

Night Thoughts on Editing *Tarr*

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A tale once told cannot be told again;
The whistle whistles and it whistles still.

(‘Night Thoughts’, C. H. Sisson)

It may seem curious to begin an essay about producing a new edition of the 1928 text of Lewis’s *Tarr* for the Oxford World Classics series with the minor poetic genre of the ‘night thought’. Ever since Edward Young’s eighteenth-century poem of the title, best known to the general reader for its later illustrations by William Blake, the ‘night thought’ has implied a personal look backward, a remembrance of things past carrying with it a melancholy acknowledgement of opportunities lost. Yet as C. H. Sisson suggests in his poem of the same title, the ‘night thought’ implies a paradoxical relation between the one who contemplates and the past. The narratives of the past cannot be recaptured, on one hand, for the tale already told cannot be told again. On the other hand, the work of the past has always maintained a covert existence through time. What was once sounded (‘whistled’) continues to sound, if only in memory. Sisson’s poem implies that the past cannot be recaptured, but also, conversely, that the past has never been lost.

I’d like to suggest that this paradox is particularly relevant to the editing of a work such as *Tarr*. For while *Tarr* has never been a ‘lost’ work, it is an important novel that has fallen out of print, leading for some a shadowy existence on the cusp of the canon as well as the cusp of availability. Its ‘whistle’ – sometimes strident, sometimes alluring – has never gone away, but it has become, to a degree, inaccessible.

This inaccessibility is both pragmatic and aesthetic. The 1928 *Tarr* has been out of print for some years, and Paul O’Keeffe’s edition of the 1918 *Tarr* is technically out of print, although still available from some third-party sellers. Despite its substantial merits, *Tarr* is for most new readers a difficult book. Lewis filled it with bristling stylistic experimentation, and arguably unsympathetic characters. He expects familiarity with artistic and philosophic ideas of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the ability to read (or at least read past) many phrases and conversations in French, German, and Italian. One would

hate to depend upon the commentary left on amazon.com to provide a comprehensive overview of reader response, but the sole review of an earlier edition of *Tarr*, left by a frustrated initiate, is striking. Titled ‘Pretentious and deliberately exasperating’, the review begins: ‘I picked up this book because an English major friend of mine said it was the most difficult book she ever read’. The author rounds the corner of the last paragraph by stating baldly: ‘Do yourself a favor. Avoid this book’.¹ Lewis no doubt wanted to be exasperating; as with so many modernists, difficulty is part of the project. Yet editors ignore such responses at their peril. Marjorie Perloff has cited such user reviews – albeit positive ones – as part of an argument about the appeal of modernist texts for readers outside of the academy.² To her great credit, Judith Luna, the editor of Oxford World Classics, noted this frustrated response when I first proposed a new edition of *Tarr*, and simply commented wryly that she hoped the new edition would prove to be more engaging to the unconvinced contemporary reader. Part of that concern is understandably commercial. The Black Sparrow editions of Lewis’s work issued in the 1980s were nonpareil in beauty of production and scholarly content, but were produced by Lewis scholars and enthusiasts mainly for other enthusiasts. Oxford, in contrast, is a mainstream publisher whose books are widely available and often ordered for classroom use and by general readers. They have the understandable priority of getting their books into the hands of readers who are intrigued by, say, Lawrence or Woolf, but for whom Lewis and *Tarr* are unknown quantities. By appearing in the Oxford World Classics series *Tarr* would be granted a more canonical status, and with that greater visibility comes the responsibility to present the novel with the most useful kinds of contextualization.

Can an ‘inaccessible’ novel be made accessible? In 1979 Fredric Jameson memorably referred to Lewis’s modernism as ‘an archaic survival, like the antediluvian creatures of Conan Doyle’s *Lost World*, hidden away within a forgotten fold of the earth’s surface’.³ Jameson’s introduction is titled ‘On Not Reading Wyndham Lewis’, and while his geologic metaphor mainly referred to readerly neglect of Lewis in the late 1970s, it was also at that time nearly impossible to find copies of his books in print. The first hurdle of accessibility is literal: can one get the books to read? Shortly after Jameson’s book, and perhaps partly because of interest raised by it, Lewis’s novels began to reappear in print. I admired the Black Sparrow editions of Lewis beginning with *The Apes of God* (1930) in 1981, and Penguin reissued the 1928 *Tarr* in 1982. Paul

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O’Keeffe’s edition of the 1918 *Tarr* in 1990 was another welcome arrival. Its annotations were superb, and its list of textual variants was of great use for the scholar and historian, if arguably too detailed for the casual reader or undergraduate student. This left one with a dilemma when presenting *Tarr* for university coursework. Penguin’s reprinting of the first Chatto and Windus edition was less than ideal. It had no annotations, no glosses on foreign phrases, no contextualizing introduction. When I taught from that edition the novel met, for these and more intrinsic reasons, with a fair amount of resistance from students. O’Keeffe’s edition rectified most of those omissions, but presented an alternative text that was arguably more enticing for the scholar than for the first-time reader.

And then, within a very few years, both editions became unavailable. Some scholars, I’ve heard, taught *Tarr* from photocopies, and at least one colleague stockpiled enough copies of the Penguin *Tarr* at his University library so that he could teach his students from the assembled books, a kind of private hoard in a public cache. My proposal that Oxford reprint the 1928 *Tarr*, then, depended on demonstrating several interrelated claims: that interest in Lewis’s work had risen in the academy, that Lewis’s work belonged in the series, and that *Tarr* could be contextualized so that it would appeal both to professors for classroom use and to the general educated reader who sought out the classic novels that normally appear under Oxford’s imprimatur.

Showing rising interest in Lewis was not difficult, even while recognizing that Lewis will probably never demand the same level of attention as, for example, Joyce or Woolf. Although Lewis has always been recognized as significant by a handful of scholars in the United Kingdom, the United States, and Canada, the critical visibility of his work has risen significantly in the last fifteen years. Recent displays of Lewis’s art in London and in Spain certainly raised the visibility, as it were, of his painting. More generally, after the founding of the Modernist Studies Association in the later 1990s and the increase of societies devoted to the study of modernism in the United Kingdom, inquiry into the broader texts and contexts of modernism has led to substantially wider interest in Lewis. Many books have appeared from prominent presses that treat Lewis as a key figure of modernism. These include, notably, *Wyndham Lewis: Painter and Writer* (2000) by Paul Edwards and the biography *Some Sort of Genius* (2000) by Paul O’Keeffe.⁴ Critical books by Paul Peppis, Tyrus Miller, Martin Puchner, Ann Ardis, Paul Xiros Cooper, and Miranda Hickman treat Lewis in the larger

modernist context.⁵ *Modernism/Modernity*, the major journal in the field, published a special issue on Lewis in 1997, and the influential collection of essays *Bad Modernisms* (2006) prominently features two chapters on Lewis.⁶ Recent books such as *Cinema and Modernism* (2007) by David Trotter, *Machine Age Comedy* (2009) by Michael North, and *Feeling Modern* (2008) by Justus Nieland are further evidence that Lewis has perhaps finally crossed the border from being a specialist figure requiring special pleading to a writer and painter who is increasingly studied without demurrals.⁷

That *Tarr* deserved reprinting and full scholarly contextualization was further supported by the increased attention to Lewis evident in anthologies and introductory books largely aimed at classrooms. The most recent edition of *The Norton Anthology of Modern and Contemporary Poetry* (2003), for instance, includes the major *BLAST* (1914-1915) manifestos in its 'Poetics' section, and Lawrence Rainey's *Modernism: An Anthology* (2005) includes several prose pieces by Lewis, including *Enemy of the Stars* (1914), 'Bestre' (1927), and 'Inferior Religions' (1917).⁸ Recent general introductions to the field specifically emphasize *Tarr* as a key work of the era. David Trotter calls *Tarr* 'quintessentially modernist' in his chapter on the modern novel in the *Cambridge Companion to Modernism* (1999); David Ayers discusses Lewis prominently in his *Modernism: A Short Introduction* (2004); and *A Companion to Modernist Literature and Culture* (2006) contains a chapter on *Tarr* by Andrzej Gąsiorek.⁹ Could one argue that *Tarr* was finally poised to enter the literary mainstream?

Framing *Tarr*

Oh ye cold-hearted, frozen, Formalists!
(Edward Young, *Night Thoughts*, Night IV l.638)

In my proposal to Oxford I argued that this case could well be made, particularly if one provided an introduction that would place Lewis's achievement first in its contemporary aesthetic and intellectual context. The next step would be – to borrow the terms only slightly out of context from Young – to challenge the assumption that though Lewis was undoubtedly formalist, *Tarr* was neither cold-hearted (emotionally) nor frozen (stylistically or ethically in time).

First came the choice of text. I've always preferred the 1928 *Tarr*. This was in fact my introduction both to the novel and to Lewis as a

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writer, so part of my attachment to the later version may reflect my personal looking backward. More generally, I've come to feel that what the 1928 *Tarr* gains in novelistic weight and increased detail over its 1918 predecessor more than compensates for the arguable loss of telegraphic punch and stylistic idiosyncrasy (those notorious '=' signs prized by at least some readers).¹⁰ True, there are a few places in the 1928 *Tarr* where a careful reader can note elements of Lewis's later prose style creeping in: moments where he elides an expected comma in reported speech, or where, in the manner of *The Apes of God*, he spends excessive space on the reportage of inane dialogue, a stylistic tic really only evident in the passages Lewis added to the preparations for Kreisler's duel. I also felt, and the Trustees of the Lewis Memorial Trust agreed, that the revised text was Lewis's preference, and deserved pride of place, particularly given that the exigencies of publishing had led to an unintended anomaly in the transmission of the text. O'Keeffe's Black Sparrow edition of the 1918 version had at the time of its publication been no doubt intended as a scholarly alternative to the 1928 version, which was the basis of all editions of *Tarr* in Lewis's later life. But because the availability of the Black Sparrow *Tarr* outlived that of the Penguin reprint of the 1928 Chatto and Windus, for the first time since 1928, a later generation of readers and scholars approaching *Tarr* came to think of the 1918 *Tarr* text as *Tarr* itself – the very fate that Lewis had attempted to forestall with his revision.

My strategy, then, was to suggest how I could revive the 1928 *Tarr* to make it valuable for its most likely classroom contexts. *Tarr* should be accessible for courses on the early twentieth-century English novel, for courses on modernism and culture, and for mixed genre courses in modernism, such as one I teach, where students might study it alongside the poetry of Pound and Eliot, and in the context of Vorticism and the other European avant-gardes. I wanted to provide linkages between *Tarr* and the period of Vorticism and *BLAST*, but also provide enough chronological contextualization with Futurism on one side, and later artistic movements such as Dada and Surrealism (including films) on the other, to make *Tarr* useful in courses that present it in the context of modernist visual culture.

I also wanted to make the novel accessible *as* a novel, in dialogue with the more canonical novels of its period. My agenda was Janus-faced: I wanted both to present *Tarr* as a product of the avant-garde, and, without downplaying the degree to which Lewis was antagonistic to mainstream modernism, to draw attention to the ways in which his work

enters into dialogue with the major English and Irish novels of its period – particularly Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), Ford’s *The Good Soldier* (1915), and Lawrence’s *Women in Love* (1921).

In my original proposal to Oxford, I presumed that the introduction would be in three parts. The first would present *Tarr* in the context of Lewis’s early career, the Vorticist ideas of *BLAST*, and Lewis’s relation to the European pre-War avant-garde. The second section would place *Tarr* among its three companion novels, emphasizing linkages between their characters, structures, and ideas. The third section would explore *Tarr*’s affiliations with the English art scene of its day – including its surprising use of some techniques of early cinema – looking at how key moments in the text echo the visual techniques of Eadweard Muybridge and Charlie Chaplin.

In practice, I produced a five-part introduction that covers all of these subjects – although less on the general English art scene than I had projected – and which drew other topics into its ambit as well. In subsections that Judith Luna suggested be titled ‘Satire and Society’, ‘Style and the Visual Arts’, ‘*Tarr* and Contemporary Fiction’, and “‘a sincerely ironic masterpiece’” (a quotation from *Tarr*’s description of the architecture of the Bonnington Club), I tried to contextualize the novel in a series of interpretive frames: the early critical reception of *Tarr*, Lewis’s writing and painting of the period; and particularly as a response to Lewis’s own description of his novel in progress, to Sturge Moore, as both a philosophic dialogue and a ‘grotesque tapestry’.¹¹

I came to understand that in outline the plot of *Tarr* resembles a certain kind of European comedy. Michael Levenson once showed that the plot of *Tarr* bore structural affinities with the novels of Henry James.¹² I suggest that it also bears affinities with Viennese operetta – the pairs of intertwined couples, with the men as the soldier and the artist, and the women as the ‘peasant’ and the ‘aristocrat’ – but that Lewis’s treatment of the structure undermined its lighter generic associations in favour of a bleaker undercurrent of violence and sexuality, rather the darker Vienna of Schnitzler or Schiele than that of the confections of Strauss.

In playing off the paradoxes of *Tarr*’s plot and construction – as both grotesquerie and comedy, as novel and philosophical investigation – I hope I demonstrated how Lewis manages to satirize not just his main players and their recurrent obsessions. I hope I also cast some light on how the novel investigates the philosophical relationships between ideas of individuality and of society, of representation and

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action, and of the received structures and tropes of the English versus the continental novel.

In discussing *Tarr's* relation to Vorticism and the European avant-gardes, I focused on how the novel's main themes and its stylistic innovations both emulate and criticize aspects of Marinetti's Futurism, while showing how Lewis picked up on some technical and cultural aspects of film. Kreisler looks at the world around him 'cinematographically' (T2 88), Lewis tells us, and at times acts like a sort of comic-demonic mix of Goethe's Mephistopheles and Charlie Chaplin. Elsewhere, Kreisler arises as a kind of film poster from German Expressionist film ('like a great terrifying poster, cut out on the melodramatic stairway' [T2 170]), and, on the first page of the novel, Paris appears like the set for a Hollywood Western. *Tarr's* Paris, in other words, is not only enmeshed in a world of aesthetic and philosophic cosmopolitanism, but is already beginning to show the Americanization of cultural taste that would increase markedly after the First World War, including such apparently minor fashion details as Butcher's pullover and suit of 'gangster cut' (T2 23).

I was conscious, however, that while cultural and aesthetic contexts were essential to understanding the world of *Tarr*, these alone would not be enough to win over readers who might find the novel heartless, or ethically suspect. Are its characters 'believable'? Are its gender politics retrograde? Does *Tarr* endorse the misogyny of its main male characters, or even find rape – the subject of perhaps the novel's most striking and disturbing set-piece – an appropriate subject of a kind of comedy, however black? These questions required other kinds of contextualization.

While it is difficult to deny the degree to which both the novel and the character of Tarr are cruel to Bertha, it is also possible to underestimate the degree to which Lewis presents her as an enabler to Tarr, and the degree to which Lewis shows their relationship as a model of erotic and emotional co-dependency. Nor can one deny that Lewis portrays Bertha's psychic reaction to her rape by Kreisler with a good deal of psychological acuity, from the stylistic representations of how her shock translates into visual and mental blockages, as in the memorable sequences in which she sees multiple Kreislers appearing simultaneously in space, and the ways in which Lewis records her attempts to erase the shock to her sense of self through denial and social accommodation.

The character of Anastasya, arguably stiffly drawn, becomes less so if considered in the context of the pre- and post-War journalistic constructs of the intellectually forward and politically aware New Woman, and the fun-loving sexually open Modern Girl. She could be compared to various real-life analogues of actual inter-War women artists and consorts, such as the Futurist performer and polemicist Valentine de Saint-Point or Man Ray's model Alice Prin (better known by her pseudonym, Kiki de Montparnasse).

As for the novel's gender politics, Lewis's criticism of Kreisler's behaviour is all too clear throughout. At times, particularly in a long conversation with Tarr towards the end of the novel, Lewis relates this misogyny to the ideas of Nietzsche. But I was also careful to contextualize Tarr's misogyny with his still immature immersion in the German intellectual tradition – both Nietzsche and Schopenhauer, from whom Tarr derives some of his most pungent and politically incorrect ideas about women. Most significantly, I demonstrate that Kreisler is not only a prototypical Prussian, but also a parodic embodiment of Futurist ideas of motion, power, destruction, and contempt for women, arguing that Lewis uses him to criticize at one blow both the increasing militarization of a self-destructive Europe and the ways in which contempt for women is an intrinsic part of fantasies of masculine power.

The sexual politics of the duel, I came to understand, are related to the sexual politics of rape. Both are the logical endpoint of the gender ideologies of a *Mitteleuropa* where women were simultaneously elevated as an ideal and denigrated as real individuals. The duel both overvalues and undervalues woman – she becomes an abstraction of purity worthy of masculine protection, even as she is reduced to an object of masculine control. Both the duel and rape echo Marinetti's praise of intuitive action, destruction, and hatred of the conventionally feminine. I discovered an essay in *The Egoist*, published in the same issue as a serial number of *Tarr*, in which John Cournos makes the same associations among war, sex, Futurism, and rape. I cite Cournos in the introduction as a serendipitous confirmation of Lewis's fictional conflation of these terms.¹³

The sceptical reader might wonder, however, whether Lewis's presentation of cruelty and sexual violence in *Tarr* criticizes these behaviours rather than merely avowing them. Isolating ethically questionable representations and claiming that they intrinsically criticize their subject matter is a familiar gesture in many philosophic arguments

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about the relations of art and politics, and one must be careful not to make such claims in bad faith. They often depend on the critic importing into his or her arguments frames of reference extrinsic to the work in question. I feel justified in making these claims, however, both by *Tarr*'s contemporary literary context and in light of the history and text of *Tarr* itself.

Seeing *Tarr* as an English novel among selected novels by Joyce, Ford, and Lawrence worked doubly for my argument. It shows that however avant-garde *Tarr* may be in certain respects, it also shares key structural and thematic concerns with its fellows. Like Ford's *The Good Soldier* and Lawrence's *Women in Love*, *Tarr* is a story of two intertwined couples, whose social and sexual experiences become the subject of philosophical observation by a male member of the foursome; like Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, *Tarr* shows the growth of an intellectual and an aesthete in a mixture of the *Bildungs-* and *Kunstlerroman*. More notably, all three comparative novels feature protagonists or narrators who appear initially to be trustworthy guides to the world around them, but are subsequently revealed throughout the novels, either by context provided by other characters (such as Lawrence's Birkin, as seen by Ursula) to be limited, deluded, or ironically circumscribed in their abilities to understand themselves or the world.

While these confluences are circumstantial to *Tarr*, they suggest that the modernist novelists of the mid-1910s worked within a common range of fictional epistemologies. This commonality also throws into sharp relief the many ways in which Lewis ironizes and distances himself from *Tarr*'s attitudes and behaviours, despite the manifest similarity of *Tarr*'s aesthetic ideas to those of Lewis and of Vorticism. In this respect the relation of Lewis and *Tarr* is comparable to the relationships of Joyce to his Stephen Dedalus or of Lawrence to his Rupert Birkin. Although it is scarcely news to experienced readers of *Tarr*, I lay out the many ways in which Lewis ironizes *Tarr* from within, by pointing out incongruities between *Tarr*'s theories and his practice, weighing criticisms of him presented by other characters (such as Hobson and Bertha), and noting some linguistic play that underlines the degree to which Lewis intends us to take the characters at face value.

As has long been recognized, Kreisler is a version of E. T. A. Hoffmann's musician Kreisler, but he is also, like Hoffman's character, a '*kreisel*', the German word for 'spinning top', a wonderfully Vorticist metaphor for a character who is constantly in furious motion yet gets

nowhere, and who eventually falls dead. Likewise, we may think of Tarr, in a kind of cross-linguistic pun, as a kind of ‘*Tor*’, a German term for ‘blockhead’ that appears at one point in Kreisler’s consciousness (*T2* 99).

Lewis agreed that Tarr was partly foolish, for he distanced himself overtly from his character’s behaviour in his Preface to the 1918 Knopf edition, expanded slightly and divided into a Prologue and Epilogue for the 1918 Egoist version. In an Appendix, I reprint the Knopf prologue and variant paragraphs from the two 1918 versions. O’Keeffe does so as well, but I also underline in the Appendix the thematic reasons why Lewis probably excluded this material from the 1928 revision. Both Sturge Moore and Pound objected, one in a letter, the other in a review, that by including this material as a frame Lewis telegraphed his criticisms of Tarr to the reader too early on, thus ruining the game before it began. Removing the authorial statement from the revision left the work of evaluating Tarr and his world to the acuity of his readership.

In connecting *Tarr* to the avant-garde and to the mainstream of modernism and by clarifying the degree to which *Tarr* satirizes both its social world and the characters it appears to hold in the highest intellectual esteem, I tried to show a first-time reader how *Tarr*’s subject matter and characters should be seen as an effect of Lewis’s complicated and shifting ironic frames. Rather than reading *Tarr* as a heartless book, one can read it as a novel that questions the efficacy and integrity of its characters’ various versions of heartlessness. Lewis was, after all, initially concerned that Harriet Shaw Weaver, the first publisher of *Tarr*, might find the tone of the first version of *Tarr* ‘too heartless, bitter and material’. But he also wrote ‘if the book has a moral, it is that it describes a man’s revolt or reaction against his reason’ (*L* 76). I try to show that *Tarr* can be read both as a comic endorsement of its main character’s point of view about life and art, and as a more sombre evaluation of the dangers of subordinating feeling to intellect.

Ado about Noting

Enveloped in obscurity, our enemy,
An emissary from the world of shadows,
Assails us from an unknown vantage-point ...
(‘Night Thoughts’, David Gascoyne)

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Turning to the textual annotations from the introduction is to turn from the forest to the trees, from textual macrocosm to textual microcosm. In practice, illuminating minutiae and providing the Big Picture of the introduction work symbiotically. Like induction and deduction, each process makes its complementary process possible, without ever being quite able to say where – to shift metaphors – the egg ends and the chicken begins. An editor typically mulls the introduction over during the course of the project, but writes it last; the intellectual matters discovered while preparing the annotations help shape the introduction's content, even as the Platonic ideal of the introduction to come shapes the number and nature of the glosses.

Admitting in the introduction that *Tarr* can be difficult to read presupposes that the notes will need to be extensive. Indeed, *Tarr* has a special need for lengthy annotations. I recognized practically that this edition would be the *Tarr* of record for some years, and that it should provide both guidance for the student and depth for the scholar. Like Joyce, Lewis demands from readers a wide range of cultural, aesthetic, philosophic, and linguistic references. *Tarr* is less overtly 'enveloped in obscurity' than, say, *Ulysses* (1922), for the sentences are in many cases superficially less complicated than Joyce's. Yet consider the novel's opening. What does it mean that 'Western Venuses twang [the] responsive streets' of Paris? That Paris is a 'Thebaïde'? That the people on the streets are compared to a 'Hollywood camp of pseudo-cowpunchers', or that 'guns tap rhythmically the buttocks'? Why does Lewis introduce the gathered artists as 'disheartening and admonitory as a Tussaud's of the Flood' (T2 7)? What are the vantage points of this linguistically apparently straightforward but actually quite opaque world?

The novel's first four paragraphs required, in fact, ten explanatory endnotes. While this density is unique even within *Tarr*, it underlines that *Tarr* is unlike most novels, even modernist novels, in its patterns of reference. In the typical edited novel, the number of annotations decreases as the novel proceeds. This is because an author usually establishes context, names of places, and important motifs early in the texts, and most narratives unfold within a stable intellectual and geographical environment.

Since editing *Tarr*, I've been working on an edition of Ford Madox Ford's *The Good Soldier*, and the glosses demanded by that text work quite differently. Many of the annotations for readers of *The Good Soldier* consist of the names and locations of European resort towns, some observations about social nuance and wealth between Americans

and Europeans, and passing references to historical events and works of art, significant not so much because of their content but because of their sheer number. These references mark Ford's narrator as a specific class of person who lives in a certain way at a certain time and place. The references act for Ford's narrator, Dowell, as an assumed bank of mutual knowledge: the reader is one of his social peers, who is familiar with the culture of the German spa, say, and this illusion of shared, if fictional, knowledge is more important than the knowledge itself. Thus the annotations fall off markedly as the novel continues, for as the novel focuses more resolutely on the private lives of the characters, references to new aspects of the public and intellectual world decrease.

Tarr works differently. When approaching the opening conversation between Tarr and Hobson, for instance, a new reader would be almost entirely baffled without some sense of the detailed network of social and aesthetic attitudes for which Hobson stands: the cultural details of his education at Cambridge, and even his hat and style of hair. It is helpful to note the history of Impressionism and English ideas of art, particularly the degree to which Hobson stands in for Roger Fry and the history of personal acrimony with Lewis over the Omega Workshop and the subsequent creation of the Rebel Arts Centre. These are very specific details requiring a good deal of contextualization, and so it continues throughout the novel. The density of annotations does decrease in the Kreisler sections of the novel. This may mark it as a kind of epistemological analogue to the narrative structure: once Lewis establishes Kreisler's limited range of knowledge and interests, his identity and fate are, in a sense, foreclosed. Tarr traces an opposite trajectory. Not only does the need for glosses not diminish as the novel ends, but the closing sections of conversation between Tarr with Anastasya and Tarr's final confrontation with Bertha require nearly as much moment-to-moment explication as the opening.

As a pragmatic decision, I started with fresh research for each reference. I wanted to avoid imitating O'Keeffe's previous work, although there's quite a lot of such copying in the history of edited volumes. (If one compares the various annotated editions of *The Good Soldier*, one finds a surprising amount of 'adoption' of previous editors' research. The editor of a recent edition of Joyce's *Dubliners* (1914) tells me that the notes to most modern editions of that work depend heavily upon those of the first annotated American edition.) My job was considerably easier than O'Keeffe's, however, for I had the advantage of access to the Internet. Lewis noted how technological aids for writing

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had changed over time, saying in his late blindness ‘Milton had his daughters, I have my dictaphone’.¹⁴ Contemporary annotators have the inestimable benefit of nearly instantaneous technological access to vast amounts of information. Google Books is a particularly rich resource. It enabled me, for instance, to track down an allusion to ‘*Prose pour Des Esseintes*’ (1885) by Mallarmé that understandably eluded O’Keeffe (T2 201). It also pointed me towards passages in other novels that helped illuminate such disparate subjects as the stereotype of the impassive Native American, the nature of the Russian cigarette smoked by Kreisler before the duel (called, in fact, ‘*papiros?*’), and the then-fashionable woman’s unstructured ‘reform dress’ or *reformkleid*. This last term first appears in the text during the dance at the Bonnington Club (T2 119), and thereafter is used as a correlative both for the decline of fashion – Bertha is said to wear ‘reform-clothes’ (T2 152) – and as a metaphor for a decline of taste in general (Germany as ‘reform-dressed’ [T2 203]).

I learned much of interest along the way. I had known that a ‘*Thébaïde*’ (T2 7) was a hermitage or place of contemplation – Lewis uses it in this sense as the title of a drawing in the portfolio *Timon of Athens* (1912) – but not that *La Thébaïde* was also the title of an early play by Racine that recounts the hatred and war between Oedipus’s sons, a nicely fratricidal allusion for the interplay of Tarr and Kreisler (not to mention Soltyk) later in the novel. I learned that Tarr insulting Hobson by calling him a ‘voice-culture practitioner’ (T2 15) alludes specifically to the once popular voice-training methods of François Delsarte, and that an apparently anomalous reference to the bubonic plague (T2 196) had a surprisingly topical source in outbreaks that took place in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. I learned that the plaster cast of ‘the Drowned Girl’ (T2 281) decorating Bertha’s apartment was one of many replicas of the death mask of the so-called ‘L’inconnue de la Seine’, an anonymous girl who drowned in Paris in the late nineteenth century and whose enigmatically smiling face was the model of feminine beauty in Europe for decades before the ascendance of Greta Garbo. Above all, I uncovered fascinating material about guns and the culture of duelling in France, Germany, and England. I found a good deal of information about Brownings and duelling pistols on various specialist websites. One of my prized discoveries was a newspaper item from *The New York Times* of May 14, 1914 that describes how the art critic Waldemar George, who later contributed to Lewis’s journal *The Tyro* (TY2 50-52), nearly fought a duel with an artist who knocked him

unconscious at a party – an anecdote that illuminates well the question of what was considered a ‘duelling offense’ in pre-war Paris.

I also tried to provide careful context for a few potentially offensive allusions, so that these terms would be understood in historic context. Thus, when Tarr calls Bertha a ‘high-grade aryan bitch’ (T2 26), there’s no gainsaying the character’s misogyny or racialism. It’s worth clarifying, however, that particularly in 1918 (for the phrase appears as ‘high standard Aryan female’ in the 1918 Knopf edition [T2 23]) the term ‘aryan’ drew upon Gobineau’s *Essai sur l’inégalité des races humaines* (*Essay on the Inequality of the Human Race*; 1853-1855) but was not yet associated with anti-Semitism or Nazi ideology. When Tarr refers disapprovingly to the ‘eugenicist’ (T2 15), I note that the eugenics movement had many prominent supporters among writers and thinkers in the early twentieth century, and that it only lost its (pseudo)scientific reputation in the 1930s when eugenic rhetoric entered into the racial policies of Nazi Germany. For similar reasons, I felt the need to contextualize, particularly for students, that the title of Part IV, *Holocausts* (T2 211), refers to Biblical burnt offerings and not the murder of Jews during the Second World War, an historically much later, although now culturally pervasive, use of the term.

Lewis’s later relationship to Germany has always been controversial, particularly since the publication of Jameson’s study, with its memorable but in many ways reductive subtitle ‘Wyndham Lewis, The Modernist as Fascist’.¹⁵ Working closely with *Tarr*, however, I realized that Lewis’s attitude to German thought and art was more complex than it initially appeared. *Tarr* takes German art as a satiric target in the decorations of Bertha’s apartment, which aesthetically levels a bust of Beethoven with souvenir sabots of the Bretagne, and where Bertha imagines Tarr as a version of Goethe’s Werther (T2 189). Lewis does take war-time aim at the baleful influence of German culture in his cancelled 1918 preface.¹⁶ That influence is, however, in evidence throughout *Tarr*. Lewis alludes repeatedly to Goethe’s *Faust* (1808) and, where Bertha’s child is said to look rather impossibly like Tarr, possibly also to *Elective Affinities* (1809). A section dealing with Kreisler contains at least one key and thematically significant allusion to Kant.¹⁷ And although the novel foregrounds Tarr’s negative appraisals of the popular European reception of Nietzsche, Tarr is in many ways thoroughly Germanicized in his Schopenhauerian pessimism, and there is evidence that he is more familiar with his contemporary German than French philosophy, despite the novel’s setting in Paris. He is at least familiar in

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passing with a metaphysical term such as ‘*Wesensgefühl*’ (‘feeling for being’ [T2 263]) used by such now little-known German philosophers as Eduard von Hartmann (1842-1906) and Ludwig Klages (1872-1956).

Lewis’s use of such terms, in both German and French, pose a different kind of textual challenge. In his book *Memories and Impressions* (1911), Ford Madox Ford made fun of the idea that a great stylist must use many obsolete words that can only be known with the help of a glossary.¹⁸ Lewis largely circumvents that criticism in his use of English. But despite Pound informing Lewis that Helen Saunders checked the accuracy of his foreign expressions for the first American edition, minor errors appear in German throughout (see *P/L* 94). At times I had to decide whether incidences of non-standard French were simply errors or were Lewis’s intentional representation of dialectical variants. Particularly in the German, misspellings – ‘*Reformkleide*’ for ‘*Reformkleid*’, ‘*Wesengefüh!*’ for ‘*Wesensgefühl*’ – hampered my ability to discover their sources, while a misspelling, such as *Pernot* for *Pernod* (T2 24), seemed more obviously a simple mismatch of Lewis’s orthography and his aural memory.

Where I decided to leave such errors in the text uncorrected and noted them as such in the annotations, I conversely found it useful to comment upon a number of places where Lewis shows great subtlety in his use of foreign languages. With the help of a colleague who is a native speaker of French, I determined that when Tarr calls Bertha ‘*brave*’ (T2 43) it is a left-handed, even slightly pejorative, compliment, and that Bertha’s French is often subtly incorrect, as when she says of Tarr “‘il es un salaud’” (T2 147) instead of the idiomatic ‘*c’est un salaud*’. Bertha’s shift from using *vous* to *tu* (T2 46) with Tarr, even though she has earlier used the informal German *du* (T2 44), demonstrates a subtle shift in that scene’s emotional temperature, as well as an asymmetry between period codes of intimacy within those languages. And what of Kreisler’s mysterious Italian epithet ‘Sagraletto’ (T2 73)? Another colleague, a native speaker of Italian, suggested convincingly that it might be a dialectical approximation, with the first syllable elided, of the phrase ‘*dissacra letto*’ – ‘bed desecrator’, that is, ‘adulterer’ or ‘masturbator’. Elsewhere there were orthographic puzzles to solve. For instance, when Suzanne says to Kreisler in the 1928 Chatto and Windus edition, ‘tu ne le voir pus?’ (T2 93), I had to decide whether ‘pus’ was a typesetter’s error or Lewis’s intentional dialectical alternative for ‘*plus*’. In that case, turning to the 1918 Egoist edition showed that Lewis originally spelled the word there as ‘p’us’, so ‘pus’ remained, the lost mark of elision a

brushstroke crept into the text from Lewis's prose style of the late 1920s.¹⁹ And I'm embarrassed to admit how long it took for me to realize that Kreisler's café order of 'Lobster salad, mayonnaise and a pommes à huile Jeanne' (T2 83) was simply an order to a waitress named Jeanne, rather than that 'pommes à huile Jeanne' was an obscure but plausible-sounding item of French cookery – another example of how Lewis's prose practices from the period of *The Apes of God* can mislead.

Ultimately, I was able to steer nearly entirely clear of O'Keeffe's precedents, with two notable exceptions: try as I might, two references to Balzac and Diderot led to the same sources as in O'Keeffe, and those seemed to be the only two available sources still.²⁰ I am grateful to O'Keeffe's work, and to many informants who shared their expertise on particular points of interest, and saved me from mistakes. I owe special thanks to Thomas Pfau, who helped with all matters German, and Paul Edwards, who not only graciously read over the introduction and annotations, but kept me from attributing a direct quotation from Dryden as a paraphrase from Wordsworth, and from quoting an outraged letter about Lewis from *The Egoist* as authentic when it was actually a parody planted in the journal by T. S. Eliot. And, above all, I thank Judith Luna for allowing my extensive annotations to stand without significant changes. Oxford may be one of the last presses around that allows editors such potential freedom – in this case, I hope, a latitude justified by the project.

Envoi

Is it true, as Sisson claims in his 'Night Thoughts', that a 'tale once told cannot be told again'? A new edition of a novel is surely not a recreation. In Vladimir Nabokov's novel *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* (1941), a visitor finds the author Knight stretched on the floor, having just completed a novel. Knight explains his posture: 'I have finished building a world, and this is my Sabbath rest'.²¹ Editors make the same kind of claim at their peril. At best the editor is more akin to the visitor, an onlooker who reports about the original to later listeners and readers.

But if editing is a kind of reframing rather than a creation – and also an attempt, in a sense, to step twice into Heraclitus's impossible river – it is also a form of 'representation'. I mean this in a variety of senses. Editors literally 'present again' the text for a new readership,

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returning it to public view; at the same time, they hope to reinvigorate ‘the present’ of the text – its historical and cultural specificity – to make it newly available to their contemporaries. They also ‘stand for’ the text, in that they portray the work in their own words while attempting to set it forth clearly (for another meaning of ‘represent’ is ‘to present clearly to the mind’). Like a political or economic representative, editors are spokespersons and agents for the text. Above all, they ‘represent’ the text by drawing attention to it, by describing and putting forward to the public the claim that the text at hand is worthy as the embodiment of noteworthy qualities. To be a ‘professor’ means etymologically to proclaim a belief. To be an editor suggests a similar kind of calling: to do one’s best by a text one believes to be valuable, and to try to become, to the best of one’s abilities and with all of its varied connotations in mind, the text’s representative.

I hope that I’ve emphasized how *Tarr* engages with its own present moment, with its time’s intellectual and aesthetic history, and that I have afforded entry into those worlds to both the seasoned reader of Lewis and to the neophyte. Sometimes the intellectual affiliations of an unusual text can become clearer with the passage of time. I hope that emphasizing not only the originality of *Tarr* but also its lines of connection with both English modernism and the European thought with which it is suffused, can make the novel clearer for a contemporary readership. After all, English art since Lewis has included such dark aesthetic visions as the films of Nicholas Roeg and Peter Greenaway and the installation works of Damien Hirst; such a context may provide a clearer aesthetic framework for the tonalities of Lewis’s novel than do his contemporary artists. While *Tarr* will probably never prove to be ‘popular’ in any sense that the marketplace would recognize, *Tarr* was one of three of Lewis’s books – along with *Time and Western Man* (1927) and *The Art of Being Ruled* (1926) – to sell well for Chatto and Windus.²² I hope that, by editing the text for Oxford, I have helped represent *Tarr* for a new readership, to nudge a worthy if difficult novel back into the light of day where I believe it belongs.

Notes

¹ The review can be located at http://www.amazon.com/Tarr-Wyndham-Lewis/dp/1150383526/ref=sr_1_3?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1277826319&sr=8-3. Accessed 15th October 2010.

² See Marjorie Perloff, 'The Aura of Modernism', *Modernist Cultures* 1. 1 (2005): 1-14.

³ Fredric Jameson, *Fables of Aggression: Wyndham Lewis, the Modernist as Fascist* (London: University of California Press, 1989), 3.

⁴ Paul Edwards, *Wyndham Lewis: Painter and Writer* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000) and Paul O'Keeffe, *Some Sort of Genius* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 2000).

⁵ A full bibliography can be found in T2 xxxiv-xxxvii.

⁶ *Modernism/Modernity*, 4. 2 (1997); Rebecca Walkowitz and Douglas Mao, (eds), *Bad Modernisms* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006).

⁷ David Trotter, *Cinema and Modernism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007); Michael North, *Machine Age Comedy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Justus Nieland, *Feeling Modern* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008).

⁸ Lawrence Rainey (ed.), *Modernism: An Anthology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005).

⁹ David Trotter, 'The Modernist Novel', in Michael Levenson (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 70; David Ayers, *Modernism: A Short Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 52-64; Andrzej Gasiorek, 'Wyndham Lewis: Tarr', in David Bradshaw and Kevin J. H. Dettmar (eds), *A Companion to Modernist Literature and Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006): 402-10.

¹⁰ See John Xiros Cooper's observation: 'Just ask any one of the two-dozen Lewis scholars in the world which of the versions of *Tarr* is the best or most complete text. Be prepared for a lively response' in his *Modernism and the Culture of Market Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 215.

¹¹ See Paul O'Keeffe, *Some Sort of Genius: A Life of Wyndham Lewis* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2000), 108.

¹² Michael Levenson, *Modernism and the Fate of Individuality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 121.

¹³ John Cournos, 'The Death of Futurism', *The Egoist* 1. 4 (Jan. 1917), 7.

¹⁴ Quoted by Jeffrey Meyers, *The Enemy: A Biography of Wyndham Lewis* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980), 309.

¹⁵ As Douglas Mao has noted, 'Jameson's sensational subtitle is especially unfortunate because his remains not only the most widely read study of Lewis, but also the one best known by name to people *who have not read it* and know little about its subject'. See Douglas Mao, *Solid Objects* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 274-75.

¹⁶ 'Germany's large leaden brain booms away in the centre of Europe. Her brain-waves and titanic orchestrations have broken round us for too long not to have had their effect'. See the 1918 American version of *Tarr* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1918), 9.

¹⁷ When Kreisler thinks ‘Ah, the Mensch, the Mensch! What was that, the Mensch?’ (*T2* 95), the question echoes the claim of German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) that the question ‘*Was ist der Mensch?*’ (‘What is man?’) is the most important of the four fundamental questions of philosophy, and the ultimate referent of the other three, which are ‘What can I know? What ought I to do? What may I hope?’. See Immanuel Kant, *Lectures on Logic*, J. Michael Young (trans. and ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 538.

¹⁸ Ford Madox Ford, *Memories and Impressions* (New York and London: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1911), 59.

¹⁹ P. Wyndham Lewis, *Tarr* (London: The Egoist Ltd., 1918), 101.

²⁰ These refer to Balzac’s attitude to a difficult childhood in *Cousin Pons*, and the biography of Diderot by Arthur M. Wilson, *Diderot* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), mustered to explain Tarr’s slapping of Anastasya’s thighs while he converses with her.

²¹ Vladimir Nabokov, *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* (New York: New Directions, 1959), 90.

²² Unpublished letters at the Wyndham Lewis Collection at Cornell University show that Lewis’s editor C. H. C. Prentice reported in 1929 that the publisher had sold almost 2000 copies of the new *Tarr*. A much later communication from Chatto and Windus notes that *Tarr* was one of three of Lewis’s books to have repaid its advance (Box 96, folders 37 and 135).