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Uncelebrated Stylists:

Wyndham Lewis, Ford Madox Ford, and the Artist as Masochist

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Degree

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my grandmothers, Ruth Cheshire and Aline Erwin, who instilled in me a love of reading, and who at all points, and often against my will, impressed on me the importance of eloquence, integrity and reasonableness in speech and the written word, and to my parents, Cara Jean Erwin and Jerry Charles Erwin, who out of a selfless love and earnest passion for a bright and amazing future, have sacrificed so much for my education.

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Abstract

This study presents an attempt to understand the political and aesthetic relationship between two of Modernism's most enigmatic authors, Wyndham Lewis and Ford Madox Ford by examining their novelistic practice in light of their writings on politics and social criticism. A close look at the use of ironic distance, a hallmark feature in our understanding of modernist fiction, in *Tarr* (1918) and *The Good Soldier* (1915) reveals both authors conscious effort to distance themselves from their novel's subjects, Fredric Tarr and John Dowell respectively. In light of both novels' satirical element, a scathing attack on bourgeois narcissism caused by the wealthier class' persistent attempts to identify with hollow and self serving social roles through the sham-aristocratic prestige created by England's pre-war commodity culture, and the fact that both Fredric Tarr and John Dowell are artist figures that somehow resemble their creators, this project reinterprets Ford and Lewis' ironic distance as an instance of self-distanciation. From this we can infer that both Ford and Lewis were invested in the modernist idea of impersonality, not just as a artistic or literary technique, but as the artist's only means of escaping the narcissistic and slothful trap of modern subjectivity, and that, along with the production of modernist art, they saw a continual self-effacement as the price of authenticity, therefore inspiring in them the conviction to live as "uncelebrated stylists."

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Introduction— The Artist as Masochist

> The haven from sophistications and contentions
> Leaks through its thatch;
> He offers succulent cooking;
> The door has a creaking latch.
>
> Ezra Pound, "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley"

When his book opens its mouth, the author must shut his.

Friedrich Nietzsche

While writing a review of *BLAST* only two days after its publication, Ford Madox Ford makes a strange comment in reference to what he calls "a story that is to what other stories what a piece of abstract music by Bach is to a piece of program-music" (176 "Mr. Wyndham Lewis"). Here, Ford has in mind Wyndham Lewis' "Enemy of the Stars," not a story at all, but instead a "play" that Lewis intended as the paradigm of Vorticist literary production. Ford writes, "I don't just figure out what it means, but I get ferociously odd sensations" (176 "Mr. Wyndham Lewis"). Possibly fearing that his comment could be mistaken for an insult against Lewis' lucidity, Ford qualifies his earlier statement: "But then I do not understand what Bach meant by the Fourth Fugue, I don't want to" (176 "Mr. Wyndham Lewis").

Ostensibly, Ford's opinion of Lewis' "story" appears ambiguous. Earlier in the review, he calls *BLAST* "very amusing, very actual, very impressive now and then" (176 "Mr. Wyndham Lewis"). With this in mind, we should wonder whether or not Ford was

serious when he admitted not wanting to understand "Enemy of the Stars." We should not put past him the possibility that his remark was sarcastic; Ford was not one to refrain from cracking a joke. However, in "Enemy of the Stars" Lewis took on a theme that I will spend the following pages arguing was a significant preoccupation to Ford while he was writing his review for the *Outlook*. Lewis' play deals with the interior struggle of modern artists who have all but lost their place in society and must discover how to reestablish themselves to a place of social relevance. The same year *BLAST* was published, Ford was in the midst of composing *The Good Soldier* (1915), a novel that, as I argue, was largely concerned itself with the place of artists in modern society. Four years later, Lewis would publish his first novel *Tarr* (1918), which I also contend echoes many of the same concerns.

Therefore, when Ford wrote about his "ferociously odd sensations" in response to Lewis' play, it seems possible that he was speaking honestly. Ford possibly recognized in his younger acquaintance a similar anxiety, persistent but not at that moment quite fully articulated. In what follows, I offer a comparative analysis of *The Good Soldier* and *Tarr* suggesting that this shared anxiety was not only present, but a paramount concern of both figures during the early years of modernist literary production. *Uncelebrated Stylists* offers a comparison of these two novels based on a set of assumptions I will here elucidate. I argue that both Ford and Lewis' work figure into the larger historical phenomenon permeating modernist literary representation that Andrew Hewitt calls "the legitimation crisis;" that both works attempt to satirize the English bourgeois subjectivity of its relationship to the commodity industry; and that the formal innovations of both works imply specific social convictions concerning the artist' appropriate place within modern

society. Reading *Tarr* and *The Good Soldier* this way allows me to explore the radical conclusions that come from both Lewis and Ford's satires through their formal use of ironic distance to re-posture artists in relationship to the society they are critiquing through art. This conscious re-posturing of the artist in relation to the subject of their work, however, does not imply a moral or epistemological superiority, as ironic distance often does. Instead, my argument is that it effects the exact opposite, the masochistic effacement of the artist's self. This self-effacement does not lead to a superior subjectivity, a higher way of thinking or feeling intrinsically divorced from the emotional currants of normal interpersonal relationships, but instead to a flat-out denial of subjective experience *as such*. Bourgeois subjectivity is useful to the author only insofar as it can be rendered artistically. Therefore, the value of an experience for both Ford and Lewis is not in the experience itself, but in the subsequent act of critical reflection that holds experience in arrest, that isolates it and immediately challenges its authenticity.

Both Ford and Lewis' interests in the authenticity of subjective experience, particularly expressions of desire, stems from the fact that they wrote under the historical pressure of a shifting emphasis in the place of art in bourgeois society. Beginning in the eighteenth century, art, like everything else in the capitalist free-market, found itself prey to the forces of commodification. By extension, the artist experienced a shift in social roles from autonomous craftsman to entrepreneurial producer. This shift created an anxiety in artists concerning the legitimacy of artistic creation as an act autonomous from market demands, putting the artist on the offensive (a phenomenon best exemplified by the satires

of London literatures like Swift or Pope,[1] aimed viciously at writers and patrons they determined to be more interested in writing for profit than for establishing any lasting artistic legacy.) This aggression, while still existing in some forms, receded by the nineteenth-century into the evasive cultural move towards the aestheticism of *l'art pour l'art*, the artist's retreat from the social world into the aesthetic. According to Andrew Hewitt, many of the early aesthetic practices of the *avant-garde* worked as a response to this retreat into the aesthetic. As the term "avant-garde" suggests, early modernist aesthetics functioned as the expression of a desire to re-legitimate art in bourgeois society by positing aesthetic praxis *as* a critique of the commercial forces challenging the author's agency within their social context.

Thus, as Hewitt writes, modernists sought to create art that "stressed the mimetic and interpretive value of aesthetic discourse" by displacing "the meta-discursive structures of philosophy in favor of framing a discourse on the aesthetic itself; more specifically on the notion of mimesis or representation" (63). The *avant-garde* desired an aesthetic

[1] In his mock epic *The Dunciad*, Pope describes the literary market of the 1720's as a place dominated by the incompetent "grub street" writers who:

> […] On outside merit but presume,
> Or serve (like other fools) to fill a room
> Such with their shelves as due proportion hold,
> Or their fond parents dressed in red and gold. (131-137)

This image (especially placed within the context of his narrative, which is the story of the goddess Dullness crowning the fictional Tibbald as the king of bad writing) suggests that Pope and many of his peers felt as if the London literary scene had exchanged the values of wit, insight, and innovation for cheep entertainment, encouraging literature as a means of profit instead of a site of thoughtful cultural and political introspection. The poem goes on to complain of "the frippery of crucified Molière" (127) and "hapless Shakespeare" (128) as the victims of banal imitation, the expected result of a culture more interested in the comfortable and nostalgic styles and themes of past innovators, instead of supporting the innovators of the present.

designed to critique the society it inhabited through the very act of presenting its art to that society. For early modernism, the practice of representation functioned not to *deliver* critique, but instead to be the critique itself. Representation in poetry and art should present an aesthetic whole that is assembled from elements of a fragmentary and incomplete society, thus the completion of the work subsumes the essential incompatibility of its parts, like it does in, for example, Picasso's *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* (1907) or Eliot's experiments in literary Cubism that resulted in *The Waste Land* (1922). Novel writing, in a similar way, has to capture the dissolution of narrative coherence within the act of narration, making incompletion and failure themselves objects of aesthetic contemplation.

Hewitt Goes on to write, "the externality of the aesthetic is not fixed within the terminology of a framing discourse (philosophy) that acts as a theoretical mediation between art and life; rather, it is fixed by the distanciation implicit in the very act of representation and reflection" (63). Modernist art, Hewitt contends, replaces the evaluative norms suggested by a philosophical discourse within the text, traditionally mediated by the editorializing voice of the narrator, with an unmediated representation of the subject treated within a totalizing framework, the artwork's form. The result is that, instead of art expressing a evaluative norm or ideal, the art itself *is* the ideal, emphasizing the incompleteness and fragmentation of the subject it represents by re-containing it in an independent and self sustaining whole.

This praxis of form-as-critique presents itself in the formal structure of *Tarr* and *The Good Soldier*. In this study, I have chosen to place these two novels under the formal category of satire. However, the use of the term "satire" when referring to a formal

category of *avant-garde* literary practice must be qualified with a note on our understanding of the term might be effected by the self-conscious stylization for which the *avant-garde* are known, least we slip into anachronism by confusing their satiric practice with satires of the past. In *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, Peter Bürger suggests that "certain general categories of the work of art were made recognizable in their generality by the avant-garde" (19). Thus, Bürger goes on to say, "it is consequently from the standpoint of the avant-garde that the proceeding phases in the development of art as a phenomenon in bourgeois society can be understood" (19). From this he concludes it an "error" to read modernist aesthetic practices as simple developments of earlier formal practices.

For my purposes, this translates into the assertion that Ford and Lewis' satires do not merely criticize certain social conditions or practices, but that their satirical practice also self-consciously reanimates the satirist's agency in relation to the society they address. The formal structure of *The Good Soldier* and *Tarr* self-consciously imply a specific relationship between their authors and the readers as receivers of satirical attack. The rhetorical effects of the novels themselves imply a relationship between author and reader that is manipulated and mediated through the stylistic practices of composition. Thus, Lewis and Ford do not limit themselves to passive moral judgments on the readership that they seek to criticize, but instead actively guide the reader through an experience of their ideal social relations as mediated by the phenomenological act of reading itself. Like in most satiric practice, readers come to a realization of how they find themselves implicated in the deceptive and inauthentic social habits and practices satirized. *Tarr* and *The Good Soldier* present clear *indictments* of their readership, the English *bourgeoisie*. However, at the same time, ironic distance places the author in a position of incongruity with their

readership. Ironic removal implies social removal, the authors repositioning of themselves in a way that justifies their satiric attack by showing that they *know* the cost of authenticity and have paid the price that allows them to justifiably critique their community.

The specific focus of *Tarr* and *The Good Soldier's* satirical attack present itself as a critique of the commodity industry's role in the formation of bourgeois subjectivity. Discussing this topic inevitably introduces my study to some of the major theoretical assumptions of Marxist criticism, which implies a theoretical schematic I cannot introduce without qualifications concerning Marxism's relationship to modernist politics. In *All that is Solid Melts into Air,* Marshall Berman writes with enthusiastic optimism about the possibility of a synthesis between the modernist and Marxist methods of critiquing bourgeois culture. The particular mode of modernist critique we find ourselves engaging in this study, the modernist satire of early twentieth-century commercialism, appears, at least initially, comfortable within a Marxist context. Like Berman, Lewis and Ford found the escapist notion of autonomous art and transcendent thought that pervaded so much of 19th century thought farcical. The *bourgeoisie*, regardless of their artistic or intellectual pedigree, could not escape the material circumstances of their social reality. No artistic or intellectual activity could ensure transcendence from their class identity or their participation in the market economy. Thus, the *avant-garde's* charge of escapism leveled against the decadent autonomy of *l'art pour l'art* and their subsequent demand that art re-engage society as critique appears in line with Berman's understanding of Marxist thought in relationship to the nineteenth-century bourgeois intellectual:

> As for the orthodox modernists who avoid Marxist thought for fear that it might strip them of their haloes, they need to learn that it could give them something better in exchange: a heightened capacity to imagine and express the endlessly rich, complex and ironic relationships between them and "the modern bourgeois society" that they try to deny or defy. A fusion of Marx with modernism should melt the too-solid body of Marxism… and at the same time give modernist art and thought a new solidity and invest its creations with an unexpected resonance and depth. (122)

Berman goes on to list Baudelaire, Wagner, Courbet, the Expressionists, Futurists, Dadaists, and Constructivists as artists who productively synthesized Marxist and modernist thought. This study assumes some congruity with Berman's synthesis by adopting the explicitly Marxist assumption that the means through which goods are produced and distributed in a society determines the structures of class-consciousnesses, and that this, in turn, structures the ideological assumptions of the individual in relationship to their conception of self. We must keep in mind that I am offering here a study of Ford and Lewis' satirical practice as it is leveled against the bourgeois conception of self. Therefore, a fundamental assumption in this study is that the models of consciousness, and the political implications thereof, found in Ford and Lewis' fictional representations of bourgeois society find themselves engendered through some kind of relationship with, or reaction to, the commodity industry.

However, I must qualify my overarching congruence between modernist and Marxist critique by pointing out a critical difference between Marxist thought and Ford and

Lewis' more conservative/reactionary assumptions concerning the historical relationship between the *bourgeoisie* and the commodity industry. A mention of Marx's address on the fourth anniversary of the *People's Paper* illustrates this difference well: "We know," Marx writes, "that to work well the new-fangled forces of society, they only want to be mastered by new-fangled men" that "are just as much an invention of modern times as machinery itself" (587). Here, Marx characterizes the historical emergence of the *bourgeoisie*, who, according to Berman, incorporate the "old modes of honor and dignity" into a new market system that has subsumed their thinking, thus giving old values "new lives as commodities" (110). However, Marx's comment implies that the rise of industry and the invention of modern production preceded the bourgeois subject. The bourgeois subjectivity is "an invention of modern times," its narcissistic refusal to acknowledge its own inauthenticity and hypocrisy presents a subject formation that is generated in response to capitalist modes of production. Therefore, the plasticity of bourgeois values create a mass denial of their inconsistency as a necessary response to modernity. Ford and Lewis would agree that the *bourgeois* ideals of honor and dignity are fundamentally inauthentic, but would differ from Marxist thought in that they see the *bourgeoisie's* fundamental inauthentic and delusional sense of self-satisfaction as the *cause,* not the effect, of the commodity industry. Therefore, the fault ultimately lies with the subject, and the world that they have unconsciously created functions as a means of denying a fundamental flaw in their own self-conception.

As appealing as the idea of the *bourgeoisie* as fundamentally corrupt may seem for engendering vicious and unapologetic satire, it leads ford and Lewis into an inevitable trap. If the *bourgeoisie*, in their narcissistic drive for self-satisfaction, engendered the rise of the

means though which this narcissism finds itself actualized, then their semiconscious inauthenticity becomes an inevitable trap from which they cannot escape. Paradoxically, the desire for self-satisfied narcissism creates the demand for the commodity, which, in turn, creates the self-satisfied narcissism. Narcissism, for the *bourgeoisie*, inevitably binds itself to subjectivity because the subject's desires demand and at the same time are reinforced by the very means through which those desires are created and sustained.[2] Thus the bourgeois self is a form of narcissism. In their explicitly political and social writings, Ford and Lewis both appear consciously aware of this recurrence as a problem in their thought. The problem of the *bourgeoisie* will not resolve itself until they are displaced, and since both these authors mistrust and explicitly condemn populist social revolutions that challenged bourgeois supremacy, they were forced to accept the fundamental tension between artists and society that they saw as a threat to their authenticity and legitimacy. The historical relationship that Ford and Lewis presuppose between the *bourgeoisie* and

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[2] In *A Singular Modernity* Fredric Jameson characterizes the Modernist passion for "depersonalization" (136) as a desire to imagine "some new existence in a world radically transformed and worthy of ecstasy. What has been often called a new and deeper, richer subjectivity, is in fact this call to change which resonates through it: not subjectivity as such, but its transformation" (136). In relation to what appears to be Ford and Lewis' pessimism, Jameson describes the desire to escape subjective experience as a much more constructive project, a positive work of the imagination as opposed to a self-effacing objectification. However, like Ford and Lewis', Jameson thinks that the bourgeois subjectivity cannot be successfully transformed apart from their total displacement in a "Utopian and revolutionary transmutation of the world of actuality itself" (136), a proposition that he of course affirms. Jameson's insistence on the primacy of bourgeois subjectivity in the formation of relations in a capitalist society lead him to acknowledge, in the end of *Fables of Aggression*, that right-wing critiques of the *bourgeoisie* often seem more accurate and effective than those of the left because they acknowledge an essential depravity in individual subjects that leads them to embrace an unjust society as long as their desires fulfilled and their ideal self image confirmed. Lewis' genius, according to Jameson, is that he creates in his fiction, "a sham world filled with unreal puppets who can nonetheless be killed" (176). This allows Lewis to sustain a critique of the bourgeoisie that captures their essential inauthenticity but that simultaneously realizes that violence against them is real and horrific, thus doubly criticizing "those passionate private languages and private religions" of European intellectuals, which "entering the field of force of the real social world, take on a murderous and unsuspected power" (177).

commodity industry leads to the object of my study. Irony, in *Tarr* and *The Good Soldier*, represents a denial of the self as the only means though which the social problems outlined above can be resolved.

On the subject of irony, Wayne Booth's *The Rhetoric of Fiction* makes several portentous claims. Booth suggests that irony functions as a community building device, necessitating "a secret communion of the author and reader behind the narrator's back" (300) through an implicitly mutual acknowledgement between the two of the narrator's lack of self-awareness and errors in judgment. In the case of Ford and Lewis' fiction, I agree with Booth on this claim. John Dowell as a failed narrator and Fredric Tarr as an absurd protagonist facilitate a mutual awareness of failure and absurdity between the authors and their readers. However, my understanding of formal irony in these novels departs from Booth's claims about the ultimate goal of the author's "secret communion" with their readers. Booth asserts that, for readers, the end of irony is "to collaborate with [the author] on mature moral judgment" (307). If we were to apply this reading of irony to *Tarr* and *The Good Soldier* we would have to suppose that the desired effect of Ford and Lewis' irony is to place the author and reader into a superior position over the novels' subjects. This would suggest that Lewis and Ford's goal in writing these novels was to create some kind of superior subjectivity, a mode of consciousness that successfully escapes the artifice of bourgeois narcissism. To be sure, the formal irony of these two novels suggest that Fredric Tarr and John Dowell deserve our judgment. However, in acknowledging their subjects' shortcomings, Ford and Lewis do not assert

their superiority over them. Instead, they imply that an avoidance of either absurdity or failure on the author's part requires a masochistic self-effacement.[3]

The origin of this masochistic self-effacement lies in Ford and Lewis' doctrinal convictions about style. For Ford and Lewis, style, the conscious motivation to manipulate language in a certain way,[4] comes in response to what I. A. Richards calls "the impulse" (86). Even though they are today outmoded, Richards' observations concerning the emergence of modernist literary technique serve as a useful corollary for the modernists' understanding of their own stylistic practice. Richards' defines the impulse as "a process

[3] I realize that, within the confines of this project, I am adopting a rather unorthodox definition of the term "masochism." In the classical sense, masochistic self-deprecation allows for the erotic experience of the subject *identifying with* the suffering body *and* the other's response to the spectacle of suffering. The subject inhabits this position at the cost of— or as a willful attempt at— obliterating self-awareness by replacing it with the intensity and immanence of humiliation. Lewis and Ford, as I argue, seek the exact opposite; the escape from subjectivity through a constant objectification of subjective identification. Therefore, their masochism (even though intentional self-deprecation is still its central quality) appears more like a stoic practice of de-identification. A corollary example of this might be the religious rite of mortification practiced by the Opus Dei, an eccentric sect in Roman Catholicism whose followers regularly beat themselves with scourges to imitate Christ's torture at the hands of the Roman state. Their goal is to repeat Christ's self-denial as it was announced in the gospel account of his prayer at the garden of Gethsemane: "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42 KJV). Thus, Jesus' torture, and the Opus Dei's imitation thereof, represents a denial of the vain wishes and desires (which they locate in the physical body) preventing them from understanding and executing the will of God.

[4] My own thinking on style owes a debt to Roland Barthes and Louis T. Milic. As critics, we identify authors' "unique style" by placing their texts within the two dimensional landscape Barthes describes in *Writing Degree Zero*. Style is bound to the expressive limits of language, which, as Barthes writes, "is not so much a stock of materials as a horizon" (9). It is within these limitations that we are restricted in discussing stylistic practice. Individual style, then, "has only a vertical dimension, it plunges into the closed recollection of the person and achieves its opacity from a certain experience of matter… [the] equivalence of the author's literary intention and carnal structure" (11-12). Style is not the use of language to communicate a particular effect, but the result of the composite forces that differentiate between one author and another authors' writing. Thus, critics identify style by noting an author's deviation from "common" linguistic practice. Louis T. Millic ideas on composition suggest we can understand style in this way. Style, for Milic, is the author's self conscious reaction to the "large and perhaps dominant contribution of unconscious processes to the production of language" (84). The unconscious process he calls the "stylistic choice" finds itself willfully manipulated into individual style through the author's confrontation with unconscious self in the process of revision, where the author differentiates between his style and convention by a *conscious* departure from his own *unconscious* linguistic production.

beginning in stimulus and ending in an act" (86). He contends that the impulse is paramount to modernist literary production. In modernist literature, the individual sentence is created as a recording of the impulse, the moment of response created by an isolated stimulus. We see this taking shape through Ford and Lewis' stylistic practice. Ford styled himself an impressionist. His sentences, their ambiguous adjectives, winding subjunctive clauses leading to the constant deferral of the object, render in language what Ford saw as the bewildering effects caused by the impressions of modern life. Likewise, the terse violence of Lewis' sentences presented an attempt to render his vitalism in language. The individual sentence, for Lewis, functions as a response to the biological energy of what he called "the Wild Body."

From this, we can infer that both Ford and Lewis' critiques of bourgeois subjectivity were *internal critiques*. The amalgamation of individual sentences that comprise *The Good Soldier* and *Tarr* were not the product of removed judgment, but the attempt to place the reader within bourgeois subjectivity by representing the impulsive reactions to modern experience in language. These novels' stylistic expressions do not originate from a stance of ideal removal. Instead, they are, for their authors, the very matter of modern existence. In Lewis' case, the idea of modernist style as a means of internal critique must be qualified with a note on his distain for impressionism which we will cover in-depth during the first chapter. Lewis' stylistic practice depended on what he perceived as the energetic force of the modern world, the frenzy of mechanical production and the proliferation of commodity objects which his fiction mirrors in the frenzied and energetic proliferation of sentences. However, Lewis is simultaneously careful even on the level of the individual sentence to ensure that his focus on the subjective does not lead to

identification, but in fact consistently distances the reader from these moments of identification by coding them in figurative language.[5] Thus, the reader does not identify with subjective experience as Lewis' sentences represent it, but are lead to identify it as a representation of something else. The literal finds itself subverted by the figurative in a moment of distanciation.

However, Lewis' concern was, like Ford, in relating the subjective experience of modernity. Therefore, the totalized removal of the reader's sympathetic identification with the experiences that these novels' describe require a more totalized act of distanciation provided by their formal structures. *The Good Soldier* and *Tarr*, avoids drawing their readers' into sympathetic identification by simultaneously representing the bourgeois subjectivity and calling the reader's attention to its inconsistencies. Ford and Lewis achieve this distanciation through their novels' formal ironies. To understand how this works, we can employ Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the molecular and the molar. The molar, in Deleuze and Guattari's thought, consists of the ebb and flow of vital energy through singular desiring machines, whereas the molecular represents the body without organs' subsuming of this schizophrenic production of desire into the repressive illusion of a unified consciousness. This is the process through which bodies' molar production of desires find themselves transformed into the chimera of the individual, and the same process finds itself again repeated when the community of individuals are re-subsumed

[5] Jameson characterizes Lewis' violent and often self negating use of metaphor as "a veritable self-gathering image—and a sentence producing machine com[ing] in to view behind the dexterous and imperceptible substitutions of literal and figurative levels for one another" (28 *Fables of Aggression*).

into the chimerical totality of the society. Thus, Deleuze and Guattari suggest that this subsuming process of the molar into the molecular create all perceptions of totality.[6]

We can then read the individual sentences of Ford and Lewis' novel's as instances of the molar, the particular shock of individual experience. Formal irony, the experience of these novels as totalized works of art, then constitutes the molecular. However, as a result of Ford and Lewis' commitment to the impulse, the fragmented and incoherent experiences of the bourgeois subjectivity as they are stylized on the level of the individual sentence refuse totality. The moments of Modern experience are incommensurable, and therefore Ford and Lewis' art reflect this formally by emphasizing the disparity between the subject's false understanding of its own coherence (the illusory molecular) and the schizophrenic and inchoate molar structures that comprise it. This implies a different kind of irony than that which Booth maintains in his concept of "secret communion," because the subjects are not implicated by the author's active condemnation of their lack of self-awareness located in the text of the novels themselves. Instead, readers are made aware of their deficiency when their fragmented and incomplete perspectives are compared to the aesthetic coherence and completion of the novel's form.

Irony, in *Tarr* and *The Good Soldier,* then looks something like what Allen Wilde calls "absolute irony," which he defines as "the conception of equal and opposed

[6] We can see the difference between the molecular and the molar in Deleuze and Guattri's comparative analysis of schizophrenia and paranoia found in *Ant-Oedipus*: "Paranoia and schizophrenia," they write, "can be presented as the two extreme oscillations of a pendulum oscillating around the position of socius as full body, and, at the limit, a body without organs" (281). Schizophrenia is an instance of the molar because it "follows the lines of escape of desire; breaches the wall [of the body without organs] and causes flows to move" (277) and is thus the deterritorialization of the self. Paranoia, on the other hand, "invests the formation of central sovereignty" (277), and thus solidifies the coherency of the self by projecting a maliciousness on to the world which it understands as chronic persecution. Thus it is the manifestation of the molecular formation.

possibilities held in a state of total poise, or, more briefly still, in the shape of an indestructible paradox" (21). As instances of absolute irony, *Tarr* and *The Good Soldier* offer expressions of the problem perpetual recurrence of bourgeois narcissism and commodity culture found in Lewis and Ford's social criticism. Fredric Tarr and John Dowell fail to escape the machinations of bourgeois subjectivity because bourgeois subjectivity is ultimately inescapable. Neither Lewis nor Ford could conceive of a definite means of breaking the recurrent cycle of bourgeois narcissism and the commodity industry that did not imply violent revolution. By extension, we can infer that this inescapable paradox would inhibit the artist from establishing autonomy in a bourgeois culture, and as long as artists maintained the recognition of themselves as artists within this culture, the authenticity of their art would be constantly threatened.

Artists, then, had only choice if they desired to maintain the purity of their art and their free-agency as artists, masochism. The self must be effaced. It is this self-effacement that Lewis and Ford so masterfully express though their use of absolute irony. For Lewis, this self-effacement of artists meant the perpetual self-distancing and critical reflection on their social role as artists. For Ford, self-effacement meant the conscious recognition and full acceptance of limitation expressed as the artist's humility. In the pages that follow, I intend to show that, for both Ford and Lewis, authenticity as artists meant, not only their acceptance, but also the constant reaffirmation of their ineffable positions as uncelebrated stylists.

This study began as an attempt to explain, in light of the many similarities in their aesthetic practice and social criticism, why Ford and Lewis garnered such radically

different political associations after their work with Vorticism. After the publication of *Tarr*, Lewis became for modernism a sort of misanthropic naysayer, violently criticizing everything about his peers' art and their stance within British society. Ford, on the other hand, became a champion of liberal humanism through his later fiction and scholarship. I assume the germinal difference between their later aesthetic practices and perceived social positions lies somewhere in the construction of *Tarr* and *The Good Soldier* with the subtle differences in their use of ironic distance.

Chapter one, then, explains the similarities in Ford and Lewis' social critique as they are found in their work with the Vorticist flagship *BLAST*, a distrust of the authenticity of bourgeois desire and a conviction that society must be reorganized in such a way that allows artistic autonomy, with some preliminary analysis of how these criticisms determined their aesthetic praxis as satirists. Chapter two looks at *Tarr* in the context of Lewis' works of political and aesthetic commentary as a way of elucidating how irony works as authorial self-effacement. Chapter three examines *The Good Soldier* as a commentary on novel-writing by placing it in the context of Ford's social criticism and literary scholarship, with the ultimate goal of understanding how *The Good Soldier's* use of irony implies a repositioning of the artist within society. The conclusion is what I hope will be a satisfactory elucidation of the critical differences in their novelistic practices and what at least some of the social and political implications of these practices might be.

Chapter 1— “Art thou an Ephraimite?”

Ford, Lewis, and the New Artistic Elite

> …And it was so, that when those Ephraimites which were escaped said, 'Let me go over;' that the men of Gilead said unto him, 'Art thou an Ephraimite?' If he said, 'Nay;' Then said they unto him, 'Say now Shibboleth:' and he said 'Sibboleth:' for he could not frame to pronounce it right. Then they took him, and slew him at the passages of Jordan: and there fell at that time of the Ephraimites forty and two thousand.
>
> Judges 12:5-6 (KJV)

On September 1st, 1939 the German army advanced on Poland. Two days later—on the 3rd— England declared war on Germany. Earlier that morning before the declaration was announced, tired, nearly bankrupt, and depressed by “the spectacle of another war in Europe” (248 Myers) Wyndham and Foranna Lewis fled from England to New York, a place Lewis described in a letter to his friend James Johnson Sweeny as a “stony dessert, full of shadows, in human form” whose lifelessness he couldn’t have imagined “in his worst nightmare” (277 “Letters of Wyndham Lewis”). Lewis financed his voyage with the few pounds he had made off of a recently composed portrait of T.S. Eliot. By the late thirties, his thinly veiled attacks on his patrons and their friends in *The Apes of God* (1934) had alienated him from any immediate means of financial success as a writer. His renewed interest in panting, then, became a way for Lewis to revive his torpid reputation as a marketable artist.

However, renewing his career as a visual artist had offered Lewis only limited success, a fact that he, in typical fashion, attributed to what he felt was the British people's chronic hostility to innovative artists.[7] Also, in spite of his recent recantations of his earlier support for Nazism in *The Hitler Cult* (1939) and *The Jews, Are They Human?* (1939), Lewis still bore the stigmatism for *Hitler* (1931), his infamous formal endorsement of the Third Reich. So by the time he decided to leave London, there was little evidence to suppose that he could have done anything further, either personally or politically, to save his damaged reputation.[8] His trip to New York, in short, was the beginning of a self-imposed exile brought on by his satirical aggressions and dubious political affiliations, an exile that would bar him from his London-based sphere of literary and artistic influence for the rest of his life. Lewis' associates thought him too offensive— and he thought himself too audacious and cunning—to ever again work in London among those artists and cultural elites around which he had built his career.

Recently, one of Lewis' former literary associates, Ford Madox Ford, had taken his own journey across the Atlantic. Ford, however, traveled in the opposite direction. Having recently completed *The March of Literature* (1938) and taken leave from Olivet College in Michigan, Ford was planning a lecture tour with Dial Press when he fell ill. At 65, Ford

[7] In a review of an exhibit showcasing the work of British painter Mark Gertler, Lewis lashes out furiously against the many "crimes against art" (405) committed by the British public over the course of his career: "Have you noticed," he writes, "in later-day England how artists show great promise, often, and then 'go off''—or actually go to pieces? It is not the rule elsewhere that artists get worse as they get older. Why that phenomenon is only met with here is easily explained […] You know how sweet a tooth our public has, how unwilling it is to give its attention to anything a little severe. How it exerts its slothful, sentimental pressure from the first moment a fine artist reveals himself " ("Round the Galleries" 405-406).

[8] *The Jews, Are They Human?* Would not be published until May of '39, and *The Hitler Cult* wouldn't be released until December of the same year, so Lewis' efforts to publicly distance himself from the Nazis arrived far to late to have any significant impact on his current social situation.

was still active as both a writer and a promoter. At the onset of his illness, he was in the midst of negotiating the publication of his massive three volume travel tome *The Great Trade Route* (1937) and working on an outline for *Professors Progress*, his fourth in a series of explicitly anti-leftist political satires, and the intellectual inheritor of past political satires like *Mr. Flight* (1913), *The Marsden Case* (1923), and *Vive La Roy* (1936). He was actively involved with Allen Tate and his literary circle and still in close correspondence with Ezra Pound (whom he had tried, much to the poet's chagrin, to get a teaching position at Olivet). Before his abrupt break with Dial, Ford had been active in promoting the work of young poets and writers as he had done since his time as editor of *The English Review*.

Before his bout of ill health, Ford had been in contact with Tate about spending the summer in North Carolina with the Tate family. However, when his doctors told him that "a long course of French cooking" (138 "Letters of Ford Madox Ford") was the only thing that could restore him to health, Ford broke his plans with Tate. On the 30th of May, he and his wife Janice sailed to France with plans to spend the summer in Havarti. They made it as far as Le Havre before Ford began to need serious medical attention. Julie moved him to the Clinique St. Francois in Deauville on the 24th of June. Two days later, Ford, who had authored thirty-six novels and had been at least partially responsible for promoting the early literary careers of D. H. Laurence, Katharine Mansfield, Jean Rhys, Ezra Pound, and Wyndham Lewis, died of heart complications.

It's worth contemplating whether, had the circumstances around Ford's death been different, Lewis would have contacted his old literary associate asking for help. Lewis was notably resentful of Ford at times, as he was towards many people who tried to help him.

He was also remembered at times to adopt a particularly vicious attitude in attacking Ford's art.[9] According to Jeffery Meyers, Lewis, upon hearing of Ford's death, flippantly commented to Ezra Pound that he "was not a 'Fordie-fan' and never had "been able to read more than a few lines of his fiction" (29). Ford, consequently, had always taken care to keep a professional distance from what could be Lewis' caustic and uncouth social and literary practices. Commenting in his typically tongue-in-cheek style on his affiliation with Lewis, Ford once wrote, "my motives [for endorsing the Vorticist movement] you will observe to be entirely cowardly … I support these young men simply because I hope that in fifteen years time Sir Wyndham Lewis, Bart., P.R.A., may support my claim to a pension on the Civil List" ("Mr. Wyndham Lewis" 175). Ford had granted Lewis his first publications when he ran several of his travel sketches in the *English Review,*[10] but always took care in his later years to regard Lewis as somewhat of a novelty,[11] a force to be reckoned with rather than a peer.

[9] *In Portraits from Life,* Ford recalls a particularly disgruntled Lewis informing him that, "[y]ou and Mr. Conrad and Mr. James and all those old fellows are done… exploded!... *Fichus*!... *Viux jeu*!... No good!... Finished!" (290 ellipses appear in the original). Its worth noting, however, that Ford enjoyed these unsolicited attacks, citing them as evidence of the youthful virility that would save English art.

[10] In 1909, Ford published "The Pole" in his May issue, followed by "Some Inkeepers and Bestre" and "Les Saltimbanques" in the June and September issues respectively. According to Myers, when Ford, who was a notoriously inept businessman, was at one point late in his payment for one of the stories, Lewis retorted by calling him "a shit of the most dreary and uninteresting type" (28).

[11] In his celebrated but largely suspect recollection of his first meeting with Lewis, Ford writes: "He was extraordinary in appearance … He was very dark in the shadows of the staircase. He wore an immense steeple-crown hat. Long black locks fell from it. His coat was one of those Russian looking coats that have no reveres. He had also an ample black cape of the type that villains in transportine melodrama throw over their shoulders when they say "Ha-ha!" He said not a word" ("Return to Yesterday" 389-390). Here Ford capitalizes on Lewis' sinister persona in a way that subtly implies both impressive personal eccentricity and culpability.

However, regardless of their public attempts to distance themselves from each other, Ford and Lewis shared several prominent similarities regarding their social criticism and their novelistic practice. As I will argue, both Ford and Lewis were invested in reinstating past social hierarchies onto British culture. Both thought that the orderly ascendancy of British cultural life had collapsed under the pressure of Europe's industrialization and the rise of a commodity industry. Both thought that this was detrimental to the future of Western art, and that the reinstatement of the artist to a place of social significance and guaranteed free agency was the starting point for finding a remedy for cultural decline. Many of these social concerns effected the way Lewis and Ford represented the *bourgeoisie* in their novelistic practice, in that both authors capitalized on a particular use of ironic distance to represent their subjects. In this study, I argue that the relationship between Ford's pre-war novel practice as a social satirist must be re-examined in relation to its similarities to Lewis' own developing practice as a satirist. Furthermore, we must examine these similarities in light of their abrupt post-war break, a disparate trajectory that leads us to regard Ford as a champion of humanism and political liberalism and to suspect Lewis as an authoritarian and possibly even a fascist. In what follows, we will attempt to understand, from an aesthetic point of view, how two artists who shared similar social prejudices could so radically deviate; how Ford could end his career as a novelist with his four masterpieces of Liberal humanism, the *Parades' End* Tetralogy and Lewis could go on to earn his reputation as "the Enemy."

Lewis' Satire as a Rhetorical Shibboleth

If this study aims to understand, from more than just a historical or biographical point of view, why two novelists with similar aesthetic interests and political commitments diverged radically from each other in the space of less than a decade, then the first step should ostensibly to be to establish a firm and lasting connection between these aesthetic interests and political commitments. We can facilitate such a connection from reading the social critiques implicit *within* these experiments. If both Ford and Lewis thought that the decay of their contemporary culture could be reversed by the reinstatement of the artist to a place of social significance, then we can read their innovative use of ironic distance *in relation* to the content of their satires as a kind of fictional re-imagining of the ideal relationship between the artist and the rest of society.

In Lewis' case, Fredric Jameson has already provided a detailed analysis of the conjunction between aesthetics and politics on the level of the individual sentence in *Fables of Aggression*. In his study of Lewis' art, Jameson positions Lewis as a seminal figure within the emerging critiques of capitalist ideology that would define 20th century thought. Jameson argues that Lewis separates himself from many of his artistic contemporaries through a "'populist' component" in his literary production, that is "expressed through his stylistic practice," which is itself "mediated by the excitement of the machine and of a mechanical production" (16). The immediacy of Lewis' style draws from the energy of modern mechanization to engender his social critique. As a result, Lewis' "violent critique and repudiation of all the hegemonic ideologies of the parliamentary bourgeois state may be taken as a figure for the crisis and fragmentation of

the subject itself" (18). Lewis' novels, then, understand the relationship between the ego and fragmented individual subject as a mirror to the relationship between ideology and the fragmented society. The narrative treatment of these crises present a reimagining of these fractured relations that speaks to both public life and private experience, one that is both explicitly political *and* aesthetic. This study seeks to expand upon Jameson's reading to meet its goals in understanding both the suddenness and completeness of Ford and Lewis' break.

However, working with Jameson's project entails a confrontation with more recent critical attempts to challenge the integrity of the relationship between modernist social critique and aesthetic experimentation. In his theoretical assessment of modernist aesthetics, Peter Nicholls advances a now popular claim that *avant-garde* preoccupations with "the new" as a category of formal artistic experimentation arose primarily as a commercial venture. His reading hinges on the idea that modernist poets, beginning with the work of Baudelaire, Rimbaud, and Mallarmé, sought to "cultivate an essentially closed model of the self" (4) as an appeal *to,* instead of a critique *of,* contemporary bourgeois sentiments of disinterestedness and individual social superiority. His reading includes the "men of 1914" in the race to commercialize a new aesthetics by pointing out that Pound's dislike for impressionism stems from its dependence on what Nichols calls its "intellectual passivity" (171) and that, in Pound's estimation, Italian Futurism presented nothing more than an accelerated form of impressionism.

In Nicholls' view, Lewis and Pound's desire for an active, action-based aesthetic caters to a popular sexism that values masculinity through its implicit connections to social

dominance, intellectual superiority, virility and individuality. These sexist notions certainly present themselves in early Vorticist art, but we cannot limit the Vorticist movement to nothing more than an ambitious commercial enterprise. As the most prominent locus of early modernist thought, the pages of *BLAST* imply that the Vorticists' attempt to make a place for themselves in the British art scene presented a means of criticizing the hypocrisy of the middle-class preoccupation with attitudes of social superiority and masculine virility. An examination of Lewis' rhetorical stance toward popular culture in *BLAST* displays his ironic repositioning of the officious attitudes of individual superiority in relationship to the way the culture industry creates these attitudes. In what follows, I argue that Lewis' idea of modernist agency, at least as it pertains to the relationship between *avant-garde* artist and popular market, cannot be reduced to a simple commercial ploy. More importantly, however, I claim that we lose important aspects of Lewis' social criticism when we reduce the Lewis' attempt to communicate to the British public to a matter of commerce.

In line with Nicholls, both Paul Peppis and Rod Rosenquist offer acute historical analyses of early modernism's commercialist sensibilities by tracing the development and increasing popular appeal of *avant-garde* techniques of self-promotion. Their readings focus on early modernism's most relevant site of direct contact with the English public, the June 1914 edition of *BLAST*. Peppis, focusing on the nationalistic dimension of early English modernism, reminds us that one of the three proclaimed goals behind the creation of *BLAST* was to "publicize their art as England's— Possibly Europe's— premier art group... as a defense against foreign occupation and encroachment, especially the Futurist effort to 'occupy' the English art market" (85). Peppis cites this nationalistic reaction to

Fillipo Marinetti’s Futurist asthetic as an entrepreneurial ambition. Lewis's self proclaimed superior sense of the "new" presented a means by which the Vorticists could dominate the European art market. In his treatment of *BLAST*, Rosenquist points out that the "antibourgeois oppositional stance of many of the *avant-garde* artists was actually solicited by the masses they confronted," concluding that the "scandal, outrage, and militaristic fervor of *avant-garde*" served the angst-ridden and aggressive public sentiments of pre-war Britain. Both these readings imply that the avant-garde's brief pre-war success came as a result of both an ambitious promotion on the part of the artists and an accepting temperament on the part of the receiving public. The artistic and literary climate in pre-war Britain then appeared hospitable for the emergence of modernist innovation as a marketable enterprise, with both the suppliers and consuming public willing, for different reasons, to "do business" with each other.

However convincing they may appear, these arguments aimed to reduce early modernism to commercial concerns carry inconstancies in both their treatment of the artists and the public they addressed. First, we must acknowledge the fact Vorticism was not a commercial success. The Vorticsts held only one major exhibition before the war. The Rebel Art Centre stayed open for only four months, and its artists were forced to give lessons home decor painting to keep its doors open for that period of time. The Vorticists' most significant achievement, *BLAST*, ran for only two issues. The war, of course, was a major consideration in the Vorticists flagging success. Two of the movement's central figures, Henri Gaudier-Brzeska and T. E. Hulme, died on the frontlines. Those who stayed behind found little notoriety as a group (even though Eliot, a latecomer who was identified himself with Vorticsm only marginally, found financial success as a poet later in the

twenties), and soon after Lewis left for the frontlines in 1916, the group disbanded. Looking back, Lewis himself thought the movement was underserved by the public. In the pamphlet for a a 1956 exhibition of his work in the Tate gallery, Lewis took care to distance his late career from its origins in collective action: "Vorticism, in fact, was what I, personally, did, and said, at a certain period" (451 “The 1956 Retrospective”).

Even if the British public did not seem as enthusiastic to welcome the rise of a London *avant-garde* as Peppis and Rosenquist would lead us to believe, with the artists there does appear a tension between elitist integrity and self-promotion. It is reasonable initially to see how artists so explicitly antagonistic to middle-class commercial sensibilities could discredit themselves by announcing their arrival through commercial mechanisms—the loud and spectacular manifestoes and advertisements that permeated *BLAST*— that their writings should ostensibly reject. The seemingly commercializing elements of *BLAST* could cast an unfavorable light on the authenticity of Lewis self-proclaimed position as a cultural elite dedicated to arbitrating aesthetic and stylistic innovations designed to transcend the *passé* conventions of his cultural moment. However, we must at the same time acknowledge the fact that, if he chose to take both his social criticisms and his aesthetic innovations seriously, Lewis could reasonably desire a substantial amount of public recognition for them. Thus, we can re-imagine Lewis' situation as one where he has to find a way to fully confront and at the same time distinguish his group from the class and culture they sought to reform.

This tension between elitist integrity and the desire for recognition, the desire to engage with *and* stand above popular culture, should cause us to take a second look at

Lewis' techniques for promoting Vorticist art. *BLAST'S* aggressive self-promotion in the form of artistic and political manifestoes and the Voticists' vigorous participation in the British pre-war project of nationalist revival suggests that Lewis was actively concerned with the precariousness of his position as a social critic. As the primary architect behind *BLAST'S* promotional apparatuses, Lewis shows his readers an awareness of his precarious stance as both social critic and arbiter of high culture. The apparent hypocrisy bound up in *BLAST'S* advertisements and manifestoes display Lewis' conscious attempt to present *BLAST* as a rhetorical device designed to persuade his readership to react to Vorticism in a way that mirrors both his aesthetic and social vision.

By the time that Lewis and Pound began to imagine a British avant-garde, the manifesto as a genre of literary production had already earned a dubious association with commercial culture. This was due partially to the fact that the *avant-garde* manifesto itself works as a kind of advertisement. On the subject of the *avant-garde* manifesto, Alain Badiou reminds us that, "the Manifesto is only ever a rhetorical device serving to protect something other than what it overtly names or announces," because "there is no metalanguage appropriate to artistic production... it is thus in the nature of declarations to invent a future for the present of art" (139). The new cannot draw enough attention to itself so that its public can recognize it as such. One of the foibles of artistic innovation, especially modernist literary innovation, which places so much emphasis on the minute intricacies of the individual sentence is that it presents itself as "always precarious and almost indistinct" (140), as Badiou explains:

> Real action exists in such a way that that it has to be pointed out and emphasized in loud proclamations, rather like the circus ringmaster amplifies his calls and orders a drum roll so that a pirouette on the trapeze –novel and daring, but also extremely fleeting— will not be ignored by the public. (140)[12]

Real innovations in the moment require false promises about the future, so the audacity of the *avant-garde* manifesto serves a protective function to the art it seeks to bolster. This appears especially relevant in the case of the English avant-gardists, who faced a public still convinced, over forty years after Matthew Arnold's demand for cosmopolitan enlightenment, that English culture was essentially provincial. Such a public would appear largely skeptical that their culture could or should even try to compete with the innovations taking place on the European continent.

Lewis, as a latecomer in the continental *avant-garde* art scene and an avowed competitor with Marinetti's Futurist movement, confronted the manifesto as a form both necessary for artistic innovation and an increasingly notorious element in the dissolution between high art and popular culture. However, the particular need for Badiou's "rhetorical envelope" gave Lewis' a unique opportunity to project his anti-bourgeois stance onto the culture he sought to address. Martian Puchner points out that *BLAST'S* manifestoes present

[12] Another term-set we can use to explain this phenomenon comes from Pierre Bourdieu's observation that "a successful revolution in literature […] is the product of the meeting between two processes, relatively independent, which occur in the field and outside of it." He goes on to explain the avant-gardists that desire to "break with current norms of production in defiance of the expectation of a field can usually only succeed in imposing recognition for their products by virtue of external changes" (252-253). Like Badiou, Bourdieu maintains that the subtleties and intricacies of avant-garde artistic innovation, in order to achieve recognition as true innovation through the creation of a legitimate space of cultural production, has to enact certain exaggerated social gestures that capitalize on other "ruptures" which "change the power relations" (253) within other cultural fields, particularly political revolutions. This notion presents itself as especially relevant to our study of Lewis, who as we will see, often capitalized on the rhetoric of populist revolutions even though he generally distrusted their merits.

one of Lewis' early attempts to define his notion of satire as the center of his aesthetic practice. Puchner reminds us that Lewis' used the manifesto largely as an attempt to simultaneously compete with and to satirize the *avant-garde* tradition of manifesto writing on the continent, particularly the revolutionary fervor of Marinetti's manifestoes. Lewis, when it came to politics, the masses, and popular culture, largely denounced both the Marxist and Fascist notions of populist social revolution—not because he was in any way invested in maintaining the status quo, but instead because he didn't think that social revolution was the business of popular culture or the public in general. "Lewis denies the unleashing of social revolution," Puchner writes, "… and restricts the 'true' revolution to some neatly confined aristocratic elite" (59). *BLAST's* manifestoes, then, over-act or exaggerate the revolutionary tendencies of the avant-garde manifesto to both legitimate the Vorticist movement and to mock their revolutionary ambition *via* commercial promotion to a mass audience. Thus, in the case of *BLAST*, Lewis "adopts the genre of… [popular] revolution… to contain its consequences" (60 Puchner).

If Jameson is correct in arguing that Lewis' writing seeks to effectively re-imagine society through its aesthetic structures, we can see how *BLAST* mirrors this impulse. With the combination of satirical distance and the manifesto's rhetorical purpose, Lewis attempts to transpose the aesthetic hierarchies implied by *BLAST'S* manifestoes into the actual reception of Vorticist art. Satire, through its use of ironic distance, exaggeration, and overt mockery, often purports to affect the exact opposite of what it literally suggests. The manifesto, conversely, demands a sincere reaction by simultaneously *acting* and intentionally expecting its readers to *react* in a particular way. For example, Lewis blasts those who "still crack their whips and tumble in Piccadilly Circus, as though London were

a provincial town" (19). Here Lewis condemns a culture saturated in the illusion that England can avoid confronting the modern age, a culture in denial of the fact that the sleepy complacency of nineteenth-century social convention no longer presents itself as an option. However, in the next line Lewis provokes a response: “WE WHISPER IN YOUR EAR A GREAT SECRET. LONDON IS NOT A PROVINCIAL TOWN" (19). Ironically, he presents this whisper as a shout. The Vorticists "secret" is a public proclamation to action. In a similar way, the opening manifesto demands a following: "A VORTICIST KING! WHY NOT? / DO YOU THINK LLOYD GEORGE HAS THE VORTEX IN HIM?” That Lewis elected Lloyd Gorge, a figure associated with the populist sentiments he reviled, as a possible convert suggests that he sought to distance himself from what could be the potential effects of his rhetorical strategy.

From this, we can infer that Lewis' employment of satirical technique in the manifesto attempts an *inversion* of the respective allegiances of his readership. Lewis' critique of bourgeois culture rests in the idea that “real” or authentic action has largely become separated from “real” or actualized desire, and both individual action and desire have found themselves redirected by mimesis into mass action and desire. In short, the British middle-class actualize their individuality, in terms of both action and desire, by mimicking everyone else who claim the sanctity of their own individuality—the bourgeois establish their individuality by imitating their peers. *BLAST* announces that it intends to “present an art of individuals” (8). Here we can see Lewis' treachery toward his audience emerging. *BLAST* duplicitously presents a mass call for artistic individuality, simultaneously mocking and affecting the kind of desire/imitation reversal he despises. Readers aligning themselves with *BLAST'S* proclamations in effect embodied the very

thing Lewis despised about bourgeois culture, and his desire for success with the Vorticist flagship simultaneously expressed his misanthropic disgust towards his readership. In essence, *BLAST'S* manifestoes sought to create a rhetorical shibboleth, identifying his enemies by inviting them to swear allegiance as allies.

As to why Lewis would want to make enemies of his allies, *BLAST* itself seems to suggest that many of Lewis' more sincere social commitments required that he make allies of his enemies. *BLAST* repeatedly suggests that it seeks to foster the individual artist through violent intellectual opposition. The opening polemic announces that *BLAST* seeks to "destroy politeness" (7) and in the first manifesto abstracts its intended rudeness into a metaphysical principle; "we start from opposite statements of a chosen world. Set up violent structures of adolescent clearness between them" (30). The value of opposition here appears to lie neither with an apparent victory of one abstracted "side" or anything like a synthesis of both sides, but in the *opposition* itself. The Vorticists fight "always for the same cause, which is neither side and both sides" (30) and also simultaneously *their* cause. The Vorticist vision then appears to weave a sort of tapestry of violent intellectual opposition, where antagonism reigns as the supreme value because of its ability to unite authentic individuals in a common artistic practice without falling back into *passé* social patterns of mimesis. From this vantage point alone, however, it is not clear whether Lewis intends this statement of principle specifically applies to aesthetic practice or to some sort of new vision for social relations. In what proceeds, I intend to argue that it applies equally to both.

Ford’s Satire as Sexual Shibboleth

Initially, it might feel strange to think of Ford Madox Ford’s social criticisms as similar to Lewis’. In his earlier career, Ford claimed to belong to the generation of artists that dominated London before Lewis, Pound, Aldington, and Gaudier-Brzeska announced their arrival. His people were those anxious and portentous Edwardians concerned with finding an alternative to “the perpetual torture of incompetent compassion” that bourgeois liberalism had become, an alternative that doesn’t surrender English society over to either “malevolent anarchy” or “benevolent servitude” (125 Chesterton). Writers like G.K. Chesterton, Hiliare Belloc, G.B. Shaw and H.G. Wells spent their intellectual energy searching for an alternative to modern decadence that didn’t stray into what they saw as the extremes of anarchy or tyranny they saw sweeping over the European continent. Early in his career, Ford styled himself a Tory Gentleman and reactionary politico wedged somewhere between the utopian progressivism of Shaw and Wells and the authoritarian romanticism of Chesterton and Belloc. Superficially, his attitudes were closer to Chesterton’s. He romanticized the clarity and simplicity of feudal Europe, claiming that if it weren’t for the influence of Cervantes, “chivalry… might have saved our unfortunate civilization” (680 "The March"). Ford's early critical writing was preoccupied with identifying and reinstating the cultural attitudes and practices that Europe had lost with the encroachment of modernity. At the same time he was troubled by the “standardizing” forces of democracy, mass education and popular culture “doing away with everything outstanding” (299 “Memories and Impressions”) and the fact that the forces of technology

and industry have made “life much more bewildered than it has ever been” (51 *The Critical Attitude*) for the modern subject.

Ford’s time as a Tory gentleman was cut short, however, when the news of his affair with Violet Hunt and subsequent estrangement with his wife Elisa Martindale broke loose to the public between 1909 and 1910. By abandoning his wife and taking up with another woman, Ford alienated himself from his older Edwardian crowd. This persuaded him to associate with the younger generation of British artists who were unaffected by his impropriety. However, Ford’s decision to defect to the modernist camp was more than just a convenient social move. As Michael Levinson points out, Ford ultimately couldn’t remain at home with his own generation of writers because they failed “to yield sufficiently to the exigencies of [Ford’s] present, the failure to concede to the fragmentation, the fragility, the precariousness and to write accordingly” (61). In the preface to his *Collected Poems*, Ford wrote, “for a quarter of a century I have kept before me one unflinching aim—to register my own times in terms of my own time” (327).

Ford’s impressionistic outlook valued above all else a faithful rendering of subjective experience, what he in his seminal essay “On Impressionism” would call “a frank expression of personality” (36). In a cultural and historical moment where confusion and bewilderment had become, in Ford’s view, the defining trait of contemporary thought, the artist could not shrink from the task of trying to represent the sordid manifestations of this bewilderment and its inevitable effects on how the modern subject perceives reality: “impressionism […] is not a sort of rounded, annotated record of a set of circumstances, it is the record of the recollection in your mind of a set of circumstances that happened ten

years ago—or ten minutes ago" (41). His project, in a sense, remains conservative. To *re*collect means to recover something from the past which the subject now lacks. His commitment, however, was to the present, to understanding not just how, but *why* recollection fails. In recollecting, Ford suggests, the modern subject cannot always produce a "rounded, annotated" record of events, to experience a complete understanding of its world, and furthermore struggles to differentiate the past from the present, to stand fully aware of the modern moment. The pressures of modernity on the modern subject, then, create a uniquely modern confusion where it can not pull "ten years ago" and "ten minutes ago" apart. The cause of fragmentation in the modern experience, then, lies not in the past that is lacking, but in the present of recollection. Understanding the present, for Ford, became a necessary part of his literary endeavor in a way it had not before.

Thus the increased interest with the subjective, however, did not detract from the political concerns of Ford's earlier Edwardian attachments, it just changed their focus. The period between 1910 and 1914 saw the production of *The Critical Attitude* (1911), Ford's scathing portrait of an England where "clear and objective thinking is a lost art" (131 Snitow), and his first three novel experiments in social satire, *The Simple Life Limited* (1910), *The New Humpty-Dumpty* (1912), and *Mr. Flight* (1913). Thus, in turning inward, Ford became more explicitly political than he had been before. The difference is that, between 1910 to 1915, Ford began to suspect the middle-class English values he had fought earlier to preserve. By releasing himself from those burdensome Chestertonian preoccupations that stood to represent the anxieties of a class from which he was removed by both income and birth, Ford was able to perform a self-conscious reexamination of

English bourgeois culture, its conventions, its values, and its practices *from* a subjective point of view. His satires sought to understand what kind of interior confusion and bewilderment the English middle-class can inspire through the duplicity of their social practices. Robert Green claims that this "new clarity," which he describes as the ability to "portray credibly the tension between belief and social agnosticism" (81) that fractures the psychic continuity of the English bourgeois subject, comes from Ford's admittance of his "failure to decode" the bourgeoisie's "complex rhetoric of speech and gesture" and "to demarcate the boundary between play and life" (80) that defines its social interaction. His new artistic energy came from an abandonment of what for him was an inauthentic sympathy with the *bourgeoisie* and a turn towards criticizing the inauthenticity of the class itself. In admitting that he did not belong to his generation, Ford freed himself to turn his critical eye back onto the class he once defended.

Ann Barr Snitow claims that the hallmark technical feature of Ford's subjective concern presents itself as an innovative play with ironic distance: "irony is a central expression of social ambivalence" allowing him to "begin to ask questions about his time that he had been incapable of asking earlier" (130). Leaving his past associations behind, Ford could identify more with the creators of *BLAST* and their interest in using ironic distance to objectify the painful subjective fragmentation of modern life, reforming it into something both beautiful and culpable. Unlike the impressionism of Conrad and James, or Marinetti's sensational Futurism, Ford's use of the impressionist technique to capture the confusion of modern thought fit the new Vorticist program because it required the ironic distance to both attack the delusions of the bourgeois subject and make it into an object of

aesthetic contemplation. Like Lewis, Ford realized that the *bourgeoisie* claimed certain aristocratic pretentions— the responsibility of guiding society and representing its dominant values and anxieties—while still only educating and refining themselves as economic leaders. They played at living like aristocrats while still thinking and acting like shopkeepers, a fact that Ford sought to ironize in his fiction. Ford's irony takes the form of a distance between the authorial voice and the fictional subject; a narrative technique that reached its apotheosis with his 1915 novel *The Good Soldier*. In *The Good Soldier*, Ford's bold and counterintuitive use of a first person narrator successfully distanced the reader from the subject treated in order to re-conceive impressionism as a method of social critique.

John Dowell, the story's narrator, suffers from a chronic stereotype of passivity and effeminacy that the novel's principal characters impose on him. The English gentleman Edward Ashburnham regards him as a "woman or a solicitor" (31) and Edward's wife Leonora listens to Dowell like a "mother, to the child at her knee" (53). The principal insult, however, comes from Dowell's own wife Florence, who feigns a heart condition to avoid consummating their marriage and conducts a series of clandestine affairs. The abusive treatment he receives from his wife and friends, coupled with the severe emotional trauma of the story he tells, leaves Dowell an ineffectual narrator. He often fails to complete his narration of a significant moment or differentiate between details that are critical to his reader's understanding of a moment and which ones are superfluous.[13]

[13] Citing and discussing specific instances within the plot of this phenomenon have become critical commonplace for discussions on *The Good Soldier*, and I'm not going to spend too much time at this point elaborating on them, seeing as Ford's completed 1915 version of the novel will be treated in detail later. However, its worth mentioning that Dowell's narration of the infamous excursion to the town of M with Leonora's *faux* revelation on the balcony

Dowell's failed attempts to "keep all these people [his characters] going" (241) and thus guide his reader through the "sort of maze" (201) created by his frenzied recollections, revelations, and traumatic impressions, create an emotional gap between the reader and the subject treated. Dowell claims he's telling the story for therapeutic purposes, to "get the sight out of [his] head" (7). But his botched storytelling, for the reader, has the opposite effect. Dowell's mistakes disrupt the conduits necessary for fostering a significant emotional connection between the sympathies of the reader and the plight of his characters, thus rendering his subjects in a more strenuously objective light. He informs us of details necessary for making an emotional connection with the story only after the fact, so we are allowed for a moment to see the characters the populate Dowell's memory act as Ford saw them act— aimlessly, lifelessly, like dolls arranged to stand about in the way that people do.

Thus, *The Good Soldier's* emotional frustration and cruel ironies present a social satire which, much like the majority of Lewis' pre-war writing, worked as a send-up of the English *bourgeoisie.* The fragment of Ford's novel published in the June 1914 *BLAST* as "The Saddest Story" presents a problem of inauthentic desire similar to the problems highlighted by the rhetorical devices that announced the importance of its arrival. "The Saddest Story's" main social concern presents itself as a disjunction between identification and desire, a separation between professed desire and real action that has become the scourge of bourgeois masculinity. The men in Ford's story substitute the act of identifying

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(pp. 44-50), his preoccupation with unexplained details like the “little phial that should have contained nitrate of amyl” (pp. 112) the night of Florence’s suicide, and his hasty attempt to end the story without recounting Edward’s death (pp. 276-77), which had presented itself as a driving force in his narrative since the beginning of the third section.

their desire in place of the act of obtaining those desires. Mimesis in "The Saddest Story," means hypocritically recreating the attainment of sexual desire through language, without any real action. Dowell, characteristically regarding himself as "not so much a man" (94), acts as a receptacle for others personalities. As the negation of desire— a man who claims not to "want" (93) anything— Dowell becomes a barometer for the force of impressions created by the other characters' ability collate desire and action. Ford expects the reader to measure the authenticity of a connection between desire and action by Dowell's ability to comprehend and react to the misnomers of male sexual aggression. Among men other than Teddy Ashburnham, "those incalculable simulacra amidst smoke wreathes" (88), Dowell conjures an uncharacteristic repulsion to the banality of cheap sexual performance:

> Fellows come in and tell the most extraordinarily gross stories—so gross that they will positively give you a pain. And yet they'd be offended if you suggested that they weren't the sort of person you would trust your wife alone with. And very likely they'd be quite properly offended—that is, if you can trust anybody with anybody. But that sort of fellow obviously takes more delight in listening to or telling gross stories—more delight than anything in the world. (89)

These idle and comfortable men who "hunt languidly and dress languidly and dine languidly, and work without enthusiasm" (89) express—or perhaps more properly, perform— their sexuality *through* mimesis. Their desire for authentic action, restrained by bourgeois propriety, finds itself deferred onto an unconscious imitation of reality. From sharing these deviant stories of sexual conquest, they find enough arousal to "wake up and

throw themselves about in their chairs" (89). Dowell gives us an English *bourgeoisie* of juvenile boasters, men who devote their intellectual energy into creating narratives about the things they want do in order to compensate for a lack of *actual* gratification. In this instance, Dowell's puritan innocence amplifies what otherwise might be the impenetrable distinction between authentic desire and hypocritical imitation. His puzzlement over the fact that these men "can be offended—and properly offended at the suggestion that they might make an attempt at your wife's honor" (89) lays bare a class of men so alienated from their own desires that they cannot conceive of an implicating relationship between the "stories" they tell and their actual behavior.

The principal irony of "The Saddest Story," however, is that Dowell's innocent eye and alien stance find themselves unable to detect and root out the one real threat to his "wife's honor," Edward Ashburnham. Dowell's skepticism acknowledges Edward's duplicity, but cannot so quickly register the magnitude of its threat. Norman Leer suggests that the complexity and pathos of Edward's character manifests itself as an irresolvable fissure between a public *façade* and private desire. "Ashburnham," Leer writes, "is the sort of man who always fulfills and perhaps even surpasses his expected social duties … he plays the part of the dutiful aristocrat, or the good soldier, but this role is so external that it is gradually undermined by [his] own private life" (76). Edward accepts and even nurtures this duality because "the sense of responsibility becomes for him a means of publicly veiling and evading the private sphere of passion and emotion" (76). Thus, the distance between the virtuous candor of Edward's public reputation and the litany of affairs become, for Dowell, the obfuscating epistemic haze he must see through in order to find a

"haven where … old beautiful intimacies prolong themselves" (88) and to discover whether his supposed intimacy with Edward Ashburnham was a manifestation of public act or private desire.

The problem for Dowell however, presents itself as the fact that all he ever sees of Edward directly appears as a unity. He can't be sure whether or not he knew the public or the private Edward, because Edward, in his superior masculine and remarkably British acumen of coolness and control, never exposes the fracture in his personality. Dowell illustrates this dilemma with his fantasy anecdote about finding his way into Edward "private room" to see him:

> Standing with his coat and waistcoat off and the immensely long line of his perfectly elegant trousers from waist to boot to heal. And he would have a slightly reflective air, and he would be just opening one kind of case and closing another .
>
> Good God, what did they all see in him; for what there was of him, inside and outside; though they said he was a good soldier. Yet Leonora adored him with a passion that was like an agony, and hated him with an agony that was like the sea. (94)

With this image, Dowell shows us the source of his bewilderment. He can't "sound the depths" (87) of Edward's apparent contradiction because his impressions of Edward all speak to a staunch English consistency and an unnerving psychic unity. Thus, Ford repeatedly sublimates *The Good Soldier's* dramatic tension— allowing it to resurface in

the destructive effects of Edward's licentiousness, effects like Maisie Maidan's death, Florence's suicide and Nancy's mental breakdown. We, like Dowell, never get to *see* Edward as anything but a good soldier. We never get to see him act on his rakish impulses. We can only watch Dowell go through the painful process of trying to trace the effect of his destructive behavior back to their obvious causes. This is why Dowell often adopts paradox as a way of evading a conclusive description of Edward's personality.[14] He has to struggle to resolve Edward's appearance of moral and emotional unity with revelations of his duplicity so that he can fend off the constant threat that his meditations on Edward's character will simply dissolve into pure *aporia*.

As opposed to the "Saddest Story," the completed *Good Soldier* uses Dowell's inability to penetrate the illusory unity of Edward's character as a narrative device that propels the plot of the novel by offering us a series of tragic events that we, along with Dowell, must trace back to an absent cause— the libertinism that we always hear about but never get to see. We should also note that, in the completed work, Ford's concern shifts dramatically away from a valorization of action to a narrative stance that expresses the dangers of unrestrained sexual passion. Read in the context of *BLAST* and the emphasis that the vorticists placed on individual action and authentic desire, Edward appears heroic in his ability to disregard convention and to act how he wants. (Just publicly announcing his affair with Violet Hunt and divorcing his first wife, it appears reasonable to assume that Ford could have honestly felt this to be the case). *But The Good Soldier's* insistence on the

[14] The following description of Edward's face at the moment of he and Dowell's first meeting in Nauheim presents a typical example of Dowell's paradoxical way of explaining his impressions of Edward's Personality: "I never came across such a perfect expression before, and I never shall again. It was insolence and not insolence; it was modesty and not modesty."

destructive capability of this kind of behavior when it is left with no public accountability for its effects makes Edward into a figure that Ford cannot fully endorse. Edward's suicide, along with Florence's suicide, are not so much the final manifestation of an inescapable tragic flaw, but are instead the result of cowardly refusals to accept accountability for their sexual desires and face the consequences of their choices.

However, if we allow a look at "The Saddest Story" as a completed work autonomous from its latter incarnation, we see, much like with Lewis's advertisements and manifestoes, another kind of shibboleth emerging. The principal irony Ford displays in "The Saddest Story" is that the sensitive and impressionable Dowell allows the "incalculable simulacra" of the English smoking room to register as a threat towards his wife's honor in spite of the fact that we *see* him passively record their behavior as they mimetically compensate for their inability to act on any authentic sexual desire. Edward, on the other hand, receives Dowell's trust as "just the sort of man you can trust your wife with," and then reveals himself as the real threat. Men in Ford's world either act on their sexual urges in silence or they talk about their sexual urges without acting on them.

Both patterns of behavior imply a hypocritical duality—a psychic fracturing that past critics have identified as both a central concern in Ford's social criticism and an essential feature in his representation of the modern world in *The Good Soldier*.[15] With both "The Saddest Story" and *The Good Soldier*, Ford complicates the possibility of a

[15] Mark Schorer suggests this idea of psychic fracture as it relates to Dowell's narration when he writes: "The fracture between the character of the event as we feel it to be and the character of the narrator as he reports the event to us is the essential irony" (*ix*), and critics including Samuel Hynes (313), John A. Meixner (320), and Eugene Goodheart (377) make significant developments on this idea.

modern experience where the subject escapes this psychic fracture between public and private selves. However, “The Saddest Story” does offer some sort of social distinction. Using Dowell’s subjective impression of masculine sexuality, Ford strikes a distinction between Edward Ashburnham and his peers. This distinction lies between bourgeois men who have fallen pray to the impotency and hollowness of something like a Nietzschean “heard instinct” and those who actively pursue their desires. In “The Saddest Story,” the force of Edward’s personality can at least create the appearance of a unified whole—an authentic connection between action and desire—because his private life is one where desire finds itself actualized.

This distinction would become increasingly more complex as Ford turned “The Saddest Story” into *The Good Soldier*. But in its June 1914 manifestation, Ford’s Impressionist expedition into the subjective experience of modernity, far from offering a retreat from the decadence and impotence of middle-class English life, actually attempts to invade it, using art to reorganize society. Despite Pound and Lewis’ uncharitable resistance to Impressionism’s passivity, “the Saddest Story” attempts to show that Ford’s impressionism can offer a viable means of reestablishing those critical social hierarchies corroded by the spirit of bourgeois conformity.

The conjuncture of these similarities between Ford and Lewis’ aesthetic practice and social criticism demands more explication. Intuitively, Lewis and Ford’s demand for the public’s recognition of both the civic benefits of art and the artist’s return to a place of prominence in society imply an aggrandization of the artist figure. Historically, this is quite true, especially for Ford, who latter in life would insist that the artist acts, to echo Shelly’s

assertion, as the world's "unacknowledged legislators." However, as I will show through my analysis of the ironic formal qualities of *Tarr* and *The Good Soldier*, the re-establishment of artists to a place of social distinction conversely required on the part of the artists a masochistic effacement of self.

Chapter 2—"Conscience as an Artist:"

The Ethics of Sex in Lewis' *Tarr*

> It is not a grinning face we object to, but a face that is mean when it is serious and then takes to grinning like a duck takes to water. We must stop grinning. You may say that I do not practice what I preach. I do: for if you look closely at my grin you will perceive that it is a very logical and deliberate grimace.
>
> Wyndham Lewis

> The Joke is always about something else. "A joke [*esprit*] in fact entails such a subjective conditionality [...]: a joke is only what I accept as such," continues Freud, who knows what he is talking about.
>
> Jacques Lacan

It took Lewis nearly eight years to write his first novel. He completed the final draft of *Tarr* in March of 1916, and serialized it in *The Egoist* between 1916 and 1917 before its first publication in book form in 1918. What he produced as a result of his eight year project, however, was a novel that in several ways ironically reflects the turbulence of Lewis' life during the time of its composition. That *Tarr* was completed amongst a frenzy of illicit sexual trysts makes sense giving that the novel itself presents a sustained meditation on the artist figure's ideal relationship to sex. Also, *Tarr*'s completion during a period of heightened artistic productivity makes sense in that Lewis' first novel would prove seminal in later developments in his political, social, and artistic thought.

In his survey of Lewis' artistic career, Tom Normand suggests that an engagement with politics was the inevitable conclusion of Lewis' social and aesthetic vision—the "last twist in his spiraling vortex" (130). Lewis' gestures a turn towards politics as early as the 1915 preface for

the first edition of *Tarr*. Here, Lewis explains that he wrote *Tarr* in response to the failure of British cultural elites to effect an intellectual revolution powerful enough to liberate themselves from the *passé* conventions of modern social conformity. Writing at the outbreak of the war, Lewis found himself concerned with how "the commercial and military success of Prussia" has captured "the imagination of the English" (13). Writing his preface only months before leaving for the front, the patriotic and distinctly ant-German fervor of his writing suggests that his concern over Prussian influence is political as well as cultural. Thus, Lewis' art and military service go hand and hand—a cultural and martial defense of British sovereignty in Western Europe. Just as his participation in the war presented a actual defense of England's borders, he suggests that his pre-war writing presented a literary defense of the purity and singularity of British culture. Falling under the sway of an exotic foreign culture and temperament, according to Lewis, repressed the English people's potential to invest in the development of their own unique national creative project.

Moving from the public life of nations to the personal life of the educated individual, Lewis' preface explains how a cultic fascination with Nietzsche threatens the sanctimony of the individual British intellect. He suggests that, in one of those ironic cultural moments that only a mass commercial economy can initiate, "Nietzsche's gospel" (13) of volunteerist elitism has become a mechanism of conformity: his writings "have made an Overman of every energetic grocer in Europe" (13). Nietzsche's rhetoric of individualism has become a marketable commodity, a means of clustering the mimetic tendencies of the bourgeoisie into groups of conformist pseudo-revolutionaries: "the Paris apache, the Italian Futurist 'littérateur,' the Russian revolutionary" (13) to name a few. The possibility of a revolution inspired by and contained solely within English intellectual society finds itself overcome by commercial

sensibilities. Thus, Lewis' attitude implies that he does not think a revolutionary change in social relations possible through art and philosophy alone. He would later make this deficiency explicit in 1927 with *The Art of Being Ruled*, arguing that civil government must actively intervene in defense of its cultural elite to insure that the encroaching hegemony of modern society does not violate what should be its privileged position.

Rachael Potter places Lewis' post-war political writing within the group of English reactionaries who saw period between 1914 and 1918 as the transition between "individual liberalism" and "mass democracy" (5). She groups Lewis with Pound, Eliot, and H.D., as the frontline of a literary reaction to a civil government whose purpose, they thought, was to sedate the masses by providing for their material desires, instead of providing a legal framework designed to protect the individual's self-fulfillment through the pursuit of significant cultural achievements. However, we must qualify Lewis' resistance to mass democracy by clarifying that it wasn't the banal or uncultivated desires of the masses themselves that drew his contempt. In a comprehensive study of his political thought, G. D. Bridson claims that Lewis's goal was never to disparage the masses for their lack of interest in high cultural pursuits. "Where some prefer to study philosophy," Bridson writes, "others prefer to cultivate their gardens…. [t]he Roussophile's wistful vision of 'ballet every evening' is hardly calculated to appeal to [the masses]—nor did Lewis see any particular reason why it should" (56). The uneducated masses will peruse, in Lewis' estimation, what they desire to pursue, regardless of any judgment from the refined and intellectualized remnant of British society. When taken into account next to Lewis' disgust with the *bourgeoisies'* tendency towards mimesis, it almost appears as if he admired the masses for an authenticity his social class could not achieve. And in the opening pages of *BLAST I* he affirms the artist's need for the uniquely savage authenticity found among

the uneducated masses: “WE NEED THE UNCONCIOUSNESS OF HUMANITY—their stupidity, animalism and dreams” (8). This particular class contains a store of raw, vital material, the primal “dreams” of the working class, who the artists find themselves obliged and privileged to exploit.

Lewis took issue with mass democracy, then, not because it cultivated a mass idiocy he abhorred. His problem with mass democracy was instead that it wasted the energy and attention of government on the one thing that British society was guaranteed to do on its own. The “unconsciousness of humanity” will seek what they desire. They don’t need anyone’s help for that. This led Lewis, in *The Art of Being Ruled,* to ask a question that would set the tenor for his political thought: “Instead of the vast organization to exploit the weaknesses of the Many, should we not possess one for the exploitation of the intelligence of the Few?” (89). Governments should focus their attention on the cultivation of an elite group of specialists. Their goal should be to cultivate the scientific, artistic, philosophical and literary genius born within their borders, defending them from the natural and expected hostility of the rest of society.

Even though he confesses a feeling at the end of *The Art of Being Ruled* that “no logical future has taken pictorial shape” (413), Lewis does hint sporadically throughout that his vision entails the rise of a “caste” of intellectual elites whose form would look something like the synthesis of a modern “bureaucracy” and an ancient “priesthood” (156). As Bridson points out, the question with which Lewis would always grapple was how this bureaucratic priesthood would interact with the masses, and by extension, what kind of control they would have over them. In *Rude Assignment*, Lewis speaks vaguely about the notion of “a separation, limited in kind, between creative man and his backward fellow” (184). According to Bridson, this notion

was “bristled with difficulties” (59) both logistically and ethically, so Lewis spoke rarely of it in his political writings. However, our purpose here is to see if *Tarr’s* intimate portrait of the ideal social elite can speak in place of Lewis’ refusal to elaborate on this relationship.

Tarr has the ability to speak in absence of Lewis' voice as a political commentator because it its purpose is to, in short, place his ideal artist *within* the world of bourgeois absurdity he wished to satirize. This allowed Lewis to simultaneously criticize the intricate follies of bourgeois culture and to show what the artists’ attitude should be in relation to it. *Tarr* presents its reader with an intense meditation on the relationship between art and life. Its pages contain an elaborate network of ideas, spoken mainly through its titular hero, designed to delineate the specifics of this relationship. Moreover, the story itself reflects a narrative symmetry that allows a sort of economic stability to emerge between art and life. They are never completely autonomous, and the novel’s characters, from Kreisler’s desperate attempt to return form art back into life, to the absurdity of Tarr’s final half-triumph over both, are constantly transgressing the boundaries between the two. As a result, we get a very specific preview of how Lewis’ "limited separation" (51 Bridson) between the artist and the rest of society actually works.

If Lewis contends that the artist should hold a privileged position over society, then we must determine what kinds of ethical rights and responsibilities this privileged position implies. To his credit, Lewis adamantly insists that the ascendancy of authentic artists to a privileged position in culture ultimately benefits the culture as much or even more than it does the artist. In exchange for an unnatural and lonely isolation, the artist, “more than the prophet or the religious teacher” can “represent all that is unworldly in the world” (432 *The Art of Being Ruled*). This representation, he claims, is neither nether mystical nor spiritual, but simply a purview of “the

very stuff which all living (not mechanical) power is composed" (432 *The Art of Being Ruled*), the virile energy of life. Such a representation saves the modern subject form slipping listlessly back into the mechanized processes of modernity by reminding it that it is *more* than these processes. To find out how the artist makes this discovery and the separation needed to do so, we will first explore the relationship between art and life implied in the novel. Then, following Kreisler from art "back into sex," we will explore the novel's satiric elements with the goal of understanding how Lewis' criticisms of bourgeois culture place them relationally within his ideal social vision. Finally, we will use Tarr's attitude towards that culture to form an understanding of what, in Lewis' thought, the entitlements and ethical obligations artist should hold in relation to the rest society.

Possession and Indifference

Lewis builds *Tarr's* conceptual framework on a sustained tension between two competing attitudes he calls "possession" and "indifference." The novel's artistic "psudo-couple" (37 Jameson),[16] Tarr and Kreisler, find themselves faced with the dilemma of trying to live consciously as artists in the world by understanding the relationship between possession and indifference—which presents itself in the novel as their attempt to relate their sexual desires to their ambition as artists. Sexual experience, in *Tarr*, reads something similar to Bataille's notion of a "return to continuity." In Bataille's analysis of sexual experience, an organism focuses so

[16] In *Fables of Aggression*, Jameson claims that "the very element of Lewis' novelistic world" presents itself as a "violent *stichomythia*" between to advisories of "matched and abrasive consciousnesses" (37), which he calls the *pseudo-couple*, a paring based not on sympathy or identification, but competition for dominance. Thus, Jameson argues that Lewis "saw the privileged role" in this *agon* as "the essentially nonsocial one of artist or pure eye… longing for world stilled of the conflicts of the political and of political parties, conceived [by] some ultimate vision of the peace of divine and angelic indifference" (37).

much of its conscious energy on the stimulation that a particular set of sensations provide that reflexive self-awareness is reduced to a pre-conscious unity. This results in the "discontinuous self" experiencing a return to a singular "continuous" state of semiconscious unity. The term "discontinuous self," for Bataille, represents the ego able to distinguish itself from the physical body it inhabits. It is the conscious state that can point to its hand and say, for example, "this is not *me*, it is my hand, a part of me," a self alienated from its own being. Conversely, the "return to continuity," the return to thingness experienced through extreme pain or extreme sexual sensation, represents the momentary obliteration of this alienating ego. In such a state, reflection becomes impossible.[17]

The obsessive focus sex entails, thus, presents a threat to artists, who, in Lewis' estimation, must remain highly conscious of their experiences to render them artistically. Tarr breaks his engagement with Bertha when he determines that his attachment to her threatens his ambition as an artist. Love, Tarr realizes "is either *possession* or a possessive madness … the obsession of a personality" (72), "Possession," then, as the subject of Tarr's mistrust, represents the full and unremitting contact with the most virile forms of conscious experience at the expense of complete self-awareness. It is possession in a double sense— as the subject possesses the object of its desire and, in turn, the object effects emotional and sensual responses so powerful that it conversely takes possession of the apprehending subject. This possession

[17] Bataille Writes: "The transition form the normal state to that of erotic desire presupposes a *partial* dissolution of the person as he exists in the realm of discontinuity… In the process of dissolution [of discontinuous consciousness] the male generally has an active role, while the female partner is passive. The passive female side is essentially one that is dissolved into a separate entity. But for the male partner the dissolution of the passive partner means one thing only: it is paving the way for a fusion where both are mingled., attaining at length the same degree of dissolution. The whole business of eroticism is to destroy the self-contained character of the participators as they are in their normal lives" (17 *Erotism* italics mine).

muddles the clarity of Tarr's focus, provoking in him the fear that the self-satisfying pleasure of Bertha's sex could hold his artistic insight in arrest.

Lewis thus posits Kreisler as Tarr's double. Not as Tarr's direct opposite, that which opposes art, but instead a portrait of the dangers of possession to the artist. We see the semiconscious arrest Tarr fears directly embodied in "the unconscious" (191) Kreisler's obsession to "possess" the novel's female protagonists, Bertha Lunken and Anastasya Vasek. "Kreisler's one great optimism," Lewis tells us, "was a belief in the efficacy of women" (101). Women, for Kreisler, represent "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*" (101 italics mine). This metaphor ironically capitalizes on Kreisler's financial trouble (he has to get his dress "frac" out of pawn so he can attend the dance party where he intends to seduce Anastasya), to create a sense of continuity between his persistent financial woes and his failings as an artist. Kreisler has an unmistakably sentimental and escapist attitude towards sex. The emotions and sensations of the sex act, "the gold of the human heart," represent a fleeting but singular resolution to the antipathy of modern life. Thus, sex represents a means by which he can be "purged… periodically of the too violent accumulations of to desperate life" (102), by a retreat from self-awareness into the overwhelming swell of subjective experience.

The novel itself, however, becomes a sort of catalogue of this attitude's ultimate inadequacy. Kreisler's escapist use of sex fails because it presents a fleeting and illusory distortion of the reality of "indifference." In *Tarr,* the state of indifference simultaneously refers to a conscious state, the trademark of a true artist's temperament, *and* an objective reality. Thus,

both Tarr and Kreisler at different moments "enjoy" their "feeling of indifference" (49) and, at the same time, Lewis can assign to the world of the novel itself "an enormous indifference and ignorance flowing all round" (196). The artist's feeling of indifference looks something like Argol's revelation in "Enemy of the Stars" that "Men have a loathsome deformity called self" (71) which allows their solipsistic desires to delude their view of a word they naively think responds to those desires in either benevolent fulfillment or cruel withdrawal. Thus Argol finds that to be an artist means to "spoil [the] continuity of instinctive behavior" (74) by acknowledging objects in the world as they are, apart form the illusory emotions that subjective desire attaches to them. *Tarr's* world is one where artists apprehend reality by drawing up the thrall experience *out of* subjective consciousness. Object's are seen in-themselves when the artist's consciousness removes them from the currents of social convention and "personal" desire (this word, of course, always presenting a misnomer in Lewis' thought when used in relation to the *bourgeoisie*).

Thus, the "weakness" of Kreisler's frustrated sexuality perpetually draws him "back into the vortex" of subjective experience. To capitalize on the metaphor of a vortex, Lewis presents Kreisler as an inauthentic artist because he always inhabits the *center of his vortex*. He finds himself so focused on the virile energy of his own desire that he is unaware, unlike the authentic artist Tarr, of how life moves around him. Lewis shows us that this self-absorption presents a deadly (literally suicidal) narcissism from which the subject cannot recover. At the semiconscious center of his experience, Kreisler forms a pariah complex, thinking that the external world is not indifferent but malicious. This leads to his erratic behavior at the dance party, his challenge to and subsequent killing of Soltyk, and his suicide. Kreisler dies because he mistakes his chimerical and time-bound emotional life *for* the world it represents. He determines,

in another comic metaphor capitalizing on his money problems, that he and the universe have some sort of personal commerce, and that it has doomed him to die because their accounts are "settled" (164).

Tarr, however, realizes that his own indifference can facilitate a real aesthetic connection with the external world. At the end of the novel, he comes to the conclusion that art is "life with all the nonsense taken out of it" (298)—that it "is identical with the idea of the person … continuity and not an individual spasm" (299). This is because artists, in Tarr's estimation, "only see what is necessary to the eye," they "specialize in necessities" (298). Here, the Novel divorces "necessity" from its usual references— notions of physical substance or a binding logical relationship. Instead, Lewis' artist looks for that which presents itself necessary in an *ontological* sense, finding it, as Tarr says, in "a hippopotamus' armoured [*sic*] hide. A turtle's shell, feathers or machinery … *that* opposed to its naked pulsing and moving of the soft inside of life" (299). He searches for the "soul" of a thing, which he finds in the "lines and masses," only the things that the artist finds absolutely necessary for representing it. Only these lines and masses can save life from the "restless, quick flame-like ego" (300) of subjective experience.

Because he can make these distinctions, Tarr holds the place of true artist at the novel's end. Unlike Kreisler, who uses sex "to get out of Art back into Life again" (302), he realizes that the artist should expose himself to only those virile and naked moments of subjective experience necessary to understand the "lines and masses" of its soul. The artist must find his material in "the crude and unformed *bed*, the stupidity and formlessness" (236) necessary to understand life. Thus, "the birth of a work of art is as dirty as that of a baby" (236). Art depends on sex, but the artists' attitude towards subjective experience successfully engenders the creative act.

"From Art into Sex"

Relocating possession and indifference from individual consciousness to a wider social dynamic shows us that, within *Tarr*, the tension between subjective experience and self-reflection also determine the distinctions Lewis attempt to reinstate through his satirical attack on the *bourgeoisie*. In *The Art of Being Ruled*, Lewis argues that the corrosion of stable social order arises in response to "a certain type of energy" that "constantly carries men up into the ruling class" (155). An expanding ruling class did not present a problem in itself. More precisely, Lewis saw a problem with the sort of people who make their way to the top of a capitalist society: "a collection of personalities with no traditions, no intellectual training except such as is involved in speculation in stocks … no religious beliefs or any attachments to a wider system than that of the stock market" (155). This rootless and shallow group of social upstarts are Lewis' *bourgeoisie*—a rapacious band of semiconscious consumers who use Europe's newly emerging commodity industry to fabricate a sense of genuine culture.

Lewis deftly captures this shallow attempt to fabricate a culture and tradition through Tarr's repeated disgust with Bertha's *art deco* domestic sensibilities, or what Lewis calls her "Bourgeois-Bohemian interior" (52). Bertha adorns her apartment with the feeble accoutrements of mass-production:

> Green silk cloth and cushions of various vegetable and mineral shades covered everything, in mildewy [sic] blight. The cold, repulsive shades of islands of the dead, gigantic cypresses, grottos of teutonic nymphs, had invaded the dwelling. Purple metal and leather steadily dispensed with expensive objects. There was the plaster cast of Beethoven (some people who

> have frequented artistic circles get to dislike this face extremely), brass jars from Normandy, a photograph of Mona Lisa (Tarr hated the Mona Lisa). (52)

Much like his satirical paintings in the nineteen thirties (for example, his "Portrait of T.S. Eliot"), Lewis drapes Bertha's room in the decedent eclecticism of Europe's post-imperial fascination with the East, "the green silk cloth" and "various vegetable and mineral shades." These appear randomly juxtaposed with plastic replications of the achievements Western art, the several "islands of the dead" and "grottoes of teutonic nymphs." (Ironically, Lewis only a few paragraphs earlier describes Bertha as striking a "Dryad like" (52) pose, suggesting in light of her home decor that she has reduced her own sexuality to a consumable object). This juxtaposition suggests the corrosion of stable systems of aesthetic judgment. Art as a commodity, divorced from its historical and factual origins in a mass cultural phenomenon that resembles Bourdieu's idea of "genesis amnesia,"[18] threatens to level the distinctions between the significant cultural accomplishments of the past and the machine-like frenzy of the present. The members of the *bourgeoisie* disregard the relative strengths and weaknesses of past cultural accomplishment, so that the violent struggles of past artistic innovators against their time become ridiculously accessible without genuine appreciation of their origins. Lewis ends this passage with a subtle

[18] In his *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Bourdieu defines genesis amnesia as the result of "the objectivist apprehension, which, grabbing the product of history as an *opus operatum*… can only invoke the mysteries of pre-established harmony or the prodigies of conscious orchestration to account for what, apprehended in pure synchrony, appears as objective meaning" (79). Essentially, genesis amnesia is the phenomenon of mass forgetting, where the violence and trauma of class conflict does not account for the subject's apprehension of their social world, but the subject assumes falsely that "things are as they always have been." Richard Terdiman suggests that this effect can be tied back to the commodity industry when he writes that "in the modern period appears to reside not in perceiving consciousnesses but *in the material*: in the practices and institutions of social or psychic life, which function within us, but do nit seem to require either or participation or our allegiance" (34). From this assertion, we can see how the overwhelming mnemonic effect of perceiving the mass-produced simulacra of a single object over and over again could mystify its actual historical origins.

hint at the result of this phenomenon: those who "have frequent artistic circles" in Tarr's Paris "can get to dislike" Beethoven's face. The bourgeois temperament becomes so affected by the leveling power of commodity culture that the great achievements of German romanticism can be dismissed over the dislike of Beethoven's brooding scowl.

The odd thing about this scene, however, is that Tarr retreats from Berth's gross *art deco* by occupying himself with a commodity-producing device. Turning from Bertha's plastic home museum, Tarr "manufactures" cigarettes with "a little steel machine" (53) he keeps in his pocket. Paul O'keeffe notes that the schematics of this particular device greatly resemble Gaudier-Brzeska's bronze sculpture "torpedo Fish" (n.4 333). Also, Paul Edwards notes that Tarr twice tries to convince his acquaintances to give up art and "develop an interest in commerce" (36 *Tarr*),[19] like his failed attempt to convince Hobson to quit Paris and take a banking job in South Africa, or Butcher, whom Tarr has convinced to renounce art in exchange for success as a car salesman. We cannot simply write Lewis off as a Luddite. In *BLAST I*, Lewis blasts "ROUSSEAUISMS" and "wild nature cranks" (13) and later blesses "monotonous cranes," the "heavy chaos of wharves," and the "steep walls of factories" (23). He does not appear to be resistant to the machinery of the industrialized world. Even though he might not find himself willing to give art over to the laudation of industrial machines like his Futurist competitors, Lewis at least appears to think the technology of mass production a worthy site of aesthetic exploration.

[19] Edwards argues that Tarr encourages his friends to take up commerce because "the tendency of the novel as a whole is to stress the degree to which Bohemia is not so much an alternative to bourgeois society as an extension of it" (31). Thus we can see Tarr's apparent affinity for commercial culture not as an endorsement of the culture itself, but as a reaffirmation of artistic authenticity. Tarr's career advice to his friends act as a protection of the validity of his artistic project by replacing inauthentic artists in the social strata in which they belong.

To understand how Lewis could simultaneously value modern industry and find himself repulsed with its effect on the middle-class, we must locate an image of Tarr's world with a wider historical scope than the comfortable immediacy of Bertha Lunknen's apartment. Jameson notes how Lewis' machine like syntax gives his extended scene descriptions the ability to both render accurately a specific location and reflect the whole process of mechanized society.[20] We see this kind of performance in *Tarr* when Lewis describes the edacious rise of the café Lejeune, which:

> … [L]ike many others in Paris, had been originally a clean, tranquil little creamery … then one customer after another had become more gluttonous. He had asked, in addition to his daily glass of milk, for beefsteak and spinach, or some terrific nourishment, which the decent little business first supplied with timid protest. But perpetual scenes of sanguine voracity— weeks of compliance with the most brutal and unbridled appetites of man—gradually brought about a change in its character. It became frankly a place where the most carnivorous palate might be palled. As trade grew, the small business had burrowed backwards into the house—the victorious flood of commerce had burst through walls and partitions, flung down doors, discovered many dingy rooms in the interior it instantly filled with serried cohorts of eaters. It had driven out terrified families … and in the musty bowels of the house it had established a … roaring den, inhabited by a rushing and howling band of slatternly savages. (97)

[20] For my explanation of this phenomenon in Lewis' fiction, see page 12 of the introduction, and for Jameson's explanation found in *Fables of Aggression* see n. 5.

In this violent portrait of the café's expansion, Lewis offers a vision of industrial society's rise. This presents a direct indictment of bourgeois culture in the formation of the modern condition. The bizarre impersonality of the acting agents in the passage—the café itself reacts to the "carnivorous palate" and the "unbridled apatite of "cohorts of eaters"— suggests that industrial society rose as a result of mass desire. According to Lewis, the bourgeoisies' sudden rise to prominence, coupled with their rootless lack of discipline—its "sanguine voracity," has necessitated commodity culture in response to it collective desire. Here, Lewis meets the hard-at-work banker or industrious steel mogul with a terse but ultimately approving nod. It is the dilettante that provokes his wrath, the officious upstarts that convert their newly acquired wealth and free-time into their own machine-made *faux* culture. The machine-like quality of modern life has not robbed Europe of its individuals. The loss of individuality through mimetic desire has forced the machine into existence. The "victorious flood of commerce" with its "roaring den" and its "slatternly savages" presents itself as the result of mimetic desire, not the cause.

Lewis renders the end result of industrialization through Kreisler's flirtatious attempt to give Anystasa a "lesson" (98) on how to order from the café Lejune:

> 'Allow me to give you some idea of what the menu of the restaurant is like... at the head of each list you will find simple dishes, elemental dishes... this is the rough material from which the others are evolved. Each list is like an oriental dance, it gets wilder as it goes along. In the last dish you can be sure that potatoes will taste like tomatoes, and the pork like a sirloin of beef.' (98)

In this passage, Lewis gives us a distilled image of Western Europe's progression from provinciality, the "simple... elemental dishes" to decadence. Like in his description of Bertha's

apartment, Lewis again capitalizes on a dubious association between Eastern culture and a lack of discipline: the café's dishes are like "an oriental dance" getting "wilder" as they progress. Complexity, however, is not the issue. Lewis does not want to advocate nostalgia for provincial culture. In the last sentence, his subtle but effective use of the word "taste"— operating surreptitiously in the future tense— reveals a distain for an apparent *lack* of urbanity or refinement in what Lewis' contemporaries might think of as high culture. “Taste,” as a means of judging the aesthetic merits of artwork, becomes a misnomer. The *bourgeoisie* usurps the clear-thinking refinement of a cultivated aesthetic plate and replaces it with an artificial apatite that *conceals* its artificiality by conflating the distinction between art as an authentic endeavor and the mass produced commodity. Thus the values an individual develops to establish in relation to the rest of their culture becomes conflated: "the potatoes will taste like tomatoes, and the pork like a sirloin of beef."

This conflation of taste, the inability to distinguish personal values from mass trends, results in what Lewis calls in *The Art of Being Ruled* the "vulgarization of disgust," which manifests as "the natural insolence and desire for a feeling of superiority in those who are superior in nothing but money and the power it gives" (85). Individuality dissolves at this point. Bourgeois society transforms the development of a capable sense of aesthetic judgment into a matter of responding to appetite. Appetite, the desires of what Lewis would call the "wild body," respond to a herd instinct. As a result, the *bourgeoisie* develop only a semiconscious sense of their own individuality— they are conscious of themselves as individuals *per se* but are simultaneously ignorant of the fact that their sense of individuality finds itself engendered though a class trend.

As a social satire, *Tarr* seeks to faithfully represent the hypocrisy and absurdity of this *faux* sense of individuality. In the novel, Lewis conveniently designates his satirical targets the "Bourgeois Bohemians," capturing their hypocrisy in the idea that they present a class of people with enough wealth and social standing to buy their way into the Paris art scene and appear to live anti-materialistic lives dedicated to art. Lewis developed a special method for the fictional rendering of these people that he would later deem in *Men Without Art* (1934) "metaphysical satire." Within this system, the satirist devotes his energy to "the outside of people" so that "their shells or pelts, or the language of their body movements, come first" (118). The satirist must ignore interiority, viewing people with the "objective, non-emotional truth of scientific intelligence" (121). Unlike moral satire, which criticizes people by emphasizing the disparity between their professed intentions and their actions, metaphysical satire collapses both into a single continuity of external appearance. The satirist's attack shows people as they *are*, without showing any potential interior site of moral redemption through a change in character. Thus, Lewis deems his satire distinctly "non-moral" (104).

In *Tarr*, Lewis denies the "Bourgeois Bohemians" interiority by feminizing them. In much of his fiction, Lewis places the individual and the crowd in a gender binary. For example, in a short story published in *BLAST II* "The Crowd Master," Lewis writes that "the married man is the symbol of the crowd ... at the altar he embraces death" (94). When we take into consideration that Lewis' crowd is only semiconscious, the above image of the masculine husband embracing his own negation implies that the crowd presents a feminized receptacle for the loss of the individual's conciseness. The crowd is feminine to the true individual. In *The Art of Being Ruled*, Lewis insists that this gender dynamic has nothing to do with actual biological sex. However, there does exist places in Lewis' fiction where the femininity of the crowd appears

linked to physical sex, like the "Code of a Herdsmen" printed in *BLAST II* when he claims that the artist should "treat" women "kindly, for they suffer from the herd," while at the same time he warns that they are "of" (79) the heard as well.

We see this dynamic relationship between femininity and the herd instinct enacted in the "Bourgeois Bohemians'" feminine caucus after Kreisler's disastrous intrusion on the dance party. Here, these women (and one man) are *re*acting to Kreisler's behavior: "When one is attacked," Fräulein Lipmann says, "one doesn't spend time contemplating *why* one is attacked, but in defending oneself" (173 italics his). Lipmann's delicate and urbane substitution of the ambiguous "one" for the definite first person pronoun, coupled with her frank demand that the ladies avoid reflecting on the incident, implies a denial of self-assertion in favor of instinctual reaction. The crowd acts only in a defensive posture against the individual, and thus he (in this instance Kreisler) controls their movements. Lewis mirrors this reactive posture in the way he represents the ladies' deliberation. Usually a glutton for accentuating physical detail, Lewis navigates this scene through the selective isolation of disembodied physical organs and voices. Thus, he gives us the pack leader Lippmann as a pair of "eyes fixed on a tram near by," later manifesting as, "lips a little white with fatigue," and "shoulders with blank contemptuous indifference" (173). Voices other than Lipmann's manifest anonymously and without a definite location. The man in the group, Ekhart, provides a comically impotent parody of bourgeois chivalry by "moving rhythmically in his chair something like a steady rising sea" (173), his anger invoking a disastrously inappropriate simile implying a sort of picturesque tranquility. His self-assertion fails when the women silence him, insisting that revenge on Kreisler is "one of the occasions for a woman" (174).

This passage provides us with a good example of Lewis' satirical technique because, on the level of representation, it reflects many of his aesthetic concerns: a tension between form and chaos, fragmentation and wholeness, stasis and flux. The axis on which these ideas find themselves centered, however, *is* Lewis' critique of the "Bourgeois Bohemians." As the semiconscious class, these *bourgeoisies* can reflect on their own individuality, but are unaware that they define this individuality through a channel of mass desire. In the passage cited above, Lipmann's eyes, lips, and shoulders present fragments of an incomplete *individual* body, but since the group, as a body, is made of fragments, their isolation is the expression of an *altogether other whole.* The darkness out of which the ladies' disembodied voices come transforms into the surface that Lewis wants to represent. As individuals, the ladies are mere fragments, but they find themselves completed through Lewis' reinvention of their bodies and voices as a single surface. For Lewis, satire as a conversion of interior flux to surface re-invests a society of fragmented individuals with a sense of aesthetic completeness of which they have robbed themselves. Thus, Lewis' satire works as both social critique and an objective reconstruction of a fragmented bourgeois society.

Swearing off Humor

In a letter dated September of 1918, T. Sturge Moore told Lewis, after commending him for the accomplishment of his first novel, that he wished Fredric Tarr had been "more frankly you, or something more wholly distinct from his creator" (99). Lewis was unsure about Tarr's autobiographical implications as well. In his preface, he gives Tarr a "private and independent life of his own" of which he "would be very sorry to be held responsible" (15). Lewis, however,

undercuts his own attempt to distance himself from his protagonist. In a move that affirms Moore's accusation, Lewis' preface identifies for the reader distinct traces of his own thought in Fredric Tarr, admitting that he "associates [himself] with everything [Tarr] says on the subject of humour" (15). In the novel, Tarr's pledge to "swear off humor" because it "paralyzes the sense for reality" (43) trapping people "in a phlegmatic and hysterical dream-world" represents the artist's constant diligence against the slothful trappings of bourgeois subjectivity. Tarr's constant diligence against the trappings of humor thus presents the conscious habit of the ideal artist. Resistance to "humor" gives Tarr the ability to operate *apart* from the masses while at the same time immersing himself in life through sexual experience.

Tarr's own talk about humor ranges to the point that it requires a basis of comparison. As a satirist, Lewis himself employs humor, and he takes care in *Men Without Art* to distinguish his use of humor from that of the *bourgeoisie* by indentifying the perils of laughter:

> Laughter, humor and wit—has a function in relation to our tender consciousnesses; a function similar to of art. It is the preserver much more than the destroyer. And, in a sense, *everyone* should be laughed at or *no one* should be laughed at. It seems ultimately that is the alternative. (109)

Laughter that is not directed to the universal plight of humanity functions ultimately as a means of differing introspection. Lewis claims that “the laugh alone possesses the power of magnification” (109). The danger of laughter, then, presents itself as the subject’s ability to use laughter to magnify the absurdity of another, thus conversely shielding itself from the laugh’s power to reveal its own absurdity. In the preface to *Tarr,* Lewis’ token example for this deferral is “the worship (or craze, we call it) of Charlie Chaplin” which

he calls a “mad substitution” for reality (15), the laugh directed at another, designed to conceal the fundamental hilarity of the self.

We can compare Lewis’ insistence on the detrimental effects of evasive humor to Lacan’s notion of misrecognition. Lacan's commentary on the role of jokes in maintaining the chimerical "unity of the subject" (673) offers us a stable means through which we can read Tarr's musing on the "curse of humour" (243) among the English *bourgeoisie:*

> Hence the place of the "inner-said" [*inter-dit*], constituted by the "intra-said" [*intra-dit*] of a between-two-subjects, is the vary place at which the transparency of the classical subject divides, undergoing, as it does, the effects of fading that specify the Freudian subject due to its occultation as an even purer signifier; may these effects lead us to the frontiers where slips of the tongue and jokes become indistinguishable in their collusion ... that we are astonished the hunt for Dasein hasn't made any more of it. (678 *Écrits*)

Here, Lacan suggests that the act of joking presents the subject's desperate attempt to evade the kind of self-realization possible through the "intra said" of consciousness' turning in on itself. Joking functions as the ego's attempt to maintain continuity in the subject threatened by the introspection psychoanalysis demands. This bears a striking resemblance to Tarr's understanding of the purpose of "humour" within English society:

> 'With the training you get in England, how can you be expected to realize anything? The University of Humour that prevails everywhere in England as the national institution for developing youth, provides you with

> nothing but a first rate means of evading reality... Many of the results are excellent; it saves us from gush in so many cases; it is an excellent armour [sic] in times of crisis or misfortune ... but for the sake of this wonderful panacea— English Humor— we sacrifice much. It would be better to face our imagination and our nerves without this soporific.' (42)

Humor, For Lewis, works as a "first rate means of evading reality" at the cost of an honest confrontation between the subject and its "imagination" and "nerves." Both these passages implicate humor as a means of evading self-reflection. There remains, however, the question of whether or not Tarr, like Lacan's notion of the subversion of the subject, implies a model of consciousness that challenges the notion of the subject as a unified whole.

If, for Lewis, the unified self emerges from the evasive laughter directed towards another, then this conception of self is not authentic. The alternative mode of consciousness then presents itself as the subject turning in to laugh at itself *through satirical objectification*. Thus, we can infer that, for Lewis, authentic consciousness manifests through the act of self-distancing laughter. *The authentic self is the act of self-distancing*. We see Tarr effect his self distancing in the beginning of the novel, where a conversation with Hobson inspires him to examine his relationship with Bertha. Commenting on his attitude to sex, Tarr says “I laugh hoarsely through the thickness… People will begin to think that I am an alligator if they see me always swimming in their daily ooze. As far as sex is concerned, I am that” (27). In this self-deprecating image, Tarr maintains his elitist snobbery towards the rest of humanity, presenting himself as the indifferent thick skin of the alligator wallowing in the weak-minded messiness of human sexual relations. However, his image implicitly mocks his own self-importance, creating a necessary

distance between and the role he sees himself occupying in the world and his conscious awareness of that role.

How then, does Lewis formulate the artistic consciousness in a way that ensures its perpetual self-distancing? I argue that Lewis formulates his theory of artistic consciousness in an attempt to conjoin that which Alain Badiou calls "the anti-dialectics of … primordial duality," the "choice between formalization and destruction" which the artist can only resolve "*by means of formalization*" (110 italics his). Within the context of early modernist literary theory, this would look something like the radical juxtaposition of the Arnoldian and Paterian aesthetic doctrines, where the vitality and force of the Paterian sentence can be preserved by rigid formalization through the Arnoldian attitude of disinterestedness.[21] I contend that Lewis insisted on this juxtaposition of seemingly contradictory aesthetic doctrines as a result of his relationship with the philosophy of Henri Bergson. In his most important non-fiction work of literature, *Time and Western Man* (1927), Lewis implicates Bergson's "time obsessed flux" with the founding of "a sort of mystical time-cult" which he claims has "gained an undisputed ascendency in the modern world" (*xv*) since the end of the 19th century. This "time-cult" threatens the clarity of

[21] In the conclusion of *The Renaissance*, Walter Pater writes, "To such a tremulous wisp constantly re-forming itself on the stream, to a single sharp impression, with a sense in it, a relic more or less fleeting, of such moments gone by, what is real in our life finds itself down. It is with this movement, with the passage and dissolution of impressions, images, sensations, that analysis leaves off—that continual vanishing away, that strange, perpetual weaving and unweaving of ourselves" (236). Compare this to Arnold's aerations in *Culture and Anarchy*. In the first essay of *Culture and Anarchy*, Arnold defines culture as the pursuit of "perfection," emerging from "thorough disinterested study of human nature and human experiences… a harmonious expansion of all the powers which make the beauty and worth of human nature" (62), later defining disinterestedness as "the active use of reading, reflection, and observation. Pater calls for an aesthetic embrace of the impression, the impulse, the isolated and subjective moment of experience, whereas Arnold demands constant introspection and learned contextualizing. We can see Lewis trying to impart both these qualities in *Tarr* in the idea of "swagger sex" (311), the artist's self-conscious performance of impulsive virility that renders sexual experience as a formalized art object.

form in art by exalting the "subjective impulses of history and biography" over the "concrete" (*xv-xvi*) world of formal purity.

However, in spite of his resistance to the Bergsonian notion of "*dure*," *Tarr* displays Lewis' debt to the Bergsonian model of consciousness. In Bergsonain philosophy, the creative or inventive impulse arises from the dynamic tension of two conscious faculties. "*Instinct perfected*," Bergson writes, "*is a faculty of using and even constructing organized instruments*," whereas, "*intelligence perfected is the faculty of making and using unorganized instruments*" (83 italics his). The difference between these two faculties lies in the fact that instinct deals primarily with satisfying a desire in the organism, by reorganizing the external word into tools that make this desire attainable. Thus, "the instrument forms a part of a body that uses it" (82), and the organism cannot with instinct see that which it reorganizes as anything as an extension of its physical desire. Intelligence, however, "consists in an inflection of past experience in the direction of present experience" where the organism "tends toward an ideal" (81). Intelligence abstracts desire by removing it from the context of its arising and projecting its formal qualities onto a different situation. This, Bergson contends, "is the beginning of invention" (81). Creation presents itself as *the act of abstracting the organized means by which a desire is obtained.* Above all, Bergson emphasizes the dependence of the creative impulse on the dynamic tension between these two faculties. The intellect depends on instinct to "comprehend life" (88) and the instinct knows nothing outside of the present moment without the abstracting capability of the intellect.

From this, we can understand more clearly what Tarr means when he styles himself an "*Efficient Chimpanzee*" (303 italics his). His almost inhuman insight into the world of forms

stems not from a Rousseauian poeticizing of “wild nature” or putting it forth “as an ideal” (236). Instead, Tarr takes his insights from “expediency” (236) letting his instinctual need for sex (the impulses of the “Wild Body”) operate through him, unhindered by any conscious attempt to aestheticize it. Paradoxically, this surrender to sex allows his intellect to see the world more clearly when engaging it artistically. Here, Tarr successes seem to approach something like Nietzsche’s valorization of the “life affirming instinct," in that Tarr resists the temptation to flee from or disguise his sensual urges by making them something their not, namely something beatified. Instead, he accepts the formless chaos that they are, so that the duality between life and art can remain distinct while still allowing these separate spheres to interact. Thus, after his first night with Anastasya, Tarr announces himself “the new animal,” whose ability “will succeed the superman” (307) in its life-affirming abilities.

That Lewis basis his model of consciousness in Tarr from a system like Bergson's, where the act of creation rises as a result of the dynamic tension between two opposing forces, implies a possible challenge to the idea of a unified subject. During Tarr's first meeting with Bertha, Lewis gives us an image, a metaphorical comparison of Tarr and Betha's interiors, that suggests that the subject's constant subversion and dislocation lies at the center of the artist's emergence into and dominance over the world:

> A woman has in the middle of her a kernel, a sort of very substantial astral baby. This baby was apt to swell. She [Bertha] then became *all* baby. He [Tarr] was a mummy case, too. Only he contained nothing but innumerable other panted cases inside, smaller and smaller ones. The smallest was not a

> substantial astral baby, or live core, but a painting like the rest. = His kernel was a painting. That was as it should be! (58-59)

At the center of Bertha's self, Tarr sees an image that easily reminds us of Lacan's notion of the Real, the proto-lingual state of being that, after the subject finds itself structured through language, leaves that subject "a prisoner in the toils of the pleasure principal," something "primary" and "determinate in the function of repetition" (55-60 "Four Fundamental Concepts"). From a Lacanian Point of view, we can take Lewis' metaphor of Bertha as a baby quite literally. Behind the veil of Bertha's subjectivity lies the irrational dependency of a crying child, unable to actualize fully her independence from the pre-oedipal desire for the comfort of Tarr's consistency. Tarr, on the other hand, presents a quite different image. At his own core, Tarr sees himself as a *mise en abyme.* The center of his being presents an image of itself, which in turn presents an image of *itself*— and so forth. Each attempt to represent the core of his being operates self-reflexively. Each representation represents a representation, which is simultaneously a representation of itself in kind (they are all paintings) and in particular a representation of something else entirely (we are led to assume they are all different pictures).

In this image, the subject, Tarr's experience of *being-in-the-world,* fragments and looks back on itself in a transference that makes subjective experience an object for the self to contemplate. However, as the *myse en abyme* suggests, this self presents just another representation of self already objectified. Lacan, in developing a therapy of subject-subversion, claims that this kind of constant objectification of subjective experience provides a way of dismantling an ego which "masks it duplicity... in which the ego assures itself as an indisputable existence" (685 *Écrits*) through the creation of an ego-ideal. The problem with this ideal-ego for

Lacan is that it presents a fundamental misrecognition by acknowledging the self through the alienating mirror of the other, and then appropriating this mirror image as its own ego ideal. We can easily apply it to Lewis' critique of *bourgeois* desire. The bourgeois subjectivity realizes its individuality by unconsciously adopting the desires of its class and then touting them as its own. Thus, the *bourgeoisie* fail to create an authentic sense of individuality by accepting their subjective experience *as* reality. This, for Lewis, is the disastrous failure of humor— the inability to differentiate between their "phlegmatic and hysterical dream-world" and the real world.

In the language of its historical context, the artist's consciousness avoids the trappings of subjectivity by constantly objectifying instinct at the moment it arises, transforming it into a solid surface with the "objective, non-emotional truth of scientific intelligence." Metaphysical satire, then, functions not as a mere artistic technique but as a mode of consciousness. Tarr himself commits the look at the world "inhumanly" (43), thus perpetually effecting the turn from subjective interior to objective surface Lewis promises in his preface: "If you look closely at my grin you will perceive that it is a very logical and deliberate grimace" (15). In the satirist's eye, the ephemeral gush of emotion of a grin becomes the repulsion of the oppositional grimace. To the artist, the depths of subjective experience— sexual desire, hatred, sympathy— present a glaring surface of absurd falsity. The artist takes these experiences, and through a paradoxical transformation, asserts his individuality by taking an antagonistic stance to them. He (Lewis would demand the masculine pronoun) makes the world around him his own *by opposing himself to it*. This presents us with, playing on the ambiguity of Lewis' syntax, the idea of "conscience as an artist." The artist, in Lewis' social vision, receives an ethical license to objectify those subjective impulses around which the currents of social relations are structure within a society— to re-appropriate subjective experience as the lines and masses of art.

Our reading of Tarr reveals several critical implications concerning Lewis' ideal artist—especially concerning his idea of "limited separation" between the artist and the masses. The best satire, in Lewis' estimation, is "non-moral," but then what does the purpose of satire present itself as? What function would the artist ultimately have in Lewis' ideal society? To answer these questions, we must turn *from* the world Lewis presents us in *Tarr to* a look at his relationship with it. As author, Lewis' creation of the self-as-self-distancing in *Tarr* forms a dialectical move from antagonist, to protagonist, to author. Kreisler presents the inauthentic vortex, an on-rush of virile energy that prevents self-deferral. He is sex without art. Tarr, however, attempts self-distancing but finds himself trapped at the end of the novel in "a moral tale told on behalf of Bertha" (305), admitting through his marriage and claiming Kreisler's child as his that he is somehow dependent on Bertha. His final position within the novel is an absurd one, and he is forced to oscillate back and forth between sex and art, between Bertha and Anastasya, Rose Fawcett and Prism Dirkes. His final solution for mitigating art and sex itself becomes a kind of dependency on the other, a weakness. If Kreisler is the negation of artistic consciousness presenting itself as the true artist, Tarr, then, is the artistic consciousness only half-formed but still unable to effect complete self-distancing. The final step in Tarr's dialectical move towards the authentic artist would be Lewis himself. Thus we see the hierarchical relation between the artist and the masses emerge through the artist negating his subject, the refusing of identification that makes up sympathetic understanding.

We must, however, avoid labeling Lewis' refusal to sympathize as a self-satisfied egoism. His ironic re-posturing of his own authorial position in *Tarr* is not self-affirmation in a normal sense. Lewis does not complete his dialectic by refusing others, but by refusing his own feelings for them as an essentially narcissistic subjective experience. He denies not others, but

him self. Artists' triumph over the world, then, presents itself as a triumph over self, through the masochism of objectification, distance and alienation from the self's own feelings and desires as punishment for receiving the mantle of artistic insight.

Chapter 3— "Some picture that I have seen somewhere:"

History and the Great Figure in Ford's *The Good Soldier*

> If, therefore, Individuality is erroneously supposed to be rooted in the particularity of nature and character, then in the actual world there are no individualities and no characters, but everyone is like everyone else; but the presumed individuality really only exists in someone's mind, an imaginary existence which has no abiding place in this world, where only that which externalizes itself, and, therefore, only the universal, obtains an actual existence.
>
> G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit C. (BB.) Spirit*

> So I shall imagine myself for a fortnight or so at one side of a fireplace of a country cottage, with a sympathetic soul opposite me.
>
> John Dowell

In a review of Ford's three volume travel tome *The Great Trade Route* (1937), Graham Greene writes that Ford escaped the chaos and urbanity of the "big individual capitalist and the small communist cog" by styling himself the "small producer" (161). Ford would ideally, Greene goes on to say, "have every man a part time agriculturalist, because such a man is free in a sense unrecognized by either the Fascist or Communist, free from the state ideal" (161). Here, Greene offers us a portrait of Ford as a man in retreat—in retreat from industry, from the growing power of the state and the bizarrely unorthodox ideologies that lie behind its growing power. While Greene's comments seem to fairly represent the Ford of the twenties and the thirties, Ford's writings before the war had shown no intentions of backing down from the communist activist, the capitalist giant, or the unruly state. In the midst of a barrage of pre-war and wartime radical social commentary, including three political satires, essays of social criticism published in the *English Review*, and a book of war propaganda, Ford composed and published *The Good*

Soldier (1915), by far one of his most private works, an intimate exploration of individual consciousness.

However, we find *The Good Soldier's* publication placed only three years after Ford's most explicitly political work. Published in 1911, *The Critical Attitude* explains, from a historical and sociological point of view, why a "disease of thoughtlessness" has taken a hold of the English people in its author's time. In the *Critical Attitude*, Ford laments the passing of "the great figure," who in England's past possessed the "literary consciousness" (33), a state of mind bequeathed with the ability to effect "the bringing of humanity into contact, person with person" (23). Here, he speaks of the novelist, a figure that who's importance, he maintains, the social conditions English of modern English life have progressively undermined. In modern England, novelists find themselves replaced by the "specialist" (22), a cultural figure that expresses society's obsessive materialism, a fact made clear to Ford through the shift in the English academy's pedagogical strategy from "the marshaling and the analysis of facts" to the "instruction that merely teaches their collection" (22). This trend signifies an object fetishism that severely obstructs the critical placement of value onto any aspect of English life. Thus, English society compartmentalizes knowledge into atomized sects that value the collection of information over the consideration of that information's value to the individual.

These atomized sects, of course, are the ruling spheres of the specialists. In *The Critical Attitude*, Ford accuses science, politics, education, and the arts of surrendering themselves to the specialist. However, he seems especially concerned with criticizing the historian for transforming England's historical consciousness into a glut of facts and

figures. This is due to the fact that he sees the social function of the historian as that he most comparable to the novelist, the waning great figure of English society. “It is almost impossible…” Ford writes, “to name any historical work of late that has an educational, as opposed to instructional, weight … because the writing of such works have fallen into the hands of the schoolmaster or the specialist” (22).

This connection between historical writing and novelistic concerns seems more reticent in light of the fat that Ford had, four years before composing the *Critical Attitude*, completed his impressionist sociological survey of the English people called *England and the English* (1907), a work in which he seeks to discover the “Historic Spirit” of England by uniting the “groups of facts, groups of maps, [and] groups of engravings” to tease out “a great English Theory” (257). Here, Ford uses an early version of his impressionist technique to subsume the factual evidence of English history into a totalized understanding of the English consciousness at present. In her critical appraisal of *England and the English*, Harriet Y. Cooper suggests that Ford’s history stood as both an early pronouncement of his conviction that “the novelist should stand as the historian of his time” with the obverse implication that “the historian should have a novelist’s talents—insight into character and a focused seasoned vision” (191). At the foundation of Ford’s social theories of literature, which he would strive to perfect later in *The English Novel* (1929) and his last work *The March of Literature* (1938), stands the idea that novelistic writing and historical writing are inextricably linked through the conscious efforts required to produce them.

Ford's concern with the relationship between fiction and England's collective historical memory is an essentially Hegelian concern. Even though Ford denounces him as a typical Prussian warmonger[22] in his first book of wartime propaganda, *Between St. Dennis and St. George* (1915), Hegel's insistence that historical knowledge come from an unmediated synthesis of subjective experience and objective truth holds a profound influence on Ford's thought. Ford understood that the problem with specialized knowledge was that it restrained the emergence of an all encompassing historical perspective. "Today," he writes, "we produce not so many great lives as an infinite flicker of small vitalities" (66). He attributes this lack of greatness to an obsession with specificity that restrains English minds from creating "a historic sense," through the encouragement of a study of "A meticulous knowledge of a small period" (22). This specification alienates historical knowledge from the subject by fragmenting it into incommensurable departments.

Novelists, however, deal with what Ford calls the creation of "atmospheres" which manifest as "the appearance of natural objects and the utterance of thoughts not immediately appreciable by hurried minds" (32). A "hurried mind," in Ford's critical lexicon, stands for a mind fragmented and isolated by specialized knowledge. The novelist, by rendering "not facts," but "the value of his temperament" (23) rejoins the subject to historical knowledge by offering it a view of life unmediated by specialist

[22] In *Between St. Dennis and St. George*, Ford writes, "whether it be Wagner, Nietzsche, Kant, or Hegel—every one of these Teutonically [sic] eminent has accepted war as a part of a theory of state about which they find it necessary to write" (33). Later, Ford cites Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* (1820) as evidence for this designation, claiming that Hegel believes that "the waging of war is the first object of state," and that the German philosopher praises war "on moral grounds" (259).

categories—a frank expression of the totality of lived experience engendered through the English historical temperament. Thus, as he notes in his 1924 remembrance of Joseph Conrad, "the general effect of a novel must be the general effect life makes on mankind" (180 "Joseph Conrad"), a reflection of reality unmediated by hierarchies of knowledge or objectified facts.

In spite of the fact that Ford, in his characteristic elusiveness, dismisses the passing of the great figure as "not in itself a thing to be wholly lamented" (45), he does insist that the great figures return would reverse many of the ills he extrapolates on in *The Critical Attitude*:

> The appearance of a great body of imaginative effort, the work of authors single minded in their effort to express, and felicitous and successful in expressing, in imaginative terms, all that is most real, most permanent, and most fugitive in life around us—the appearance of such… would have to be regarded as an event *at least as important in the history of civilization as the recording of the will of a sovereign people*… and the nearer [this imaginative effort] comes to registering the truth… the nearer it comes to being a historic event itself. (15 italics mine)

The idea that novelists' "imaginative effort" equates to the "recording of the will of a sovereign people" suggests that the act of novel writing carries with it a historical and social capability that the absence of, in Ford's estimation, would be detrimental to not only writers and artists but the people who they are charged to represent. However, as Ann Barr Snitow notes, the problem with Ford's argument in *The Critical Attitude* is

that it "pretends to discuss causes and effects, but causes recede into a realm of vagueness while effects loom large and most of Ford's rushing energy is lavished on their description" (132). Ford's wild and often undecipherable associative thinking often leaves the reader unsure of what exact social trends or historical phenomena he wants to see reversed. Several hints are made towards the displacement of artists in culture, commercial trends threatening the truth or integrity of art, and shifting popular demands that value fanciful entertainment over critical introspection. But what, at the center of English society, causes these destabilizing effects? Why is the novel and the novelist in danger? To answer these questions, I turn to the deft and often self-conscious aesthetics of *The Good Soldier*.

The Flagging Novelist

Recently, there have been a handful of critical attempts to suggest that, bound up within Ford's construction of *The Good Soldier*, rest a series of artistic commentaries. Particularly, Jeffry Mathes McCarthy and Damon Marcel DeCoste have engaged in a debate over how some of Dowell's comments about painting and aesthetics could be read to shed new light into Ford's often murky and ill defined feelings towards Vorticist aesthetic theories.[23] Even though this exchange doesn't apply directly to my project, it

[23] McCarthy and DeCoste's debate is worth noting even though it doesn't interest my study directly. Both critics seem to agree that The Good Soldier expresses some kind of critical and aesthetic commentary on the Vorticist movement. However, they disagree in what exactly Ford is saying. In his reading of *The Good Soldier* , McCarthy claims that Dowell's stance as both narrator and cohort in the action he narrates expresses Ford's "optimism that modernism is the way for people to first understand the challenges of their social moment and then bond in a common understanding" (333). DeCoste, in response, suggests that it is exactly "Dowell's pursuit of an Imagistic art and life" (113) through his telling of the story that prevents successful narration, and thus we should read the

does show a general critical interest in the idea that we can read Dowell's struggle to narrate *The Good Soldier* as a commentary on novel writing as an aesthetic practice. We might even go so far as to read Dowell as a figure for the modern novelist—to suggest that Dowell's aesthetic practices might have some baring on our understanding of the great figure's role in Ford's ideal society.

Ford wrote in his 1927 dedicatory letter to his wife Stella that he has always "been mad about writing" and that he has "to this date made exhaustive studies into how words should be handled and novels constructed" (*xx*). He then claims The *Good Soldier* as a result of these studies. The way past critics have understood these studies might explain why the idea of Dowell as a figure for the modern novelist has only recently come into conversation. Famously, Richard Cassell attributes Ford's stylistic genius to his ability to undercut Dowell's choppy and inconsistent (although often times eloquent) storytelling with his own highly calibrated and carefully selected series of images and impressions, creating what Cassell calls the novel's *"progression d'effet"* (176).[24] This method of understanding *The Good Soldier's* structure, however useful it might be for explaining the

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novel as "a work of cautionary and prescient insight, identifying at the moment of high modernism's first coalescence the antihumanist impulses that align it disastrously with the hierarchies of the past and the forces of political reaction" (117). For reasons I am about to elucidate, my reading tends to correlate with McCarthy's understanding of the novel's relationship to pre-war modernism.

[24] Cassell writes that Ford's "device of memoirs written by a rambling narrator is a ruse. With its dislocations in time and its free movements between reporting, evaluating, and questioning, it is a method to conceal art… Naturally, Ford treated time as an aesthetic, rather than a philosophical, principal, and more and more in his work he sees the time shift as an artificial structuring device … to offer the juxtaposition of temperaments, meanings, and metaphors, and to develop a *progression d'effet*" (176). It's difficult to deny a larger, more artificial ordering principal behind Dowell's botched storytelling, and it is not my intention to do so. However , I do criticize the implications of Cassell's use of the term "conceal" to describe the relationship between Dowell's conscious arrangement of the tale and Ford's larger designs because it implies that Dowell's own aesthetic sensibilities are designed antithetically to Ford's, as a distraction from his larger structural scheme.

intricate relationship between Ford and his narrator, implies that Dowell's conscious attempt and subsequent failures to reconstruct a the Ashburnham tragedy serve as a foil for the success of Ford's own artifice. Thus, readers assume that Ford's relationship to Dowell in the text constitutes a purely negative irony—that, for Dowell, conscious attempts to at successful narration fail, but his unconscious slips and foibles create opportunity for Ford to intervene in constructing a design larger than Dowell's paltry ambitions can convey.

But framing Ford and Dowell's relationship as one between artist and foil marginalizes the fact that Dowell has aesthetic sensibilities of his own. Dowell's many reflexive meta-commentaries on his own storytelling contain, in their own way, elements of Ford's own "exhaustive studies" on writing. In "On Impressionism" Ford suggests that his theory of fiction rests on the tension between perception and memory. These two elements of consciousness form, for Ford, the elemental matter of fictional art. The consciousness that is simultaneously aware through sensory impressions of its present being-in-the-word and its past must learn to negotiate between the two when it constructs a narrative. Thus, the goal of the literary impressionist is to:

> Render those queer effects of real life that are like so many views seen through a bright glass—through a glass so bright that whilst you perceive a landscape or a backyard you are aware that, on its surface, it reflects the face of a person behind you. For the whole of life is really like that; we are almost always in one place with our minds somewhere quite other. (41)

Ford calls this process rendering the effects of "superimposed emotions" (41). Like Eliot's "mixing memory and desire," the impressionist must present the "objective" truth of a

moment *through* the endless chain of memories and associations it conjures. The opening passages of *The Good Soldier* suggest that Dowell shares Ford's challenge. Unlike Conrad's localized an anonymous narrator observing Marlow's storytelling process in *Heart of Darkness* (1899), or the psychological introspection of a dislocated narrator in James' *Portrait of a Lady* (1881), Ford situates his reader within Dowell's consciousness, isolated from any objective standpoint from which the reader can judge the truth or relevance of Dowell's claims. But in exchange for objective truth, Ford offers us an intimate meta-fictional portrait of a story coming into being.

From this standpoint, Ford allows us to witness Dowell's confrontation with the impressionist struggle between the present and the past:

> Permanence? Stability! I can't believe it's all gone… Upon my word our intimacy was like a minuet, simply because on every possible occasion and in every possible circumstance we knew where to go, where to sit, which table to choose; and we could rise and go, all of us together, without any signal form any one of us, always to the music of the Kur orchestra. (8)

Dowell's relationship with the Ashburnhams conformed to the tranquil ascendancy of high art, a harmonious dance of mutual desire and understanding. But in a sudden turn it transforms itself into "a prison full of screaming hysterics" (9). We soon learn that the stability of Dowell's married life was undermined by his wife and best friend's betrayal of his sacred trust. "Permanence" then transforms itself from a mourned loss into a sneeringly painful reality. Dowell finds himself aware of both the memory of his past harmony and the present realization of its falsity. Thus, he asks: "If for nine years

I have possessed a goodly apple and discover that it is rotten to the core and discover its rottenness only in nine years and six months less four days, isn't it true to say that for nine years I possessed a goodly apple?" (9). His question strikes right at the heart of objective truth: what is the reality of his story, the impressions of his experience, or what he now knows about those impressions? Both seem equally valid, but he must choose one, or at least come to an understanding through the narration of his story how one became the other.

Thus, Dowell must resolve the tension between tranquil memory and traumatic realization. To accomplish this, he employs the aesthetic tools of the novelist. We should remind ourselves of Susan Sontag's injunction that literary style functions as "a mnemonic device" designed to "preserve the works of the mind against oblivion" (34-35). So many essential features of literary style ultimately depend on repetition, symmetry, and contrast—the tools of memory. Dowell's failures as a storyteller stem from his tendency to obsess over meaningless details, usually located in quantifiable objects or actions. In Nauheim, he recalls the landscape of the spa by counting his steps:

> From the hotel Regina you took one hundred and eighty-seven paces, then, turning sharp, left handed, four hundred and twenty took you straight down to the fountain. From Englischer Hof, starting on the sidewalk, it was ninety-seven paces and the same four hundred and twenty, but turning right-handed this time. (24)

Dowell's obsessive counting offers him a refuge from the loneliness of his life as a nursemaid. However, the same kind of obsession pervades his storytelling, and he often

fails to account for important events because he finds himself overly engaged with the impressions of a single personality. By the end of the novel, he wearily complains that "it is so difficult to keep these people going. I tell you about Leonora and bring her up to date; then about Edward, who has fallen behind. And then the girl gets hopelessly left behind" (241-42).

The juxtaposition of Dowell's step counting at Nauheim and his complaints about "keeping all [his character's] going" reveals a tendency to repress the painful moral ambiguity of his story through focused obsession. As the step counting image suggests, Dowell struggles to tell a coherent story because he often fails to look up from his momentary obsession and view his surroundings. This means of coping with the trauma of the Ashburnham tragedy, however, finds itself contrasted with a markedly different psychic refuge. As Miriam Bailin suggests, the aesthetic pleasure of literary style often solidifies moments of uncharacteristic coherence and tranquility for the rattled Dowell. Bailin writes, "when the comforting 'minuet' of Dowell's association with the Ashburnhams falls apart under the pressure of private needs and desires … he seeks the 'discreet shelter' of his own aesthetic conventions" (70). Ford's narrator possesses his own private arsenal of aesthetic techniques to mediate the struggle between rememoration and repression. Bailin goes on to note that Dowell can, "distance himself from the disturbing implications of the story he feels impelled to record both by providing himself with a refuge in his self-designated role as detached narrator and by variously containing and displacing in numerous aesthetic frameworks the emotional and moral quandaries with which he wrestles" (70). Our interest here lies with the larger social and historical implications of aesthetics as a mechanism for coping with trauma, with symmetry and a

sense of completion as a superior means of escape from moral and emotional ambiguity than brute repression.

In the opening pages of *The Good Soldier*, Dowell carefully constructs an aesthetic refuge from the trauma of his experiences. He admits that his initial framework for narrating his story is a complete fantasy:

> I shall imagine myself for a fortnight or so at one side of the fireplace of a country cottage, with a sympathetic soul opposite me. And I shall go on talking, in a low voice while the sea sounds in the distance and overhead the great black flood of wind polishes the bright stars. From time to time we shall get up and go to the door and look out at the great moon and say: "Why, it is nearly bright as in Provence!" (15)

Dowell's fantasy of authorial displacement presents us with a metaphor for the ideal stance of the great figure in society. The Great Figure's engagement with the world is paradoxically private; Dowell talks "in a low voice" to a "sympathetic soul." Therefore, Ford's ideal novelist experiences the uncontrollable forces of nature and history from a standpoint of simultaneous awareness and removal. The "sea sounds in the distance" and he is unscathed by the "great black flood of wind" allowing its force to interact with the rest of the world in a moment of apparent aesthetic harmony "polish[ing] the bright stars." Thus, from a point of candid shelter, the great figure can understand the world as a totality that subsumes the chaos of individual moments.

The larger historical and cultural implications of this passage might seem counter-intuitive to the highly personal candor of Dowell's story. However, in a novel that, according to Frank Kermode, manages its epistemological complexity through the carful use of equivocation,[25] Dowell himself equivocates between personal and social history when talking about the purpose of his writing: "Someone has said that the death of a mouse from cancer is the whole sack of Rome by the Goths" (7). Like Ford, Dowell's understands history in Hegelian terms. Consciousness repels itself from itself in a constant dialectical turn outward, from private consciousness, to social awareness, finally to a totalizing historical consciousness. For Ford, it is literature— the private self's outward turn towards reimagining the world through writing— that guides this historical process from solipsism to social consciousness.

In *The March of Literature*, Ford suggests that literary art provides an "an imaginative culture necessary for all civilizations" (10) and in his assessment of the *Aneid,* which Virgil candidly wrote "to give pleasure to a splendid friend" (216), he claims that the poem provided the Romans relief from "a commonly received ancestry—which was that of robbers and outlaws" (215) by reimagining their collective history with the more noble idea that they were descended from survivors fleeing the destruction of Troy. In a similar vein, *Ancient Lights* (1911) argues that France's political instability in the

[25] Kermode argues that Dowell's intentionally deceptive use of the words "heart" and "know" as his two major terms creates an "absence of simple complicity, of a truth vouched-for and certainly known" (111). This equivocal use of central terms is reflected in the presiding structure of the novel, denying readers "a hermeneutic series that ends in a discovered truth" (111). Thus, Kermode concludes that, with The Good Soldier, "we are in a word where it needs to be said *not* that plural readings are possible (for this is true of all narrative) but that the *Illusion of the single right reading is possible no longer*" (111 italics his). Kermode's idea of the text-as-object's complete destabilization as a structural principal is interesting in its own right. However, we can use it here to challenge the hermeneutic boundaries of the text by re-stabilizing it in another possible field of meanings using Ford's critical prose.

ninetheenth century could have been corrected, and the Franco-Prussian war avoided, had more of the French read Flaubert's *L'Education Sentimentale.* He claims that the chaos of "governments [falling] at the shaking of the head of a purely selfish bourgeoisie" could have been reordered by the "morals that [Flaubert's] facts would have pointed out to the French people had they read his book" (184). In an almost exact reversal of Jameson's thesis of the role of literature in the formation of ideology,[26] Ford thought literature provided a social identity that could paradoxically unite a people and raise them up into a level of individual consciousness that allows them to criticize their society from a historical perspective.

"Why are you all in the dark?"

Dowell's aesthetic framework for his story, then, presents the writer's attempt to provide for the modern world with the "imaginative culture" that the great figures of the past provided for theirs. At the same time, however, we see him searching for the same ability in others, the evidence of a fundamental insecurity that suggests that the world which Dowell inhabits is one that refuses its own imaginative introspection. In *The Critical*

[26] Here, I'm referring to Jameson's now famous pronouncement, found in *The Political Unconscious,* that "History is what hurts, it is what refuses desire and sets inexorable limits on limits to individual as well as collective praxis" (102). History is the trauma of inequality, marginalization, and class conflict that appears cyclical and insurmountable. Narrative then, for Jameson, is "the radical restructuration of inert material… in the form of Necessity: why what happened… had to happen the way it did" (101). Thus narrative as a socially symbolic act works to bequeath a sense of historical necessity to the trauma of social and political violence, but it also reinforces class relations by framing them as a teleological necessity to the development of order and social cohesion. Ford's thought differs from Jameson in its idealism. "The imaginative community" literature creates *is* the reality created as an absolute manifestation of a people's identity, and the violent trauma of life without this narrative act is a symptom of a lack of cultural development.

Attitude, Ford writes that the introspective critic's success in English society is, at best, short lived: "He lives if he has a chance, suspected, dreaded… then he disappears. He is covered with the wax of oblivion" (2). Later, in the conclusion of *The March of Literature*, Ford admits that great figures' success depends on the acceptance of the culture for which they write. These figures reflect the spirit of their age "because the people of the earth demand nothing else… and what the Master shall command the hand of the slave shall contrive" (850). Here, the novelists' agency as a creator and arbiter of culture finds itself engendered through the public's reception of their art. Literature can only create a culture if the people for whom the novelist writes recognizes its power to do so.

The English Novel provides a more specific historical indicator as to why Ford thought pre-war England shunned it great figures. In his assessment of the modern novel, Ford suggests that, after the disappearance of Wilde and the end of the "*Yellow Book* period" (142), the English *bourgeoisie* could not develop a novelistic voice of their own. The greatest Edwardian writer, in Ford's estimation, H. G. Wells produced myopic visions of a distant and utopian future that could not speak directly to England's present. The other three novelistic voices of this period, Henry James, Stephen Crane, and Joseph Conrad wrote from an outsider's perspective, and only James examined English life directly. Even though, as Ford says, the people of England still thought that "the novel was a vehicle by means of which every kind of psychological or scientific truth connected with the human life and affairs could be very fittingly conveyed" (142), he suggests that the *bourgeoisie* find themselves unwilling to offer up one of their own minds to explore how these truths connect to them.

Thus, Dowell's naiveté as a puritan outsider charged with the tasks of "sound[ing] the depths of the English heart" (5) presents an incandescent view into the reasons why the English *bourgeoisie* refuse to submit their way of life to the novelist's scrutiny. Robert Green suggests that Dowell's dual perspective, his position as both narrator *of* and participant *in* the story he tries to tell, reflects Ford's own feeling of living in a culture "from which he was alienated by both birth and class" (81), but that he was inextricably attached to through the development of his identity as an author. As the son of a poor German printmaker who has established himself among the *bourgeoisie,* Ford's task of satirizing the English's narcissistic refusal for introspection and the moral chaos that results from it necessitates a narrator like Dowell. From Dowell's pure and unassuming insights into the people he seeks to represent, we receive an understanding of the narcissism that the laborious social conventions of England's middle-class desperately try to conceal. At the same time, however, through Dowell's emotional and physical proximity to the story and its effect on his ability to recount it, Ford offers an understanding of how the material conditions and social practices of English life fight against novelistic representation.

Like in *Tarr,* I argue that Ford sees the rise of commodity culture as the determining factor in bourgeois narcissism. However, unlike Lewis, Ford was not so much concerned with how commodity culture created inauthentic individual tastes by directing currents of mass desire towards commodified art objects. Instead, Ford was more concerned with how the *bourgeoisie's* used the commodity object to create an inauthentic sense of self-empowerment that keeps individuals from acknowledging certain hypocritical psychic divisions between public action and private desire. *The Critical Attitude* complains

of a “flaccid and self satisfied commercialism” (11) that deadens the moral sense of the English *bourgeoisie*. In *The Good Soldier*, characters use commodities to engender a semiconscious sense of control over their identities as they unconsciously allow their desires to wreak havoc on their emotional lives.

Sara Haslam suggests that *The Good Soldier’s* dramatic energy relies on Ford animating his characters “with proportions of masculinity and femininity, of libidinous capacity, that will cause a massive implosion once all is known” (55). Ford implicitly makes Haslam’s “shifting systems of psychological and sexual knowledge” (55) apparent in the novel. Florence, for example, asserts a more typically masculine attitude in cuckolding Dowell and initiating an affair with Edward. Leonora, in response to her husband’s careless passions, begins to manage their estate’s finances and the socially devastating aftermath of his affairs. Dowell, conversely, determines himself a “eunuch” (14) while his implied double Edward, the “raging stallion” (14) asserts a maternal affection for “all children, puppies and the feeble generally” (30).

However, at the same time, each one of the characters, save possibly Dowell, asserts some kind of gender-typical behavior at one point or another. As Haslam suggests, the tension created by these shifting roles finds itself slowly accentuated by Dowell’s coming to knowledge of their tenuous instability churning and raging behind public *façade:* “with each new experience comes a concommitment development in the character, an increase of knowledge” (57). Dowell gains mastery over his tale (even though he still struggles expressing it) by slowly accumulating knowledge of the breakdown in clear gender divisions that the other characters’ actions initiate. Moreover, his small victories

represent an emerging understanding of other characters' libidinal energies that supersede their own self-knowing.

Thus, in a moment of brilliant irony, Dowell narrates the moment when Nancy walks in on Edward and Leonora's silent attempts to resolve the betrayal of Edward's affairs, the shocking deaths of Florence and Maisie Maidan, and the horror of his incestuous desire for his ward, and asks, "why are you all in the dark?" (147). We could very well imagine Dowell asking that question himself: "Your personal passions are destroying everything, stable, solid, and respectable around you, what could keep you from seeing that?" Ford answers this question through his carefully inscribed and highly stylized character descriptions. In Edward and Florence, the novel's two most destructive sexual forces, we see Ford placing around them a distinguishable mass of consumer objects he allows them to use as narcissistic projections of ideal selves. These commodity obsessions obscure self-knowledge and leave Florence and Edward in a semiconscious arrest, unable to deduce the absurdity of their own actions.

One of Dowell's early portraits of Edward provides an example of this:

> That was the sort of things he thought about. Martingales, Chiffney bits, boots; where you got the best soap, the best brandy… the spreading power of a number-three shot before a charge number-four powder… by heavens, I hardly ever heard of him talk of anything else… And that was all I knew of him till a month ago—that and the profusion of his cases, all of pigskin and stamped with his initials, E. F. A. (28)

"What did he even talk to them about," he concludes, "when they were under four eyes?" (29). Edward constructs his public persona through the consumption of commercial goods. He finds himself able to idiosyncratically structure an identity as a good soldier by participating in a market-driven fetishism of bourgeois luxury objects, signaling to others a level of moral efficacy and material comfort he in reality does not possess. It is telling that Dowell includes the reference to his pigskin cases stamped with his initials. Edward keeps himself from acknowledging his libertinism by projecting a false image of his subjectivity onto the objects with which he surrounds himself. When Leonora, after the couple's return from Nauheim for the last time, offers to divorce Edward so he can marry Nancy, she walks in later to find him "in his evening clothes" (233) cleaning one of his guns. The psychic trauma of his own desires drives him to cling to the implements of his identity as a soldier and English gentleman. And when Edward kills himself at the mistaken suggestion that Nancy no longer loves him, he fittingly does so with a "little neat pen-knife," an ironically genteel signifier of status and taste.

As an outsider desiring to surround herself with the refined prestige of bourgeois English life, Florence unconsciously mimics Edward's commodity fetishism. However, Florence's commodity fetish forms as an attempt to renew cultural and historical ties from which war and immigration have separated her. Dowell reminds us that Florence comes from an immigrated English country family, a "seriously impoverished and quite efficiently oppressed" (890) clan of Tory loyalists whose American origins were stunted by their political affiliations during the American war for independence. As such, the aunts Hurlbird appear to Dowell as dried up comical parodies of gothic Americanism: "it was almost as if they were members of an ancient family under some curse—they were

so gentlewomanly, so proper, and they sighed so" (87). Thus, Florence marries Dowell to escape her laconic family and ensure her safe passage to Europe. Later, Dowell tells us that he and Florence's marriage was a *ruse* on her part, designed to fulfill "the main idea of her heart" (98)—to take her place as "a country lady in the home of her ancestors" (99), which just so happened to be Edward's home county of Fordingbridge.

Florence's longing for English country life manifests as a severe anglophilia—an obsessive accumulation of facts about European culture and history. Unlike Edward, Florence appears more aware of her knowledge as a means of deception, using it to distance herself emotionally form Dowell, convincing him he had to keep her talking on "the finds at Gnosssos or the mental spirituality of Walter Pater" (18) or she might die of her "heart" (2). She also uses her position as a cultural authority to hold Edward's attention long enough to seduce him, the most notable instance of this being the two couples' trip to the ancient city of M. However, Florence's cultural elitism still presents a narcissistic commodity obsession that slowly undermines any stable sense of identity.

Thus, when Dowell, reflecting on the night of her death, tries to determine whether or not Florence was fully conscious of her destructive behavior, he determines that "she wasn't real; she was just a mass of talk out of guidebooks, of drawings out of fashion-plates" and that trying to stop her from killing herself (had he known that was her intention) would be akin to "chasing a scrap of paper—an occupation ignoble for a grown man" (134). Florence invests her identity in information commodities to equate herself with a culture and class her family finds itself alienated from by over two hundred years of life in America. As a result, Dowell detects her sham history, an inauthentic and

commercialized sense of real historical connection to a people and a land that transforms her into a comic figure. Thus, he concludes "that Florence was a personality of paper—that she represented a real human being with a heart, with feelings, with sympathies, and with emotions only as a bank note represents a certain quantity of gold" (133).

"A phosphorescent fish in a cupboard"

The final step in understanding The Good Soldier as a satire of *bourgeois* narcissism as it relates to the commodity object's restriction of self-awareness presents us with the need to understand how Dowell's efforts as a narrator ultimately fail. In posturing himself as a great figure, we have already noted how Dowell creates an aesthetic framework of simultaneous awareness and removal through his construction of the "fire place in a country cottage" as an aesthetic refuge. The trouble for Dowell, in spite of his growing knowledge of Edward and Florence's unguided passions and the varied aesthetic experiments he employs in his storytelling, is that this aesthetic framework collapses when he tries to transfer it from the privacy of his interior to the chaotic world in which the events of his story take place. Dowell finds that the experience of a "sympathetic soul opposite" that he sees as central to his ability as a storyteller has no mirror in the reality of his world. Thus, he becomes absorbed in the same narcissism that Ford uses his story to satirize.

Sally Bachner notes how the narrative device of *The Good Soldier*, with its refusal to clearly demarcate a difference between subjective experience and objective reality,

necessitates the "aligning [of] one's point of view with that of another in an act of love and investiture" (105). She goes on to suggest that, in the novel's world, "identification with another is a necessary precondition for revelation" (105). However, we must be careful, in a world where unarticulated sexual desire masked in benevolence but "ending in absorption" (171), to differentiate between the identification true love provides and identification tainted by desire. In developing his concept of recognition, Hegel differentiates between identification as love and identification as sexual desire. In his now famous analysis of Sophocles' *Antigone,* we see a characterization of desireless identification:

> The brother, however, is for his sister a passive, similar being in general; the recognition of herself in him is pure and unmixed with any natural desire. In this relationship, therefore, the indifference of the particularity, and the ethical contingency of the latter, are not present; but the moment of the individual self, recognizing and being recognized, can here *assert its right*, because it is linked to the equilibrium of blood and is a relation devoid of desire. (275 italics mine)

The "moment of the individual self, recognizing and being recognized" presents Dowell's emotional impetus in *The Good Soldier*. In Hegel's terms, Dowell needs a "sister;" someone with which he can experience a mutual recognition, subject to subject, uninterrupted by the objectifying tendency of "natural desire."

We find sexual desire strangely absent in our understanding of Dowell's psychology. When recounting the events leading to his marriage Dowell asks, "why

does one do things? I just drifted in and wanted Florence" (17). Dowell's courtship has none of the impulsive drive of sexual desire, setting the subject on the world to perform a list of accomplishments, "things" as he calls them, to show the other worthiness as a sexual partner. Similarly, Dowell admits that, even though he "loves" Leonora, he "never had a trace of what is called the sex instinct towards her" (35), and commenting on his ambition to marry Nancy, he hints at something similar: "I wanted to marry her as some people wanted to go to Carcassonne" (134). Ford, then, appears to chose a passionless narrator to tell his "tale of passion," suggesting that a certain amount of authorial removal presents itself as a necessity even when the story must come directly from the author's perception of events.

That Dowell lacks the "sex instinct" (and his maladroit use of a scientific term when talking about his own interior psychology should lead us to believe he is telling the truth), does not mean that he is indifferent to the bonds of human contact. The whole novel, in a way, presents Dowell's internal drive to find a person in which he can recognize himself. In the novel's opening he complains that he finds himself "horribly alone" due to the fact that he knows nothing "of the hearts of men" (9). Later he concedes that "we all need from the outside the assurance of our own worthiness to exist" (127). Dowell, as the novelist, cannot face the horrors of human passion and betrayal without the mutual assurance of his validity, both as an observer of human sorrows (as we see with the "sympathetic soul opposite" in his cabin) and as someone who has experienced those sorrows personally. Many of his labyrinthine digressions into character present a search for an impression that confirms this connection. Through Florence's "play acting" (131) he can find nothing of a real interior. With

Edward he suffers from a clear misrecognition. “For I can’t conceal from myself,” Dowell writes, “that I loved Edward Ashburnham—and that I loved him because he was exactly *myself*” (275 italics mine). Edward, of course, is not John Dowell. Seeing that Dowell neither excites his sexual passions nor qualifies as a legitimate peer in his sham coterie of masculine heroism, Edward refuses Dowell as a man of his standing, talking to him “not so much as a man” but as if he “were a woman or a solicitor” (31).

In Leonora, however, Dowell finds a different kind of misrecognition. Dowell says she would listen to him with “air of inattention as if she were listening, a mother, to the child at her knee” (53). Dowell’s impressions of Lenora, then, appear faintly to resemble the conscious attitude of the novelist. Thus he attempts to project his position as narrator onto her in an attempt for mutual recognition:

> I swear that Leonora, in her restrained way, gave the impression of being sympathetic. When she listened to you *she appeared to be listening to some sound that was going on in the distance*. But still, she listened to you and took in what you said, which, since the record of humanity is a record of sorrows, was, as a rule, something sad. (225 italics mine)

The object of this passage, of course, presents itself as Dowell’s (possibly misguided) impressions of Leonora’s predilection to sympathy. However, Dowell qualifies her attentiveness with something like the superior awareness he feels in his imaginary position as storyteller. Like the waves and the wind enveloping but not invading his cottage, Dowell’s description of Leonora includes an attentiveness to the world outside of the private sphere of their *tête à tête*. We must keep in mind that by now, Dowell has serious

doubts as to whether he can penetrate the chaotic surface of his story's events to understand the dark and tangled motivations of its characters: "who in this world can give anyone a character?" he asks, "who in this world knows anything of any other heart— or of his own?" (170). Unsure of his ability to capture "the sack of a city or the falling to pieces of a people" (7) bound up within the heartache and betrayal of his wife's affair with Edward, Dowell projects the ability of the great figure onto Leonora. The two switch roles—Dowell recites his "record of sorrows" to Leonora while she, he assumes, raises them out of the locality of specific time and isolated consciousness into a greater sense of history as a whole. We learn, however, that he is mistaken his recognition of greatness in another. Leonora, the novel's portrait of modernity's "purposeful efficiency" (155) in exchanging the ruined bits of the past for the new, leaves him in Branshaw Teleragh with her insane niece and the ghosts of Edward and Florence while she makes a new life with Rodney Bayham.

Without the desireless identification of a silent listener, Dowell finds himself forced to admit later that, "there is about [his tale] none of the elevation that accompanies tragedy" (179). "Elevation" presents itself as the key word here for our study. Dowell, ultimately and in spite of his efforts, cannot rescue the Ashburnham tragedy from the trappings of locality and perspective because he cannot escape himself. Dowell's failure manifests as the reticence with which he finds himself slipping into the narcissistic obsession with commodity objects. These objects, for Dowell, become trappings for emotional difference when the emotional trauma of his recollection overcomes his ability to narrate. Thus, they figure in to our study as the element of bourgeois English life that,

for Ford, prevented his peers from producing a novelist that can show their existence in a historical perspective.

Dowell is not an English *bourgeoisie*. However, he has "known the shallows" (5) of the English heart. There are several moments when Ford allows Dowell to rescind into the machinations of the English middle-class, allowing an interior portrait of their narcissistic tendencies. We find the germinal anecdote for this narcissism's effect on Dowell's narration when he imagines his wife and friends caught up in an apocalyptic judgment drama. This passage presents a moving and energetic vision of finality and resolution for the Ashburnham tragedy that carefully poises the moral weight of his tale within a vibrant aesthetic framework, awakening the reader suddenly out of Dowell's previously incoherent ramblings:

> It is almost too terrible, the picture of that judgment, as it appears to me sometimes, at nights. It is probably the suggestion of some picture that I have seen somewhere. But upon that immense plain, suspended in mid-air, I seem to see three figures, two of them clasped close in an intense embrace, and one intolerably solitary. It is in black and white, my picture of that judgment, an etching, perhaps; only I cannot tell and etching from a photographic reproduction. And the immense plain is the hand of God, stretching out for miles and miles, with great spaces above it and below it… (76)

Aesthetically, this image presents a striking model of the process of Ford's impressionism: a sensory impression ignites a subjective impulse, Dowell's terror in response to an "immense plain" and "three figures." Eventually, the subject offers up language to measure

himself against the blank austerity of the impression (here I am referring to Heidegger's idea that poetic thinking is the foundation of language).[27] Dowell determines that the immense plain is the hand of God and the three figures are, of course, Edward, Leonora, and Florence.

Dowell rounds of this image in an odd way, however: "they are in the sight of God," he tells us, "and it is Florence that is alone" (76). Passion in *The Good Soldier* is one to one. There are three people in the image, so some one must be left to stand alone before God. But why Florence? We can understand Dowell's malice towards his wife. At the same time, however, he tells us in the forth section that Nancy's return to India left Edward with "nothing left… but a dreary, dreary succession of days" (214), and Edward himself banishes Dowell from his stable to face his death alone. Leonora, in the same way, could reasonably stand alone in Dowell's image. As an Irish Catholic, she is the novel's cultural outsider, and she is the only character to find some version of happiness outside of the tangled passions of the Ashburnham affair, appearing at least to leave the novel's events behind her. Either one of the three figures could reasonably stand ostracized from the remaining couple. Furthermore, we can assume that a universal and just judgment would require all three to experience the ostracism that they caused at least one of the others to experience in life. Thus, Dowell's image fails to present an ideal justice in pictorial terms.

[27] Heidegger thought that humanity defined its temporal and special locality in the world by "measuring" itself against "the way in which the god who remains unknown, is revealed as such by the sky" (223 *Poetry, Language, Thought*). Humanity measures itself against the immeasurable (i.e. the infinite) by introducing the sky as a mediating image. This is similar to how Dowell "measures" the temporality and locality of his writing the Ashburnham tragedy against his undefined impression of the pain it has caused him by renaming his impression "the hand of God."

As noted, such an ideal of justice, if Dowell wants to capture it aesthetically, would have to resist locality, to simultaneously implicate all three characters, thus capturing the real horror of the Ashburnham tragedy—that all three of these figures were as much perpetrators as they were victims. The turning point in this image, the act of localization that grounds it back in the particularity of Dowell's malice towards Florence, is the fact that he "cannot tell an etching from a photographic reproduction." Reading this passage as a narrative of the subject crafting an impression into an aesthetic image, Dowell's inability to tell a genuine work of art from a reified commodity presents itself as an obstruction to something like the notion of "abrasion" (129) Barthes elucidates in his narrative analysis "The Struggle with the Angel." The structural phenomenon of "abrasive frictions" within a narrative, Barthes asserts, "allows the juxtaposition of narrative entities to run free from an explicit logical articulation" (140). An abrasion is a narrative ambiguity created by a seemingly needless repetition, working to create a narrative condition where the story can "hold its *significance* fully open" (141 italics his). In its process of coming to be, Dowell's image needs the semiotic freedom of open significance, the possibility of multiple references. However, the photographic reproduction, as a simulation for which Dowell's cannot find a distinct reference, prevents his image from transcending the materiality and locality of object. Thus, his attempt to find a meaning for his story that transcends the moment of his telling—his attempt to create "the elevation that accompanies tragedy"—crashes into the locality of the commodity object.

This is not an isolated incident in Dowell's narration. Other instances provide clearer examples of Dowell differing to the commodity object in moments of emotional distress. While recounting the interview with Leonora where she reveals the truth behind

his wife's death, Dowell recalls his state of mind that night, "it is some little material object, always, that catches the eye and that appeals to the imagination" (118). His fixation on the flask of what he supposed to be heart medicine, he learns retrospectively, kept him from realizing his wife's death was not an accident. However, while recounting the incident, Dowell still fails to draw the connection between the flask and Leonora's revelation (we are forced to infer on out own that the flask did not, in fact, contain nitrate amyl). In this instance, an attached focus on the object overcomes an attentiveness to the context in which the object finds itself, the comingling of desires, diverging interests, and desperate attempts to conceal the truth.

Earlier, Dowell complains that the does not have the "seeing eye" (16). Paradoxically, his admission of deficiency reveals a hubristic overconfidence in his role as narrator. Dowell naively assumes from the outset that his exploration into the concealed depths of the English heart will reveal its fundamental truth, its "benefit of unknown heirs," as a result of him *seeing* and *positively indentifying* this truth. Thus he displays a hubristic overconfidence in his role as observer.[28] Dowell's story presents the search for an ultimate significance he cannot find, so he constantly differs the actual narration and

[28] Compare Dowell's conviction that he must invest his story with significance to the narrator's comments on Marlow's belief in the efficacy of a story in *Heart of Darkness*: "The yarns of seamen have a direct simplicity, the whole meaning of which lies within the shell of a cracked nut. But Marlow was not typical… and to him the meaning of an episode was not inside like a kernel but outside, enveloping the tale which brought it out as a glow brings out a haze" (9). In the context of the story Marlow tells, we can interpret the narrator's comment as the suggestion that a narrative does not in itself does not reveal meaning, but that meaning finds itself engendered through an audience's reception. Thus, the "kernel" of Marlow's tale is the recounting of his journey up the Congo river in search of Kurtz, whereas the "enveloping… haze" presents its reception by the audience on the *Nellie*, a group of officious British imperialists who are (ideally) supposed to interpret Marlow's tale as a foreboding caution against the possible moral dangers of the imperialist mindset.

replaces it with lackluster meditations on his own incapability. Thus, when Dowell learns from Leonora of his wife and Edward's affair he tells us:

> No, I remember no emotion of any sort, but just that feeling that one has from time to time when one hears that some Mrs. so-and-so is *au-mieux* with a certain gentleman. It made things plainer, suddenly, to my curiosity. It was if I thought, at that moment… that, when I came to think it over afterwards, a dozen unexplained things would fit themselves into place. (117).

This promised revelation never comes for Dowell. He works through his story to its end and still "knows nothing of the hearts of men." The lack of significance he finds when conjuring up his actual recollections of events forces him to compensate with a sluggish materialism. Recalling the night of Florence's suicide, he notes, "I felt no sorrow, no desire for action, no inclination to go upstairs and fall upon the body of my wife. I just saw the pink effulgence, the cane tables, the palms, the globular match holders, the indented ashtrays" (120). Here, Dowell unwittingly confesses to a narcissistic attachment to his role as impartial observer, privileging his ability to note the physical objects that surround a situation over his duty to narrate.

This narcissistic self projection, the obsession with significance as the author's gift *to* the reader, severely impairs Dowell's ability to narrate. His overconfidence in his own role as storyteller finds itself mediated through the commodity object when he replaces the significance he cannot invest in the story with catalogs of material things. Thus, he conflates storytelling with inventory by investing his narrative with commodity objects.

Informing his reader as to "what actually happened" the night of Florence's suicide, he writes:

> You will remember I said that Edward Ashburnham and the girl had gone off, that night, to a concert at the Casino and that Leonora had asked Florence, almost immediately after their departure, to follow them and to perform the office of chaperone. Florence, you may also remember, was all in black, being the mourning that she wore for a deceased cousin.... It was a very black night and the girl was dressed in cream-coloured [sic] muslin, and must have glimmered under the tall trees of the dark park like a phosphorescent fish in a cupboard. (121)

The commodity object has become a part of the narration, infusing itself into the act of telling itself through the literary device of the simile. The actual image appears nonsensical: "A phosphorescent fish in a cupboard," fails (intentionally on Ford's part) to call a specific image to mind. It is the product of observation overcoming narration, of the locality of endlessly homogenized and mass-produced objects overcoming the explication of passion and confusion. Ford directs us to the realization that "A phosphorescent fish in a cupboard" *is* the "picture" Dowell has "seen somewhere," the all encompassing reality of narrative re-localized into the faceless object. Like Edward and Leonora, Dowell has crafted a role for himself using the commodity object, and it is this role which Ford ironically exposes as a falsity. Listing of commodities presents a cheap replacement for insight, a narcissistic delusion of Dowell's competence as a narrator.

Dowell's failure, of course, presents an ironic indication of Ford's success. Dowell cannot narrate, but the very presentation of his failure indicates that Ford *can*. The irony bound up in Ford's choice directs us to insight that *The Good Soldier* has for the possibility of a reemergence of a great figure within modern bourgeois society. Commenting on his work with Conrad, Ford remarks on his shared conviction found in Conrad's preface to *The Nigger of the Narcissus* (1897) that the novelist's duty is, "before all, to make you *see*" (147). Ford claims that he shared this conviction with Conrad because, "seeing is believing for all the doubters of the planet from Thomas to the end: if you can make humanity see the few very simple things on which this temporal world rests you will make mankind believe such eternal truths as are universal" (168 *Joseph Conrad*). The revelation of truth emerges from the act of showing readers the world in which they dwell. Later Ford writes "you must not, as author, utter any views" (208). Novelists, then, cannot relate significance into their own work editorially, but must instead trust that the significance of the work finds itself manifest through the act of reading.

Ford's position as novelist in relation to Dowell ultimately implies that the great figures must reinstate themselves to a place of social significance through the act of self-effacing humility. Ford does not ironically undercut Dowell's authority as narrator singularly by means of any special ability. Narrative competence in *The Good Soldier* finds itself supported by the tacit acknowledgement of the narrator's own limitations, hence Ford's refusal to intervene within the narration. Ford limits the novel's perspective to the isolation of Dowell's consciousness to show that novelists must act as servants to their subject. To give the English *bourgeoisie* a historical understanding of themselves,

he in a sense surrenders his story to the people for whom it was created, to, as he says in the preface to his *Collected Poems*, "register [his] own times in terms of [his] own time" (327).

From this we can infer that, for Ford, the return of the great figure to English society can only be intermediated through novelists' self-conscious humility. Novelists must suppress themselves in presenting their subject. Thus, Ford's irony in *The Good Soldier* works as a kind self-effacement, with Ford expressing his superior abilities over his narrator through anonymity. We can then infer that the place of the novelist in society mirrors the anonymity of Ford's absence in the narration. Novelists give their society a superior understanding of themselves, but as the mediator between the social and its fictional reflection they must remain unseen and unheard.

Conclusion—The Cost of Authenticity: Irony and the Humble Aggressor

Identification and distance, sympathy and removal— these are the terms with which I have attempted to trace and correctly demarcate the "absolute irony" of Ford and Lewis' relationship to the subjects of their novels. As we have noted before, both *The Good Soldier* and *Tarr* focus on the development of some kind of artist figure as that figure fights his way out of the machinations of modern bourgeois culture. Fredric Tarr paints and theorizes about art in a town full of bohemian fops who paint and theorize about art. Yet, he insists on his own individuality, that he is the authentic artist, the most "*efficient chimpanzee*." John Dowell tries his hand at writing "the saddest *story*," a record of the sorrows caused by passion and betrayal that he desires to lay down for "the benefit of unknown heirs or generations infinitely remote." For Ford, he presents a type of the novelist in the modern world, struggling to yield up a portrait of a class and culture that seems to refuse its own reflection. Thus, both novels attempt to encapsulate the struggles surrounding the act of creation in a world growing more and more hostile, either through the material conditions of cultural production or the social practice of the ruling class, to the work of innovative artists.

The social objective of Lewis and Ford's art, as we see it manifest in *Tarr* and *The Good Soldier*, is to satirize the English *bourgeoisie*. This relates directly to their concerns with art. Bourgeois culture, particularly in its relationship to the rising commodity industry of early twentieth-century England, stifles the development of authentic artists, and, by

extension, art and literature that supposedly functions as a unique and dynamic expression of their culture. Politically, both critiques come from the right. Commodities, in Lewis and Ford's thought, do not corrupt the authenticity of bourgeois England. Instead, bourgeois England uses the commodity as a substitution for the introspective vitality that authentic art provides. Commodity culture, for the *bourgeoisie,* presents a suicidal pool (both figuratively and, in the case of Otto Kreisler, Edward Ashburnham and Florence Dowell, literally) where they can drown in the absurdity of their narcissistic desires.

However, Lewis and Ford's concerns with commodity narcissism differ in important ways. For Lewis, *art deco* and kitsch form the basis of bourgeois mimetic desire. In Lewis' thought, the *bourgeoisie* are only semiconscious of their relationship between action and desire. Ford would agree. However, Lewis' concerns himself with how this semiconscious state of arrested self-actualization obscures the demand for art. The commodity, as Bertha's ornately bohemian apartment show us, redirects the desire for cultural expression through art into mass commercial channels, thus obscuring the development of individual taste by conflating it with popular taste. Lewis captures this conflation between individual and mass desire through his comically adept portrait of the "Bourgeois Bohemians," a group of *faux* cultural elites who use commercial products to express a paradox of conformist individuality. From this "megrim" of individuality, art as the objective rendering of reality cannot emerge.

Ford's satire of the English *bourgeoisie* differs form Lewis's satirical practice in that he finds concern with the way his class (as much as they can be called *his* class) uses commercial industry to create a delusory sense of public stability in the midst of private

chaos. The way *The Good Soldier's* characters use commodities as a narcissistic reflection of their ideal egos, exemplified by Edward's genteel English finery and Florence's guidebooks, creates a thin veneer over the moral turmoil surrounding their secret behavior. John Dowell leads his readers to these cracks in their public persona, pointing out the personal inconsistencies Edward and Florence create though their failure to understand their own sexual desires. The frenzy of sexual passion coupled with the public delusion of clam creates a trap from which these two cannot wrestle themselves from into a critical state of self-awareness. Samuel Haynes calls this entrapment "the conflicting demand of convention and passion" (55), between which the characters are, as Haynes points out, "shuttlecocks" bouncing back and fourth. But Dowell is no more adept at articulating the impressions of what he sees when he peers behind their public *façade,* forcing him to admit that he knows nothing of "the hearts of men" (9). This is Dowell's principal insecurity, and this pushes him to become caught in the same narcissism that Ford seeks to satirize through his narration.

Both novels feature an ironic contrast between the formal genius displayed by the precision and self-conscious stylization of their construction and the failure of their protagonist or narrator to repeat their authors' accomplishment. Lewis' dialectical self-distancing necessitates an ironic turn in Tarr's attempt to perfect the artist's relationship to sex. Finding Bertha pregnant with Kreisler's child, Tarr forces yet another distance between his self-perception and the role he occupies, this time of the artist as sexual performer. Tarr agrees to marry Bertha in a move that (she thinks) constitutes his "denying reality" and "ending… against himself" (311). Tarr's denial here, however, is not a denial of reality but another moment of self-distanciation. The irony, however, is that he must

abdicate his “new promises and hopes of swagger sex” by charging back into the “regularity” (311) of biological life, least he become too comfortable in his new and fascinating tryst with Anystasa. This is the cycle which Tarr repeats throughout the end of the novel, marrying Bertha while still seeing Anystasa, then when Anystasa leaves him and Bertha asks for a divorce, Tarr moves on to another set of women who somehow represent the elusive slide back and forth between sex as biology and sex as performance: “the cheerless and stodgy face of Rose Fawcett” countered by a “swing back of the pendulum of the swagger side” that Lewis represents with “the painted, fine inquiring face of Prism Dirkes” (320).

To continue his self-distancing, Tarr must retreat from the position of artist into the messiness of sex, an ironic turn that paradoxically forces him to betray his ideals in order to preserve them. As Robert T. Chapman notes, “Tarr attempts to organize his life according to ideas. His logic is faultless; his argument valid; but his actions are absurd” (82). Chapman goes on to suggest that Tarr fails because the absurdity of all biological life presents a fundamental truth in Lewis’ thought, and “to have Tarr succeed would have been an evasion of this basic Lewisian truth” (82). While Lewis does appear to contend for a fundamental absurdity bound up in all biological life, I disagree with Chapman’s assertion that this is the purpose for the ultimate irony of Tarr’s situation. Tarr represents the artist acting in the world, his final dependency on the unconsciousness of femininity then suggests that the artist’s position (insofar as they interact with life) is an absurd one. However, our very realization of this truth as readers forces us to assume the final turn in the dialectic that leads to Lewis as the authentic artist, the supreme creator who completes his self-substation in his work by negating his subjects with the hard biting laugh of the

satirist. Tarr fails to completely manifest as “the new animal” that “will succeed the Superman” (307) because the artist’s position in the world is absurd. However, this does not direct us to an admission of the impossibility of Lewis’ ideal artist in the modern world, because the artist interacting with life is not the artist complete. It is only through their work that artist are completely actualized and their distanciation perfected.

In a similar way, Ford charges Dowell with the task of adding another chapter to history’s “record of sorrows,” to capture the chaotic passions of a moment within the novelist’s historical perspective. He bequeaths to Dowell the tools of his ideal novelist, memories, impressions, and the longing for a sympathetic connection with another. But Dowell fails in his task. His narration is fraught with admissions of ignorance and moral ambivalence. “The instances of honesty one comes across in this world are just as amazing as the instances of dishonesty” (39), Dowell laments. He goes on: “After forty five years of mixing with one’s kind, one ought to have acquired the habit of being able to know something about one’s fellow beings. But one doesn’t” (39). He appears to think that his narrative hasn’t breached the particular gap between his wife and friends’ actions and what he perceives to be their motivations. Thus the narrative falls apart. He leaves crucial moments unexplained, accuses his wife and friends of villainy and then recants those accusations, and adds Edward Ashburnham’s suicide—arguably the most crucial moment in the narration—as a terse footnote at the end of his tale.

Read within the context of Ford and Lewis’ social criticism and their writings on the fate of modern art, a more acute irony emerges. According to Fredric Tarr, “all effectual men are enemies of every time,” and “with a fundamental divergence they give

the weight of impartiality to the supreme thesis and need of their age" (235). Artists' call to act as antithesis to their community requires perpetual isolation, or what Lewis would call "a separation, limited in kind" (184 *Rude Assignment*). Yet Tarr himself, by the end of the novel, becomes hypocritically dependent on others. Conversely, John Dowell, who Ford postures as a novelist with "the province" of "bring humanity into contact, person with person" (23), ends up alone in the absurd position of caretaker of an abandoned estate and ward over a madwoman. Both figures, in failing to complete their creators' ideal roles, end up in social circumstances antithetical to Ford and Lewis' ideal positions for the artist and the novelist.

That this is an explicit case of "humble yourself or you shall be humbled" is clear. Both Ford and Lewis' affect some kind of punishment on their subject for failing to actualize the kind of self-punishment that they seem to demand of the artist and the novelist. In fairness, both authors insist that the artist's suppression of self is universally applicable. Lewis' satirical aggression was egalitarian: "everyone should be laughed at or else no one should be laughed at" (109 *Men Without Art*). The scorn of the satirist's laugh, to present itself effectively, must turn in on itself to become the scourge of the complacent ego. Ford also insists on a kind of egalitarian critical pose; novelists must sacrifice the prominence of their own voices to let the age speak through them. Thus, as he notes in the conclusion of *The March of Literature* the great figure finds greatness through humble silence, working as the "hand of the slave" (850) for a society of unknowing and ungrateful masters.

The divergence then between Ford and Lewis then appears to emerge as a difference between where their self-effacement places them within their community. For Lewis, the artist must distance himself from the community by objectifying the subjective feelings that create the bonds of sympathy. These bonds, in his thought, are disingenuous and narcissistically self-serving, so they must be destroyed at the source, the conception of self he attributes to everything but the self. This should lead us to suspect whether or not Lewis' "nastiness,"[29] his rejection by his social circles, his unapologetic criticisms of patrons and friends, and even the brief endorsement of the Third Reich that earned his final banishment from English society, was a product of his own cruelty and aggression or the product of a society unwilling to accept the questioning of its own legitimacy. That, anyway, is how Lewis would have it.

Ford maintains that novelists must be the "unacknowledged legislators" of their communities. His liberalism, the conviction that "no one individual is intelligent enough to be entrusted with the fortune or life of any other individual" (81 *Return to Yesterday*), depends on the assumption that the community for which he writes will correct itself upon realizing the insight that literature gives. He presents himself as willing to cede control, and strangely he does so to a people he seems convinced that seek nothing but amusement and sentimental reaffirmation from their reading. For both figures, the condition of bourgeois subjectivity, as my readings of *Tarr* and *The Good Soldier* show, appears to be a Gordian knot, something that cannot be altered through anything but destruction. (This

[29] I chose "nastiness" as the summative adjective in describing Lewis' presence in the modernist art scene based on Hemingway's now infamous portrayal of Lewis' character in *Movable Feast:* "I do not think I have ever seen a nastier-looking man some people show evil as a great race horse shows breeding…. Lewis did not show evil, he just looked nasty" (109).

destruction, however, takes place on a personal level for both authors; mass destruction on a political level would be more disastrous than the present state of things.) However, Ford's conclusion seems to ignore its own premise; he depends on a society that introspection to embrace the introspective capability of the novel.

Is the possibility of social liberalism and modernism coexisting then the result of a flaw in logic? This may be the case. We must keep in mind that both these men create their ideal visions through manipulation. Fredric Tarr and John Dowell fail because Lewis and Ford *wish* them to fail. Even though both characters' failures point ironically to masochistic self-effacement on their creators' part, they are still products of Ford and Lewis' will, so masochism itself becomes a self-aggrandizing fantasy. Lewis, it appears, would embrace this as a fundamental truth; the artist's masochism is in itself a round about means of achieving control and dominance over the world through a perpetual removal from it. However, Ford's masochistic fantasy leads him back into integration and acceptance into the community, even when a rough departure seems to present itself as a necessity. Is his humble posture then genuine, or is it an incoherent denial of novelist's ability to cohabitate peacefully with the rest of their kind and still yield the full force of the novel?

Satire itself seems like a kind of fictional removal, the creation of a fictional space from which its creators can effect their ultimate supremacy as the possessors of reason and clarity. Thus, it seems doubtful that a humble satirist can exist. A satirist can, as Ford does, assume a posture of humility, but this is ultimately an officious accusation, a self-negating humility that declares a moral attack. This should lead us to doubt whether or not an ironic

masochism can comfortably coexist within the idea of an egalitarian community. Modern novelists can attack their community from within but may never find themselves comfortable with the hypocrisy implied by styling themselves “humble aggressors.”

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