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Editorial

Introduction: Ford Madox Ford's War Writing

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Ford Madox Ford's ground-breaking novel, *Some Do Not*..., one of the earliest fictional attempts at charting the cataclysmic impact of the First World War, was published in 1924.

It was only the first part of the story. We will probably never know whether Ford intended a sequel when *Some Do Not*... was published, but the novel would be followed by three more (*No More Parades*, *A Man Could Stand Up–*, *Last Post*), forming a series named *Parade's End* in the US edition brought out by Knopf in 1950. Initially published by Duckworth & Co, *Some Do Not*... launched an outstanding example of First World War fiction with both popular and critical acclaim. Malcolm Bradbury and Samuel Hynes have declared it peerless from both sides of the Atlantic, as war fiction but also as 'charting twentieth-century change', and as a 'central Modernist novel of the 1920s, in which it is exemplary' (Hynes 1990; Bradbury 1992). At the time, while some reviewers objected to *Some Do Not*...'s 'profanity', it was also lauded as 'brilliantly written' and of 'outstanding interest'. The Manchester *Guardian*'s reviewer remarked that Christopher Tietjens 'would furnish enough virility for about twenty ordinary novels', going on to reassure readers that there was 'no need to worry about the state of the English novel while books like this are being produced' (Harvey 1962).

The essays contained in this Special Issue of the *Humanities* journal were therefore published on a significant anniversary. Ford's tetralogy has had an extraordinarily productive life in the last 100 years, generating enthusiasm and interest in readers, students, and scholars—as well as playwrights and film companies. The five-part television adaptation of *Parade's End*, dramatized by Tom Stoppard for the BBC/HBO and directed by Susanna White, was broadcast worldwide in 2012 and 2013 to excellent reviews. Stoppard later wrote of his work that 'many of those who had read it cleaved to it as a favorite novel and a masterpiece', noting more personally that 'for a writer in television drama *Parade's End* was the best of times' (Stoppard 2012). The adaptation introduced Ford's work to millions of viewers, and it followed hard on the heels of the first full annotated critical edition, produced in four volumes by Carcanet Press in 2010–11 and described by Kate McLoughlin (2019 [2011]) as a 'model edition' in 'Ford's Reception History' (Steffens and Wiesenfarth 2019, p. 54 in Haslam et al. 2019). Between them, these interventions produced a new flourishing of engagement, study (*Parade's End* became increasingly native to university syllabi), and criticism.

This Special Issue demonstrates that there is more to learn and to say about Ford's 1920s masterpiece, in ways that develop and perhaps complicate or challenge the wide range of scholarship on the tetralogy which has been published over the last 100 years and which we briefly chart here. The Issue also speaks well to the new era in Ford studies inaugurated when in 2023 Oxford University Press announced a new edition of his works. With an early focus on Ford's letters, most of which are as yet unpublished, one of the

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clearest rewards of that project to date is the discovery of the extent to which the threads of Ford's interests, preoccupations, and literary ambitions, not to mention the views of his life and times, can be seen to weave throughout his output. The edition will also enable the publication of further First World War-focused fiction for the first time. But, as one critic featured here, Isabelle Brasme, has recently argued, Ford's war needs to be seen both very close up and in cross-generic form, from periodicals through letters and into the fiction that would cement his post-war reputation, in order that the shape and scale of his contribution can be more completely known (Brasme 2023).

1. An Overview of War Scholarship on Ford

Frayn and Houston note that it is a 'critical commonplace' that there was a ten-year publication gap after the cessation of fighting in 1918 and the commencement of a so-called 'War Books Boom' influenced, in part, by the success of Erich Maria Remarque's *Im Westen nichts Neues* and the first performance of R. C. Sheriff's *Journey's End* in 1928 (Frayn and Houston 2022). Ford, however, wrote prolifically during the war and published comparatively swiftly after it. 'Arms and the Mind' was written in Ypres in 1916; *No Enemy* was written some time between 1915 and 1919; and *The Marsden Case* was published in 1923. And as noted at the head of this Introduction, *Some Do Not* . . . (1924), the first part of *Parade's End*, was published in 1924—well before the boom. All of this demonstrates the extent of Ford's innovative creative energies in ways which feature in the scholarship, while at the same time flagging important questions about the relationship between writing, recovery, and catharsis in Ford, whether or not work was published immediately, and alongside what was also a very real experience of writer's block.

Much related discussion, also demonstrating the range and history of scholarship on Ford's war writing, can be seen in the two critical volumes that emerged from the 2012 London conference on *Parade's End* (*Ford Madox Ford's Parade's End* (*IFMFS*, vol. 13) and Chantler and Hawkes' *War and the Mind: Ford Madox Ford's Parade's End, Modernism and Psychology* (2015)); further relevant work can be found elsewhere in the *International Ford Madox Ford Studies* series, as well as *Last Post: A Literary Journal from the Ford Madox Ford Society*. Furthermore, biographers have devoted key chapters to Ford's war experience and war writing, especially Max Saunders in *Ford Madox Ford A Dual Life* (Saunders 1996), and Saunders' *War Prose* (Saunders 1999, p. 2) which remains an essential collection of Ford's writing on the war. The continuing vibrancy of the field is evidenced by the bibliography of periodical writing since 2000 on the Ford Society website <available online: https://www.fordmadoxford.org/critical-writing-on-ford.html, accessed on 3 March 2024>. PhD theses have been written on Ford's war, and the approaching anniversary of the First World War galvanised other media interest additional to the BBC/HBO adaptation—BBC's Culture Show Special (Yentob 2012), for example.

In their 'Introduction' to *War and the Mind*, Chantler and Hawkes stress the ways in which modernist writing amplified psychological matters, demonstrating how the mind works and that pain is inflicted upon both body and mind (p. 4). As they assert in their Introduction, the 'inward turn' of the age became central to Ford's writing (p. 6). Chantler and Hawkes also argue that Ford's recovery from the war depended heavily on his ability to be able to write about it (p. 5). Living as we do today in times of collective anxiety caused by global crises, Ford's focus on the 'wound of the mind' seems especially prescient, highlighting the potential rewards of re-reading his wartime work alongside modern theories of trauma and explorations of coping, healing, sanity, and insanity in today's mental health discussions.

For Ford, madness is repeatedly shown to be an inevitable consequence of the war. In '"Not Yet Diagnosed Nervous": Ford Madox Ford's Parade's End *Tetralogy*', referring to the characters in *Parade's End* as a 'nervous bunch', Trevor Dodman examines their ongoing struggle, caught between sanity and madness (Dodman 2015, p. 58). He argues that this battle over rationality leads them, especially Tietjens, into confusion over what kinds of methods they can develop to deal 'with others and selves—and even other selves' which are 'shifting, infirm, unstable, and even unknowable'. Thus, he diagnoses a struggle over 'naming and knowing' their mental states and troubles (Dodman 2015, p. 58). Max Saunders takes madness in *Parade's End* as his theme in '"Sex ferocity" and "the sadic lusts of certain novelists": Sexuality, Sadomasochism, and Suppression in *Parade's End*', his chapter in Chantler and Hawkes (2015). Saunders investigates Ford's handling of sexuality and the ways in which he links this to madness and violence (p. 18).

Andrew Frayn underscores in his chapter 'Ford Madox Ford and the First World War' in the *Routledge Research Companion to Ford Madox Ford* how Ford's depiction of war is less about the battle itself and more about its lasting impact on the human psyche and society. In *Trauma and Recovery* (1992), Judith Lewis Herman discusses the devastation of an individual's defence mechanism and argues that traumatic events disrupt the usual support systems that help individuals feel in control, connected, and to find meaning in life (Herman 1992, p. 33). In an extension of this argument, in his essay in this Special Issue Saunders focuses on the metaphorical and psychological importance of 'images of houses' or 'house-like structures' as a defence for the human subject amidst otherwise overwhelming levels of destruction.

Some relatively recent scholarship on Ford and war has focused on investigating the relationship between nature, sound, and war experience. In 'The Sound of Ford Madox Ford: War-Time, Impressionism, and Narrative Form' (Kyne 2020), Rachel Kyne explores how Ford's writing directly reflects a 'sonic consciousness', further emphasising the psychological over the physical. In 'Nature's Sonic Order on the Western Front' (Guida 2020), Michael Guida analyses soldiers' sensory experience on the battlefield, juxtaposing the calming sounds of nature, such as the sound of birds singing, with the roaring mechanical noises of machinery and artillery. Paul Skinner's article in this Special Issue develops this work, in part, as he comments on the treatment and effect of the dual presence of birds and warplanes in the sky above the soldier-writer.

The significance of Ford's use of ellipsis features in past and more current scholarship, inflected differently according to context. Ford employs 'a series of erasures, defacements, and ellipses', as Sorum explores in 'Mourning and Moving On: Life After War in Ford Madox Ford's *The Last Post*' (Sorum 2007), to write his way around things that are too painful to express directly (p. 158). In the tetralogy, Ford represents this double-sided process of remembering and forgetting by narrating the war as a series of erasures, defacements, and ellipses. James Dutton has built on this idea, proposing that Ford's ellipses invite readers to fill in the blanks, actively engaging with the text's 'imaginative possibilities' in 'Cutting, Reading, Re-Membering *Parade's End*'s Elliptical History' (Dutton 2021, p. 265). In this Special Issue, in which he brings welcome scholarly attention to Ford's short stories, Frayn extends the analysis to *Pink Flannels*, where he interprets Ford's ellipses as 'pointing to the gap between the home front and the Western front' (p. 11).

2. The Essays in This Special Issue

The Routledge Research Companion to Ford Madox Ford (2019) serves, as Houston has previously argued, as an 'essential tool for those who are new to Ford studies'; 'it offers an overview of existing Ford scholarship while suggesting new directions Ford studies could be taken in the future' (Houston 2019). This Special Issue is one such new direction, reflecting on the broad range of Ford's war writing and bringing together the work of early career researchers and established scholars. And while, as the previous section demonstrated, there is a long history of scholarship on Ford's war writing, including monographs with a particular focus on Ford's subject matter, style, and the impact of war (see, for instance, Haslam's *Fragmenting Modernism: Ford Madox Ford, the novel and the Great War* (Haslam 2002)), a considerable gap remains with regard to analysis of Ford's short stories, memoirs, and lesser-known writing in relation to the war. This Special Issue begins to address this gap, communicating and narrating a more expansive Ford, and providing new windows into both Ford Madox Ford studies and First World War studies more generally.

Gill Gustar's essay, for instance, focuses on *The Marsden Case* (1923), a relatively neglected novel. Gustar argues for an interpretation of the work as a reflection of the narrator's psyche as she examines the novel through the lens of madness. In contrast to this treatment of a lesser-known text of Ford's, Molly Porter's chapter reveals the depth of Ford's engagement with seventeenth-century literature in one of his most famous works, *Parade's End*. Original in her outlook, Porter brings together two cultural monuments of early modern and modernist literature, commenting on the intertextuality of the tetralogy and the metaphysical poets referred to in the text, and demonstrating that even a well-known text can generate innovative lines of enquiry.

Max Saunders and Nur Karatas also take *Parade's End* as a focus. Karatas examines trauma in both *Parade's End* and Ford's own life via the lens of 'worry', showcasing an untraditional approach as the focus of the trauma in the text shifts to the anticipation of future sufferings rather than past experiences to demonstrate the ways in which the First World War extends beyond the battlefield into society. Saunders, meanwhile, avoids the standard image of trench soldiers and focuses instead on the powerful image of houses and house-like shelters in *Parade's End*. While Ford's war tetralogy remains a significant part of his discussion, Saunders connects the novel to the post-war poem 'A House' and Ford's memoirs *It Was the Nightingale* and *No Enemy* to explore Ford's use of repression and object relations theory.

Paul Skinner traces Ford's references to flight in his writing, engaging with a range of key Fordian texts including *No Enemy, Return to Yesterday,* the two propaganda texts *Between St Dennis and St George* and *When Blood is Their Argument,* and *Parade's End*. The chapter maps Ford's responses to the aeroplane and the use of aviation as a weapon of war as overlooked thematic aspects of the early modernist period. In contrast to the mechanisation of wartime aviation, Eve Sorum's chapter offers an ecocritical reading of Ford's wartime essays, exploring Ford's highlighting of humility in his presentation of perspective. In particular, she addresses ecological humility, arguing for its importance in 'reorienting human relationships with the natural world'.

While several of the contributions to this Special Issue offer fresh insight into *Parade's End,* Andrew Frayn and Isabelle Brasme forge new ground in their choice of both texts and subject matter. Brasme's essay builds on her chapter from *Writers of War* (2023), exploring Ford's use of shifting pronouns as a key facet of his characteristic impressionism. While time is spent analysing Ford's trajectory from *The Good Soldier* to *Parade's End,* Brasme also devotes attention to his essays, including 'Arms and the Mind' and 'Trois Jours de Permission', which have received much less critical attention. Noting that short stories are

under-discussed in Ford studies, Frayn turns to contemporary periodical publications in his examination of Ford's short stories. His chapter brings together Ford's short stories about the First World War, analysing them together for the first time to argue that his characteristic but also generically nuanced impressionism is significant as a response to war, trauma, and neurosis.

3. Conclusions: Future Ford

In 'Looking Back at the International Ford Madox Ford Studies Series: Impressions of a Relatively New Reader' (Bruen 2020), Garrett Bruen also questions how the future of Fordian studies might unfold. We hope as one result of this Special Issue that readers will turn, or return, to Ford's short stories or *The Marsden Case*, or extrapolate from its ideas to approach his poetry or letters. Moreover, the essays and periodical publications cited and explored in this Special Issue are fertile ground, we hope, for new research on Ford. How might methodologies help? While acknowledging Ford's now well-established place in the literary canon, Andrew Frayn (2019 in Haslam et al. 2019) highlights the limited work to date on digital humanities and Ford. Growth in this area, allowing scholars to digitally cross-reference Ford's war writing, would enable its undeniably rich linguistic, stylistic, and thematic qualities to be more fully realised and interrogated in future research.

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