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## 'From Hitler to Hitler': A New Paradigm of Wyndham Lewis's Fascist Insights in *Hitler* (1931) and *The Hitler Cult* (1939)

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**Abstract:** The present paper examines the juxtaposition of Wyndham Lewis's polemical and disputatious works *Hitler* (1931) and *The Hitler Cult* (1939) under the theoretical framework of the political trajectories of Fascism to present an intriguing lens through which to examine Lewis's evolving views on fascism and Adolf Hitler during the tumultuous peak and trough of the twentieth-century authoritarian regime. By delving into the nuanced language of Lewis's notorious writings on fascism, the conjectural boundaries of his intuitive, conceptual, and artistic framework established his reputation as an avant-garde advocate of fascism. In this fashion, the paper encapsulates Lewis's vision of his manifestation of the political insights of fascist predispositions, which reveal a loading towards specific socio-political matrixes over the course of the interwar period (1919-1938). Building logically on this political concept, the present study is meant a) to reflect Lewis's initial fascination with the fascist movement and its charismatic leader, Adolf Hitler, to portray him as a dynamic and transformative figure who embodies the spirit of the times and offers a viable substitute for the perceived failures of liberal democracy and socialism; and b) to represent a critical reassessment of Hitler and the fascist movement in light of the escalating tensions and atrocities of the late 1930s. In this work, *The Hitler Cult* (1939), Lewis adopts a more skeptical and condemnatory stance toward Hitler and the cult of personality surrounding him by exposing the contradictions and hypocrisies of Hitler's regime and criticizing its propaganda techniques, suppression of dissent, and expansionist ambitions.

**Keywords:** Wyndham Lewis; Fascism; Fascist Movement; Adolf Hitler; *The Hitler Cult*.

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## 1. Introduction

An influential and controversial figure in the early twentieth-century modernism, Wyndham Lewis (1882-1957), was both a prominent painter and the driving force behind Vorticism – an English counterpart to the Expressionist, Cubist, and Futurist movements of continental Europe – and a prolific writer, encompassing roles as a novelist, poet, essayist, critic, and pamphleteer. Not only did Lewis position himself on the political spectrum of fascism, which has made critics often complain, but also Lewis's tarnished stature solely reposed on clear-cut evidence and some selected disquisitions, extracted from *Hitler* (1931). In retrospect, Lewis states that the National Socialist revolution, sooner or later, would stretch across Germany in 1933 and the *Sturmabteilung* (German: "Assault Division", or SA) would take office to oust their political opponents, including Communists and Jews, from power. However, it is incumbent upon critics to navigate through Lewis's extensive body of work to grasp his political views in order to solve the thorny issue of Lewis's political trajectories of Fascism in his notoriously literary works, *Hitler* (1931) and *The Hitler Cult* (1939), which necessitate obviating the need for anachronistic readings and considering the historical context based on the critique of the new modernist aesthetic in which his writings were produced. Despite these nuances, there are no startlingly revelatory insights into Hitler or the 'fascist regime', but it is its great value as a curiosity of its time, though not for the reasons one would expect. However, the overriding questions are: why did Lewis write these political readings of fascism in 1931 and 1939? and how did the most sophisticated futurist-oriented avant-garde thinker, Wyndham Lewis, have such a profound influence on the political philosophy of fascism? However, he confesses:

In 1926 I began writing about politics, not because I like politics but everything was getting bogged in them and before you could do anything you had to deal with the politics with which it was encrusted. And I've got so bepoliticked myself in the process that in order to get at me, to-day, you have to get the politics off me first. (Lewis *Blasting & Bombardiering*. [with Plates, Including Portraits.] 320)

To fulfill this dual purpose, the present study seeks to delve into investigating Wyndham Lewis's highbrow books in 1931 and 1939, both to signify Lewis's fascist championship and allegiances and to elucidate his apparent alignment with fascist ideologies in order to unravel the mystery surrounding his political trajectory of Fascism with a nuanced approach. Although suffused with a pessimistic tone toward the English populace, as evidenced by sentiments such as "*I am proud to die for my ideals and I am*

sorry for the sons of Britain who have died without knowing why”, the nub of the matter is the fact that ‘Lewis was the quintessential progressive artist and his draw to Hitlerism and Fascism is as much novelty seeking as much as it was sympathy for the devil, the ultimate underdog.’ (Lewis *Hitler* (1931) 19) Lewis was known to have visited Oswald Mosley, the leader of the British Union of Fascists, who later recalled in his autobiography how Lewis “used to come see [him] in the most conspiratorial way, late at night with his coat collar turned up.” After the National Socialists came to power, whenever Lewis was questioned about his book *Hitler*, he readily agreed to have it destroyed. “And pulp it accordingly became,” he wrote. (Lewis *The Hitler Cult* 13)

By 1930, resistance to the National Socialists had intensified dramatically. The Social Democrats held strong control over Prussia and its police force, actively seizing every chance to harass and prosecute National Socialists—methods that would resonate with modern political dissidents. Lewis was never forgiven for documenting these events in *Hitler* (1931), and his portrayal was quickly dismissed as “biased” and a “historical misrepresentation,” despite his firsthand experience of the unfolding history. Lewis capped the argument by quoting:

When two nations fall out, the armamentking and chemical-king rake in the shekels. When two men fall out, the lawyer coins money. When two Classes fall out, it is the same thing. Power, or wealth, passes from both to some third Class. (Lewis *Hitler* 75)

According to this perspective, even before rumors of treason and his ties to Ezra Pound led him to erase any memories of that turbulent period, he sought to clarify his stance and brace for the looming crisis. By 1939, as another European war appeared unavoidable, he made serious efforts to distance himself from his past, publishing two works aimed at providing him with much-needed plausible deniability. The first was *The Hitler Cult* (1939), a thorough repudiation of Adolf Hitler, and the second, *The Jews, Are They Human?* (1939), was a satire on antisemitism. And also in *The Hitler Cult*, Lewis feels compelled to reimagine Hitler. He recounts his encounters with the National Socialists to demonstrate that his involvement with them was minimal. Lewis’s prophetic insight continues in this work—just as he anticipated the rise of a figure like Hitler in *Tarr* (1918), he predicted his downfall six years later in *The Hitler Cult*.

## 2. Literature Review

Wyndham Lewis’s works *Hitler* (1931) and *The Hitler Cult* (1939) lay a distinctive groundwork on the ideological reform in his viewpoints on fascism, showcasing both his early flirtation with and subsequent disenchantment regarding authoritarianism and

authoritarian governments. The existing scholarship on Lewis's involvement with fascist ideologies portrays the complexities and ambiguities within his narratives, often revealing an oscillation between endorsement and critical distance. To this extent, early critics like Fredric Jameson and Paul Edwards interpret Lewis's *Hitler* as initially sympathetic to authoritarian hopes and aspirations. Jameson asserts that Lewis's idealization of authoritarianism in *Hitler* represents his critique of liberal democracy, which he saw as a failure to prevent societal decay. In this fashion, Lewis's early narratives echo a sentiment that fascism could revive order and meaning in the face of modernity's perceived chaos. Edwards builds on this perspective, claiming that *Hitler* expresses Lewis's admiration for formidable leadership as a counter to what he grasped as the decadence of the Weimar Republic and democratic culture. Such interpretations pinpoint the ideological tension in Lewis's early advocacy of fascist leadership as a way of reinforcing social cohesion.

More recent scholarship makes this reading more complicated by proposing that Lewis's later work, *The Hitler Cult* (1939), represented a fundamental move toward a critical appraisal of fascism and Nazism. Tom Lahey (2015) claims that *The Hitler Cult* demonstrates a shift from adulation to critique (renunciation of Fascism), as Lewis grew increasingly wary of the personality cults surrounding authoritarian leaders like Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini. Lahey discerns this later work as a political text indicating Lewis's trajectory in perspective, as he began to observe fascism as inherently detrimental due largely to its reliance on propaganda, violence, and brutal repression of individual thought. Scholars argue that *The Hitler Cult* espouses Lewis's critique of the mechanization of society and loss of individuality under authoritarian regimes (Lahey).

In a similar vein, critics like Andrzej Gasiorek and Jeffrey Meyers emphasize Lewis's later disavowal of Nazism in *The Hitler Cult* (1939), observing the text as an unambiguous condemnation of the personality cult surrounding Adolf Hitler and the psychological manipulation inherent in fascist regimes. They highlight Lewis's growing recognition of the dangers posed by authoritarianism, marking *The Hitler Cult* as a moral and ideological corrective to his earlier work. On the one hand, Gasiorek discusses Lewis's shift in perspective on Nazism, particularly as expressed in *The Hitler Cult*, highlighting how it reflects Lewis's disillusionment with authoritarianism and his critique of the manipulation underpinning fascist ideologies (Gasiorek). On the other hand, Meyers analyzes the trajectory of Lewis's political thought, with particular attention to his

retraction of earlier views expressed in *Hitler* (1931). Meyers positions *The Hitler Cult* as a key text where Lewis explicitly condemns the psychological strategies and dehumanizing cult surrounding Hitler, framing it as a moral reversal of his earlier ambivalence (Meyers).

The literature on Wyndham Lewis's *Hitler* (1931) and *The Hitler Cult* (1939) reveals a critical discourse that captures the great complexities of his involvement with fascist ideology. His 1931 work is often interpreted as an endorsement of authoritarianism, yet by 1939, his narratives reflect a clear departure toward skepticism and critique. This literature review accentuates the shift in Lewis's ideological stance over the decade, molding it as a progression from an initial ideological attraction to authoritarianism to a critical reassessment of the same. This research constructs on these interpretations to argue that *The Hitler Cult* represents a paradigm shift, revealing the disenchantment and critique that ultimately mark Lewis's mature engagement with fascist ideologies.

### 3. Approach and Methodology

The current article partakes of Fascism as a revolutionary brand of populist 'ultra-nationalism' and mass movement that held sway in various parts of the world and attracted new adherents to its principles. According to this perspective, it perceives Fascism as a type of political and ideological dogma centered around the national inauguration or ethnic rejuvenation, often manifested in its various contingent combinations and permutations. At the core of 'Palingenetic Ultrnationalism' lies the belief that the political/ideological dogma of Fascism can be precisely epitomized by its central myth of national renewal or regeneration, known as "palingenesis," derived from the Greek words, 'palin' and 'genesis' meaning "again" and "creation", respectively (Griffin *The Nature of Fascism* 302). Not only does this notion emphasize the conformation of the creed of authoritarianism/dictatorship as a political school of thought aimed at the revitalization of a country or empire, but also the core myth of palingenetic ultrnationalism can influence the initial mobilization and socio-political orientation towards the establishment of the Roman Empire and the German "Reich," evident in Benito Mussolini's Italian fascist regime and Adolf Hitler's Nazism as attempts to resurrect bygone glories.(Griffin *A Fascist Century: Essays by Roger Griffin* 99).

British political theorist and fasciologist, Roger Griffin re-examines Fascism as a nationalist revolution dedicated to mobilizing societal energies against perceived decline or 'decadence', with the aim of achieving national renewal through cultural, political, and ethical regeneration (Shenfield et al.). In that light, the palingenetic core of generic

fascist ideology ('Generic Fascism') intersects with modernization and modernity, whose conceptual and theoretical approaches, to a greater degree, the historical and national contexts are meant to draw from a miscellaneous assortment of conceptual transformations and ideological trends to unravel fascist ideology and to articulate its ideas and doctrines. However, Griffin's analysis positions Fascism within a spectrum of mythical renewal, emphasizing its aspirational quest for rejuvenation and revitalization:

In the inter-war period it manifested itself primarily in the form of an elite-led 'armed party' which attempted, mostly unsuccessfully, to generate a populist mass movement through a liturgical style of politics and a programme of radical policies which promised to overcome the threat posed by international socialism ... The core mobilizing myth of fascism which conditions its ideology, propaganda, style of politics, and actions is the vision of the nation's imminent rebirth from decadence. (Griffin "Generic Fascism" 98)

To forcefully drive home this point, Griffin's theory of fascism, dubbed "palingenetic ultra-nationalism," provides a prism through which to carry out an in-depth analysis of Wyndham Lewis's notorious works *Hitler* (1931) and *The Hitler Cult* (1939), shedding light on the evolution of fascist philosophy and its manifestations during the interwar period. This theoretical concept underscores the fascist belief in national rebirth or regeneration, often accompanied by a mythic vision of a golden age to be restored. This concept aligns with the themes of renewal and revitalization present in both Hitler's ideology and the broader fascist movement. In *Hitler* (1931), Wyndham Lewis may have been drawn to Hitler's promise of national rejuvenation and his appeal to a mythic past, reflecting a certain sympathy or ambivalence toward fascism. This sentiment echoes Griffin's interpretation that fascism appeared as a reaction to the severe shortcomings of political ideology, liberal democracy, and socialism. Lewis's manifestation of Hitler as a dynamic and charismatic figure resonates with Griffin's characterization of fascism as a revolutionary response to the perceived crisis of modernity and also suggests a practical option to the status quo that aligns with the populist and nationalist elements of Griffin's concept of fascism. However, in *The Hitler Cult* (1939), Lewis's perspective seems to have shifted, indicating a more critical assessment of Hitler and the fascist movement. This transformation may reflect a growing recognition of the potential threats posed by fascist ideologies and their authoritarian tendencies, as highlighted by Griffin's analysis of fascism as a totalitarian state of ultra-nationalism.

Griffin's conceptual framework of fascism emphasizes the totalitarian nature of fascist regimes and authoritarian tendencies, which seek to mobilize society around a vision of national rebirth/renewal under the leadership of a charismatic dictator, and to consolidate power and suppress dissent in the name of national unity and collective purpose. This totalitarian impulse is evident in both Hitler's regime and the broader fascist movement. Hence, in *The Hitler Cult* (1939), Lewis may have sought to expose the dangers of totalitarianism and the erosion of individual freedom under the guise of national unity and collective purpose. His critique of Hitler's cult of personality and the authoritarian nature of Nazi rule reflects Griffin's emphasis on the totalitarian dimensions of fascism.

#### 4. Analysis

Wyndham Lewis's boundless political enthusiasm has been of considerable significance and yet a politically debatable issue: whether his eagerness for politics had an inherent right-wing leaning, which became particularly troubling with the advent of Fascism in the 1930s. Accordingly, the printing of Lewis's unreserved support and endorsement of *Hitler* in 1931 seemed to confirm this marked tendency, reaching its peak with delusional beliefs that Hitler, "a Man of Peace who will help quash Bolshevism," (Lewis *Hitler* 32) whose policies could prevent a second world war, and gives new impetus to his unswerving devotion to the spreading of political propaganda of Nazi Germany during the rising and falling tidal wave of fascism. This is substantiated by the fact that Lewis's shift towards fascism and admiration for Hitler can be seen as symptoms of a broader disillusionment with Western civilization (Whittier-Ferguson). Lewis, however, endeavored to stem the growth of deep futurist-oriented avant-gardism in the late twentieth century, his fragmented but idiosyncratic personality had a tendency to assert a direct correlation between his radical modernist doctrine and its tendency to shade over into the unifying credo of fascism.

Alan Munton commented on the fact that the book *Hitler* (1931) led to scrutiny of Lewis's political narratives, rightfully raising concerns about his racially discriminatory writings of the 1930s (Munton "Wyndham Lewis: From Proudhon to Hitler (and Back): The Strange Political Journey of Wyndham Lewis"). These ostensibly inflammatory books of the 1930s—notably *The Hitler Cult* (1939)—served as a second chapter of Lewis's pro-fascist arguments and self-exculpation in allegedly pro-fascist polemical and disputatious texts, challenging the notion that his work was saturated with right-wing Anglo-German ideals. In this fashion, the elusive term of "proto-fascist" was meant to ensure Lewis's

political views towards Fascism by means of his more substantial predecessors, *The Art of Being Ruled* (1926) (a political theory), and *Time and Western Man* (1927) (an attack on subjectivity and the cult of flux in modern art), which made his theoretical political arguments more tangible in the aftermath of World War I on philosophy, politics, and art. As Fredric Jameson suggests Lewis's brand of fascism was a protest against the alienation of social life (Jameson 14), viewing modernists as inherently tied to conservative political thought:

Protofascism may be characterized as a shifting strategy of class alliances whereby an initially strong populist and anticapitalist impulse is gradually readapted to the ideological habits of a petty bourgeoisie, which can itself be displaced when, with the consolidation of the fascist state, effective power passes back into the hands of big business. (15)

This is substantiated by Lewis's perspective, as articulated in *The Diabolical Principle*, which appeared in his journal 'The Enemy' in early 1929 (Vol. 3). Until 1937, he was heavily influenced by right-wing political ideologies, vehemently criticizing Communism and communists while advocating for the dismantling of what he viewed as a deeply flawed societal structure—the destruction of contemporary society, or Western Civilization (Lewis *The Diabolical Principle*). His criticisms were frequently aimed at other intellectuals, particularly those aligned with leftist ideologies, leading him to coin the term "Left wings," as seen in the contentious polemic of 1936 titled *Left Wings over Europe* (Munton "Wyndham Lewis: From Proudhon to Hitler (and Back): The Strange Political Journey of Wyndham Lewis"). Additionally, Lewis himself, in *Blasting and Bombardiering* (1937), acknowledges, "I am the most broadminded 'leftwinger' in England. If I have mentioned these Marxian playboys first, it is not out of bias for the rebellious mind. It is because the right-wing never 'creates', for some reason, in England." (Lewis *Blasting & Bombardiering*. [with Plates, Including Portraits.] 321).

Britain was approaching the depths of a prolonged economic downturn by 1930, which would result in significant electoral setbacks for the Labour Party. This dashed the hopes and expectations of numerous liberal elites and contributed to a growing political polarization toward both the right and the left. On one extreme, there was a growing appeal for the Communist Party, while on the other, Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists was gaining traction (Miller). It is reasonable to infer that the fundamental essence of Lewis's political stance, which combines elements of communism and fascism along with a noticeable inclination towards monarchism within Marxism (Lewis *The Diabolical Principle*), yet fundamentally aligns with anarchism while also advocating for



order, grapples with a range of concepts amid a declining ruling class and a newly assertive but politically unsteady working class. These concepts tend to lean more towards socialism and cultural anarchism, as seen through a "culturalist" perspective during the mid-1920s, wherein revolutionary art and thought run parallel to revolutionary politics or idealism:

The transition from one set of values to a more scientifically accurate one which the Communist wishes to effect in the minds of the majority, has already been effected in the minds of a minority. So all popular revolutions, of whatever nature, have always, before they occurred, virtually existed in the consciousness and behaviour of a minority, and often, visibly, in phalansteries and colonies. The merely political revolutionary is thus, for the most part, an interpreter only of a creative mind. [...] That sort of revolutionary idealism, in the world of the War and of Postwar, would be strangely unreal. (Lewis *The Diabolical Principle* 75-77)

Based on the *Führerprinzip* ("Leadership principle") ideology, Adolf Hitler's cult of personality was seen as crucial for achieving Nazi political goals and served as the cornerstone of political authority in Nazi Germany (1933–1945). This cult of personality was propagated through the spreading of political propaganda, and bolstered by Hitler's successes in overcoming Germany's economic downturn and unemployment setbacks, re-establishing German strength, overthrowing the Versailles Treaty through remilitarizing/rearming amidst the worldwide Great Depression, and restoring Germany's military and political dominance in Europe. This became a pivotal element of Nazi authority over the German populace, as Hitler pledged vigorous action and a reconstructive ideology, aiming "to seize the big bull of Finance by the horns, and to take a chance for the sake of freedom" (Lewis *Hitler* 202).

In a similar vein, Hitler's leadership was considered indispensable to the National Socialist regime, with the party and its ideology being inseparable from him, 'Germany is now National Socialist: and National Socialism is Herr Hitler. The National Socialist régime could not survive him, and would not have come into being without him' (Lewis *The Hitler Cult* 39). In current political usage, 'the Führer's word is above all written law' and that state/public strategies, resolutions and regulations were implemented to aim at complying with the realization of the leader principle at all levels of society/hierarchy (executive power, judicial power, and legislative power). To put it more succinctly, this resulted in an authoritarian system where power flowed from the top down, swearing

unquestioning obedience to a visionary leader, which is an earmark of political fascism. To this extent, Adolf Hitler, according to Nazi ideology, was depicted as a gifted demagogic figure to embody and shape the German people, as an iconic figure to be capable of saving Germany, and as a mighty defender to defend Germany against its adversaries, as Historian Ian Kershaw underscores this depiction of Hitler as a gifted demagogue who symbolized hope and strength for the German nation:

Hitler stood for at least some things they [German people] admired, and for many had become the symbol and embodiment of the national revival which the Third Reich had in many respects been perceived to accomplish. He had evoked in extreme measure and focused upon himself many irrational, but none the less real and strong, feelings of selfless devotion, sacrifice, and passionate commitment to a national ideal—emotions which had developed enormous, elemental force during and after the First World War. (Kershaw *The "Hitler Myth"* 171)

Newspapers overseen by Nazi propaganda chief Joseph Goebbels, such as *Völkische Freiheit* (People's Freedom) (1924), *Der Angriff* (The Attack) (1927), and *Das Reich* (The Nation) (1940), served a dual purpose: they contributed to the construction and dissemination of the 'Führer myth' or the 'Hitler myth,' while also playing a crucial role in stabilizing and unifying the Nazi system. Through the use of photographs and illustrations portraying Hitler, these newspapers propagated an image of him as a revered role model in all aspects. He was depicted both as a laborer and a soldier who risked his life for Germany during World War I, and as an unmatched heroic genius possessing nearly superhuman attributes. This portrayal emphasized his ability to quell widespread discontent and provide a socio-economic framework of 'national' policy, unity, and strength, promoting 'national efficiency' and interests, as well as fostering national regeneration, all of which were perceived as transcending the ordinary aspects of daily life (Kershaw *To Hell and Back: Europe 1914–1949*).

In *Der Angriff*, Goebbels consistently emphasized certain recurring themes, including condemnation of the "November Criminals," criticism of the inefficiency of parliamentary governance, and vilification of the Jewish population (Blamires). Likewise, under the headline "The National Socialist movement heralds the revival of the German nation," (282) the provincial party paper quoted Hitler as proclaiming, "I believe I believe that I am God's instrument of nature to liberate Germany." (283) The Nazi newspaper *Völkischer Beobachter* ("People's Observer") portrayed Hitler as a resolute figure committed to liberating Germany from decades of Soviet oppression and the perceived falsehoods of liberalism. He was depicted as a man with a singular mission to rescue

Germany, encapsulated in the political slogan *Hitler über Deutschland* ("Hitler Over Germany"), or 'Hitler for Germany—the entire nation for Hitler,' thereby endorsing key aspects of Nazi governance (Orlow).

In elucidating Hitlerism doctrine, which revolves around the concepts of Soil, Race, and Kultur, it is noteworthy to mention that his 'doctrine' is the restoration of majority rule to Germany in order to fulfill the hopes and aspirations for the future, and the preservation of its racial traditions, particularly Aryanism. Adolf Hitler, hailed as a 'man of the people'— '*Mann aus dem Volke*,' epitomized the typical German soldier whose deep-seated feelings of nationalism, racism and antisemitism were deeply ingrained in his personality. Hitler, a remarkably intelligent individual, justified his beliefs through a power argument rooted in Darwinian and Nietzschean principles of the "struggle for existence." He advocated the notion that survival hinges on one's ability to fight, asserting that individuals who refuse to partake in this ongoing battle are unworthy of existence, "Those who want to live, let them fight, and those who do not want to fight in this world of eternal struggle do not deserve to live" (Hitler 210). To expand upon and market these ideas, Hitler, viewed as a truly socialist prophet with militant ideologies, believed that people could be put into a hierarchical classification of races and ethnic groups with some deemed superior to others. In this fashion, drastic proposals targeted against the Jews were prioritized by the Hitlerist Programme where a nationwide, centrally directed, violent wave of anti-Semitism reached its zenith in Nazi Germany (Lewis *Hitler* 35). This historical context, in this light, underscores the undeniable link 'between anti-Semitism and right-wing ideologies, with Nazism as its most extreme example' (Frisch 24).

However, Lewis, functioning as a modernist artist, categorized revolutionary politics into two main streams: centralizing Marxism and decentralizing anarchism. His aim was to blend these opposing political and economic structures within the framework of federalism, engaging deeply in the discourse surrounding postwar European society. In fact, his strong preference for Proudhon over Marx as a political thinker was indicative of his belief that some form of authoritarian control or planning from a creative center was necessary (Lewis *The Hitler Cult*). This preference was part of his effort to conceptualize the socio-political conditions most conducive to artistic production, alongside a third crucial element: individualism.

Lewis's political views, according to Alan Munton in *Lewis, Anarchism, and Socialism* (2016), coined three terms: "anarchic" individualism defines the most intense interpersonal relationships; "anarchist" mutualism conveys the most effective political structure; and "Marxism" differs from these by having a centralizing and potentially

authoritarian structure that may nevertheless be the source of a planned creativity.' (Munton "Lewis, Anarchism, and Socialism") As Lewis is broadly skeptical about Marx and Marxism, he characterizes the term "ideology" to portray a political belief or theory, but an active political and cultural power that modifies or restructures society by its use of global hegemonic powers in order to inculcate fixed ideas or principles into social class as dominant (Munton "Lewis, Anarchism, and Socialism"). What stimulates Lewis to apply "ideology" or world-view and technical processes in *Time and Western Man* (1927) is to depict innovative ideas and virtuosity in the modernist literary work of his time, notably in James Joyce's *Ulysses*, which he interprets as a victim text of ideology:

Strictly speaking, he has none at all, no special point of view, or none worth mentioning. It is such people that the creative intelligence fecundates and uses; and at present that intelligence is political, and its stimuli are masked ideologies. He is only a tool, an instrument, in short. That is why such a sensitive medium as Joyce, working in such a period, requires the attention of the independent critic." (Lewis *Time and Western Man* 88)

Lewis's notorious remarks on political activity or his long failure to identify the threat of Hitler may have changed his mind for a variety of reasons to envisage an active relationship between liberty and authority (Munton "Lewis, Anarchism, and Socialism"). He expressed the sentiment that in 1937, the prevalent discourse revolved around the dichotomy of 'communism' versus 'fascism'. However, he personally did not subscribe to the belief that either 'communism' or 'fascism' inherently provided solutions to any problems, "In 1937 everybody's talking about 'communism' versus 'fascism'. I am not one of those who believe that either 'communism' or 'fascism' are in themselves solutions of anything." (Lewis *Blasting & Bombardiering. [with Plates, Including Portraits.]*) In his works, Lewis depicted his own social and cultural milieu, reflecting his philosophical and political viewpoints. For instance, in *Count Your Dead: They Are Alive!* (1937), he aimed to demonstrate the interconnectedness of war, art, civil unrest, labor strikes, and coups d'état. One notable sentence from the book reads: "The solution to which we are being driven by our acquiescence in present events, is Communism" (Lewis *Count Your Dead: They Are Alive!: Or, a New War in the Making*). However, despite Lewis's association of classicism (and thereby an external approach) with fascism, this statement represents a relatively moderate assertion.

In *Hitler* (1931), not only did Lewis shift towards sympathetic views of fascism but also revealed his deepest ideological allegiances (Phillips). He expressed profound admiration for fascist regimes, particularly the German variant, stating that "the Hitlerist

dream [was] full of an imminent classical serenity—leisure and abundance. It is, with them, Misery-spot against Golden Age!" (Lewis *Hitler*) However, just before the outbreak of the Second World War, he almost completely renounced his earlier views on fascism. He once again associated fascism with democracy, arguing that both were mass movements. However, it is worth noting that Lewis, indeed, considered himself an uncommitted apolitical person with full of contradictions/paradoxes between fascism and communism:

In a period of such obsessing political controversy as the present, I believe that I am that strange animal, the individual without any 'politics' at all. You will find neither the politics of communism nor those of the militant Right here ... In a platonic commonwealth I should be a politician, for then politics would be identical with my deepest interests. Here they are not. Here I could not be a politician without ceasing to be other things which their profession would contradict. (Lewis *Time and Western Man* 116)

This statement from Wyndham Lewis's *Time and Western Man* (1927) exemplifies his self-perception as an intellectual and cultural outsider, detached from the polarized political ideologies of his time. It reflects his commitment to individuality, critical thinking, and a skepticism of dogmatic systems, whether they stem from communism, fascism, or any other ideological orthodoxy. In fact, Lewis presents himself as someone who resists being categorized within the political frameworks of his era, instead engaging with politics "on the ideal plane," where it intersects with philosophical inquiry and cultural critique.

## 5. Conclusion

The juxtaposition of *Hitler* (1931) and *The Hitler Cult* (1939) marks Wyndham Lewis's evolving standpoints on fascism and totalitarianism during a continuing tumultuous period of European history. While Lewis firstly witnessed Hitler with a mixture of admiration and apprehension, he finally came to renounce the fascist movement and its authoritarian impulses. "From Hitler to Hitler" thus encapsulates Lewis's transformative journey from fascination to disenchantment with fascism, reflecting broader shifts in public opinion and political consciousness during the interwar era. In *Hitler* (1931), Wyndham Lewis arouses his intellectual curiosity of Adolf Hitler's accession to power and the subsequent socio-political phenomenon of fascism in Europe. Narrated shortly after Hitler's rise to the Chancellorship of Germany, the text portrays Lewis's initial enthusiasm with the fascist movement/regime and its charismatic leader, who capitalized on the political and economic turmoil of post-World War I Germany to rally

popular support for his nationalist and anti-Semitic agenda. In this fashion, Lewis represents Hitler as a dynamic and transformative figure who embodies the spirit of the times and offers a viable solution to the perceived failures of liberal democracy and socialism. While acknowledging the growing menaces posed by Hitler and the fascist movement, Lewis also shows a certain flirtation with the energy and dynamism of Hitler's leadership style and manner.

In contrast, *The Hitler Cult* (1939) depicts a critical re-evaluation of Hitler and the fascist movement in light of the increasing socio-political tensions and perpetuating atrocities of the late 1930s. In this oeuvre, Lewis adopts a more skeptical and condemnatory stance toward Hitler and the cult of personality surrounding him and exposes the contradictions and hypocrisies of Hitler's regime, criticizing its propaganda techniques, suppression of dissent, and expansionist ambitions. In summary, "From Hitler to Hitler" offers a compelling framework for analyzing Wyndham Lewis's fascist insights as reflected in his contrasting works, *Hitler* (1931) and *The Hitler Cult* (1939). Through this paradigm, we can trace Lewis's intellectual trajectory from fascination to critique, casting light on the intricacies of the interwar period and the enduring legacy of fascism in contemporary society.

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