Wyndham Lewis’s *Tarr:*
Portraits of the Failed Artist

John Rodden

Wyndham Lewis’s *Tarr* (1918 / 1928) is regarded by some critics of the modernist novel as a masterpiece of staggering originality, a literary achievement second only to James Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1922). Even for critics who do not hold this view, the novel is generally judged to be Lewis’s most significant work of fiction. And yet *Tarr* is little read today. One reason for the novel’s neglect is that its experiments in characterization, its unique style, and its highly cerebral quality render it quite unlike other leading works of British modernism. Its distinctiveness has induced critics to situate *Tarr* in the avant-garde German tradition of Thomas Mann’s and Rainer Maria Rilke’s ‘Nietzschean novella.’ On this view, *Tarr* is a Nietzschean novel; that is, a work of philosophical fiction that anticipates and complements Lewis’s philosophical *summa* of a decade later, *Time and Western Man* (1927).

*Tarr* is thus the literary half of Lewis’s critique of the modernist convention of spatial time, a Teutonic novel of ideas that portrays his version of the existential, indeed superhuman, artist-hero. *Time and Western Man* represents a critical assault on the philosophical and literary exponents of the Western ‘time-mind’ for their hypostatization of flux and the consequent undermining of the individualistic, superior, fully-conscious being. *Tarr*, Lewis’s fictional counterpart, is an exploration of the place of the artist, ‘the truthful one’, in a ‘bourgeois-bohemian’ society of ‘practical’, conformist herd-men. As the great exemplar of Nietzschean fiction in the modern British world, *Tarr* presents the development of the central hero, Tarr, marked out by his superior vigour and vitality, as he breaks through and transcends the sick and destructive forces which surround him. Such a Nietzschean approach is invaluable and provocative in two respects: it both focuses critical attention on the young Lewis’s philosophical roots in Nietzsche, and it positions Tarr’s self-created values in opposition to a ‘normal’ society breeding-herd morality and bad faith.
Portraits of the Failed Artist

Nonetheless, I believe that such a straightforward Nietzschean reading is misleading. It casts Tarr as a crowning exemplar of joyful wisdom and thereby overlooks his growing resemblance to the very corrupting forces he seeks to surmount. Indeed, such a reading is ironically itself a Nietzschean ‘lie’, for it ignores Tarr’s final inability to achieve a heightened synthesis for himself of the novel’s central oppositions of art against life and work against sex. Nietzsche too was for Lewis a ‘hollow, “stagey” vulgarizer of the ‘notion of power and aristocracy’ (ABR 113). Lewis claimed that Nietzsche ‘lived in a Utopia, and wrote in and for a Utopia, hoping to make Europe that Utopia by pretending that it was’ (ABR 116). Treating Tarr as a Nietzschean novel therefore also misleadingly frames the novel’s explicit artistic questions with regard to themes of power, thereby obscuring the fact that Tarr is a Künstlerroman, not a Vollmachtsroman, a novel about artists rather than one about the exercise of power. The fact is that Tarr strives to be not a political but an artistic Übermensch, a post-Nietzschean man: ‘the Artist’ himself, a new sort of person; the creative man’ (T1 29), declares Tarr. Describing himself, Tarr adds that the ‘new animal’ of his self ‘will succeed the superman’ (T1 307).

If Lewis seeks in Tarr to surpass Nietzsche, indeed to out-Nietzsche Nietzsche, then to argue that the novel achieves ‘metaphysical gaiety’ and that Tarr himself realizes ‘creative Selfhood’, is misconceived. That contention neglects the disunity and instability of Tarr’s sex life, his emergent similarity to his foil Otto Kreisler, his guilty feelings towards Bertha, and the invariable testimony of readers that the tragic fate of Kreisler – not of Tarr – preoccupies them. My reading of Lewis’s novel inverts the Nietzschean conclusion: Tarr fails to achieve ‘creative Selfhood’ and remains a ‘conflicted self’. His ultimate ‘stillbirth’ of full individuality is not best understood through a strict Nietzschean approach. Nor is it attributable to Lewis’s oft-bemoaned loss of artistic control, anti-Shavian polemics, or nationalistic and cultural biases. Rather, Tarr is a literary artwork about visual artists by a literary and visual artist, and it is most appropriately interpreted within an explicitly artistic framework. It is a tragicomic story plumbing the implications of growing self-consciousness and autonomous will, of ‘creative urge and personality development’, words that are, significantly, the subtitle of the psychoanalyst Otto Rank’s landmark study of the artist’s struggle with Life, Art and Artist (1932). Like Lewis, although from a wholly different vantage-point,
Rank judges Nietzsche an ‘ultra-Romantic’ and inverts his concept of the ‘will to power’ by his own ‘will to art’: the ‘integrative power’ of the personality is fully realized only through relationships with others, and in community.8

Lewis, Otto Rank, and Artist ‘Types’

This essay proposes that, viewed within the Rankian framework of character development and typology, Tarr gains coherence as a fascinating series of successive ‘Portraits of the Failed Artist’, in which even Tarr, Icarus-like, finally falls. As we shall see, Rank’s identification of three stages of character development (or three artist ‘types’) parallels in significant ways Tarr’s triadic cast of characters: first, Hobson, Butcher, and Lownes as the ‘average’ men who adapt naturally to social convention and are at one with the world; second, Kreisler as ‘neurotic’ or ‘conflicted’ man, rejecting social conformity yet suffering terribly because he can neither accept the will of Society, nor that of his father, nor yet affirm his own; and third and finally, Tarr himself is a potential Rankian ‘artist’ or ‘creative’ man who aspires to make himself a work of art. But Tarr fails to reconcile and unite the human drive for separation from others with the concomitant drive for union through creative relationships with others. In Rankian terms, Kreisler suffers from the ‘fear of life’, by which he dreads separation from Society, Authority, and ultimately the womb; Tarr exhibits the ‘fear of death’, by which he dreads loss of individuality and identity in union with Society or Woman and thereby defensively apotheosizes Art in isolation from Life.

Therefore, my aim here is to offer a close textual reading of Tarr in the light of Rankian personality development. I believe that a Rankian approach to Tarr is especially fitted to illuminate Lewis’s art. It honours Lewis’s own philosophical emphases: it focuses directly upon the novel’s central themes of power and individual consciousness in opposition to the unconscious ‘time mind’ concepts that Lewis castigates – and Rank achieves this through a positive yet realistic treatment of impulse, will, and art. Largely neglected today, even in psychoanalytic circles, Rank alone among the early
Portraits of the Failed Artist

psychoanalytic theorists devoted sustained attention to the artist and the creative urge.

In Rank’s view, Freud, Adler, and Jung interpreted creativity superficially as a negative concept rooted, respectively, in the sublimation of libidinal drives, in neurotic power urges to overcome biological inadequacies, and in unconscious religious archetypes. Art for Rank is a positive, creative expression of the individual will. Thus, Rank’s ‘Psychology of the Will’ and ‘Will Therapy’ theories are directly indebted to, and seek to synthesize, both Freud and Nietzsche. According to Rank, Freud fatally ‘denied the will’ in his misguided view that repression could positively direct an instinct (rather than merely divert or suppress it), and by counselling clients to adjust to a sick reality.9 By contrast, Nietzsche melodramatically overemphasized the will and ‘denied the guilt feeling’, for even the ‘creative man’ still needs relationships. Moreover, ‘guilt is an ethical problem found in every human relationship.’10 All this resonates much more closely with Lewis’s vision in Tarr than does a Nietzschean reading. The world of Tarr is a sick society to which Tarr’s pseudo-artist friends adjust naturally and well, and in which a torn Kreisler suffers anguish. But Tarr too fails to become the ‘artist’, because in denying the challenge to synthesize his aesthetic doctrine and life through constructive relationships of his own making, he seeks to evade guilt and so misconceives what it means to be ‘the Artist himself, a new sort of person; the creative man’ (T1 29) – and thereby remains a divided self.

Extremely sceptical about the value of psychoanalysis, Lewis viewed Freud as the second great modern ‘vulgarizer’ after Nietzsche.11 But doubtless he would have been more sympathetic to Rankian ego psychology, which elevates the conscious over the unconscious, individual will over repressed collective heritage. Born only two years apart, Lewis (1882-1954) and Rank (1884-1939) shared not just the same passionate youthful attachment to Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, but also a grand conception of the supremacy of the artist.12 Indeed the familial and intellectual contexts of Lewis and Rank possess some striking similarities. Both Lewis and Rank were raised by tender mothers and without paternal love: Mrs Lewis took young Wyndham from Canada to England after her separation from her American husband, and Rank’s icy relationship with his father culminated in a cut-off in contact between them during his teens. Furthermore, while no evidence yet exists that either man ever read the other’s work or was acquainted with it during their youths in the
German-speaking world or later, their philosophical ideas and literary orientations, manifested in quite divergent creative fields and intellectual spheres, possess notable parallels. As Lewis was beginning *Tarr* in Munich in 1907, Rank was completing Der Künstler (*The Artist* – a different work from Art and Artist) in Vienna. Lewis’s rebellion against the literary establishment’s embrace of psychological theorizing and mentalistic exploration, and thus its consequent rejection of visual precision and consciousness, along with his relative isolation and widespread dismissal by critics and fellow writers, broadly mirrors Rank’s repudiation of Freudian orthodoxy and his consequent ostracism and neglect by the psychoanalytic community. However, before examining *Tarr* as a ‘portrait of the failed artist’ according to the three stages of Rankian personality development let us place Rank’s theories of the creation of ‘self’ and ‘art’ within the context of his concepts of ‘the birth trauma’, ‘separation’ and ‘individuality’, and ‘will’. This overview will better equip us to assess *Tarr* itself as an artistic success or failure.

**Rankian Will Psychology**

Otto Rank’s psychoanalytical theorizing passed through several phases, not unlike that of his mentor Freud. Rank himself was the first to stress the great difference between his mature study of art and will, *Art and Artist* (1932), and his early period ‘completely under the influence of Freudian realism’ and within ‘the biological-mechanistic terms of Freud’s natural science ideology’, which was exemplified by *Der Künstler* of 1907. He identified publication of *The Trauma of Birth* (1923) as a turning point away from Freud, and it is Rank’s mature thought that possesses chief relevance for our evaluation of *Tarr*.

According to Rank, humanity’s conscious and unconscious struggles are rooted in the fact of our mortality, in our origin and destiny as creatures moving through life from the trauma of birth to the trauma of death. The birth trauma is analogous to Adam’s banishment from Eden, for life consists of a ceaseless attempt to refashion the world into the unity and peace of the womb: ‘The Ego in its retreat from the confines of anxiety is constantly urged forward to seek Paradise in the world formed in the image of the mother’. Each
assertion of individuality repeats in essence the conflict of the birth trauma, for it re-enacts the liberation from total biological dependence in the womb, to personal dependence on Society or an Other to, finally— if successful—the birth of a creative Self and Art and the artistic experience.16

The birth and death traumas result in two fundamental, opposing, and interacting fears that shape human personality: the ‘fear of life’ and the ‘fear of death.’ The former is the fear of separation, of loss of fellowship with others, of standing alone and acting independently—and its preponderance characterizes the ‘neurotic,’ ‘conflicted man.’ The life fear pushes us to seek mother surrogates on which we perpetually depend. It is the dread of differentiation from ‘the collective,’ the fear of becoming an individual. The death fear is the dread of ‘the All,’ of embracing union and rushing towards dependence, and of the demise of uniqueness and identity. To submit to such domination is also indicative of a ‘conflicted man’ who seeks to perpetuate himself through productive action. Rankian man therefore engages in a futile struggle to reconcile his two irreconcilably conflicting drives toward separation and union, toward individuality and collectivity. The life and death fears are likewise simply two sides of the basic primal fear:

This ambivalent primal fear, which expresses itself in a conflict between individuation and generation, is derived on the one side from the experience of the individual as a part of the whole, which is then separated from it and obliged to live alone (birth); on the other side, from the final necessity of giving up the hard-won wholeness of individuality through total loss (in death).17

Nevertheless, although man cannot return to his maternal paradise, Rank is not a fatalist, for through the power of human ‘will’ we can transform the outside world and be transformed in a creative interchange from passive object to active subject. While the life and death fears are never entirely reconcilable, since birth and death are the ultimate facts of life, one’s level of character development consists in the degree to which one has attempted and achieved a constructive integration of inner conflicts. For Rank, ‘the problem of willing,’ in the philosophical sense of the word, is ‘the central problem of the whole question of personality, even of all psychology’ (Rank, A4.19). ‘Will’ for Rank was not metaphysically real like Schopenhauer’s blindly insatiable and evil will, or Nietzsche’s
powerful positive life force, nor was it simply the will of Romantic psychology. It is principally but not entirely conscious and therefore similar to the Freudian ‘ego’, but not a pawn of superego or id:

an autonomous organizing force in the individual which does not represent any particular biological impulse or social drive, but constitutes the creative expression of the total personality.18

‘Will’ is a ‘positive guiding organization and integration of self which utilizes creativity, as well as inhibits and controls, the instinctual drives’ (Rank, A.A 9). First experienced negatively, as ‘counter-will’ in childhood, willing inevitably involves the burden of guilt, since willing is rejecting someone or something on which one has been dependent. In the act of willing consists ‘a kind of universal guilt problem’, not the ‘moral guilt’ of an explicit code violation but the ‘ethical guilt’ attendant with becoming an individual.19 Ethical guilt can neither be avoided nor eliminated, and the extent of personality growth is based upon how successfully it is accepted and used affirmatively. Rankian ‘will therapy’ is a process of strengthening the will’s autonomy in order to achieve a creative integration of self.

The ‘Average Man’

Let us now turn to the three phases of Rankian character development – the ‘average man,’ the ‘neurotic,’ and the ‘artist’ – which will frame our depiction of Tarr’s cast of characters. In a letter to the editors of The Egoist in which he accepts their offer of serialized publication of the novel, Lewis concedes that its initial sections feature his artsy ‘average men’: ‘You must really consider the first three chapters as a sort of preface’ (L 76). Given that each of these three chapters (the section is entitled ‘Overture’) features an encounter between Tarr and one of his artist-acquaintances (Hobson, Butcher, Lowndes), it is as if Lewis is dismissing his opening Parisian scenes in the same off-hand manner that Tarr (Lewis’s self-described ‘mouthpiece’) rebuffs his friends (L 76).

Lewis’s statement and Tarr’s attitude suggest that ‘Overture’ is mere prologue, an introductory andante movement in Tarr’s Haydn-like
sonata. Each docile friend (‘a substitute for this defective self’; T1 31) listens as Tarr develops a familiar theme: should he make a romantic ‘overture’ of marriage to ‘the Lunken’ (T1 37)? ‘Overture’ climaxes in a ‘fourth movement’ when Tarr confronts his unofficial ‘fiancée’ and they both recognize that their relationship must end. Of course, Tarr also serves as the ‘Overture’s’ unifying consciousness, the common filter through which the narrative voice is expressed, through which narrative events cohere and against which they must be measured. This makes a sympathetic or objective hearing of the ‘average men’s’ voices difficult. It also indicates that Lewis’s negative position is essentially similar to Rank’s attitude towards such men: they must be evaluated not in their own right but be set against the claims of ‘the artist.’

In his ‘Preface’ to Art and Artist, Rank announces his ‘intention’ to define the relation between ‘two tendencies, inherent in art and creativity: the individual and the collective, the personal and the social, in their interaction, and correspondingly in their counteraction’ (Rank, AA xii). Lewis’s conclusions in Time and Western Man, directed against the proponents of Bergsonian flux and process, exhibit a similar set of dichotomies:

On every hand some sort of unconscious life is recommended and heavily advertised, in place of the conscious life of will and intellect [...]. [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 of recent years. [...] 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. (TWM 299-300)

Tarr’s ‘average man’ is the mechanical witness to the Pyrrhic victory of the Unconscious, for he harmonizes life’s basic dualisms by his compliant yielding to authority and instinct. Seeking liberation from dependence within the womb, he resolves the dichotomous conflicts by surrendering to his clamouring internal voices: the Unconscious, the crowd, the emotional, and the Many. Hobson, Butcher, and Lowndes therefore exemplify the Rankian ‘average man’ in two respects: by their ready acceptance of both the external compulsion of authority and the inner compulsion of impulses, and by their
identifications with role-playing and sham appearances, all of which betray the artist’s vocation.

The ‘average man’ never progresses beyond the first stage of liberating individuation from the womb, during which he ‘now wills what he was earlier compelled to, what externally or internally he was forced to do’ (Rank, *AA* 288). He ‘subordinates himself, both socially and biologically, to the collective’ and his ‘ideal’ is ‘to be as others are’ (Rank, *AA* 293). Alan Hobson, introduced in chapter one through Tarr’s eyes, is a counterfeit bohemian-artist, a trendy ‘Cape Cantabian’ (*TI* 25) philosopher with an aristocratic Cambridge education: ‘Hobson, he considered, was a crowd. = You could not say he was an individual. = He was a set. He sat there, a cultivated audience’ (*TI* 29).20 Hobson is ‘concentrated, systematic slop’ (*TI* 34), a mere ‘body,’ rather than an ‘intellect’ like Tarr. Hobson is a ‘cultivated audience’ to which Tarr declaims about art and sex, a ‘friend’ through whom Tarr ‘confesses his faults to the world when his self will not acknowledge or listen to them’ (*TI* 31). Like Rank’s ‘average man’, Hobson succumbs not only in the face of external pressures (e.g. fashion, aristocratic tradition), but also to his own inner impulses. His credo is simple: ‘Surely, a man is his appetite’ (*TI* 26). He gives free play to his emotions like an animal: Hobson ‘convulsed himself and crowed thrice’, then ‘let[s] himself go in whoops and caws’ (*TI* 28) when the subject of sex arises, apparently incapable of discussing it in Tarr’s ‘serious’ terms.

Butcher too is for Tarr a ‘defective self’ (*TI* 31), a creature of impulse who behaves like a child, a schoolboy with a will perfectly pliant towards outer dictates and his own sudden urges. He is a ‘bloody wastrel enamoured of gold and liberty’, a ‘romantic, educating his schoolboyish sense of adventure up to the pitch of drama’ (*TI* 36). His new turn away from art and gypsies toward the automobile business reflects his mechanical nature, for he bears ‘the air of an Iron-Age mechanic, born among beds of embryonic machinery’, and smiles ‘as though half his face were frozen with cocaine’ (*TI* 36). Hiccuping, belching, and guffawing like an animal, with ‘rheumy eyes’ like ‘a dog’ (*TI* 39), Butcher is a mindless blob of ‘pure, unadulterated romanticism’ (*TI* 40). Like Descartes, Butcher is virtually a Skinner box, a cluster of predictable sensations which Tarr can manipulate as he chooses, for he can convince Butcher ‘of anything on earth within ten minutes’ (*TI* 39).
Portraits of the Failed Artist

Lowndes also exhibits a ‘willed acceptance’ of bohemian values not his own. He seeks to incorporate them by setting up a studio and working busily and quite conspicuously. He is ‘not very active’ but has ‘just enough money to be a Cubist’ (TI 45), and is really nothing more than a fastidious, self-important creature of pretence. He merely echoes the artist with his rhetoric about ‘his work’, yet he produces little (TI 45). Like the Rankian average man who ‘finds the justification of his individual will in the similarly adjusted wills of the majority’ and accepts their moral norms and religious projections, Lowndes apes the artist’s outlook. He is no individual; he plays a role. Lowndes’s role-playing differs from the animalistic passions that Hobson and Butcher indulge, and represents a second characteristic of the Rankian average man, who ‘always plays a role, always acts, but actually plays only himself, that is, must pretend that he plays in order to justify his being’. His acting is invariably transparent. Possessing little self-knowledge, he experiences few pangs of ‘ethical guilt’ and is troubled more instead by the ‘moral guilt’ of violating social norms or religious standards. So, although the average man ‘must always play a role to rationalize his being’, he experiences no conflict about that fact, but rather only when his performance is judged unsuitable by his recognized audience. His discomfort is not with a life of illusion; he is a herd-man content to remain in his Platonic cave, disturbed only if the light of individualistic values abruptly pierces the uniform darkness.

Hobson’s fraudulent posing mocks and vulgarizes the artist’s life. When Tarr asks if he is idle or working as an artist, Hobson yawns. A pseudo-artist, he has ‘bought for eight hundred pounds at an aristocratic Educational establishment a complete mental outfit, a programme of manners’ (TI 34). He is a ‘disciplined social unit’, the very antithesis of the Artist and the Individual (TI 34). Tarr tells him:

You are systematizing and vulgarizing the individual. = You are not an individual. You have, I repeat, no right to that hair and that hat. You are trying to have the apple and eat it, too. = You should be in uniform, and at work, not uniformly out of uniform, and libelling the Artist by your idleness. (TI 34)

Seeking to buy the Artist’s vocation, Hobson fails because Lewis’s Artist necessarily possesses the sensibility of aristocracy and individuality. Hobson is the ‘average man’ whom Lewis bemoans in The Art of Being Ruled.
The average, worldly man does not [...] get beyond the conception of “the struggle for existence.” He has no creative surplus at all. [...] This bloody struggle he is determined to subsist in the midst of, and yet keep it at a distance. He outwardly, like Nietzsche, has a powerfully developed “falsification” theory and “will to illusion.” Only (naturally) he is much more successful in the use of it than Nietzsche could be. (ABR 118)

According to Lewis, the average man is hated by Nietzsche only because he holds to his illusion so fully, and does not, like Nietzsche, commit himself ‘to just go on contemplating the horrors of existence’ (ABR 118).

Hobson lives ‘harmoniously’ with the world. He is ‘convulsed’ by laughter ‘as though Tarr had been pressing him to perform’ (T1 28), he does not recognize Tarr’s authority to criticize his role-playing, and he is not shaken by Tarr’s vitriol: ‘In any case, my hat is my business!’ he concludes (T1 35). And later: ‘My dear Tarr, you’re a strange fellow. I can’t see why these things should occupy you’ (T1 35). Tarr has just told him, he says, ‘lots of things which may be true or may not’ (T1 35), but Hobson has already concluded that ‘You know you don’t mean all that nonsense’ (T1 34). He does not see beyond himself and his immediate actions, and his casuistry preserves his illusions. So Tarr tries vainly to puncture them. Revelling in a spontaneous adaptation of the Baudelairean fable in which the poet pummels a beggar but is himself attacked, Tarr knocks Hobson’s hat off, the symbol of his pseudo-neediness and artiness: ‘Your hat, at least’, he concludes, ‘will have had its little drama to-day’ (T1 35). Tarr’s mocking gesture confronts Hobson with the role-playing that he refuses to see.24

Butcher flirts with different occupations, but like the ‘average man,’ he ‘actually plays only himself’, a self that consists of roles without substance or foundation.25 Abandoning an attraction to the gypsy life, Butcher is suddenly ‘induced’ (T1 36) by Tarr into commerce. He mimics Tarr when speaking with him: ‘He talked to Tarr, when a little worked up, as Tarr talked to him. He didn’t notice that he did. It was partly câlinerie and flattery’ (T1 43).
Portraits of the Failed Artist

Lowndes, the ‘selfmade man’ (T1 46) with his friend Thornton, desperately strives to reach the Rankian average man’s ‘ideal’: to be as others are. Having ‘risen ambiguously in the sphere of the Intelligence’ (T1 46), his aesthetic pretensions are obvious in his pitiable attraction to his ‘moth-like’ admirer Thornton (T1 45). Thornton praises Lowndes’s intelligence, but Lowndes is an intellectual hustler, not a self-aware intellect. Plunged even more deeply than Hobson and Butcher into that sentimental world of ‘Humour’, which ‘paralyses the sense for Reality and wraps people in a phlegmatic and hysterical dream-world, full of the delicious swirls of the switch-back, the drunkenness of the merry-go-round’ (T1 43), Lowndes’s ‘nether world’ (T1 46) is a staged illusion in which he plays both grand actor and adulating critic. ‘Biographically-minded’, he foresees ‘analysis and fame’ for himself (T1 46). His specialty is the vain self-portrait; he is a Rembrandt of self-advertisement. Because he respects Tarr as an ‘Artist’, Lowndes feels ‘always embarrassed’ around Tarr, as if Lowndes senses that Tarr as Artist can indeed ‘see’ through his congratulatory self-reviewing. Tarr ‘always embarrassed’ him by his ‘mock curiosity’ about Lowndes’s work and by his ironic joking (T1 46). So serious is Lowndes about his comic little dream world that he struggles to deliver ‘adecate and light’ (T1 47) repartees, he ‘undulate[s] himself as though for the passage of the large bubbles of chuckle’ when he attempts a casually clever reply, and feels ‘disturbed’ when Tarr does not laugh at his jokes and departs (T1 48). Lowndes has only his artist’s role. Even more so than Hobson and Butcher, he is the role he plays. Unlike Hobson, who feels no distress because he rebuffs Tarr’s severe critique as ‘upside-downness’ from an easily dismissed audience, Lowndes reveres Tarr, and so he agonizes about Tarr’s indifference (T1 35).

As we have seen, Tarr’s ‘average’ artist-acquaintances share two sets of behaviours: a surrender to the life of Instinct and a willed submission to others’ standards via self-delusive role-playing. Their homogeneity extends even to their descriptions in animal imagery. Tarr muses aloud with Hobson how ‘one apes the forms of conventional life’ (T1 32) – obviously referring to Hobson himself – and Lowndes eyes his watch with ‘calculated, apelike impulsiveness’ (T1 48).

The re-echoing dog identifications are particularly noteworthy. Hobson, ‘meanker-spirited than the most abject tramp’ (T1 35), feels Tarr his ‘superior’ (T1 22). Devoted Butcher is ‘like a dog, with his rheumy eyes’ (T1 39). Lowndes ‘potter[s] about, like a dog’ (T1 46) and reveres Tarr too. The
growing explicitness of the dog imagery announces the Bertha theme in ‘Overture,’ which modulates towards the Tarr-Bertha confrontation. Leaving Lowndes and nearing Bertha’s flat, Tarr fancies that he is a top dog engaged on an amusing errand: ‘A big dog wandering on its easily transposable business, inviting some delightful accident to deflect it from maudlin and massive promenade. In his mind, too, as in the dog’s, his business was doubtful’ (TII 50).

In ‘Overture’s’ fourth movement, the appearance of Bertha witnesses the mundane and sentimental (she calls Tarr ‘Sorbet’), which builds in a crescendo. In Rankian terms, her facades ‘prove to be so false that [they] work through their complete spuriousness’ (Rank, AA 59). Tarr seeks to cut the string, but Bertha ‘had captured a bit of him, and held it as a hostage’ (TII 72). When Tarr broaches a separation, Bertha ‘sniffs softly’ and Tarr feels ‘like a person who is taking a little dog for a walk at the end of a string’ (TII 59). Tarr departs, ‘suffering from something that came from Bertha’ and ‘wounded’ by the ‘malady’ of her love, which instils a ‘wasting and restlessness’ (TII 72). On this discordant note, ‘Overture’ returns full circle. The section opened with an aria to Paris’s ‘unscrupulous heroes’, ‘largely ignorant of all but their restless personal lives’ (TII 21). It ends with a sombre coda that brilliantly connects and encapsulates Lewis’s themes, and suggests that Tarr’s own strutting canine ‘promenade’ (TII 50) is not quite the Artist’s path: ‘something followed him like a restless dog’ (TII 74).

Because the ‘average men’ in ‘Overture’ do experience ‘a relatively harmonious working together of will and counter-will’ (Rank, AA 37) they do not suffer excessively from a Rankian fear of death or of life. But they are failed Rankian ‘artists’ because, while their compromise in favour of the collective generates ‘fewer possibilities of conflict’, it also ‘permits them fewer creative possibilities of any kind’ (Rank, AA 39) — as Hobson’s idleness, Butcher’s vagrancy between art and commerce, and Lowndes’s inactivity attest. By their willed surrender to Authority and Impulse, they lead ‘the unexamined life’ — an existence that Rank and Lewis deem far worse than the growing-pains wrought by birth trauma anxieties from autonomously willed decisions. For Lewis, such people are never truly ‘born’.
Portraits of the Failed Artist

Kreisler, the Neurotic Fool

From the moment he is introduced and until his tragicomic end in ‘Holocaust’, Otto Kreisler dominates Tarr. Kreisler becomes a divided, bathetic Hamlet, the novel’s neurotic Fool. Kreisler’s plight is that of Rank’s ‘neurotic’, the ‘conflicted’ man of ‘divided will’ caught in the second stage of individual development. This stage or ‘type’ is characterized by the feeling of division in the personality, through the disunity of will and counterwill, which means a struggle (moral) against the compulsion of the outer world as well as an inner conflict between the two wills. (Rank, AA 288)

Like Bertha’s room, Kreisler’s flat defines him: ‘Kreisler’s room looked like some funeral vault’ (T1 77). We already know from the novel’s section title that he is ‘Doomed, Evidently’. Kreisler is the chief presence in five of the novel’s seven sections, yet the sections in which he appears – unlike Tarr’s orderly Apollonian ‘Overture’ with himself as the integrating consciousness – have no unifying central consciousness. They are a wild, chaotic Wagnerian opera with climactic recitatives, or Dionysian dithyrambs punctuating the narrative’s dance, with scenes involving rape and a duel. Kreisler behaves in these scenes like ‘The Dithyrambic Spectator’, a force whom Lewis identified elsewhere in a 1925 essay of that title. Only intermittently does Kreisler’s consciousness filter the narrative voice. Kreisler can only react, not act. He cannot be an actively shaping and unifying consciousness because he too is a divided, abject self. The five Kreisler sections are consequently reported by a rather detached narrative consciousness.

Kreisler as Rankian ‘conflicted’ man cannot transcend mere moralistic (or legalistic) and instinctual acceptance, because he can only conform or rebel, not struggle constructively to forge a new creative self from his inner divisions. This type resembles a man restricted to inadequate one-word ‘yes’ or ‘no’ responses – in answer to questions he does not pose. For Rank, whereas the ‘average’ man’s ideal is ‘to be as others are’, the ‘conflicted’ man’s ideal is ‘to be himself, that is, what he himself is and not as others want him to be’. His ideal self therefore is limited to a mere ‘is’, rather than the Artist’s ‘ought’. But he still resembles the Artist more than even the ‘advanced’, ‘average’ type. Like the Artist,
he is fundamentally committed to separation from the crowd. His tragedy is that he cannot unite his divided will and counter-will to achieve creative integration. So he knows neither the contented ignorance of the ‘average’ man nor the triumphant exultation of the ‘creative’ man, but only anguish. As if he were viewing Kreisler as the archetype for the ‘conflicted’ stage, Rank terms him ‘the artiste-manqué’ (Rank, AA 428).

It is not only the appearance of his lodgings and his apparel that express Kreisler’s internal war between submission and rebellion. His relationships, especially that with his father, also reveal conflicting tendencies of surrender to, and resistance against, inner impulse and external authority. Moreover, when the events of Kreisler’s life ‘became too unwieldy or overwhelming’, he ‘converted them into love [i.e. sex], as he might have done […] into some art or other’ (TI 102). In this he embodies Rank’s neurotic Romantic artist:

Not only is he an individual-revolutionary in creation, but he confuses life with art; he is dramatic or lyrical, he acts the piece instead of objectifying it, or rather he is obliged to act it as well as merely objectify it. His art is as chaotic as his life. (Rank, AA 180)

Of course, Kreisler utterly confuses art and life, and so completely converts the latter into a feeling of love (in practice expressed as sex) that he can only act, not objectify. No work of art emerges. Unproductive as an artist, ‘he had only lost [i.e. sold] one picture so far. This senseless solitary purchase depressed him whenever he thought of it’ (TI 81). Unlike Rank’s ‘artist’, who ‘strives to be deathless through his work’, ‘the neurotic does not seek immortality in any clearly defined sense, but in primitive fashion as […] accumulation of actual life’ (Rank, AA 149). Promiscuous Kreisler, the ‘sculptor of a mock-realistic and degenerate school’ (TI 102), has a remarkably impressive accumulation: seventeen children ‘in Munich alone’, with ‘a small society […] founded in Bavaria to care for Kreisler’s offspring throughout Germany’ (TI 94).

Kreisler, like the ‘average men’, is a creature of impulse. Womanizing is his arena. Women are ‘Art or expression for him’ (TI 101), ‘the aesthetic element in Kreisler’s life’ (TI 102). A gifted ‘creator’, it is rumoured that ‘he only had to look at a woman for her to become pregnant’ (TI 94). ‘No adept in the science of his heart’ (TI 102, Kreisler feels ‘Woman’ is ‘always connected with [life’s] important periods; he
thought, superstitiously, that his existence was in some way implicated with “das Weib” (T1 103). He is correct, for each of his impulsive encounters in the three chief events of the Kreisler sections – the dance, the rape, and the duel – are prompted by Kreisler’s uncontrollable passion for ‘das Weib’. On the basis of a single luncheon meeting with her, Kreisler fantasizes Anastasya Vasek into an ‘idée fixe’ (T1 107). He unsuccessfully seeks a ‘frac’ (a dinner-jacket or tuxedo) in order to gain admittance and meet her at the Bonnington Club dance, but he goes anyway. He behaves outrageously to impress her, and his dancing suggests his urgent libidinal frenzy: ‘as though he mistook the waltz for a more primitive music’ (T1 148).27

Not only confusing art and Life, but betraying art, Kreisler asks Bertha Lunklen to sit and pose nude for him. Then he rapes her, using a ridiculous simile as his opening line: “Your arms are like bananas!” […] But still he was an artist: it was natural, – even inevitable! – that he should compare her arms to bananas’, a hapless Bertha rationalizes (T1 193). Kreisler then abruptly calls on Bertha, and now apologizing becomes his instinct that must be satisfied: ‘He had not known what he had wanted with her, but the obvious pretext and road for the satisfaction of this impulse was the seeking of pardon’ (T1 200). Kreisler can only ‘act violently, in gusts. He did not know, when he began an action, whether he would be able to go through with it’ (T1 201). Kreisler is no mere id, lacking consciousness like the ‘average men’; but when he attempts deliberate action, instinct invariably overcomes him: ‘Destiny had laid its trap in the unconscious Kreisler. It fixed it with powerful violent springs’ (T1 191). Next it snaps on Soltyk in their duel.

Harbouring an immediate violent dislike for Louis Soltyk, Kreisler is furious to see him in Anastasya’s company at the dance. He challenges him to a duel, and with characteristic impulsiveness, withdraws it on the condition that Soltyk kiss him. Soltyk rushes for Kreisler’s neck, the German’s gun accidentally goes off and kills the Pole, and Kreisler finally yields himself on an impulse to the French police. In prison, playing with a cord and the notion of hanging himself, ‘a sort of heavy confusion burst up as he withdrew the restraint’ (T1 285). His suicide resembles the duel, which had been ‘a whim, a caprice, […] as though, for instance, they had woken up in the early morning and decided to go fishing’ (T1 267). Kreisler’s life is one comically accidental event after another.

Although Kreisler invariably yields to instinct, he can and does resist external authority. Despite the pressure of father, financial security,
and Society to abandon it, he persistently follows the artist’s calling. However, his rebellions are either overbalanced by, or rooted directly in, submission to authority or inner impulse. Despite his seeming defiance of his father, Kreisler still lives on a paternal allowance at the age of thirty-six. He quickly drops his hermit life when he meets the Lipmann set. His actions before and during the dance are done primarily from impulse or to impress Anastasya. And his sudden reversal toward Soltyk is prompted by fear and whimsy; indeed, Kreisler’s life seems a successive series of attachments and surrenders to others for social, financial, and personal security: to the Lipmann circle, to his father, to Volker, to Lowndes, and to Anastasya. Women for Kreisler are the ultimate security. They are a ‘vast dumping-ground for sorrow and affliction – a world-dimensioned Pawn-shop, in which you could deposit not your dress suit or garments, but yourself, temporarily, in exchange for the gold of the human heart’ (T 1 101). But Kreisler gets neither his ‘frac’ nor Anastasya ‘out of hock’. As he had done with Volker, Soltyk displaces him in Anastasya’s affections. The remarkable galaxy of associations between this group of characters (Volker, Anastasya, and Soltyk) and Kreisler’s father and ‘stepmother’ illuminate Kreisler’s paradoxical behaviour. If, as I have already noted, ‘Destiny’ lies in the ‘unconscious Kreisler’, his unpredictable oscillations between rebellion and submission are not adequately explained by reference to cycles of defiance and resistance toward authority and impulse. Rather, the patterns of his chief relationships suggest Kreisler’s impassioned search for a mother, for a return to the womb, to find a female ‘dumping ground’ for his anguished self. These relationships highlight both the dynamics of Kreisler’s neurotic personality and his Rankian quest to overcome the primal fear.

Herr Kreisler Sr. is ‘jealous, contemptuous and sulky’ (T 1 81) toward Otto and uses his son’s allowance to infuriate him and as leverage for getting his way in argument. So powerful is Herr Kreisler’s authority that Otto refers to his father’s girlfriend – a woman of approximately Otto’s age (and his own former fiancée) – as his ‘stepmother’. Otto is unable to imagine himself as his father’s rival. He therefore distances his father’s girlfriend by naming her his ‘stepmother’ (though she can hardly substitute effectively for his dead mother). The ‘suffering’ and ‘contempt’ that Otto holds toward his father doubtless arise in part from his latent
Oedipal feeling that Herr Kreisler stole his mother’s love, just as he swiped his fiancée.

Kreisler is therefore not so much ‘the sort of man who would splice his sweetheart with his Papa’ (Tf 94) as he is the powerless victim or pawn in an Oedipal battle that has been re-enacted. His quest for security in ‘das Weib’, his perpetual student life, and his willed submission to institutional authority are all explainable in light of his chief, defining relationship to his father, who has abused him and kept him dependent. His idealization of Anastasya manifests his endless, enflamed pursuit both for the tranquil womb from which he was exiled and for the mother whose love was snatched away. By idealizing Anastasya, ‘neurotic’ Kreisler idealizes himself. So when she rejects him, he is devastated and rejects a part of himself:

The neurotic, no matter whether productive or obstructed, suffers fundamentally from the fact that he cannot or will not accept himself, his own individuality, his own personality. On one hand he criticizes himself to excess, on the other he idealizes himself to excess, which means that he makes too great demands on himself and his completeness, so that failing to attain leads only to more self-criticism. (Rank, A4 27)

Anastasya becomes Kreisler’s idealized good mother and, by extension, the good self for which he yearns. Soltyk, by contrast, who ‘physically bore, distantly and with polish, a resemblance to Kreisler’ (Tf 90) is Kreisler’s superior, thieving father, the bad self whom he despises. Soltyk is his ‘efficient and more accomplished counterpart’, with a ‘handsome face’ and ‘elegance’ (Tf 90). But the Pole is actually just as ‘empty and unsatisfactory’ (Tf 90) as Kreisler. Like Kreisler and his father, Otto and Soltyk harbour a mutual, innate contempt for each other: they ‘disliked each other for obscure physiological reasons: they had perhaps scrapped in the dressing rooms of Creation for some particularly fleshy covering, and each secured only fragments of a coveted garment’ (Tf 90). Just as in the cases of Herr Kreisler Sr. and Jr., both Otto and Soltyk covet their neighbour’s ‘Weib’.

It is therefore unsurprising that the like-minded and more sophisticated Soltyk replaces Kreisler as Volker’s favoured beneficiary. But the possibility of also losing Anastasya to Soltyk, dimly connected with the loss of his fiancée to his father, sends Kreisler into a
paroxysm of rage on seeing the pair together at the dance. ‘Anastasya was sitting there with Soltyk. With Soltyk!’ (TI 119). He fixes them in his mind as one: ‘Soltyk-Anastasya; Soltyk-Anastasya. That was a bad coupling!’ (TI 120). He then momentarily hallucinates the link between Volker and Herr Kreisler and between Soltyk (Soltyk-Anastasya) and his stepmother: ‘Behind Ernšt and his parent, Soltyk and his stepmother stood’ (TI 121). He muses: ‘Soltyk, who had got hold of Volker […] occupied a position not unsimilar to his stepmother’ (TI 121). Although Kreisler consciously scorns Volker as a fool easy to exploit, he also idealizes him as the rich, generous good father whom he never had. Free with his allowance toward Kreisler, Volker arouses the tenderness in Otto that he wants to feel toward his father yet cannot: ‘Volker had been a compendious phenomenon in his life’ (TI 93). Soltyk’s new success with Volker is ‘the omen of the sinking ship, the disappearance of the rats’ (TI 93). Soltyk’s triumph with Volker is therefore not only a financial setback for Kreisler, but the momentous triumph of his bad father over his good one. After Soltyk’s capture of Anastasya (at least in Kreisler’s eyes), Kreisler is again parentless, a helpless dependent without a dependency. He writes a note to his father, threatening suicide; but it is perfunctory. But why does Kreisler associate Soltyk, rather than Anastasya, with his stepmother? Or why not Soltyk directly with his father?

Kreisler’s hatred for Soltyk is palpable. Feeling ‘endless dissatisfaction and depression’, Kreisler is even ‘depressed’ by Soltyk’s ‘self-possessed and masterly signs of distinguished camaraderie’ (TI 150) with Volker and Anastasya. Kreisler ‘did not like [Soltyk]. How it would satisfy him to dig his fingers into that flesh, and tear it like thick cloth!’ (TI 150). Yet Kreisler’s repressed identification of Soltyk with his stepmother, the former love object now distanced and desexualized, bursts forth in the duel scene: ‘A cruel and fierce sensation of mixed origin rose hotly round his heart. He loved that man!’ (TI 270). Kreisler immediately has a phallic dream-wish: ‘But because he loved him he wished to plunge a sword into him, to plunge it in and out and up and down!’ (TI 270). Suddenly Kreisler resolves to ‘kiss and make up’: ‘Kreisler thrust his mouth forward amorously […] as though Soltyk had been a woman’ (TI 272). At this affront, a crazed Soltyk rushes for Kreisler’s throat. Soltyk’s nails carve ‘six holes in the flesh and cut into the tendons beneath’ (TI 272), recalling not only Kreisler’s desire to tear Soltyk’s flesh but also the German’s earlier identification of

86
‘Soltyk-Anastasya’ as one, when, seeing this ‘bad coupling’, a ‘sort of persecution mania seized him by the throat’ (*T1* 121).

Let us dwell here a moment on Kreisler’s complex psychology. Traditional Freudian psychoanalysis would judge Kreisler’s ‘persecution mania’ as a father complex, with the series of character links viewed as unconscious identifications that disclose Kreisler’s psychic propensity toward homosexuality. He ‘suffers’ before his father and masochistically suffers before Anastasya: ‘But he wanted to suffer still more by her, *physically*, as it were, under her eyes. […] He must excite in her the maximum of contempt and dislike’ (*T1* 124). ‘Contempt’ and ‘dislike’ are the very words used repeatedly to describe the mutual feelings of Otto towards his father and towards Soltyk, respectively. Kreisler’s identification of Anastasya not only with Soltyk but also with his powerful father displaces Soltyk into ‘a position not unsimilar to his stepmother’ (*T1* 121). Kreisler unconsciously represses his own violent hatred toward his father, a deep-seated fear rooted in his Oedipal defeat, transforming it into his Father as Vengeance – much as five-year old Little Hans does because of castration anxiety:

The instinctual impulse […] was a hostile one against the father. One might say that impulse had been repressed by the process of being transformed into its opposite. Instead of aggressiveness on the part of the subject towards the father, there appeared aggressiveness (in the shape of revenge) on the part of the father towards the subject.28

On a Freudian reading, ‘neurotic’ Kreisler therefore wants to suffer and inevitably feels inferior because his chief relationship – to his father, vengeful Fate – defines all his other relationships: ‘All these people allied with and privy to Fate, acted in an unexpected and maliciously natural way’ (*T1* 138-39). Defending himself against a ‘homosexual impulse which has become too powerful’, Kreisler displays classic *paranoia persecutoria*.

There was a plot to deny his fermentations. = His were the sensations of a simple man introduced for the first time into an official milieu, – a court or courthouse – where everybody, behaving strangely, seems quite at home and born to it all. […] He was the only one not in Fate’s secrets. (*T1* 139)
As with Little Hans’s fear, Kreisler’s hatred of his father gives expression, in a form that has undergone regressive degradation, to a passive, tender impulse to be loved by him in a genital-erotic sense. According to a Freudian reading, Kreisler inverts and disguises his homosexual love in a manner similar to his attempt to distance his fiancée by thinking of her as ‘stepmother.’ His passionate and ambivalent primary identification of Soltyk with his stepmother arises because Kreisler ‘loved that man!’ (T1 270) – and wants to be loved by his father in the way he can romanticize his ‘stepmother’ is loved.29

Equipped with this Freudian reading of Kreisler’s condition, we are now in a position to grasp the radical difference between Freud and Rank, and the more satisfying explanation that a Rankian ‘life fear’ approach to artistic creation affords. A Rankian interpretation of the aforementioned character links does not deny Kreisler’s latent homosexuality. Rather, it focuses upon his relationship with his mother figures and treats the paternal relations as secondary. Rank indeed speculates (but does not elaborate) in Art and Artist that the artistic nature (productive or obstructed) may be bisexual.30 However, I contend that a Freudian reading, in its focus upon the father relation, overemphasizes Kreisler’s paternal fear and hatred and elides the repeated references to ‘das Weib’ as both the centre of Kreisler’s existence and the ‘dumping-ground’ for his self. It also elides the fact that Soltyk is linked not only with his father but also with Kreisler’s own bad self. His accidental but fated killing of Soltyk is the death of a part of himself, for Kreisler ‘questioned if it were not he that had died and not Soltyk, and if it were not his ghost that was now wandering off nowhere in particular’ (T1 279). Death confronts him like a ‘dive’ into ‘deep water’ (T1 164). In fact, ‘he had got into life […] by mistake; “il s’était trompé de porte”’ (T1 164). Lewis’s French is richly suggestive: ‘se tromper de porte’ (‘to take the wrong door’) echoes the primary meaning of ‘tromper’: ‘to betray’. Kreisler unconsciously yearns to ‘dive’ back into the ‘deep water’ of the womb, for he has been forced out by his Oedipal rival. So Kreisler’s life ‘might almost have been regarded as a long and careful preparation for voluntary death’ (T1 164). In all this Kreisler corresponds to the Rankian ‘neurotic’, whose efforts ‘to delay dying and to ward off death’ only ‘hasten and strengthen the process of destruction because he is not able to overcome it creatively’ (Rank, A.A 391). Thus Soltyk’s death assists Kreisler’s unconscious goal of
return to the womb. His identification of Soltyk with his stepmother is important less for its homosexual undertones than because Soltyk is his hated but ‘better half’ with whom he must reunite. He must kill Soltyk and himself in order to unify his divided self. Only then can he satisfy ‘the perpetual insatiable tendency to force one’s way into the mother’ and undo the trauma of birth.

Kreisler’s tragi-comic gestures reflect his pathetic ‘neurotic’ urge for what Rank terms ‘creative integration’. His ‘stepmother’ arouses intimate feelings as both a romantic attachment and a mother surrogate. But his way to her is blocked by his father, just as his way to his real mother is blocked by the fact of her death. Consequently, like the Rankian neurotic, for whom ‘actual production is only possible with the aid of a concrete Muse through whom or from whom the work is produced’ (Rank, A.A 152), Kreisler turns to Anastasya. Of course, his productive arena is not Art but Life; and every major action he takes – his seeking the ‘frac’, his behaviour at the dance, his duel with Soltyk – is produced for her. She is both his idealized Muse and his passionate love object, and in this duality lies the link between Kreisler’s stepmother and Anastasya, or more precisely, ‘Soltyk-Anastasya’. Kreisler’s ‘divided self’ seeks reunion with ‘das Weib’ – with his mother, his stepmother, and with Anastasya. Thwarted in his attempts with all three – even Soltyk is only ‘one of her [Anastasya’s] many impresarios, who helped her on to and off the scene of Life’ (TI 150) – Kreisler rapes Art for Life by assaulting Bertha Lunken. But this is yet another frustrating, unsuccessful attempt to satisfy his unconscious desire for reunion in the womb.

With his options to overcome the fear of life seemingly exhausted, Kreisler must die. His pattern of willed suffering has unconsciously served to make his life ‘a long and careful preparation for voluntary death’. The Rankian neurotic’s self-punishment tendency has not so much the intention of granting him life as of escaping death, from which he seeks to buy himself by daily partial self-destruction. […] In this way the lengthening of punishment is at the same time a drawing out of life, for as long as he punishes himself – feels pain, as it were – he still lives. This neurotic attitude of the individual towards death […] is comprehensible only from will psychology, which shows that the human being seeks to subject death, this original symbol of ‘the must,’ to his
will, and as it were, at his own instigation transforms the death punishment that is placed upon life into lifelong punishment he imposes upon himself (Rank, A.A 271).

The concept of the birth trauma as the foundation for Rank’s psychosocial, phylogenetic theories places the father in the role of obstacle to the son’s desire to return to the mother’s womb. In Tarr’s closing pages, Kreisler repeatedly succeeds in penetrating the paternal ‘walls’ that block his mother image, the prison, by submitting to them. As Kreisler flees from the French authorities to the German border after the duel, the border begins ‘to rise like a wall in front of him’ (T1 279).

Informed that he must face trial in Paris for Soltyk’s death, Kreisler immediately associates the departure with the ‘walled’ frontier and with his father, and so he prepares for his unconsciously-willed physical death:

This journey to Paris resembled his crossing of the German frontier. He had felt that it was impossible to see his father. That represented an effort he would do anything to avoid. [...] Noise, piercing noise, effort, awaited him revengefully. He knew exactly what his father would do and say. If there had been a single item that he could not forecast. But there was not the least item. Paris was the same. (T1 283-84).

In his dreary cell, Kreisler hangs himself, ending his unconscious quest for union with the mother, with ‘Soltyk-Anastasya’: ‘[The cord’s pressure] reminded him of Soltyk’s hands on his throat’ (T1 285). Finally: ‘[I]t was the Soltyk struggle over again. But, as with Soltyk, he did not resist’ (T1 285).

Tarr is both right and wrong in his psychoautopsy of Kreisler’s death. He is right that sex was Kreisler’s ‘form of art’ and that ‘the nearest [he] can get to Art is Action’ (T1 302). Undoubtedly he ‘was an art-student without any talent, and was leading a dull, slovenly existence like thousands of others in the same case’ (T1 302). But Kreisler’s suicide is not ‘an attempt to get out of Art into Life again’, or, as Tarr subsequently qualifies it, ‘back into sex’ (T1 302). Rather, Kreisler is a divided self whose overpowering life fear unconsciously drives him to a joint death with Soltyk. Before this occurs, he has failed to penetrate through images of his ‘warden’ father so as to return to his ‘lost Paradise’. He is the Rankian
Portraits of the Failed Artist

‘artiste-manqué’ who cannot unite his divided will and counter-will in creative integration, for even his suicide is merely the last of a series of willed, self-destructive acts of submission. Like the introductory and final notes in the Apollonian ‘Overture’, this ending echoes the opening of the Wagnerian Kreisler sections (from ‘Doomed, Evidently – the “Frac”’ to ‘Holocausts’).31 For Kreisler the ending is literally a return to origins. Kreisler (German, ‘Kreis’ = ‘circle’)32 comes full circle, from womb to tomb, from birth to death.

Tarr, the Unintegrated Artist

Let us now consider the novel’s protagonist, the title figure of Frederick Tarr, in light of Rank’s psychology of art and neurosis. Tarr’s ‘tragedy’ is the failure of a potential Artist, that ‘exceptional being’ (Rank, AA 337), to exploit fully his creative will and attain all he can be. As we shall see, espousing an aesthetic that partitions art from sex and male from female, Tarr inadvertently and self-destructively ends as a ‘conflicted’ Rankian man, battling in a ‘perplexed interior life’ (Rank, AA 372) between intelligent Anastasya and ‘average’ Bertha. When the blockade separating Tarr’s art and his sex life is finally lifted and he ‘marries’ Bertha (for four hours per day) and cohabits with Anastasya, the choice represents in Rankian terms an ideological collapse, not a positively ‘willed’ decision. It evades the messiness of life (in which male and female relationships cannot be fixed on canvas); it reflects Tarr’s failure to engage in the creative effort necessary to synthesize constructively his conflicts. His oscillations between Anastasya and Bertha suggest finally that Tarr never does get ‘beyond A and B’, for Prism Dirkes ‘represents the swing back of the pendulum once more the swagger side’ away from ‘cheerless and stodgy’ Rose Fawcett (TF 320).

Rather, Tarr becomes an increasingly fragmented self, ultimately unable to reconcile his aesthetic with his relationship to Bertha, or even to unify his sex life itself in opposition to art. Although his aesthetic manifestoes do not change much from beginning to end, his behaviour in the novel’s latter sections belies his words. As he shifts from an observer in ‘Overture’ to a man who must deal with relationships and others’ emotions, he cannot quite maintain his ‘famous feeling of indifference’ (TF 49). He cannot remain a disembodied intellect, and he grows to resemble the very characters whom he earlier despised. It is also not
surprising that Tarr no longer serves after ‘Overture’ as the novel’s integrating consciousness through which the narrative voice is filtered and against which events are measured. As he becomes enmeshed in life, he cannot view it with the detachment that one might view art. He cannot be a central, unifying consciousness because, as he comes to resemble Kreisler and Bertha, he becomes a divided self. Still, more than any other character in Tarr, the title hero is periodically self-aware and approaches Rank’s ‘creative man’:

The third and highest level of development is characterized by a unified working together of the three fully developed powers, the will, the counter-will, and “the ideal-formation born from the conflict between them, which itself has become a goal-setting, and goal-seeking force.” Here “the human being, the genius, is again at one with himself; what he does, he does fully and completely in harmony with all his powers and his ideals.” (Rank, A.A 288)

This ‘ethical ideal formation’ entails an individual’s willing to ‘free himself from the traditional moral code and to build his own ethical ideals from himself, ideals that are not only normative for his own personality but also include the [...] possibility of happiness’ (Rank, A.A 289). Often he may in times of anxiety exhibit willed acceptance of external authority or inner impulse and become excessively compliant or rebellious, for the artistic path is a ‘continuous struggle against outer forces and a constant conflict with inner ones, in which the individual must live through for himself all stages of evolution’ (Rank, A.A 288). According to Rank, whereas the ‘average’ ideal is ‘to be as others are’, and the ‘neurotic’ ideal is to be ‘what he himself is and not what others want him to be’, the artist’s ideal is always ‘an actual ideal, which leads him to become that which he himself would like to be’. This consistent, willed striving for the ideal, not artistic productivity or achievement, represents the defining criterion to ascertain the Rankian Artist. Although Tarr’s narrator says of Volker that ‘Since arriving in Paris, he had blossomed prodigiously’ (Tn 83), his development is external – just crass, bourgeois artistic success.

The first, and determining, sign of the Rankian ‘creative man’ is not productivity, but rather his ‘nomination’ of himself as an artist. Tarr at first appears to display this sign, though it is questionable finally that
he ever does so. He clearly fails to exhibit the second sign, the development of a personal ‘philosophy of renunciation’. As Rank explains:

the creative type nominates itself at once as an artist [...] in the artist-type the creative urge is constantly related, ideologically, to his own ego [...] so that one can say of the artist that he does not practice his calling, but is it, himself, represents it, ideologically. [...] For the artist, therefore, his calling is not a means of livelihood, but life itself. (Rank, AA 288)

Thus, the creation of his own personality is the artist’s first work. It remains his chef d’œuvre, since all other productions are at least partly the repeated expressions of this initial creation. Does Tarr accomplish this? Tarr does proclaim himself an Artist, and knows that he must sublimate his energies in order to transform his own being into his first masterpiece:

First, I am an artist. = With most people, not describable as artists, all the finer part of their vitality goes into sex. [...] [The] artist is he in whom this emotionality normally absorbed by sex is so strong that it claims a newer and more exclusive field of deployment. = Its first creation is is the Artist himself, a new sort of person; the creative man. (TI 29)33

‘The creative impulse springs from the human urge for immortality’, Rank explains. ‘Artists’ seek ‘self-perpetuation through an artwork. Both are creations. But the latter is not only entirely individual, but an eternal legacy over which one (usually) has complete control’ (Rank, AA 288). Tarr himself is the ‘first-rate poet whose ‘powers and moyens’ are channeled ‘away from the immediate world’ (TI 29) towards aesthetics itself. This ‘will to self-immortalization’, as Rank calls it, arises from ‘the fear of death’. ‘In creation the artist tries to immortalize his mortal life. He desires to transform death into life, as it were, though actually he transforms life into death. For not only does the creative work not go on living; it is, in a sense, dead’ (Rank, AA 39); that is, lifeless spiritually and psychologically, indeed almost inorganic.34 Yet still it wards off the ‘fear of death’ because it endures. Tarr’s self-professed aesthetic reflects how Rank’s death fear drives Tarr’s urge for immortality:
“No, but deadness is the first condition of art. A hippopotamus’ armoured hide, a turtle’s shell, feathers or machinery. [...] The second is absence of soul. [...] No restless, quick flame-like ego is imagined for the inside of it. It has no inside. [...] Instead, then, of being somewhat impelled like an independent machine by a little egoistic fire inside, it lives soullessly and deadly by its frontal lines and masses.” (T1 300-1)

As we have noted, the act of ‘nomination’ or self-appointment is not alone sufficient for Tarr to become a Rankian ‘artist’. Even Kreisler calls himself (along with ‘Boulevardier’ and ‘Korpstudent’) a ‘Rapin’ (T1 256). Because an artist is his or her calling and he or she represents it ideologically, nomination usually marks ‘the subordination of the individual to one of the prevailing art-ideologies’, whereby the artist turns (consciously or unconsciously) to models from life or history for his ‘ethical ideal’ (Rank, A.A 144). Tarr professes to admire Socrates and repeatedly echoes Nietzsche. Tarr’s self-glorification and contempt for ‘the crowd’ have Socratic roots; his misogyny bears a Nietzschean accent: ‘I prefer the artist to be free, and the crowd not be ‘artists’ (T1 234), he tells Anastasya. Later he muses: ‘There was only one God, and he was a man. A woman was a lower form of life’ (T1 313). He declares: ‘I’m the new animal; we haven’t found a name for it yet. It will succeed the Superman’ (T1 307). Tarr also intermittently speaks as if influenced strongly by Rousseau’s Romantic primitivism and Wildean aesthetics, echoing Vivian in The Decay of Lying (1889). Tarr’s failure does not lie in his renouncing his self-appointment as an ‘artist’, but rather in his developmental arrest. This is a familiar hazard of ‘nomination’, which often actually fosters a new dependence on an art-ideology. To develop further, the ‘mature’ artist liberates himself from the ideological ‘bonds’ that he accepted and helped to shape. The process is again a complex repetition of the trauma of birth, and excruciatingly difficult, not because it demands separation from persons and ideas one admires, but because ‘the victory is always, at bottom [...] won over a part of one’s own ego’ (Rank, A.A 169-70). However, in this battle Tarr capitulates without ever actually ‘striving’ for an ideal, since he willfully avoids developing ‘a renunciant view of life’: a Rankian artist sees that it is ‘not only impossible but perilous’ to live out his ideology to the full ‘and can, willingly and affirmatively,
Portraits of the Failed Artist

accept the limitations’ of ‘moral conventions and artistic standards, not merely as such, but as protective measurements against a premature and complete exhaustion of the individual’ (Rank, AA 171-72). Mired in illusions, Tarr will not affirm his human limitations and so partitions art from life, male from female. Art is ‘Life with all the nonsense taken out of it’ (TI 298), he insists, ‘ourselves disentangled from death and accident’ (TI 299). A man without ‘a vestige of passion’ in the sex ‘compartment’ (TI 31), Tarr takes up with his ‘pumpkin’ Bertha (TI 29) solely because the great artist, who seeks beauty not in women but Art, still needs an outlet for his vulgar nature.36

Tarr’s conduct as an observer in ‘Overture’ who needs only to talk and evaluate, not act, offers insight into why he later falters when confronted in his relationships with a choice between art and sex. Tarr has ‘no social machinery but the cumbrous one of the intellect’ (TI 23), which is just as mechanical as instinct when functioning alone: ‘full of sinister piston rods, organ-like shapes, heavy drills’ (TI 23). Although he resolves in the novel’s first three chapters to give up humor, play, and then laughter, Tarr himself succumbs to ‘childish sport’ (TI 27) and sentimentality throughout the novel. Scorning the role-playing of Hobson, Butcher, Lowndes and Bertha, Tarr never criticizes his own acting – or even seems aware of it. An objective narrator observes:

When he solicited advice, it was transparently a matter of form. But he appeared to need his own advice to come from himself in public. […] He was the kind of man who, if he ever should wish to influence the world, would do it so that he might touch himself more plastically through others. He would paint his picture for himself. He was capable of respect for his self-projection. It had the authority of a stranger for him. (TI 38)

Tarr’s delicious pleasure in acting the Baudelairean poet and knocking Hobson’s hat off represents a grandiose act of self-projection. Rank notes that, in subordinating himself to an art-ideology, the individuality of the potential artist arrested at the ‘nomination stage’ ‘vanishes’ (Rank, AA 288). Soon Tarr’s ‘individuality’ re-emerges as Kreislerian conflict. Swimming in [life’s] daily ooze ‘like an alligator’ (TI 27), Tarr loses his aesthetic distance and becomes ‘infected’. Tarr senses that Bertha has captured part of him, but he cannot ‘escape’: ‘The appeal of the little again. If only he could escape from scale’ (TI 73).
Unable to vault over the miniature – to escape ‘scale’ – by going to England, Tarr ‘marries’ it. Of course, his four-hour-per-day union with Bertha is no partnership, just a legal bond. Tarr’s ‘sentimental’ defense rings inauthentic. In a defensive exchange with Anastasya, Tarr rationalizes his marriage to Bertha as follows – and she has the last word:

“= I have merely gone back a year into the past and fulfilled a pledge, and now return to you. […]” […]

“That is sentimentality.”

“Sentimentality! – Sentimentality! […] Sentimentality is a privilege. It is a luxury that the crowd does not feel itself equal to […]. = Besides, it is different in different hands.” […]

“But the fact of your having married Bertha […] will prevent your making anyone else your wife in the future. Supposing I had a child by you – not by Kreisler – it would be impossible to legitimize him. […] But you have given Kreisler’s child what you should have kept for your own!” (T1 319-20)

Tarr’s ‘mutterings of reason’ (T1 314) tell him that Anastasya is right, launching a ‘counter attack’ (T1 312) against the impulses which ruled him during the Bertha proposal. He attempts to referee his intra-psychic conflict by appealing to reason itself:

“Why marry Bertha Lunken […]? [T]o keep faith with another person: and secondly to show my contempt for the world by choosing the ‘premier venu’ to be my body-servant and body-companion; my contempt for my body, too.” (T1 313)

Tarr is deceiving himself. He is caught in the web of Rank’s ‘ethical guilt’, which leads one to perpetuate dependence and ‘to tie down the individual in loyalty to the past’ (Rank, A4 160). Even Butcher muses exasperatedly that Tarr’s affair with Bertha is a ‘disproportionately long and ‘unique’ (T1 38) liaison. The decision to ‘keep faith’ with Bertha (paradoxically enobling her a ‘person’ and denigrating her as a ‘body-servant’) is filled with conflict, the conflict of ‘ethical guilt’ that is rooted in the nature of willing and individuation:
Portraits of the Failed Artist

This loyalty to the past is itself opposed by a demand for loyalty to the artist's own self-development, which drives him onward. So the struggle of the artist against art is really only an ideologized continuation of the individual struggle against the collective. (Rank, AA 159)

Tarr's claim to show his 'contempt' (TI 313) for the world by marrying Bertha signifies his misguided, willed surrender to the collective in the name of the 'individual'. His 'sentimental' gesture is not one of strength but of willed resignation. The legal 'tie' to Bertha is not significant in itself, as Anastasya notes in reference to the possibility of her having a child by Tarr, but rather for what it represents: Tarr's gradual succumbing to the values and persons whom he once sought to transcend.

Unable to leave either Bertha or Paris, Tarr 'persistence[s] in his self-indulgent system of easy stages' (TI 204). Magnetized by the values of the 'crowd' and his 'average' fiancée, Tarr increasingly resembles Kreisler, a 'conflicted' man. 'Belittled and guilty' (TI 73) on leaving Bertha's room in 'Overture', Tarr exacerbates his conflict by refusing to break definitively with her. He and Kreisler become rivals for Bertha and Anastasya together, even getting confused in one scene about which woman each man is now chasing. At the Café Souchet, Tarr is asked to be Kreisler's 'second' in the Soltyk duel. He accepts only 'temporarily', with the self-delusively explanation, 'I am leaving Paris early to-morrow morning' (TI 252). But Tarr is indeed already showing signs that he will become Kreisler's 'substitute'. In her overvaluation of the Lipmann circle's social decree, even Bertha inadvertently marks the two men as similar, differing only in degree: 'Of Kreisler she thought very little. [...] Tarr to Kreisler. From bad to worse, for her friends' (TI 181). Expecting visitors from the women's circle to her room, 'at the knock [Bertha] thought of Tarr and Kreisler simultaneously, and welded in one' (TI 181). And after 'machine-like' Kreisler rapes her, Bertha believes 'Tarr has been the real central and absorbing figure, all along, of course, but purposely veiled'. Tarr, she thinks, 'had been as really all-important, though to all appearances eliminated, as Kreisler had been of no importance, though propped up in the foreground' (TI 198).

With Kreisler's death, Tarr moves into the 'foreground'. He marries Bertha, now pregnant with Kreisler's child, who 'bore some resemblance to Tarr' (TI 320). If women do not become the
‘profession’ of Tarr’s life, they at least become his avocation. In his shift from pure observer of, to participant in, Life, Tarr becomes the man of ‘swanky’ sex (T1 319). The sharp Eye of ‘Overture’ becomes the torn conscience of the section entitled ‘Swagger Sex’, by which time Tarr has apparently abandoned his opening proclamation against sexual expression. He has forgotten his conviction in ‘Overture’ that fatherhood coarsens and promiscuity putrefies ‘Form’, the refined aesthetic, which ‘would perhaps be thickened by child-bearing’ and ‘perhaps be damaged by harlotry’ (T1 30).

Whereas the true Rankian artist ‘frees himself from the parallelism between his life and work’ (Rank, A.A 191), Tarr cannot. Experiencing how ‘impossible’ and ‘perilous’ it is to follow his ideological parallelisms uncompromisingly, Tarr instead denies Anastasya’s personhood and the challenge of a full relationship with her. He fails to understand the underlying implications of his own aesthetic: ‘If you are going to work or perform, you must make up your mind to have dirty hands most part of the time’ (T1 236). But the ‘dung’ in life is not mere stage paint, as Tarr implies, ‘put there for you’ (T1 236), the artist. It is life, and the order of his phrasing of the artist’s problem reveals why Tarr cannot integrate art within his life: ‘The conditions of creation and of life disgust me’ (T1 236). Tarr cannot truly accept the responsibility borne by Rank’s creative man that to be in life is to be stained by it. One cannot remain an observer (Rank, A.A 232). The ‘creative artist’ is more than an incorporeal intellect. The tragedy of Tarr’s inflexible parallelisms regarding art and womanhood converge when he meets Anastasya, the intelligent woman who threatens him and toward whom a full human response would thrust him into Life: ‘Surrender to a woman was a sort of suicide for an artist’ (T1 214), he believes, thereby expressing his Rankian ‘death fear’.

Still, he is attracted to Anastasya, and she is fully ‘a woman; not a man’ (T1 296), as she points out forcefully to him. Tarr admits that ‘It was chiefly his vanity that gave [him] trouble’ (T1 313) in his rejection of Anastasya to marry Bertha, but he can only comprehend her within his ideology by unsexing her: ‘There was only one God, and he was a man. = A woman was a lower form of life. [...] Above a certain level of life, sex disappeared [...]. And, on the other hand, everything beneath that line was female. [...] [T]he line had been crossed by her’ (T1 313-14). Desexualizing her and making her the object of his ‘swagger sex’, Tarr

98
Portraits of the Failed Artist

idealizes Anastasya doubly, even more that Kreisler had. She becomes Tarr’s ‘perfect woman’ (Tt 320) – a male in his artist’s life and an object more beautiful and exciting than Bertha in his sex life.37 On the one hand, Anastasya is his ‘Muse’ in whom Rank believes artists see ‘not so much the woman as a comrade of like outlook and like aims, who could equally well – and possibly better – be replaced by a male friendship’ (Rank, AA 60). The potential ‘artist’, however, usually ‘needs two women, or several, for the different parts of his conflict’ (Rank, AA 61). Tarr concludes that he married Bertha ‘to keep faith’ yet really loves Anastasya. According to Rank, this is another trap into which the arrested potential artist characteristically falls:

Because the Muse means more to him artistically, he thinks he loves her more. This is seldom the case […] and more over it is psychologically impossible. For the other woman, whom, from purely human or other motives, he perhaps loves more, he often enough cannot set up as his Muse for this reason: that she would thereby become in a sense defeminized. (Rank, AA 246)38

According to Rank, the Mother, who originally gave life to the artist, is the artist’s ultimate Muse, and the idea of her ‘is easily transferred in the course of life to another person’ (Rank, AA 378-79). This provides insight into Tarr’s misogynistic splitting of Anastasya into Muse and object and his degrading of Bertha, for ‘he was the only child of a selfish, vigorous mother’ and had ‘an enervating childhood of mollycoddling’ (Tt 38). Rank would doubtless agree with Freud that such ‘unfavoured children’ demonstrate a peculiar self-assurance and an unshakable optimism that superficially resemble heroic attributes. Tarr, who ‘impressed you as having inherited himself last week’ possesses ‘unparalleled’ confidence (Tt 38).

But this ‘confidence’ is really just an asexual form of swagger – which is why it so easily devolves into ‘swagger Sex’. I doubt that Tarr ever genuinely exhibits even the Rankian artist’s first sign of personality development, ‘nomination’. Rather, Tarr’s self-glorification is a continuation of his ‘elevated position’ from childhood in which he came ‘to feel prominence as a birthright’ (Rank, AA 72). His ‘long foundation of delicate trustfulness and childishness’ from maternal mollycoddling have resulted in ‘a store of illusion to prolong youth’ (Tt 38) and the inevitable day when he will no longer be the centre of maternal
attention. Only with the ‘fact’ of Bertha’s pregnancy does Tarr mildly reexperience the trauma of birth. Finally forced to end his ‘vague arrangement’ with Bertha and marry her, Tarr swings endlessly like a pendulum, his aesthetic doctrine exposed as a self-delusive ideology fostered by dependence yet flaunted as ‘freedom’. If the ‘Overture’ and Kreisler sections alternately approximate a Lewsian (and Rankian) Apollonian and Dionysian mode, Tarr’s final fortunes are understandable in Rankian terms as a failure in the highest, ‘Kantian’ mode: ‘We see these various levels of development toward ideal-formation in [...] three different ages, world views, and human types. The first is the Apollonian, know thyself; the second is the Dionysian, be thyself; the third is the Kantian, determine thyself from thyself (Rank, AA 241).

The ‘average men’ are Apollonian. Their orientation is toward similarity to others and based on the Socratic formulation of the universal ideal. This is also the foundation of Freudian psychoanalytic therapy: not knowledge for the sake of the Self but rather for the sake of social adjustment. Kreisler’s Dionysian condition affirms a Self that is not only anti-social but ridden with guilt, and therefore ‘leads to ecstatic-orgiastic destruction’ when fully affirmed. The Kantian formulation, towards which Tarr might have striven, affirms ‘true self-knowledge’ and ‘actual self-creation’. Aware that the act of willing inevitably generates ‘ethical guilt’, the Kantian man nevertheless practices a ‘renunciant’ philosophy, whereby he lives fully in the world yet seeks to transcend its sick or limiting forces. Beyond the Kantian type lies Rank’s ‘new sort of person’, his Artist-Superman, the creative person who will ‘no longer use art as the expression of his personality’ (Rank, AA 293). Developing a renunciant view toward art – renouncing not only his life fear but also his death fear – this new sex-transcending person will disclaim the ‘protection’ afforded by art and devote his full being to creative, vitalistic living.

Notes

Portraits of the Failed Artist

hero who transcends the degenerate conditions of an ill or decaying social order and either succumbs to, or triumphs over, them. The contention of a Nietzsche connection is provocative and compelling because Tarr bears strong affinities with a continental European stream of fiction that is both open to stylistic experimentation and traffics in philosophical abstraction and essay-like reflection as part of the very plot and characterization.


4 I suggest, therefore, that we take seriously Lewis’s hostility to Nietzsche as it is expressed in his preface to Tarr: ‘In Europe Nietzsche’s gospel of desperation, the beyond-law-man, etc., has deeply influenced the Paris apache. […] Nietzsche’s books are full of seductions and sugar-plums. They have made “aristocrats” of people who would otherwise have been only mild snobs or meddlesome prigs; […] and they have made an Overman of every vulgarly energetic grocer in Europe’ (TI 13). This hardly sounds like a writer who wants to celebrate Tarr as a Nietzschean hero.


7 On this point, see Starr, ‘Tarr and Wyndham Lewis’.


11 See ABR 113-118. For Lewis’s views on Freud see P 208 and 238.

12 Hence the young Rank on Nietzsche: ‘I bathed, as it were, in Nietzsche’s spirit, and got charmed, weatherproof skin’. See Franz Alexander and Samuel Eisenstein (eds), *Psychoanalytic Pioneers* (New York: Basic Books, 1966), 37. Lewis recalled that Nietzsche ‘was among [his] favourite reading’ (R.1 128) during his student days on the Continent.

13 Tomlin called Lewis ‘the least provincial of modern English writers’ in *Wyndham Lewis* (New York: The British Council, 1955), 7. Lewis’s and Rank’s writings both show a deep interest in the aesthetics of Wilhelm Worringer and Alois Riegl.


17 Rank, *The Trauma of Birth*, 192.


20 ‘Cape’ because Hobson’s father ‘was a wealthy merchant at the Cape’ (of Good Hope), ‘Cantabian’ because Lewis has added an unusual suffix to ‘Cantab’, itself short for L. Cantabrigiensis, ‘of Cambridge (University)’, which Hobson attended.


22 Ibid., 119.

23 Ibid., 120.

24 At least, this seems to be Tarr’s (if not Lewis’s) intention.


26 Rank posited that the urge for immortality was the human being’s most powerful drive. In *Psychology of the Soul* and other works, he elaborated this view in such a way as to move beyond psychology and embrace an essentially religious view of history and human nature. On these points, see


29 Ibid., 105.

30 See Rank’s suggestive analysis of Shakespeare’s and Michelangelo’s sonnets in *Myth*, 158-62.

31 ‘Dithyrambos’ refers to Dionysus, meaning ‘double-doored’. Dionysus entered life by the womb of his mother and the thigh of his father.

32 ‘Kreis’ also means ‘top’, and Kreisler ‘waltzes’ at the dance like a whizzing top.


34 The following comment of Lewis’s in *Time and Western Man* (1927) sounds like a Rankian ‘nomination’: ‘our only terra firma in a boiling and shifting world is, after all, our “self.” That must cohere […], I will side and identify myself with the powerfulest Me, and in its interests I will work’ (*TWM* 132-33).

35 ‘The artist is […] primarily an individual […] who is unable or unwilling to accept the dominant immortality-ideology of his age – whether religious, social or other […] because it is collective, whereas he aspires to an individual immortality.’ See Rank, *Myth*, 169.

36 ‘No one could have a coarser, more foolish, slovenly taste than I have in women. […] All the delicate psychology another man naturally seeks in a woman, the curiosity of form, windows on other lives, love and passion, I seek in my work and not elsewhere’ (*T* 30).

37 Lewis echoes this in ‘The Meaning of the Wild Body’ (1927): ‘We are not constructed to be absolute observers’ (*CWB* 158).
38 ‘Rose Fawcett’, suggesting sentimental flux, and ‘Prism Dirkes’, suggesting brilliance and self-reflection, imply a sad perpetuation and intensification of Tarr’s conflict.

39 Rank considered the Apollonian a ‘higher’ type, with the Romantic closer to the ‘neurotic’.

40 Rank believed that the full expression of the creative will would unleash the best potentialities within human nature. Such expression is manifested in self-affirming, responsible choice, which forms the basis of the art of living. Esther Menacker provides an insightful discussion of these aspects of Rankian psychology in her article, ‘Creativity as the Central Concept in the Psychology of Otto Rank’, *Journal of the Otto Rank Association* 11. 2 (Winter 1976-77): 1-17. See also William Rickel, ‘Concepts of Power in Personality as seen by Otto Rank and Reinhold Niebuhr’, *Journal of Psychotherapy as a Religious Process* 3 (1956): 77-91.