

Honorary Members: Julian Barnes, Bernard Bergonzi, A. S. Byatt, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, Samuel Hynes, Alan Judd, Sir Frank Kermode, John Lamb, Sylvère Monod, Sergio Perosa, Ruth Rendell, Michael Schmidt, The Hon. Oliver Siskice, John Sutherland, Gore Vidal.

Executive Committee: *Chair:* Max Saunders *Treasurer:* Sara Haslam *Secretary:* Heather Beck

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OBITUARIES

Roger Poole

Roger Poole was actively involved in the Ford Society from its founding after the first British conference on Ford in 1996, serving continuously on its Executive Committee. He was an unforgettable presence at meetings and conferences: both modest and commanding; generous, amusing, and above all a warm friend to many of us. Fred Inglis' excellent obituary in the *Independent*, 28 November 2003, caught not only the extraordinary range of his intellectual achievements (Levi-Strauss, Sartre, Woolf, Kierkegaard . . .) but also his tone of existential irony. This wasn't just a quality he admired in his favourite writers – though it is an important part of his passion for Ford too – but it was also a quality he embodied. A moment from our first meeting (at that 1996 conference) has always stayed with me as emblematic of his wit. During a noisy coffee break we were talking, and I wanted to bring a friend into the conversation. I got as far as 'Roger, let me introduce you . . . ' when he stood back in mock-alarm, and boomed: 'Traduce me?' I've always loved the momentary vision conjured up of a world of treachery proceeding with good

manners. I once heard Christopher Ricks (another critic whose acuity about language is inseparable from sensitivity to motives) joke about the possibilities of ‘creative mishearing’. Roger’s joke was also a Fordian moment: the creative mind pursuing an impression that was more interesting than fact, and enriched the occasion. Inglis wrote of Roger’s ‘gallant, generous, and sometimes touchy’ mastery of his subjects. Those are all terms that have been used of Ford too, of course. But I think they also suggest what inspired Roger to champion Ford as a great Modernist. It was perhaps because Ford *had* been traduced – by fellow writers like Conrad and Hemingway, who were in his debt; by an ungenerous biography; and by readers and critics who merely neglected him – that Roger came so gallantly to his defence. That defence includes two recent ground-breaking essays. The first, in *Ford Madox Ford’s Modernity*, is a brilliant thought-experiment, exploring how far a reading of *The Good Soldier* can be taken in which the narrator betrays his readers; in which Dowell and Leonora have between them murdered the other characters; and according to which Ford has produced a detective story in which the reader must be the detective. It is sure to prove controversial as long as the novel is read. The second, called ‘How Should We Read Ford?’, in *Ford Madox Ford and the Republic of Letters*, edited by Vita Fortunati and Elena Lamberti, is another *tour de force*, seizing creatively on Ford’s curiously glancing dealings with Modernism in *The March of Literature* as a way of opening up the questions of his relation to Modernism, and of Modernism’s relation to Impressionism. Roger had been invited to give one of the Society’s annual Ford Madox Ford Lectures, and when he died was working on an analysis of Ford’s discussions of narrative techniques. This too sounded as if it would prove another decisive contribution to Ford criticism. I am sorry not to have been able to hear it; sorrier that he is no longer with us to deliver it. He is sadly missed by his friends in the Ford Society.

Max Saunders

I first met Roger at the inaugural British Ford Madox Ford conference in 1996. Our panel of three had shrunk intimidatingly to two, and he was alluded to as the Grand Vizier of Deconstruction. Worse, his paper was, it was hinted, part of a Larger Project. Wads of reading matter were distributed: the reprint of an article, notes, outlines. I, on the other hand, had nothing to distribute and no Large Project, but Roger was characteristically generous about my paper, which had been urged into shape in my usual dogged state of prolonged panic. He was always impressive, always gracious. There were the too brief meetings at Society events, from which I hurried away to trains or coaches. But once he came to Bristol and we met, by arrangement, at a Greek restaurant in Clifton. We had mezés, and more mezés (‘Excellent mackerel!’); wine, and more wine. We talked for hours, read bits of essays, tussled over Fordian errors, took in Henry James, Ezra Pound, wild flowers, Greek myth, Kierkegaard (of whom I knew nothing and he knew everything). We exchanged emails, a few letters, even discussed writing a book together. Things drifted, as they do. I heard he was ill; wrote a letter; rewrote it, but it was, somehow, never sent. A lesson learned there. Looking back now to those discussions, I find this: ‘...why don’t we meet up for say a working lunch in Bristol one weekend in later January, over a great deal of wine and some dish made with 40 cloves of garlic, and discuss everything so far, and see where we would start to write from?’

Alas, that meal we never had.

It is a large gap, a painful absence.

Paul Skinner

Remembering Roger Poole, there are two things that come to mind at once: His versatility as to language – he read German as well as French and Danish and I don't know what else – and his insatiable mind. All you had to do was to give vent to an idea, and he visibly set on to work it, to make it his own so to speak. He was a Fordian with a vision whose comments always provided food for thought, and as late as August 2002 he hoped, talking over the telephone, to see Münster, the place where Franz Hüffer had grown up.

Jörg W. Rademacher

FORD SOCIETY LIBRARY COLLECTION

The plan to build up a major collection of Ford books in conjunction with the library at King's College London has got off to an excellent start. Many thanks to the members of the society who have already generously donated over twenty volumes to be added to the collection. If anyone is considering making a donation, please contact Max Saunders for details: max.saunders@kcl.ac.uk

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

The Joseph Conrad Society's 2004 conference will be held at the Polish Social and Cultural Association (POSK), 238-246 King St, Hammersmith, London W6 0RF. The conference runs from 1-3 July. On Friday 2nd July, the afternoon sessions include a panel on Ford and Conrad, with the following papers:

ANDRZEJ GASIOREK: 'Cannibalism and Aquaria: Conrad, Ford, and Anarchism in London.'

JASON HARDING: 'Conrad and *The English Review*.'

HELEN SMITH: 'Edward Garnett, Joseph Conrad, and Ford Madox Ford.'

For further details, please see the website at:

<http://users.bathspa.ac.uk/conrad/>

7-9 April 2005: The Renaissance Society of America is including a panel on Ford's *The Fifth Queen* as part of its meeting in Cambridge (UK).

Münster

London

Paris

Telgte

New York



Literarische Aufbrüche

Franz Hüffer und sein Sohn
Ford Madox Ford

Mehrsprachige Lesung am Samstag, den 26. 6 im
Kirchenfoyer

Salzstraße
20 Uhr

FORD MADOX FORD AND ENGLISHNESS

CALL FOR PAPERS

**A CONFERENCE TO BE HELD IN MANCHESTER
17-18 DECEMBER 2004**

The complex writing of Ford Madox Ford is a reflection and refraction of aspects of the theme of Englishness. Ford's Englishness encompasses a variety of characters, both historical and imaginary, personalities, place-myths and classes. His life-long fascination with the Englishness of English life, as expressed in his fairy stories, novels, poems, essays, regional studies and editorship of the *English Review*, will be explored in the conference.

The topic coincides with a recent post-devolution interest in a surviving, or re-consolidated, Englishness. Great Britain may have lost its empire and a defined world role, but it is rediscovering 'virtual' Englishness, just as Ford was negotiating national ideas in his lifetime. The conference will serve to foster a reciprocal dialogue between contemporary perceptions and Fordian ideals, and the critique of an English society and culture.

Papers are encouraged on any aspect of this topic, or on the subject of Englishness in modernism.

It is planned that a book, in the International Ford Madox Ford Studies series, published by Rodopi, will be developed from the conference papers.

Proposals for papers should consist of two copies of a one-page outline, to be received by 16 July 2004, to:

Professor Emeritus Dennis Brown
Department of Humanities
De Havilland Campus
University of Hertfordshire
College Lane
Hatfield AL10 9AB
ENGLAND

Enquiries to Dr Jenny Plastow (0208 4414534) or Dr Ashley Chantler (a.chantler@chester.ac.uk).

All proposals will be welcomed and given sympathetic attention.

INTERNATIONAL FORD MADOX FORD STUDIES

The third volume of International Ford Madox Ford Studies will be published towards the end of 2004. It is on *History and Representation in Ford Madox Ford's Writings*, is edited by Joe Wiesenfarth, and collects nineteen papers from the 2002 Madison conference covering Ford's major work throughout his career. It includes Patrick Parrinder on Ford and the Spirit of Edwardian England; and the novelists Alan Judd (on using Ford in Fiction) and Nicholas Delbanco (on *The March of Literature*). The mailing list has to be sent to the publishers in September, so please subscribe to the society now for 2004 (if you haven't already!) to be sure of receiving your copy this year.

NEWS AND PUBLICATIONS

Reference To Ford In Journals And Magazines

Honorary member of the Society, Bernard Bergonzi, published a short essay in the TLS on Ford's claim that James based the character Merton Densher in *The Wings of the Dove* on him: 'Mortonifying', TLS (16 January 2004), 13.

The Posy Simmonds cartoon 'Literary Life' in the *Guardian* on 12th June 2004 showed a dejected woman writer lamenting as her partner comes in with the groceries: '. . . and what does it matter, my book, in the great scheme of things? . . . just another bloody book joining millions of other bloody books. . . Why write? What do we do it for? **Fame?** Puh!!!! . . . I mean, *what* are we? Motes of dust in freefall! . . . occasionally one or two specks catch the light – that's FAME! . . . there goes Dickens. . . that one's Beatrix Potter . . . there goes Ford Madox Ford. . .'

Books on Ford

We received the following volumes:

- Gilberto Coletto, *Vita letteraria di Ford Madox Ford*. Milano: Global Print, 2004
- Anthony Fowles, *Ford Madox Ford. A Student Guide*. London: Greenwich Exchange, 2002

Books by and on Ford published in Germany

- Joseph Conrad & Ford Madox Ford, *Bezauberung. Abenteuerroman, (Romance)*, translated and with an afterword by Rainer G. Schmidt, Hamburg/Bremen: Achilla Presse Verlagsbuchhandlung 2000.
- Ford Madox Ford, *Manche tun es nicht, (Some Do Not)* translated and with an afterword by Joachim Utz, Berlin: Eichborn.Berlin 2003.
- *Some Do Not* at long last out in German! Eichborn Verlag, always good for surprises, brought out the first volume of Ford's tetralogy late last year. The cover of the fat volume features an interesting juxtaposition of Mrs Comadi and London in the 1910s. The tone is set for Joachim Utz' translation of what according to the editor is Ford's "chef d'œuvre, the first of a series of novels". It seems as if the critical success of *Manche tun es nicht*, also translated into sales, since the second volume is due to be out in the autumn. Doubtless, any publisher is free to maintain that apart from *The Good Soldier* this was the only book by Ford ever available in German, but this is simply not true, for *Romance*, Ford's collaboration with Joseph Conrad, translated by Rainer G. Schmidt and entitled *Bezauberung. Abenteuerroman* has been on the

market since 2000 – which, interestingly, is acknowledged in a fairly comprehensive bibliographical survey at the back of the book. Like *Manche tun es nicht, Bezauberung* is a handsome book. For reasons of space, the translations proper cannot be studied here.

Jörg W. Rademacher

- *Vater und Sohn: Franz Hüffer und Ford Madox Ford (Hüffer)*, edited, translated and commented by Jörg W. Rademacher, Münster: Lit 2003.
This handsome anthology brings together and makes available in German a number of wide-ranging essays in cultural criticism by Franz Hüffer – on the influence of Schopenhauer on Wagner, or on the poetry of Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Algernon Charles Swinburne – with poems, memoirs, and little-known stories on German themes by Hüffer's son Ford Madox Ford. The degree to which Hüffer père was involved in the literary as well as the musical culture of England will surprise Ford scholars, as will the suggestion that Germany continued to figure as an important element of Ford's short fiction even after the First World War. Published in a series devoted to the culture of Münsterland, this thoroughly annotated and nicely illustrated volume documents the role of two generations of cosmopolitan Hüffers in exploring links between the arts and cultures of Germany and England during the crucial period from 1871 to 1939, and fills a large gap in our understanding of the importance of the Hüffer family in this process of cultural exchange.

Gene M. Moore

FORD BOOKS FOR SALE

Roger Davies has two Ford books for sale and these are as follows:

The Last Post (see Harvey p 70/71) Second American edition published by Albert & Charles Boni, New York 1928, 'Avignon Edition' and compliant with Harvey's specification in all respects. Very Good condition in slightly chipped but good dustwrapper and with protective clear wrapper covering.

Price £145 inc p & p in UK; Overseas postage payable at cost

The Inheritors (with Joseph Conrad) (see Harvey p 10) issued in The Uniform Edition of the Works of Joseph Conrad by J M Dent & Sons Ltd, London 1923.

Very good condition of a book relatively difficult to find in any edition.

The series was issued without dustwrappers.

Price £35 inc p& p in UK; Overseas postage payable at cost

Contact Roger direct to reserve either or both of the above. His contact details are 24 Park Street, Salisbury, Wiltshire, SP1 3AU, UK. Tel/Fax: 01722-501610 email:

rda@salisbury75.freerve.co.uk

RENEWALS OF SUBSCRIPTIONS

If you have not yet paid your subscription for 2004, but wish to remain a member and to receive a copy of this year's volume of *International Ford Madox Ford Studies*, please don't delay, and send a cheque for the appropriate rate (details below) to either:

Dr Sara Haslam,
Department of Literature,
The Open University,
Walton Hall,
Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA, UK.

Email: S.J.Haslam@open.ac.uk
Tel. 01 908 652 472
Fax 01 908 653 750

Or (if in US\$) to:

Prof. Joseph Wiesenfarth,
Department of English,
University of Wisconsin-Madison,
Helen C. White Hall,
600 North Park Street,
Madison, WI 53706-1475, USA

You may print and send the form below to either of the above addresses:

Ford Madox Ford Society Membership Form

First Name _____ Last Name _____

Category: Individual Concessions
Member Organisations Others

Academic institution _____

Address _____

Telephone _____

Fax _____

E-Mail _____

Total Membership Fee Enclosed _____

Date _____

Signature _____

As explained in previous newsletters, we urge members based in the UK to pay by standing order. This lessens the administrative burden on the Society's officers, and is very easy to set up; all you have to do is to contact your bank and ask that the appropriate amount is paid annually in January to the following account, until further notice:

The Ford Madox Ford Society
HSBC, St. Clement Danes
194 Strand, London WC2R 1DX
Sort Code: 40-06-29 Account no. 21391100

Rates:

Pounds sterling: Individuals: £12; Concessions £6; Member Organisations £17.50

US Dollars: Any category: \$25

* * *

Payments in Germany/Europe

Dr. Jörg W. Rademacher wegen Ford Madox Ford Society
Account no. 83144500 at Volksbank Münster, Germany
IBAN DE61 4016 0050 0083 1445 00
BIC GENODEM1MSC

The rates in Euros are:

Individuals: £12; 17 Euros
Concessions £6; 8.5 Euros
Member Organisations £17.50 25 Euros

To be paid at the start of each year, preferably by standing order.

* * *

If you received this newsletter by mail, but now have an e-mail address, could you please send a message to that effect to: max.saunders@kcl.ac.uk

Any material or ideas for the Ford Madox Ford Society web page or this newsletter would certainly be appreciated. Please note that our intention is to include a list of publications on Ford by Society members. Any information you can provide would be most welcome. Please send this to:

Michela A. Calderaro, Via Amba Aradam, 12, 30173 Mestre-Venice, Italy
Tel: 39-041-534-7801, Fax: 39-041-534-7807, Email: michela.calderaro@scfor.univ.trieste.it

Deadline for Submission of Material for the Newsletter

Summer issue: 30 April
Winter issue: 10 October

Against Oblivion: Ford Madox Ford¹

Ashley Chantler

University College Chester

‘You did not know I was a poet? Few
Possess that knowledge.’²

‘What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun?’³

Ford’s reputation as a major modernist novelist is now secure. His poetry, however, has been strangely neglected. Richard Aldington, William Rose Benét, T. S. Eliot, Robert Lowell, Ezra Pound, William Carlos Williams and W. B. Yeats all wrote favourably of it, yet when Ford is mentioned in critical studies of early twentieth-century poetry, it is usually in relation to Pound and to the influence Ford’s theories about poetry had on him. The impression these studies leave is that Ford’s poems have been little read – and this is true. The individual volumes are all rare books only available to scholars in copyright libraries or special collections. In America, not even Cornell University, the owner of the largest collection of Ford’s manuscripts and letters, holds all the volumes. It was not until 1997, with the publication of Max Saunders’s Carcanet *Selected Poems*, that Ford’s poetry became widely available, although this contains but a fraction of the total *opus*. In his lifetime, Ford published eight individual volumes – *The Questions at the Well* (1893), *Poems for Pictures* (1900), *The Face of the Night* (1904), *From Inland* (1907), *Songs from London* (1910), *High Germany* (1912), *On Heaven* (1918), *New Poems* (1927) – two *Collected Poems* (1913, 1936) and a one-hundred-and-twenty-six-page dramatic poem illustrated by Paul Nash, *Mister Bosphorus and the Muses* (1923). He also published a pamphlet, illustrated by Wyndham Lewis, of his war poem *Antwerp* (1915), which Eliot described as ‘the only good poem I have met with on the subject of the war’,⁴ and Harold Monro’s *Chapbook* devoted an issue to *A House* (March 1921), which won the 1921 *Poetry* magazine prize, an award conferred in previous years on H. D., John Gould Fletcher and Robert Frost. As Saunders has written: ‘That a major modernist such as Ford still needs a *Complete Poems* is something of a scandal’.⁵

¹ This piece is based on the preface of my Ph.D. thesis, ‘A Critical Edition of Ford Madox Ford’s *The Questions at the Well* (1893)’, University of Leicester (2003).

² Ford, *Buckshee*, in *Selected Poems*, ed. Max Saunders (Manchester: Carcanet, 1997), p. 148.

³ Ecclesiastes 1. 3; quoted by Ford in ‘Notabilia Quaedam’, a collection of quotations he was compiling; unpublished AMS, ‘9/2/93’, Ford Madox Ford Collection, Cornell University.

⁴ ‘T. S. E.’, ‘Reflections on Contemporary Poetry’, *Egoist*, 4. 10 (Nov. 1917), p. 151. In his article ‘On a Notice of “Blast”’, *Outlook*, 36 (31 July 1915), p. 144, Ford wrote: ‘Mr. Lewis has discovered a new poet who shows signs of being very much after my own heart in Mr. T. S. Eliot—an American’; reprinted in Ford, *Critical Essays*, ed. Max Saunders and Richard Stang (Manchester: Carcanet, 2002), pp. 182-85. The second, and last, issue of *Blast*, the ‘War Number’ (July 1915), contained Eliot’s ‘Preludes’ and ‘Rhapsody on a Windy Night’.

⁵ Saunders, ‘Introduction’, *Selected Poems*, p. xi.

The studied nonchalance of Ford's statements about writing poetry probably contributed to this neglect. He often discussed, for example, the use of 'juxtapositions' to 'suggest emotions',⁶ a technique of 'rendering'⁷ rather than 'telling' he had mastered by the 1910 volume, *Songs from London*. This technique was to become closely linked to Pound's, to Imagism and Vorticism. Yet of this Ford wrote, with typical self-deprecatory wit: 'For myself, I have been unable to do it; I am too old, perhaps, or was born too late—anything you like.'⁸ Lowell recounts how Ford 'wrote poetry with his left hand—casually and even contemptuously',⁹ and in the preface to the 1913 *Collected Poems*, Ford states:

the writing of verse hardly appears to me to be a matter of work: it is a process, as far as I am concerned, too uncontrollable. From time to time words in verse form have come into my head and I have written them down, quite powerlessly and without much interest, under the stress of certain emotions. And, as for knowing whether one or the other is good, bad or indifferent, I simply cannot begin to trust myself to make a selection.¹⁰

This statement, it would seem, was both true and untrue. It is probable that 'words in verse form' came into his mind and that he wrote them down quickly in a surge of inspiration, often driven in the early work by the musicality of the phrasing. The revisions contained in Ford's manuscripts and typescripts, however, suggest that what he published was not at all careless but the result of meticulous labour and an acute sensitivity to what is 'good, bad or indifferent'. The phraseology of the above ('from time to time', 'without much interest') and the impression Lowell received suggest an air of cultivated languor, Ford lulling his readers so that the cloudy brilliance of the poems surprise them more forcefully. But there is also, perhaps, the sense that there is more kudos to be gained, more 'style', in appearing to be a poet who captures the 'spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings' rather than one who has 'thought long and deeply'¹¹ and, Prufrock-like, had time for revisions. A series of conflicting images thus emerges of Ford's poetic 'personality'. Is it self-effacing or pompous, lazy or meticulous, sentimental or objective?

Scholars, it seems, are reluctant to allow Ford the poet into the canon because he does not fit neatly into any of its categories. He is a *fin de siècle* poet with the weariness and burden of Davidson, Dowson and Johnson, yet captured his anxieties in poems that read like pastiches of Coleridge, Keats, Tennyson and the Pre-Raphaelites. He is a literary impressionist who did not always write impressionist poems; a *Des Imagistes* contributor who said that the Imagists were his 'children'¹² but was never rigorously Imagist; a mordant satirist who published gentle poems to his children; a

⁶ Ford, 'Preface', *Collected Poems* (London: Max Goschen, [1913]), p. 19; see also, for example, *The March of Literature* (1938; London: George Allen and Unwin, 1939), p. 734, and *Rossetti: A Critical Essay on His Art* (London: Duckworth, 1902), pp. 91-92.

⁷ See, for example, 'Literary Portraits XXXVI. Les Jeunes and "Des Imagistes"', *Outlook*, 33 (16 May 1914), p. 683 (reprinted in *Critical Essays*, pp. 154-58), *Hans Holbein the Younger: A Critical Monograph* (1905; London: Duckworth, 1914), p. 11, *Joseph Conrad: A Personal Remembrance* (London: Duckworth, 1924), p. 208, and *The Soul of London in England and the English*, ed. Sara Haslam (Manchester: Carcanet, 2003), p. 3.

⁸ Ford, 'Preface', *Collected Poems*, p. 19.

⁹ Robert Lowell, 'On Two Poets', *New York Review of Books*, 6. 8 (12 May 1966), p. 3.

¹⁰ Ford, 'Preface', *Collected Poems*, p. 9.

¹¹ William Wordsworth, 'Preface' to *Lyrical Ballads* (1802), in *William Wordsworth*, ed. Stephen Gill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 598.

¹² Ford, 'A Jubilee', *Outlook*, 36 (10 July 1915), p. 46; reprinted in *Critical Essays*, pp. 178-82.

war poet whose collection of war poems is dominated by a poem not about the war; and a sentimental love poet sceptical of romantic love.

On 9 February 1893, when the teenage Ford wrote the Ecclesiastes verse in his 'Notabilia Quaedam', it followed quotations from Lucretius and from Arthur Schopenhauer. Lucretius meditated on humankind's quest for happiness, the materiality and mortality of the self and the indifference of the gods.¹³ His pessimism is tempered by the pleasure of contemplating the natural world. Schopenhauer, the German philosopher of suffering, the self as Will and the absence of God, also sought escape, in his case of aesthetic contemplation.¹⁴ These contradictory impulses away from chaos and towards integration (either in the natural or the artificial), are both present in Ford's poetry and create a tension in his literary voice between passion and indifference, love and coolness, sex and love, faith and despair – all of which relate to his uncertain (but passionate) religious faith. On 25 March 1892, Olive Garnett wrote in her diary:

I was [...] very much shocked when Ford admitted that as a relief from the gospel of perfect indifference to everything, he sought refuge in bigoted pietism in the Brompton Oratory, not that he thought that Catholicism was rational, outside its circle, but that it satisfied his sensual religious needs, he found poetry in it, etc. [...] I was as much surprised when Ford also declared that the only thing really interesting & unfathomable was love, not the higher kind, but the lower kind. 'Helen of Troy the everlasting symbol.' Men to become beasts etc.¹⁵

The 'lower kind' of love seems to be love that is inseparable from, and confused by, sexual desire, and has the dual potential of integration or destruction. Ford's interest in its conflicts parallels the conflict of being simultaneously attracted to the 'gospel of perfect indifference' and to 'bigoted pietism', to Lucretius, Ecclesiastes and Schopenhauer.

Ford's poems contemplate such conflicts but resist resolution. He writes of the 'lower kind' of love and the complexities and paradoxes of sexual relationships, of indifference and withdrawal, sensitive engagement and action, of the futility and value of labour, of will and its suspension, of the desire for nescience and an afterlife, of the burden of materiality and transcendence, and of God's presence and absence. The questions asked, at the well or elsewhere, are never answered, or rather, never resolved, but this does not lead to despair: it leads to the fascinated contemplation of formlessness. As Ford wrote to John Galsworthy in October 1900: 'In the first place what I am always striving to get at is: The ultimate reasons of the futile earth / And crawling swarms of men . . .',¹⁶

A notable Ford scholar, R. G. Hampson, quite recently dismissed *The Questions at the Well* as being 'very much juvenilia'.¹⁷ The poems in Ford's first two collections – *The Questions at the Well* and *Poems for Pictures* – do not, perhaps, make the strongest case for his genius as a poet, but then the reputation of few great poets would survive on the basis of their apprentice work. Their interest

¹³ For Ford on Lucretius and Epicurus, see *The March of Literature*, pp. 162-63, 190-91.

¹⁴ Ford's father, Francis Hueffer, was an expert on Schopenhauer and founded the *New Quarterly* 'with the intention of spreading the light of Schopenhauer in England' (*Ancient Lights* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1911), p. 43); see also 'Literary Portraits LVII. Persecution of German Professors', *Outlook*, 34 (10 Oct. 1914), pp. 463-64.

¹⁵ Olive Garnett, *Tea and Anarchy!: The Bloomsbury Diary of Olive Garnett, 1890-1893*, ed. Barry C. Johnson (London: Bartlett's Press, 1989), p. 70.

¹⁶ Ford, *Letters of Ford Madox Ford*, ed. Richard M. Ludwig (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), p. 11.

¹⁷ R. G. Hampson, "'Experiments in Modernity": Ford and Pound', in *Pound in Multiple Perspective: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Andrew Gibson (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993), p. 94.

often lies not so much in their intrinsic aesthetic merit or the subtlety of their argument, but in their being vital to an understanding of Ford's evolution as a poet, their engagement with the tensions and irresolutions which connect them to the ontological and epistemological uncertainty of Ford's later work. They are, therefore, and oddly, because none is experimental, also essential to an understanding of Ford's reputation as a major modernist writer. Neglecting any part of the *opus* is at the expense of our knowledge.

With permission from Ford's executor and a publishing contract, my next research project will hopefully be a critical edition of the *Complete Poems*.

Ashley Chantler
University College Chester

* * *

Ford on the M25

The following quotes appear in Iain Sinclair's excellent account of a series of literary and psychogeographical walks around the M25 motorway, *London Orbital* (Granta 2002). Page references are to the 2003 Penguin edition.

pp 204-6: 'Ford Madox Hueffer (later Ford) published an extraordinary essay, 'The Future of London', in 1909. Ford recognised that roads were 'the chief feature of a city's life'. Without its roads, London was a dry sponge. 'If I can walk along roads that I like I am happy, alert, energetic, and as much of a man as I can be.' The wellbeing of the man and the wellbeing of the city were linked, freedom of movement, walks were the key to the good life. Ford looked back to a period when it was not unusual to stroll from Fleet Street to Hampstead, Westminster to Richmond; for dinner, conversation, a moonlit return. Victorian clerks, as Dickens frequently demonstrated, hiked to the City from Camden, Holloway or Walworth.

Ford isn't another sentimental antiquarian (he *is*, but only as a convenient pose), he has a take on London that pre-empts Abercrombie [Sir Patrick, town planner] and trounces the feeble private/public ditherings of New Labour with its clapped-out, expensive and dangerous transport systems. Ford, the huffing, puffing Edwardian, has a radical solution to deliver:

I should make travelling free, smooth, and luxurious. Along the railways I should set motor-ways, and between hedges, moving platforms for pedestrians and those who need exercise. I should clean out the Thames and set upon it huge, swift, and fine express launches. Who would put up with this bottom of a basin that London is if, being as near their work and their pleasant pleasures, they could inhabit a residential London that crowned the hill tops and scattered along the beaches of the sea?

Not content with reviving the river, building motorways over tired railways, turning footpaths into open-air gymnasia, Ford lays out the first great vision of the M25: as a single sweep in a series of ever-expanding circles.

Let us consider now my outer ring of the Future...With one leg my compasses set in Threadneedle Street, with the other I describe a great circle, the pencil starting at Oxford. (Roughly speaking, Oxford is sixty miles from London, and in my non-stop, monorail expresses, this should be a matter of half an hour, about as long as it takes you now to go from Hammersmith to the City.) It takes in, this circle, Winchester, the delightful country around Petersfield, Chichester, all the coast to Brighton, Hastings, Dover, all Essex, and round again by way of Cambridge and Oxford. Think of the

cathedrals, the castles, the woods, the chases, the downs, and the headlands! You would not sleep in Kensington if you might as well at Lewes...

It is on the road, this change. It has got to come. All south-eastern England is just London.

Walking the South Downs, Ford remembered Holland Park; marooned in town, he dreamt of drowsy Wealden villages. Abercrombie echoed Ford. The *County of London Plan* of 1943 spoke of 'an age of mobility', avenues and radials linking parkways, eroding the distinction between town and country.'

And on p.551, the last page in fact, when Sinclair has finished his exhausting anabasis and looks across the Thames at his old *bête noir*, the Millenium Dome:

'Will Self, a fan of the M25, said that the mistake with the Dome was that it played safe. It was too modest. It should have spread itself to envelope the whole of London, right out to the motorway. An invisible membrane. A city of zones and freak shows separated from the rest of England. Ford Madox Ford's old fantasy finally reactivated.' (End of extracts)

As someone who lived in Brighton for ten years I can confirm that much of Ford's vision has come true – I knew many people who lived there but worked in London. And some who lived in Lewes or Chichester for that matter. A shame, though, that London's expansion shouldn't have followed the charming, countryside-friendly pattern that Ford envisaged.

Dougie Milton.