewis with a short bibliographical survey in which he criticizes Hugh Gordon Porteus's reading for what he sees as an attempt to sublate dialectically the fragments of Lewisian identity into a synthesis in the figure of the sophist.[197] To deviate from Ayers's reading for a moment, I do not accept that there is sufficient evidence in Porteus's exegesis to suggest that he is assuming a strictly dialectical relation between two aspects of Lewisian being. What it rather suggests is that he is engaged for the most part in mapping out an agonal relation (although he does not mention the term) which is resolved for him by a translation of the conflict of opposites that he finds in the visionary poetics of William Blake, with whom he compares

---

[196] On the notion of experimentation as philosophical and/or artistic rather than historical, though dependant on history for its effects and determinations, see Deleuze and Guattari, What is Philosophy? 110-111, and chapter seven below.

[197] Ayers 7

Lewis in an intriguing, if speculative, chapter.[198] After surveying the critical terrain, Ayers then proceeds to an illuminating interpretation of the Lewisian multiple subject, the general trajectory of which is ably conveyed by the opening two sentences of his introduction: "This book... discovers at the heart of Lewis's work a tension between his assumption that the self is really nothing at all, and his perception that the survival of European culture—Western Man—depends on the stability and coherence of the self."[199] For Ayers, in this provocative study, this antimony is at least partially resolved through a barely concealed and emergent anti-Semitism, in which the Jew is seen as the puppet-master directing the deliquescent forces of modernity that seek to undermine the more stable, Aryan self, that Lewis posits as the only defence against the void. In this sense, the Jew is the void for Lewis— or at least its most trusted operative.

While Ayers's argument is often very persuasive, and raises many questions on the links between anti-Semitism and Lewis's worldview that demand further investigation,[200] the nihilistic archetype in Lewis is not, I would suggest, necessarily grounded in his racism, which tends to be based on, (or justified by), a far more circumambulatory reading of the history and errors of the

---

[198] Porteus 37-56.

[199] Ayers 3.

[200] One important attempt is Geoff Gilbert, "Shellshock, Anti-Semitism, and the Agency of the Avant-Garde," unpublished ms. Gilbert's paper is discussed in passing by Paul Edwards in Wyndham Lewis 556n; 557n; 556n; 563n; 566n.

European culture whose demise he wishes to reverse, or more accurately, to overcome.[201] Nor, and in spite of occasions of blatant anti-Semitic caricature in the 1920s, usually censored by Lewis himself prior to publication,[202] is it perceived as the product of some Jewish conspiracy as in the more conventionally fascist interpretations. And although much of his political commentary of the 1930s has, inevitably, somewhere in its background the Semitic conspiracy theories often eagerly embraced by his colleagues, and he does undoubtedly express sympathy with elements of the fascist cause at this time, particularly in its early Nazi variant, a number of fairly explicit comments on the fundamentally misguided nature of anti-Semitism in German national-socialism as well as in the activities of certain prominent English intellectuals of the period, in his notorious study, Hitler,[203] not only distance him clearly from a number of his contemporaries, but also run somewhat counter to Ayers's claim that this is the main source of his argument in 1927, or later. So while Ayers makes some important points on this theme, points for which evidence

---

[201] See, for example, the mention of Lewis and W.E.B. Du Bois, in Paul Gilroy, The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness (London: Verso, 1993) 140; 242n. Gilroy rightly notes that Lewis's discussion of African-American writers in Paleface has been almost entirely ignored in critical history and scholarship.

[202] A possible example being an early draft of The Childermass called "The Infernal Fair," though whether the grotesquerie presented here is indicative of racism remains open to question. See Agenda: Wyndham Lewis Special Issue Vol. 7. No. 3. Vol. 8. No.1. (Autumn-Winter, 1969-1970): 209-215.

[203] The muted anti-Semitism of "Hitler and the Judenfrage" is a case in point. Here Lewis appears to be suggesting that anti-Semitism is nothing more than a distraction for the Nazis from more serious political aims, yet couching this argument in terms that are undoubtedly racist (H 37-41). At the same time, he makes a point of noting H. G. Wells's membership of an explicitly anti-Semitic organization.

can certainly be found in a selective reading of Lewis's writings, the void for Lewis in the 1920s and early 1930s is nevertheless a far more pervasive entity than that which might be forged by the supposedly covert activities of any ethnic minority: an entity which includes women, children, artists, actors, historians and physicists amongst its representatives, and of course, philosophers. Hence Bergson (who was, of course, a Jew) and Nietzsche (who was, of course, not), not to mention his colleagues Pound and Joyce, are far more central targets in Lewis's war against contemporary nihilism and the "time-cult" than race per se; as well, in the case of the philosophers, as being the main sources of the models he adapts to expedite that war.

In discussing the image of the multiplicitous, fragmented, auto-eristic self from Time and Western Man, Ayers quite rightly places it in opposition to Lewis's reading of Bergson and his so-described "followers," such as the Anglo-Australian realist Samuel Alexander. His interpretation of this image from that context deserves attention. Ayer holds that:

> the model owes something to evolution—forces are conceived of as struggling for ascendancy—but the struggle is one viewed from above by an independent ego which regards the struggle as a laboratory experiment and then chooses which side it will prefer. But unlike the evolutionary model, the unsuccessful forces are preserved within, as what Lewis calls a 'domestic Adversary', liable at any time to reassert itself. Essentially this is a celebration of that professional, intellectual objectivity which is the cherished myth of the middle class.[204]

---

[204] Ayers 83.

Ayers then goes on to explicate Lewis's vision of self in Time and Western Man, in contrast with the more neutral vision of self that we find in BLAST, as existing in a kind of bad faith with the exigencies of fashion: "be it literature, Bloomsbury, or the endless newspaper clippings analysed in Doom of Youth."[205] To an extent, both of these observations are appropriate. The former observation on Lewis's fetishization of objective distance is probably more complex than Ayers suggests, though it has a certain explanatory power when applied to his often very curious views on the concept of class as a weapon in the modernist conspiracy against the intellectuals. The latter observation more usefully illuminates something about Lewis's approach to the semiotic surfaces of modernity that not only describes a certain ambivalence in the man himself towards these phenomena, which is Ayers's point here, but also, and by virtue of that ambivalence, indicates a direct link with the anxiety and ambivalence that haunt any number of postmodern critics and cultural theorists who have not yet entirely abandoned themselves to the multiple seductions of hyper-reality.[206] What needs also to be said on the addictive ephemerality of fashion, however, and the closely related theme of advertising, is that Lewis was in this period often extraordinarily acute in his analysis of the reification of commodities, to use Lukács's expression, and of the rhythmic

---

[205] Ayers 83.

[206] Such as, for example, Fredric Jameson in Postmodernism, Or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism (London: Verso, 1991).

activities of the subjects who receive and recirculate images of those commodities and thereby hasten the process of their own reification. As when, and in manner that contains echoes of the prodigious Hungarian theorist when he was still at least partially under the spell of Henri Bergson, he describes the rationalization of time in modernity through the image of the "fashion clock":

> The world in which advertisement dwells is a one day world. It is necessarily in a plane universe, without depth. Upon this Time lays down discontinuous entities, side by side; each day, each temporal entity, complete in itself, with no perspectives, no fundamental exterior reference at all... The average man is invited to slice his life into a series of one-day lives, regulated by the clock of fashion. The human being is no longer the unit. He becomes the containing frame for a generation or sequence of ephemerids, roughly organized into what he calls his "personality." (TWM 12)

What must be clarified at this stage is that in sharp contrast with Lukács, the Lewisian exposure of reification is in no sense a first step in the promotion of the emancipation of the masses from the exigencies of industrial capitalism. Lewis was, as is clear, entirely contemptuous of the masses (though not necessarily of the "true individuals" he felt had been categorized as belonging to the masses by default), and would have found the idea of them as the foundation of the revolutionary subject of history preposterous. Nor was he remotely convinced by arguments that stressed economic causality, whether mechanical or expressive, in the production of culture. The realm of economics, while it occasionally intervenes in his discussions, plays a very small role when compared, say, with the hysterical fixation on usury and social credit

in the work of Ezra Pound.[207] More to the point in Lewis is a particular way of regarding the manner in which the metaphysics of time and space determine on a social and cultural level the conditions whereby authentic personality rather than merely reactive personality—what Heidegger famously differentiates as genuine *Dasein* in contact with the primordial temporality of Being, in contrast with the time fixated *das Man*[208]—is able to come into the world and act upon that world in a way that is both atemporal and oriented towards the future rather than the past. Indeed, a brief dialogue between Heidegger and Lewis on primordial temporality is, perhaps surprisingly, instructive here. For although Lewis only became aware of Heidegger in the early fifties, and then only, it would seem from the evidence presented, through the distorting lens of Sartre's existential phenomenology and Henri Lefebvre's destructive commentary on that project,[209] and although some might perceive a certain bathos in such a comparison, (although Lewis would later claim of the early Heidegger, rather intriguingly, that "had I known of him then [in the twenties], he would have been one of my most valuable exhibits,") (WA 125), there are a number of intriguing parallels between them which undoubtedly help to illuminate the sense behind much of the obscurity in Lewis's attack on

---

[207] Pound's curious economic theories are surveyed and analyzed in Earle Davis, Vision Fugitive: Ezra Pound and Economics (Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1968).

[208] Heidegger, Being and Time 163-168.

[209] Lefebvre, later to become the seminal theorist of space and a major influence on both Guy Debord and Jean Baudrillard, is mentioned several times by Lewis in The Writer and the Absolute. See, Henri Levebvre, l'existentialisme (Paris: Editions du Sagittaire, 1946).

modernity. For a start, as Fredric Jameson has noted correctly by way of correcting an earlier generation of critics:

> It is clear that Lewis' polemic pamphlets must be replaced within a whole corpus of such productions in the interwar period, which constitutes a veritable discursive genre—what we will call the "culture critique"—and numbers such influential texts as Ortega's Rebelión de las masas, Benda's Trahisons des clercs, Scheler's call to cultural regeneration, Heidegger's stigmatization of the inauthenticity of the anonymous and depersonalized subject of the modern industrial city...[210]

Jameson continues by emphasizing that the positions adopted by these conservative cultural critics—and others who interested Lewis and readers of Eliot's The Criterion such as Babbitt or Maurras—were not in themselves original, and might be found elaborated "by Taine and Nietzsche (when not by Edmund Burke himself)."[211] The reference to Nietzsche is, as we have seen, especially pertinent to Lewis, as it is also to Heidegger, for if there is one assumption that these very different thinkers share, and draw predominantly from the reading of Nietzsche, it is this: "Metaphysics grounds an age, in that through a specific interpretation of what is and through a specific comprehension of truth it gives to that age the basis upon which it is essentially formed."[212] There are, however, other parallels between the two thinkers,

---

[210] Jameson Fables 128.

[211] Jameson Fables 128.

[212] Martin Heidegger, "The Age of the World Picture," The Question Concerning Technology and other Essays, trans. W. Lovitt (New York: Harper & Row, 1977) 115.

which while they might be very differently expressed, nonetheless expose the kernel of the anti-metaphysical modernist tendency to which they both belong. Lewis, for example, can claim in BLAST in the compressed and telegraphic style of Vorticism, and with the contempt for gender, sex and sexuality so characteristic of his effusions, that:

> There is no Present—there is Past and Future, and there is Art...
> This impure Present our Vortex despises and ignores.
> For our Vortex is uncompromising.
>
> We must have the Past and the Future, Life simple, that is, to discharge ourselves in, and keep us pure for non-life, that is Art.
> The Past and Future are prostitutes Nature has provided.
> Art is periodic escapes from this Brothel... (B_1 147-148)

While in a rather different context in Being and Time, which, as Jameson notes, was published in the same year—1927—as Lewis's monumental critique of being, becoming and temporality, Heidegger can claim that:

> The future, the character of having been, and the Present, show the phenomenal characteristics of the 'towards-oneself', the 'back-to', and the letting-oneself-be-encountered by'. The phenomena of the "towards...", the "to...", and the "alongside...", make temporality manifest as the [ecstases] pure and simple. Temporality is the primordial 'outside-of-itself" in and for itself. We therefore call the phenomena of the future, the character of having-been, and the Present, the "ecstases" of temporality. Temporality is not, prior to this, an entity which first emerges from itself; its essence is a process of temporalizing in the unity of the ecstases. What is characteristic of the 'time' which is accessible to the ordinary understanding, consists, among other things, precisely in the fact that it is a pure sequence of "nows", without beginning and without end, in which the ecstatical character of

primordial temporality has been levelled off.[213]

The impedimenta of Heidegger's fundamental ontology is well known to require a familiarity with his esoteric vocabulary and mode of procedure, as laid out in the introduction to Being and Time, before it can begin to illuminate the problems it seeks to bring to consciousness. Nevertheless, the essential details of Heidegger's discussion here are easily summarized, even if this necessarily requires some loss of technical precision. In its essence, Heidegger's project was to surpass the phenomenological investigations of his mentor Husserl, by grounding a fundamental ontology in a sense of Being which he believed had been lost during the course of two thousand years of Western philosophy. To do this, he began by differentiating between individual beings and being-as such, and sought to determine how the two might be seen as aspects of a more fundamental ontology. *Dasein*—or the being for whom "bei-ing" is an issue, such as the human subject—evidently has a different relation to its existence than, say, a car or a hammer, by virtue of what Husserl called its "intentionality"— the manner in which consciousness directs or projects itself towards things and concepts in the world, and many that may not be in the world, whether because they are imaginary creatures such as unicorns, or because they have vanished into memory, or because they do not yet exist, but may do so at some point in the future, as might be the case with a projected artwork or invention or state of affairs amongst individuals. One fundamental

---

[213] Heidegger, Being and Time 377.

difference between beings and being-as-such in this sense is the way in which these two concepts stand out against time. Beings, for example, are determined by a temporal context—we can travel from *a* to*b* because it is possible to drive *this* car *now*. Being-as-such, on the other hand, transcends a particular context and, as Heidegger poetically and frequently renders it, is illuminated by the transcendental horizon of time itself.

This use of images of horizontality in the descriptions of time and temporality in Heidegger indicate the ways in which an ostensibly spatial metaphor or set of metaphors, is applicable, within his phenomenology, to the absolute time of consciousness itself, as it is the more limited temporal context of objects of intentionality such as books, keys or hammers. In contrast with these objects, the being who is conscious of itself as being—*dasein*—is also aware of its various comportments within temporality: its retention of past-ness, its sense of present-ness in all its ambiguity, its anticipation of future-ness. In this understanding, *dasein* is always "beyond itself," is always, as Heiddeger describes it, "ec-static," is always "coming-towards-itself" in regard to its future possibilities, and in this "beyond-ness" dasein is unlike any other entity in the world.

Central to Heidegger's early understanding of *dasein* as an entity revealed in and through ecstatic horizontality, is the reaching towards and reaching back from

the limit of myself in the anticipation of my ultimate non-existence through death. It is this relation to death in particular, to the non-being that enables me to grasp my own being-ness, which allows Heidegger to develop his notion of authenticity as recognition of the open-ness of the future to my projects and possibilities. Authentic being, in this sense, is an open-ness to the future from whence my possibilities depart to my "now"; and especially an open-ness to the beyond future of my death, which determines and thereby limits these possibilities. Essential to this understanding also is the manner in which authentic being guides the self away from the inauthenticity of the crowd—*das mann*—towards the authentic embrace of the self as alone.

This combination of aloneness, thanatotropism, and anticipation of possibilities characterize authenticity in the early Heidegger in a manner which, while it is ostensibly radically different to Lewis in its prioritization of time over space, nonetheless shares a certain raw affinity with Lewis in terms of an underlying sense of the interweavings of ontology, temporality, value and selfhood as apprehended against a spatially contrived horizon of comprehensibility. For Lewis, in a comment which very clearly indicates the political ramifications of temporality for him:

> *'Change' is much less than is generally believed a single-gauged track.* It is not a single-gauge track at all. It is a multitudinous field of tracks and lines, only *one* of which is used. That single line, the one that is used, the one that 'happens'—we call the 'new'. As we proceed along it we call it progress. It is my argument that there is an *absolute* progress for any given community, but that they are

seldom able to investigate it, and seldom attain it. (P 122)

The horizon indicated by Lewis differs from that of Heidegger, or at least the Heidegger of Being and Time, to the extent that here Lewis appears to be suggesting a community of possibilities rather than possibilities belonging to the individual per se, and is also indicating a rigidly spatial version of temporality in which anticipation is akin to travelling on a train. But such anticipations as are here suggested are usually only ever dealt when Lewis wishes to stress the inferiority of the collective as compared with the individual. Far more "authentic" in Lewisian terms, (although these two observations are separated by some fifteen years), is the citation from BLAST above, in which the ec-stases of past, present and future belong to what Heidegger might refer to as particular beings within specific temporal contexts, whilst "Art" and authentic selfhood are oriented to the meta-temporal horizontality of what, in Lewisian terms, is signalled via the concepts of space, exteriority and stasis; what Heidegger signified as being-as-such. In contrast with Heidegger, however, the essence of this stasis within the artwork for Lewis, (and this applies as much to the literary as to the plastic artefact, in theory at least), is its fundamental "deadness"—its cessation of the realm of becoming.[214] Thus, while, as this comparison might indicate, there are certainly parallels between Lewis and Heidegger in the way in which they deal with this disjunction

---

[214] Heidegger's most influential discussion of art may be found in Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," in Poetry, Language, Thought, trans. Albert Hofstandter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971) 34f.

between the authentic and the inauthentically human in respect of space and time, there are also a number of very important differences between them, particularly as regards the faculty of vision and its role in picturing the world,[215] which connect Lewis far more closely to theorists of time, space, identity and—surprisingly—desire, more usually associated, rightly or wrongly, with what is called the postmodern, and in particular, with the work of Lyotard and Deleuze and Guattari. In particular, while Heidegger, like Bergson before him, attempted to destroy the prejudice in favour of space which he identified, in direct contrast to Lewis, in modernity and notably, the spatialization of time in both philosophy and in everyday life about which Bergson wrote so lyrically and, to Lewis's eyes at least, so offensively — Lewis took the opposite direction and attempted to reconfigure the three "ec-stases" of temporality as subsisting in a space of homogeneity, upon which he drew his own lines of resistance in a manner which connects him with these later, postmodern, thinkers in a number of surprising ways. To prepare the way for this connection, the next two chapters will continue by providing a social and philosophical context for Lewis's critique of modernity in terms of what I have called his "aesthetics of vision" and his "metaphysics of repetition," as these perspectives, beginning with his visuo-spatial bias and its implications, and then traced through a philosophical genealogy since Kant, allow for a radical illumination of the themes of identity and modernity in his critical theory.

---

[215] Heidegger, "Age of the World Picture" 128-136.

Chapter Three

Time and Motion

> What is the *Heart*, but a *Spring*; and the *Nerves*, but so many *Strings*; and the *Joynts*, but so many *Wheels*, giving motion to the whole Body, such as was intended by the Artificier? ... *Art* goes yet further...For by Art is created the great LEVIATHAN called a COMMOM-WEALTH... which is but an artificiall Man.[216]

> BLESS the HAIRDRESSER.
> He attacks Mother Nature for a small fee...
> ...He makes systematic mercenary war on this
> WILDNESS.
> He trims aimless and retrograde growths
> Into CLEAN ARCHED SHAPES and
> ANGULAR PLOTS. (B_1 25)

> He who would know the world must first manufacture it.[217]

In the 1880s, Frederick Winslow Taylor, a steel company foreman in Pennsylvania, initiated a series of experiments on the study of "time and motion" in factory production, which was to result in 1911 in the publication of his seminal document on technocratic expansion and efficiency: The Principles of Scientific Management. The essence of Taylor's argument was that, suitably armed with a stopwatch and a flowchart, managers would no longer need to rely upon the specialized skills and technical knowledge of their workers, but would be able to increase output in

---

[216] Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan; or, Matter, Forme, and Power of a Common-wealth Ecclesiasticall and Civill (London: Andrew Crooke, 1651) 1.

[217] Immanuel Kant, Opus Postumum, trans. and ed. Eckhart Förster and Michael Rosen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 240.

production through an instrumentally defined minimalization of "waste" in the labour process. By "waste," Taylor was explicitly indicating the inadequate exploitation of space and time in the working day, and by implication, the inadequate exploitation of those human resources whose relation to space and time had not yet been sufficiently taken into account in the process of accelerated mechanization that was currently taking place in the industrial West. Accordingly, the appropriate application of "time and motion" studies in relation to the advance of mechanization would, he asserted, enable a shift of power from the workforce to the middle and upper echelons of management, who would thus be given far more control over both the organization of technical knowledge and the administration of time.

Reactions to Taylorism in the early part of this century varied widely. Henry Ford, for example, took many of the ideas implicit in Taylor's work and added to them a new corporate philosophy which emphasized the dimension of properly demarcated leisure and consumption as essential to the industrial-economic process, thereby introducing a new element of "private experience" into the worker's life which Lewis, in spite of his admiration for Ford himself, was to criticize vehemently in The Art of Being Ruled and elsewhere.[218] On the other side of the ideological fence, one of the most intriguing and influential responses to the general pattern of mechanized

---

[218] In Paleface, Lewis claims that Ford is "truly humane and public spirited in the European sense,"– inasmuch as he recognizes that most human beings "wish to be machines" and caters for this need on utilitarian grounds; though Ford himself, like Lewis, does not belong to this mechanical tendency. From this we may assume that Ford is considered by Lewis to be a fellow "nature" who understands the needs of his "puppets."

industrial capitalism, if not to the ideas of Taylor himself, came, of course, from Georg Lukács, whose History and Class Consciousness, first published four years before Time and Western Man in 1923, introduced the notion of reification into social and political analysis. Here, Lukács adapted the ideas of Marx on the commodification of the labour process from a section from The Poverty of Philosophy in which Marx relates the subordination of man to machine to the management of human time as a commodity. The passage from Marx cited by Lukács, and his comment upon it, are notable in this context for the imagery that they deploy to stress the spatialization of the temporal in the industrial process:

> Marx puts it thus: "Through the subordination of man to machine the situation arises in which men are effaced by their labour; in which the pendulum of the clock has become as accurate a measure of the relative activity of two workers as it is of the speed of two locomotives...Time is everything, man is nothing; he is at most the incarnation of time. Quality no longer matters. Quantity alone decided everything; hour for hour, day for day..."

Lukács supplements this quotation from Marx and brings it into the twentieth century:

> Thus time sheds its qualitative, variable, flowing nature: it freezes into an exactly delimited, quantifiable continuum filled with quantifiable 'things' (the reified, mechanically objectified 'performance' of the worker, wholly separated from his total human personality): in short, it becomes space...[219]

---

[219] Georg Lukács, "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat," History and Class Consciousness no trans. (London: Merlin Press, 1971) 90. In Grundrisse, Marx concluded that capitalism is characterized by a perpetual need to "annihilate space with time," though it could never entirely achieve this aim within the scope of the technological limitations of spatial systems such as transport and communication. Karl Marx, Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy (rough draft), trans. Martin Nicolaus (London: Harmondsworth, 1973) 539. Lewis clearly felt that this process was being accelerated by impositions on the cultural level so as to transform the notion of personality in parallel with developments in media and technology in the 1920s.

The important point to note in this comparison between Lewis's observations from the right in the 1920s on the "clock of fashion," (noted in chapter two above), and a near contemporary Marxian assessment of space, time and identity, is that in both cases, space is shown to have acquired a transparency, an almost ideational quality, in relation to the greater reality assigned to the temporal process, with important consequences for the social analysis of modernity and the position of culture within that analysis. In concentrating his critical energies on the social and cultural manifestations of the representation or embodiment of time and space, however, Lewis is indicating his conviction that these are not merely the effects of economic change or technological innovation, but are inherently bound to a fundamental alteration in the structures of power in Western civilization prior to economics or technology. Thus a particular configuration of power—and here Lewis is very evidently less Marxian than Nietzschean/Foucauldian, in that his mapping of power is generally effected through metaphors based on complex, seemingly multidimensional, visual models, rather than binary distinctions between, say, base and superstructure, or capital and labour—requires that a particular notion of human identity should predominate.[220] It is a notion of identity best observed, for Lewis, in the relative importance assigned to space and time as this asymmetry designates human reality in accordance with the dictates of that configuration of power.

---

[220] The Foucault referred to here is the theorist of power/knowledge, as in the essays collected in Michael Foucault, Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and other Writings 1972-1977, ed. Colin Gordon. trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, Kate Soper (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1980).

Accordingly, Lewis inverts that asymmetry as it valorizes the temporal dimension over the spatial through his own models of identity, and does so belligerently as a form of critique.

Lewis's tactics here are as notable for their untimeliness within his own milieu as they are also pre-emptive of the ways in which the perception of modernity would evolve along spatio-temporal lines to become something markedly different from its negative nineteenth and early twentieth century portrayal in Marx, Bergson or Lukács, as the spatialization of time. For if it is the case as Daniel Bell has asserted that:

> The organisation of space, whether it be in modern poetry, architecture or sculpture, has become the primary aesthetic problem of mid-twentieth century culture, as the problem of time (in Bergson, Proust and Joyce) was... the primary aesthetic problem of the first decades of this century.[221]

—then within these terms, it can be argued that Lewis may be said to stand as one of the most consistent amongst the critics of his era of this apparent fetishization of temporality in literary and artistic modernism, as well as in the natural and social sciences, the political theory and philosophy of the period, as he is also one of the more intriguing progenitors of the diverse discourses which have evolved from the aesthetic and political concerns of a condition and a pathos which, it has often been assumed since the late 1970s, may have superseded modernity and the modern altogether: that of the postmodern.

---

[221] Daniel Bell, The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism (London: Heinemann, 1976) 107 & 111.

Whilst it must, of course, be borne in mind that the reference and distinguishing characteristics of the terms modernity and postmodernity, or the modern and the postmodern, whether they are used to denote changing modes of socio-economic experience, or to signify parallel modes of cultural expression in the arts, in electronic media and in the technology of communication and simulation generally, continue to provoke wide disagreement, there remain, nonetheless, cogent arguments for their heuristic value as indicators of a qualitative change in the consensual experience of space and time in the West between the early and later parts of the twentieth century, which has had a correlative effect on the organisation of self and community in the world. In his influential study of the transition between modernity and postmodernity as it devolves upon what he terms the "concrete abstractions" of space and time in relation to parallel changes within the structure of capitalism, for example, David Harvey has attempted to establish what he construes as the geo-metaphysical underpinnings of this transition by coining the expression "time-space compression," by which he signals those processes:

> that so revolutionize the objective qualities of space and time that we are forced to alter, sometimes in quite radical ways, how we represent the world to ourselves... "compression" because a strong case can be made that the history of capitalism has been characterized by speed-up in the pace of life, while so overcoming spatial barriers that the world sometimes seems to collapse inwards on us.[222]

Harvey's observation is significant in the way it applies to Lewis for a number of

---

[222] David Harvey, The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989) 240.

reasons. What is most immediately striking, however, is the metaphor of "compression" itself, inasmuch as it implies a description of a phenomenon observed from a distinctly spatial or spatializing perspective—in contrast to the predominance of metaphors of flux or continuum which invariably attended the space-time copula at the time of Lewis's critique of modernity, and against which Lewis consistently rebelled. Moreover, the kind of consensual change in the conception and representation of the world to which theorists such as Harvey and Bell refer certainly bears comparison with the overall focus if not necessarily the target of a range of Lewis's critical objections to the machinations of what he disparagingly referred to throughout the 1920s as the "Time Cult"— that amorphous collectivity of writer, artists, scientists, politicians, intellectuals and ordinary citizens whose valorization of the temporal dimension, Lewis believed, disguised a more sinister tendency which he claimed as having gained "an undisputed ascendancy in the intellectual world" of early twentieth century Europe. (TWM xviii) And although there are clearly important differences between Lewis's early formulation of this tendency in modernity and those projected by subsequent thinkers and theoreticians, particularly in relation to specific developments in late or postmodern capitalism and the alternative political systems which preceded those developments such as fascism, Nazism or Stalinist communism, elements of Harvey's projection of the necessity of perceiving space and time as radically distinct from one another, the "overcoming" of "spatial barriers" in the "compression" which he notes, and the social and intellectual implications of that process, were also of central importance to Lewis's

critical and fictional output in the first half of his career, but also, in a more attenuated sense, throughout his life. Their recurrence as a theme in his critical texts, philosophical essays and polemical pamphlets, moreover, provides the reader not only with a unique perspective on modernity and its legacy, particularly as it manifested itself through literary modernism in the early part of this century, but also with a pattern of political and aesthetic concerns through which his dialogical engagement with his continental philosophical predecessors, as well as subsequent theorists of Western culture, may be critically assessed.

This is a picture of the postmodern condition understood as the condition of late capitalism as a hegemonically or ideologically all-pervading global system, and as presented from a range of prescriptive angles from Marcuse and Bell to the various readings of Althusser, Poulantzas, Wallerstein, Fukuyama and Baudrillard, which Lewis prefigures in a remarkable discussion of art and politics in The Diabolical Principle, first published in his self-produced journal The Enemy 3 in 1929, where he comments:

> Open 'Capitalism' as it exists to-day cannot endure. But as Capitalism becomes more and more abstract and 'collectivist,' and as political ideas of a 'revolutionary' order permeate the so called Capitalist states (the universities, the Press, even the religious communities) and prepare the way for an ultimate transformation, is it not possible that the world may all melt into one super-state, without the rigmarole of 'revolution' or 'catastrophe,' (DP & DS 147)

That Lewis should speculate on the future of capitalism as spectacle, as the société de

consommation, as he does here and in The Art of Being Ruled from a few years before, when most of his contemporaries on the political left were still aligning themselves with the class analyses of orthodox Marxism, for example, or at least with one of its more exotic variants, whilst those on the political right were attaching themselves to various species of traditionalism, mythic-nationalism, religious authoritarianism, militarism or radical hermeticism, is clearly important to any consideration of his critical theory. For in this sense, (and with reservations, certainly, as to whether global capitalism in the late twentieth century approximates to the condition of a "super-state" in the classical economic sense), what Lewis's vision in Time and Western Man of the fragmented self in conflict with its suppressed temporal elements can also be claimed to do, alongside reflecting on the rationalization of temporal experience in his own period from a distinctly elitist perspective, and as Fredric Jameson has himself noted,[223] is connect him very directly and oppositionally with what Jameson, borrowing from the work of both Lacan and Deleuze and Guattari, has described as the condition of postmodern subjectivity as schizophrenia,[224] in which, to cite from David Harvey's useful paraphrase:

> If personal identity is forged through 'a certain temporal unification of the past and the future with the present before me,' and if sentences move through the same trajectory, then an inability to unify past, present and future in the sentence betokens a similar inability to 'unify the past, present and future of our own biographical experience or psychic life.'...The effect of such a breakdown in the signifying chain is to reduce experience to 'a series of unrelated presents in

---

[223] Jameson, Fables 19-20.

[224] Jameson, Postmodernism 26-29.

time.'[225]

The realm of schizophrenia in which the late twentieth century subject, overloaded both by the immediacy of technological communication and by the vertiginous cascade of disconnected signifiers that constitute everyday consciousness in the postmodern world is dissolved into a kind of spatio-temporal entropy,[226] is often remarkable in its similarities to the nostalgia-saturated, temporally disconnected and historically orphaned culture that Lewis projected into the future of his own time, when he noted some sixty years earlier that:

> the tendency, even upon the most popular plane, is evidently to substitute time for space in human psychology. The geographic novelties of the earth (as they represented themselves to the contemporaries of Magellan or Marco Polo) are now exhausted... As there was a globe-trotter, so there will be a 'time-tripper'... certainly this change or revolution... will give a new psychological outfit - suitable for mind-travel - imposed by the different character of their new function. (TWM 250)

---

[225] Harvey 53.

[226] In his introduction to Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964) 3-4, for example, Marshall McCluhan writes:

> "After three thousand years of explosion, by means of fragmentary and mechanical technologies, the Western world is imploding. During the mechanical ages we had extended our bodies in space. Today, after more than a century of electric technology, we have extended our nervous system itself (sic) in a global embrace, abolishing both space and time as far as our planet is concerned. Rapidly, we approach the final phase of the extensions of man—the technological simulation of consciousness, when the creative process of knowing will be collectively and corporately extended to the whole of human society, much as we have already extended our sense and nerves by various media."

Whilst Lewis would have objected to the idea of abolishing both space and time—a heresy that he levelled against the Futurists as, in fact, a deification of the temporal, the influence of Lewis on McCluhan is everywhere attested in the latter's work by direct or indirect allusion. Indeed, McCluhan has claimed Time and Western Man as one of the shaping influences on his intellectual life as a student, and, on a personal level, later helped Lewis in a number of ways during the artist's self-imposed exile in North America in the 1940s.

In a manner comparable to Jameson in his controversial essay "Cognitive Mapping,"[227] Lewis's prognosis for this condition was a therapeutic spatialization of self-identity, which would allow for a stable sense of positionality in a shifting and multi-perspectival world. This resemblance, and however qualified one would have to make it, between Lewis in 1927 and Jameson and 1984, is not as surprising as it might initially seem. To begin with, it is fair to say that in the late 1970s, Jameson's work on time, space, what was then called post-structuralism, historicism, and notably, on Wyndham Lewis, coalesced in a number of ways to provide the impetus for his subsequent speculations on the condition of postmodernity as the cultural logic of late capitalism, for which he is now probably best known. In this sense, and as with the prime Canadian theorist of global technocracy and the closure of ideology, Marshall McLuhan, who openly and repeatedly acknowledged his intellectual debt to Lewis, and by extension, the sociologist of social apocalypse, cultural anorexia and pataphysical ennui, Jean Baudrillard,[228] there is a certain continuity that might well be put down to the selective vicissitudes of influence.

There is, however, another aspect of Lewis's visionary tendency in its relation to

---

[227] Jameson, Postmodernism 26-29.

[228] Baudrillard has openly borrowed a number of elements of vocabulary from McCluhan, such as "implosion" or the delineation of "hot" and "cool" media, and in many ways has come to represent, or at least express, the kind of nihilism that Lewis predicted would result from the increasing power of technology to homogenize human experience. See the essays in The Selected Writings of Jean Baudrillard, ed. Mark Poster (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988).

time, space and identity, whose consequences are largely ignored by Jameson,[229] (though not by McLuhan), that needs to be examined in some detail if his projections into the future are to be properly contextualized in terms of the period in which they were written. This being a notable singularity of approach that he sustained towards not only the culture of his own time, but also to the philosophical genealogy of that culture, and hence, on his own terms, to its projection into the rest of the century and beyond. It is a singularity rehearsed in the introduction to this study, and most economically expressed by him, as was suggested there, in his preface to Time and Western Man, when he asserts the fundamental axiomatic principle behind what is, effectively, his entire corpus:

> my philosophic position could almost be called an occupational one, except that my occupation is not one that I have received by accident or mechanically inherited, but is one that I chose as responding to an exceptional instinct or bias....whatever I, for my part, say, can be traced back to an organ: but in my case it is the eye. (TWM 133 -134)

The consequence of this almost obsessionally ocularcentric approach to his philosophical and artistic source materials is, on the plane of critical practice, and as I have suggested, a general movement towards spatialization in his critical theory which remains more or less consistent throughout his working life, and acts as the master-principle of his literary and critical production.

To begin to establish the philosophical and political contours and motivation behind

---

[229] Although see his later Signatures of the Visible (London: Routledge, 1990), in which the visual is (necessarily) foregrounded through cinema.

this visual bias in Lewis, as well as its origins and effects, and to adumbrate the nature of his use of repetition as a cognate of the autonomous and atemporal self that he sought to valorize, it is useful at this stage to attempt a preliminary sketch of the way in which Lewis's systematic chronophobia relates to the broader issue of the metaphysics and aesthetics of modernity. A valuable reference point here may be found in the work of the prominent neo-critical theorist Jürgen Habermas, who in his much debated address on receipt of the Adorno prize in Frankfurt in 1980, entitled "Modernity—An Incomplete Project," attempted to encapsulate the central characteristics of the temporalist ascendancy noted by Lewis over a half a century before, when he observed that:

> Aesthetic modernity is characterized by attitudes which find a common focus in a changed consciousness of time. This time-consciousness expresses itself through metaphors of the vanguard and the avant-garde. The avant-garde understands itself as invading unknown territory, exposing itself to the dangers of sudden, shocking encounters, conquering an as yet unoccupied future. The avant-garde must find a direction in a landscape into which no one appears as yet to have ventured.[230]

Habermas's characterization of the avant-garde is valuable here in that it tallies closely with the critical-creative project which Lewis initiated in the 1920s, after what was arguably the only genuinely vanguardist literary-artistic movement in England, Vorticism, had collapsed into a series of casual affiliations, little magazines and disparate careers. It also reflects, with some accuracy, the kind of imagery employed by Lewis in this project, a series of metaphors and analogies

---

230 Jürgen Habermas, "Modernity—An Incomplete Project", trans. Seyla Ben-Habib, Modernism/Postmodernism, ed. Peter Brooker (London: Longman, 1992) 127-128.

combining unity and disunity, degeneration and progression, creativity and destruction, in more or less equal measure. Consideration of this imagery and its object allows for a preliminary contextualization of Lewis within the broader project of European modernism in both its nihilistic and vanguardist manifestations, and at the same time, indicates the often incommensurable contrasts between his vision of its development, and that of excursions into the post-war "Waste Land" of fellow protagonists in the initial BLAST circle such as Pound or Eliot. For in contrast to either Pound—whom Lewis described in Time and Western Man as the "revolutionary simpleton," or Eliot, both of whom were, perhaps surprisingly in the light of his behaviour towards them to remain his lifelong friends, Lewis had no truck whatsoever with either myth or traditionalism, transcendental notions or theories of impersonality, and no desire whatsoever to heal symbolically the wounds of time à la Eliot, preferring instead to exacerbate those wounds as publicly as possible, and thereby reveal the corpse of the past as nothing but a corpse. As he put it in an article entitled "The Children of the New Epoch" from the first edition of his autonomously produced and short-lived journal The Tyro from 1921:

> A phenomenon we meet, and are bound to meet for some time, is the existence of a sort of No Man's land atmosphere. The dead never rise up, and men will not return to the Past, whatever else they may do. But as yet there is Nothing, or rather the corpse of the past age, and the sprinkling of children of the new. There is no natural authority, outside of creative and active individual men, to support the new and delicate forces bursting forth everywhere

today.[231]

Lewis continues: "So we have to entrench ourselves; but we do it with rage: and it is our desire to press constantly on to realization of what is, after all our destined life."[232] However, while Lewis and Habermas share military and exploratory images in their depictions of the consciousness of the avant garde, such notions of destiny as are indicated here and in several other places by Lewis in this period may be taken as calculatedly ambivalent. On the one hand, he deploys notions of destiny to simultaneously promote and undermine nascent modernisms in much the way he deploys "stylistic and formal production" to subvert a "dominant 'aesthetic ideology'," as Jameson has suggested.[233] On the other hand, he deploys the idea of destiny as a direct attack on the dominant metaphysical principle of modernity, which as Benjamin suggested, was less merely the consciousness of novelty, than a re-appropriation of the past exploited to colonize the emptiness of the present.[234] For Lewis, this notion of the use of the past, in contrast with empty neophilia, is acceptable, but only if balanced out with an appropriation of the future, and even the remote future, as well. Thus, the notion of destiny in this statement spatializes time quite literally, as may be noted in this passage from his "Essay on the Objective of

---

[231] Wyndham Lewis, "The Children of the New Epoch," The Tyro: A Review of the Arts of Painting Sculpture and Design No. 1, ed. W. Lewis (London: The Egoist Press, 1921) 3.

[232] Lewis, Tyro No.1 3.

[233] Jameson, Fables 19.

[234] For a discussion of Benjamin and modern time-consciousness, see Habermas, Philosophical Discourse 11-16.

Plastic Art in our Time":

> You handle with curiosity and reverence a fragment belonging to some civilization developed three milleniums (sic) ago. Why cannot you treat the future with as much respect? Even if the Future is such a distant one that the thing you hold in your hand, or the picture you look at has something of the mutilation and imperfection that the fragment coming to you from the past also has, is not the case a similar one... I think we should begin to regard ourselves more in this light—as drawing near to a remote future, rather than receding from an historic past.[235]

In this sense, Lewis challenges both the conventional sense of modernity as a consciousness of novelty, and — arguably with the Joyce of Finnegans Wake — the metaphysical paradigm of modern time consciousness and experience as a linear progression or flow into an undetermined and as yet uncreated future. For Habermas, the generality of avant-garde production follows a specific form of future orientation, which is effectively a flight from the emptiness of the present towards a utopian present that is curiously above and beyond time at the same time as it is immersed in transience:

> But these forward groupings, this anticipation of an undefined future and the cult of the new mean in fact the exaltation of the present. The new time consciousness, which enters philosophy in the writings of Bergson, does more than express the experience of mobility in society, of acceleration in history, of discontinuity in everyday life. The new value placed on the transitory, the elusive and the ephemeral, the celebration of dynamism, discloses a longing for an undefiled, immaculate and stable present.[236]

While Habermas is undoubtedly correct in his characterization of the "time-

---

[235] Wyndham Lewis, ed. "Essay on the Objective of Plastic Art in our Time," The Tyro: A Review of the Arts of Painting, Sculpture and Design No.2 (London: Egoist Press, 1922) 36.

[236] Habermas, "Modernity" 128.

consciousness" which attended much of the avant-garde creativity of experimental modernism, his assertion that the obsession with the transitory disguised a longing for an almost theological present, is one with which Lewis, although he might well have agreed with its analysis in relation to the majority of his contemporaries, would certainly have wished to qualify in the terms of his own literary, critical and philosophical experimentation. For Lewis, in a superficially counter-modernist move, an immersion in the present as represented by this post-Baudelairean obsession with the transitory and the ephemeral amongst the generality of the contemporary avant garde was the primary symptom of a far more general intellectual malaise in Western civilization, aided and indeed augmented by technological innovation and its manipulation by the structural and hegemonic forces of modernity through what he called "romance" or "advertisement." In contrast with these tendencies, the present for Lewis could only ever be understood authentically as an anticipation of the future as a locality or modality, as an experience of the body traversing a series of discrete moments which what he called the eye-mind, rather than the "mind's eye" which he associated with stream-of-consciousness narrative, could assess panoptically from a position at the still centre of the "vortex" and then form into spatial representations.

> I am an artist, and through my eye, must confess to a tremendous bias. In my purely literary voyages my eye is always my compass. "the architectural simplicity"—whether of a platonic idea or a greek temple—I far prefer to no idea at all, or no temple at all...Nothing could ever convince my EYE—even if my intelligence were otherwise overcome—that anything that did not possess this simplicity, conceptual quality, hard exact outline, grand architectural proportion, was the greatest art.

Then, in a characteristically venomous attack on Henri Bergson, the prime source for Lewis of this temporalist ascendancy, he concludes:

> Bergson is indeed the arch enemy of the EYE, from the start; though he might arrive at some emotional compromise with the Ear. But I can hardly imagine any way in which he is not against every form of intelligent life. (ARB 338)

From this perspective, and through his partisan attitude towards the ectodermic or spatial metaphor, the individuated gaze, and the intellectually detached viewpoint, Lewis accordingly sought to identify on numerous levels of representation, a preference for mutability over stability, and interiority over exteriority, as an attack on the notion of personality as the source, rather than the recipient, of values. Interiority, in this sense, and whether expressed in art, literature or in abstract thinking, was understood by him as a fundamentally prescriptive analogue of the valorization of the temporal over the spatial in thought, discourse and action. It was an analogue whose asymmetrical presence within the structure of modernity he sought to expose in its covert formulations, so as to provide the focal point for an aleatory system of critical conspiracy theory, whose overall purpose was to reassert, through agonistic criticism, the external world of appearance as it manifests itself in space, rather than in time, and as that world is expressed through the authentic and autonomous self of the creative nature, as the supreme source of value. Nor, at least on Lewis's terms, was this project the result of a form of idealism as might initially be supposed. For what he consistently makes clear is his absolute antipathy to any form of abstraction in either the conventional or philosophical sense, to any valorization

of the concept, that is, over matter or the material, as the latter is understood through the singularity of the perceived event. Writing sympathetically on the immaterialist empiricism of Bishop Berkeley, for example, Lewis notes that:

> It was abstraction, Berkeley said—the admission of inferences and fictions of the mind upon an equality with perception that caused men to believe in the reality of the external world. So the sign-world of verbal fiction established a competitive reality outside us; and the sign-world of mathematics, developing out of the abstraction of verbalism, can only reinforce that process.

Lewis adds:

> Berkeley was much concerned to destroy the myth of the superiority of the "abstract" over the immediate and individual. With us exactly the same preoccupation must occur, in the case of the advertisement of the mental at the expense of the concrete. That particular snobbery is a source of endless confusions, upon which such a mind as Bergson's, or Alexander's, is not slow to seize. It is exceedingly easy to confute, if the true values of "mental" and "concrete" as they emerge in the time-philosophy are attended to. (TWM 164)

As is invariably the case in his discussion of philosophical ideas, this illustration from Berkeley tells the reader more about the direction of Lewis's critique of contemporary philosophical thought as it relates to his own project than it does about immaterialism per se. To begin with, his characterization of a competition over "reality" in which the visual, on the one hand, and the textual, tactile or aural, on the other, make conflicting claims, indicates a singular perspicacity in Lewis's dealings with philosophy which pre-empt many of the more contemporary concerns of philosophy with its own tendency to suppress one faculty in favour of another and thereby generate aporiai which, in the contemporary parlance of critical theory, may then be "deconstructed" so as to indicate the implications of that suppression

for philosophy itself:

> if by "philosophy of the eye" is meant that we wish to repose, and materially to repose, in the crowning human sense, the visual sense: and if it meant that we refuse (closing ourselves in with our images and sensa) to retire into the abstraction and darkness of an aural and tactile world, then it is true that our philosophy attaches itself to that concrete and radiant reality of the optic sense. That sensation of overwhelming reality which vision alone gives us is the reality of "common sense," as it is the reality we inherit from pagan antiquity. (TWM 392)

To Lewis, then, this project of critical conspiracy theory was not only a drive to legitimate a form of cultural elitism, but also a form of radical materialism. It was a materialism, as is clear from these examples, markedly different from either that inherited from the historical materialism of Marx and Engels, or from the epistemological reductionism of much nineteenth century positivist science, of which Taylorism is an exemplary product, and of which he was equally critical. Rather, it was a materialism drawn from diverse philosophical sources whose underlying ontology was promoted through the repeated affirmation of the "common sense" of externality and spatiality as perceived through the faculty of vision, and conceived by Lewis as the epistemological correlative of what he called at various points the "eye-mind" of the self in its active opposition to the temporalist "mind's eye" of the self which he considered the dominant model of the modern subject not only in contemporary art and literature, but also in physics, philosophy, sociology, politics, cinema and advertising. Against this tendency, as he affirms in Men Without Art:

> You have in the most unmistakable way come down upon the side of what is material, if you have accepted in the main my contentions—over against those people who prefer the mind's

> eye, as an instrument, to the eye upon the outside of their head. The mind's eye I refer to is that organ which looks out equally upon the past and present, but perceives the actual scene a little dimly, at best peeps out upon the contemporary scene: it is the time-eye, as it might be called, the eye of Proust. (MWA 120)

While there are undoubtedly discontinuities between his versions of how this metaphysical instrument of self might function in relation to the consciousness of temporality between the time of BLAST and its more systematic theoretical elaboration in the 1920s and beyond, these are discontinuities which are best understood as essential elements in his strategic presentation of self as the enemy of modernity, and of the eye-mind as a multi-perspectival figure of agency and action, rather than the result of an incoherence in his thinking. It is, in this sense, to the construction of his images, rather than that of his arguments, that one must look for illumination. A crucial indication of this eye-mind and its function in determining the basis of multiple self-identity for Lewis is presented, for example, in his "Essay on the Objective of Plastic Art in our Time" from 1921, through an image to which I shall return, in which he posits a "man of the future" as his ideal, against an image of "present-ness," in the following terms:

> A space must be cleared, all said and done, round the hurly-burly of the present. No man can reflect or create, in the intellectual sense, while he is acting—fighting, playing tennis, or making love. *The present man in all of us is a machine.* The farther away from the present, though not too far, the more free. So the choice must be between past and future... The man of the future, the man who is in league with time, is as engrossed *away* from the actual as the first man is in his dear past.[237]

---

[237] Lewis, "Essay" 35.

In describing the "present man" as a "machine," Lewis continues a line of argument-through-image begun in BLAST, by asserting his mechanical and spatial vision of identity against the more deliquescent notions and pictures of identity that he opposes so resolutely in his contemporaries. What results from Lewis's subsequent valorization of the visual metaphor in the 1920s and beyond, as is already evident in this example, is a model of self in which the experience of temporality in particular, and of the will in general, is to be understood less as a continuity or stream of consciousness, than as an arrangement of forms in geometric space. A prescriptive model, that is, in which the distance between the elements that make up those forms is to be privileged over their hypostasized connection with one another. In this sense, and in direct contrast not only to his colleagues in English high modernism, but also to a major European contemporary such as Heidegger, for example, for whom the sense of distance generated by visual metaphor represents the profound alienation of *dasein* in the face of modern technology,[238] or an important predecessor such as Bergson—who as Lewis himself noted, and as Hannah Arendt subsequently indicated in her seminal study of the concept of will, was the first modern philosopher to denigrate explicitly the sovereignty of the visual in philosophy, thereby inaugurating a tendency which has subsequently dominated twentieth century

---

[238] On Heidegger and the malaise of the visual, see David Michael Levin, "Decline and Fall: Ocularcentrism in Heidegger's Reading of the History of Metaphysics," Modernity and the Hegemony of Vision, ed. David Michael Levin (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993) 186-217.

thought[239]— Lewis is quite consciously going against the grain of the European zeitgeist in asserting ocularcentrism, rather than logocentrism or the study of temporality or history, as the basis for the future of Western thought.

In contrast, similarly, to a figure such as Spengler whom he attacks in Time and Western Man, and yet in common to some extent with more sophisticated and subsequently influential critics of modernity such as Nietzsche or Heidegger, it is an assertion based on his diagnosis of the sickness and decline of the West as the result of a fundamental or even a constitutive lack in the metaphysical and aesthetic sensibility of the European psyche. But whereas for Nietzsche this lack was due to the expression of weakness through various species of *ressentiment*, and where for Heiddeger it was the result a radical forgetting of the question of Being, for Lewis this lack was rather the product of a socio-cultural disengagement from the ontological power of the eye, of the gaze and of the figural as the assertoric projection of self and intellect onto the world of forms. For as he suggested in Paleface: The Philosophy of the 'Melting Pot,' in a section on art, culture and the aesthetics of machinery:

> The idea that plastic and graphic art is a soft, indefinite, fluffy and vague sort of thing, is more than a Victorian prejudice. It is almost a European prejudice. Plastic or graphic art is, in fact, nothing of the sort: it is essentially a geometric thing, a thing of structure. But with European art, the structure, the geometric basis of beauty, has always tended to be covered up,

---

239 Hannah Arendt, The Life of the Mind: Thinking (London: Secker & Warburg, 1978) 122.

> hidden away...it could almost be said that the European has never understood the secrets of the pure eye at all. (P 251/252)

On one level, this use of an ocular conceit as the dominant metaphor of his argument, and indeed of his critical theory and fiction in general, has a purely pragmatic end, inasmuch as:

> To solidify, to make concrete, to give definition to—that is my profession: to 'despise the fluid' (mépriser le fluent) and to postulate 'permanence' (postuler la permanence); to crystallize that which (otherwise) flows away, to concentrate the diffuse, to turn to ice that which is liquid and mercurial—that certainly describes my occupation, and the tendency of all that I think. (P 254)

On another level, however, the ramifications of this conceit extend far beyond the mere practice or technique of the artist or fictionalist, as Lewis was fully aware. For so strongly held an aesthetic preference on the part of a European intellectual profoundly concerned about his place within modernity will inevitably extend into the realm of the political, and into the perspective that will be adopted on the dominant codes which could be said to govern that modernity, such as those which provide the motor for ideas of will, of social and technological progress, of the continuing sovereignty of the rational as the process of domination over nature, and of history. Writing on the question of history in 1926, for example, Lewis roundly accuses those whom he sees as the abstract historiographers of modernity, amongst whom he somewhat promiscuously includes Marxists, liberals, conservatives, and the followers of the degenerative Viconianism of Spengler, as well as most contemporary

philosophers and physicists, of:

> In every case....distracting people from a living Present (which becomes dead as the mind withdraws) into a Past into which they have gone to live. It is a hypnotism that is exercised by the time-vista, or by those time-forms or exemplars that are relied upon for the mesmeric effect. The intelligence to which this method is natural is the opposite of the creative, clearly. (TWM 249)

Lewis continues with a typically sardonic observation on the decadence of modern representations of the dead, in comparison with the more geometric and anti- or pre-historical cultures that he explicitly favours; cultures whose pro-spatiality and atemporality was premised, or so he believed, on a view of time as a background from which we emerge, the product of a certain and dominant relation to the immediacy of the faculty of vision, rather than to the more decadent and abstract faculties of touch and orality. He begins by informing us that the ancient Egyptians "who embalmed their dead were constantly in the presence of the Past of their race," and then adds by way of an evaluative provocation:

> Imagine some English country-squire, who possessed, instead of a set of family portraits, a cellar-full of the carefully embalmed remains of his ancestors, to which he could stroll down, when he felt inclined...That would be more impressive than dingy oil paintings.(TWM 249)

The attempt here and at various points in his writing to spatialize the discourse of history and of the *nunc stans* through analogical reference both to the deadness of insensate matter and the deadness of the past, and then to initiate a return to what he variously referred to as a pagan or barbarian or classical model of the

relation between time, representation and personal identity—effectively, and as regards history, a privileging of the scopic drive over the desire for narrative continuity—has led a number of critics to classify Lewis's obsessive chronophobia as exemplary of a certain fascist or proto-fascist aesthetic in Anglo-American modernism.[240] None, however, have approached this notion, or the curious and possibly unique political and aesthetic stance of Wyndham Lewis, with as much rigour and fervour as Fredric Jameson. In his monograph on Lewis, Jameson begins by asserting what he calls the "happy accident" of Lewis's critical neglect, in that it enables the contemporary reader to re-experience the shock of modernist innovation in a way denied to them in writers more critically revered and thus mediated by layers of commentary and exegesis. More than this, there is a formidable ambivalence to Lewis's innovation, a singular originality of approach which marks him out from his peers, a "consistent perversity" which: "made of him at one and the same time the exemplary practitioner of one of the most powerful of all modernistic styles and an aggressive ideological critic and adversary of modernism itself in all its forms." [241] From this telling observation, Jameson then moves on to construct and then to deploy a prototype of his theory of total critique—a theory more fully worked out a year or so later in The Political Unconscious, to which Fables of Aggression may be considered as a kind of preliminary supplement with a specific brief on literary modernism—

---

[240] For a discussion of the links between spatio-temporal aesthetics and politics in modernism, se Hewitt 14-47.

[241] Jameson, Fables 3.

whereby Lewis might be at least partially reprieved from his tendency towards incipient proto-fascism, and then re-engaged as an agent for revealing ways in which Jamesonian-Marxist-structuralist hermeneutics, and history, and fictional narrative, coincide in a moment of dialectical illumination.[242] His chapter entitled "From National Allegory to Libidinal Apparatus," for example, argues that the underlying pan-nationalism favoured by Lewis (prior, at least, to the 1930s), and demonstrated by him in Tarr, provides through allegory a locus of conflicts between the comparative stability and autonomy of nation-states prior to the events of World War One and the October revolution, and their fragmentation subsequent to these events into the more fluid and unstable identities ruled by the figure of global capital. Thus he writes that the form of national allegory: "should be understood as a formal attempt to bridge the increasing gap between the existential data of everyday life within a given nation-state and the structural tendency of monopoly capital to develop on a world wide, essentially transnational scale."[243]

Alongside this dimension of national allegory in Tarr, lies what Jameson terms the level of psychic allegory, a second layer of interpretation opened up by the move from national allegory, a constant narrative form amongst people in

---

[242] The theoretical background to this notion of dialectical "shock" or illumination is outlined with elegant critical economy in Fredric Jameson, Marxism and Form: Twentieth Century Dialectical Theories of Literature (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971) 306-416.

[243] Jameson, Fables 94.

transition,[244] towards Jameson's appropriation of Jean-François Lyotard's post-psychoanalytic model of the *dispositif pulsionnel* or libidinal apparatus, which Jameson redefines as: "an empty form or structural matrix in which a charge of free-floating and inchoate fantasy—both ideological and psychoanalytic—can suddenly crystallize, and find the articulated figuration essential for its social actuality and psychic effectivity."[245]

Into this empty structure, Jameson suggests, rush "unformulable impulses" which parallel the transformations of capitalism and the reification of the subject in the early twentieth century, and metamorphose "the whole narrative system into a virtual allegory of the fragmented psyche itself."[246] The essence of this interpretation is that through a combination of stylistic and formal innovation Lewis unwittingly enables an allegorical reading of his novel in which the precession of new forms of literary mimesis, from say realism to naturalism to modernism, what Jameson calls the "history of forms," enacts on a symbolic level a series of conflicts and contradictions within the history of Western capitalism itself. These are conflicts that paradoxically disclose themselves through their attempts to disguise their fundamentally dialectical nature by virtue of masks and structural decoys, such as the modernist fragmentation or dissolution of the

---

[244] Jameson's controversial notion of "third world narratives" is developed from this idea, most fully in The Geopolitical Aesthetic: Cinema and Space in the World System (London: BFI Publications, 1992).

[245] Jameson, Fables 95.

[246] Jameson, Fables 96.

subject, which are, in actuality, techniques for the repression of history. The aim of the critic in this sense is to allow for a "return of the repressed" in an author such as Lewis, first through a reading of narrative as a symptom, and then through a retracing of its aetiology back to the mode of production.

While Jameson's interpretation is certainly very suggestive and indeed valuable here, what must also be understood is that the Lewis of Fables of Aggression is in many ways a pawn in a game of higher dialectics that Jameson is inaugurating at this stage of his career as part of a project as ambitious—though considerably more rigorous in its explication—as that which Lewis himself attempted in the 1920s through the various volumes: The Art of Being Ruled, The Lion and the Fox, Time and Western Man, The Childermass and Paleface, that were originally intended to make up his massive critique of Western consciousness and modernity in all its forms, The Man of the World. Both of them are, in effect, attempting to find a way out of the impasse into which the capitalism of their times appeared to be leading the societies in which they lived, and this parallelism of motive may well at least partially explain Jameson's evident fascination with Lewis. But where Lewis approached this problem from a broadly right-wing and elitist perspective, albeit an exceedingly maverick one, which actively sought to repress or preferably to eradicate history from the picture altogether, and concentrate instead on what Lyotard and Deleuze would later characterize as the

singularity of the "event,"[247] for Jameson, at least in the period leading up to The Political Unconscious, history is, when all is said and done, the *deus absconditus* or absent cause through reference to which all local interpretive systems and all fragmented psyches must finally be encoded, judged, and enacted on a global level of interpretation.[248]

If Jameson's often dazzling pursuit of a kind of *via negativa* of materialism and identity on the macro-level of his theory in Fables of Aggression and The Political Unconscious has delighted, puzzled, and alienated his readers in about equal measure over the years since their publication,[249] his concern with the micro- level of the literary text, with the local specificity of expression on the page, has generally been more acceptable or at least accessible to the generality of literary theory and criticism. It is a concern articulated forcibly a few years before Fables of Aggression in the preface to Marxism and Form, when he promises here to:

> remain faithful to the notion that any concrete description of

---

[247] On the philosophical background to the notion of the "event" in Deleuze and Guattari, and especially its connection with Stoic thought, see Gilles Deleuze, The Logic of Sense, trans. Mark Lester with Charles Stivale., ed. Constantin V. Boundas (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990) 142-153. On Lyotard and the "event" see Geoff Bennington, Lyotard: Writing the Event (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988).

[248] The "absent cause" here is derived from his reading of Althusser's denial of contradiction as ever being literally present in the scene of history. Instead contradiction must be grasped indirectly through the dialectical links it forges as those links determine the course of the class struggle. See, Louis Althusser, Essays in Self Criticism, trans. Ben Brewster (London: New Left Books, 1976) 127 n.20

[249] On Jamesonian style, see Terry Eagleton, "Fredric Jameson: The Politics of Style," in Against the Grain: Essays 1975-1985 (London: Verso, 1986) 65-78.

> a literary or philosophical phenomenon—if it is to be really complete—has an ultimate obligation to come to terms with the shape of the individual sentences themselves, to give an account of their origin and formation.[250]

As a dialectician of incorrigible audacity for whom a particularity must always be returned to its position within a totality, however, to focus solely on the shape or origin of a sentence would be anathema to Jameson, and would deny the political context that justifies the role of the literary critic in the first place. It is for these reasons that he alights, both in his book on Lewis and in The Political Unconscious, on Deleuze and Guattari's distinction between the molar and the molecular, as a way of re-dialecticizing not only specific literary texts into the untranscendable horizon of history, but also the powerfully anti-Hegelian and post-Marxist libidinal thinking of figures such as Gilles Deleuze and Jean-François Lyotard into his broader project of Marxist exposition and assimilation. What Jameson intends through this expropriation of the molar and the molecular opposition in particular, is to indicate an antagonism between what happens at the local or micro- level of the sentence, and what is already in place at the macro- or global level of the system, whether narrative, psychic or political, as it partially determines, as reconceptualized through his rewriting of Althusser's notion of structural causality,[251] both the architecture and vernacular style of a work of fiction. Jameson clarifies this antagonism in relation to his study of

---

[250] Fredric Jameson, Marxism and Form xii.

[251] The relation between Jameson and Althusser is discussed in some detail in William C. Dowling, Jameson, Althusser, Marx: An Introduction to the Political Unconscious (London: Methuen & Co, 1984).

Lewis as follows:

> In this use, the molecular level designates the here-and-now of immediate perception or of local desire, the production-time of the individual sentence, the electrifying shock of the individual word or the individual brushstroke, of the regional throb of pain or of pleasure, the sudden obsessive, cathected, fascination or the equally immediate repulsion of Freudian decathexis. To this microscopic, fragmentary life of the psyche in the immediate a counterforce is opposed in the molar..., which designates all those large, abstract, mediate, and perhaps even empty and imaginary forms by which we seek to recontain the molecular: the mirage of the continuity of personal identity, the organizing unity of the psyche or personality, the concept of society itself, and, not least, the notion of the organic unity of the work of art.[252]

What this passage means in terms of reading Lewis himself is that his "principle of immense mechanical energy,"[253] as Jameson describes it, in the production of images through the manipulation of phrase and sentence, represent the molecular level of the text, while the "molar forms, the macrologic of his narratives, prove to have a very different dynamic from the momentum of the sentences themselves...."[254] The fundamental antagonism between these two textual levels is, moreover, reflected internally in the various fictional narratives generated by Lewis through depictions of the agon of split identity, of the "pseudo-couple" as Jameson characterizes this figure through reference to Beckett[255] and in reference to his reading of The Childermass. Here Jameson quite rightly notes that the

---

[252] Jameson, Fables 8.

[253] Jameson, Fables 25.

[254] Jameson, Fables 8.

[255] Jameson, Fables 52-53.

agon between Pullman and Satters in The Childermass, the "pseudo-couple" trapped in a Bergsonian purgatory who find themselves in thrall to the powerful yet disjunctive figure of the bailiff, must be:

> decisively distinguished from the powerful Hegelian dialectic of the Master and the Slave, which it at first seemed superficially to resemble. It is, indeed, to this moment of Hegel's Phenomenology as the structuralist concept of the binary opposition is to genuine contradiction: a mirror reduction of the latter which empties it of any genuinely negative force and flattens it into the static two-dimensionality of a graph or mathematical equation.[256]

Jameson concludes:

> Aggressivity in Lewis is therefore not some private characteristic of the novelist which diverts the narrative into the service of its own extrinsic gratifications: it is structurally inherent in the agon itself, in that utterly distinct from Hegelian or dialectical negativity, and (sic) expresses the rage and frustration of the fragmented subject at the chains that implacably bind it to its other and its mirror image.[257]

Aside from the typographical error here, (which I have assumed as an "it" rather than an "and"), these passages exemplify Jameson's extraordinary density of style, similar to Lewis in a number of ways, at the same time as they indicate his theoretical generosity towards non-dialectical and non-totalizing forms of thinking. Such generosity, however, is always a preface in Jameson to a further and higher dialectical move at a later stage, conceptually if not chronologically. Thus it is that a bare two pages before this affirmation of the agonal principle in

---

[256] Jameson, Fables 61.

[257] Jameson, Fables 61.

Lewis, a principle to which this study adheres both intrinsically and extrinsically, Jameson has already planted the tactical clue that will enable this agon between Satters and Pullman in The Childermass to be re-mastered into the neo-Hegelian dialectic of critical reflection central to his broader political project. The way in which he provides this information is both internal to his specific illustration, and continuous with his overall argument that what he calls psychic allegory forms spontaneously from the contradictions between different levels in the Lewisian text, and especially those contradictions that subsist between the molecular and molar levels of that text. So it is that he concludes, prematurely, in his reading of The Childermass that in reading Lewis overall:

> It will become abundantly clear that one part of Lewis' mind—the political and journalistic—is powerfully locked into the ideological closure of ethics and has become a virtual machine for issuing judgements and anathemata. The narratives, on the other hand, may be seen as the experimental or laboratory situation in which the very problem of making such judgements is itself foregrounded, and in which the impossibility of the ethical becomes itself the implicit center of the text, whose operations systematically and critically undermine this older "habit," this henceforth historically outmoded system of positioning the individual subject.[258]

It is then, in this escalating disparity between levels of the Lewisian text that Jameson finds the inspiration for his use of Lewis as a literary exemplum whereby the contradictions of capitalism reveal themselves as a process of occultation, but one perpetually undermined by molecular forces on the level of narrative which

---

[258] Jameson, Fables 57.

can then be reconverted or "transcoded" as Jameson prefers, at the molar level of the critical act, as this act reveals these narratives as allegorical fragments of the suppressed master-narratives of modernity. The Lewisian subject in this formulation is fragmented and decentred and reified, because it accurately reveals the fragmented and decentred and reified subject under capitalism, the very same subject, in effect, whom Lewis figures in his image of the iron cage of the "clock of fashion." The antagonism between this fragmented subjectivity on the level of narrative, and the authoritarian violence of the Lewisian text on the higher or "ethical" level, is then subject to a dialectical repositioning at an even higher level of hermeneutic engagement through the act of criticism. We do not, in this sense, read through the Lewisian text to find Jameson's political unconscious. Rather, the political unconscious is constructed in the complex dialectical activity of reading Lewis in terms of the internal molecular-molar conflict in the text, and at the same time, reflecting on that reading in relation to the master-code provided by the precession of the modes of production via the molar reclamation enabled by the process of criticism. Such reflection, echoing Adorno's notion in Negative Dialectics that the essence of the dialectic is thought thinking against itself, enables also what Adorno elsewhere described as the "communication of the incommunicable" in modernist art,[259] a communication which allows, for Jameson, a return of difference to identity. In this way, the function of the

---

[259] See T. W. Adorno, Aesthetic Theory; Negative Dialectics, trans. E. B. Ashton. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973) passim.

molecular-molar antagonism in Fables of Aggression is revealed as purely dialectical. It is not an expression of pure heterogeneity, or heterology, of unrelated events, or of radical difference and dissemination as postmodern criticism generally has it, because as Jameson states unequivocally in The Political Unconscious in relation to both Derridean and Deleuzian notions of difference and in defence of totality against its opponents, such radical difference is always already open to the possibility of further mediation by virtue of its own definition:

> This negative and methodological status of the concept of "totality" may also be shown at work in those very post-structural philosophies which explicitly repudiate such "totalization" in the name of difference, flux, dissemination, and heterogeneity...If such perceptions are to be celebrated in their intensity, they must be accompanied by some initial appearance of continuity, some ideology of unification already in place, which it is their mission to rebuke and to shatter. The value of the molecular in Deleuze, for instance, depends structurally on the pre-existing molar or unifying impulse against which its truth is read.[260]

What Jameson has achieved here in his immanent reading of Lewis against a background of the unconcealing of totality through the recognition of allegory is both revealing and compelling, and has undoubtedly transformed the way in which Lewis can be read by subsequent critics. But there is, nevertheless, a problem with his methodology—although not a problem that Jameson would recognize as such because of the inviolability of his theoretical assumptions—and that is the way in which he employs the antagonism between the molar and the

---

[260] Jameson, Political Unconscious 53.

molecular as the terms of a vertiginous dialectical sublation. This is a problem because it is probably the case that very few recent thinkers have been so vociferously and consistently anti-dialectical as the philosopher Gilles Deleuze, whose promotion of a resoundingly non-dialectical conception of difference and multiplicity, and a version of identity, whether personal or political, directly and unambiguously opposed to any form of Hegelian or post-Hegelian sublation, is the absolute principle upon which his and Guattari's philosophical and theoretical terms, included the molar and the molecular, are based. This is not to protest that Jameson has read Deleuze and Guattari, or indeed Lyotard, for that matter, incorrectly—although he has most certainly done that, and knowingly so—but to suggest instead that the original source of this antagonism between the molar and the molecular in Deleuze and Guattari, and its non-dialectical denotation in regard to their philosophical, political and literary project overall, as well as that of Lewis, can provide a more sympathetic reading of the critical theory of Lewis than that provided by Jameson. A reading, that is, which remains oppositional in the sense demanded by Lewisian critical theory, yet at the same time retains his insight into the spatial and temporal conditions that largely determine the nature of personal identity in modernity. A reading which will then allow for an overcoming of those conditions through a perspective on ontological difference that is not reducible to the dialectical procedures favoured by Jameson, nor to the ontic-ontological distinction argued by Heidegger, but instead works according to a principle of ontological repetition.

Chapter Four

Death and Repetition

> In the case of a philosophical work it seems not only superfluous, but...misleading to begin, as writers usually do in a preface, explaining the end the author had in mind...and the relation in which the writer takes it to stand to other treatises on the same subject, written by his predecessors or contemporaries.[261]
>
> One is in immense collapse of chronic philosophy. Yet he bulges all over, complex fruit, with simple fire of life.
> (CPP 96)
>
> Repetition is not a generality.[262]

Although it clearly has its virtues, Fredric Jameson's reading of Lewis as discussed in the previous chapter, and largely because of its irrepressible passion for totality, generates as many problems as it attempts to resolve. In particular, his dialectical recuperation of the Lewisian text to the level of a symbolic act, arising from structural forces which themselves arise from the political unconscious as it gestures towards the absent cause of history, often appears to be based on premisses which are only ever finally justified in terms of the dialectical procedure itself, which leads to a kind of vicious circle of interpretation in which the

---

[261] G.W.F. Hegel, Phenomenology of Mind, cited by Robert Solomon, From Hegel to Existentialism (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1087) 7.

[262] Deleuze, Difference 1.

conclusions are structurally dependent on — and on the same hermeneutic level as — the premisses with which he started out. In addition, and far more crucially, his marshalling of theoretical devices from the philosophies of desire associated with Lyotard and Deleuze and Guattari, seems to work on the dubious assumption that it is possible to fabricate new forms of the dialectic from non- and anti-dialectical, and specifically philosophical sources, without making any serious attempt to examine why or how they were designed to resist that very procedure in the first instance.

This is not, however, to make here any general critical claims about the viability or otherwise of the dialectical method in itself, but rather to suggest that in this particular case the object of that method, Wyndham Lewis, as well as some of the theoretical devices arguments used to illuminate that object, might be better served by an alternative, and more philosophically grounded approach. Such an approach at this stage requires a synoptic account of the particular philosophical problems at issue, and for that reason, will involve an excursus into certain forms of continental philosophy as they inform this reading of Lewis. More specifically, it is the concept of repetition that will be canvassed in this chapter, understood here as the organizing principle of Lewis's critical theory overall, and his theory of identity in particular, as the latter can further be perceived as the consistent and underlying preoccupation of the former. To establish the trajectory of the reading towards which the remainder of this dissertation will be

aiming, therefore, the present chapter will set up the terms and conditions whereby the concept of repetition, rather than that of dialectic, will be used not as a "master-code" or as a totalizing gesture in the manner of Jameson, but rather, as a set of exploratory formulae, or what Deleuze refers to as an "assemblage," [263]whereby Lewis may be returned, not to history as such, but to death, desire and multiplicity.

In dealing with philosophy in this context, and bearing in mind Schopenhauer's exasperated comment, (evidently directed against Hegel), on the stylistic derelictions of certain kinds of philosophising that lead to "frantic word-combinations in which the mind torments and exhausts itself in vain to conceive something,"[264] it is probably wise to introduce the present chapter as it concerns just such "frantic word-combinations," by noting that it has become something of a commonplace in the secondary literature on post-structuralism to assert that the work of the Gilles Deleuze, and especially his collaboration with the Felix Guattari in the two volumes of Capitalism and Schizophrenia, the first volume of which, AntiOedipus, is the source of Jameson's molecular-molar distinction, is impossible to summarize and extremely difficult to comprehend.[265] This may

---

263 For an elaboration of this term and its relation to Deleuze's version of empiricism, see Gilles Deleuze with Claire Parnet, "On the Superiority of Anglos-American Literature," in Dialogues, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987) 51-59.

264 Schopenhauer, World as Will Vol.1 xxiv.

265 See, for instance, Christopher Norris, Spinoza & the Origins of Critical Theory (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991) 57.

well be the case. But what must also be taken into account is that in spite of the delirial excess and Rabelaisian digression of much of this extraordinary treatise, which can certainly distract from its powerful central arguments, the guiding philosophical spirit behind the whole enterprise remains that of the dry, rigorous and systematic historian of his discipline, Gilles Deleuze, author of a series of excellent monographs on canonical philosophers such as Kant, Hume, Spinoza, Leibniz, Lucretius, Bergson and Nietzsche, as well as inspired critical works on Lewis Carroll, Marcel Proust, Franz Kafka (with Guattari), the history and theory of cinema, and the painter Francis Bacon, and illuminating if fragmentary readings of Herman Melville, Henry Miller, Antonin Artaud, D.H.Lawrence and Scott Fitzgerald. In addition to this exemplary range in Deleuze, and quite contrary to the caricatures that have often been drawn of Deleuze and Guattari as postmodern extremists, neither were even remotely enamoured of the academic vogue for the theory or expression of the "postmodern" in its initial ascendancy or subsequently, and tended to treat the whole notion, as, at best, an enormous confidence trick on the part of the repressive, rather than the emancipatory forces of what they called, in one of their characteristically provisional antagonisms, the "capitalist machine" as contrasted with the "capitalist state."[266]

The agon that I am setting up in this chapter between Jameson and Deleuze over

---

[266] Deleuze and Guattari, AntiOedipus 222-240.

Lewis is not then centred on the emancipatory desires of Marxism, with which both Deleuze and Guattari had a complex and by no means antithetical relation as Jameson was very clearly aware, but rather with the central philosophical target for most of their generation in the France of the 1960s. This is of course the master systematizer and totalizer, Hegel, and especially the Hegel of the dialectic as it had dominated, through Kojève's lectures, the generation of Sartre, Lacan and Merleau-Ponty before them;[267] and as, via Lukacs, and paradoxically via Althusser[268] it has continued to act as a fundamental structuring principle of Jameson's critical project, and hence of his reading of Wyndham Lewis.[269] This chapter will, therefore, begin with a synopsis of the specifically Hegelian problems that lead in Nietzsche, Bergson and Kierkegaard to a philosophy of existence based on difference and multiplicity rather than on totality and identity. Once the parameters of this philosophy of difference have been sketched out through reference to Deleuze and Derrida, it will then be possible to conclude with a short outline of the principle of repetition in Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and

---

267 On the influence of Kojève for this generation of philosophers, see Vincent Descombes, Modern French Philosophy, trans. L. Scott Fox & J.M. Harding (Cambridge: Cambridge University Pres, 1980) 9-54.

268 Bearing in mind, that is, Althusser's rejection of Hegel in his pursuit of a purer and more fundamental Marxism. For Althusser on Hegel and Marx, see Louis Althusser, For Marx, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Pantheon Books, 1969); Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971).

269 Lewis at several points indicates an awareness of Hegel, and even cites him on occasions, but surprisingly, never tackles him directly in his "destruction" of Western philosophy. Perhaps this has more to do with what Lewis perceived as Hegel's "barbarous" language, than the content or momentum of Hegel's thought. Whatever the reason, an encounter with Hegel would have provided Time and Western Man with considerably more critical gravity than is provided by his attacks on Bradley's neo-Hegelianism.

Freud, as this principle stands as the conceptual template by virtue of which Lewis's critical theory may be understood as both coherent and as pre-emptory of the concerns of late modernity.

As is well known, the Hegelian dialectic proceeds from the ancient philosophical conundrum of continuity and change; of how a consciousness establishes self-identity in space through differentiation from that which is other to itself, and how it retains that self-identity through time which is, or appears, as a process of perpetual transformation. Hegel's response to this problem was to construct the most impressive—or, depending on one's point of view, the most demented[270]—philosophical system of the nineteenth century, at the core of which lay a model of the opposition of identity and difference perpetually resolved, at increasingly elevated levels of abstraction, by the process of negation, until it achieved (or achieves) the absolute self-consciousness of absolute spirit. It is the achievement of this absolute spirit, of absolute consciousness discoursing with itself in the full knowledge of itself in all its variety and as both the subject and object of that discourse, that Hegel held to be the final end of philosophy, and indeed of all human civilisation, representation and endeavour.

Negation here is to be understood as the process whereby we establish otherness or difference and then, by a second negation absorb that difference into a higher

---

[270] On Hegel's "dementia" see Descombes 45.

level of self-identity. Or, to use an example from Hegel: when being first becomes conscious of itself as being, or when a consciousness becomes aware of itself as a consciousness, it does so only in relation to the possibility of non-being, or in relation to another consciousness, both of which are a threat to its self-identity. The way in which this threat is negotiated is through a series of negations that preserve identity at the same time as they incorporate otherness into that sense of identity. In the case of the other consciousness, we negate through his famous master-slave dialectic from The Phenomenology of Spirit, in which one consciousness is always in a relation of desire and then of power with another.[271] The basis of self-consciousness in this sense is the desire to absorb otherness or difference into itself through violence or domination or some other form of appropriation. In this sense, desire arises because it is only in the recognition of another self-consciousness, and another's desire, that we can have consciousness of ourselves in the first place. But at the same time we wish to destroy that other, because it is only through the negation of difference that identity can maintain itself in its own desire. Moreover, the object upon which a subject-consciousness fixes its desire must be resistant to that desire, because in that resistance lies the possibility of a mutual recognition in which two subjectivities sustain their identity through a mutual negation of self and other which then establishes identity at a higher generic level; as, for example, in the

---

[271] G.W.F Hegel, The Phenomenology of Spirit, trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford University Press, 1977) 111-119.

identity of the concept of humanity.

With being-in-itself, the problem lies for Hegel, as he outlines it at the beginning of The Science of Logic, with the realization that being, if thought about enough, is effectively nothing. Or, as Kojève eloquently summarized this state of affairs, using a critical illustration of the proto-postmodernist, Parmenides, as an example of the errors of non-dialectical thinking:

> Parmenides was right in saying that Being is, and that Nothingness is not; but he forgot to add that there is a 'difference' between Nothingness and Being, a difference which to a certain extent is as much as Being itself is, since without it, if there were no difference between Being and Nothingness, Being itself would not be.[272]

To explain change from this premiss, the act of negation here takes place through the recognition of nothing as the ground of being and being as the ground of nothing, and the constant and mutual movement or oscillation between the concepts of being and nothing which results through this recognition, and then through dialectical sublation, in the concept of becoming. Becoming—the mode of temporality that so fixated and horrified Lewis—is not mere change for Hegel however, for within it is contained an anticipation of a greater and greater complexity of identity as it absorbs or rather sublates more and more difference and otherness, and approaches by stages the condition of terminal and thus absolutely rational self-consciousness in spirit. In this final form of absolute

---

[272] Alexandre Kojève, Introduction to the Reading of Hegel - Lectures on The Phenomenology of Spirit, trans. James H. Nichols, Jnr., Allan Bloom., Ed. Raymond Queneau (1969; Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980) 221n.

spirit, the world, nature, society, humanity and the individual coincide in the recognition of itself as a totality in which all difference, otherness and distinction between subject and object is preserved, but superseded. In this final stage, difference in every manifestation, including the difference between being and becoming, has effectively been eradicated. The truth is then the whole.

One of the by-products of Hegel's all-enveloping system, (of which the above is clearly an inadequate paraphrase), and the one to which his later critics such as Kierkegaard and Nietzsche readily and aggressively attached themselves in an attempt to dismantle its assumptions and by extension the assumptions of the whole system, was the picture of identity-in-difference in which the existential reality of the self-conscious subject in its singularity and corporeality, in its fragmentation or dissolution through time and the transformations of change, in its embrace of difference and becoming, in its quotidian reality, was always and irrevocably a logical symptom of a totality, and one that would inevitably, by virtue of its ontological otherness, be returned to totality by negation. To put it another way: where for Hegel the "real was the rational, and the rational the real," and only totality could be true, only "the whole could be the true and the true the whole," for Nietzsche, in a famous passage from The Birth of Tragedy and the Spirit of Music:

> What is the sign of every literary decadence? That life no longer dwells in the whole. The word becomes sovereign and leaps out, the sentence reaches out and obscures the meaning of the page, the page gains life at the expense of the

whole - the whole is no longer whole.[273]

Leaving to one side the early Nietzsche's attitude to decadence, this diagnosis of identity thinking, this observation on the perpetual colonization of difference by identity or the same; on the continuous absorption of otherness, of the strange or the alien, into the totality of which the rational is a reflection; a way of thinking the absolute as the condition for the event or the singularity against which much postmodern and recent feminist thinking has subsequently, and however indirectly, rebelled—is one towards which Deleuze, along with much of his generation in France, felt an immediate affinity. In his books on Nietzsche and on Bergson in particular, but also in his later works on Spinoza for whom he, like Althusser, maintained a special philosophical affinity,[274] what Deleuze attempts to achieve is a critical exposition which challenges directly the legacy of the past as expressed through the reverence felt towards the Hegelian dialectic especially, but also the legislature of critical reason inaugurated by the "Copernican revolution" of Kant.

The essence of the Kant under attack here is his procedure of immanent critique, the notion that reason itself must be interrogated by reason, so as to rid itself of the distortions to rational progression that come from the body or the senses or

---

[273] Friedrich Nietzsche, The Birth of Tragedy, from The Portable Nietzsche, trans. and ed. Walter Kaufmann (1954; New York: Viking Books, 1958) 170.

[274] Gilles Deleuze, Spinoza: Practical Philosophy, trans. Robert Hurley (San Francisco: City Lights 1988); Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza, trans. Martin Joughan (New York: Zone Books, 1990). On Althusser and Spinoza, see Norris 34-42.

feelings. In setting up reason against reason as the critical interrogator of itself, Kant and those who followed him, the philosophical "mediators" against whom Lewis also rails, are for Nietzsche little more than philosophical "labourers,"[275] effectively the same thing, who make safe and preserve the dominant values of their society and culture without challenging those values, without creating new values. The problem at this stage is then reason itself, or at least our perspective on reason, for as Deleuze puts it:

> Understanding and reason have a long history: they are instances which still make us obey when we no longer want to obey anyone. When we stop obeying God, the state, our parents, reason appears and persuades us to continue being docile because it says to us: it is you who are giving the orders.[276]

Nietzsche's fundamental challenge to Kant according to Deleuze is that in establishing the realm of the noumenal which remains by definition beyond our apprehension, he established a domain beyond the reach of critique, and accordingly, failed to deal with the more primary question for Nietzsche of value itself, of the way in which we assert the priority of one faculty, for example, over another.[277] The result of this being that whatever the greatness of Kant's critical achievement, and Nietzsche did not deny this greatness, he nevertheless remained in thrall to a system of values that he attempted to conceal, and which, inevitably,

---

[275] Friedrich Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1966) 135-136.

[276] Deleuze, Nietzsche 92.

[277] Friedrich Nietzsche, The Gay Science, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1974) 263-266.

ended up in control of his critical philosophy. Thus in The Gay Science, Nietzsche ridicules the categorical imperative as a sign of weakness:

> don't cite the categorical imperative my friend! This term tickles my ear and makes me laugh despite your serious presence. It makes me think of the old Kant who had obtained the "thing in itself" by stealth...and was punished for this when the "categorical imperative" crept stealthily into his heart and led him astray...like a fox who loses his way and goes astray back into his cage. Yet it had been his strength and cleverness that had broken open the cage![278]

Hegel and the dialecticians fare no better in Nietzsche's analysis, for in stressing opposition as a contradiction to be resolved by mediation, they entirely miss the point of the force of affirmation and creativity. As Deleuze summarizes in relation to the dialectic of Judaism and Christianity in Hegel, and then cites Nietzsche in support:

> The dialectician posits Christian love as an antithesis, for example, as the antithesis of Judaic hatred. But it is the profession and mission of the dialectician to establish antitheses everywhere, where there are more delicate evaluations to be made, coordinations to be interpreted. That the flower is the antithesis of the leaf, that it "refutes" the leaf — this is a celebrated dear to the dialectic.

Although a caricature of the dialectic, this is undoubtedly accurate in terms of some of its manifestations in Hegel. Deleuze continues with Nietzsche:

> This is also the way in which the flower of Christian love "refutes" hate.... "one should not imagine that love...grew up...as the opposite of Jewish hatred! No, the reverse is true! That love grew out of it as its crown, as its triumphant crown spreading itself farther and farther into the purest brightness

---

[278] Nietzsche, Gay Science 264.

> and sunlight, driven as it were into the domain of light and the heights in the pursuit of the goals of that hatred—victory, spoil and seduction."[279]

Already in this early reading of Nietzsche contra Hegel, Deleuze's philosophy of difference as a productive force rather than a set of contradictions to be returned to a prior or external identity is beginning to develop along lines which are, in spite of its celebration of the will-to-power and of becoming, and in spite of its apparent vitalism, surprisingly close in certain respects to the theories of identity as difference and change as a geometrical progression elaborated by Wyndham Lewis in a more elusive and fragmentary manner across the pages of his critical and fictional volumes.

This preliminary hint at resemblance may be pursued further in Deleuze's introduction to Bergson and Bergsonism, published some four years after his book on Nietzsche. Here, once again, Deleuze is engaged in an attack on Hegel, and specifically, as in an earlier essay, on the question of determination in Hegel's account of negation. This question in Hegel, and Deleuze's setting of it, has been ably summarized by Michael Hardt as follows:

> The Logic begins with pure being in its simple immediacy; but this simple being has no quality, no difference—it is empty and equivalent to its opposite, nothingness. It is necessary that being actively negate nothingness to mark its difference from it. Determinate being subsumes this opposition, and this difference between being and

---

[279] Deleuze, Nietzsche 15. The citation is from Friedrich Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morals & Ecce Homo, ed. Walter Kaufmann., trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (1967; New York: Vintage Books, 1969) 35.

> nothingness at its core defines the real differences and qualities that constitute its reality. Negation defines this state of determinateness in two senses: it is a static contrast based on the finitude of qualities and a dynamic conflict based on the antagonism of differences.[280]

At this point, Deleuze enters complex and involved philosophical territory, using Hegel's foundational critique of Spinoza, as well as aspects of Platonism and mechanism, against Hegel, to show how in fact Hegel manages to avoid difference entirely by subsuming it into a notion of determinateness based on negation itself. There is no need to enter and explore this recondite territory here,[281] but what is important is the value of difference that Deleuze derives from Bergson and then projects into his later philosophical and literary theory; a difference based not on identity-in-difference as in Hegel, nor on negation, but on multiplicity-in-identity.

To elaborate upon this notion of multiplicity in Bergson, it is probably best to begin by reiterating from chapter two of this study the focus of Bergson's philosophical concern in the three works with which Lewis was most familiar, and which also preoccupied Deleuze: Time and Free Will, Matter and Memory and then Creative Evolution. To begin with, it may be recalled, Bergson distinguishes between three faculties of consciousness: intelligence, instinct and intuition. In Deleuze's reading:

---

[280] Michael Hardt, Gilles Deleuze: An Apprenticeship in Philosophy (London: University College London Press, 1993) 3.

[281] An able summary is provided in Hardt 4-10.

> Bergson shows clearly that the intelligence is the faculty that states problems in general (the instinct is rather a faculty for finding solutions). But only intuition decides between the true and the false in the problems that are stated, even if this means driving the intelligence to turn back against itself.[282]

What Bergson intends by this distinction between intelligence and intuition, in which intuition is privileged for its ability to solve problems, to differentiate in a way intelligence cannot, is probably best illustrated by taking two related examples of his attack on what he considered to be "false problems" in philosophy. The first is the false problem of what he called "intensive" and "extensive" magnitudes.[283] The second is the problem of "nothingness," particularly as derived from the Hegelian dialect of being and nothingness described above.

In the first case, the false problem involves intensity, or intensive magnitude and extensity, or extensive magnitude, and the way in which the two have usually been confused or conflated to the detriment of the former. To put it simply, that which is extensive can be measured, counted, or geometricized, whereas that which is intensive cannot. We can divide space in various ways, in terms of length, width, breadth, volume, and so forth, and shape it into representations;

---

[282] Deleuze, Bergsonism 21.

[283] Lewis would have undoubtedly been familiar with Hulme's discussion of intensive and extensive magnitudes in Hulme, "The Philosophy of Intensive Manifolds," Speculations 173-214.

but how can we demarcate the intensity of the colour blue, for example, or enframe the experience of happiness or despair? Bergson's answer is that we cannot. Both philosophy and "common sense," however, have tended to treat intensities as possible of comparison by demarcation and measurement, not merely in terms of more or less, which is problematic enough, but whether consciously or not, in terms of twice as much or half as much.

While there are evidently a number of problems with this rather oversimplified account, most of which Bergson deals with methodically if controversially in his three major works,[284] the outcome of his argument is that it leads him to consider the experience of time, or duration as he prefers, as a perfect example of the way in which we tend, and have tended through history, to treat an intensity as an extensity. A clock measures time only by spatializing it, by making it visual, in one famous example from Bergson. Similarly, and in another famous example, we tend to break up duration scopically, much as a cinematograph does, by dividing it into frames, thereby spatializing time in our everyday lives as much as philosophers have in their more recondite deliberations.[285]

The consequence of this exposure of the false symmetry between intensity and extensity in Bergson's account, according to Deleuze, is not merely that

---

[284] A useful discussion of extensity and intensity may be found in A.R. Lacey, Bergson (1989; London: Routledge, 1993) 1-16.

[285] See, for instance,Bergson, Creative Evolution 321.

duration—and the intuition of duration—become the primary philosophical objects to the detriment of space, although this is certainly one possible result, and one against which Lewis expressed considerable rancour, but also that Bergson, through various stages in his argument, resolves the old philosophical problems of the one and the many by revealing them as based on faulty premises largely derived from the language we use to describe them; language which is itself derived from concepts based inappropriately on extensity and negativity. As Deleuze has it:

> There are many theories in philosophy that combine the one and the multiple. They share the characteristic of claiming to reconstruct the real world with general ideas. We are told that the Self is one (thesis) and it is multiple (antithesis), then it is the unity of the multiple. Or else we are told that the One is already multiple, that being passes into nonbeing and produces becoming.[286]

Against this conception, and through Bergson, Deleuze asserts a notion of multiplicity or the many ostensibly irrecuperable to the One or unity. Again, the target here is Hegel, and especially his use of the dialectic of being and nonbeing as the origin of becoming. For Bergson, the ideas of nothing and negativity so central to the dialectic as it produces becoming is a false problem. Since Leibniz first posed the formative existential question "why is there something rather than nothing?" philosophers, claims Bergson, have forgotten the insight of Parmenides and viewed "nothing" as being on par with "something"—but this is a fault of language rather than a sound metaphysical opposition. In the language

---

[286] Deleuze, Bergsonism 43-44.

of philosophy, to assert that the sky is blue is positive, whereas to state that the sky is not green is a form of negation. This negativity in language for Bergson has led philosophers to a false and positive conception of nothing, an abstraction ungrounded in any singularity, whereas the reality of stating that the sky is not green is that you would be mistaken in stating that it was green. As a result of this linguistic sleight of hand, which he carries through several examples, the negativity of nothingness becomes a positivity filled with his most important philosophical object, duration, with the direct intuition of becoming.

Similar abstractions from a range of concrete examples have led, then, to philosophers making statements about the one and the many, or about totality and the event, based on a spatializing misconception of becoming or duration. Rather than there being one kind of multiplicity, however, Deleuze argues that there are two, based on Bergson's differentiation between intensive and extensive properties, between differences of quality and differences of quantity as they are invariably confused in everyday thought or philosophy or political theory in favour of the latter. Thus in challenging the idea of the one and the many in its traditional formulation, Bergson's differentiates after the mathematician Riemann[287] between "discrete multiplicities" which are spatial, quantitative and indicate "differences in degree," and "continuous multiplicities" which are durational, qualitative and indicate "differences in kind," a differentiation which,

---

[287] Deleuze, Difference 182.

and as will be discussed at later stage, has ramifications for Lewis's image of multiple identity.

There are several things that Deleuze then takes from this analysis for his own substantive philosophy. The first is that if the concept of nothing or nonbeing is a pseudo-problem, an abstraction detached entirely from any singularity or real event, then all metaphysical notions based on nothing or on lack are also false; predominant among them being the notion of desire as lack which runs from Plato's Symposium through Hegel to Lacan, and is opposed in different ways by Spinoza, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. For Deleuze, desire thereby becomes a positive force, a force of production, which generates difference perpetually, and is thus similar in certain aspects to both Nietzsche's will-to-power and Bergson's duration. The second thing he takes from Bergson, and then combines with ideas drawn from Nietzsche, as well as Spinoza and the Stoics,[288] is the idea of multiplicity as a basis for a new conception of identity; a schizophrenic machinery of self, that is, in permanent desiring production with the world in both its virtuality— a term he takes from Bergson, but which despite its postmodern connotations is actually scholastic in origin[289]—and its actuality. This distinction between the virtual and the actual is not easy to grasp, but the former has a

---

[288] On Stoicism, see Gilles Deleuze, The Logic of Sense trans. Mark Lester, with Charles Stivale. ed. Constantin. V. Boundas (New York: Columbia U.P., 1990) 31-34; 61-62; 142-147; 169-171; 183-184.

[289] Hardt 17.

quality something like Proustian reminiscence, it has a kind of ideal subsistence somewhere between existence and a realm prior or parallel to existence. Perhaps Ronald Bogue's example is the clearest when he suggests in his introductory volume on Deleuze and Guattari that virtuality is effectively like the genetic code: it bears no resemblance to the phenotype it actually makes possible, nor is it quite the same as Aristotle's hylomorphism, nor is it in any way similar to the immanent and internal logic of necessity in the Hegelian dialectic, but it is nonetheless essential to the form of that phenotype once actualised.[290]

More important than the virtual and the actual here, however, though connected with these terms in a variety of ways, is the final aspect of the Deleuzian spectrum that must be surveyed before its alternative derivations can be investigated: repetition. The essence of Deleuze's argument here is one of perspective, inasmuch as most Western philosophical thinking has been characterized as valorising the one over the multiple in one form or another. Instead, because of his suspicion of abstraction and preference for the concrete and the empirical, a preference, it should be noted in passing, that he shares with Wyndham Lewis, Deleuze everywhere celebrates the many over the one, the multiple over the unitary, or as he prefers, the nomadic over the sedimentary.[291] The essence of sedimentary thinking in the West, or sedimentary distribution as

---

[290] Ronald Bogue, Deleuze and Guattari (London: Routledge, 1989) 59-60.

[291] See especially, Deleuze and Guattari, "12. 1227: Treatise on Nomadology—The War Machine," in A Thousand Plateaus 351-421.

Deleuze calls it using a characteristically spatial metaphor, has been a concern with representation, which he understands as implying, both etymologically and conceptually, a re-presentation of the same, a repetition of identity. Vincent Descombes states this position with admirable precision:

> Every present must be re-presented, in order that it may be re-discovered as the same; it follows that in this philosophy the unknown is only ever a not-yet-recognized known, that to learn is to remember, that to encounter is to meet again, that to leave is to return, etc. What eludes this rationalism, then, is difference as such. The difference between discovery and rediscovery is the gap which separates an experience from its reiteration - whence the problem of repetition.[292]

In line with his view that desire is a production rather than a lack, repetition is then a production of difference for Deleuze, a way in which thought generates difference in and between identities, the way in which the reiteration of the same is recognized, productively, as the virtuality of difference. This leads Deleuze to the philosophical position he designates as transcendental empiricism. Transcendental" because it is concerned with general principles, and "empiricism" because, as he argues in the preface to a set of interviews with Claire Parnet, drawing on Whitehead: "the abstract does not explain, but must itself be explained; and the aim is not to rediscover the eternal or the universal, but to find the conditions under which something new is produced (creativeness)."[293]

---

[292] Descombes 154.

[293] Gilles Deleuze and ClaireParnet, Dialogues trans. Hugh Tomlinson & Barbara Habberjam (New York: Columbia U.P., 1987) vii.

This transcendental empiricism as it characterizes Deleuze's recalcitrant form of materialism, drawing on the British tradition of empiricism, especially Hume, but also diverging from it in a number of ways, emerges from his readings of canonical philosophers as a celebration of difference, desire, chaos and repetition, in which temporal and spatial metaphors are combined and conflated in continuously new forms to express the idea of production as a positive force:

> This empiricism teaches us strange 'reason' that of the multiple, chaos and difference (nomadic distributions, crowned anarchies). It is always differences which resemble one another, which are analogous, opposed or identical: difference is behind everything, but behind difference there is nothing.[294]

Lest it be objected at this point that Lewis has been somewhat obscured by an extended meta-philosophical commentary on Hegel, Bergson and Deleuze, it should be noted the reason for this apparent digression is to establish the initial grounds whereby Deleuze's post-humanist philosophical trajectory and Lewis's anti-humanist critical extemporization on the theme of exteriority and the sovereignty of visual aesthetics meet and touch in a number of intriguing ways. To begin with, there is the by now evident point of contact in Nietzsche and Bergson, and although Deleuze would seem, superficially, to represent everything that Lewis loathed in Bergson— vitalism and duration—and what he found most

---

[294] Deleuze, Difference 57.

problematic in Nietzsche—will and becoming—in adapting Bergson and Nietzsche through repetition he enables a picture of identity and becoming with powerfully, though in no way reductively, spatial characteristics. Arising from this, and most immediately striking in terms of comparison, is the attraction that Lewis and Deleuze clearly though separately share for metaphors involving simulacra, automata, smooth and striated spaces, topological figures, strange and alien geometries, and the conflation of machine and organism as a critical and rhetorical image. That this dual attraction to certain metaphors is not always entirely coincidental, the source of this last example for both Lewis and Deleuze will make clear. For the most important source of this metaphor for both Lewis and Deleuze and Guattari is, as I have suggested above, the now largely forgotten author of Erewhon and Erewhon Revisited, Samuel Butler, whom Deleuze and Guattari employ with evident affection to formulate their anti-dialectical distinction between the molar and the molecular: the same distinction used by Jameson, that is, although dialectically, in his reading of Lewis. Deleuze and Guattari's reference here is to Butler's The Book of the Machines, which they claim as a "profound" text which "shatters the vitalist argument"— vitalism being that aspect of Bergson which Deleuze transforms in his mature thinking, albeit somewhat ambiguously, into a more geometric philosophy of difference and expression—and use to illustrate the molar-molecular antagonism as based on a version of continuous rather than discrete multiplicity.[295] This distinction

---

[295] A useful brief discussion on the value of multiplicities and their application in his

between the molar and the molecular is clearly summarized by Brian Massumi as follows:

> It is crucial for understanding Deleuze and Guattari...to remember that the distinction between molecular and molar has nothing whatsoever to do with scale. Molecular and molar do not correspond to "small" and "large," "part" and "whole," "individual" and "society." There are molarities of every magnitude...The distinction is not one of scale, but mode of composition: it is qualitative, not quantitative. In a molecular population...there are only local connections between discrete particles. In the case of a molar population...locally connected discrete particles have become correlated at a distance...A molarity remains a multiplicity...only a disciplined one.[296]

In other words, the molecular-molar relation cannot by definition be treated as one of contradiction or opposition in the dialectical sense in which one or other might be negated as the condition for the existence of the other, and cannot therefore be subject to a dialectical sublation in the Jamesonian manner. The critical act from a Deleuzian-Guattarian perspective may well be molar as Jameson suggests, but it may equally be molecular, and will in all probability be both simultaneously. Rather than a dualism or a dialectically progressive triadism, what we have here, and following both Nietzsche and Bergson, is what Deleuze calls a multiplicity. What this means in terms of reading Lewis from a Deleuzian rather than from a Jamesonian perspective, therefore, is that instead of looking for binary oppositions between levels in the text, one searches instead for patterns between discrete elements or particles as they reveal themselves through

---

work, may be found in Deleuze/Parnet, Dialogues vii-viii.

[296] Massumi, A User's Guide 54-55.

their repetition, their asymmetric progression through narrative, their inter-referentiality or auto-mimesis on the level of a metaphorical density of phrase or sentence, or a metonymic chain proceeding from a particular image or the expression of an idea as it links up with parallel or divergent metonymic chains to form new discrete elements or particles. Or as Lewis put it "One-Way Song":

> Do not expect a work of the classic canon.
> Take binoculars to these nests of camouflage-
> Spy out what is half-there —the page under the page.
> Never demand the integral— never completion-
> Always what is fragmentary— the promise, the presage-
> Eavesdrop upon the soliloquy— stop calling
> the spade spade-
> Neglecting causes always in favour of their effects-
> Reading between the lines— surprising things half-made-
> Preferring shapes spurned by our intellects. (CPP 33)

Or as he suggests a little earlier in the same poem:

> Swept off your feet, be on the look out for a pattern.
> It is the chart that matters—the graph is everything! (CPP 31)

In deploying the image of the chart and the graph, in denying completion and the integral and valorising the fragment or the effect over the cause, Lewis is of course pointing to one of the central themes in the hermeneutics of modernism. The intentionality behind the fragments and gaps in a literary text is always finally unavailable to the reader, and accordingly, the reader's attention will be drawn to the process of reading itself, and way in which significance or meaning is generated from the collusion between text and process. A collusion, whose result can never be final, whose ultimate signified, as Derrida would no doubt put it, is always deferred. At the same time, however, there is another philosophical point

to be drawn from these instructions, a point far more Deleuzian than Derridean in its general pathos towards difference. For as Callinicos has argued in his excellent comparative study of Marxism and the philosophy of difference:

> while both Derrida and Deleuze conceive of language as infinite play, the former deduces from this claim that we have no access to reality outside language, a 'transcendental signified', and Deleuze asserts that language shares the structure of reality as a whole—the logic of sense mirrors and is part of the chaosmos.[297]

While Derrideans might demur on the former characterization for a number of reasons,[298] this is, nonetheless, a very fair rendering of the outcome of the difference between difference and différance in the substantive philosophical accounts of Derrida and Deleuze. Deleuze's empirical universe is fundamentally chaotic, a chaosmos, a smooth space in which difference perpetually bifurcates into new difference, into new zones of difference which open up then vanish or remain to produce further difference. Yet it is, for all that, a universe of the concrete, of the singular event repeated, of experience unabstracted. Lewis's universe is similarly composed. However, where Deleuze affirms difference and desire and asserts repetition in difference, Lewis asserts the discrete and autonomous self and suppresses desire in its manifestation as desire for otherness in favour of a more "spatial" appetite for radical distinction from otherness.

---

297 Alex Callinicos, Is There a Future for Marxism? (London: Macmillan, 1982) 88.

298 A detailed account and discussion of the varieties of "difference" in late twentieth century French philosophy may be found in Todd May, Reconsidering Difference (University Park PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997). On the Nietzschean background to these variations, see also, Charles E. Scott, The Language of Difference (New Jersey: Humanities Press International, inc, 1987).

Lewis's affirmation results, however, in an image of self-identity that can only base itself on a concept and practice of repetition if it is to cohere. It is, therefore, with repetition itself that this chapter will conclude.

There are, effectively, three significant sources of the philosophical notion of repetition in modernity: Kierkegaard's idea of repetition as a "recollecting forward"; Nietzsche's theory of eternal recurrence; and Freud's hypothesis of the death drive, in his most speculative and philosophical text, "Beyond the Pleasure Principle." By virtue of the nature of repetition itself and its position in regard to the philosophical notions of identity and difference, these three theories cannot be brought together into a single formula whereby the idea of repetition can be given a clear and distinct definition, but can only be brought into a dialogue with one another as that dialogue emerges, in this case, from an engagement with the question of style and expression in the critical theory of Wyndham Lewis. As such, it should be noted here in anticipation of possible objections at a later stage that where there are incidences of concrete or literal repetition in this dissertation, as, for example, of a citation from Lewis, these incidences will not be accidental, but will be related to the thesis itself, to its engagement with Lewisian theory on the levels of structure and style. In this understanding, the term "repetition" could be said to have the same general function in this study, albeit from an alternative theoretical perspective, as the "political unconscious" does for Jameson in his book on Lewis, as well as in his book of that name. For if as

some of his critics have complained Jameson never finally gets round to explaining precisely what the "political unconscious" is,[299] if he avoids strict definition, then it is fair to say that this is because, as Dominick La Capra has argued: "the guiding principle of a 'political unconscious' is in Jameson's usage as richly connotative and associative as in any 'master' term or title that is defined—insofar as it is at all—only by its multiple uses."[300]

Bearing this pragmatic and heuristic application of the concept of repetition in mind, however, there are nevertheless sufficient points of resemblance between the use of this concept in Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Freud to allow, if not for a strict definition, then at least for a conceptual orientation as to how it can be deployed so as to illuminate Lewisian style and theory. For what these three theories may reasonably be said to have in common is a perspective on the experience of space, time and identity which enables a significant point of entry into the intellectual foundations of Lewis's chronophobia, as well as into his plans for the construction of a generalized visuo-spatial ontology whereby the deliquescence of self in modernity might be redeemed.

As with most of the examples in this chapter, Kierkegaard's philosophical starting

---

[299] Geoffrey Bennington, "Not Yet," Legislations: The Politics of Deconstruction (London: Verso, 1994) 74-87.

[300] Dominick LaCapra, Rethinking Intellectual History: Texts, Contexts, Language (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983) 236.

point is a rage against the totalitarian aspects of the Hegelian dialectic as it refuses to account for the momentary, the contingent and the personal. The general direction of Kierkegaard's thought is always from the universal to the particular, and especially towards the instant of self-consciousness and decision in the flux of time, which, unlike that of Hegel's cannot be "mediated" by some inner logic of necessity towards a sublation on another level of reality, but is in-and for-itself the only reality. The major flaw in Hegel's system lies in this account with its inability to account for movement. According to Kierkegaard, all movement for Hegel is merely logical movement. It is immanent movement within the dialectic as it sublates levels of reality. Whereas the reality of authentic human existence lies with a movement that is outside all structures of direct representation, dialectical or otherwise: which is, in effect, transcendent.

At the heart of Kierkegaard's account of existence and its transition through time is the moment. The moment is the point of transition, of authentic change. It does not rely on some form of immanent logic or necessity, however, because there is a radical and inevitable discontinuity between possibility, or what we have earlier called virtuality—and actuality. The actual is the result of innumerable possibilities, but only one of those possibilities becomes the case in at any given moment. As Kierkegaard asserts in Philosophical Fragments: "Everything which comes into existence proves precisely by coming into existence that it is not

necessary."[301] This attention to contingency, indeterminacy, and the concrete instant as reality, over the abstract irreality of any logical system accounting for change through some form of inner necessity, or through some form of overwhelming machinery of totality bases on necessity, leads Kierkegaard to posit repetition as a riposte to Hegel, and as an authentic approach to reality as change and coming-into-being.

The concept of repetition, in Kierkegaard's charming and enigmatic book of that name, arises from the meditations of one Constantin Constantinius who has returned to some lodgings in Berlin that he once occupied to ascertain whether or not literal repetition is possible. His musings lead him to an attack on the predominant philosophical notions of change or transition, and their replacement by repetition as a way of accounting for change. There are several qualities that distinguish Kierkegaardian repetition: the first is an aversion to novelty and variation as found in the dialectic; the second is a belief in freedom as the power to repeat, rather than the power to act entirely contingently as in what Kierkegaard describes as the realm of the aesthetic,[302] or in relation to a larger system of values as in Kantian duty or Hegelian spirit. As Constantin Constantinius makes clear: "Freedom's supreme interest is precisely to bring

---

[301] Søren Kierkegaard, Philosophical Fragments, trans. David Swenson and Howard V. Kong (1962; New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1967) 91.

[302] Discussion of the "aesthetic" as a mode of being is canvassed at various points in the first volume of Søren Kierkegaard, Either/Or, trans. David Swenson and Lillian Marvin Swenson, 2 vols. (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1959).

about repetition, and its only fear is that variation would have the power to disturb its eternal nature."[303] This allusion to eternity indicates a third quality of repetition, its nature as a way of "recollecting forward," as a way to project the future according to the experience of the moment as it allows access to that which is beyond time. The best way to understand this is in terms of its nature as a critique of recollection, of the idea from Plato to Hegel that thought, and especially philosophical thought, is a form of memoration or return or re-presentation as Deleuze has it. And that hope or the anticipation of the future is based on recollection as that future unfolds according to a system of immanence, according to a set of laws. However:

> Hope is a new garment, stiff and starched and lustrous, but it has never been tried on, and therefore one does not know how becoming it will be or how it will fit. Recollection is a discarded garment that does not fit, however beautiful it is, for one has outgrown it. Repetition is an indestructible garment that fits closely and tenderly, neither binds nor sags.[304]

What Kierkegaard means by repetition is something in keeping with his general outlook. That is, the act of conscious repetition is a means of escaping the aesthetic and ethical realms for the religious and existential realm towards which most of his discourses aim to ascend.[305] Julian Roberts illustrates this movement

---

303 Søren Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling/Repetition, trans. and ed. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1983) 302.

304 Kierkegaard, Repetition 132.

305 See Harvie Ferguson, Melancholy and the Critique of Modernity: Søren Kierkegaard's Religious Psychology (London: Routledge, 1995) 83-115.

through repetition by reference to the anagogical level of religious hermeneutics, inasmuch as:

> In the windows of King's College Chapel, Cambridge, the events of the New Testament are depicted in pairs with those Old Testament events which are held to have prefigured them, and these links, rather than the tortuous evolutions of world spirit, are believed to mark the critical steps of human history.[306]

This is at least the religious intention of repetition for Kierkegaard. But there is also an existential and potentially non-religious or non-Christian level on which it is possible to understand Kierkegaardian repetition as a genuine alternative to the more systematic readings of history in modernity, as well as of life in the individual:

> This is the sense in which change and difference can still coexist...with unity and repetition. Repetition abhors novelty and disdains variation. But its interventions are significant in the—for Kierkegaard—more fundamental sense that they change the status quo; they burst it out of the desultory immanence of its accustomed continuum, and reintroduce a lost figure.[307]

In other words, what we have here is a notion of repetition which is not merely the re-iteration of the same, not merely a re-production or re-presentation of identity, as Deleuze describes this more traditional philosophical tendency, but a production of difference from the same in which difference is the activity which enables identity to subsist, but only as the by-product of the repetition from

---

306 Julian Roberts, German Philosophy: An Introduction (Oxford: Polity Press, 1988) 202-203.

307 Roberts 202.

which it is derived.

If Kierkegaard's repetition leads him finally to God, and depends finally on faith, that of Nietzsche, as one would expect, leads in entirely the opposite direction towards a radical atheism or anti-theism, in which we have already killed God, and in which we encounter and confront directly the nihilism of the age as rooted in the fear of becoming and loss in the absence of a transcendental entity who might enable us to overcome that fear. Nietzschean repetition as expressed through his hypothesis of eternal recurrence has been touched upon already in chapter one and will be dealt with again in chapter five in relation to The Childermass. There are two versions of it. One expressed in his published writings, especially The Gay Science and Zarathustra, works on a hypothesis or thought experiment along the lines of, "if this were the case, what would you do about it?" The second so called "scientific" formulation in the notes collected in The Will to Power as it has preoccupied various commentators such as Arthur Danto in its more literal sense is undoubtedly intriguing,[308] but so far as the present matter is concerned may be treated as a distraction. For that reason, it is the most striking assertion of eternal occurrence in The Gay Science, a book that Lewis held in great regard, that will be used to illustrate the heart of Nietzschean repetition.

---

[308] On the "scientific" formulation of eternal recurrence and its inadequacies, see Georg Simmel Schopenhauer and Nietzsche (1923; Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1986) 172-173; Arthur Danto, Nietzsche as Philosopher (London: Macmillan, 1965) 204-209.

Nietzsche described his doctrine of eternal recurrence with characteristic immodesty, and frequently, as the "greatest gift" ever presented to humankind; a gift that split the history of humanity in half. Whatever Nietzsche's estimation of its world-historical importance, it was, undoubtedly, the most daring and dangerous philosophical notion that he ever evolved, though for its full effect it must also be seen within the context of the many other philosophical problems and creations he devised. It is, however, accessible in isolation from his oeuvre, and is almost certainly best illustrated through Nietzsche's own lyrical paraphrase in aphorism 341 from The Gay Science:

> What if some day or night a demon were to steal after you into your loneliest loneliness and say to you: "This life as you now live it, you will have to live once more and innumerable times more; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and sigh and everything unutterably small or great in your life will have to return to you, all in the same succession and sequence— even this spider and this moonlight between the tress, and even this moment and I myself. The eternal hourglass of existence is turned upside down again and again, and you with it, speck of dust!"[309]

In itself, the question posed may be startling, but it is also fairly straightforward. Imagine that all the best and all the worst events in your life, all the smallest and largest details, took on the inescapable quality of the eternal, simultaneously and, of course, forever. To succumb to this state of affairs, which would anyway be unavoidable, might well lead to an equally perpetual sense of horror: to infinite

---

[309] Nietzsche, The Gay Science 273.

hell. On the other hand, to affirm with joy all events, good and bad, ecstatic and terrible, as though one had willed them oneself, and to affirm that willing, to embrace all the consequences as one's own choice, might well lead to horror, but at least it would be a horror of one's own choosing, an assertion of personal will rather than the passive reception of an imposition from an evil demiurge. This is the essence of eternal recurrence. This is the essence of Nietzschean repetition.

Any literary reading of aphorism 341 would, no doubt, quite properly note the demonic element within it, and the use of spiders and moonlight in a context that indicates their presence as more than ornamental. The demonic element in particular is important here, for unlike the cold and rational daylight of the dialectic, there is undoubtedly something dark and demonic about repetition, something that escapes the sunlight and prefers the pathos of spiders and lunar iridescence to the artificial clarity of reason. Sigmund Freud also, (though perhaps with more direct reference to the classically daemonic), noted this diabolical element in his principle of repetition in "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" when writing of repetition-compulsion as it formed the basis of his analysis of neurosis. "The manifestations of a compulsion to repeat," he suggested, "...give the appearance of some 'daemonic' force at work."[310] If Nietzsche and Freud might seem somewhat divergent on this matter, inasmuch

---

310 Sigmund Freud, "Beyond the Pleasure Principle," Vol 11 On Metapsychology: The Theory of Psychoanalysis, trans. James Strachey (1955; London: Pelican, 1984) 292; 307.

as Freud was concerned with the pathology of the everyday, it is worth noting that for all its seeming alterity, Nietzschean repetition is not merely the province of the seer, for as he observes in an epigram from Beyond Good and Evil: "If one has character one also has one's typical experience, which recurs repeatedly."[311]

Moving from Nietzsche to Freud, then, it is fair to say that there is a certain continuity, albeit one with a number of differences of perspective in regard to its object. For if repetition is one of the most important concepts for what was subsequently designated existentialism—as derived from Nietzsche and Kierkegaard and as understood in its popular sense as the affirmation of self-conscious singularity and the event over historical totality as prior identity—it is also central to the development of early psychoanalysis, with its more universalist epistemology. It is present in Freud, for instance, in the discussions of transference as the repetition by the analysand of the structure and content of repression; and it is there in the origins of language and desire in the children's game of "fort-da," as later elaborated in the structuralist psychoanalysis of Lacan as the basis of desire as metonymy.[312] Most notably for this study of Wyndham Lewis, it is present in the first postulation of the Freudian death-drive, in which a

---

[311] Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil 80.

[312] See, for example, Jacques Lacan, "The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious, or Reason since Freud," Écrits: a Selection, trans. Alan Sheridan (1977; London: Routledge, 1989) 146-178.

Manichean struggle between Eros and Thanatos emerges from an aporia in Freud's earlier hypothesis of the pleasure principle as the fundamental drive in the human psyche.

Sigmund Freud first indicated the existence of the pleasure principle in 1895 in his early essay "Project for a Scientific Psychology," and it remained, along with its anamorphic twin, repression, as the primary and uncontested bivalent law of the human psyche until 1920, when he published his speculative but groundbreaking essay "Beyond the Pleasure Principle," which Deleuze has described as his "masterpiece" and most "philosophical" text.[313]. The underlying dynamic of the pleasure principle throughout is that the human organism instinctively tends towards the lowering of nervous excitation; this being what Freud calls "unpleasure." Unpleasure is essentially what happens when that which is repressed begins to rise to consciousness, thereby releasing whatever pain or anguish prompted this mechanism of repression in the first place. In this sense, pleasure for Freud is a movement towards equilibrium or homeostasis, and the pleasure principle expresses this movement, via the defiles of the repressive apparatus, through the innumerable manifestations of quotidian intentionality and non-intentionality, from daydreaming and creativity to neurosis and the compulsion to repeat. Repetition, in this earlier sense as a neurotic symptom, is

---

313 Gilles Deleuze/Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, Coldness and Cruelty/Venus in Furs, no trans. (1971; New York: Zone Books, 1991) 111.

the constant administration of repressed material so to lower excitation and avoid unpleasure.

In "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" Freud begins for the first time to deal with the aporia in his positing of the pleasure principle as the all-inclusive principle of human motive and pathology. Up until this point, as Paul Ricoeur has observed in his study of Freud and philosophy, apparent exceptions to the rule have been re-assimilable. Thus Freud's "reality principle," first noted in The Interpretation of Dreams, which operated by deferring immediate gratification because of the constraints of external reality, might appear to lead to and even affirm unpleasure. But this deferral is, in fact, a "roundabout path adopted by the pleasure principle in order to prevail in the end."[314] The second anomaly is neurotic suffering, which seems to challenge the pleasure principle directly. This time Freud's way out of this anomaly is to suggest that this suffering is, in effect, a conflict between the traces of different stages of sexual development, and thus the pain of neurosis is, effectively, a "mask" that the most archaic pleasure adopts in order to assert itself in spite of everything.

Having disposed of these two possible exceptions, Freud then moves on in this essay to discuss, in passing, the repetition that arises from severe trauma, as in

---

[314] Paul Ricoeur, Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970) 284.

nightmares experienced by those who have suffered in war. Although this subject is soon disposed of in favour of a discussion of the "*fort-da*" and then biological parallels with the pleasure principle and its possible alternatives, this section on war neurosis is actually crucial. Here, for the first time, Freud notes a phenomenon that cannot be accounted for by the pleasure principle. Why, for example, should an extremely unpleasant memory be constantly re-iterated in various forms when it seems to lead to no release, no lowering of nervous excitation? Such speculation leads him in due course, after tentative attempts to enrol current biological theories of life and its ends as evidence to back him up, to the notion that in fact the pleasure principle, Eros, is only one of the two instincts in operation in and behind the human psyche. For if Eros is directed towards the preservation of life, albeit through the direction of need and desire towards a condition of homeostasis, then there is another force even more inclined towards the state of absolute equanimity, a force which inclines the organism through repetition towards its original pre- and non-organic nature: Thanatos or the death drive.[315] As Ricoeur has observed, however, in what is possibly the most detailed and sophisticated study of this drive in relation to its philosophical context, Freud's initial speculation on the death-drive, which remains central to his subsequent writings such as Civilization and its Discontents, is actually very difficult to follow. Nonetheless, its essentially

---

315 Strachey translates trieb as "instinct." In common with more recent conventions, trieb here will be translated as "drive."

speculative and heuristic nature, as well as its clearly mythic resonances, have guaranteed the death-drive an important if contested place in later psychoanalytic and post-psychoanalytic thinking. What is crucial here, however, is its direct relation to repetition, what Freud calls in an echo of Nietzsche: "this perpetual recurrence of the same thing."[316] What is also important for this study of Lewis is the centrality of death as a drive to the inorganic, for as Freud observed in a footnote added in 1921:

> Our speculations have suggested that Eros operates from the beginning of life and appears as a 'life instinct' in opposition to the 'death instinct' which was brought into being by the coming to life of inorganic substance. These speculations seek to solve the riddle of life by supposing that these two instincts were struggling with each other from the very first.[317]

This concluding observation of Freud's, along with Kierkegaard's reflection on "recollecting forward," Nietzsche's postulation of eternal recurrence, Bergson's theories of duration and intensity, and Deleuze's philosophical illumination of both Nietzschean and Freudian repetition as they function through his development of Bergsonian duration to effect what he calls a "pure synthesis of time," in which past, present and future are simultaneously constituted, and as will be discussed in chapter seven, will then provide the means whereby repetition will be shown as the fundamental principle behind not only the Lewisian split subject and his spatial presentation of argument and fictional

---

316 Freud, "Pleasure Principle" 293.

317 Freud, "Pleasure Principle" 334.

landscape, but also his prognosis for modernity. Before that, however, it is necessary to trace the genealogy of Lewis's own thinking against the background of the philosophical tradition against which he constructed his critical theory, and in particular, his approach to the fundamental nihilism that he believed to be the essence of human identity within the conspiracy of modernity.

Chapter Five

Agon of the Stars

> The tragic duality between biologic and technical organization, between what is vitally alive and what is automatic and mechanical in man, is clearly expressed in the following fact. Not a single one of the masses who make up the masses of this world wanted the war. All of them, without exception, have fallen prey to it, hopelessly, as to a monstrous automation. *But it is the rigid man himself who is this monstrosity.*[318]

> As soon as a man has submitted himself to the crowd, he ceases to fear its touch. Ideally, all are equal there; no distinctions count, not even that of sex. The man pressed against him is the same as himself. He feels him as he feels himself. Suddenly it is as though everything were happening in one and the same body.[319]

> Alas! The time is coming when man will give birth to no more stars. Alas! The time of the most contemptible man is coming, the man who can no longer despise himself.[320]

Although Bergson is often now cited, along with Dilthey and Nietzsche, as one of the major protagonists of the *Lebensphilosophie* of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century,[321] there is, nonetheless, much about the perspective he adopts on time and space and their relation to action and identity that is characteristic of a far more general tendency in modern thought, from the late eighteenth century

---

[318] Wilhelm Reich, The Mass Psychology of Fascism, trans. Vincent R. Carfagno (1970; Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1978) 368 n.54.

[319] Elias Canetti, Crowds and Power, trans. Carol Stewart (1962; Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1984) 16.

[320] Nietzsche, Zarathustra, 46.

[321] The main source of "life-philosophy" in its fully articulated form, however, lies with the hermeneutics of Dilthey. See W. Dilthey, Selected Writings, ed. and trans. H.P.Rickman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976).

to existentialism at least, if not to certain elements in the interpretation of what has come to be known as the condition of postmodernity. For as Daniel Bell has suggested in The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism, one undeniable outcome for the discourse of modernity that was to result, however mediated, adapted or revised from the "Copernican revolution" initiated by Kant was that:

> Activity— making and doing—become the source of knowledge, Praxis and consequence are substituted for theoria and first cause. In art and literature, the activity theory of knowledge becomes the agency for the transformation of the older modes of mimesis and given coordinates of space and time. And instead of contemplation, we find substituted sensation, simultaneity, immediacy and impact. These new intentions provide a common, formal syntax for all the arts from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century.[322]

Whether or not one accepts Bell's contention that a "formal syntax" per se may be generated from the altered perception of mimesis initiated by Kant's transcendental idealism, he is undoubtedly correct to note that its consequences were to resonate in most areas of theoretical and artistic endeavour in the West throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and especially where those endeavours were attempting to reflect, evade, or to transcend, whether consciously or unconsciously, the major historical alterations wrought by capitalist expansion and its attendant obsession with technological innovation and change. The emphasis on sensation in particular, and its symbiotic relationship with the emergent mass media and mass culture of the early twentieth century, is one that clearly dominated the thought of Lewis, to the

---

[322] Bell 110-111.

extent that he identified it from at least Time and Western Man to The Doom of Youth, if not from the Vorticist manifestoes of 1914 and 1915, as one of the primary symptoms of modernity's essentially nihilistic aspirations. Indeed, subsequent to the Great War and certainly by the mid 1920s, the equation that he had originally drawn in his attack on Marinetti between, on the one hand, the neophiliac obsession of the modern, and on the other, a powerful if largely submerged current of socio-political nihilism as represented in art by the celebration of "life" or "nature" or "motion," had, he believed, substantialized into a fact universally repressed by a mass conspiracy or artists, writers, scientists, intellectuals and politicians. It was a conspiracy that Lewis attempted to expose, as I have outlined above, through a range of cultural phenomena quite remarkable in its seemingly incommensurable diversity. The social-cultural metaphysics of time, for instance, as represented by the rise of feminism and homosexuality as a form of consciousness or drug; the cult of the child-like and the primitive in Picasso, D.H. Lawrence or Sherwood Anderson; the worship of action and mobilism amongst the Venetian futurists; the quanta and continua of the new physics; the literary experimentalism of Joyce, Pound or Stein; the dithyrambic tendencies of early surrealism and its derivative in journals such as transition; and even the paedotropic inclinations he discerned and inculpated in the films, and rather surprisingly, in the physical stature on celluloid of Charlie Chaplin—all appeared to exemplify for him a process in which radically heterogeneous forces had been brought under the sway of an homogenizing

metaphysical delusion: a pervasive Dionysian nihilism catalysed especially by the writings and influence of Bergson in the early years of the century:

> All the sickly ecstasies of élan vital were drugs on the market. It was on the ecstatic 'life' cry that Bergson was allowed formerly to provide the first (continental) wave of High Bohemia with an appropriate philosophy, showing it plainly that it was the roof and crown of all things, and that the contemptible 'intellect' was less than dust beneath its chariot wheels. (TWM 204)

It was a conspiracy in which the artists and mandarins of modernity, not to mention their hapless epigones, had been duped by the very philosophies they expounded, and particularly as these philosophies themselves reflected this nihilism as it followed, not so much from the carnage and horror of modern war as one might expect, as from the demotion of value—a term which we may take as being as flexible in Lewis as it often appears to be in Nietzsche—to a socio-cultural function rather than an act of autonomous aesthetic or indeed ethical creation. As Lewis wrote symptomatically of Shaw's Ozymandius and Seminaries— the statues animated by Pygmalion in Back to Methuselah — such conspirators as these figures could be said to represent, whether they were fabricated from the desire of the artist to inject life and motion into art, or alternatively, generated from the reactive morality of those in thrall to notions of equality, progress, freedom or revolution, were finally as much in the dark, and as compliant to that darkness, as those they imagined they ruled or controlled. For:

> In reality they are another genus of puppets, a genus of homicidal puppets, sure enough. And they bear a strange resemblance to the misanthropic masters of What the Public Wants. (ARB 141)

This observation, typical as it is of Lewis's tendency to find equations and

isomorphisms between the most unlikely phenomena, whilst ardently resisting any notions of zeitgeist or archetype or historical determinism as being in any way the cause of such connections and linkages, is indicative of a broader oppositional tendency in his critique of modernity, and particularly to the "formal syntax" suggested by Bell. It is a "syntax" illustrated by the interventions of the sociologist Georg Simmel, for example, in his essay on Rodin from 1909, where he defines to near perfection the expression of the discourse of modernity so detested by Lewis:

> The essence of modernity as such is psychologism, the experiencing and interpretation of the world in terms of the reactions of our inner life and indeed as an inner world, the dissolution of fixed contents in the fluid element of the soul, from which all that is substantive is filtered and whose forms are merely forms of motion.[323]

In direct contrast to a theorist such as Simmel, for whom the art of Rodin exemplified, in words of David Frisby, "its embodiment of modernity and its resolution of its modernity's contradictions,"[324] for Lewis, Rodin was not only abominable but also by the mid-twenties, and presumably from henceforth: "So remote from all the interests of contemporary artistic expression that it is impossible to be more completely forgotten." (TWM 148) Similarly, and in stark contrast to the artist of modernity described by Baudelaire in his seminal portrait of "The Painter of Modern Life," whose archetype is the "child" who "sees

---

[323] Cited in David Frisby, Fragments of Modernity: Theories of Modernity in the Work of Simmel, Kracauer and Benjamin (1985; Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988) 46.

[324] Frisby 47.

everything as novelty; the child is always 'drunk...Nothing is more like inspiration than the joy the child feels in drinking in shape and colour"[325]—Lewis's artist is utterly contemptuous of child-like innocence, of regression, of any kind of atavism, and of the intoxication which accompanies an acquiescence in sensation. For Lewis, such a model is the primary manifestation of the degenerate herd-morality's insidious incursion into the non-temporal realm of art and of intellect. Accordingly, and whether implicitly or explicitly, Lewis persistently caricatures these representations of modernity through his "apes" and "puppets," or sets up in opposition to them his own pre-emptively violent marionettes and "soldier of humour." Thus against Baudelaire's influential designation of the *flâneur* for whom:

> The crowd is his domain, just as the air is the bird's, and water that of the fish. His passion and his profession is to merge with the crowd...the ebb and flow, the bustle, the fleeting and the infinite.[326]

—Lewis's crowd-man is the demophobic, misogynistic and proto-fascistic Cantleman, whose loathing of temporality is only equalled by his contempt for nature in all her manifestations.[327] Cantleman is here the uncouth descendant of Poe's "Man of the Crowd," as interpreted by Walter Benjamin in his essay on

---

[325] Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life," Selected Writings on Art and Literature. trans. P. E. Charvet. 1972. London: Penguin, 1992. 140-161.

[326] Baudelaire 399.

[327] On Cantleman, style and nature, see Jameson, Fables 26-28.

Baudelaire,[328] rather than of Baudelaire's marginalized Parisian aesthete, or the latter's descendents in Aragon or Breton or the Situationists. In "The Crowd Master" from BLAST 1915, for example, and even more clearly in its revised version as "The War Crowds, 1914," from Blasting and Bombardiering, he is the figure for whom war and its evasion, rather than communion or solidarity or revolution or merging, is always at the heart of any crowd's massing, and death is always at its core. For whom:

> Men resist death with horror, it is true, when their time comes. But death is only a form of Crowd. It is a similar surrender. Does not the Crowd in life spell death, when most intensely marshalled? The crowd is an immense anaesthetic towards death, such is its immemorial function. (BB 80)[329]

Here, in Cantleman's meanderings through a city preparing for war, we encounter the "Bachelor and Husband Crowd" as it snakes through the streets and squares of the metropolis in "thick well-nourished coils." (BB 79/B_2 94)[330] It is a vision of the "Crowd" as a pseudo-mechanical, pseudo-organic Leviathan, slithering semiotically through the collective coils of human desire and the replicative structure of the family which patterns that desire, absorbing otherness into itself at every turn. Here we also discover that the "immemorial" truth of war— and

---

328 Walter Benjamin, "Some Motifs in Baudelaire," Illuminations, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (1968; London: Fontana, 1992) 152-197.

329 As "The Crowd Master 1914. London, July," the initial version has this as: "Men resist death with horror when their time comes. Death is, however, only a form of the Crowd. It is a similar surrender. For most men believe in some such survival, children a definite one. Again, the Crowd in Life spells death too, very often. The Crowd is an immense anaesthetic towards death. Duty flings the selfish will into this relaxed vortex."(B_2 94) On these revisions, see note 34, below.

330 Both versions have the same here.

war for Cantleman, as for Lewis, as for Heraclitus, as indeed for the Nietzsche of the "Great Politics,"[331] is the a priori condition for the generation of all things, of all past and future value— is that once it is transformed into any kind of demotic spectacle, it then reverberates with the need of the Crowd to unite into some kind of absurd and homogenous machine so as to exceed the painful limitations of the individual:

> So periodically we shed our individual skin, or are apt to, and are purged in big being— An empty throb. (BB 79)[332]

Such imagery projects a vision of a blind and mechanical striving for a transcendence of the individual ego into an amorphous and nihilistic mass-subject which, and in spite of Lewis's ostensible objections to the legacy of Schopenhauer, is, nonetheless, distinctly reminiscent of the latter's portrayal of the masses in his chapter on the "Characterization of the Will-to-Live" from The World as Will and Representation. Here the philosopher of the will describes these same "puppets" of humanity as Lewis will caricature more or less a century afterwards, as drawn together by an inexorable collective inner tension or drive or instinct over which they have only an illusory control. This tension is in fact, Schopenhauer argues, the manifestation of a cosmic and noumenal force which objectifies itself in and through our every physical action, from scratching to

---

331 References to the "Great Politics" are scattered throughout Nietzsche, but a clear expression of this dangerous idea can be found in the final section of Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil entitled "What is Noble?" 199-237.

332 "We all shed our small skin periodically or are apt to sometime, and are purged in big being: an empty throb."(B² 94)

sneezing to orgasm, from eating to revolution to commercial investment, and which is finally empty of any notion of value in itself for the individual, save that of its own perpetuation as the Will. In the case of Schopenhauer's disciple Edward Von Hartmann, moreover, whom Lewis drew upon heavily in his discussion of Schopenhauer, it is a force whose ultimate entropy and dissolution is certain, and to which the only response, at least in this interpretation —is an active resignation to cosmic suicide.[333]

Although he did not travel quite so far along this rather melancholy and apocalyptic track as his enthusiastic pupil Von Hartmann, such speculation is indicative of Schopenhauer's subsequent influence as the patron metaphysician of an extraordinary range of misanthropes, egoists and pessimists, as well as a number of more affirmative thinkers and creative artists who used his vision as a tonic or a catalyst to the development of their own. Writers such as Wagner, Tolstoy, Zola, Hardy, Conrad, Proust and Thomas Mann, and of course Lewis himself, undoubtedly found his work of considerable inspiration to their own development. Others such as Nietzsche, Freud, Wittgenstein and Horkheimer paid open homage to his insights and the effect they had on the direction of their own investigations. Indeed, while he may have been overshadowed in the subsequent century by figures such as Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, Kierkegaard,

---

333 On Von Hartmann and "cosmic suicide," see Copleston, History of Philosophy Vol VII 290-292.

Husserl, Wittgenstein and Heidegger in the post-Kantian philosophical pantheon, his originality of approach, his early notion of the unconscious, and his decidedly anti-teleological strain of thinking—all bear the imprimatur of an important, if now largely occluded, founding figure of much that later became central to the discourse of modernity, as Lewis was quite correct in pointing out. This was especially the case for those like Lewis, though not necessarily for the same reason as Lewis, who remained unimpressed by what they perceived as an essentially hollow faith in the idea of progress as it had been generated by the varieties of nineteenth century positivism, by the ideas of the Enlightenment, or by the social utopianism of the numerous reformists, revolutionaries and dreamers of modernity. Indeed, in any conventional reading there is very little scope for extracting either optimism or eutopia from Schopenhauer, least of all for the collectivity. For even if in his bleak comedy of action and affect a crowd or an individual may imagine itself to be striving for life, for happiness, for self-fulfilment, for liberation, or for whatever cause—even if it or they celebrate the autonomy of its or their sense of agency as a potency, as a freedom—in fact, this sense of agency, he argues, is never anything more than the "blind will appearing as the tendency to life, the love of life, vital energy." Schopenhauer continues:

> This vital energy can be compared to a rope, stretched above the puppet-show of the world of men, on which the puppets hang by means of invisible threads, while they are only apparently supported by the ground beneath them (the objective value of life).[334]

---

334 Schopenhauer, World as Will II 359.

In this vision of an etiolated humanity subsisting in a universe entirely made up of "false bottoms," as Lewis was later to portray a remarkably similar and equally vacuous and simulacrous cosmos in his savage critique of English bourgeois socialism of the 1930s, The Revenge for Love, there are no grounds whatsoever for appealing to the insatiable will as it objectifies itself through our bodies and our gestures, certainly not in the hope of achieving some form of transcendental consciousness, or some form of synthesis towards the realisation of Spirit as in the system of his despised contemporary, Hegel, at the University of Berlin.[335] Indeed, the will has no recognisably human goal at all in this formulation, either evolutionary or teleological, and it certainly does not regard the human subject as in any way an "end"— spiritual or moral, philosophical or cultural, religious or biological—merely as a "means" for the realization of itself as a system of ideas.[336] The only possible recourse for the individual conscious of this state of affairs, therefore, is according to Schopenhauer a resignation to the reality of the will through a seemingly paradoxical act of denial of that will. Or alternatively, through an ontological absorption in the aesthetic moment, or even better in the act of creation itself, in which the individual, (or at least certain members of the class of individual), and particularly the "genius," who, as with Lewis, is a special

---

335 On Schopenhauer's loathing of and rivalry with Hegel, see Magee 247-251.

336 Although Schopenhauer assumes that there is no "point" to the striving of the Will, and thus no telos in the human or theological sense, his discussion of teleology is not entirely dismissive of the notion on an organic level. For his thoughts on teleology and life, see Schopenhauer, World as Will II 327-341.

case, is momentarily transformed into a pure and timeless "subject of knowledge"— whilst the "object" of contemplation transforms itself or is transformed into something resembling a pure platonic idea. In this moment, and only in this moment::

> the individual thing becomes the idea of its species and the perceiving individual the pure subject of knowing.[337]

Aside from these rather limited options for the self-conscious subject and unless one views Schopenhauer's own work with the same ironic detachment that he recommends in "On the Vanity of Human Existence" from Parerga and Paralipomena, as the basis of any remotely aesthetic view of one's own life as a "rough mosaic...viewed from a distance,"[338]—a recommendation with which Lewis appeared broadly to concur—the world is an astonishingly depressing place, relieved, if at all, only by transient theatrical illusions, brief sensual pleasures, fatalism, and the embrace of boredom as a training exercise in the absolute denial of the Will-to-Live. Two further passages from "On the Vanity of Human Existence" should indicate not only Schopenhauer's intriguing incorporation of certain aspects of Eastern philosophy into his system, particularly the Vedas, Puranas and the Upanishads,[339] but also the parallels between his own position and that of Lewis on the subject of the parallel flow of

---

337 Schopenhauer, World as Will I 179.

338 Arthur Schopenhauer, "On the Vanity of Existence," Essays and Aphorisms, ed. and trans. R.J.Hollingdale (1970; Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1981) 53

339 Schopenhauer famously encountered a copy of The Upanishads as a young man, translated into Latin via Persian, and later described them as the "consolation" of his life. The influence of both Hinduism and Buddhism is everywhere evident in his work.

time and desire. Thus:

> Our existence has no foundation on which to rest except the transient present. Thus its form is essentially unceasing motion, without any possibility of that repose which we continually strive after.[340]

Such striving, however, cannot really be taken seriously even as presented, for as he then points out:

> That human life must be some kind of mistake is sufficiently proved by the simple observation that man is a compound of needs which are hard to satisfy; that their satisfaction achieves nothing but a painless condition in which he is given over to boredom; and that boredom is a direct proof that existence is itself valueless, for boredom is nothing other than the sensation of the emptiness of existence.[341]

Schopenhauer's doubts as to the value of life in general and his tendency towards what Terry Eagleton has characterized as a species of political ataraxia,[342] is echoed and hyperbolized by Arghol repeatedly in both versions of Enemy of the Stars. In the first version of the play, for instance, Arghol grieves for a lost and presumably imaginary solitude, an originary plenitude of the soul, explaining to his companion Hanp that:

> The process and condition of life, without any exception, is a grotesque degradation, and "soullure" of the original solitude of the soul. There is no help for it, since each word and gesture partakes of it, and the child has already covered himself with mire.

---

340 Schopenhauer, Essays 52.

341 Schopenhauer, Essays 53.

342 Terry Eagleton, The Ideology of the Aesthetic (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990) 153-172.

(B_1 70/ CPP 106)[343]

Arghol's complaint is further elaborated in the revised version of the play in terms which define his facticity, his being in the world at all, as the result of a mysterious and inhuman causal force; a negative theogenic principle to whose inner workings he had neither access nor appeal:

> Energy has been fastened upon me from nowhere—heavy, astonished, resigned, I accept it. It is without meaning I agree—or at least if it have (sic) a meaning I cannot discern it. However, I will use it, as a prisoner his sheet or bedding for escape. Not as a means of idle humiliation. Why should I not make use of these senseless gifts? (CPP 163)[344]

It is a condition of subjection to an absent cause or principle or demiurge that he elaborates upon obsessively, as here when relating to Hanp an anecdote in which, for a moment at least, he appears to adopt the guise of a metaphysical rebel—in the later Camusian sense of the term[345]—through his existential defiance of the absolute negation inherent in life's alternative:

> One night Death left his card. I was not familiar with the name he chose, but the black mourning edge was deep. I flung it back. A thousand awakenings of violence visited me then. I was ready to act—for a moment I was a stimulus-response machine which would have elicited you admiration. And all for death. (CPP

---

343 References to Enemy of the Stars will be given both to the re-issued first edition of BLAST and the Collected Poems and Plays, the latter of which usefully contains both the original and revised versions. Where the revised (1932) version of Enemy of the Stars has the more appropriately phrased passage, I will cite from it. For comparison, the original version (1914) will be found in the notes.

344 The first version has: "Energy has been fixed on me from nowhere—heavy and astonished: resigned. Or is it for remote sin! I will use it, anyway, as prisoner his bowl or sheet for escape: not as a means of idle humiliation." (B_1 68/CPP 104)

345 Albert Camus, The Rebel, trans. Anthony Bower (1953; London, Penguin Books, 1971).

163)[346]

In spite of this parodic fall into a kind of proto-behaviourist ontology, Arghol's real condition is one to which he can only finally respond through pure despair and self-loathing. In this fall into radical abjection, and in contrast with either Tarr or Kell-Orr, or even Cantleman, he ends up as a recipient rather than as a catalyst of both existential and physical violence, imposed from an external rather than an internal source, depriving him of even the ghost of agency. Even the consolation of suicide cannot be an option for Arghol because, and as he explains to Hanp, he is still soiled with the impurity of his social and corporeal connection with other beings and things, with the sickness of his inter-subjectivity:

> Anything but yourself is dirt. Anybody that is. I do not feel clean enough to die, or to make it worth while killing myself. (B_1 70/CPP 106)

Such a cleaving to nothingness through contact with others, such a repression of action, such a persistence—to adapt an apophthegm attributed to Samuel Beckett—as a "stain on the silence" of being,[347] thus dis-enables Arghol even from the radical and solitary purification that he would need so as to effect a successful, rather than a dismal, annihilation of the self; and in adopting this perspective, Arghol more or less directly follows Schopenhauer in his view of suicide as unacceptable if it is in any way the result of pure and unadulterated

---

346 "On night Death left his card. I was not familiar with the name he chose: but the black edge was deep. I flung it back. A thousand awakenings of violence. (B_1 68/CPP 104)

347 Cited by Deirdre Bair, Samuel Beckett: A Biography (1978; London: Picador, 1980) 539.

despair, as despair is merely a manifestation of the affirmation of the Will-to-Live, inasmuch as it indicates a thwarted desire for happiness of fulfilment. On the other hand, and in stark contrast to Nietzsche's views on the ascetic consciousness, suicide through self-starvation is entirely acceptable to Schopenhauer, as this particular form of asceticism expresses an absolute renunciation of the will and an effective counter to the will's hunger for expansion through desire, whether physical, psychological or emotional.[348] For Arghol, however, it is impossible to cleanse desire from the system through such anorexic stratagems; desire remains as a fundamental and yet fundamentally impure force, an excremental exchange between selves in the world, a viscous temporal medium that refuses all his attempts to become the static, spatial, vorticular subject which would enable him to stand as the equal of his intransigent stars. Even the radical surgery he occasionally contemplates in his abjection is finally inadequate, for as he explains to Hanp:

> The doctoring is often fouler than the disease.
>
> Men have a loathsome deformity called Self: affliction got through indiscriminate rubbing against their fellows: social excrescence.
>
> Their being is regulated by exigencies of this affliction. Only one operation can cure it: the suicide's knife.
>
> Or an immense snuffling or taciturn parasite, become necessary to victim, like abortive poodle, all nerves, vice and dissatisfaction.

---

348 For Nietzsche on the ascetic consciousness, see Nietzsche, Genealogy, 72-128. For Schopenhauer on suicide in general, and in particular through self-starvation, see Schopenhauer, World as Will I 398-402.

> I have smashed it against me, but it still writhes, turbulent mess.
>
> I have shrunk it in frosty climates, but it has filtered filth inward through me, dispersed till my deepest solitude is impure.
>
> Mire stirred up desperately, without success in subsequent hygiene
> (B_1 71/CPP 107)

If philosophical anorexia is one solution to the problem of the will for Schopenhauer, for the impossibility of the solitary self in the factitious exigency of the social realm as identified by Lewis through Arghol and Hanp, philosophical pessimism is another and more advisable antidote to both despair and life, for pessimism in its pro-active sense renounces the will whilst refusing to succumb to the will's seductive cunning in planting the possibility of self-murder in human consciousness as a response to extreme lack in one form or another. Such radical and pro-active pessimism as Schopenhauer suggests can, of course, also take the form of an affirmative laughter in the face of the misery of the world, an absurdist laughter against the encroachment of the void, as it does for Kell-Orr in the stories and sketches of The Wild Body, for example, of for Tarr in conversation with his inconsequential and "pointlessly handsome" interlocutor whom he describes characteristically as a "crowd" or "set," rather than as an "individual," in the opening pages of the novel, Alan Hobson:

> I'm a new sort of pessimist.—
> ...— I am the Panurge-Pessimist, drunken with the laughing gas of the Abyss. I gaze on squalor and idiocy, and the more I see it, the more I like it.
> (T_1 26)

As this passage indicates, so militant a brand of pessimism as advocated by Schopenhauer and Lewis may also have the effect of bleeding the soul dry of any vestige of empathy for the mass of human beings, of any compassion for their sufferings, or for their bondage, of any recognition that they are in fact the abstracted and extrapolated version of oneself, thus causing the pro-active pessimist to objectify them as merely the conscious or unconscious victims of their own folly, as creatures obsessed with the facile diversions of sexual romance and bland entertainment, as paeans mesmerised by the way in which the depletion of their own internal economics of self-hood as "reactionary individuals," in Nietzsche's understanding, reflects and is reflected in the banality of commerce, for example, or gambling. Within this narrow and pathetic focus the masses are at best derisory, and at worst to be condemned as execrable. What is more, the general populace is always to be avoided if at all possible, as contact with them may, and on this both Lewis and Schopenhauer appear to agree, lead to a form of metaphysical contagion. Thus Schopenhauer writes of the mass of humanity—of men, that is, as he like Lewis reserves a different species of contempt for women—that:

> Coarse buffooneries at most excite them to laughter: apart from that they are earnest brutes—and all because they are only capable of *subjective* interest. It is precisely this which makes card-playing the

> most appropriate amusement for them—card-playing for money: because this... sets in motion the *will* itself, the primary element which exists everywhere.[349]

Through Arghol, (not to mention Tarr, or Kerr-Orr, or Benjamin Richard Wing in "The Code of the Herdsman" or Joint in the prototypical sketches for The Childermass), Lewis presents the reader with a picture of this degenerate mix of diversion and commerce as it personifies the desultory will of the masses, through passages of delirial expressionism that easily rival the bleakest speculations of his philosophical and misanthropic mentor:

> Existence, Loud feeble sunset—blaring like lumpish, savage clown, alive with rigid tinsel, tricked out in louse-infested pantaloons...promising laughter and death mixed...a showman who bellows down to penniless herds, their eyes red with stupidity, crowding beneath him, clutching their sixpences.(CPP 159)[350]

Such then, is the raw contempt that Lewis evidently wished to convey through his fictional and semi-fictional puppets towards existence generally, and towards the masses of humanity in particular—the real puppets in his critical and fictional sights. In this sense, the ontologically deracinated individuals of Schopenhauer's objectified will, his aimless automata deluded with the false optimism that they derive from an inner sense of vitality in the "Characterization of the Will-to-Live", can be said to belong to the same species as those for whom, in the eyes of the Crowd master Cantleman:

---

349 Schopenhauer, Essays 129.

350 "Existence; loud feeble sunset, blaring like lumpish, savage clown, alive with rigid tinsel, before a misty door: announcing events, tricks and a thousand follies, to penniless herds, their eyes red with stupidity." (B_1 67/CPP103)

> A fine dust of extinction, a grain or two for each man, is scattered in any crowd like these black London war-crowds. Their pace is so mournful. War begins with this huge indefinite internment in the cities. (B_2 94/BB 79)[351]

Through this image of a "fine dust of extinction," however, one may also begin to discern a more general and ambiguous tropism in Lewis's vision and presentation of modernity as an ideology of sensation, as an ideology of the crowd. It is a tropism through which Lewis both absorbs and criticizes thinkers such as Schopenhauer through a double movement that does not attempt reconciliation, but actively seeks conceptual and philosophical conflict. The image of "fine dust" scattered through a waiting crowd exemplifies this double movement so precisely because, on the one hand, it may be understood as signifying a tendency towards deliquescence and homogenisation that he opposes in every department of the modern as the primary symptom of a hidden and Manichean conflict: a conflict in which the forces of darkness—everywhere apparent to him if to no one else—are made manifest in the privileging of all that flows through consciousness or life, all that is feminine or internal, all that is natural rather than artificial, all that serves the chronological muse or the will. At the same time, this same image of "dust," by virtue of its near infinitesimal mass and volume, opposes the force of passion or fear which animates and unites the

---

[351] As above, reference here is given both to the original in the second edition of BLAST, and its reprint in Blasting and Bombardiering, in the edition revised after Lewis's death by his wife, Anne, in 1982, who includes a brief note on the piece in the preface to the new edition (unpaginated). There are a number of changes between these two versions, both in content and typography, taken from Lewis's notes and mentioned in passing on the contents page. None, however, are of importance to the present discussion.

crowd, in that it divides and separates that which would otherwise be conjoined—and yet even in its power of division and annihilation, remains as no more than an aspect of the crowd from which it is supposed to be distinct. Indeed, if it often seems as though virtually everything that Lewis wished to oppose or criticize is incorporated in one form or another into this "Crowd" through a process of systematic and metaphorical de-differentiation to which the observing eye is immune—and this might begin to explain the recurrence of his curiously montaged assemblages of philosophers and poets, actors and physicists—it is also the case that it is only through this same "Crowd" that the individuation that he valorizes can in any sense take place. Similarly, it is only be virtue of the temporal obsession he identifies so promiscuously with figures such as Schopenhauer, Bergson, Joyce, Alexander, Stein, Chaplin, Whitehead or Spengler in Time and Western Man, or Nietzsche and Sorel in The Art of Being Ruled, that his own spatialist constructions make any sense, by virtue of their assertion of differential conflict as an ontological category whose main attribute is a particularly rebarbative mutation of the Leibnizian monad, recast as a simultaneously individuated and multiplicitous self or "nature," whose perceptual and cognitive apparatus is subservient to the faculty of vision.

This underlying tension in Lewis can be demonstrated on a structural level through its dramatic exposition in Enemy of the Stars, where the antagonism between Arghol and Hanp, master and pupil of a new and virulent nihilism,

focuses on the relationship between subjectivity and matter in a world of perpetual transformation, and the opposition of the subject to the transcendental or transcendent in any form. The denotation of the stars themselves in this text is extraordinarily complex in both versions, suggesting both nature and spiritual substance as the fundamental elements of the "other-ness" of the object-world that Arghol both desires and fears, whilst retaining a certain indeterminacy as an "otherness" of the self that Lewis will later celebrate as "oddity" and strangeness—as "Not-Self." What is reasonably transparent here, though, is that Arghol remains the committed adversary of whatever these celestial icons represent through their in-human permanence and distance from the human stage, and that Hanp, at least in the final scene of the play, has become their servant, when he enables the self-proclaimed enemy of the stars to escape from the real, of base matter by executing him and then by destroying himself. This almost gnostic element in the play is further clarified at the conclusion of the revised version from 1932, where the death of Hanp is followed by a direction for blackout whose conventional dramatic connotation is intensified by the absolute metaphysical closure suggested by the annihilation of the stars, and by the peaceful nothingness that is allowed finally to sweep through this once bleak circus, now vacated by the dual protagonists of self and matter:

> A bleak cloud enters and occupies the whole arena, immediately everything is blotted out. Accompanying the cloud a wind is heard sighing high up in the vertical tunnel. Then there is no sound in particular and only the blackness of a moonless and

> unstarlit night (CPP 191)[352]

That Enemy of the Stars can and should be read as an expository agon between philosophically representative pseudo-identities or perspectives battling for position, as critics from Hugh Kenner to Frederic Jameson have suggested, is undoubtedly the case. The difficulty then lies in identifying what, precisely, if it is indeed possible to identify them precisely, those philosophical representations can reasonably be said to denote, and how they then connect with the broader issue of Lewis's aesthetics and politics, as they later incorporate both an expression and a critique of modernity. For Jameson, for example, drawing on the work of Jean Borie,[353] the split subjectivities of Lewis, and particularly Pullman and Satters in The Childermass, indicate:

> a curious structural halfway house in the history of the subject, between its construction in bourgeois individualism and its disintegration in late capitalism[354]

Jameson's point here aligns with his more general attempt to rescue Lewis from his designation as "fascist" and re-inscribe his fictions in the dialectical movement of history as a form of mediation, in which narrative momentum, material reality and change are connected through a version of structural causality, whose dynamic and momentum, and thus historical context, describes the horizon of

---

352 This is the conclusion to the revised edition. The conclusion to the first edition is as follows: "A sickly flood of moonlight beat miserably on him, cutting empty shadow he could hardly drag along. He sprang from the bridge clumsily, too unhappy for instinctive science, his heart a sagging weight of stagnant hatred." (B_1 85 /CPP 119).

353 Jean Borie, Le Tyran Timide (Paris: Klincksieck, 1973); Le Célibataire français (Paris: Le Sagittaire, 1976).

354 Jameson, Fables 59.

interpretation itself. His purpose here is to avoid what he elsewhere describes as a static and reactionary vision of the "history of forms" as promoted by the "ideologists of modernism" as nothing more than "an autonomous dynamic of purely formal innovations, each of which is motivated by the will to replace an established form by a novelty at length superseded in its turn..."[355] As always at this stage in his career, Jameson's aim here is to historicize that which appears to strive for transhistorical status. A more forensic approach based on notions of individual innovation in respect of the influences bearing down on the artist, however, does not necessarily counter Jameson's broader picture, nor fall into static formalism, but can yield a number of interesting points of intellectual continuity and discontinuity between Lewis and his early mentors, which have an equally important bearing on the construction of the split or multiple subject in his fiction, drama and critical theory. More recently, for example, and taking his cue from the textual presence of the radical egoist and anarchist Max Stirner and his notorious Der Einzige und sein Eigentum in Arghol's dream sequence, Toby Foshay has argued that:

> Stirner is the thematic axis of Enemy in the way that Arghol's mask is its formal axis. As philosophical model, Stirner embodies the discrepancy that on a formal level is revealed between the origin of persona in dramatic character...and its modern, transmogrification into identity, self-present completeness—that is, Stirnerian uniqueness...[356]

Max Stirner, anarchist, neo-Hegelian eccentric and interlocutor of Marx and

---

[355] Jameson, Fables 93.

[356] Foshay 33.

Engels in the coffee houses of Berlin,[357] is now generally remembered, if he is remembered at all, as the formulator of a radical materialist egoism whose influence on the traditions of later anarchist thought,[358] as well as on certain strands of existentialism,[359] probably owes as much to the three hundred and twenty odd pages devoted to him in The German Ideology,[360] where he is referred to variously as "Sancho," the "Unique" and "Saint Max," as it does to his recurring fashionability in the artistic and bohemian circles that Lewis satirized so vitriolically from Tarr to The Diabolical Principle. In terms of the history of Western philosophical thought, he is important mainly for his critical responses to various neo-Hegelian currents in Feuerbach and Bruno Bauer, and to Fichte's hypothesis of the absolute Ego, where he further radicalised the anthropological turn in philosophy that Kant began and that Nietzsche was later to take to its most extreme limits by stressing that the ego is not in any way to be abstracted into any idealist or social ontology, but is to be understood simply and solely as the concrete ego of the here and now, of flesh and blood. In his manifesto, Der Einzige und Sein Eigentum translated in English as The Ego and its Own, Stirner

---

357 On this period in Stirner's life, see R.W.K. Paterson, The Nihilistic Egoist Max Stirner (London: Oxford University Press for the University of Hull, 1971) 7-11.

358 On Stirner and the history of Anarchism, see Peter Marshall, Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism (London: Fontana Press, 1992) 220-233; Paterson 126-144.

359 For Stirner and Existentialism, see Paterson 162-188.

360 On the complex relations between Stirner and Marx and Engels, see Paul Thomas, Karl Marx and the Anarchists (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980) 125-174; John Carroll, Break-Out from the Crystal Palace: The Anarcho-Psychological Critique: Stirner, Nietzsche, Dostoevsky (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974) 60-86; Paterson 101-125.

recognized the existence of empirical reality, and in this sense, he was not the solipsist that caricatures of him have tended to suggest. He also recognized and supported the idea of society as the natural habitat of the individual, though not as a Rousseauist or socialist of the time would have viewed it. For Stirner, as the ego is the only present reality for us at any given moment it is to the ego alone that we should look for our philosophy. The egos of others are out there in the world also, certainly, but as he put it:

> For me you are nothing but—my food, even as I too am fed upon and put to use by you. We have only one relation to each other, that of *usableness*, of utility, of use.[361]

There are, in this sense, two orders of reality for Stirner, the "I am present"—and the notion of "presence" in the presentation of the self is important here— and the second order of what we would normally call the phenomenal world, subject to mutability. Moreover, the ego has both a creative and a destructive relationship with this second order, summarized, in a discussion of the limitations of the Fichtean ego, by the assertion: "It is not that the ego *is* all, but that the ego *destroys* all, and only the self-dissolving ego, the never-being ego, the—*finite* ego is really I."[362] What Stirner intends by this, as John Carroll has argued persuasively, is something resembling the *übermensch* of Nietzsche, or the angel of Rilke[363] an "ideal-type"—in Weber's phrase—which acts as a bridge or process between the

---

[361] Max Stirner, The Ego and Its Own: The Case of the Individual against Authority, trans. Steven Byington (London: Rebel Press, 1993) 296-297.

[362] Stirner 182.

[363] Carroll 40-41.

moments of self through time. Thus:

> the unique one is the statement that changes, that fades into silence every minute, the vehicle of a continually developing-in-dying I.[364]

For Foshay, Stirner represents the "thematic axis" of the play because it is through the rejection of the singular Stirnerian ego rather than its multiple Lewisian version, that Arghol, and subsequently Hanp, are able to realize that they can only define themselves as selves in relation to the "Not Self," or the Levinasian "Other" as I think Foshay wishes to translate this curious entity—for as Arghol puts it: "without other—the Not-Self—there would be no self." However, I would suggest that there is another more important aspect of Stirner that Lewis through Arghol wishes to reject which links him with figures as diverse as Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Bergson, rather than Levinas per se—for Stirner was without doubt a potent theorizer of the unconscious will—a thinker whose notion of the ground from which the ego draws up its self-ness links him very closely to future developments in psychoanalysis, as much as it does the energeticist vision of self developed by Nietzsche. For Stirner, the ego is primarily a "creative nothing," a procession of serial selves through time, but:

> I am not nothing in the sense of emptiness, but I am the creative nothing, the nothing out of which I myself as creator create everything.[365]

Accordingly, while the absurdist tragedy of Arghol and Hanp may well represent

---

[364] Carroll 40.

[365] Stirner 5.

Lewis's wrestling through the medium of dramatic expressionism with his own youthful identification with Stirner, as Foshay argues—and this is an quasi-autobiographical dimension of Lewis that should certainly not be ignored—it is also indicative of a mode of revealing the limitations of a particular form of nihilistic egoism which, and whether represented by Schopenhauer or Stirner or Freud or Spengler, clings to a notion of the generalized Will as a monistic and unconscious force in the absence of a more monadic and multiplicitous version of agency. It is a version of agency that Lewis attempted to compound from the fragments of philosophy and through the agonistic portrayal of self in Enemy of the Stars. For at the heart of Enemy of the Stars is a model of conflict between identities, or between fragments of identities, which has to be approached through the medium of violence rather than that of reason because it is only through such violence, Lewis contends, that the ground can then be cleared of the effluence of the past so as to allow for the emergence of the art, intellect and subjectivity of the future. In this sense, and by extension throughout his early critical and fictional writings, it is war, rather than conciliation, that Lewis is also promoting between time and space, between subject and object, between the self and the other of self. It is a war in which the tactics of the subject or "nature" who sides with the spatial must always be those of multiplicity and deception. For although he can write in "ART VORTEX—BE THYSELF" in the second edition of BLAST that "You must be a duet in everything," it is an imperative qualified by the fact that it is the "impression of two persuaders" (B_2 91) that is

most crucial here, rather than its actuality. Or as he puts it more explicitly in "The Code of a Herdsman," which for all its brevity may be taken as something of a master-key to understanding Lewis's apparently contradictory statements on personal identity, and is thus worthy of reiteration:

> Each trench must have another one behind it. Each single self—that you manage to be at any one time—must have five at least indifferent to it.[366]

It is a relation between apparently irreconcilable images of multiplicity, duplicity and dualism that he elaborates even more enigmatically in the fragment from "ART VORTEX BE THYSELF," where he develops his imperative on the importance of the number "TWO" by noting that:

> For, the individual, the single object, and the isolated, is, you will admit, an absurdity. Why try and give the impression of a consistent and indivisible personality? You can establish yourself as either a Machine of two similar fraternal surfaces overlapping. Or, more sentimentally, you may postulate the relation of object and its shadow for two selves. (B_2 91)

In paradoxical antagonism that Lewis set up here between the multiplicitous individual and the "other" of self—effectively the masses in their manifestation as particles of social agency—through such imagery in his early and middle-period writings, it becomes possible to trace the outlines of a constellation of figural and metaphysical aporia that he will make no attempt to resolve through synthesis or conciliation at any stage in his career. Instead, it is a principle of

---

366 Wyndham Lewis, The Code of a Herdsman, originally published in The Little Review, July 1917. More accessible versions of this seminal piece can also be found in: Wyndham Lewis, The Code of a Herdsman, ed. Alan Munton (Glasgow: Wyndham Lewis Society, 1977); The Essential Wyndham Lewis: An Introduction to his Work, ed. Julian Symons (London: Andre Deutsch, 1989) 27.

antagonism that will be exacerbated through his experiments in the thirties with the "external method" in novels such as The Apes of God, Snooty Baronet and The Revenge for Love, and more obliquely through the theological fiction of the later volumes of the Human Age so as to emphasize that the tension he portrays between the self and the collectivity is no mere stylistic or even political issue for him, but the symptom of a personal and philosophical loathing of the masses—however leavened and abstracted it becomes in his later work—far more obsessive and virulent than that which has now been accepted as almost conventional amongst the "reactionary modernists" of the high modernist phase of experimental English writing. Indeed, it is a rampant and all-inclusive demophobia that he extends far beyond the concrete historical moment of the modern industrial West and its expression in high or popular culture into the deepest reaches of cosmological thought—into the stars themselves. For whether they are represented in the fiction or in his critical volumes, the masses —amongst whom we must include, as Lewis appears to insist, artists and intellectuals of mediocre talent or left-wing sympathies—invariably appear to be, or at least to represent, as much a metaphysical or even theological entity as an empirico-material one: a primal and annihilative force that seeks to destroy the individual on every level by combining that individual with that which it is not. For as he suggests in Time and Western Man, in a passage in which he mocks and parodies the Schopenhauerian will in its interminable objectifications and variations on its own singularity, the reduction of experience to any form of

monistic system through such a negation of that which is perceived as distinct—particularly by the visual sense—and especially to a monism based on the flow and directionality of pure sensation or will as the primary intuitions of reality, carries with it the danger of the gradual dissolution of the observing consciousness itself, and hence the capacity for judgement, into a viscous ontological undifferentiation. The mechanical will and its cognates might then be deployed, in this way, as an agent of social control which can then be used to explain and legitimise not only the "cult" of Charlie Chaplin, but also:

> the League of Nations, wireless, feminism, Rockefeller; it causes daily, millions of women to drift in front of, and swarm inside gigantic clothes-shops in every great capital, buying silk-underclothing, cloche-hats, perfumes, vanishing creams, vanity bags and furs; it causes the Prince of Wales to become one day a Druid, and the next a boy scout..(TWM 312)

— as the products of a force occluded by its very nature from the direct observation or judgement of its nature as value or as the producer of value. In addition, this dark and occluded force which reifies difference into identity as it moves through the structures of human consciousness and the discourses which both represent and constitute those structures on a cultural level, on the level of pre-given perceptions and cognitions, works specifically and relentlessly on the notion of reality itself, so as to persuade the compliant masses that it is in some way distinct from appearance, that it has some deeper aspect which connects it to personal identity at some intuitive or unconscious level. Thus it is that John Porter-Kemp in Lewis's war-time drama The Ideal Giant claims that "Reality is the 'thing which is not' for creative artists."—and, continues by explaining that

within the social realm:

> People can only base their actions on facts. If you put in a person's head something purporting to be a fact, which is not a fact, it is liable to cause the utmost confusion and disorder. But the point of my argument is the physical uneasiness about this thing said...the hallucination of the Object.
> The 'truth' is another way of saying 'the substantial.' In life the 'substantial' is the 'fact.' (CCP128)

Kemp delineates the ideal giant of the title in dialogue with Fingal as an aspect of the "many" towards which both the artist, and even sometimes, the "Crowd" (in its more heroic moments) may aspire. It is a picture of something both monumental and yet potentially malleable—of a mass-man created in the image of the individual—through which the author, ventriloquizing for his agitated puppet John Kemp, elaborates his desire to exacerbate the antagonism between the creative personality and the masses (or alternatively, between the differentiating Self and the collective social reality), as the latter respond in Pavlovian fashion to the promptings of the cult of time and interiority like some gigantic quivering animal, or alternatively, through a calculated conflation of metaphor, like some passive machine prodded into action by the mechanical commands of its invisible master. As Kemp expresses his resistance to this passivity in response to his umbral companion, the curiously named Rose Godd, in scene three of the play:

> We must contrive: find a new Exit. Any wildly subversive action should be welcomed. We must escape from the machine in ourselves! Smash it up: renew ourselves. (CPP 36)

This "exit" is a creative violence belonging solely to the properly individuated

subject whose resilience may, however, and unless a stringent vigilance is maintained, be undermined by the contagion of the crowd as it infects his professional and dispositional detachment with a visceral and collective frenzy. The effect of a successful contagion would be to debilitate the hard, artistic exterior required of the creative individual and cause him to melt into one with the rhythms of the masses, with the "poetry" of the crowd, with the social frequency of the new Leviathan. The consequence of this absorption for the artist is that his peculiar talent for perspectival force from which he derives his ability to shape reality according to his own demands as they further derive from his ability to create his own values, will be swallowed up in the miasma of mediocrity. Such an infection, however, is not merely bad for the artist, but also for the crowd, for the masses of humanity. For as Lewis declares with a typically elitist flourish in The Art of Being Ruled, in a chapter mainly concerned with the fruits of democracy and the mis-directedness of demagogues and liberals entitled "The Vulgarization of Disgust":

> If the creative minds of the world are indeed for ever cancelled and rendered ineffective by the agency of the "unprogressive" mass of men, then they should be protected and rescued. This is of more importance than the gratification of the vanity of the human average: the human average would get more out of such a salvage than out of those satisfactions for which it pays the expert of What the Public Wants so dearly. (ARB 87)

On this particular ideological platform—the idea of the mass-subject and its mergings as a threat to the autonomy of the creative individual—Lewis undoubtedly has a great deal in common with a broad range of elitist critics of

modernity and modernisation in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century. However, where Lewis tends to diverge at this stage from much of the polemic on the masses associated with comparably demophobic writers such as Gustav Le Bon or Ortega Y Gasset, for example—and in this he follows a distinctly Nietzschean and genealogical path, albeit one adapted to suit his own purposes—is in his derivation of both the idea and the material reality of the masses from the Enlightenment concern with the place of the subject in the process towards the totalization of knowledge. For if Kant's primary concern in the first Critique had been to explain systematically the way in which personal identity remains consistent through time, to shift the Cartesian concern with the ontology of the subject to one focusing on the rules which govern the relationship between the subject and its representations and sensuous experience in time and space, for Lewis the result had been the inauguration of an empire of temporality in which that which is presumed to unite the self through time had been installed as a transcendental realm legitimating for the present by reducing the subject to an aspect of the flux prior to all immediate experience. It is a flux exemplified in the aurality and phonocentrism, the "musical politics," of Spengler or Pound, and in the "poetry" of the machinic crowd-rhythms of socialism and democratic capitalism that he sees as characterizing and indeed, as colonizing the modern age. In this suspicion, Lewis clearly echoes the more calculated and strategic suspicions of Nietzsche in On the Genealogy of Morals, where in a passage central to the project of genealogy, he condemns both the Kantian

subject and the Schopenhauerian will as reactive diversions, so as to assert a strongly visual and personal perspectivism:

> From now on, my philosophical colleagues, let us be more wary of the dangerous old conceptual fairy-tale which has set up a "pure, will-less, painless, timeless, subject of knowledge"; let us be wary of the tentacles of such contradictory concepts as "pure reason," "absolute spirituality," "knowledge as such":- here we are asked to think an eye which cannot be thought at all, an eye turned in no direction at all, an eye where the active and interpretative powers are to be suppressed, absent, but through which seeing still becomes a seeing-something, so it is an absurdity and non-concept of eye that is demanded.[367]

Against this absent consciousness—a consciousness of nothing and no-one in particular that Lewis, in a manner comparable to Derrida as well as to Nietzsche, perceives as a dominant epistemological and political fiction to be exposed, Nietzsche asserts that:

> There is *only* a perspective seeing, *only* a perspective "knowing"; the *more* affects we allow to speak about a thing, the *more* eyes, various eyes we are able to use for the same thing, the more complete will be our "concept" of the thing, our "objectivity".[368]

Nietzsche concludes on a note, which, in its criticism of Schopenhauerian asceticism and what he calls the "will-to-nothing", an essentially nihilistic perspective associated with the reactive and reactionary individual that will lead him in due course, if not here, to his infamous postulation of the Will-to-Power:

> But to eliminate the will completely and turn off all the emotions without exception, assuming we could: well? would that not mean but to *castrate* the intellect?...[369]

---

[367] Nietzsche, Genealogy 92.

[368] Nietzsche, Genealogy 92.

[369] Nietzsche, Genealogy 92.

For the moment, however, and in a manner parallel to Lewis's later attempt to anatomize the void through a radical critique of dualistic social ontology, it is with the investigation of this "will-to-nothing" as a product of the philosophical repression of multiple perspectives, and of the creative imposition of heuristic value as means to gaining new perspectives, as a means to genealogy, to art, and as a means to a philosophy of the future, that Nietzsche is concerned. Or as he puts it in the loose collection of aphorisms which he placed as an appendix to Human all too Human:

> *Error of Philosophers*—The philosopher believes that the value of his philosophy lies in the whole, in the building: posterity discovers it in the bricks with which he built and which are then often used again for better building: in the fact, that is to say, that the building can be destroyed and nonetheless possess value as material.[370]

It is thus through a form of critical and dialogical violence towards philosophers that Nietzsche attempts to clear the ground for his transvaluation of all values. Similarly, the motivation behind the agonistic quality of Lewis's project, in contrast to the more discursive or dialectical mode of the generality of philosophers and social theorists, should not be ignored when looking at his relation to Kant or Schopenhauer, for as he suggests rather petulantly in the early pages of Time and Western Man

> I do not feel at all compelled to explain myself when I am examining a mere philosopher; he speaks my language, usually with less skill, but otherwise much the same as I do. (TWM 136)

---

[370] Friedrich Nietzsche, Human All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits, trans. R.J.Hollingdale (1986; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) 261.

While this certainly could be and indeed was taken as an unduly arrogant position to adopt in a treatise largely concerned with philosophy and its relationship to art and culture, it is a statement that within the broader frame of Lewis's critical theory can be qualified as part of a strategy that sought, in a manner comparable, as I have suggested in chapter one, to a writer such as Georges Bataille, to subvert the process of philosophical thought itself through a combination of violence and art.[371] It is a selection of tactics based on a view of the role of violence, and especially of textual violence, as a form of excess or waste: an indiscriminate discharge of energy against "life" that can also be turned outward and disciplined into a higher form of expression. An inability to channel this violence, moreover, can lead to annihilation in much the same way that the philosopher's pursuit of depth will lead to self-destruction. This annihilation for Lewis is intimately bound up with the feminine and with sexuality, with nature and life in contrast to art, for the latter of which he claims a structural isomorphism with the hard edges and aggressive substantiality of his understanding of the masculine. The contrast between life and art so frequently alighted upon by critics in Tarr, for example, exemplifies this conflict and

---

[371] In a manner with some parallels with Lewis, Bataille identifies both creativity and destructiveness with heterogeneity, and conservatism with homogeneity. This distinction is most resonant in his study of early fascism, where he writes: "Violence, excess, delirium, madness characterize heterogeneous elements to varying degrees: active, as persons or mobs, they result from breaking the laws of social homogeneity... Heterogeneous reality is that of a force or shock. It presents itself as a charge, as a value, passing from one object to another in a more or less abstract fashion, almost as though the change were taking place not in the world of objects but only in the judgments of the subject." Georges Bataille, Visions of Excess: Selected Writings 1927-1939, ed. and trans. Allan Stoekl (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985) 142-143.

isomorphism on a number of levels, for here life in its purest form is represented by women, and the male artist (of either gender) must purify himself of all aspects of the emotional dimension of sex, until he becomes no more than a "lonely phallus" (T, 30) in all his sexual encounters. As Tarr explains to Anastasya, Otto Kreisler's failure as an artist and then as a man lay in his inability to live up to the hard masculine demands of his chosen vocation, and for that he died

> I believe all the fuss he made was an attempt to get out of Art and back into Life again. He was like a fish flopping about who had got into the wrong tank, = back into sex = He was trying to back into sex again out of a little puddle of art where he felt he was gradually expiring. (T_1 302)

In a passage on philosophy and violence in The Art of Being Ruled Lewis clarifies his position on this issue in a chapter ostensibly concerned with vegetarianism and capital punishment, by noting that:

> Where violence is concerned the aesthetic principle is evidently of more weight than the "moral"...It is a higher form of the appetite that leads to excess, that leads to the measure of aesthetic delight. Sadistic excess attempts to reach roughly and by harshness what art reaches by fineness. (ARB 64-65)

Lewis's purpose in his philosophically oriented criticism and fiction, then, is not so much to philosophise, nor even to, tell a story, so much as to expose the ways in which philosophy seeps into the general consciousness hegemonically, as a result of its appropriation through the more populist or "middle-brow" promotions of art or science or political thought, through the mass-media, or through the ersatz salon-culture of leisured pseudo-bohemians in Paris or Bloomsbury or Chelsea. However, as he points out:

> If you said this the average person would be none the wiser, in the first place because "Hegel" (whose philosophy is in any case a very repulsively technical one) would mean nothing to him. (TWM xiii-xiv)

Nonetheless:

> The "ideas" of Plato can be shown at work. The philosophy of Hegel can be shown at work in Herzen, Bakunin and Lenin. The theories of Darwin can be shown at work all over the world. Nietzsche trumpets from the balconies of the Chigi palace. (TWM xiv)

And, as he then whispers in a more malevolent vein through the mask of his affected didacticism:

> I could show you many Bergsonians. (TWM xiv)

One can observe this same fundamental movement of the Lewisian agon against philosophers in action some ten years earlier in the telegraphic style of the BLAST manifestoes, as one can again nearly ten years later in "One-Way-Song," where in both cases he very clearly sides with his rebarbative ideal of the artist against an impressive range of named and unnamed adversaries:

> This impure Present our Vortex despises and ignores.
> For our Vortex is uncompromising.
> We must have the Past and the Future, Life simple, that is, to discharge ourselves in, and keep us pure for non=life, that is Art,
> The Past and the Future are the prostitutes Nature has provided.
> Art is the periodic escape from this Brothel.
> Artists put as much vitality and delight into this saintliness, and escape out, as most men do their escapes into similar places from respectable existence. (B_1 148)

This notion of an "escape" from the effluent discharged in "life" and into the non-temporal realm of art has, of course, its precursors. In contrast to much of the seeking after a place in eternity in western mysticism, Gnosticism, aesthetics

and asceticism, however, Lewis's version of escape is explicitly concerned with the question of external rather than internal domination, and particularly the domination of time and its cognates—at least in the Lewisian formulation of these isomorphisms—in the world. Thus we are informed that:

> The Vorticist is at his maximum point of energy when stillest.
> The Vorticist is not a Slave of Commotion, but its Master.
> The Vorticist does not suck up to Life,
> He lets Life know it place in a Vorticist Universe!
> (B_1 148)

At the heart of this urge of domination over nature, or life, or time, or internality, or the feminine or the child or the shaman—the recurring fetishes for the early-to-middle period Lewis of the "Slave of Commotion" imprisoned, like the Valentinian gnostic in base matter, in an etiolated modernity—is a version of personal identity that is somehow to be unified across space whilst being dispersed through time as a form of multiplicity. It is a perspective which he stresses repeatedly in his elliptical discussion of Kant and the Kantian legacy in Time and Western Man, taking Kant, quite rightly, as the source of so much of what was to follow and that he now wishes to correct through a mode of cynical imposture that he intends, at least in Time and Western Man, to be read as illuminating through its transparency. The primary object of this perspective, or perhaps more accurately its victim, is the Nietzschean "Last Man" recast in a new mould as The Man of the World—designation that was at one stage intended to provide the general title of his multi-media and multi-disciplined epic of the 1920s. The eponymous central character of The Man of the World is understood

by Lewis as the "arch exponent" of a "strategy of defeat" in the modern world, whose "pedigree," however, as Lewis notes in an essay for The Calendar of Modern Letters, in 1925, "The Foxes' Case": "is longer than supposed."(CC 130) This is the figure of the spirit of passive nihilism whom Lewis continues in the same essay by portraying as a basic human type akin, in a number of important ways, to the Nietzschean slave who reaches his final incarnation in the "Last Man" of Zarathustra, and opposed, in Lewis's vision, to the more revolutionary and necessarily aristocratic (in the Nietzschean sense of an aristocracy of spirit rather than property) intellectual. This is a basic human type for whom, as he puts it in a second essay for the same journal in the following year, "Creatures of Habit and Creatures of Change," in the era of high capitalism, the millionaire, (who is also, conspiratorially, a necessary pawn in the structure which enables and encourages the second great religion of the passive nihilist hordes: communism), is the only possible ideal as all other values have been levelled. This is a figure, moreover, who:

> robs and murders his fellow Plain-man and Plain-woman; he thrusts them in millions into the shambles of war; he enslaves him in his factories. But *spiritually* he is his champion. He is everything the Plain-man would like to be *and nothing more*, strictly (spiritually) nothing more. It is this particular "nothing more," this spiritual modesty or poverty, that is the whole secret of his power: the congenial stratagem by which he secures his rule. He is the *conservative* element in humanity... the human animal who does not want to budge from the spot to which he has been pushed and driven by the urgent forces of evolution. (CC 143)

For Nietzsche, the "Last Man" or "ultimate man" was, arguably, a version of the affluent postmodern relativist, content in his or her situation, without want or

striving, without creative or spiritual yearnings beyond those determined by material consumption, accepting that all ethical or cognitive points of view are equally valid and that there is finally no good or bad, nor are such notions worth wasting time over. As Zarathustra describes it in the "Prologue":

> They still work, for work is entertainment. But they take care that entertainment does not exhaust them... No herdsman and one herd. Everyone wants the same thing, everyone is the same: whoever thinks otherwise goes voluntarily into the madhouse.[372]

A simulacrum of this figure, representing the final stage of passive nihilism before the possibility of the *Übermensch* begins to resolve itself into actuality,[373] and for whom Nietzsche indicates such contempt, is, intriguingly, described by Lewis as a Kantian in primitive disguise:

> There was undoubtedly a primitive strategist who on the termination of the first generation of men on the earth made up his accounts, reckoned his changes, put to himself something like Kant's three questions: What can we know? What should we know? What can we hope for? and came to the unpleasant conclusions: NOTHING. (CC 130)

In this understanding of Lewis as a genealogist of the decline of aesthetic and personal value, as an anatomist of nihilism, and here I take what I consider to be the underlying tenor of book two of Time and Western Man as well as large sections of The Art of Being Ruled, the movement towards the hypostasization

---

372 Nietzsche, Zarathustra 46.

373 The Übermensch has often been confused in secondary literature, including works by eminent commentators such as Kaufmann and Danto, with parallel Nietzschean types such as the genius, the free spirit or the higher man. As Schutte has argued carefully, however, the whole point about the übermensch is that he has never yet existed. See Ophelia Schutte, Beyond Nihilism: Nietzsche Without Masks (1984; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986) 117-124.

of human volition and identity into a single continuum of interiority or ideological flux—the product of a regressive functionalism that he believed to be the most important single characteristic of modernity's self-perception—had been initiated by certain strands of post-Enlightenment thinking which he sought to unravel the laser intensity of the critical eye. In particular, these were tendencies in which aesthetically necessary divisions in the subject—divisions of external form rather than of internal substance, or of the creative singularity of the individual rather than the replicative seriality of the Crowd—had been hijacked by a noumenal and deliquescent force whose provenance lay, largely if not entirely, with Kant's restatement of the other-worldly metaphysics of Christianity and Platonism through and by virtue of the trial of reason. It is not, however, Kant that is necessarily at fault here for Lewis, indeed, there is often a sense that he is sympathetic to much in the Kantian project, but rather, the aporia that Kant bequeathed to future generations; aporiai that were to be resolved subsequently through a variety of mediations, absolutes, syntheses and metaphysical divisions of self that he deplored. For in terms of personal identity as an active and reflective consistency of being, by subjecting the faculty of reason to his systematic critical tribunal Kant had not only managed to place the thinking subject at the centre of cosmology as the shaper of phenomenal experience, but had also provided that thinking subject with a noumenal double, whose ontological foundation could be, from thenceforth, grounded as firmly in reason as it might be in myth, for example, or in dream. Or, as Lewis describes

the methodological legacy of Kant in Time and Western Man, a legacy which applies as much for him to the supposed objectifications of science as it does to the vagaries of metaphysics or romantic art:

> When Kant was woken from his 'dogmatic slumber' he proceeded to invent what he called 'criticism', and since the main characteristic of that slumber was that it was 'dogmatic', his criticism was in the nature of things an undogmatic gesture. He became the greatest 'mediator' of the modern age. (TWM 237)

Lewis, however, qualifies this ostensibly positive assessment of the Kantian achievement, when he points out that:

> Ever since Kant, people have gone on 'mediating'. It is at the present stage of the proceedings highly questionable if this particular `critical' gesture of Kant's was such a blessing as it has been represented, or even, in the upshot, so undogmatical; for an orthodoxy of a critical order, founded in the 'meeting of extremes', has now become a dogma. (TWM 237)

It is a pathos towards the mediation of extremes, and particularly of the extremes of subject and object, or of the One and the Many, or of the spectator and the object of aesthetic contemplation, or of the empirical self and its noumenal double or "other"—that Lewis evidently chose to reject for some kind of "ineluctable modality," and especially one belonging to the realm of the visible rather than the tactile, at every point in his programme. It is, moreover, a sentiment with profound implications for his portrayal of single, divided and multiple subjectivity as these portraits may be said to indicate the way in which authentic intellectual energy had been expropriated by the instrumentalizing forces of modern rationality so as to shape ideas of time, space and personality to its greater operative efficiency—to its greater control over the mass of

humankind. Accordingly, it is a perspective on the process of reason as the will-to-mediation which has important consequences, also, for Lewis's analysis of the reification of the individual or personality into a mass-subject; of the transition of that entity, that is, from its most differential and autonomous denotation to one of a standardized simulacrum or "puppet" at the mercy of occluded cultural and metaphysical forces and agencies. In this, Lewis has much in common with Nietzsche's projected unveiling of the nihilism of modernity, his analysis of being and becoming, of reason and the body, as he does also with certain strands in the philosophical pessimism associated with Horkheimer and Adorno, especially in such works as The Eclipse of Reason and the Dialectic of Enlightenment. Indeed, as Horkheimer and Adorno noted in the aphoristic drafts included as appendices to the latter volume, as series of studies concerned as much with the negative consequences of Enlightenment rationality and pseudo-individualism as Lewis had been some twenty years before:

> The opinion that the levelling-down and standardization of men is accompanied...by a heightened individuality in the "leader" personalities that corresponds to the power they enjoy, is false and an ideological pretence. The modern Fascist bosses are not so much supermen as functions of their own propaganda machine, the focal points at which identical reactions of countless citizens intersect.[374]

It is, then, to Lewis's approach to the process of rationality itself—the central dynamic and measure of so much of modernity's reflection on its own processes —as the foil of artistic representation and personal identity as a rhetoric of

---

374 Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, Dialectic of Enlightenment, trans. John Cumming (1972; London: Verso, 1986) 236.

power, that I shall be attending to primarily in what follows. At the same time, I will be considering his analysis of the political implications of the division of self in its various guises and manifestations and his attempts, both in his fiction and criticism, to overcome or to exacerbate that division, depending on whether he viewed it as the result of a positive or a negative manipulation of value, through the fabrication of a non-metaphysical alternative to the realm of becoming; a site of non-temporal futurity divorced not only from the forms of interior consciousness that he so persistently attacked in art and literature, but also from the rule of what he clearly considered as the "Time-Cult's" two most despotic signifiers in the modern era: history and the unconscious.

Chapter Six

Satanic Laughter

> The chief source of the most serious evils affecting man is man himself; *homo homini lupus*. He who keeps this last fact clearly in view beholds the world as a hell, surpassing that of Dante by the fact that one man must be the devil of another.[375]
>
> God *values* man: that is the important thing to remember. It is this valuing that is so extraordinary. There are men who only value *power*. This is absurd, because power destroys value. Value can only exist with multiplicity. The only value for Sammael is solipsistic. I, Pullman, am acting in a valueless vacuum called Sammael.
> (MF 181-182)
>
> Laughter is satanic: it is therefore profoundly human. In man it is the consequence of his idea of his own superiority...[376]

In Malign Fiesta, the third and final published volume of Lewis's projected tetralogy from 1955, James Pullman finds himself embroiled in an infernal conspiracy as advisor to the chief of the fallen angels, Sammael, concerning the latter's project for a merging of the celestial and terrestrial realms through an inter-breeding of male angels and human females, and the intended creation of a new species of angelic, or possibly demonic, humans. It is a project intended, or so it seems to Pullman, as a decisive act of defiance against the "architect" of the universe and its dominions, whom Sammael notably refers to in the final and unfinished volume of The Human Age, tentatively entitled The Trial of Man, as "that big Nothing we call God." (MF 219)

---

375 Schopenhauer, World as Will II 577-578.

376 Baudelaire, Selected Writings, 148.

Sammael elaborates his plan to Pullman in the following terms:

> I am proposing a great revolution in everything about me. My position will be altering all the time.... In proposing to my fellow angels to change themselves from angels into men I am planning a liquefaction, as it were, of those titanic immortal units—their immortality will dissolve into mortality, their vast individual shapes will be cut up into thousands of facsimiles of themselves. There would be everywhere a swarming of ephemeral units in place of a world of larger and more stable things. (MF 142)

Within this quasi-theological caricature of sublunary post-war politics and social planning, (although Lewis would always insist, somewhat disingenuously, that the politics of the afterlife had nothing to do with those of Earth), it is possible to discern a thematic continuity across time between a number of Lewisian obsessions. For not only do we find in the relationship and conversation between Pullman and Sammael a consideration of the ancient antagonism between the One and the Many that so preoccupied the early and middle-period Lewis, but also an investigation of the consequences of a conflation of time and space into a single continuum to which he devoted his most considered enmity in Time and Western Man and The Childermass in the twenties. Not only do we have here an ironic presentation of his perennial resistance to any form of merging of the individual into the masses, into the rhythm or "poetry" of the crowd, but also to the merging of the female and the male in anything but the most transitory and corporeal, and indeed brutal, sense. This latter tendency, this virulent and deeply unpleasant misogyny, as has so often been noted, is everywhere apparent in the Lewisian oeuvre, but nowhere is it as concentrated and as obscenely graphic as in Malign Fiesta. Finally, not only do we find in

both Monstre Gai and Malign Fiesta a dramatization of his opposition to any interpenetration between the spectator and the spectacle, for Lewis a direct correlative of the "counters" of art and life—this, of course, being a central feature of the avant-garde from Futurism to Surrealism as Peter Bürger[377] has argued so influentially, and on to beyond Lewis's death in the legacy of Pop and Performance Art and certain forms of conceptualism; a feature lambasted in The Diabolical Principle, first published in Enemy 2 in 1929—but also, a typically Lewisian pre-emption of the culture of surface and simulation, of schizophrenia, implosion and ontological fragmentation, which has become a central theme in the work of a range of theorists of the postmodern, from Lewis's acolyte Marshall McCluhan through to thinkers as diverse in their orientation as David Harvey, Fredric Jameson and Jean Baudrillard. This is the realm of the "time philosophy" in which, to reiterate:

> Pattern, with its temporal multiplicity, and its *chronologic* depth, is to be substituted for the *thing*, with its one time, and its *spatial* depth. A crowd of hurrying shapes, a temporal collectivity, is to be put in the place of the single object of what it hostilely indicates as the "spatializing" mind. This new dimension introduced is the variable mental dimension of time. (TWM 172)

Within his more speculative political thought, such exploratory pre-emptions of many of the concerns of late capitalism that we find in his works of the fifties such as Malign Fiesta or The Demon of Progress in the Arts, can, as this latter passage indicates, be traced back in a reasonably continuous line to Lewis's

---

377 Peter Bürger, Theory of the Avant-Garde, trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

analysis of space, time and identity in Time and Western Man; a work which was, of course, to be a formative influence on the young Marshall McCluhan whilst at Cambridge, and subsequently, albeit indirectly, on the aesthetic nihilism of McLuhan's heir, Jean Baudrillard—providing a theoretic lineage which would, undoubtedly, have both fascinated and repelled Lewis. Most centrally for this dissertation, is the manner in which these themes derive from a particular fascination with the exigencies of time and space as they configure and reconfigure human identity through repetition—a supremely flexible conceptual tool which, as I have suggested above, is also crucial in its various forms to the theoretical map of modernity drawn up by diverse figures from Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Freud to Heidegger, Derrida and Deleuze, as it is also to Baudrillard, and in a manner with distinct resonances with Lewis, as I will show. It will, therefore, be the aim of this chapter to trace through the implications of Lewis and repetition for notions of space, time and identity in his work, so as to contextualize them within the post-Nietzschean tradition to which he belongs, and to indicate also how these ideas function in relation to broader conceptual systems such as rationality, totality, history or the unconscious, as these broader systems underpin the reading of Lewis's critical theory and fiction by his most incisive critic: Fredric Jameson.

To begin with, and bearing in mind his general future-orientation and contempt for history as a determining presence in art and culture, it is important to assess

the manner in which notions of futurity are dealt with by Lewis, and especially in relation to the Nietzschean images of repetition which the philosopher deploys so as to counter traditional historical consciousness in favour of a Dionysian present. Lewis, for instance, opens the second part of the philosophical half of Time and Western Man with an observation that epitomizes the critical tone not only of the sections that follow, but also of the various volumes and essays—including The Lion and the Fox, The Art of Being Ruled, and The Childermass—elements of which were originally intended to comprise his multi-volume critique of modernity in The Man of the World. Here, the reader's attention is drawn to a certain desultory apocalypticism that Lewis believed had invaded the humanities and the social and natural sciences, and indeed intellectual and artistic production generally, and which the author wished to have dismantled into its component parts and then have rebuilt in a more acceptable and forward-looking form. He writes:

> Millennial politics, it seems evident enough, have a very persuasive influence on philosophic thought to-day. The latter places its purely theoretical concepts, I believe (such as 'Time' notably), in a light that will be found attractive to the majority of contemporary sensibilities. (TWM 245)

In spite of the clearly prescriptive tenor of his critical treatise on the "Time Doctrine," however, Lewis does not claim at this point to be offering anything more than a clear exposition of the current position, which he will then, as he states in the conclusion:

> leave...in the hands of the reader, without further comment, in the belief that it will serve to throw into immediate relief the origins and

> implications of time-doctrine, in a form accessible to the general educated person. (TWM 451)

Such largesse on Lewis's part is prefigured the year before the publication of Time and Western Man in a brief meditation on the utopian dimension that might be gleaned from his thought, in a chapter from The Art of Being Ruled, entitled "Is 'Every One Unhappy in the Modern World?'" where he advises his reader that:

> No logical future has taken pictorial shape in these pages. All that has been done is to lay down a certain number of roads joining the present with something different from itself; yet something necessitated, it would appear, by its tendency. (ARB 357)

The essential point to be noted here is that of the cartographical image that Lewis provides of temporal progression and human volition as belonging to a plane of simultaneous multiple determinisms, whose ultimate directionality is as much dependent upon the interventions and agency of the reader, the spectator, the interpreter of interpretations, as it is upon the material or projected reality supposedly represented by the map or model. In other words, the future will run according to the relative configurations of forces already at work within the frame of the present, certainly, but these forces can be manipulated and re-channelled by significant individuals—genuinely experimental artists or intellectuals, rather than "revolutionary simpletons" such as Ezra Pound—who are prepared to perform as research engineers on the machinery of the present, and to represent their design of the future as an actuality as well as a virtuality, rather than some mere potentiality or utopian vision. In this sense, the material reality of the future

may be represented as a kind of text, but it is a text whose limits—and unlike a number of later theorists Lewis is always insistent that a text should have limits—are prescribed by strictly spatial rather than temporal considerations. The future exists as a text, that is, which may be read as a picture or a chart of what have subsequently been designated as time-lines, but they are time-lines divorced from their own temporality as either sequence or flow, and certainly from any hint of their historical determination or historicity. For a Lewis puts it in the first edition of BLAST, with clear, albeit indirect reference to Bergsonian virtuality—transformed by Lewis into a "fourth quantity":

> Everything absent, remote, requiring projection in the veiled weakness of the mind, is sentimental...
> "Just Life" or soi-distant "Reality" is a fourth quantity, made up of the Past, the Future and Art.
> This impure Present our Vortex despises and ignores. (B_1 147-148)

The evident dismissal of Bergsonian virtuality here requires Lewis to assert an alternative metaphysic of the future. But as is invariably the case with Lewis, the manner in which this metaphysic is asserted will be largely by proceeding negatively, and then drawing, in a typically occluded fashion, on the theories of his antagonists for support—in this case, as so often, on Nietzsche. The future in this sense is not something to be determined by the process of teleological and/or progressive reason, nor certainly by some hypostasized metaphysical force or will, nor by a dialectical or circular historical momentum, but instead, by a singular and creative agency of pure visualization.

Thus, and in spite of his disclaimers as to the prescriptive dimension of his philosophical and political projections, what can most certainly be gleaned overall from the critical and theoretical volumes of the Lewisian oeuvre, and particularly from Time and Western Man and The Art of Being Ruled, is a policy of strategic perspectivism on the process of reason itself, and especially as that process is directed towards future states of being or civilisation. It is a perspectivism that is also, largely because of his equation of the intellect with the frozen moment of artistic visualization—with the aesthetic fix of the eye— rooted absolutely in a notion of the singular intellect as something continuous with the realm of perception in an empirical sense, and yet prior to the experience of temporality as that which determines the cognition of representations within the perceptual field. What this can be shown to reveal, in contrast, for example, with the Kantian distinction between the realms of the cognitive and the perceptual, (and in common to an extent with the metaphysical aporia of the early Schopenhauer),[378] is Lewis's apparent desire to absorb the apparatus of cognition into the perspectival field without in any way sacrificing his notion of autonomously regulated and regulative rationality. In this sense, Lewis undoubtedly belongs less to the post-Kantian tradition than to the early

---

[378] Schopenhauer differs quite sharply from Kant here on the role of reason in relation to understanding and intuition. For Kant, sense and understanding combine to give us experience of phenomena, and the senses are understood as passive, whilst reason is active. For Schopenhauer, on the other hand, understanding is of less importance than intuition, and reason itself is passive, in that all it can produce is concepts. See Schopenhauer, Fourfold Root, 171.

Enlightenment exploration of reason as exemplified by the "eclectics", described by Diderot:

> The eclectic is a philosopher who, trampling underfoot prejudice, tradition, venerability, universal assent, authority—in a word, everything that overawes the crowd—dares to think for himself, to ascend to the clearest general principles, to examine them, to discuss them, to admit nothing save on the testimony of his own reason and experience.[379]

However, at the same time, Lewis is sufficiently enamoured of the post-Kantian fascination with creativity to assume that "general principles" are themselves the product, to a degree, of such creativity. Accordingly, in sharp contrast with much of the overtly reductivist forms of rationality prevalent at the time, especially within the positivist and instrumentalist traditions deriving from the nineteenth century, Lewisian rationality is intimately bound up with the assertion of its external representation, its creative arrangement as a display of what the rational process may conceal as well as what it may reveal. In other words, and at its most creative, Lewisian rationality is concerned primarily with the question of style itself, understood as an exhibition of both reason and volition in their most affirmative and future-oriented manifestations. It is an approach to style, moreover, and specifically philosophical style, that works expansively through the spatial arrangement or syncretization of its elements and/or arguments, and their repetition at various points in a series or a pattern, rather than by virtue of their logical or temporal progression, or even necessary connection with one another.

---

379 Cited by Charles Taylor, Sources of Self: The Making of Modern Identity (1989; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) 323.

In this sense, it is an approach concerned less with either the instrumental or even transcendental qualities of reason per se, than with the display of particular forms of reason as aggregates of figural intensities and densities, collated around a central point or singularity variously represented by Lewis as the static heart of the vortex, the abyss at the heart of human identity, or, as Sammael views it in cosmological terms: "that big Nothing we call God."

Such a procedure when applied to ostensibly theoretical writing or what he describes as philosophical criticism, rather than to more overtly imaginative or literary writing, or to the visual manifesto or speculative essay, may, even in the post-Derridean age in which critical theory currently operates, generate certain hermeneutical problems that may then leave the texts open to charges of incoherence or eclecticism for eclecticism's sake, as was evidenced by the responses cited in chapter one. However, as is so often the case when dealing with the grander claims of Wyndham Lewis as they intervene through and across the range of his works, the most productive way to approach his version of rationality as the regulative or guiding principle that he undoubtedly felt it to be, is, finally, by his own lights: that is, by disconnecting it from the reductive machinery of rationality that dismisses the metaphorical or the rhetorical as mere embellishment and views its own processes and connections as somehow purified of extraneous metaphysical or meta-critical elements. Equally important in the light of his persistent use of satirical indirection as both critique and

commentary on that critique—by treating the whole with a little less than absolute seriousness, (at least in the sense that "seriousness" might be equated here less with intellectual gravity than with a particular form of hermeneutical earnestness, quite likely to miss far more than it reveals). And it is here especially, in the relation between style and reason, between satirical indirection and conceptual trajectory, that a reflexive form of iteration can be used to illuminate the methods and methodology of Lewis. For as he puts its in stanza viii of "The Song of the Militant Romance," the second section of his verse satire on temporality and its discontents, "One-Way Song," in a passage which was deployed in a slightly different, though related, context in chapter five, and is re-cited here in a sense and a context that extends far beyond its immediate reference:

> Do not expect a work of the classic canon.
> Take binoculars to these nests of camouflage—
> Spy out what is *half-there*—the page under the page.
> Never demand the integral—never completion—
> Always what is fragmentary—the promise, the presage—
> Eavesdrop upon the soliloquy—stop calling the spade spade—
> Neglecting causes always in favour of their effects—
> Reading between the lines—surprising things half-made—
> Preferring shapes spurned by our intellects.
> (CPP 33)

Or as he indicates a little earlier:

> Swept of your feet, be on the look out for the pattern.
> It is the chart that matters—the graph is everything!
> (CPP 31)

So it is that one can find that in the main and eponymous section of "One-Way Song," amidst his mockery of nostalgia or tradition through the satiric assertion

of the inevitable mono-directionality of time's arrow, and in tandem with his characteristically merciless assault on those supposed avant-gardists of theory who hold that the future will be the product of historical forces to which we should merely adhere or succumb: —

> The headlong flux is frontal and reverseless:
> It has *direction*—the earth has *surfaces.*
> Back-to-the-engine travellers are those
> Who wish out of their spines to sprout a nose—
> Our tri-classed life express carries oh so far more
> Back to the engine fares than those face-fore.
> (CPP 72)

—that Lewis retains a sense, beyond his satiric facade and prompted by the indirections of invective and reflective mockery, of the anticipation of the future as a nothingness or emptiness that might be both grasped and shaped by meta-temporal hands and eyes. It is a covert and tactical assertion of the operation of reason as an instrument which, (and in spite of his ostensible insistence on the mono-directionality of time), reaches back *from* the future to shape the present. Or, (and again to reiterate a passage cited in an earlier chapter), as he writes more explicitly on this theme towards the end of his "Essay on the Objective of Plastic Art in our Time" some years earlier in 1921:

> You handle with curiosity and reverence a fragment belonging to some civilisation developed three millennia ago. Why cannot you treat the future with such respect?

And continues:

> The future possesses its history as well as the past, indeed. All living art is the history of the future. The greatest artists, men of science and political thinkers, come to us from the future—from the opposite direction to the past. (WLOA 213-214)

That his paradoxical inversion of time's arrow is not merely a pictorial or metaphysical conceit, however, but also a prescriptive and political proposition for Lewis, is evident when in the first BLAST manifesto, and again towards the end of The Art of Being Ruled, he advocates the adoption of a perspective "*beyond action and reaction*"— a fundamentally Nietzschean position—in relation to the idea of revolution and change as it had evolved through the early years of the twentieth century. Such a perspective may begin to explain the seeming contradictions in his critical perspective on temporality, such as, for example, his assertion from the first Vorticist manifesto that whilst, on the one hand:

> The new vortex plunges to the heart of the Present....
> With our Vortex the Present is the only active thing.
> The Present is art.

And yet, on the other:

> Our Vortex insists on water-tight compartments.
> There is no Present—there is Past and Future, and there is Art.
> (B_1 147)

What is most centrally at issue here is what Lewis conceives of as an erroneous and degenerate association between reason and temporal progression; an association that could be said to have provided the dominant ethos of modernity and which both Lewis and Nietzsche tried to expose and subvert through the manipulation of literary style. It is an association that may be clarified by reference to Nietzsche himself, who in an essay on asceticism and what he calls the "incorporate will to contradiction" that enables the ascetic thinker who has internalized his *ressentiment* against time to assert that: "*there is* a realm of truth and

being, but reason is firmly *excluded* from it!" argues that there is, nonetheless, value in the violation of reason in that it enables one to become more fully aware of the plurality of perspectives available to the creative individual.[380] It is an argument further developed in a notable passage from Twilight of the Idols on "Reason in Philosophy" where Nietzsche describes the inherent error involved in the relation between perception and cognition in terms of the genealogical development of philosophical suspicion:

> Change, mutation, becoming in general were formerly taken as proof of appearance, as a sign of presence of something which led us astray. Today, on the contrary, we see ourselves as it were entangled in error, *necessitated* to error, to precisely the extent that our prejudice in favour of reason compels us to posit unity, identity, duration, substance, cause, materiality, being; however sure we may be... *that* error is to be found here.[381]

Nietzsche continues by alluding to Heraclitus's famous gnome on perceptual and cognitive illusion in which he states without comment that the sun is the same size as the human foot. His point being that reason's embedding in language is parallel to this illusion in the modern era, in that it guides our thought processes and our visions and projections without our being fully aware of its operation. Thus he continues:

> The situation is the same as with the error of the sun: in that case error has our eyes, in the present case our *language* as a perpetual advocate. Language belongs in its origin to the age of the most rudimentary form of psychology: we find ourselves in the midst of

---

[380] Nietzsche, Genealogy, 91-92.

[381] Nietzsche, Twilight, 37.

> a rude fetishism when we call to mind the basic presuppositions of the metaphysics of language—which is to say, of *reason.*[382]

It is then, to counter this ascendancy of an arbitrary and inadequate model of reason that Nietzsche develops his various philosophical tools such as transvaluation, eternal recurrence and perspectivism. The latter is especially important here for Lewis, for while he was in no sense a pluralist as regards reason itself—at least not in the anarchistic epistemological style of some later theorists—his prioritization of perception as the measure of reason undoubtedly leads him to a combination of empiricism which he derives from Berkeley, and a form of perspectivism with clear parallels to Nietzsche. And this in turn, because of his "occupational bias," leads him towards a desire for a supra-perspectivism as represented by an escape from temporality through vision.

For Nietzsche, as was outlined above, and in a move that invites comparison with that attempted by Lewis on several levels:

> There is *only* a perspective seeing, *only* a perspective 'knowing'; the *more* affects we allow to speak about a thing, the *more* eyes, various eyes we are able to use for the same thing, the more complete will be our 'concept' of the thing, our objectivity.[383]

This seminal comment by Nietzsche on the mechanics of his philosophical style comes in the third essay of what is surely one of the most sophisticated, virulent and influential attacks on egalitarianism and utilitarianism in the modern period,

---

[382] Nietzsche, Twilight, 37.

[383] Nietzsche, Genealogy, 93.

On the Genealogy of Morality, and it is an attack whose overall tenor and direction Lewis appears happy to follow, (with, of course, the happily Nietzschean proviso that such "following" means here to reshape his thought to one's own ends), in The Art of Being Ruled. For as he makes abundantly clear, his own perspectivism on the future is one that would seek at the very least to extract: "...from the pure revolutionary impulse of creative thought all those corrupt imitations which confuse so much the issue, in their over-night utilitarian travesties." (ARB 359) In this discussion of revolution, creativity and the autonomous individual, Lewis further advises his readers to:

> Use your revolutionary impulse as a magic carpet to transport you constantly into the future: this will act healthily on your present. You will fly back to your present to see how it is progressing, and you will find it very slowly sprouting with less impatience than if you were unable to imagine its ever becoming anything else but what it is. (ARB 359)

Through images such as these, Lewis presents the reader with an anticipation of the future as a quantum of available energy which, in its challenge to the despotism of time's arrow and its assertion of a kind of *übermensch* or adept who can invert the effects of this despotism through the exercise of creative intellect, is undeniably reminiscent of certain sections in Nietzsche, and particularly the later Nietzsche of The Gay Science or Twilight of the Idols, albeit through the "nests of camouflage" that he feels compelled to arrange around such allusions or too evident influences. Indeed, it is on the whole the multiple *directionality* of the combined machinery of reason, creativity, objectivity and subjectivity, its power to generate the future, to produce forms in the void, and to give shape and

significance to experience through a perennial moment exempted from time rather than extended through time, rather than reason's formal properties as calculation or ratiocination, that is central to the more destructive elements of Lewis's critical programme. For whilst the process of Lewisian reasoning in his critical works is very evidently calculative of potential future effects in its tactical appropriation of the idea of the intellect, or of the individual, or of the concept of revolution, it is, nonetheless, decidedly anti-instrumentalist in the understanding of instrumentalism as the calculation of effects as the *measure* of means.

What Lewis wishes to oppose, or at least position here, as he makes evident in his study of Shakespeare, identity and culture in The Lion and the Fox, is precisely this neo-Machiavellian tendency in modern thought, in that the scientific-political attitude which he identifies as beginning with Machiavelli, is essentially a closed attitude determined by a specific vision of time as a medium of reason rather than of creativity and openness, of the return and repetition of the same, in Deleuzean terms, rather than the return and repetition of difference. In this sense, in his frequent and paradoxical use of the idea of the future as a resource for the present, Lewis's perspective on the movement of reason as a creative appropriation and arrangement of ideas in the service of the individuated consciousness can be said to bear some affinity with the sketches that Nietzsche made towards a theory of chance in the *Nachlass*, where he notes:

> Theory of Chance. The soul a selective and self-nourishing entity, perpetually extremely shrewd and creative... To recognise the active

> force in the chance event: —chance itself is only the clash of creative impulses.[384]

Nietzsche's elliptical expression of the radical creativity of the subject through an embrace and affirmation of the will-to-chance as a conflict of forces, a primal repetition, may also be understood on its most fundamental level as an aspect of what Bernd Magnus has described as Nietzsche's "existential imperative"[385]—his notorious desire to "to impose upon becoming the character of being" as the supreme moment of the will to power.[386] It is an imperative that he derived at least in part from and in response to his belief in the failure and fatuity of teleological thinking in general, in Twilight of the Idols, and progressivist thinking by clear implication, and his attempt to find an alternative. Here, in "The Four Great Errors," which is arguably the most condensed summation of later Nietzschean thought published within his lifetime, he writes that:

> Man is not the effect of some special purpose, of a will, of a goal; nor is he the object of an attempt to attain an "ideal of humanity" or an "ideal of happiness" or an "ideal of morality." It is absurd to wish to devolve one's essence in some goal or other. We have invented the concept of "goal": in reality there is no goal.[387]

Nietzsche's observation that teleology and notions of purpose generally are a strictly human invention, carries with it the accusation that philosophies of self or

---

[384] Nietzsche, Will to Power, 355.

[385] Bernd Magnus, Nietzsche's Existential Imperative (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978).

[386] Nietzsche, Will to Power, 330.

[387] I have used Kaufmann's translation here, as it brings out the sense more clearly than Hollingdale's. As cited in Bernd Magnus, Stanley Stewart & Jean-Pierre Mileur, Nietzsche's Case: Philosophy as/and Literature (London: Routledge, 1993) 75.

society, or indeed nature or cosmos, that hint at some grand temporal design or eschatological unveiling or utopian inevitability are fundamentally inauthentic, the result of a passive nihilism that shies away from the existential loneliness and contingency of life, and hence its tragic creativity. It is a perspective with which Lewis tends to concur, noting in his "Essay on the Objective of Plastic Art in our Time," for instance, that "there is never an *end;* everything of which our life is composed, pictures and books as much as anything else, is a means only, in the sense that the work of art exists in the body of the movement of life." (WLOA 200) Lest this might seem to indicate that Lewis is moving in the direction of some form of vitalism, the author continues by making it abundantly clear that life and the art within it is certainly not akin to "Bergsonian impressionism" or Italian Futurism, but is closer to the ideal set up by Schopenhauer when he plucks the "object out of the stream" of time to create an object beyond the flux. Bergsonism, for Lewis, is obsessed with the uniqueness of the art object in the stream of time. Such "uniqueness"—paradoxically— homogenizes art and disperses it across a plane of ontological consistency, which places it on the same level as anything else. Instead, Lewis opts for a certain repetition and contingency, which is more than mere uniqueness, and which allows for genuine emergence and immanence in the work. It is a sense of repetition and contingency that leads him to associate both art and intellect with games, rather than with goals, and his definition of the role of art and artistic aspiration is rarely better put than in this essay, when he writes that:

> According to my view, all intellectual endeavour is in the same contingent category as cricket or billiards...The art impulse reposes upon a conviction that the state of limitation of the human being is more desirable than that of the automaton... To feel that our consciousness is bound up with this non-mechanical phenomen (sic) of life; that, although helpless in the face of the material world, we are in some way superior to and independent of it; and that or mechanical imperfection is a symbol of that. (WLOA 204)

Having very eloquently summed up the underlying ontological motivation for the art impulse, Lewis concludes this passage with an observation redolent with Freudian speculations on repetition and the death drive:

> In art we are in a sense playing at being what we designate as matter. We are entering the forms of the mighty phenomena around us, and seeing how near we can get to being a river or a star, without actually *becoming* that. (WLOA 204)

The italicized participle is, of course, absolutely crucial here. For to allow the process of "becoming" into the equation would be too fall into the Bergsonian rather than the Schopenhauerian camp, and allow the flux to take precedence over the stasis of "being." Such considerations apply not only to the art object, moreover, but to the human subject also—at least to the kind of human subject that Lewis has a particular interest in promoting. This is a subject who has grasped the nihilism of the present and the qualified usefulness of past and seeks to embrace the affirmation of the future instead; a place "uninfected with too many old murders, and stale sweetheartings"; a place of true creativity and vision, to the extent that:

> ...every poet, painter or philosopher worth the name has in his composition a large proportion of *future* as well as of past. The more he has, the more prophetic intuition, and the more his energy

> appears to arrive from another direction to that of the majority of men... the better poet, painter or philosopher he will be. (WLOA 213)

Accordingly, when he continues by noting that: "*The Present man in all of us is a machine,*" and then connects this particular machinery of self with the backward looking masses; with:

> the majority, of machine like, restless and hard individuals, who positively rattle with a small, hollow, shaken ego; or... throb and purr with the present vibration of a plodding and complacent, mechanism. (WLOA 213)

—which he then contrasts to his preferred "man of the future, the man who is in league with time," who is "as engrossed away from the actual as the first man is in his dear past." (WLOA 213), he is, and despite his protests to the contrary, promoting a distinctly Nietzschean vision of a potential for human identity in its most creative and affirmative and future-oriented aspect. It is a postulated identity for whom (or which) the question of value and the volitional element in the construction or generation of value is of considerably more importance than any disabling acquiescence— and on this Lewis and Nietzsche concur—in the values of the utilitarian herd, for example, or the democratic mass. As Nietzsche wrote somewhat chillingly:

> The good of the majority and the good of the minority are conflicting moral standpoints: we leave it to the naïvety of English biologists to view the first as higher in value as *such*... *All* sciences must, from now on, prepare the way for the future work of the philosopher: this work being understood to mean that the philosopher has to solve the *problem of values* and that he has to decide on the *hierarchy of value*.-[388]

---

388 Nietzsche, Genealogy, 37.

In this sense, Lewis's "man of the future" may be understood as an ecstatic (in the sense of *ek-stasis*, of a standing-out, that is, of vision rather than one of affect) projection of an autonomous and value-generating self for whom, as Nietzsche puts it in the second of his Untimely Meditations: "The past always speaks as an oracle: only as master builders of the future who know the present will you understand."[389] This aphoristic fragment from "On the Uses & Disadvantages of History for Life" belongs, of course, to the early Nietzsche of the period immediately following on from The Birth of Tragedy; to the Nietzsche, that is, still partially under the sway of both Schopenhauer and Wagner, and yet at the same time in rebellion against the more reductive forms of historical and pseudo-mythical discourse then so prevalent in Europe that were, he felt, turning the face of modernity away from a vertiginous and Dionysian future towards a safe and anaemic past. It is the Nietzsche for whom we live—*we* being generalized Europeans of the latter half of the nineteenth century, and particularly those who are (fundamentally or potentially) resistant to the herd mentality, though perhaps swamped by its regulations and judgements—in a world in which our consciousness is in large part defined, but also assailed, by the sense of our historical nature as a culture or a people or race, or even as a species. It is a sense that has had the general effect of ossifying our potential for authentic self-identity in an attenuated present moment laden with its own pastness. This ossification

---

389 Cited in Joan Stambaugh, The Problem of Time in Nietzsche, trans. John F. Humphrey (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1987) 52.

or reification has had the further consequence of oppressing us in our movement towards the future, creating in us a kind of stupor, akin, he suggests, to the exhaustion of the insomniac or somnambulist.

In the poisonous flowering of modernity we have become incapable of forgetting the past, of dropping the burden of history on which we have come to depend, and to escape this condition we must learn again to understand our fundamentally *un*historical and creative nature, which he designates in this meditation as "the art and power of *forgetting* and enclosing oneself within a bounded horizon."[390] Alternatively, we can aspire to a meta-temporal condition through the aesthetic and the spiritual dimensions of becoming; a condition which he describes as *supra*historical and describes in the following terms: "I call 'suprahistorical' the powers which lead the eye away from becoming towards that which bestows upon existence the character of the eternal and stable, towards *art* and *religion.*"[391] If we adopt the former path, he continues, we can begin to use the idea of history and all it contains as a vehicle for emergent life, for radical productivity, rather than be used by the idea of history and its attendant historiography, (whether that writing be what he classifies as monumental,

---

390 Nietzsche, Untimely Meditations, 120.

391 Nietzsche, Untimely Meditations, 120.

antiquarian or critical),[392] as a vehicle for stultifying regimentality and personal slavery to a redundant moral, political and intellectual system. Intriguingly for Lewis's own position on the decadence of temporality as a fundamental value, especially in its Bergsonian variant, the individual who is unable to exploit the power of forgetting in Nietzsche's deployment of the term:

> would no longer believe in his own being... would see everything flowing asunder in moving points and would lose himself in the stream of becoming.[393]

Aside from the underlying affirmation of "life" in this early essay, its general thesis is certainly not too far removed from the view of the impulse to history and historicizing adopted by Lewis in the 1920s and 1930s in his dealings with historians and other assorted chronophiles such as, notably, Oswald Spengler, when in his attempt to travel beyond the defiles into which he felt modernity was fast becoming mired, he specified the concept of the *present*, in particular, as having acquired all the characteristics of a nihilistic entrapment. In this formulation, history has taken the form of a musical expression of an underlying metaphysical force or will, the present has become the repository of all the *ressentiment*, directed against what Nietzsche described as the "it was," and the forward-looking moment has been suppressed in favour of a backward-looking

---

392 Nietzsche largely follows his own advice on history from hereon, as there are only passing references to history and historiography in his subsequent writings. This is in keeping with his notion of himself as a philosopher of the future.

393 Nietzsche, Untimely Meditations, 62.

and reactive conceptual prison through which equally reactive forms of power are able to operate with an insidious and occluded efficiency.

By way of illustration of the political consequences of this metaphysic of history, towards the end of Paleface, he notes that in its currently understood form as contemporaneity:

> *The Present can only be revealed to people when it has become Yesterday...* people are historically minded, and this, again and again must be stressed. It is by taking advantage of this human peculiarity that the politician invariably operates, and brings off his most tragic *coups.* (P 269)

Whilst Lewis may have been deeply critical of the political marionettes who manipulated and who were manipulated by "history" and temporality for reactive ends, it could hardly be said that he demonstrated the slightest degree of empathy towards either the active or passive victims of the "tragic *coups,*" nor did he ever choose to extend any calls to liberty or liberation to the subjects of the regimes that such coups invariably brought into being. In this sense, once again, Lewis occupies a position analogous to the still centre of the vortex that he promoted in his early career; a position essential to, though forever detached from, the ideological and cultural forces swirling around the empty point that nonetheless defines it as a pattern of potentially monstrous energy. Paradoxically, perhaps, at the heart of this resistance to political commitment is a concern with the very thing that his nihilating models of human consciousness would seem to largely preclude: freedom and agency. For Lewis, as was discussed in chapter four, the

post-enlightenment concern with revolution and progress, in tandem with the broader process of industrialization and the growth of mass-media, as well as a range of social philosophies such as egalitarianism, utilitarianism, syndicalism as represented in the work of Georg Sorel, and, indeed, most forms of democratism or socialism, have led to a condition in which the idea of freedom itself has thus been hijacked by the deliquescent forces of modernity. Thus:

> The conventional libertarianism of a century ago envisaged this latter form of personal freedom, this *prose of the individual*, as it could be called. The libertarianism of today rejects with horror the idea of that "independence." In place of the *prose of the individual* it desires the *poetry of the mass*; in place of the *rhythm of the person*, the *rhythm of the crowd*. (ARB 130)

In this passage, a pivotal moment of self-summary in The Art of Being Ruled, Lewis continues by relating his principle of the "poetry" of the mass to a more generally Schopenhauerian inclination in modern society, at least as he sees it, towards selflessness; a selflessness which, in contrast to Schopenhauer himself who equates such a moment with the intensity of a true aesthetic experience, is subservient to the machinic culture of abstraction and standardization in which science, in particular, is the most ardent expression of a desire for or will towards the annihilation of self. Thus, in a paragraph reminiscent in a number of ways of Nietzsche's discussion of the ascetic in On the Genealogy of Morality, but also, of the inheritance of Schopenhauer evident in the Freudian notion of the death drive, Lewis claims of this poeticization of self, that:

> The extreme expression of this desire is the jesuit (sic) ideal of self-annihilating obedience, so that the adept becomes a disinterested machine, ecstatically obedient, delighted to find himself in the

> power of another person, his superior in will and vitality. The very principle of authority is his bride. That is the release of ecstasy, absolute repose of the *will*... also complete abandonment of the principle of self, which is the principle of effort too, and the cause of all suffering. (ARB 130-131)

What so much of the discussion of the "individual" in The Art of Being Ruled would seem to indicate is a nostalgic vision of the late eighteenth century bourgeois subject, the "*The Phantom Man of the Democratic Enlightenment*" as this figure is described by Lewis. This is a figure who is both taken as a model by Lewis, and at the same time, attacked as a simulacrum generated historically by the tendency towards abstraction that lies at the heart of the enlightenment project; a tendency that he wishes to expose and redirect into something approaching his "man of the future."

Within this expression of critical nostalgia, however, (as is so often the case with Lewis), he retains the image of a fundamental split within the modern subject. It is a split that forever seeks resolution, resulting in a kind of interminable homesickness that pervades so much of his work, but a homesickness that seems, so often, to have no clear denotation as to what that home might be. In this, as I have suggested above, Lewis is not too removed from certain elements in the speculative critique of enlightenment associated with the Frankfurt School. For as Horkheimer and Adorno argued in Dialectic of Enlightenment, with particular reference to the figures of Kant, Nietzsche and Sade, the escape of subjectivity from its mythic past through science and reason, through the dreams of

enlightenment as epitomized by the drive to maturity associated with Kant in philosophy and political theory, or by notions of historical progress of determinism from Laplace to Marx, was subverted from the outset by a division of self in which internal nature was divorced from external nature and either objectified as other, as a reified ensemble of social elements subject to abstract forces, or "phantomized" into spirit or some variety of a generalized will or evolutionary force. For Horkheimer and Adorno, following Weber's notion of the "disenchantment of the world" that results from the encroachment of instrumental reason into all aspects of modern life,[394] the sacrifice involved in this divorce between subject and object, between internal nature as the experience and expression of value and external nature as the apprehension of fact, led to a sense of conflict and alienation whose resolution was often, and in some cases tragically, sought through a "return" to mythic structures of consciousness and culture. It is a sentiment that, through a more ostensibly inter-personal conceit, Arghol expresses with a painful acuity to his disciple Hanp, when he explains:

> I wanted to make you myself: you understand?
> Every man who wants to make another HIMSELF, is seeking
> a companion for his detached ailment of self.
> (CPP 109)

---

394 Weber, of course, himself borrowed the notion of "disenchantment" from Schiller. See Max Weber, "Science as a Vocation," in From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, ed and trans. H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (1948; London: Routledge, 1991) 148.

Throughout both versions of Enemy of the Stars, Arghol suffers from an agonizing nostalgia for self-unity, for a homeland of self, to which he refuses to surrender, becoming instead the conscious enemy of external nature rather than simply its master: and as a consequence the enemy of internal nature also. This resistance to resolution, dramatized through a number of Lewis's double-acts or "pseudo-couples," has important consequences for the later castigation of him as a fascist fellow traveller. For as Horkheimer and Adorno observe in their reading of Homer's Odyssey as an archetype of Western rationality divorcing itself from myth, the protagonist in the epic is driven by a form of homesickness:

> that gives rise to adventures through which subjectivity... escapes from the prehistoric world. The quintessential paradox of the epic resides in the fact that the notion of the homeland is opposed to myth—which the fascist would falsely present as homeland.[395]

However one chooses to view the entwinement of myth and enlightenment through the agency of instrumental rationality set out here, and it hardly need to be emphasized that this is a reading of subjectivity and modernity as contentious as it is influential,[396] the opposition between subject and object and the numerous attempts at reconciliation between these two primary aspects of consciousness and/or being from the late eighteenth century onwards, which Lewis refers to as the Kantian "mediation of extremes," undoubtedly signalled a radical change in the way in which the subject, and consequently space and time,

---

395 Adorno and Horkheimer 78.

396 A brief and cogent critical account of the dilemmas generated by this reading may be found in Habermas, Philosophical Discourse, 106-130.

could be treated from thereon. For to accomplish the ground rules of certainty and knowledge, to establish the conditions for a pure epistemology which might parallel developments in science, the Kantian subject in the first critique and its supplements had to be split, as we have seen, into an empirical self which might be observed as the self of psychology or of reflection, on the one hand, a passive and reflective ego that exists in time—and a transcendental ego, on the other hand, that was consistent with itself at the same time as it provided the ground for the possibility of genuine knowledge through its capacity to synthesize or divide past, present and future events into new determinations. In combination with the legacy of Rousseau for the ideas of will and of revolution that also resonate powerfully through the following two centuries of European thought, (a legacy that Lewis treats with curious indirection through a discussion of Proudhon in The Art of Being Ruled)[397], this division of self in Kant and the various attempts that followed to schematize it through reflection, to oppose it to its absence in negation, or to synthesize it into a unity with spirit or myth, will or history, duration or desire, society or state, can be said to provide the central tension behind the political and conceptual adventures of the subject in modernity. His division of the subject into the empirical and the transcendental ego, for example, undoubtedly led by a series of diverse paths to the eventual submergence of at least one aspect of that self into a quasi-noumenal realm most

---

397 Indeed, Lewis's attitude towards Rousseau here seems to be largely one of admiration in that, like Bakunin but unlike Proudhon, he is deemed a genuine revolutionary. He is also regarded by Lewis as decidedly alien to the European sensibility: a true adversary, in fact.

generally designated, whether in affirmation or rejection, as the Unconscious. It is a realm or model or myth of the hidden quarters of the psyche which has, from Fichte, Schopenhauer and Von Hartmann through the twin turning points represented by Nietzsche and Freud, and then on to the tradition of psychoanalysis associated with Lacan, Kristeva, and then Žižek and their contemporaries and followers, problematized the availability to consciousness of the source of its desire, its drive and its volition, let alone its autonomous identity as a social, political or indeed a gendered self.

For Lewis, perennially concerned with the individuation of the volitional element in the construction of values and of art and diametrically opposed to any occultation of drives or instincts as emanations from the mythic Unconscious or feminized *chora*, ("what Plato meant by the 'mob of the senses', or rather ... where they are found" (TWM 301)), this tendency by the early twentieth century, and in combination with parallel developments in science, literature and political theory, had resulted in a form of passive and highly regimented nihilism in which the masses—the newly atomized Leviathan of industrial society—had been allowed to colonize the intellectual and creative life of the West through a perpetual re-moulding of the notion of the individual to suit its collective and utilitarian ends. It had done this, moreover, through tactics of analogy and homology based on "feminine" notions of flux and flow, rather than through a more healthy and openly discursive and "masculine" conflict of ideas. In other

words, it had achieved its aims primarily through the coercive power of language and the cunning of a sensual and deliquescent temporality.

The Unconscious, in this sense, is understood by Lewis less as a realm of drives or forces—as a mechanism of displacement and flow as it had been depicted in the works of Nietzsche or Freud, or the seat of sexual passions in the Anthropology of Kant (TWM 301-302), or even that curious topology whereby monads are linked through a cosmic membrane in Leibniz, as Lewis notes in passing (TWM 301/305)—than as a strategy born out of the collective turpitude of the Western spirit: a strategy which had taken, as with so much else in the period of high modernity, a distinctly linguistic turn. Accordingly, Lewis attempted to fight back by deploying language visually, by defying the proximous and haptic sensuality of the mysterious "other" with the optical and the idiogrammatic, by forming symmetries of conspiracy in prose. Thus is Time and Western Man, for example, he writes that:

> a long time ago a battle was engaged between the *Unconscious* and the *conscious*, and we have been witnessing the ultimate triumph of the *Unconscious* in recent years. The *Individual* and that apart of him that is *not* individual, also joined issue: for the civil war was taken up in the interior economy of personality…(TWM 300)

Having drawn up his battle lines through metaphors of internality and defeat, Lewis then continues through a characteristic axiological division of forces which might seem arbitrary were it not for the consistency of the creative examples he

provides for justification; with the deployment of repetition as a kind of visual metaphor:

> Inside us also the crowds were pitted against the individual, the Unconscious against the Conscious, the 'emotional' against the 'intellectual', the Many against the One. So it is that *the subject* is not gently reasoned out, but violently hounded from every cell of the organism: until at last... he plunges into the *Unconscious* where Dr. Freud, like some sort of mephistotelian Dr. Caligari, is waiting for him. (TWM 300-301)

From its position of exile beyond the flow of time, the autonomous Lewisian subject adopts masks or divides into battalions of multiple personae as a way of defending itself against any further encroachment by the mass-subject in its striving for homogeneity and equivalence through the newly hypostasized "*will-to-merge*," whether in its historical or psychological manifestation. This, in theory at least, allows the Lewisian subject to strike back as forcibly as it has itself been struck by the dissolving tactics of modernity, and especially those tactics represented by the advance of the Unconscious and its cognates into the everyday life of the individual mind.

It is, then, this extended notion of the "Unconscious"—though notably with far less direct reference to Freud or psychoanalysis than one might imagine—that Lewis singles out as the mastercode of the masses, legitimized by figures from Schopenhauer onwards as the source and repository of all supra-volitional force and hence of all value. And it is this latter claim that Lewis is most ardent to expose as the favoured nostrum of the puppets of modernity as they appeal to an

internal, temporal, subconscious myth as the origin or "homeland" of personal, cultural or even metaphysical identity. Commenting, for example, on the blind, insatiable will of Schopenhauer as a (largely unwitting) precursor to the malaise of modernity, as represented by a celebration of—or at least resignation to—the forces, flows and drives of the Unconscious, he writes that for the philosopher of pessimism:

> The *individual*... was a thing confined entirely to perceptual life. Schopenhauer insisted that under all circumstances the individual should be kept in the most unequivocal subordination to his conception of the Will. (TWM 306)

What is most immediately striking in this summary of the fragmentation of the will into subjectivities is the rhetorical manner in which the philosopher, rather than being presented as the pure metaphysician of the hypostasized *ding-an-sich*, becomes instead the legislator and tactician of that force in its genuine manifestation as social control or ideology—especially in its policing of the modern individual. In this deployment of eristic and caricature in an illustrative example of the genealogy of a concept through its progenitors, Lewis's profound suspicion of metaphysics as the hidden expression of power undoubtedly echoes Nietzsche's criticism of the Schopenhauerian will and its cognates, even if it rather muffles the force of Nietzsche's rejection of the concept by failing to deal adequately with its provenance in Schopenhauer's highly pertinent reading of Plato and Platonism. Similar to Nietzsche, also, if only in its general effects, is Lewis's advocation of the idea of the individual as multiplicity: an idea which he then confounds through his tendency to homogenize diversity and difference in

what one can only assume he perceived as a tactic of mimetic inversion. He begins with exposition:

> The *Will* is unconditioned: it is 'free from all multiplicity. It is itself one.' The Will is outside the *principium individuationis*, i.e. the possibility of multiplicity, altogether. (TWM 307)

—and then continues with a conflation which, because it is so exemplary of Lewis's amalgamative tendencies and underlying contentions, I shall re-cite:

> Schopenhauer's Will is really the 'life force' or 'élan vital,' the hypostasized 'duration' of Bergson, the Time-God of Spengler, Alexander, Whitehead, etc. (TWM 307)

On one level, then, this welding together of disparate metaphysical entities, repeated constantly with minor variations throughout Lewis's critical writings, might be viewed as a kind of subversion through philosophical satire: a transformation of diversity and multiplicity into a singular internal surface as a form of immanent criticism, a surface which then collides with its object and thereby reinforces the externality of Lewis's critique:

> There is one philosophy for the surface skin (for everyday "life", and another philosophy for the intestines. Schopenhauer's, and that of his disciple Eduard Von Hartmann, is of the latter type. The dark volitional Unconscious on which their system is built, with *music* as its highest accompaniment, unsealed forever from the lips of the science-sphinx. (TWM 306)

This reading would certainly accord with many of his more Nietzschean comments on the "surface life" in the 1920s, as it would with the theory of satire he attempted to formalize in Satires and Fictions and Men Without Art in the 1930s. As he writes a little later in The Mysterious Mr Bull just prior to the Second World War:

> Satire is action from above. Humour is action from underneath. The satirist looks down upon the human scene, enlarges it for his own peculiar ends... (MB 164)

There are, of course, distinctly political ends to such a process. Ends whose means explain, to an extent, Lewis's twin habits of stylistic and conceptual repetition and of seemingly arbitrary and hyperbolic amalgamation when it comes to the discourse of metaphysics, as well as his insistence on metaphors of the body and machine rather than spirit or will as the necessary tools of that process. Moreover, if the ends are primarily aesthetic in Lewis, inasmuch as all his discursive and critical writing is as he frequently affirms, ultimately subservient to his occupational role as an artist, then the means are coldly objective and inherently violent in their appropriation of nature as a resource for artifice. So:

> The satirist is an artist in destruction: one whose purpose is a more reasonable and beautiful social system... The greatest satirists have always been masters of the physical in all its departments: they are mechanics rather than metaphysicians.

—thus, he continues:

> Where the pills and plasters of the physician cease to be effective, the surgeon steps in with his knife. So with the social body.
> (MB 148)

Quite aside from the obvious resonances between this and Nietzsche's general comments on the body, sickness, philosophy, interpretation and values, especially in the preface to the second edition of Lewis's favourite Nietzsche, The Gay Science, where he asserts that: "All those bold insanities of metaphysics, especially answers to the question about the *value* of existence, may always be

considered first of all as the symptoms of certain bodies," [398] what this procedure also suggests is something akin to Adorno and Horkheimer's aside on Greek humour, where they are discussing the comedy of mis-naming in the "anti-mythological" visit by Odysseus to the underworld, and his challenging of death itself, and speculate that:

> Even though laughter is still the sign of force, of the breaking out of blind and obdurate nature, it also contains the opposite element—the fact that through laughter blind nature becomes aware of itself as it is, and thereby surrenders itself to the power of destruction. This duality of laughter is akin to that of the name, and perhaps names are no more than frozen laughter. Laughter... is a promise of the way home.[399]

Such duality as is suggested here permeates Lewis's reflections on history and the Unconscious to such an extent that his method can only be properly understood *through* that duality, but understood very specifically as agon. For example, as his thinking was inherently anti-historical and aimed specifically at a reconstitution of the present as a spatial multiplicity, any form of chronological development, whether linear, dialectical or even cyclical, was treated by him as an abstract expression of hidden metaphysical assumptions, and countered through stylistic assemblages of names. This was a procedure initiated by Lewis as a calculated redeployment of ancient rhetorical effects such as "accumulatio," "congeries," "epimone" and "palilogia"— especially when chronology seemed to be operative in his expositions. Within this mode of "spatialist" resistance to chronology and

---

398 Nietzsche, The Gay Science, 35.

399 Adorno and Horkheimer 77-78.

the chronic through rhetoric, there it the same time a broadly aesthetic impetus discernible in Lewis which undoubtedly bears comparison with Schopenhauer's view of history as a representation of that which is changeable and therefore inferior to the realm of ideas: a realm most perfectly represented for Schopenhauer in the work of art, (which for Nietzsche, of course, is the suprahistorical). In this context, it is worth expanding the passage mentioned above where Lewis, in the "Essay on the Objective of plastic Art in our Time" cites his approval of Schopenhauer's attitude to history and art, where history comes under the heading of a science, which:

> ...following the restless and unstable stream of the fourfold forms of reasons or grounds or consequents, is with every end it attains again and again directed farther, and can never find an ultimate goal or complete satisfaction, any more than by running we can reach the point where the clouds touch the horizon; art, on the contrary, is everywhere at its goal. For it plucks the object of its contemplation from the stream of the world's course, and holds it isolated before it. (WLOA 201)

In cherry-picking relevant aspects from the philosophical writings of his selected thinkers, and in this case, combining Nietzsche and Schopenhauer into an assemblage which in Deleuzean terms, might be referred to as Lewis-Nietzsche-Schopenhauer, Lewis's opposition to history is specified in the equivalence he appears to make between the art object and personal identity, both of which, ideally, are "plucked from the stream" of sensations to create a perspective from which the present can be shown as "appearance" or "surface" in the Nietzschean sense, and to which the past can be compared according to a criterion of

aesthetic value alone, rather than progress or development in the classic Kantian sense. Thus, he favours a suprahistorical form of retrospection:

> A Past in which events and people stand in an imaginative perspective, a *dead* people we do not interfere with, but whose integrity we respect—that is a Past that any person who has a care for the principle of individual life will prefer to 'history-as-evolution' or 'history-as-communism'. (TWM 223)

The fundamental mistake of historians, prime representatives of the time-philosophy, is to place value on that which is constantly in motion rather than to concentrate on that which might be extracted from the stream, that which can be represented in Lewisian terms as "dead" and as distinct from the vital and temporal dimension. The art object or intellect or creative self in the moment of its ideality is distinct, but it is not unique—and this is absolutely crucial to understanding why Lewis is no mere Platonist, but what Deleuze refers to as an overturner of Plato[400]—for the quality of being unique is always attached to life, and thus to the flow of time. Accordingly, and once again to expand on a crucial passage touched upon earlier, from the "Essay on the Objective of Plastic Art in our Time," in a subsection called "The Sense of the Future," Lewis contrasts his own position with that of his arch-enemy, Bergson, whose view:

> ...that the permanence of a work of art, or its continued interest for us, depends on its uniqueness, on the fact that such and such a thing will *never happen again,* would make everything in life a work of art. This uniqueness is a portion of everything, and need not be invoked for the definition of art. In fact, the other factors of the

---

400 Deleuze, Logic, 253-266. This appendix to The Logic of Sense, "Plato and the Simulacrum" is Deleuze's most concise account of the "overturning" of Platonism in Nietzsche, and an important essay in Deleuzean aesthetic theory.

> work of art of an opposite and general description are those that distinguish it from the rest of life, cancelling as far as possible its uniqueness. (WLOA 212)

The question here is not so much one of ontology per se, as of perspective and differential relations; of qualitative multiplicities and the repetition of repetition itself, the "eternal return of difference" as Deleuze characterizes it after Nietzsche, as this return is paradoxically concerned with identity above and beyond time, or at least identity in relation to a temporal plane which approximates the being of becoming, and is at the same time the precondition for the possibility of the new, and indeed, of the future as appearance. The artist or intellectual in this formulation must always be concerned primarily with presenting the world of appearance-as-appearance first and foremost, and representations of these "appearances in relation to one another," as Nietzsche puts it, must be clearly distinguished, in Lewis's reformulation of Nietzsche, from anything to do with life. The representation of appearance for Lewis is the fixing in time and space of *things* rather than their depiction as fluid identities in time, which he rather confusingly and inconsistently refers to as *images*. Any chronological representation of human events, including, of course, his own,[401] is

---

401 This is a prescription that Lewis, with characteristic pragmatism, is prepared to suspend when it comes to autobiography. However, the essays in Blasting and Bombardiering and his later volume, Rude Assignment, eschew any form of theoretical historicity in favour of intellectual anecdote. The notable reference to history as such in his later work in the character of Rene Harding from Self Condemned, appears, oddly, to aspire to a form of historical consciousness closer to Heidegger's particular slant on "creative" repetition and authenticity in Being and Time, though I can find no evidence of any direct influence here, even though he was clearly familiar with some aspects of Heidegger via Lefebvre. On Heidegger and history, see Charles Guignon, "History and Commitment in the Early Heidegger," in Heidegger: A Critical Reader, ed. Hubert L. Dreyfus & Harrison Hall (Oxford: Basil Blackball Ltd, 1992) 135-142.

suspect, not only as it might aspire to some form of objectivity in its reading of those events, but also as it succumbs to that which, in Schopenhauer's words "can never find an ultimate goal or complete satisfaction." Commenting, for instance, on Spengler's massively popular rendition of cyclical history, The Decline of the West, first published in the final summer of the Great War, Lewis writes:

> What to the time-philosopher, such as Spengler, is significant about a person or a thing, is *when* he or it is, not *what* or *how* he or it may be. The chronological is the only truth. (TWM 252)

For Lewis, Spengler is an ideal exhibit for his museum of chronophiles inasmuch as he represents not only a culmination of a tendency towards a rather pessimistic historicism, a tendency that we find emerging in reaction to Dilthey's critique of historical realism in the 1860s and 1870s and Nietzsche's early attempt to assess the value of "history for life" in his Untimely Meditations, and thereafter through the responses to the varieties of cultural determinism advocated by a later generation including social scientists such as Pareto, Weber and Sorel, but also because of that curious combination of dogmatism and relativism that Lewis clearly found so "attractive" in his opponents. Lewis has numerous objections to level against Spengler, and is even, it is worth noting, occasionally almost sympathetic to certain aspects of his rather crude and romantic account of parabolic history. But it is the central orthodoxy, as he sees it, of Spengler that is radically at fault; the covert exploitation of the idealism inherent in the concept of the *zeitgeist*. In this understanding, for Spengler:

> *logically,* and as a matter of course, the conceptions obtaining in the art of the theatre are identical with the political conceptions of the same period, and the 'discoveries' of science... are also reflections of the political and social ideas of the time. (TWM 261)

One might reasonably suppose that the notion that diverse manifestations of the *zeitgeist* in theatre, politics and science, say, are each characteristic of a specific culture in a specific stage in its development, and linked accordingly, is a notion that Lewis, knowing his penchant for conspiratorial assemblages of time-obsessives, would at least find congenial if not useful to his project of exposure and revaluation. Indeed, he does even note in passing the attractiveness of the "fundamental attitude of Spengler" despite his reservations, in that "no one can deny that the attitude to the liaison between the various activities of any time... respond to some sort of truth." (TWM 263) However, because of his fierce opposition to chronological thinking in any form, particularly in its vitalist and idealist manifestations, and most especially in its neo-Hegelian or totalizing aspect, history as such cannot be acceptable to him as a basis by which to construct a narrative of that culture's interconnections and evolution. History, in the sense that Lewis perceives it in Spengler, thus takes on a markedly Neo-Platonic form, in which: "the universe is an animal resembling your body with a mind composed of *time.*" (TWM 265) It is a form that, because of Lewis's inherently visual and synchronic mode of representation and conceptualisation, is strictly opposed. Instead, Lewis generates correspondences that counter the fluidity of the *zeitgeist* through a combination of frozen metonymy and structural simultaneity, which displaces the notion of subjectivity in duration by

transforming it into a series of discrete images, or alternatively, into a purely formal system of static and yet interactive forces, such as the image of the "machine" of self discussed above, or the curious topological figure from the second edition of BLAST, which I have dwelt on at various points in this dissertation. All that suggests mobility, sensation, or the undermining of clear and distinct ideas in the sense dreamt up by Descartes, (the latter of which must necessarily divorce themselves from the flow of temporality to be authentic for Lewis), are connected by some form of correspondence or resemblance that expresses motion or mobility or sensation without being metaphysically grounded in the idea of becoming, or of duration, or of the assemblage "space-time" so castigated in The Childermass. It is a system of correspondence that Lewis attempts to extend into all the "departments" of the modern, not merely, as has been discussed above, the literary, artistic, philosophical and historical departments—but also the sociological, political, the scientific and technological. The way in which these correspondences work is through a form of contiguity based around the image of the machine: a construction of apparently disparate phenomena viewed by a detached observer in a postulated atemporal space akin to that occupied by Schopenhauer's will-less subject. In this model, and to use the traditional oppositions, form undoubtedly has priority over substance.

To the consciousness that still aligns itself with the movement of the machine as the translator of energy through time, all is in motion, all is in flux, whether we

are discussing music or politics, language or subjectivity, art or history, philosophy or physics. And it is in this spirit that Lewis is able to assert that: "implicit in Spengler," are "All the problems of *language* and *music* that, respectively, occupy Pound or Stein or Joyce." (TWM 253) The conspiracy for Lewis was total, and, if not always fully available in its precise details to the conspirators themselves, remained volitional at a fundamental level of being. It could only be undermined by a systematic exposure of its effects and affects, and especially those effects and affects generated from a specific alignment between intuition, on the one hand, and duration, on the other, as that alignment had come to dominate, at least to the gaze of the Enemy, increasingly broad areas of social and artistic practice in the modern West.

So consistent and ardent a campaign necessarily raises questions as to the motive behind the desire, the dream behind the excessive deliberation: questions that Lewis contrived to deal with through his own attempt to stamp the "mark of Being on Becoming," as Nietzsche had described the highest value in his notes from the *Nachlass*, in a manner that is often more abstruse than the occlusions he sought to expose. It was an attempt that took the form of a consistent expression of the desire for revenge upon time itself. For Lewis, then, we might safely assume, as for Nietzsche, that:

> Duration "in vain" without end or aim, is the most paralyzing idea, particularly when one understands that one is being fooled and yet lacks the power not to be fooled.[402]

But where Nietzsche viewed the desire for revenge against time as a weakness to be overcome, lest we fall into an passive, impenetrable or abysmal, rather than a creative and Dionysian, nihilism, for Lewis, the desire for revenge is itself an instrument of the most creative and autonomous force—even to the extent of providing the means for a kind of redemption-through-assertion for the strong individual, as he attempts to negotiate the various levels of the "moronic inferno" of Western modernity and its discontents.

This active nihilism, this creative *ressentiment*, this virulent opposition to time and its children, especially history, this forging of the spatially *real* against the illusions of temporality, of the concrete *now* against the abstract illusions of the unconscious, of science, of politics, inevitably raises questions as to the validity of Jameson's attempt to retrieve the fiction and critical theory of Wyndham Lewis for his audacious vision of Western Marxism in the nineteen seventies and eighties. For Jameson, it may be recalled, the kind of formal experimentation he identified in Lewis, as in modernism more generally, was ultimately a form of realism with pretensions to an aesthetic autonomy that it would only ever achieve superficially. According to the map he draws of this evolution in his essay "Beyond the Cave: Demystifying the Ideology of Modernism" from 1975, for

---

402 Nietzsche, Will 35.

example, the function of the various nineteenth century realisms on an ideological level was to "decode"—and here he borrows overtly from Deleuze and Guattari—prior master narratives such as superstition and religion; discursive systems whose residues obscured the post-enlightenment concern with quantification and progress that was itself the hall mark of the industrial bourgeoisie. As is characteristic of much Marxist literary and aesthetic theory, moreover, the mimetic function here is not simply one of complementarity, but is part of the dialectical evolution of cultural form in accordance with the mode of production, and is thus potentially a critique as well as a servant of that mode of production. Realist art or literature is thus both implicated in the conditions of its production, (in the sense that cultural form is a corollary in structural terms of the material forces of production), and yet at the same time, it has the potentiality to transcend those conditions.

With modernism, Jameson identifies a shift away from the endless process of decoding and demystifying; a shift accompanied by a profound sense of exhaustion and an acute awareness on the part of artists and critics of the limitations of literary and pictorial realism, and indeed of the mimetic faculty generally, as a key to any clear understanding of modernity and the role of the self within it. Instead, modernist experimentation, whether formal or linguistic, recodes that which has been decoded—reterritorializes that which has been deterritorialized in Deleuze and Guattari's terms—and does so on the

understanding that the recondite symbolic and linguistic codes which emerge have both an aesthetic autonomy, and simultaneously, a power to influence the world from which they have emerged. Such codes, then, are both hermetic and elitist, on the one hand, and potentially transformative of the general culture that allows for, and even nurtures, their emergence, on the other.

The curious balancing act apparent in this image of high modernist culture's dual and contradictory function, a virulent anti-populism that somehow transforms the reception of culture in and by the "masses," immediately leads on to the question of what it is that enables this ideological imperative to determine that such modernist experimentation can be both autonomous and obscure, on the one hand, and engaged, at least potentially, in socially transformative or regulative activities, on the other. The answer, the key dialectical element in this process of modernist ideological construction for Jameson, is, unsurprisingly, a formal rather than a hierarchical one: innovation. For it is innovation which allows for modernist experimentation with the exhausted simulacra of past literature, art or music, so as to generate new models, and in so doing, to exemplify the capitalist mode of production which itself constantly demands innovation, technological, social or economic, as Marx had pointed out in the mid nineteenth century [403] In this sense, modernism shares the paradoxical quality that Marx noted of bourgeois capitalism generally, that it is simultaneously an admirable and vital

---

403 Marx and Engels 40-60.

burst of creative energy which has transformed humanity, and a system that generates the most crushing oppression and misery.

One of the consequences of this formal equivalence, Jameson argues, is that modernism, being a concealed realism in spite of itself, can thereby reveal its underlying material concerns in spite of their recoding, so long as two conditions are satisfied. Firstly, the appropriately historically grounded hermeneutic strategies must be in place. Secondly, there must be a horizon, a stable unity across and through time and space, a notion of *totality*, against and within which that strategy can operate to unconceal, to decode, to deterritorialize, the processes of historical evaluation disguised by adventures in style and form. Once these conditions have been satisfied it will be seen that even the most anarchistic narrative procedures in literary modernism, as they appear to disrupt our sense of unity, of causality, of chronology, of linear progression, or of integrated personality, actually work to create the opposite effect in the reader to the one overtly promoted by the text. Thus a disturbance in chronology or a rejection of historical consciousness in favour of a mythic or anti-historicist or a delirial regime will actually intensify our need to return to those historically based modes of understanding that have been repressed.

History, in this sense, is the "reality" of the repressed in the political unconscious, and it is here that Jameson exploits the ungraspability of the Lacanian "Real" as a

correlative of Althusser's "absent cause" and his own vanishing signifier to indicate the parallels between his own critical procedures as they advance along the Marxist dialectical trajectory, and those which draw upon the legacy of Freud and seek to highlight the evasions of cultural consciousness and its productions. Thus, and in spite of his overt intentions, Lewis's fictions for Jameson are structured around a complex negotiation between the desire for innovation, on the one hand, and on the other, the ideological nets thrown out by the mode of production to catch and consume such innovations as they may arise from this desire. Innovation in the arts is driven at this level by a need to challenge the aridity of emergent monopoly capitalism, and specifically to "produce something that resists and breaks through the force of gravity of repetition as a universal feature of commodity equivalence."[404] Repetition on this level is challenged by difference, but it is a difference that on another level merely replicates the structures of capitalism, in the sense that:

> To understand the history of forms, as the ideologists of modernism do, as an autonomous dynamic of purely formal innovations, each of which is motivated by the will to replace an establishment form by a novelty at length superseded in its turn, is to think such modifications in an empty, cyclical and ultimately static way.

On the other hand:

> ...every great formal innovation is *determinate*, and reflects a situation that cannot immediately be assimilated to those which may precede or follow it.[405]

---

404 Fredric Jameson, "Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture," Social Text 1 (Winter, 1979) 136.

405 Jameson, Fables, 93.

Although Jameson does move on to qualify the latter part of this statement in an appropriately materialist fashion, his observation that something within a "great" innovation will always exceed its precursors and its followers is an important one. Indeed, it is one with which Lewis would probably not have too many problems, insofar as he held most innovation the arts in contempt, condemning its "revolutionary simpletons" for their neophilia, as neophilia or formal innovation were for him nothing more than symptoms of the chronic philosophy that dominated and determined modernity, and which expressed itself socially and economically through the fashionable vicissitudes of capitalism, as much as through the dogmatic egalitarianism of socialism or—after his initial interest had been entirely unrewarded—the banal authoritarian fantasies of fascism. The kind of innovation that mattered to Lewis, as was signalled at the beginning of this chapter, was one that partook of the future rather than the past, and even *belonged* to the future, in a sense and a manner that he hinted at but did not choose to develop, clearly preferring here the "page under the page" or "the promise and the presage" to the "integral."

Genuine innovation, then, is most certainly not a product of neophilia for Lewis, nor is it a formal or structural property of events or artefacts. Rather, it is a response to a "calling" from a space and a time that has yet to emerge. It is, moreover, a response that is also a repetition of objects and events perceived

from varying perspectives, rather than a unique object or event, and it is this configuration of perspectives in relation to one another that generates value, whether aesthetic, intellectual, or indeed, ethical, rather than a global perspective based on a notion of totality. In this, Lewis not only echoes "in advance" some of the observations of Deleuze on repetition, univocity, and the "clamour of being," as I have outlined above, but also, and in a slightly different sense, pre-empts his delinquent and fundamentally chronophobic heir Baudrillard, whose "precession of simulacra" works on the "fatal" assumption that the future may have already happened, that the present can be rerun interminably, and that the past may well *not* have taken place,[406] because in the collapse between the real and the realm of simulation or simulacra, the *order* or precession may well work from future to past, rather than run in the more conventional linear one-way model. Simulation for Baudrillard, as he describes it in his essay of that name, is exactly this "repetition in advance,"[407] which while it might seem to collide with Lewis's "one-way" temporality on a superficial level, is in many ways far closer to his vorticular designs than any of the more contemporaneous models of time on which he poured so much scorn. For if, as Baudrillard claims:

---

406 As proclaimed, notoriously, in his claim that the Gulf War never took place, a claim whose implications are explored in Jean Baudrillard, "The Year 2000 has already happened," Body Invaders: Panic Sex in America, ed. Arthur and Marilouise Kroker (Montreal: New World Perspectives, 1987) 37-43.

407 Jean Baudrillard, Simulations (New York: Semiotext(e), 1983) 99-101. For a discussion of this notion of simulation and repetition in advance, see William Bogard, "Baudrillard, Time, and the End," Baudrillard: A Critical Reader, ed. Douglas Kellner (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994) 313-333.

> Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being, or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal. The territory no longer precedes the map... It is... the map that precedes the territory.[408]

—then Lewis's concern to emphasize the spatial "chart" or "map" over that which it is deemed to represent, the process of decoding, of unfolding meaning, can be seen as a critical response to and prescient forerunner of the culture of simulation that he was effectively mapping in advance, when he specified that the history of "images" was superseding the concrete experience of "things" under the aegis of the all embracing chronic philosophy of the modern age.

If Baudrillard's vision of repetition as a precession in reverse bears a strong family resemblance to certain important aspects of Lewis's often rebarbative tactics in defence of the spatial, then the reasons for this similarity must, presumably, lie with something more substantial than a mere tracing of shadowy influences on a chart of twentieth century intellectual genealogies. Indeed, it is those aspects of Baudrillard's gradual rejection of the Marxist milieu, which he encountered, in his formative years that are most pertinent here. The notion of totality, for example, so central to Marxist critical exposition, so fundamental to Jameson, is the product for Baudrillard of the explosive tendencies of modernity, whereas the age of simulation, the post-historical condition, absorbs any such mass or unity into the singularity of the "black hole" through the inverse tendency of implosion.

---

408 Jean Baudrillard, "The Precession of Simulacra," in Simulacra and Simulation, trans. Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995) 1.

Thus Baudrillard regards the flow of time towards the future very differently to a critic such as Jameson, in that while that future may certainly partake of the energy suggested by Marx as a central characteristic of capitalism, albeit in the form of "seduction" rather than production, the future is also and always a simulation, which involves reference to a notion of doubling or repetition without end. Baudrillard, in this sense, describes the culture of late capitalism in terms which exemplify the conclusions indicated by Lewis in his work of the twenties, when he examined and condemned the prevailing tendencies of modernity under capitalism as an acceleration of Marx's desubstantialization of "things," perfectly represented, for example, in the philosophy of Bergson. But in noting these tendencies at some length he also stressed the proviso that a certain species of creative affirmation, (paradoxically also both tragic and pessimistic, which is the essence of his affirmation of a "negative principle"), could, feasibly at least, return modernity to a more genuinely revolutionary materialism than that suggested by either the socialist left or the proto-technocratic right. And it is this mode of forward-looking affirmation, an affirmation that is, nonetheless, driven by a tragic and Dionysian vision of human identity, that threatens to undermine the notion of totality by virtue of its ineluctable difference *as* difference, and repetition *as* repetition, which for Lewis is no abstraction, no idealism, but an absolute and concrete materialism. It is, however, a mode of materialism evidently very different to that associated with conventional Marxism or socialism. It is a right wing materialism which

combines consistent opposition to traditional left wing materialism, and yet at the same time, remarkable insight into the emergent forms of technocratic capitalism; a combination that must surely have been one of the main attractions for Jameson in his pursuit of the submerged political project inherent in Lewis's narrative. Ironically, however, it is with the conceptual frame of totality that Jameson attempts to expose this level of emancipatory discourse in Lewis and thereby use him, in a manner not dissimilar to that employed by Lewis himself when "exhibiting" his enemies, as an exemplar of the effects of the evolution of modes of production. Totality in this formulation is a highly complex mode of horizontality which, as Jameson often states, demands a notion of identity before notions of difference can come into play. Thus he criticizes the deconstructions of Derrida and the differential intensities generated by Deleuze and Guattari, and affirms his own totalizing project, in the following terms:

> [This] negative and methodological status of the concept of "totality" may also be shown at work in those very post-structural philosophies which explicitly repudiate such "totalizations" in the name of difference, flux, dissemination, and heterogeneity; Deleuze's conception of the schizophrenic text and Derridean deconstruction come to mind. If such perceptions are to be celebrated in their intensity, they must be accompanied by some initial appearance of continuity, some ideology of unification already in place, which it is their mission to rebuke and shatter. The value of the molecular in Deleuze, for instance, depends structurally on the preexisting (sic) molar or unifying impulse against which its truth is read. We will therefore suggest that these are second-degree or critical philosophies, which reconfirm the status of the concept of totality by their very reaction against it...[409]

---

409 Jameson, Political Unconscious 53.

That such an assertion takes for granted a priority of identity over difference, (not to mention a reduction of the molar-molecular field to cognates of these concepts), may well be acceptable in axiomatic terms also if one accepts the broadly neo-Hegelian presuppositions with which Jameson tends to operate at this stage. However, even Jameson's most sympathetic critics, such as Callinicos and Eagleton as was noted above, have observed that such assumptions are in danger of turning into conclusions in Jameson's subsequent, and often brilliant, dialectical performances, and for those who work from perspectives which Jameson at this stage describes as "post-structuralist"—notably Derrida, Deleuze and Guattari and Lyotard—such assumptions are themselves entirely compromised by their provisional status which here, as in most neo-Hegelian thought, masquerades as a kind of evident self certainty. What is fundamentally at stake here for Jameson is that Marxism should not be mistaken as one system of interpretations amongst many, but rather as the ultimate horizon of all systems of interpretation. Accordingly, while in Marxism and Form he can treat the "theories of history" of figures as diverse as Lewis himself, Taine, Spengler, Toynbee, Malraux, Foucault, Mumford and McCluhan as partial and conservative, they are for him, nonetheless, theories that in their very partiality gesture towards "concrete history itself" which is "that ultimately privileged code into which the other sequences are to be translated."[410]

---

[410] Jameson, Marxism and Form 322.

Jameson's retention of a belief in the value of totalization and unified identity through so many of his works has been noted by critics such as Martin Jay as almost unique in late twentieth century critical theory.[411] That he should elect to treat Lewis in a dedicated monograph is highly significant in this context, in that Lewis, in common with a later generation of French post-Nietzschean philosophers, including Deleuze and Lyotard, clearly poses an opposition to this project; an opposition that Jameson considers exemplary within its historical context as an aspect of the dialectical progression of forms. What is central to this quality of opposition in Lewis's expressionistic modernism for Jameson, especially in regard to the latter's parallel attempt at a dialectical absorption of later anti-dialectical theorists such as Deleuze and Guattari, or Lyotard, is the manner in which the Lewisian text strives to generate fields of spatialized meta-temporality through the fragmentation of identity and its realignment as a machinery of self, operating upon the machinery of the social through laughter or violence or perspectivism or, indeed, disappearance. These are fields of meta-temporal signification, which by their very nature, (and aided by the agonal and yet essentially vacant personae that Lewis constructs for himself), refuse history the ascendant—albeit absent— role granted to it by Jameson, and signify that absent space as that very conceptual object so decried by Bergson, and celebrated by Lewis as the heart of the vortex — nothing. In this assertion of what he variously calls his "negative principle," (which should not be confused with

---

411 Martin Jay, Marxism and Totality: The Adventures of a Concept from Lukács to Habermas (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984) 51. n4.

negation), [412] or the "not self," or indeed the various "enemy" personae he adopts, Lewis is considerably closer to the post-Nietzschean treatment of history, traditionally categorized, (however over-generalized and inadequate such categorizations clearly are), as "post-structuralist" or "postmodernist," as developed, for example, in the following passage from an interview with Deleuze, where he has responded to a question on the evolution of his own thought as regards the question of history subsequent to the events of May 1968. This passage, which I will quote here at some length, is notable in that it not only reinforces a Nietzschean vision of untimeliness as a transhistorical rent in linear chronology and/or historical metanarrative, but also brings into play the political theorist and friend of Sorel, Charles Péguy, to illuminate his approach to history. The allusion to Péguy is intriguing here, in that not only is he an author whose notion of repetition is important to Deleuze as a stage in the evolution of his own version, but it is a notion of repetition that bears similarities to that of Lewis also, who, notably, mentions Péguy with uncharacteristic admiration at several points in The Art of Being Ruled. Deleuze claims that:

> It was Nietzsche who said that nothing important is ever free from a "non-historical cloud." This isn't to oppose eternal and historical, or contemplation and action: Nietzsche is talking about the way things happen, about events themselves or becoming. What history grasps in an event is the way it's actualized in particular circumstances; the event's becoming is beyond the scope of history. History isn't experimental, it is just the set of more or less negative preconditions that make it possible to experiment with something beyond history. Without history the experimentation would remain

---

[412] On this distinction, see Deleuze, Difference 63-64.

> indeterminate, lacking any initial conditions, but experimentation isn't historical. In a major philosophical work, Clio, Péguy explained that there are two ways of considering events, one is to follow the course of the event, gathering how it comes about historically, how it's prepared and then decomposes in history, while the other way is to go back into the event, to take one's place in it as in a becoming, to grow both young and old in it at once, going through all its components or singularities. Becoming isn't part of history; history amounts only to the set of preconditions, however recent, that one leaves behind in order to "become," that is, to create something new. This is precisely what Nietzsche calls the Untimely.[413]

Although Deleuze is very evidently not rejecting history itself as an important contextualizing function in the comprehension of events, and indeed he is quite open in his admiration for Braudel at this stage, the emphasis which he places on "becomings" allows him to distance himself significantly from the neo-Hegelian and neo-Marxist traditions which are so crucial to the trajectory of Jameson, and focus instead on the "non-historical cloud" through which events, which may well be construed as historical events from certain perspectives, are also lived in both their immanence and their virtuality. Becomings, in this understanding, are the invention, and "inventionings" of new selves and subjectivities, through the reorganization of and reperspectivization of territorialized spaces, achieved through an understanding of history as a field or map or chart. Accordingly, and in a manner remarkably resonant of the mode of critical thinking towards which Lewis often appeared to aspire some fifty years earlier:

> What we call a "map" or sometimes a "diagram," is a set of various interacting lines... We think lines are the basic components of things and events. So everything has its geography, its cartography, its

---

413 Deleuze, Negotiations 170-171.

> diagram. What's interesting, even in a person, are the lines that make them up, or they make up, or take, or create.[414]

To make sense of this within the context of the Deleuzean approach to time and history, it is useful to refer to the passage from the second chapter of Deleuze's Difference and Repetition, where he himself refers to the famous notion of repetition mentioned by Marx in The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, where Marx suggests that history does indeed repeat itself. Here, by way of an incipit to his essay, Marx notes that Hegel somewhere remarked that: "all facts and personages of great importance in world history occur, as it were, twice. He forgot to add: the first time as tragedy, the second as farce."[415] The essence of Hegel's remark here being that as things proceed dialectically, they will often return to the "same" event or heroic personage until such time as it or they have exhausted their dialectical purpose, to which Marx adds that: "History is very thorough and goes through many phases when carrying an old form to the grave. The last phase of a world-historical form is its comedy."[416]

That this image would appeal to Jameson in his consideration of Lewis as an author providing a narrative and critical mode of expression, broadly comic or satiric within his own terms of engagement, and delineating the transition

---

414 Deleuze, Negotiations 33.

415 Karl Marx, The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, no trans. (8th ed; Moscow: Progress publishers, 1983) 12.

416 Marx, Brumaire, (n.2), 123.

between national and global allegory, is evident. Deleuze, however, being anti-dialectical, like Lewis, in his vision of historical preconditions, treats Marx's observation as incomplete, noting that:

> Marx's theory of historical repetition... turns on the following principle which does not seem to have been sufficiently understood by historians: historical repetition is neither a matter of analogy nor a concept produced by the reflection of historians, but above all a condition of historical action itself."[417]

This is a characteristically affirmative and productivist *use* of history as a set of pre-conditions enabling creativity, rather than a progressive and dialectical unfolding of events, as Marxist historicism has sometimes been interpreted.[418] It also leads him, through a reading of Hamlet (via Oedipus and Zarathustra) to a reassertion of the three syntheses of time, in the sense that

> The past is repetition by default, and it prepares this other repetition constituted by the metamorphosis in the present... In truth, past is in itself repetition, as is the present, but they are repetition in two different modes which repeat each other. Repetition is never a historical fact, but rather the historical condition under which something new is effectively produced.

Accordingly:

> *Repetition is a condition of action before it is a concept of reflection.* We produce something new only on condition that we repeat—once in the mode which constitutes the past, and once more in the present of metamorphosis. Moreover, what is produced, the absolutely new itself, is in turn nothing but repetition, this time by excess, the repetition of the future as eternal return.[419]

---

[417] Deleuze, Difference 91.

[418] In this, Deleuze indicates his sympathy with Althusser's reading of Marx as anti-historicist, as he clarifies in his remarks on Althusser and history in Difference 186.

[419] Deleuze, Difference 90.

Thus Deleuze's temporal trinity is reiterated as, firstly: the passive synthesis of the living present, the synthesis of time's arrow and Hume's custom; secondly, as the synthesis of the pure past and of virtuality, in which past events are returned to the present for use in the future; and the third synthesis which is the empty form of time in which repetition leaps into difference, into the absolutely new, into futurity, and in which Deleuze cites Hamlet's observation that "time is out of joint" to indicate the manner in which:

> the present is no more than an actor, an author, an agent destined to be effaced... In all three syntheses, present, past and future are revealed as Repetition, but in very different modes. The present is the repeater, the past is repetition itself, but the future is that which is repeated. Furthermore, the secret of repetition as a whole lies in that which is repeated, in that which is signified twice.[420]

The "secret" of repetition, as Lewis had ascertained some eighty years previously, lies, therefore, firstly, in and with a certain form of doubling. The secret of repetition is, in this sense, the knowledge that to move beyond chronic repetition requires a notion of identity that is split and then spatially distributed, in the sense that, as he suggested in BLAST: "There is nothing so impressive as the number TWO. You must be a duet in everything." (B_2 91) If this is one aspect of the secret of repetition, a second has to do with the notion of excess resulting from this doubling, a surplus resulting from the differential between two moments or instances, whether laid out temporally or spatially. Thus when Deleuze stresses the manner in which the creation of the absolutely new, of eternal recurrence as

---

420 Deleuze, Difference 94.

absolute difference, is "repetition by excess," he is, effectively, reiterating Lewis's comments on the nature of art in The Art of Being Ruled, discussed in chapter two in connection with Bataille, in which Lewis designates the realm of the ethical, for example, as "a higher form of the appetite that leads to excess, that leads to the measure of aesthetic delight. Sadistic excess attempts to reach roughly and by harshness what art reaches by fineness." (ARB 65) For while the notion of excess here would seem to indicate appetite or drive primarily, it is the very fact of surplus itself, effectively of waste, that allows for the production of the new. In addition to doubling and excess, a third vital aspect of the secret of repetition lies with its relation to the notion of personal identity as a "becoming imperceptible" in the terms explored by Deleuze and Guattari—a particular line of flight in the tactical armoury of the "nomadic war machine" in its perpetual conflict with the state:

> the assemblage that draws lines of flight is of the war machine type. Mutations spring from this machine, which in no way has war as its object, but rather the emission of quanta of deterritorialization, the passage of mutant flows (in this sense all creation is brought about by a war-machine).[421]

The notion of becoming imperceptible is discussed by Deleuze and Guattari in connection with Scott Fitzgerald amongst others, to indicate a move beyond a crisis of identity to anonymity, to a minimal self, to a machinery of identity, from which new connections may be formed and new creative paths opened up. The

---

[421] Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus 229-230. An exemplary discussion of this curious entity may be found in Paul Patton, Deleuze & the Political (London: Routledge, 2000) 109-115.

drive to anonymity may take the form, ostensibly, of a desire to be one of a crowd, certainly, but in such cases, this must be considered as a conceit (as in the case of Magritte's hyper-conventionality, for example), concealing an urge to realise the purity of line of the artist divorced from any conventional human role beyond that of creativity itself, allied to a mask of impersonality, or hidden supremacy, or in the case of Lewis, of distance and dissembling. So when Deleuze cites Klossowski on eternal recurrence as "the secret coherence which establishes itself only by excluding my own coherence, my own identity...It allows only the plebeian to return, the man without a name,"[422]— while Lewis would certainly not view his position as "plebeian" in the ordinary sense of the term, as one in the crowd, his interest in what Deleuze and Guattari will later term "becoming-imperceptible" is strongly present in his early representations of self, and was consistently commented on by his peers, inviting Hugh Kenner to describe him as a "Man from Nowhere" and a "mystery man without a past who arrives out of nowhere onto the pages of the book..."[423]

Finally, through the notion of incompleteness and the third and empty form of time, Deleuze provides a theoretical framework through which the underlying metaphysic of repetition in Lewis's critical theory as it gestures towards the Deleuzean explication of the "secret" of repetition, can be linked both to his

---

422 Deleuze, Difference 90-91.

423 Kenner 2.

vision of the human comedy of modernity in all its tragic limitation, and the fundamentally diabolical conclusions towards which his final works such as The Demon of Progress in the Arts and Malign Fiesta are directed. Here, Deleuze argues that all drama expresses the three forms of repetition, and that the genre of comedy, in Marx's formulation, is a specific instance of what he calls a failed metamorphosis, of a potentially revolutionary moment that turned back on itself to become a travesty of revolutionary possibility. However, Deleuze differs from Marx, noting that:

> ...it appears that for Marx this comic or grotesque repetition necessarily comes *after* the tragic, evolutive and creative repetition... This temporal order does not, however, seem absolutely justified. Comic repetition works by means of some defect, in the mode of the past properly so called. The hero necessarily confronts this repetition so long as 'the act is too big for him': Polonius's murder by mistake is comic, as is Oedipus's enquiry. The moment of metamorphosis, tragic repetition, follows.[424]

The space between these two moments is crucial for Deleuze's unorthodox reading of Hamlet, (as of Oedipus and Zarathustra). This is the dramatic space that he designates as the caesura, which in Tim Murphy's elegant summary, is:

> ...the time between the other times, the time within which beginning and end, past and present cease to coincide, within which repetition breaks out of the Same to create the new future; as such it is "pure and empty" because it is a logical time within thought, within the repetitive structure of every present, and can only be localized or exemplified allegorically.[425]

---

424 Deleuze, Difference 92.

425 Tim Murphy, "Theatre of (the Philosophy of Cruelty) in Difference and Repetition, in Pli: Deleuze and the Transcendental Consciousness, ed. Joan Broadhurst (Warwick: University of Warwick, 1992) 108.

That the caesura can only be represented allegorically is important in Deleuze's readings of Hamlet and Oedipus, in that as the opening between two forms of time, it is that which enables access to the new, to the future; an opening which could allow for the emergence of anything from a new reading of an old text to a new relationship, from a new philosophical concept to a new literary or artistic expression, from a new form of love or cruelty to an entirely new understanding of identity, of the social, of the human, or even of the cosmos itself. The significance of this caesura for the comic, then, lies with the co-dependence of these two moments, the comic and the tragic, in the emergence of the third and empty moment, and the succession of moments that this implies:

> It is true that these two moments are not independent, existing as they do only for the third moment beyond the comic and the tragic: the production of something new entails a dramatic repetition which excludes even the hero. However, once the first two elements acquire an abstract independence or become genres, then the comic succeeds the tragic as though the failure of metamorphosis, raised to the absolute, presupposed an earlier metamorphosis already completed.[426]

While Lewis's vision of comedy and tragedy can be said to develop over his career, (becoming, conventionally enough, more suspicious of the "void" beyond all appearance as he grew older),[427] there is sufficient continuity between the early

---

[426] Deleuze, Difference 92.

[427] To large degree, Lewis's followed Nietzsche in being misrecognized, more often than not, as promoting the very nihilism that he sought to exceed. Such an engagement for both Lewis and for Nietzsche required a direct confrontation with nihilism and its sources, and it is almost certainly this quality of confrontation through immersion that led less adventurous thinkers to describe them as nihilists. However, there is little doubt, also, that while he celebrated the French existentialists, and especially Camus, for their direct engagement with the "void" in the 1950s, Lewis also grew increasingly impatient

and late Lewis to align his notion of genre to a specific philosophy of diabolical laughter, signalled in this passage from Deleuze as a consequence of a certain relation to repetition. It is, after all, the demon in Nietzsche who reveals to Zarathustra the vision of eternal recurrence, but in Deleuze's reformulation, this vision is certainly not indicative of a cyclical model of time in the sense of the "stoic *eternal return*" critically dismissed by Pullman in his attempts to convey the philosophy of the Bailiff in the first volume of The Human Age. (C 78-79) Rather, it is a constantly dismantled seriality of time, for in the notion of eternal return as the return of difference:

> the order of time, time as a pure and empty form, has precisely undone that circle. It has undone it in favour of a less simple and much more secret, much more tortuous, more nebulous circle, an eternally excentric circle, the decentred circle of difference which is reformed uniquely in the third time of the series.[428]

Accordingly, the caesura in the Lewisian theological drama of The Human Age, and especially its later two volumes, but also the caesura that determines the deracinated landscapes of works such as Self Condemned and Rotting Hill, is essentially the product of what Deleuze calls the "failure of metamorphosis" in which the comic succeeds the tragic. The demonic aspect of these landscapes, and especially Monstre Gai and Malign Fiesta, is, in this sense, a dramatisation of

---

with the ways in which what he perceived as artistic nihilism in the same decade was leading to an unacceptable level of relativism where aesthetic and intellectual value were concerned, as when he asserts in The Demon of Progress in the Arts from 1954, that: "...an easily defined limit exists in painting and sculpture, in music, in the theatre, in literature, in architecture, and in every other human art... There is no sense in shooting over it...Nothing, zero, is what logically you reach past a line ... laid down by nature, everywhere." (DPA 32)

428 Deleuze, Difference 91.

failed repetition on a social and a political level, if not on an artistic level. In other words, while Lewis retained his affirmative resistance to modernity's homogenizing tendencies to the last, his dream of art and of the artist as law and legislator of culture and history, his failed metamorphosis, transformed this dream into the darkest and most diabolical comedy of negative affirmation. In so many ways, and particularly as regards history, the allegorical qualities of this vision resonate with those of an unlikely soul mate—Walter Benjamin—whose angel of history is famously described as follows:

> A Klee painting named 'Angelus Novus' shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.[429]

That Benjamin, in moments of crisis, experienced this same angel as "Satanic" — as "Agesilaus Santander"— a curious conjunction of a Spartan king and a Spanish town, as Gary Banham has pointed out,[430] is perhaps unsurprising in the light of his experience of the twentieth century. For as Lewis signalled so

---

429 Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," Illuminations, trans. Harry Zohn (London: Jonathan Cape, 1970) 259-260.

430 Gary Banham, "Mourning Satan," in Gary Banham and Charlie Blake, eds. Evil Spirits: Nihilism and the Fate of Modernity (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2000) 12.

consistently, that which we call progress is as often as not demonic, in that for all its promise, it frequently takes the form of a failed transformation, a failed repetition in Deleuze's third sense, and as such, remains confined within the "moronic inferno" of modernity. What Lewis strove for throughout his career, a sense of identity that would transcend this state of affairs through what I have called his "machinery of self," was in no sense mechanical, however, but was rather an attempt to confront that sense of repetition that Freud associated with the death drive directly, and in doing so, to establish the conditions for a mode of creativity appropriate to an age in which nihilism could be overcome.

Conclusion

> The real is beyond the *automaton*, the return, the coming-back, the insistence of the signs by which we see ourselves governed by the pleasure principle. The real is that which always lies behind the automaton...Repetition demands the new.[431]
>
> In every respect, repetition is a transgression. It puts law into question, it denounces its nominal or general character in favour of a more profound and more artistic reality.[432]
>
> ...it is *we* who have to pretend to be real, if anyone has to, not to pretend that God is. (TWM 378)

In May 1951, just under six years before his death, and prior to the production of what many believe to be his greatest novel, Self Condemned, as well as the second and third volumes of The Human Age trilogy, Monstre Gai and Malign Fiesta, his investigation into existentialism and its historical parallels in The Writer and the Absolute, and his final extended diatribe against the course of the contemporary visual arts in The Demon of Progress in the Arts, Wyndham Lewis finally went blind. He had been suffering from a tumour for some three decades and had already been practically blind in his left eye for some years before the right eye began to deteriorate seriously. With characteristic resilience to the vicissitudes of fate, however, he announced the fact and its consequences for his role as an art critic to the readership of the column he had been writing for The Listener magazine, in an article called "The Sea-mists of the Winter," which one

---

[431] Jacques Lacan. "Tuché and Automaton," The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin books, 1979) 53-54; 61.

[432] Deleuze, Difference 3.

of his biographers, Jeffrey Meyers, has described as "the most brave, most poignant and most perfect work of his entire career."[433] Here he wrote:

> The failure of sight which is already so far advanced, will of course become worse from week to week, until in the end I shall be able to see the external world only through little patches in the midst of a blacked-out tissue. On the other hand, instead of little patches, the last stage may be the absolute black-out. Pushed into an unlighted room, the door banged and locked forever, I shall then have to light a lamp of aggressive voltage in my mind to keep at bay the night...[434]

Meyers, quite understandably, takes this image of the "lamp of aggressive voltage" as indicative of Lewis's prodigious energy in his last years, noting also that in responded to a journalist asking whether he intended to continue working, he responded: "Life is still rich and fascinating. I am not locked up in a dark room. The mind has many chambers."[435] Such affirmation, combined, as ever, with an equally powerful negativity and sense of the tragedy of life, permeates his late novels as much as it does his early stories, and establishes a continuity of pathos throughout his career. Along with this continuity of pathos, Lewis also exhibited a persistent need to provide intellectual justification for the affective and expressionistic dimensions he strove to evoke in his fiction and art, and it is this justification, especially as it extends into and plunders the resources of continental philosophy and what has come to be known as critical theory, that has been the focus of this dissertation. In particular, I have been concerned to

---

433 Meyers, Enemy 304.

434 Meyers, Enemy 305.

435 Meyers, Enemy 309.

map out and illuminate the ways in which the critical theory of Wyndham Lewis should not be consigned to a specific period of modernist experiment or reaction, but contextualized within a far broader expanse of modern and postmodern theory, as that theory attempts and has attempted to discover or to create — and the choice of verb is arguably indicative of which part of the modern/postmodern spectrum one chooses to emphasize — links between the three domains set up by Kant's critical philosophy: the aesthetic, the ethical and the cognitive. Certainly, of these three, the ethical is the one on which Lewis has the least to say. As a satirist, he is, of course, a moralist; but he is a moralist with a distinctly individual, vituperative and anti-collectivist agenda, which rarely lends itself to an extended discussion of the intricacies of ethical perspectives or absolutes. On the aesthetic and the cognitive domains, on the other hand, Lewis had a considerable amount to say, and if, as some critics have maintained, this often comprises the same message being asserted repeatedly and with minor variations, then this in no way detracts from the *value* of that message. Indeed, and as I demonstrated, the very act of repetition itself is essential to the force of the message conveyed, in that it establishes the parameters, both metaphysical and aesthetic, and by vivid demonstration rather than by the progressions of dialectic, (as befits his visual bias), whereby genuine innovation becomes possible in an age in which the "new" has been co-opted by the forces of ideology to such a degree that novelty has become nothing more than a commodity.

In this sense, Fredric Jameson is fundamentally correct when he ponders over the impossibility of the epic form in modernity, and the rise of what he calls the "satire-collage," which he defines as an "artificial epic whose raw materials have become spurious and inauthentic, monumental gesture now replaced by the cultural junk of industrial capitalism."[436] Jameson's concern here is to establish the function of modernist experimentation, (and especially the forms of prose or narrative collaging that find their seminal expression in Flaubert's Bouvard et Pécuchet), so as to determine the nature of a mimesis no longer "able to reproduce the real, but quite the contrary, to testify to our powerlessness to do so and to the inescapable contamination of the collective mind and of language itself."[437] Jameson's degradationist thesis is, as he himself realizes, not too far removed from that of Lewis in certain respects, albeit from a perspective arising from an opposite political pole. The language of "contamination" here is especially telling, however, as is his appeal to an earlier plenitude, utterly compromised by modernity, thus:

> In modern times...all creative and original speech flows from privation rather than from plenitude: its redoubled energies, far from tapping archaic or undiscovered sources of energy, are proportionate to the massive and well-nigh impenetrable obstacles which aesthetic production must overcome in the age of reification.[438]

---

[436] Jameson, Fables 80.

[437] Jameson, Fables 81.

[438] Jameson, Fables 81.

Jameson's point about Lewis is that he defies this tendency to reification by co-opting it, by virtue of a "homeopathic expropriation of its alienated dynamism," in which: "the machine seems to have absorbed all the vitality of the human beings henceforth dependent on it."[439] However, whilst Jameson's examples from Lewis's fictional prose, and especially from his raging anti-communist satire The Revenge for Life can certainly be said to express this draining of vitality and growing symbiosis between the human and the machine, to view such machinic metaphoricity and metonymy as a "homeopathic expropriation" alone is to miss the point that Lewis makes repeatedly in regard to the origins of the artistic impulse and its expression in ancient as well as in so-called "primitive" as well as modern cultures. For Lewis, it may be recalled, every age has been a machine age, and, as he continues in a crucial passage from Paleface:

> An alaskan (sic) totem-pole, a Solomon Island canoe, a siamese (sic) or indian (sic) temple, is *a machine*, inasmuch as it is, in its concatenated parts, composed of very mechanically defined units, and is built up according to a rigid geometric plan. The bunch of cylinders of a petrol engine has very much the same structural appeal as a totem-pole or the column of a mayan (sic) divinity.. So in the field of art, there is nothing novel in machinery. All primitive people have proved themselves a sort of aesthetic engineers. (sic) So, in a sense, a great suspension bridge, or a modern factory building—or a turbine engine—is only reintroducing into our life an element which the most ancient art supremely possessed, but which has been absent in european art...(P 250-251)

---

439 Jameson, Fables 82.

If this passage signals clearly Lewis's preference for a the geometric and machine aesthetic in regard to the arts themselves, it is a preference that he by no means restricts to art, but extends to that very vitality mentioned by Jameson:

> Life itself, in all its forms, has always possessed this however. The insect and plant worlds, much more than the animal world, have always carried their structure outside, as it were, and thrust it upon the eye. The insect world could be truly said to be a Machine World, much more than our age, as yet, is a Machine Age. (P 251)

The predilection for the inhuman extensions of that which would be otherwise human, whether in their machinic or non-mammalian manifestations, is not merely an aesthetic bias in Lewis, however, but as I have demonstrated, functions as the metaphysical foundations for all his explorations of human consciousness and its expressions, whether in the arts or the sciences, politics or war, class or race or gender or, indeed, any form of human intimacy or interaction or creativity or destruction. In this sense, Lewis is not merely expropriating the reified consciousness of modernity and exacerbating it for satirical effect, nor is he absorbing its alienating lessons for a broader dialectical movement into a utopian future, as Jameson appears to want of Lewisian style and content. Rather, Lewis is pre-empting in remarkable ways the concerns with identity, with the human and that which it differentiates itself from, (whether animal, machinic, spiritual or informational), that have come to preoccupy a much later generation of thinkers, from Deleuze and Guattari to Ansell-Pearson to Donna Haraway and N.

Katherine Hayles.[440] Moreover, Lewis does not merely describe the problems that arise in the differentiation of the human and the machine, but pre-empts the mutuality of these two entities in a manner which only began to be absorbed in Western intellectual culture some thirty years after his death, and remains controversial in the century following that death. Thus, when he announces in the second issue of BLAST:

> There is yourself: and there is the Exterior World, that fat mass you browse on.
> Sometimes you speak through its huskier mouth, sometimes through yours.
> Do not confuse yourself with it, or weaken the esoteric lines of fine original being.
> Do not marry it, either, to a maiden.
> Any machine then you like: but become mechanical by dual repetition.
> For the sake of your good looks you must become a machine.
> (B_2 91)

— Lewis is not merely dealing with esoteric word-play for the sake of effect, but sketching out the possibility of a new form of identity based on repetition appropriate to the age of the machine and beyond, to modernity and beyond, which links him, as I have argued in this dissertation, to the thinking of a number of his contemporaries and successors—from Heidegger, Adorno and Benjamin to Deleuze and Baudrillard—in ways which echo the untimeliness of his hidden mentor Nietzsche, far more than they do the effusions of the majority of his Anglo-American contemporaries such as Pound or Eliot.

---

440 See, for instance, N. Katherine Hayles, How we became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); Richard Coyne, Technoromanticism: Digital Narrative, Holism, and the Romance of the Real (Cambridge, Mass; MIT Press, 1999).

At essence here is not some recherché technological aestheticism as might connect him with the Italian Futurists, nor a notion of the simultaneously romanticized and yet utterly de-individuated modernistic drones and workers of Ernst Junger. Instead, what Lewis is sketching out as a possibility is a reconception of what is already there in the notion of post-enlightenment individualism, but which rejects absolutely that aspect of individualism which is effectively homogenized by industrial culture into the mass-produced personality, in favour of a series of co-ordinates of self which, through their repetition on various planes of expression, generate a machinery of identity that can simultaneously remain static amidst the tidal flows of temporality, and yet innovate both conceptually and ontologically, through its representations, its conflicts, and its aesthetic trajectories.

Lewis is always, perhaps, best approached conceptually and artistically through the forms of repetition and juxtaposition that comprise so much of his work in the fields of fiction, criticism, theory and visual art. It seems appropriate, therefore, to conclude this study by juxtaposing two short aphorisms without elaborate commentary from one of his favourite books, The Gay Science, which summarize the origins and ends and curious circularity of Lewis, and concretise the parity between identity and repetition and the crowds of modernity with characteristic lucidity and condensation. The last words go, therefore, to the poet

philosopher of nihilism and its succession, whom I described in the introduction as Lewis's hidden mentor, Friedrich Nietzsche:

> *With the crowd.*— So far, he is still running with the crowd and singing its praises; but one day he will become its enemy. For he is following it in the belief that this will allow his laziness full scope, and he has not yet found out that the crowd is not lazy enough for him, that it always pushes on, that it never allows anyone to stand still. And he loves to stand still.[441]

> *Skin coveredness.*— All people who have depth find happiness in being for once like flying fish, playing on the peaks of waves; what they consider best in things is that they have a surface: their skin coveredness—*sit venia verbo*[442].

---

441 Nietzsche, The Gay Science, 201.

442 Nietzsche, The Gay Science, 217.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Lewis, Wyndham. America and Cosmic Man. London: Nicholson and Watson, 1948.

- - -. America, I Presume. New York: Soskin & Co, 1940.

- - -. Anglosaxony: A League that Works. Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1941.

- - -. .The Apes of God. London. The Arthur Press, 1930.

- - -. The Apes of God. London: Penguin Books, 1965.

- - -. The Apes of God. Ed. Paul Edwards. Santa Barbara, CA: Black Sparrow Press, 1981.

- - -.. The Art of Being Ruled. London. Chatto and Windus. 1926.

- - -. The Art of Being Ruled. Ed. Reed Way Dasenbrock. Santa Barbara, CA: Black Sparrow Press, 1989.

- - -. ed. BLAST No.1. London: The Bodley Head, 1914.

- - - ed. BLAST No.1 Santa Barbara, CA: Black Sparrow Press, 1989.

- - -. ed. BLAST No.2: War Number. London: The Bodley Head, 1915.

- -. ed. BLAST No.2: War Number. Santa Barbara, CA: Black Sparrow Press, 1983.

- - -. Blasting and Bombardiering. London. Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1937.

- - -. Blasting and Bombardiering. London: John Calder Ltd, 1982.

- - -. The Caliph's Design. Architects! Where is your Vortex?. London. The Egoist Ltd, 1919.

- - -. The Caliph's Design. Architects! Where is your Vortex? Ed. Paul Edwards. Santa Barbara, CA: Black Sparrow Press, 1986.

- - -. The Childermass. London: Chatto and Windus, 1928.

- - -. The Childermass. Rev. ed., London: Methuen, 1955.

- - -. The Childermass. Rev. ed., London: Jupiter Books, 1965.

- - -. Collected Poems and Plays. Ed. Alan Munton. Manchester: Carcanet Press, 1979.

- - -. The Complete Wild Body. Ed. Bernard Lafourcade. Santa Barbara, CA: Black Sparrow Press, 1982.

- - -. The Code of a Herdsman. Ed. Alan Munton. Glasgow: Wyndham Lewis Society, 1977.

- - -. Creatures of Habit & Creatures of Change: Essays on Art, Literature & Society 1914-1956. Ed. Paul Edwards. Santa Barbara, CA: Black Sparrow Press, 1989.

- - -. Count Your Dead: They are Alive! or A New War in the Making. London. Lovat Dickson, 1937.

- - -. The Demon of Progress in the Arts London: Methuen, 1954.

- - -. The Diabolical Principle and the Dithyrambic Spectator. London: Chatto and Windus, 1931.

- - -. Doom of Youth. London: Chatto & Windus, 1932.

- - -. The Enemy: A Review of Art and Literature. 3 Vols. London: Arthur Press, 1927.

- - -. Enemy of the Stars. London: D. Harmsworth, 1932.

- - -. Enemy Salvoes: Selected Literary Criticism Ed. C.J. Fox. London: Vision, 1975.

- - -. Engine Fight-Talk, the Song of the Militant Romance, If So the Man You Are, One-Way Song, Envoi. London: Faber & Faber, 1933.

- - -. The Essential Wyndham Lewis. Ed. Julian Symons. London: André Deutsch, 1989.

- - -. Filibusters in Barbary (Record of a Visit to the Sous). London: Grayson and Grayson, 1932.

- - -. Hitler London: Chatto and Windus, 1931.

- - -. The Hitler Cult. London. Dent, 1939.

- - -. The Human Age. Book 2: Monstre Gai. Book 3: Malign Fiesta. London. Methuen, 1955.

- - -. Imaginary Letters. Ed. Alan Munton. Glasgow: Wyndham Lewis Society, 1977.

- - -. The Jews, Are they Human? London: George Allen & Unwin, 1939.

- - -. Journey into Barbary, ed. C.J. Fox. 1983. London: Penguin Books, 1987.

- - -. Left Wings over Europe: or, How to Make a War about Nothing. London: Cape, 1936.

- - - The Letters of Wyndham Lewis. Ed. W. K. Rose. London: Methuen, 1963.

- - -. The Lion and the Fox: The Role of the Hero in the Plays of Shakespeare. London: Grant Richard, 1927.

- - -. The Lion and the Fox: The Role of the Hero in the Plays of Shakespeare. London: Methuen, 1966.

- - -. Malign Fiesta. London: Jupiter Books, 1966.

- - -. Men Without Art. London. Cassell, 1934.

- - -. Men Without Art. Ed. Seamus Cooney. Santa Barbara, CA: Black Sparrow Press, 1987.

- - -. Monstre Gai. London: Jupiter Books, 1965.

- - -. The Mysterious Mr Bull. London: Robert Hale, 1938.

- - -. The Old Gang and the New Gang. London: Desmond Harmsworth, 1933.

- - -. Paleface: The Philosophy of the "Melting Pot". London: Chatto and Windus, 1929.

- - -. The Red Priest. London. Methuen, 1956.

- - -. The Revenge for Love. London. Cassell, 1937.

- - -. The Revenge for Love. London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1952.

- - -. The Revenge for Love. London: Penguin Books, 1983.

- - - .The Roaring Queen. London: J. Cape. 1936.

- - -. Rotting Hill. London: Methuen, 1951.

- - - . Rotting Hill. Ed. Paul Edwards. Santa Barbara, CA: Black Sparrow Press, 1986.

- - -. Rude Assignment: A Narrative of my Career up to Date. London: Hutchinson, 1951.

- - -. Rude Assignment: A Narrative of my Career up to Date. Ed. Toby Foshay. Santa Barbara, CA: Black Sparrow Press, 1984.

- - -. Self Condemned. London. Methuen, 1954.

- - -. Self Condemned. Manchester: Carcanet Press, 1983.

- - -. Snooty Baronet. London. Cassell, 1932.

- - -. Snooty Baronet. Ed. Bernard Lafourcade. Santa Barbara, CA: Black Sparrow Press, 1984.

- - -. Tarr London. The Egoist, Ltd, 1918.

- - -. Tarr Rev.ed. London: Chatto & Windus, 1928.

- - -. Tarr Rev. ed. London: Methuen, 1951.

- - -. Tarr Rev. ed. London: Penguin Books, 1982.

- - -. Tarr. Ed. Paul O'Keefe. Santa Barbara, CA: Black Sparrow Press, 1990.

- - -. Time and Western Man. London: Chatto and Windus, 1927.

- - -. Time and Western Man. Ed. Paul Edwards. Santa Barbara, CA: Black Sparrow Press, 1993.

- - -. Unlucky for Pringle: Unpublished and Other Stories. Ed. C.J Fox and Robert. T. Chapman. New York: D. Lewis, 1973.

- - -. The Vulgar Streak. London. London: Robert Hale, 1941.

- - -. The Vulgar Streak. Ed. Paul Edwards. Santa Barbara, CA: Black Sparrow Press, 1985.

- - -. The Wild Body. London. Chatto and Windus, 1927.

- - -. The Writer and the Absolute. London. Methuen, 1952.

- - -. Wyndham Lewis: An Anthology of his Prose. Ed. E.W.F. Tomlin. London: Methuen, 1969.

- - -. Wyndham Lewis on Art: Collected Writings. Ed. Walter Michel and C.J. Fox. London: Thames and Hudson, 1969.

- - -. Wyndham Lewis: Paintings and Drawings. Ed. Walter Michel. London: Thames and Hudson, 1969.

- - -. Wyndham Lewis the Artist: From 'Blast' to Burlington House. London: Laidlaw & Laidlaw, 1939.

Secondary Sources

Adorno, Theodor W. Aesthetic Theory. Ed and trans. C. Lenhardt (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984.

- - -. Aesthetic Theory. Ed. and trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor. London: The Athlone Press, 1997.

- - -. Negative Dialectics. Trans. E. B. Ashton. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973.

- - -. "Progress." trans. Eric Krakauer. Benjamin: Philosophy, Aesthetics, History, Ed. Gary Smith Chicago: University of Chicago Press,1989. 84 – 101.

Adorno, Theodor W., and Max Horkheimer. Dialectic of Enlightenment. 1972. Trans. John Cumming. London: Verso, 1986.

Allison, David B. ed. The New Nietzsche. 4th ed. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990.

Althusser, Louis. Essays in Self Criticism. Trans. Ben Brewster. London: New Left Books, 1976.

- - -. Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays. Trans. Ben Brewster. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971.

- - -. For Marx. Trans. Ben Brewster. New York: Pantheon Books, 1969.

Ansel-Pearson, Keith. Germinal Life: The Difference and Repetition of Deleuze. London: Routledge, 1999.

- - -.Viroid Life: Perspectives on Nietzsche and the Transhuman Condition . London & New York: Routledge, 1997.

Ansell-Pearson, Keith, and Diane Morgan, eds. Nihilism Now!: Monsters of Energy. Basingstoke: MacMillan, 2000.

Arendt, Hannah. The Life of the Mind: Thinking. London: Secker & Warburg. 1978.

Auden, W.H. "Letter to Lord Byron." The English Auden: Poems, Essays and Dramatic Writings 1927-1939. Ed. Edward Mendelson. 1977. London: Faber & Faber, 1986. 167-199.

Ayers, David. Wyndham Lewis and Western Man. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992.

Badiou, Alain. "Gilles Deleuze: The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque." Trans. Thelma Sowley. Gilles Deleuze and the Theatre of Philosophy. Ed. Boundas, Constantin V., and Dorothea Olkowski. London: Routledge, 1994. 51 – 69.

- - -. The Clamor of Being. Trans. Louise Burchill. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 2000.

Bair, Deirdre. Samuel Beckett: A Biography. 1978. London: Picador, 1980.

Banham, Gary. "Mourning Satan." Banham, Gary, and Charlie Blake, eds. Evil Spirits: Nihilism and the Fate of Modernity. Manchester: University of Manchester Press. 2000. 7-21.

Bataille, Georges. On Nietzsche. Trans. Bruce Boone. London: The Athlone

Press, 1992.

- - -. The Accursed Share Vol.1. Trans. Robert Hurley. New York: Zone Books, 1991.

- - -. Visions of Excess: Selected Writings 1927-1939. Ed. and trans. Allan Stoekl. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985.

Baudelaire, Charles. "Of the Essence of Laughter, and generally of the Comic in the Plastic Arts." Selected Writings on Art and Literature. Trans. P. E. Charvet. 1972. London: Penguin, 1992. 140-161.

Baudrillard, Jean. Simulations. New York: Semiotext(e), 1983.

- - -. "The Precession of Simulacra." Simulacra and Simulation. Trans. Sheila Faria Glaser. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995.1-42.

- - -. The Selected Writings of Jean Baudrillard. Ed. Mark Poster. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988.

- - -. "The Year 2000 has already happened." Body Invaders: Panic Sex in America. Ed. Arthur and Marilouise Kroker. Montreal: New World Perspectives, 1987. 37-43.

Beardsworth, Richard. Derrida and the Political. London & New York: Routledge, 1996.

Beiser, F. The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Hegel. Cambridge, Mass. Harvard UP, 1987.

Bell, Daniel. The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism London: Heinemann, 1976.

Benjamin, Walter. The Origin of German Tragic Drama. Trans. John Osborne. 1963. London: New Left Books, 1977.

- - -. "Theory of Knowledge, Theory of Progress." Trans. Leigh Hafrey and Richard Sieburth. Benjamin: Philosophy, History, Aesthetics. Ed. Gary Smith. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989. 43-83.

- - -. "Theses on the Philosophy of History." and "Some Motifs in Baudelaire." Illuminations. Ed. Hannah Arendt. Trans. Harry Zohn. 1968. London: Jonathan Cape, 1970. 245-255; 152-196.

Bennington, Geoffrey. Lyotard: Writing the Event . Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988.

- - -. "Not Yet." Legislations: The Politics of Deconstruction. London: Verso, 1994. 74-87.

Bergson, Henri. An Introduction to Metaphysics. Trans T.E. Hulme. 1913. Indianapolis:Bobbs Merrill, 1949.

- - - .Creative Evolution. Trans. Arthur Mitchell. London: Macmillan, 1911.

- - -. Duration and Simultaneity, with Reference to Einstein's Theory. Trans. Leon Jacobsen. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1965.

- - -. Matter and Memory. Trans. N.M. Paul and W.S. Paul. 1911. New York: Zone Books, 1988.

- - -."Memory of the Present and False Recognition." Mind-Energy: Lectures and Essays .Ed. and Trans. H. Wildon Carr. London: Macmillan and Co Ltd, 1920. 109-151.

- - -. "On the Pragmatism of William James. Truth and Reality." in Creative Mind: An Introduction to Metaphysics, Trans. Mabelle L Andison New York: Philosophical Library/Citadel Press, 1946. 209-219.

- - -. The Two Sources of Morality and Religion. Trans. R. Ashley Audra and Cloudesley Brereton, with the assistance of W. Horsfall Carter. Notre Dame, Indiana: Notre Dame Press, 1977.

- - -. Time and Free Will: an Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness. Trans. F.I.Pogson. London: Allen and Unwin, 1910.

Berman, Russell A. Modern Culture and Critical Theory: Art, Politics and the Legacy of the Frankfurt School. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989.

Bernstein, J.M. The Fate of Art: Aesthetic Alienation from Kant to Derrida and Adorno. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992.

Bogard, William. "Baudrillard, Time, and the End." Baudrillard: A Critical Reader, Ed. Douglas Kellner. Oxford: Blackwell, 1994. 313-333.

Bogue, Ronald. Deleuze and Guattari . London: Routledge, 1989.

Borie, Jean. Le Célibataire français. Paris: Le Sagittaire, 1976.
- - -. Le Tyran Timide Paris: Klincksieck, 1973.
-

Bracewell, P.J. "Space, Time and the Artist." Unpublished Diss. Sheffield U. 1990.

Brandes, Georges. Friedrich Nietzsche. Trans. A.G.Chater. London: Heinemann, 1914.

Bridgewater, Patrick. Nietzsche in Anglosaxony. Leicester: Leicester U P, 1972.

Briggs, Sarah., Paul Hyland, and Neil Sammells, eds. Reviewing Ireland: Essays and Interviews from 'Irish Studies Review' . Bath: Sulis Press, 1998.

Brunkhorst, Hauke. Adorno and Critical Theory. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999.

Buchanan, Ian. Ed. A Deleuzian Century. Durham: Duke UP, 1999.

Boundas, Constantin. V. ed. Angelaki 5:2: Rhizomatics, Genealogy, Deconstruction, (Aug 2000): *Passim.*

Boundas, Constantin. V., and Dorothea Olkowski. ed. Gilles Deleuze and the Theater of Philosophy. London: Routledge, 1994.

Bowie, Malcolm. Lacan. London: Fontana Press, 1991.

Brooks, Cleanth. Modern Poetry and the Tradition. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1939.

Bürger, Peter. Theory of the Avant-Garde. Trans. Michael Shaw. Minneapolis: Minneapolis U P, 1984.

Burwick, Fredrick and Paul Douglas, eds. The Crisis in Modernism: Bergson and the Vitalist Controversy. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992.

Butler, Samuel. Luck or Cunning: As the Main Means of Organic Modification? An Attempt to throw additional light upon Darwin's Theory. London: A.C.Fifield, 1886.

Caird, Edward. The Critical Philosophy of Immanuel Kant Vol. 1 1889.Glasgow: James MacLehose, 1909.

Campbell, SueEllen. The Enemy Opposite: The Outlaw Criticism of Wyndham

Lewis. Athens: Ohio UP, 1988.

Callinicos, Alex. Is There a Future for Marxism? London: Macmillan, 1982.

Camus, Albert. The Rebel. Trans. Anthony Bower. 1953. London, Penguin Books, 1971.

Canetti, Elias. Crowds and Power. Trans. Carol Stewart. 1962. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1984.

Caracciolo Peter. and Paul Edwards. " 'In Fundamental Agreement': Yeats and Wyndham Lewis." Yeats Annual 13. Ed., Warwick Gould. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997. 127-174.

Carey, John. The Intellectuals and the Masses: Pride and Prejudice among the Literary Intelligentsia 1880-1939. London: Faber & Faber, 1992.

Cascardi, Anthony J. The Subject of Modernity . Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992.

Carroll, John. Break-Out from the Crystal Palace: The Anarcho-Psychological Critique: Stirner, Nietzsche, Dostoevsky. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974.

Cookson, William. Agenda: Wyndham Lewis Special Issue. London: Poets and Painters' Press, 1970.

Cooney, Seamus. BLAST 3. Santa Barbara, CA: Black Sparrow Press, 1984.

Craig, Cairns. Yeats, Eliot, Pound and the Politics of Poetry. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1982.

Caplan, Alice Yeager. Reproductions of Banality: Fascism, Literature and French Intellectual Life. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986.

Casillo, Robert. The Genealogy of Demons: Anti-Semitism, Fascism, and the Myths of Ezra Pound. Evanston, Ill: Northwestern UP, 1988.

Chapman, Robert T. Wyndham Lewis: Fictions and Satires. London: Vision Press,1973.

Chardin. Teilhard de. The Phenomenon of Man. Trans. Bernard Wall. London: Fontana, 1964.

Cianci, Giovanni. Ed. Wyndham Lewis: Letteratura/Pittura. Palermo: Sellerio, 1982.

Clark, Maud-Marie. Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy .Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990.

Clausewitz, Carl Von. On War.. Ed. Anatol Rapoport.. Trans. J.J.Graham.1968. London: Penguin, 1982.

Connolly, Cyril. The Sunday Times 30 Mar. 1969, 11.

Copleston, Fredrick. A History of Philosophy. Volumes I – IX.1944-1974. New York: Image Books, 1977.

Culler, Jonathan. On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983.

Cullingford, Elizabeth. Yeats, Ireland & Fascism. New York: New York UP, 1981.

Daniels, Mary F. Wyndham Lewis: A Descriptive Catalogue of the Manuscript Material in the Department of Rare Books, Cornell University Library. Ithica: Cornell UC, 1972.

Danto, Arthur. Nietzsche as Philosopher. London: Macmillan, 1965.

Dasenbrock, Reed Way. The Literary Vorticism of Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis: Towards the Condition of Painting. Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1985.

Davies, Alistair. "Tarr: a Nietzschean Novel." Meyers. Ed. Revaluation. London: The Athlone Press, 1980. 107-119.

Davis, Earle. Vision Fugitive: Ezra Pound and Economics. Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1968.

Deleuze, Gilles. Bergsonism. Trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam. New York: Zone Books, 1991.

- - -. Cinema 2: The Time Image. Trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta. London: Athlone Press, 1989.

- - -. Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, Coldness and Cruelty/Venus in Furs. No. Trans. 1971. New York: Zone Books, 1991.

- - -. Difference and Repetition. Trans. Paul Patton. London: The Athlone Press, 1994.

- - -. Empiricism and Subjectivity. Trans. Constantin V. Boundas. New York: Columbia UP, 1991.

- - -. Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza. Trans. Martin Joughan. New York: Zone Books, 1990.

- - -. Negotiations 1972-1990. Trans. Martin Joughin. New York: University of Columbia Press, 1995.

- - -. Nietzsche & Philosophy. Trans. Hugh Tomlinson. 1983. London: Athlone Press, 1986.

- - -. "Nomad Thought." The New Nietzsche. Ed. and. Trans. David. B. Allison. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press. 1990. 4th ed. 142-149.

- - -. Spinoza: Practical Philosophy. Trans. Robert Hurley. San Francisco: City Lights, 1988.

- - -. The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque. Trans. Tom Conley. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993.

- - -. The Logic of Sense. Trans. Mark Lester with Charles Stivale. Ed. Constantin V. Boundas. New York: Columbia UP, 1990.

Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari. AntiOedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia. Vol. 1. Trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen R. Lane. 1977. London: The Athlone Press, 1984.

- - -. A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia. Vol 2. Trans. Brian Massumi. London: The Athlone Press, 1988.

- - -. What is Philosophy?. Trans. Graham Burchell and Hugh Tomlinson. London: Verso,1994.

Deleuze, Gilles with Claire Parnet. "On the Superiority of Anglo-American Literature." Dialogues. Trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam. New York: Columbia UP, 1987. 36-76.

De Man, Paul. Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke and Proust. New Haven: Yale UP, 1979.

Derrida, Jacques. The Ear of the Other: Otobiography, Transference, Translation, Ed. Christie V. McDonald. Trans. Peggy Kamuf. New York: Schocken Books, 1985

- - - . Husserl's Origin of Geometry: An Introduction. Trans. John. P. Leavey Jr. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989.

- - -. Margins of Philosophy. Trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: Chicago UP 1982.

- - - ."Plato's Pharmacy." Disseminations. Trans Barbara Johnson. 1972. London: The Athlone Press, 1981. 61-171.

-- -. Speech and Phenomena, and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs. Trans. David B. Allison. Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1973.

- - -. Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles. Trans. Barbara Harlow. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979.

- - -. "Ulysses Gramophone: Hear Say Yes in Joyce." Trans. Tina Kendall. and. Shari Benstock. Jacques Derrida: Acts of Literature. Ed. Derek Attridge. London: Routledge, 1992. 253-309.

- - -. "Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas." Writing and Difference. Trans. Alan Bass. 1978. London: Routledge, 1990. 79-152.

Descombes, Vincent. Modern French Philosophy. Trans. L. Scott Fox. and J.M. Harding. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1980.

Dilthey, W. Selected Writings. Ed and trans. H.P.Rickman. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1976.

Dowling, William C. Jameson, Althusser, Marx: An Introduction to the Political Unconscious. London: Methuen & Co,1984.

Eagleton, Terry. "Fredric Jameson: The Politics of Style." Against the Grain: Essays 1975-1985. London: Verso, 1986.

- - -. The Ideology of the Aesthetic. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990.

Edwards, Paul. "National Allegory, or the Six Unknown: Wyndham Lewis's Internationalism in 1915-17." unpublished ms, 1995.

- - - ed. Volcanic Heaven: Essays on Wyndham Lewis's Painting and Writing. Santa Rosa: Black Sparrow Press, 1996.

- - -. "Wyndham Lewis and Nietzsche: 'How much Truth does a Man Require?"" Wyndham Lewis: Letteratura/Pittura. Ed. Giovanni Cianci. Palermo: Sellerio, 1982.

- - -. Wyndham Lewis: Painter and Writer. New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 2000.

- - -. "Wyndham Lewis versus James Joyce: Shaun versus Shem" Ed. Sarah Briggs, Paul Hyland and Neil Sammells. Reviewing Ireland: Essays and Interviews from 'Irish Studies Review'. Bath: Sulis Press. 1998. 164-174.

Eliade, Mircea. The Myth of Eternal Return: Or, Cosmos and History . Princeton: Princeton UP, 1971.

Eliot, T.S. "Tarr." Rev. of Tarr. By Wyndham Lewis. The Egoist V 8 Sept. 1918: 105-106.

- - -. "Ulysses, Order and Myth." Rev. of Ulysses. by James Joyce. Dial Nov. 1923: 48.

- - -."Commentary." Criterion. 12. Oct. 1932: 74.

Ferguson, Harvie. Melancholy and the Critique of Modernity: Søren Kierkegaard's Religious Psychology. London: Routledge, 1995.

Farias, Victor. Heidegger and Nazism. Ed. Joseph Margolis and Tom Rockmore. Trans. G. R. Ricci. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1989.

Foshay, Toby. Wyndham Lewis and the Avant-Garde: The Politics of the Intellect London: McGill-Queen's UP, 1992.

Foucault, Michel. The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences. Trans. Unnamed Collective. 1970. London: Tavistock Publications, 1974.

- - -. Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and other Writings 1972-1977. Ed. Colin Gordon. Trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham & Kate Soper. Brighton: Harvester Press, 1980.

Freud, Sigmund. "Beyond the Pleasure Principle." Vol 11 On Metapsychology: The Theory of Psychoanalysis. Trans. James Strachey. 1955. London: Pelican, 1984.

Frisby, .David. Fragments of Modernity: Theories of Modernity in the Work of Simmel, Kracauer and Benjamin. 1985. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988.

Gilbert, Geoff. "Shellshock, Anti-Semitism, and the Agency of the Avant-Garde." unpublished ms, 1993.

Gillespie, Michael Allen .Nihilism Before Nietzsche. Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1995.

Gilroy, Paul. The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness. London: Verso, 1993.

Goethe, J.W. Faust: Part One. 1949. Trans. Philip Wayne. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1958.

Goudsblom, Johann. Nihilism and Culture . Oxford: Blackwell, 1980.

Gould, Warwick. ed. Yeats Annual 13. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997.

Guignon, Charles. "History and Commitment in the Early Heidegger." Heidegger: A Critical Reader. Ed. Hubert. L. Dreyfus and Harrison Hall. Oxford: Blackwell, 1992.

Grogin, R.C. ed. The Bergsonian Controversy in France, 1900-1914. Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1988.

Habermas, Jürgen. "Modernity—An Incomplete Project." trans. Seyla Ben-Habib. Modernism/Postmodernism. Ed. Peter Brooker. London: Longman, 1992. 127-128.

- - - . The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity. Trans. Frederick G. Lawrence. 1987. Cambridge: Polity Press,1990.

Hamilton, Alistair. The Appeal of Fascism: A Study of Intellectuals and Fascism. London: Anthony Blond, 1971.

Hardt, Michael. Gilles Deleuze: An Apprenticeship in Philosophy. London: University College London Press, 1993.

Harrison, John. The Reactionaries: W.B. Yeats, Wyndham Lewis, Ezra Pound, T.S.Eliot, D.H. Lawrence. London: Victor Gollancz,1971.

Hartshome, Charles. "Bergson's Aesthetic Creationism compared to Whitehead's." Bergson and Modern Thought: Towards a Unified Science. Ed. Andrew. C. Papanicolau and Pete. A. Y. Gunter. New York: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1987.

Harvey, David. The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change. Oxford: Blackwell,1989.

Head, Philip. "Keeping Le Néant at Bay: Lewis and the Existentialists." Enemy News: Journal of the Wyndham Lewis Society 26. Summer, 1988: 8-10.

- - -. "The Enemy as Deconstructionist?" Wyndham Lewis Annual 1994: 42-48.

Heidegger, Martin. Being and Time. Trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. 1963. Oxford: Blackwell, 1983. 274-488.

- - -. Nietzsche Volume One: The Will to Power as Art. Trans and ed. David. F. Krell. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979.

- - -. Poetry, Language, Thought. Trans. Albert Hofstadter. New York: Harper & Row, 1971.

- - -. The Question Concerning Technology and other Essays. Trans. W. Lovitt. New York: Harper & Row, 1977.

- - -. "Who is Nietzsche's Zarathustra?" trans. Bernd Magnus. The New Nietzsche. Ed. David. B. Allison. 1977. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1990. 64-79

Hegel, G.W.F. The Phenomenology of Spirit. Trans. A.V. Miller. Oxford. Oxford Up, 1977.

Held, David. Introduction to Critical Theory: Horkheimer to Habermas. London: Hutchinson & Co,1980.

Hewitt, Andrew. Fascist Modernism: Aesthetics, Politics, and the Avant Garde. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1993.

D'Holbach, Paul, Henri, Thiry, Baron. "No need of theology...only reason." n.t. Julien Offray de la Mettrie. "Man a Machine," n.t.. The Portable Enlightenment Reader. Ed. Isaac Kramnick. London: Penguin Books, 1995. 140-150; 202-209.

Herf, Jeffrey. Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture and Politics in

Weimar and the Third Reich. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984.

Hobbes, Thomas. Leviathan; or, Matter, Forme, and Power of a Common-wealth Ecclesiasticall and Civill. London: Andrew Crooke, 1651.

Hulme, T. E. Speculations: Essays on Humanism and the Philosophy of Art. Ed. Herbert Read. 1924. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987.

Jameson, Fredric. Fables of Aggression: Wyndham Lewis, the Modernist as Fascist Berkeley: Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1979.

- - -. Late Marxism: Adorno, or, The Persistence of the Dialectic. 1990. London: Verso, 1992.

- - -. Marxism and Form: Twentieth Century Dialectical Theories of Literature Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971.

- - -. Postmodernism, Or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism. London: Verso, 1991.

- - -. "Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture" Social Text 1. Winter, 1979: 136-157.

- - -. The Geopolitical Aesthetic: Cinema and Space in the World System London: BFI Publications, 1992.

- - -. Signatures of the Visible. London: Routledge, 1990.

- - -. The Political Unconscious: Narrative as Socially Symbolic Act. London: Methuen, 1981.

Jay, Martin Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth Century French Thought. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

- - -. The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research, 1923-1950. Boston: Little Brown, 1973.

Jones, Alun R. The Life and Opinions of T. E. Hulme. London: Victor Gollancz 1960.

Kahn, Charles. H. The Art and Thought of Heraclitus. 1979. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1983.

Kant., Immanuel. Opus Postumum. Trans and ed. Eckhart Förster and Michael

Rosen. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993.

---. Critique of Pure Reason. Trans. Norman Kemp Smith. 1929. London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1982.

---. Critique of Practical Reason. Trans. Lewis White Beck. Indianapolis: Bobbs Merrill, 1956.

Kierkegaard, Søren. Either/Or. Vol. 1. Trans. David F. Svenson and Lillian Marvin. New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1959.

---. Fear and Trembling/Repetition. Trans and ed. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1983.

---. Philosophical Fragments. Trans. David Swenson and Howard V. Kong. 1962. New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1967.

---. Repetition: An Essay in Experimental Psychology. Trans. Walter Lowrie. New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1964.

Kenner, Hugh. Wyndham Lewis. London: Methuen & Co, 1954.

Klein, Scott W. The Fictions of James Joyce and Wyndham Lewis: Monsters of Nature and Design. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994.

Klossowski, Pierre. Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle. Trans. Daniel W. Smith. London: The Athlone Press, 1997.

Kojève, Alexandre. Introduction to the Reading of Hegel — Lectures on The Phenomenology of Spirit. Trans. James H. Nichols, Jnr., Allan Bloom. Ed. Raymond Queneau. 1969. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1980.

Kolakowski, Leszek. Bergson. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1985.

Kofman, Sarah. Nietzsche and Metaphor. Trans. Duncan Large. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1993.

Kramnick, Isaac. Ed. The Portable Enlightenment Reader. London: Penguin Books, 1995.

Kroker, Arthur and Marilouise Kroker. eds. Body Invaders: Panic Sex in America. Montreal: New World Perspectives,1987.

Kush, Thomas. Wyndham Lewis's Pictorial Integer. Ann Arbor Michigan: UMI

Research Press, 1981.

Lacan, Jacques. "Of the Gaze as Objet Petit a." The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis. Trans. Alan Sheridan. London: Penguin, 1977. 53-78.

- - -. "The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious, or Reason since Freud." Écrits: a Selection. Trans. Alan Sheridan. 1977. London: Routledge, 1989. 146-178.

Lacey, A.R. Bergson. 1989. London: Routledge 1993.

La Capra, Dominick. Rethinking Intellectual History: Texts, Contexts, Language Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1983.

Lacoue-Labarthe, Phillipe. Heidegger, Art, Politics. Trans. Chris Turner. Oxford: Blackwell, 1990.

Lafourcade., Bernard. "The Taming of the Wild Body." Meyers, ed. Wyndham Lewis: A Revaluation. London: The Athlone Press, 1980. 68-84.

Lawrence, D.H. "Introduction to Edward Dahlberg's Bottom Dogs." Phoenix: the Posthumous Papers of D. H. Lawrence. Ed. Edward D. McDonald London: Heinemann, 1936.

Leavis, F.R. The Common Pursuit. 1952. London: Peregrine Books, 1962.

Lefebvre, Henri. L'Existentialisme. Paris: Editions du Sagittaire, 1946.

Leibniz, G. "Monadology." Philosophical Writings. Ed. G.H.R. Parkinson. Trans. Mary Morris and G.H.R. Parkinson. 1934. London: Dent, 1983.

Levin David Michael. "Decline and Fall: Ocularcentrism in Heidegger's Reading of the History of Metaphysics." Modernity and the Hegemony of Vision. Ed. David Michael Levin. Berkeley: University of California Press 1993, 186-217.

Levenson, Michael H., A Genealogy of Modernism: A Study of English Literary Doctrine 1908-1922. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986.

Lukács, Georg. "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat." History and Class Consciousness. no Trans. London: Merlin Press, 1971.

- - -."The Intellectual Physiognomy in Characterization." Writer and

Critic. Ed and trans. Arthur Kahn. London: Merlin Press, 1970. 149-188.

Lyotard, Jean Francois. Heidegger and "the jews." Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990.

- - -. The Differend: Phrases in Dispute. Trans. G. Van Den Abeele. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1988.

- - -. The Inhuman: Reflections on Time. Trans. Geoff Bennington and Rachel Bowlby. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991.

Macherey, Pierre. In a Materialist Way: Selected Essays. Ed. Warren Montag. Trans. Ted Stoize. London: Verso, 1998.

Magnus, Bernd. Nietzsche's Existential Imperative. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978.

Marinetti, Filippo Tommaso. "Manifesto of Futurism 1909." Art in Theory 1900-1990. Ed. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood. Oxford: Blackwell, 1992.

Manganaro, Marc. Myth, Rhetoric, and the Voice of Authority: A Critique of Frazer, Eliot, Frye & Campbell. New Haven & London: Yale UP, 1992.

Maritain, Jacques. Bergsonian Philosophy and Thomism. Trans. Mabelle L Andison. 1955: New York: Greenwood Press, 1968.

Marshall, Peter. Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism. London: Fontana Press, 1992.

Marx, Karl. Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy (rough draft). Trans. Martin Nicolaus. London: Harmondsworth, 1973.

- - -. The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte. no Trans. (8th ed. Moscow: Progress publishers, 1983.

Marx. Karl. and Frederick Engels. The Manifesto of the Communist Party. 1888. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1969.

Massumi, Brian. A User's Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia: Deviations from Deleuze and Guattari. Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 1992.

Materer, Timothy. "Lewis and the Patriarchs: Augustus John, W. B. Yeats, T. Sturge Moore." Revaluation. Ed. Meyers. 51-55.

- - -. Wyndham Lewis the Novelist. Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1976.

- - -. Vortex: Pound, Eliot and Lewis. Ithica: Cornell UP, 1979.

May, Todd. Reconsidering Difference. University Park PA: Pennsylvania State UP, 1997.

McGee, Bryan. The Philosophy of Schopenhauer . Oxford: Oxford UP, 1983.

McLuhan, Marshall. "Lewis's Prose Style," in Meyers, ed. Revaluation 64-67.
- - - . Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964.

Meyers. Jeffrey. The Enemy: A Biography of Wyndham Lewis. London: Routledge. & .Kegan Paul, 1980.

- - -. ed. Wyndham Lewis: A Revaluation, London: The Athlone Press, 1980.

Morrow, Bradford and Bernard Lafourcade. A Bibliography of the Writings of Wyndham Lewis. Santa Barbara, CA: Black Sparrow Press, 1978.

Morrow, Bradford. Bernard Lafourcade and Hugh Kenner. ed. BLAST 3. Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1984.

Mullarkey, John. Bergson and Philosophy. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1999.
- - -. "Deleuze and Materialism." A Deleuzian Century, Ed. Ian Buchanan. Durham: Duke UP, 1999.

- - -. ed. The New Bergson. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1999

Munton, Alan. "A Reading of the Childermass." Revaluation. Ed. Meyers. 120-132.

- - -. "Fredric Jameson: fables of Aggression: Wyndham Lewis, the Modernist as Fascist," Rev. of Fables of Aggression by Fredric Jameson. BLAST 3, Ed. Morrow, Lafourcade and Kenner. 345-351.

- - -. "Wyndham Lewis and the Transformation of Carnival." Wyndham Lewis. Ed. Cianci. 141-157.

Murphy, Tim. "Beneath Relativity: Bergson and Bohm on Absolute Time." in The New Bergson. Ed. Mullarkey. 66-81.

- - -. "Theatre of (the Philosophy of Cruelty) in Difference and Repetition." in Pli:

Deleuze and the Transcendental Consciousness. Ed. Joan Broadhurst. Warwick: University of Warwick, 1992. 105-135.

Nicholls, Peter. Modernisms: A Literary Guide . Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1995.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. Beyond Good and Evil. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage Books, 1966.

- - -. Ecce Homo. Trans. R. J. Hollingdale. London: Penguin, 1979.

- - -. Human All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits. Trans. R.J.Hollingdale 1986. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991.

- - -. On the Genealogy of Morality. Trans. C. Diethe. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994.

- - -. The Birth of Tragedy. From The Portable Nietzsche. Trans and ed. Walter Kaufmann. 1954. New York: Viking Books, 1958.

- - -. The Gay Science. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage Books, 1974.

- - -. The Will to Power. Ed. and. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. and. R.J. Hollingdale 1967. New York: Vintage Books, 1968.

- - -. Thus Spake Zarathustra., Trans. R. J. Hollingdale. 1961. London: Penguin, 1976.

- - -. Twilight of the Idols/The Anti-Christ. Trans. R. J. Hollingdale. London: Penguin. 1968.

- - -. Untimely Meditations. Trans. R.J. Hollingdale. Cambridge UP, 1983.

Normand, Tom. Wyndham Lewis the Artist: Holding the Mirror up to Politics Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992.

Nolte, Ernest. Three Faces of Fascism: Action Française, Italian Fascism, National Socialism. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1965.

Norris, Christopher. Deconstruction: Theory and Practice. London: Methuen, 1982.

- - -. Spinoza & the Origins of Critical Theory. Oxford: Blackwell,1991.

Dorothea, Olkowski. Gilles Deleuze and the Ruins of Representation. Berkeley:

University of California Press, 1998.

Papanicolau, Andrew C. and. Pete A. Y. Gunter. Bergson and Modern Thought: Towards a Unified Science. New York: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1987.

Passmore, John. A Hundred Years of Philosophy. 1957 Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1984.

Pasley, Malcolm. "Nietzsche's Use of Medical Terms." Nietzsche: Image and Thought Ed. Malcolm Pasley .London: Methuen, 1978. 123-158.

Paterson, R.W.K., The Nihilistic Egoist Max Stirner. London: Oxford University Press for the University of Hull,1971. 7-11.

Peters, Corbett. David. The Modernity of English Art 1914-1930. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1997.

Peters, Corbett. David. ed. Wyndham Lewis and the Art of Modern War Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998.

Putz, Peter. "Nietzsche: Art and Intellectual Inquiry." Nietzsche. Ed. Pasley. 1 – 32.

Porteus, Hugh Gordon. Wyndham Lewis: A Discursive Exposition. London: Desmond Harmsworth, 1932 .

Pound, Ezra. Pound/Lewis: The Letters of Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis, the Correspondence of Ezra Pound London: Faber and Faber, 1985.

Rapaport, Herman. Heidegger & Derrida: Reflections on Time and Language 1989. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991.

Reich, Wilhelm The Mass Psychology of Fascism. Trans. Vincent R. Carfagno 1970. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1978.

Rescher, Nicholas Process Metaphysics: An Introduction to Process Philosophy Albany: SUNY Press, 1986.

- - -. The Philosophy of Leibniz. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1967.

-

Renaut, Alain. The Era of the Individual: A Contribution to the History of Subjectivity. Trans. M.B. DeBevoise &. Franklin Philip. Princeton New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1997.

Ricoeur, Paul. Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation New Haven: Yale UP, 1970.

Roberts, Julian. German Philosophy: An Introduction. Oxford: Polity Press, 1988.

Rose, W.K. ed. The Letters of Wyndham Lewis. London: Methuen, 1963.

Russell, Bertrand. A History of Western Philosophy. New York: Simon. &. Schuster, 1945.

Schwarz, Sanford. The Matrix of Modernism: Pound, Eliot & Early 20th-Century Thought. 1985.Princeton: Princeton UP, 1988.

Schopenhauer, Arthur. "On Ethics." Selected Essays of Schopenhauer. Ed and trans. Ernest Belfort Bax. London: G. Gell and Sons,1914.

- - -. On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason. Trans. E.F.J. Payne. La Salle, Illinois: Open Court Publishing Company, 1974.

- - -."On the Vanity of Existence." Essays and Aphorisms. Ed and trans. R.J.Hollingdale. 1970. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1981.

- - -. The World as Will and Representation Vol. I. Trans E.F.J. Payne. New York: Dover Publications, 1958.

- - -. The World as Will and Representation Vol. II, trans. E.F.J. Payne. New York: Dover Publications, 1958.

-

Schrift, Alan. D. Nietzsche and the Question of Interpretation: Between Hermeneutics and Deconstruction. London: Routledge, 1990.

- - -. Nietzsche's French Legacy: A Genealogy of Poststructuralism. London: Routledge, 1995.

Scott, Charles. E. Scott. The Language of Difference. New Jersey: Humanities Press International, 1987.

Sherry, Vincent. Ezra Pound, Wyndham Lewis, and Radical Modernism. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1993.

Simmel, Georg. Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. no Trans.1923. Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press,1986.

Schutte, Ophelia Beyond Nihilism: Nietzsche Without Masks. 1984. Chicago:

University of Chicago Press,1986.

Solomon, Robert. From Hegel to Existentialism. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1987.

Sorel, George. From Georges Sorel: Essays in Socialism & Philosophy. Ed. John L. Stanley. Trans. John and Charlotte Stanley. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1976.

Spanos, William V. Heidegger and Criticism: Retrieving the Cultural Politics of Destruction. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993.

Stambaugh, Joan. The Problem of Time in Nietzsche. Trans. John F. Humphrey. Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 1987.

Stirner, Max. The Ego and Its Own: The Case of the Individual against Authority. Trans. Steven Byington. London: Rebel Press, 1993.

Strawson, P.F. Individuals: An Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics. (London: Methuen, 1959.

Sugarman, Robert. Ira. "Rancor Against Time": The Phenomenology of "Ressentiment". Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1980.

Symons, Julian. Makers of the New: The Revolution in Literature, 1912-1939. London: Andre Deutsch. 1987.

- - -. ed. The Essential Wyndham Lewis: An Introduction to his Work. London: Andre Deutsch, 1989.

-

Taylor, Charles Sources of Self: The Making of Modern Identity. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989.

Taylor, Frederick W. The Principles of Scientific Management. New York: Harper and Bros., 1911.

Thatcher, David S. Nietzsche in England 1890-1914. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970.

Thomas, Paul. Karl Marx and the Anarchists. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980.

Tomlin, E.W.F. "The Philosophical Influences." Revaluation, Ed. Meyers. 29-46.

Turetzky, Philip. Time. London: Routledge, 1998.

Vickery, John B. The Literary Impact of 'The Golden Bough' . Princeton: Princeton UP, 1977.

Virilio, Paul. The Aesthetics of Disappearance. Trans. Philip Beitchman. New York: Semiotext(e), 1991.

Wagner, Geoffrey. Wyndham Lewis: Portrait of the Artist as Enemy. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957.

Warnock,. Mary. Ethics Since 1900 .1960. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1971.

Weber, Max. "Science as a Vocation." From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology. Ed and trans. H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills. 1948. London: Routledge, 1991.

West, Rebecca. Rev. of Tarr by Wyndham Lewis. Nation 107. 17 Aug. 1918. 176.

Wildon Carr, H. Henri Bergson: The Philosophy of Change. London & Edinburgh: T. C and E. C. Jack, 1919.

Worringer, William. Abstraction and Empathy. Trans. Michael Bullock. New York: International Universities Press, 1953.

Zimmerman, Michael E. Heidegger's Confrontation with Modernity: Technology, Politics, Art.. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1990. 41.