

No more Parades End

Ford Madox Ford's last library and what it tells us about 'the Tietjens saga'

SARA HASLAM

In the spring of 1928 (the year *Last Post*, the final volume in his *Parade's End* tetralogy, was published), Ford Madox Ford separated from Stella Bowen, the artist with whom he had lived since the end of the First World War. He was in Paris when, on May Day of 1930, he met the Polish-born American painter Janice Biala, who had travelled to Europe from her home in New York. She was less than half Ford's age, but early the following year they were living together in Villa Paul, Toulon, in the South of France. Biala was Ford's last companion, and they formed a creative and passionate partnership, moving between France and the United States, until his unexpected death in Deauville in June 1939. The couple were returning to Paris from New York, and when they left Biala believed Ford was "well on his way to his usual health". Four days after Ford died, she wrote to her brother, Jack Tworckov, "I have to look after his literary life and I have to paint"; while she told Julia, Ford's daughter by Bowen, "I am dreadfully worried . . . about his books and papers".

Some of Biala's worries were straightforwardly acted on. She asked Jack and his wife, Wally, to retrieve the unpublished manuscript of Ford's *History of Our Own Times* from storage in New York, and to send her all Ford's articles stored there. In the meantime, as the political situation worsened, she had travelled south to Toulon to rescue Ford's papers, then made the trip a second time to reclaim his library of books. "This is a letter to say", she wrote to Wally on August 26, "that if war breaks out, communication will probably be out for a while – so try not to worry about me too much. I shall . . . probably try to get back to New York. It will be impossible now as all the boats are full and due to movement of troops, the trains will be uncertain for some time to come."

She was in Paris by October 20, waiting for a letter from the Société des Gens de Lettres, to cover the remaining books, manuscripts and papers she intended to take with her when she sailed from Bordeaux. To Ford's agent, George Bye, she wrote that she expected to be back in New York, "if not torpedoed on the way", by the end of the first week in November. Ford's literary effects were safely in storage in New York by mid-autumn, and it was Biala's idea to donate them to the New York Public Library, in a city which she felt had been supportive to Ford; the gift, to the library's Berg Collection, was eventually completed in 1997.

Ford was in his element when supporting and energizing the talent he spotted early on in many writers' careers: as editor of both the *English Review* and the *transatlantic review* his focus was "les jeunes". He had always been a collaborative writer, primarily, in print, with Joseph Conrad, but other key figures in his circle of influence are represented by "several remarkable association copies" (as the listing puts it), including

presentations from James Joyce, Ezra Pound, Allen Tate, William Carlos Williams, Robert Lowell and Katherine Anne Porter, "most of whom acknowledged a 'poetic debt' to Ford". The most well represented writer in the collection, after Ford himself, is Pound. The two men met in 1909, in the era of the *English Review*; notoriously, Pound said Ford's violent reaction to "errors" in his *Canzoni* (1911) – Ford got down and rolled about on the floor to express his horror at the archaic style – "saved me at least two years" (of poetic labour). Reflecting much later (1937) on this early period, Pound added a

Cantos seem to to have contributed" to Ford's methods in his later prose works. There are presentation copies here of many of Pound's important works of the 1920s and 30s, including *A Draft of XXX Cantos*, all unmarked. But eight pages in the Knopf (1917) edition of *Lustra, with Earlier Poems* – a volume that collected most of the poems and translations Pound produced between 1912 and 1916, including *Cathay* – are annotated with detailed editorial comments, which together suggest the omission of up to half of the stanzas in "The River Song" and "Exile's Letter". Like Pound himself, Ford the editor, if in doubt, would usually say "cut". None of Ford's suggestions here was taken up in a pub-

as its highs, the two men never forgot their debt to each other, and in the early 1930s, just after he had met Biala, Ford was attempting to drum up support for Pound in advance of the publication of the *Cantos*. This project was realized in the form of *The Cantos of Ezra Pound: Some testimonials by Ernest Hemingway, Ford Madox Ford, T. S. Eliot, Hugh Walpole, Archibald MacLeish, James Joyce and others* (1933), a copy of which is in the collection. (In it Ford describes himself as Pound's "oldest accomplice".) Gilbert White's *Natural History of Selborne* is there too, its inclusion making clear the book's importance to Ford, who wrote to Bowen in 1919 requesting "a cheap copy" when he was recovering from the war in deepest Sussex. From then on, he referred frequently to the *Natural History*, particularly in the four *Parade's End* novels that made him both famous and – since they sold well in the US – temporarily well-off in the 1920s. And perhaps the most important discovery I made in the Berg Collection was of an editorial conversation concerning those novels – one that Ford was having with himself.

Biala's gift contains at least one copy each of more than fifty of Ford's many books, in many genres, including poetry; art, literary and cultural criticism; biography; propaganda; and fiction. The most notable absence is that of a first edition of what is still perhaps his most famous work, *The Good Soldier* (1915) – though there are two copies of a later, 1927 edition to which Ford added a dedicatory letter to Stella Bowen, one of which has been (re!)dedicated to Biala. For all four volumes of the tetralogy, *Some Do Not . . .*, *No More Parades*, *A Man Could Stand Up* – and *Last Post*, there is an embarrassment of textual riches, with both English and American editions, many of them first editions, many of them inscribed to Biala – the first English editions of all except *Some Do Not . . .*, at the same time, in April 1933. (It seems likely that Biala's UK first edition copy of *Some Do Not . . .* was in Ford's library at some point, and excluded from the donation, lost, or sold.) The presentation copy of *No More Parades* contains the intriguing inscription, "Janice's copy to replace one that disappeared Ford Madox Ford Toulon April '33". If this was a replacement, where did it come from? Ford wouldn't have had an endless supply of first editions (partly because he moved around so much). Could this have been his own copy that he presented to Biala to replace one she had lost?

It was certainly one of his, and a working copy at that: it has been substantially revised in a wealth of autograph insertions and deletions. The latter include lines, whole paragraphs and in two instances a whole page, mostly descriptions of Sylvia Tietjens or plot information related to Sylvia's affair with Perowne, doubt over the paternity of the protagonist Christopher Tietjens's son, and their "agreement" about the affair, coupled with



Janice Biala and Ford at the Princeton Library, c.1934

note to a letter originally sent to Harriet Monroe in January 1915. The letter spoke of the need for "easy speech" in books and poems, and in the note he said "it should be realised that Ford Madox Ford had been hammering this point of view from the time I first met him".

"Pound made Ford's poetics his own", Robert Hampson argues, while reminding us of the symbiotic nature of the relationship: "if 'the prose tradition' played a part in Pound's discovery of his own poetic voice, Pound's

published version of the *Cathay* poems. Perhaps they were just for Ford's own benefit; perhaps he mislaid the book before he could show it to Pound; perhaps Pound didn't like the suggestions. But whether or not the two men even discussed these particular cuts, the poet seems to have accepted the general principle. When he republished "Three Cantos" in *Future* in 1918 it was, his biographer Humphrey Carpenter points out, in a "drastically reduced version".

Though this creative relationship, like most of Ford's alliances, had its lows as well

the introduction of Valentine Wannop, and Tietjens's motives for asking Valentine to become his mistress. Together these constitute a very significant revision of one of Ford's seminal works. Copies of the other novels in the tetralogy are only lightly revised or annotated. None of the extensive revisions Ford made to *No More Parades* or to the opening pages of the later volumes were taken up in later editions. He was planning something, but what?

As early as March 1926, when Ford was still writing *A Man Could Stand Up*, he was discussing with his publisher Gerald Duckworth how best to profit from the success of *Some Do Not . . .* and *No More Parades* in the US. He had achieved very little financial security over his thirty-year career (what money he did make he often used in creative ventures, or gave away), and badly needed some now, after the commercial failure of the *transatlantic review*. A letter to Duckworth that month debates the merits of a German translation of *No More Parades*, which might, feasibly, have sent him back to the novel, but this is unlikely given that he was still writing its sequel. The letter reveals how depressed he was by his poor UK sales ("I suppose all this will re-act favourably on England: or doesn't it make any difference? I suppose not: I suppose nothing ever does"), and also his plans for a lecture tour of the US, to further boost his reputation there.

Ford's reception in America in the 1920s meant that a collected edition became, for a

time, a very real possibility. While such an edition – which would amount to more than the fact that Duckworth was keeping the seventeen novels he had published in print, despite poor sales – was definitely a prize he sought, the Tietjens novels sat somewhat obliquely to that project, and Ford more than once expressed concern that an omnibus edition of the tetralogy might scupper it. In a letter of November 1927, though, written in anticipation of the publication of *Last Post*, Ford talks of it being the "last of the Tietjens series" in ways that highlight his sense of the relationship between those books. That relationship, the conception of a series, developed to spur his later revisions to the first editions in his and Biala's library – revisions he made as the publishing world was still reeling from the effects of the Wall Street Crash.

The majority of those revisions are concerned less with matters of style than with plot. Although there has been a clear attempt to increase clarity or improve style at times, words have mostly been deleted from a chapter whose main purpose is to provide back-story to events and feelings already dealt with in Part II of *Some Do Not . . .*. Coupled with the fact that dedicatees' names have been added to the opening pages and dedicatory letters removed, this suggests that the revisions were made with an omnibus edition of the tetralogy in mind. An omnibus would have required less editing of the initial volume, which sets up the story (an untestable proposition, in the absence of

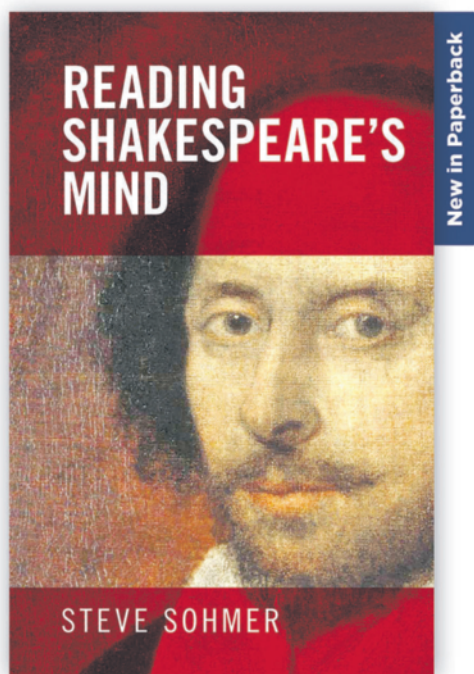
the first English edition of *Some Do Not . . .*). Similarly, in an omnibus there would be no need for the individual context that the dedicatory letters provided (each of them did this in a different way, related to reviews, for example). Removing them would both save space and eliminate a potential distraction. All in all, the four novels would run together as one long work, and the reader would not be troubled by repetitive rehearsals of character description or plot.

We know Ford liked the idea of an omnibus, even as he held on to the idea of a collected edition. By August 1930 he was heading a letter to his agent, Eric Pinker, the "Tietjens Saga". He was "quite in favour" of this publication but reiterated his earlier concern that it would "not interfere with ordinary editions intended to figure in my collected works at a later date". He is also quite clear that he does not like the title "Tietjens Saga", due to the fact that the name "Tietjens" is "difficult for purchasers to pronounce". He suggests another "general title": *Parades End* (minus the apostrophe). Over the next three years, Ford was only ever temporarily solvent, his relations with publishers were strained, and he spent most of his energy negotiating, and eking out, his living, on a book-by-book basis. *Parades End* might have helped turn things around, and the evidence Ford left behind shows clearly that he had begun work on it long before the first omnibus edition of his tetralogy, which did so much to revive his reputation, eventually appeared from Knopf in

1950. Some time between (probably) August 1930, when Ford wrote to Pinker, and (probably) April 1933, when he presented the three first editions in the series to Biala, he undertook some of the necessary revision of the second volume and began thinking about what would need to happen to its successors (neither of which covered the back-story to the degree that *No More Parades* did).

Perhaps discussions that he mentions to Caroline Gordon later in 1933, about possible publication of "The Tietjens Saga" and even a collected edition by Lippincott, did in fact take place, and he started to revise the texts accordingly. Perhaps they began just after he had dedicated the books to Biala, and in a brief period of renewed optimism he took them back to start work, but the plan evidently fizzled out before he got very far into the later texts. When the longer-term effects of the Depression began to manifest themselves, the *Parades End* omnibus of Ford's lifetime, and with it, his work on the text, was sunk, as was the collected edition. Reviving them became the task of later scholars, a task that has become both more urgent and more interesting as a result of a story the Berg Collection, as so often, has to tell.

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