

Ford Madox Ford in Toulon:

Biography, Culture & Environment in the 1920s and 1930s

Université de Toulon: 28th & 29th June 2019



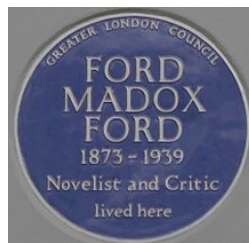
Amphi Y002, UFR Lettres, Campus de la Garde

The Ford Madox Ford Society

Ford and Toulon: Biography, Culture and Environment in the 1920s and 1930s

While there have been previous Ford Society conferences on the writer's life in France, this venture represents an exciting opportunity to explore his life and work in Toulon, the heart of the literary Riviera, in the 1920s and 1930s. A recent event, in Montpellier, in September, 2017, organised by Isabelle Brasme, provided evidence of current French academic interest in Ford's work, particularly among the postgraduate and early career community. The Toulon conference will build on this interest. To broaden relevance and reach further still, it will be tied in with local tourist and cultural organisations, such as the "Académie du Var".

Ford was in Toulon in 1925 as he was writing *A Man Could Stand Up* – volume 3 of his First World War masterpiece, *Parade's End* (1924-1928), and again in 1926. Recent biographical excursions have begun to establish the whereabouts of the studios he and Stella Bowen found and rented, and later lent to James Joyce, for example. Toulon was a heart of the literary and artistic Riviera in the 1920s and 1930s, and this conference proposes to explore Ford's life and work at that heart, as well as the networks he nurtured while there - with Ezra Pound, for example, and numerous British and American expats and visitors. Other prominent writers close to Ford, like Joseph Conrad, spent time in Toulon, and this conference will also provide the opportunity to explore those relationships, and that location as a way of focusing on particularly important aspects of them, to do with the cultural life found in and created by traditions around food, for example, and the writers' use of the French language. As Dominique Lemarchal has recently argued in an essay on Ford and Conrad, their communication in French was a crucial element of their writing lives.



Friday 28 June

Morning

Amphi Y002 Campus de la Garde

9:00 Registration and welcome

9:30 : Opening by M. José Garcia-Romeu, Dean of the UFR Lettres,

Introduction by M. Gerard Garcia from the Académie du Var.

10:00 : Keynote Lecture

Chair: Salhia Ben-Messahel

- **Max Saunders** – *Ford in Toulon / Toulon in Ford*

11:00 : Refreshments

11:15 - 13:00 : Ford: lover, inveterate kitchen gardener, Epicurean

Chair : Dominique Lemarchal

- **Martin Stannard** – *Ford, Biala and Politics*
- **Sara Haslam** – *A bookish conversation: Ford's dedications to Biala in his last library*
- **Helen Chambers** - *With plenty of garlic, olives, tomatoes, and spices: reflections on Ford's food writing*

13:00 Lunch buffet at the UFR Lettres (provided)

Afternoon

reserved for conference participants

Lycée Hôtelier Anne-Sophie Pic (Toulon)

15:30 Provençal Gourmet Workshop hosted by Chef Jean Troin,

19:00 Dinner with the Chef, at the Workshop

20:30 After-dinner informal talk about Ford's use of French,
led by Dominique Lemarchal

Saturday 29 June

Morning

Amphi Y002, UFR Lettres, Campus de la Garde

9:00: Ford Madox Ford International Society Annual General Meeting

10:00: Keynote Lecture

Chair: Sara Haslam

- **Laurence Davies** – *Of Blood, Soil, and Salad: Ford and the Lands of France*

11:00-11:15: Refreshments

11:15 - 12:15 : Living abroad: Ford and the French.

Chair: Max Saunders

- **Seamus O'Malley** – *The People and le peuple of Ford Madox Ford*
- **Dairine O'Kelly & Marine Bernot** – *George Moore and Ford Madox Ford: two contrasting visions of the Mediterranean*

13:00 Conference Lunch (reserved for participants)

L'aromate Provençal, 32 Rue Emile Gimelli, Toulon

14:30 Fordian tour of Toulon and its surroundings

ABSTRACTS

Sara Haslam - 'A bookish conversation: Ford's dedications to Biala in his last library'.

This paper develops work I have been undertaking on the collection of Ford's books that his last partner, Janice Biala, donated to the New York Public Library before her death in the 1990s. In essays published in the Times Literary Supplement and Last Post: A Journal from the Ford Madox Ford Society I have provided an account of the titles in this collection as well as the discovery of Ford's editing of *Parade's End* in his own copies of the novels included there, but as yet one important element of the story remains untold. Ford dedicated many of these titles to Biala in specific ways, on specific dates, and in specific locations, including their homes in the south of France. As many critics have shown, conversation was crucial to Ford's view of a life well lived, as well as a fundamental element of his relationships with the women who were most important to him. In this paper I will investigate the romantic, biographical, and perhaps financial 'conversations' that were being continued and enacted in written form in his dedications to Biala in this last collection of his books, as well as consider other interpretations of Ford's behaviour as he presented these texts, including what I hope to show is the related genre of the 'autograph book' that had become so popular during the First World War.

Max Saunders – Ford in Toulon / Toulon in Ford

When Ford and his companion of the 1920s, Stella Bowen, visited Toulon at the end of 1925, she said she 'fell in love with Toulon at first sight'. Ford too was enamoured, and found he wrote well there. He was to revisit the town several times over the next few years, eventually renting part of the Villa Paul, near the sea, with Janice Biala in 1931. It was to be their main base in France until late 1936, when due to the Depression they could no longer afford to keep it on.

The paper will explore Ford's life in Toulon with Bowen and their daughter Julie, and then with Biala. It will consider what they said about the region. But the main part of it will be devoted to discussing how Toulon and its environs figure in Ford's writing of the 1930s; and in particular his pair of novels *The Rash Act* (1933) and *Henry for Hugh* (1934), both set in Toulon with recognisable descriptions of its features and landmarks. The aim is to gauge the difference Toulon made to Ford's last decade; how it changed not only his view of France but of himself.

Seamus O'Malley – "The People and *le peuple* of Ford Madox Ford"

The phrase "the people" has a long a complex history, the latest chapter—Brexit—currently under composition. Those who wield the phrase usually write as if the definition of "the people" is self-evident, though it rarely is. So when Ford Madox Ford wrote *The Spirit of the People* in 1907, who were they? More importantly—as definitions of "the people" usually function better negatively, as in the "enemies of the people"—who were not "the people" in that work? Ford returned to a book-length cultural treatise with *A Mirror to France* (1926), so this paper will also ask who are "le peuple" of that text. While Ford is not a populist thinker by any means, reading his works through the lens of theories of populism (via Margaret Canovan and Ernesto Laclau) can reveal insights into his cultural presumptions and rhetorical strategies.

Proposal from Prof. Martin Stannard, University of Leicester, UK, for the 'Ford and Biala' section – 'Ford, Biala and Politics'

I have just signed a contract with OUP for a new biography, *Ford and Biala: A Bohemian Life*. What might it have to offer? The idea behind the book is to re-read both their lives in the light of the 'new' Biala letters to her brother, Jack Tworokov, to Wally Tworokov, and to Shelby Cox, a childhood friend. Ford scholars, of course, will know of these letters since Jason Andrew, manager of the Biala estate, gave a presentation on them, and I gave a paper quoting from them at the 2005 FMF conference, published in *Ford Madox Ford's Cosmopolis: Psycho-Geography, Flânerie and the Cultures of Paris* ed. Alexandra Becquet and Claire Davison (2016). These letters are, I believe, significant documents when we try to piece together Ford's shattered life and relate it to his work. They represent a considerable archive unavailable to previous biographers, revealing, for instance, a great deal about Biala's past, and a fly-on-the-wall account of her life with Ford during his last nine years in Paris, Provence and America. When they met on 1 May, 1930, a litter of failed affairs, hopeless infatuations, one marriage and three children lay behind him. He was fifty-six, portly, fish-faced and gasping for breath. She was 27, svelte and beautiful. 'I admit it sounds fantastic,' she wrote to Jack that September, trying to explain this improbable liaison, 'but I am terribly in love with him. [...] Ford is as young as you and I are mentally and physically he is a colossus.'

Her family, including, it seems, Jack, found this relationship improbable to the point of being improper. Yet she saw him as utterly delightful: the feminist, the gentle lover, the attentive father, the cook, the gardener, the 'Green'. She saw his sense of humour, modesty and generosity of spirit in a way that none of his previous women had. Trying to understand this modern *La Bohème* I think offers a new perspective on their whole lives up to this point, in particular on their politics and sexual politics.

Laurence Davies, University of Glasgow – Of Blood, Soil, and Salad: Ford and the Lands of France

Amid the throng of modes and topoi in *Provence: From Minstrels to the Machine* is a distinctive strain of ecological observation and critique. Ford (and Tietjens) loved the writings of Gilbert White, the eighteenth-century Anglican priest and naturalist. Along with other members of Edward Garnett's circle, Ford also admired the *Sportsman's Sketches* of Turgenev and W. H. Hudson's wide-ranging yet precisely seen studies of English and Argentinian environments. The Ford of the 20s and 30s was unenchanted by the British diet and landscape (too uniformly green, too many brussels sprouts, too much bloody beef) yet his language is hardly that of a culinary Savonarola.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, however, respect or veneration for the land was not always teasing or benign. Right across the Continent and the islands of the Anglo-Celtic Archipelago, what is often called blood and soil nationalism flourished. Its principal tenets were (and still are) an insistence on cultural exclusiveness, an emphasis on sacrifice and purgation, a celebration of military glory and the sanctity of the national terrain. In this proposal I concentrate on France, where this agenda was fissured with quarrels between Catholics and secularists, monarchists and republicans, authoritarians and parliamentarians, taking Maurice Barrès (1862-1923) as a relatively moderate exemplar.

Barrès and Ford share a love of place and region; the latter for Provence, the former for Lorraine his birthplace, now bisected by the Prussian annexation of 1871. For Barrès, however, Alsace and Lorraine are essential parts of a pyramid with France itself at the apex. For Ford, Provence belongs on the Great Trade Route with its far-

Barrès and Ford share a love of place and region; the latter for Provence, the former for Lorraine his birthplace, now bisected by the Prussian annexation of 1871. For Barrès, however, Alsace and Lorraine are essential parts of a pyramid with France itself at the apex. For Ford, Provence belongs on the Great Trade Route with its far-flung ways of life and destinations. While he claims to be most at home in Provence, he is a sturdy cosmopolitan – that role so loathed by phobic politicians. For Barrès France is a nation sustained and unified by ancestry, and precious in the eyes of God; moreover, the soldiers of modern France are the spiritual descendants of the Crusaders. Ford cherishes the richness and distinctiveness of Provençal language and the visual arts and takes the side of the Albigensians. Although he insists that he is not a pacifist, if wars there must be, the smaller the better.

The contrasts extend to scale, tone, and linguistic register. As ever, Ford's prose is mercurial, overflowing with surprises. Any hardline nationalists who read this book by an irreverent foreigner would surely have been as irritated by its lack of decorum as by its indictment of the crusaders and defence of heretics. What does the watering of salad greens or the disruptive powers of the mistral count against the glories of France eternal?

Ford's rejection of patriotism, 'the meanest of all the virtues', was janiform, one face towards England, one towards France, but both faces mocking narrow-minded grandiosity because he 'was on the side of the Dagoes all the time'.

Helen Chambers, *The Open University* – 'With plenty of garlic, olives, tomatoes, and spices': reflections on Ford's food writing

In *Return to Yesterday* (1931) Ford declared 'I have long wanted to write a cookery book' thus echoing how two years earlier Gringoire, in *No Enemy* (1929), dictates entire recipes for a never-to-be written cookery book. Ford's approach to food writing is unique among his peers. No other writer of his period has so embedded within their work the tastes, scents and colours of simple French food, particularly that of the Mediterranean littoral. From his forty or so mentions of garlic and twenty of culinary basil, to his fascination with the colour of saffron, his explicit instructions for rabbit ragoût, his repeated evocations of the Provençal coastal landscape of rosemary, wild mint, and thyme, to his celebrated meditation on his art while peeling shallots in *It Was the Nightingale* (1934).

In this paper I explore Ford's ways of writing about food, as revealed in his memoirs, essays and articles, correspondence and fiction. Using textual clues, I attempt to uncover his sources, including classic French 19th century food writers. Using examples from his writing, I argue that Ford was, in his uncluttered approach to the preparation and enjoyment of (particularly provincial) French food, way ahead of his time. His writing very clearly reflects his respect for essential ingredients, many of which he had grown himself or sourced in local markets. He was poles apart from the stylised and often pretentious cooking of the interwar period, or the futurist fantasies of Filippo Marinetti (1931). Ford's food writing also had an unexpected afterlife. In 1939 a twenty-six-year-old Englishwoman had, in Antibes, become friendly with Ford's one-time *English Review* contributor Norman Douglas. Two decades later she was to publish landmark works on Mediterranean food and French provincial cooking, which paid rich tributes to Douglas and to Ford.

Marine Bernot – Ford’s love for Provence, its people and culture – sowing the seeds of sustainable tourism (article)

Dairine O’Kelly – George Moore and Ford Madox Ford: two contrasting visions of the Mediterranean.

Even though George Moore was twenty years his senior, Ford Madox Ford had the disagreeable experience of being taken more than once for his Irish fellow writer. Although this could only have been explained by both men's distinctly peculiar appearance, they had a surprising number of things in common. Both were in love with France and the French way of life; both were ardent feminists and unconditional supporters of the suffragettes; both were connected, although in different ways, with Impressionism; both suffered from the feeling that they could never live up to their illustrious fathers and grandfathers; both had a gift for rubbing important people up the wrong way. GM was as prudent a businessman as Ford was improvident. Ford converted to Catholicism. GM, from a devout Catholic family, announced, via the *Irish Times*, his intention of converting to Protestantism. Both were innovators in their different ways, valiant campaigners against censorship, neither afraid to drive a coach and four through stuffy Victorian conventions. Unlike Ford, GM had nothing but contempt for Joyce and neither had any sympathy for Oscar Wilde.

In other ways, they were different: Ford was obviously physically attractive to women, unlike Moore, whose relationships were for the most part frustratingly platonic. Unlike his compatriot and friend Frank Harris, he regaled his readers, not with his conquests, but with his failures. “The Lovers of Orelay” is a semi-fictional account of his one and only journey to the French Riviera in pursuit of the charismatic Maude Burke – the future Lady Cunard – and the episode responsible for the Dublin wit Sarah Purcell's: “Cads kiss and tell, gentlemen kiss and don't tell, but George Moore doesn't kiss and does tell.”

In this paper, the descriptions of the Riviera in the “Lovers of Orelay” will serve to illustrate the resemblances and differences between the artistic visions of these two writers. (Dairine O’Kelly will rely on the help of Marine Bernot for the passages on Ford).