

1 June 1998

Honorary Members: Bernard Bergonzi, Janice Biala, Malcolm Bradbury, AS Byatt, Samuel Hynes, Alan Judd, Sir Frank Kermode, John Lamb, Ruth Rendell, Michael Schmidt, Hon. Oliver Soskice, John Sutherland, Tony Tanner.

Executive Committee: *Chair:* Max Saunders *Treasurer:* Sara Haslam *Secretary:* Jenny Plastow

Welcome to this, the second publication of the Ford Madox Ford Society. Since the last newsletter, membership of the Society has flourished. We now have members in America, Italy, France, Japan, and Norway, as well as all parts of the United Kingdom. In this newsletter we bring you a report of the first society event, announcements of impending events, and details of academic conferences in the near (and not-so-near) future. For those of you who haven't yet joined, membership details can be found on the back page.

FORD MADOX FORD: PAINTING AND WRITING, A DAY OF CELEBRATION

took place on January 10th 1998 in London. It was an enjoyable and productive occasion.

The proceedings began with a high-powered panel discussion on writing and painting in Ford's life and work. The panel comprised members of the art world, as well as the *academic and literary communities*, and discussed issues as diverse as Ford and Pre-Raphaelitism, the Cubist influence on Ford, Ford and literary magazines, and Wyndham Lewis and Blast!

Joseph Wiesenfarth's illustrated lecture on Stella Bowen followed. It focused on the connections between Ford and Bowen by way of art, emphasising her career as a painter.

Not only did Ford give us a notable picture of Stella in Valentine Wannop in the Tietjens novels, but she drew and painted herself a number of times, giving us her sense of herself in the process. And while Ford presented an unchanging sense of himself as an artist in his autobiographical writings, Bowen presented her changing sense of Ford in a series of paintings and drawings. Her collaboration with Ford's writing is noted in her drawings for "A House", and the strong possibility of her designing the logo for the *transatlantic review*. Bowen also designed the dust jackets for several of his novels.

In the afternoon a series of short, illustrated talks dealt with paintings of particular significance to Ford's life and art. The deliveries can be grouped as follows: accounts of paintings which showed how Ford himself looked at art; accounts of paintings which throw light on the matter of how Ford absorbed ideas from art, and how he applied them in his own writing; accounts of Ford's life and times in terms of significant paintings.

The first grouping considered three works by Holbein: Paul Clark on "Christina Duchess of Milan"; Guy Mannes-Abbott on "The Ambassadors"; and Max Saunders on "The Dead Man". Paul Clark said that Ford admired "Christina Duchess of Milan" profoundly, and had a "quasi-mystical" response to it. It allowed a mood of "profound self-forgetfulness", the precious experience of "thinking about nothing". For Guy Mannes-Abbot, the skull in the foreground of "The Ambassadors" is "the ugly", the unnecessary, the excessive which subverts the official statement about wealth and prestige. Max Saunders addressed Ford's consideration that painting could "freeze" time, and thus allow one to think nothing. Writing about Holbein's dead Christ, Ford brings out how, for him, painting aspires to the condition of elegy. Its stillness evokes mortality. Yet Holbein's painting offers "a world of timelessness", and "a solace which frees objects from time". Ultimately, then, the painting is about representation itself.

The second grouping considered paintings of a more modern epoch. Vita Fortunati invited us to examine Ford's Impressionism in relation to the Italian Futurists (rather than to the art of Monet and the French school), whose works about speed and "deconstruction of points of view" offer a much more important insight into what Ford gained from Impressionism in contemporary art. Elena Lamberti addressed the importance of a 1932 painting by Janice Biala of Ford sprawled in a deck-chair, reading a book about Cezanne. This painting shows not only a good deal of what Ford (and Biala) derived from Cezanne, but also

allowed insight into "the physical-artistic basis of their relationship".

Oliver Soskice demonstrated how Ford, lecturing in front of a painting by Wyndham Lewis ("Plan of War" - a painting which fell upon the lecturer during the course of his talk!) allows us insight into the relativity of point-of-view in The Good Soldier, a relativity derived from a sophisticated use and understanding of Vorticist art.

Sara Haslam instanced a passage in No More Parades, in which Tietejns describes a death-scene, as owing much of its "structure" as a verbal painting to an attentive reading of Degas' painting "Combing the Hair". In this reading, levels of fictional reality are multiplied by Ford's referencing of Impressionist art.

Robert Hampson talked about a portrait of Dr Gachet by Van Gogh, which may well have influenced certain descriptions of Dr Grouault in The Rash Act. The fact that Dr Gachet was a well-known psychologist may be relevant at a period when Ford was extremely depressed. Angus Wrenn considered Ford Madox Brown's "Work" in terms of what Ford might have derived from it, and how it was a precursor of Ford's own literary methods: the technique of super-imposition; detailed cross-referencing; composite structure.

A third group of deliveries offered insights into the way certain painting might throw light on Ford's life and times. Paul Skinner spoke on a painting by Dyce (a friend of F.M. Brown) of George Herbert. This painting, which shows Herbert by the river, with fishing basket and rod (which seem to have belonged to Isaac Walton, who has been painted entirely out) enigmatically and ironically queries Ford's view of the seventeenth century.

Roger Poole, developing the theme of irony, instanced the painting "The Signing of the Protest" which hangs on the wall in the Rittersaal of the Castle at Marburg, beside a document which plays such a key role in The Good Soldier. This was used to show that both Florence (in the novel) and Ford himself (in 1911, on a visit with his mother and Violent Hunt) had got the significance of what does indeed hang on the wall entirely wrong. The 15-point agreement achieved at the Marbug Colloquy of 1529 was not a founding document of Protestantism, but marks one of the most damaging splits in the Protestant cause.

Report by Roger Poole; additional information: Joe Wiesenfarth, Sara Haslam, Paul Clark

CONRAD (AND FORD)

The Twenty-Fourth Annual
International Conference on
Conrad
2nd-4th July 1998

This conference will take place at the Polish Social and Cultural Association, 238-246 King Street, Hammersmith, London W6.

Added interest for Fordians is to be found during session five of the conference, on Friday afternoon, when a Ford panel will be staged. Speakers at this include Vita Fortunati, Barbara Leckie and Marielle Risse. Chair: Max Saunders.

Contact Professor Keith Carabine for details (01227 464168).

FORD ANNIVERSARY LUNCH

The next Society event will be a lunch, held to coincide with the anniversary of Ford's death.

Ford Madox Ford was a notorious epicurean - a lover of good food, good wine and good conversation. It is in this spirit that the Society will stage its commemorative lunch, celebrating not the death of Ford, but the way he lived his life. The lunch, therefore, will be a typically Fordian affair, involving a rich and potent menu, lubricated by selected fine wines.

Ford himself will be making an appearance, in the form of his radio broadcasts from the 1930s; one a talk on the abdication crisis of 1936, and a second called "The Commercial Value of Literature", from 1938. Speakers at the event are to be announced.

The lunch will be held on June 27th (arrive for 1.00), at the Globe Restaurant, 58-60 Bell Street, Henley-on-Thames. Tickets are £15 per head (excluding drinks), and are available from Venetia Abdalla (01628 482510). Send cheques (payable to the Globe Restaurant) to Venetia Abdalla, 26 Glade Road, Marlow, Bucks, SL7 1DY. **Please reply by June 16th.** Further information is also available from Sara Haslam (01244 372031). If you would like the opportunity to speak at this event, please contact one of the above. Non-members are also very welcome.

FORD BOOKS FOR SALE/WANTED

In this space, in future editions of the newsletter, plans are afoot for a book exchange. This service will, we hope, cater for all those interested in Ford who wish either to purchase or to sell his books.

For those who are looking to sell, please send details - including title, publisher, date of publication, a brief description of the condition of the text, any extra information which might distinguish your copy of the book or make it particularly desirable - to the editors of this newsletter (Sara Haslam and Paul Clark) at 16 Denbigh Street, Chester, CH1 4HL. For those looking to buy, please write to the above address specifying titles, editions and any further requirements (e.g., condition). Those who are looking to buy *and* sell, please indicate the full price range that will be considered in any transaction.

FORD MADOX FORD AND THE BIG WORDS

You eschewed the Big Words, Ford,
like Loyalty, Courage and God.
As props their concrete was honeycombed
and they crumbled under the weight of the world
you saw they could no longer support.

World had slipped out from under the shield
these ungainly unipods stood to uphold.
Instead, you raised your head above the rubble
and filled the desolation with your fine fat noise.

And you were right. There are no words
for describing file upon file of stumbling men
crimson-washed on rutted fields,
jaws blasted to shrapnel, spines and skulls
splintered across seas of thirsty mud.

And there are no words for the space
of an in-collapsing self, for the pain without
hope, for the unguarded scrape of the world
against tissue, eyes and mind without armour.

Language is gone from a man
who is lost to himself in darkness.

*

Now beneath this halogen shroud
I sit writing you out, my dead rival,
with the less-esteemed intent
of driving you out of my darling's mind.

In the fragments of your shell-shocked brain
she finds a portrait of her selves, and thus
you are her lover, she looks to you
to excavate her deeper pains.

MODERNISM AND THE INDIVIDUAL TALENT: Re-canonizing Ford Madox Ford (Hueffer)

Munster (Westphalia)
25th-27th June 1999

Exactly sixty years after the deaths of W.B. Yeats and Ford Madox Ford, and with the first publication of James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* being overshadowed by the impending onslaught of WW2, it is time to re-evaluate the achievement of literary modernism and to accord Ford a place in the canon of the twentieth century. To do so in the city of his ancestors sets the agenda for this gathering of Ford enthusiasts.

Writers, translators and critics alike are asked to respond to this call for papers. Papers of 20-25 minutes length on: Ford and Modernism, Ford and German as well as other European writers, Ford in Germany, are requested.

The deadline for abstracts (200 words) is 31st October 1998. Contact Dr Jorg W. Rademacher, Inselbogen 52, D-48151, Munster, Germany. Tel/Fax: 0049 251 799330.

This is an advance notice of a conference taking place in BOLOGNA in 2000, on the subject of either Ford and translations or Ford and World Literature. Please watch this space for further details...

But you're dead, you're fixed, you cannot move.
Only your hair and fingernails
have grown since the second war began.

I challenge a duel to dethrone you
and we'll see where you are without big words now.

*

Wake up, Ford, and realise
that your most devoted lover
is stepping out from under your arms.

In fine-wrought threads and cadences
enmeshed behind the plaster world
you tried to trap the memory's string

unravelling amid the mighty craters
that cannoned you into modernity.
Now you yourself become a link

to haul us out of this century's mire.
Men are less than metaphors
rewriting the passage each to himself.

The perimeter of any lattice
made of words evaporates,
spirals in to its voided heart.

So this duel is hardly fair,
for time has shown your machine-gunned bullets
will wilt against my bayonet.

I have no lemon-stained moustache,
but I can limply hold a fag
just as well as you.

What's more, I'm not afraid
to use a Big Word now and then:
my net is less ambitious than yours.

I'm only sad you could not fix
the link between the thought and script
to ground you in your changing world.

Kiss her goodbye, your war was lost.
Leave her to living, leave her to find
her own shape in the words she mines.

A watery sun dawns over Mons.
A circle of light lies fixed in my heart.
Love and Faith restore me to myself.

Paul Clark

Newsletter edited by Paul Clark and Sara Haslam

FORD ON-LINE

We are pleased to announce that there is now a Ford Web Page, produced by Jeffrey Mathes McCarthy, at :

<http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~jeffmac/fordpage1.html>

This page includes a biographical sketch of Ford, a section dedicated to Ford's poetry, impressive photographs of Ford and other princes of Modernism, and cross-references to other relevant sites. Visit it today!

JAMES, CONRAD AND FORD IN CANTERBURY

1st - 4th July 1999

Papers (on the writers in any combination) are invited for this conference. People writing solely on Ford should contact Max Saunders (max.saunders@kcl.ac.uk); those on Conrad should contact Keith Carabine (kc4@ukc.ac.uk); those on James, Paul B. Armstrong, at the University of New York, Stonybrook.

Saturday will be a day of visits to two Conrad houses, Lamb House, and (hopefully), Ford's house at Winchelsea.

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

To join the Ford Madox Ford Society, please send a cheque to the Treasurer. Subscription rates for one year are as follows:

Individual membership	£12
Concessionary membership	£6
Member organisations	£25
USA (any category)	\$25

We now have an American account. Cheques in dollars should be sent c/o: Joseph J. Wiesenfarth, 5401 Greening Lane, Madison, WI 53705-1252, USA.

Please contact Max Saunders (Chair) or Sara Haslam (Treasurer) for more information. **We regret to announce that, in future, we will be unable to send newsletters to those who have not joined the Society.**

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