After they met briefly in 1914, Wyndham Lewis spent over a decade hating on D.H. Lawrence.

One of the earliest sustained critiques of Lawrence’s primitivism was by Lewis, who published a scathing attack on Lawrence’s work of the early twenties entitled “Paleface: Or ‘Love? What ho! Smelling Strangeness’” in the September 1927 volume of *The Enemy*, Lewis’s third venture into literary journals.

Lewis called Lawrence’s reveries about Mexico and Native Americans a pernicious form of “exotic primitivism,” one that relied on an essentially conservative fantasy of a return to the past.
The sense of enmity was mutual, though less verbose on Lawrence’s part. In an essay on the demise of social feeling, Lawrence assessed Lewis’s posture towards others as follows:

The only power motive left is the sense of revulsion away from people, the sense of the repulsiveness of the neighbour. It is a condition we are rapidly coming to—a condition displayed by the intellectuals more than the common people. Wyndham Lewis gives a display of the utterly repulsive effect people have on him, but he retreats into the intellect to make his display. It is a question of manners and manners. The effect is the same. It is the same exclamation: They stink! My God, they stink! And in the process of recoil and revulsion, the affective consciousness withers with amazing rapidity. (Phoenix 270-1)
[Percy] Wyndham Lewis
1882-1957

Painter, novelist, poet, playwright, critic, and philosopher.
Wyndham Lewis, *Indian Dance* (1912). Tate Modern Collection.
Vorticism
(1914-1920)

• Grew out of an appreciation for Cubism

• Like Futurism, Vorticism embraced dynamism, all things “new” and modern, the energy of the machine age

• Vorticist painting was characterized by an array of bold lines and harsh colors that draw in the eye of the spectator

Kate Lechmere, Cuthbert Hamilton (seated), Edward Wadsworth and Wyndham Lewis at the Rebel Art Centre (March 1914)
Wyndham Lewis, *Workshop* (c. 1914-5). Tate Modern Collection.
Wyndham Lewis, *Vorticist Composition* (1915). Tate Modern Collection.
Blast: Review of the Great English Vortex

Edited by Wyndham Lewis, with the assistance of Ezra Pound

Only published two volumes: one in 1914 and one in 1915.

Full, glorious text at the Modernist Journals Project
http://modjourn.org/render.php?id=1158591480633184&view=mjp_object
MANIFESTO.
BLAST First (from politeness) ENGLAND
CURSE ITS CLIMATE FOR ITS SINS AND INFECTIONS
DISMAL SYMBOL, set round our bodies,
of effeminate lout within.
VICTORIAN VAMPIRE, the LONDON cloud sucks
the TOWN'S heart.
A 1000 MILE LONG, 2 KILOMETER Deep
BODY OF WATER even, is pushed against us
from the Floridas, TO MAKE US MILD.
OFFICIOUS MOUNTAINS keep back DRASTIC WINDS
SO MUCH VAST MACHINERY TO PRODUCE

THE CURATE of "Eltham"
BRITANNIC AESTHETE
WILD NATURE CRANK
DOMESTICATED
POLICEMAN
LONDON COLISEUM
SOCIALIST-PLAYWRIGHT
DALY'S MUSICAL COMEDY
GAIETY CHORUS GIRL
TONKS
CURSE
the flabby sky that can manufacture no snow, but
can only drop the sea on us in a drizzle like a poem
by Mr. Robert Bridges.

CURSE
the lazy air that cannot stiffen the back of the SERPENTINE,
or put Aquatic steel half way down the MANCHESTER CANAL.

But ten years ago we saw distinctly both snow and
ice here.

May some vulgarly inventive, but useful person, arise,
and restore to us the necessary BLIZZARDS.

LET US ONCE MORE WEAR THE ERMINES
OF THE NORTH.

WE BELIEVE IN THE EXISTENCE OF
THIS USEFUL LITTLE CHEMIST
IN OUR MIDST!
OH BLAST FRANCE
pig plagiarism
BELLY
SLIPPERS
POODLE TEMPER
BAD MUSIC

SENTIMENTAL GALLIC GUSH
SENSATIONALISM
FUSSINESS.

PARISIAN PAROCHIALISM. Complacent young man, so much respect for Papa and his son!—Oh!—Papa is wonderful: but all papas are!

BLAST
APERITIFS (Pernots, Amers picon)
Bad change
Naively seductive Houri salon-picture Cocottes
Slouching blue porters (can carry a pantechnicon)
Stupidly rapacious people at every step
Economy maniacs
Bouillon Kub (for being a bad pun)
PARIS. Clap-trap Heaven of amative German professor.
Ubiquitous lines of silly little trees.
Aros de Triemphe.
Imperturbable, endless prettiness.
Large empty cliques, higher up.
Bad air for the individual.

BLAST

MECCA OF THE AMERICAN

because it is not other side of Suez Canal, instead of an afternoon's ride from London.
I.

1. Beyond Action and Reaction we would establish ourselves.

2. We start from opposite statements of a chosen world. Set up violent structure of adolescent clearness between two extremes.

3. We discharge ourselves on both sides.

4. We fight first on one side, then on the other, but always for the SAME cause, which is neither side or both sides and ours.

5. Mercenaries were always the best troops.

6. We are Primitive Mercenaries In the Modern World.
7 Our Cause is NO-MAN'S.

8 We set Humour at Humour's throat.
   Stir up Civil War among peaceful apes.

9 We only want Humour if it has fought like Tragedy.

10 We only want Tragedy if it can clench its side-muscles like hands on it's belly, and bring to the surface a laugh like a bomb.
Wyndham Lewis, *A Battery Shelled* (1919)
First American edition of *Tarr* (1918)

- Lewis lived in Paris between 1904-8, wrote *Tarr* in London between 1909-11
- First published in serial form in *The Egoist* from 1916-18
- First book edition in America in 1918, shortly followed by British edition
- Radically revised by Lewis in the twenties, second edition published by Chatto and Windus in 1928

First page of *The Egoist*, April 1916, containing the first serial installment of *Tarr*
Paris hints at sacrifice. But here we deal with that large dusty facet known to indulgent and congruous kind: it is in its capacity of delicious inn and majestic Baedeker, where western Venuses twang its responsive streets and hush to soft growl before its statues, that it is seen. (7)
William Roberts recalled the Francophilia of the Vorticist circle: “In my memory la cuisine française [French cooking] and Vorticism are indissolubly linked.”
Tarr as *Künstlerroman* / Artistic Subjectivity in the novel

Tarr wished to stay in Paris just then to finish two large paintings begun some months before. With him, for the impressionist’s necessity to remain in front of the object to be represented was substituted a sensation of the desirability of finishing a canvas in the place where it had been begun. From this point of view he had an impressionist’s horror of change. (36)

A complicated image developed in his mind as he stood with her. He was remembering Schopenhauer: it was of a chinese puzzle of boxes within boxes, or of insects’ discarded envelopes. A woman had at the centre a kernel, a sort of very substantial astral baby: this brat was apt to swell—she then became *all* baby. The husk he held now was a painted mummy-case, say. He was a mummy-case, too. Only he contained nothing but innumerable other painted cases inside, smaller and smaller ones. The smallest was not a substantial astral baby, however, or live core, but a painting like the rest.—His kernel was a painting, in fact: that was as it should be! He was please that it was nothing more violent than that. (46-7)

*(German for “artist’s novel”) a narrative about an artist’s growth to maturity.*
Tarr as a satire of the bourgeois-bohemian artistic community of pre-war Paris

**satire**: The use of humor, irony, exaggeration, or ridicule to expose and criticize people’s stupidity or vices, particularly in the context of contemporary politics and other topical issues. *(OED)*

**bourgeois-bohemians**: Lewis’s coinage for a way of life that claims to be radical but that recapitulates the middle-class mores against which it claims to rebel. (See Lewis 301)

Think of the depiction of the artist Lowndes:

Lowndes was a colleague, who was not very active, but had just enough money to be a cubist, that was to say quite a lot. He was extremely proud of being interrupted in his work, for Lowndes’ ‘work’ was a serious matter, a very serious matter indeed. He ‘found great difficulty in working’; always he implied that you did not. He suffered from a form of persecution mania as regards his ‘mornings.’ To start with, it was plain, from what he said, that he was very much in request: people, seemingly, were *always* attempting to get into his room: such was the fatal attraction he exercised. (32-3)
Priceless Visual Art as a Metaphoric Vehicle

“Well, I cannot see myself attracted by an exceptional woman, a particularly refined and witty animal—I do not understand attraction for such beings. Their existence puzzles me though I am sure they serve some purpose: but, not being as fine as men—not being as fine as pictures or poems—not being as fine as housewives or classical Mothers of Men—accordingly they appear to me to occupy an unfortunate position on this earth. No properly demarcated person as I am, is going to have much to do with them; they are beautiful to look at, it may be, but they are unfortunately alive, and usually cats: if you married one of them, out of pity, you would have to support the eternal grin of a Gioconda fixed complacently upon you at all hours of the day, the pretensions of a piece of canvas that had sold for thirty thousand pounds. You could not put your foot through the canvas. You would not be able to sell it yourself for that figure and so get some little compensation. At the most, if the sentimental grin would not otherwise come off, you could break the jaw, perhaps. No!” (27-8)
Visual Art in Reproduction as a Metaphoric Vehicle

Bertha’s was the intellectually-fostered hellenic type of german handsomeness. It would make you think that german mothers must have replicas and photographs of the Venus of Milo in their rooms during the first three months of pregnancy. Of course they in fact have. Also this arid, empty intellectualist beauty is met with in german art periodicals. (39)
Tarr was in the studio or salon. It was a complete bourgeois-bohemian interior. . . . There was a plaster cast of Beethoven (some people who have frequented artistic circles get to dislike this face extremely), brass jars from Normandy, a photograph of the Mona Lisa (Tarr could not look upon the Mona Lisa without a sinking feeling). (40)