

Article

The First World War and Ford Madox Ford's Short Stories, 1914–1920

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Abstract: This article analyses together, for the first time, Ford Madox Ford's short stories about the First World War. A surprisingly unfamiliar form for Ford, who valued allusion, subtlety, and omission as narrative devices, we see in these stories his first attempts to parse his experience of wartime and, subsequently, military service. It is also an aspect of Ford's writing which has received little previous critical comment. The wartime and post-war short stories are approached chronologically: 'The Scaremonger: A Tale of the War Times' (1914), 'Fun!—It's Heaven' (1915), 'Pink Flannel' (1919), 'The Colonel's Shoes' (1920), 'Enigma' ([1920–1922] 1999), and 'The Miracle' (1928). The contemporary debates in which Ford intervened are highlighted by returning to their original periodical publications, and extensive reference to a range of his non-fictional periodical contributions establishes new connections among his wartime writing. Here I bring together for the first time these short stories, arguing that Ford's refracting of the war through the lens of his impressionism is distinctive as an early response to war, trauma, and neurosis and is vital to the genesis of his later successes in prose, notably the *Parade's End* novel tetralogy (1924–1928).

Keywords: Ford Madox Ford; First World War; short stories; periodical studies; haunting; ellipsis

1. Introduction

Ford Madox Ford's most famous works have the First World War at their centre: his poem *Antwerp* (1914), lauded by T.S. Eliot; his novel *The Good Soldier* (1915), the first part serialised before the conflict's outbreak, the second part focusing on 4 August, opportunistically titled by its publisher John Lane; his epic realisation of his pre-war, wartime and post-war experiences in his masterful *Parade's End* tetralogy (1924–1928). Ford's Anglo-German ancestry—he was still, until 1919, Ford Madox Hueffer—meant that he felt the impact of war acutely. He enlisted and served, suffering from shell shock not long after his arrival on the front line at the Somme, before spending most of the rest of the war in administrative and service roles. These creative works address his war experiences in poetry and long prose, but Ford also wrote several compelling short stories about the conflict. In her important study of *The Short Story and the First World War* (2013), Ann-Marie Einhaus asks why: 'First World War short stories have largely been disregarded for so long?' (Einhaus 2013, p. 4)¹ This trend is replicated in Ford's oeuvre. I return to the original periodical publications to establish the contemporary debates in which he was intervening, also invoking a range of his non-fictional periodical contributions to establish new connections among his wartime writing.² I approach the wartime and immediately post-war short stories chronologically, which are 'The Scaremonger: A Tale of the War Times' (first published November 1914), 'Fun!—It's Heaven' (November 1915), 'Pink Flannel' (May 1919), 'The Colonel's Shoes' (January 1920), and 'Enigma' (written September 1920–November 1922, unpublished until 1999), also looking briefly at 'The Miracle' (December 1928).³ Here I bring together for the first time these short stories, arguing that Ford's refracting of the war through the lens of his impressionism is distinctive as an early response to war, trauma, and neurosis, and is vital to the genesis of his later successes in prose.



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If the short story is undercommented in relation to the First World War, it is also a form particularly of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, during which mass-market periodicals boomed. Andrew Maunder and Angela Smith observe that it ‘maintained its popularity during the war years; short stories could at least be read quickly, in a single sitting’, an important concern whether on active service or in a harried home front existence (Maunder and Smith 2011, p. xiv; see also Einhaus 2016b, p. 152). Alfred C. Ward, in his pioneering 1924 study, states that ‘as a medium for the conscious exercise of literary art [. . .] it is the youngest among the literary forms[. . . .] It now seems to be on the threshold of a burgeoning maturity’ (Ward 1924, p. 8). This suggests the short story’s roots as an ephemeral form in periodicals, moving towards the respectability of volume publication (see Einhaus 2013, p. 38; 2016b, pp. 160–61).⁴ Ward argues for the necessity of experiment in the form and discerns ‘a genuine wish to explore new fields of thought opened up by advances in psychological study’ (Ward 1924, p. 16). Valerie Shaw sees the short story as encompassing spontaneity, instinct, and/or revelation, suggesting that ‘it can use its intactness to say that life’s possibilities are hedged and narrow, or to express a view of life as violent and torn by harsh conflict’ (Shaw 1983, pp. 8–9). In a key work from before Ford’s recovery to the modernist canon, Dominic Head argues that ‘the short story encapsulates the essence of literary modernism, and has an enduring ability to capture the episodic nature of twentieth-century experience’ (Head 1992, p. 1). He also asserts that it is a form that has ‘flourished in difficult social and economic circumstances’ (Head 2016, p. 9). Psychology, restraint, conflict (military, interpersonal, and domestic), and literary experimentation are central to Ford’s writing, constellated in what he came to theorise, in 1913–1914, as impressionism.

2. Ford and Short Writing

As editor, and indeed founder, of modernist magazines such as the *English Review* (1908–1910) and the *transatlantic review* (1924), Ford was familiar with outstanding essays, short stories, and their writers (see Wulfman 2009; Morrisson 2000).⁵ The first issue of the *English Review* (December 1908) contained Henry James’s ‘The Jolly Corner’ and the first part of Constance Garnett’s new translation of Tolstoy’s ‘The Raid’ (1853).⁶ These address Fordian themes that recur in the wartime short stories, with James’s Spencer Brydon and his ghostly alter-ego highlighting doubling and split personalities, and resonating with hauntings and apparitions. Tolstoy’s story, set during the Caucasus War (1817–64), is told by an army narrator who reflects on and discusses with his comrades the nature of bravery in wartime. Ford used the device of separation and simultaneity of thought and action several times to speak to the disjunction between exhausted but continuing physical bodies, and minds wandering at the limits of endurance. Ford’s brief editorships were influential; they attest to his important position in literary networks of the time and his acute awareness of periodical cultures. They also shaped his own creative practice.

Ford contributed to newspapers, magazines, and periodicals throughout his writing career. If, as David Malcolm suggests, ‘the shortness of the short story—its concrete and unavoidable spatial minimalism—is arguably the only viable definition of the form’ (Malcolm 2016, p. 56), then we should consider Ford’s short stories among his other short writings. A writer who lived by the pen, Ford wrote regularly for publications such as the *Outlook*, the *Bystander*, and *Reynolds’s Newspaper*, in which several of these stories appeared, holding forth on the contemporary literary sphere, Anglo-German relations, and publishing poems and short stories. His regular non-fictional writing provided a relatively consistent income from 1907–1915: his journalism, as a consequence, is voluminous, but his short stories relatively few.⁷ Praising Ford’s linking stories for *Zeppelin Nights: A London Entertainment* (1915), co-authored with his increasingly-estranged partner Violet Hunt, Sondra J. Stang states that ‘Ford did not feel comfortable with the short story form: he could not, he complained, write “short” (Stang 1986, p. 448). This is borne out by a letter, likely about ‘The Colonel’s Shoes’, in which he tells his agent J.B. Pinker that ‘I’m afraid it’s nearly 5000 words, does that matter? 3000 is too short for me.—but I c^d. cut it a little if

necessary'.⁸ In a 1924 *transatlantic review* editorial, he saw 7000 words as a minimum, noting that 'English writers have rarely either the technical skill or the desire for selection that are needed for the real perfecting of the quite short story' (Ford 1924, p. 350).⁹ This is surprising, as the form seems tailor-made for Ford in its thematic breadth and suggestive form, and he was in various ways expert in the rhythms of short prose, honing in his collaboration with Joseph Conrad the value of excision as an aesthetic technique (see Brebach 1985, 2022).

Ford's literary antecedents and contemporaries attest further to his expertise in short writing and ground the development of his impressionism. Max Saunders sees Ford's unpublished short stories of the 1890s as an important part of his development (Saunders 1996, vol. 1, pp. 102–5). Looking across the English Channel, the roots of the modern short story are in the French authors Ford admired: particularly Flaubert, but also Maupassant, who wrote powerfully about the Franco-Prussian War (see March-Russell 2009, pp. 88–90). Indeed, Ford connects Flaubert with war on 8 August 1914: 'if France had mastered *L'Education Sentimentale*, France would have been spared the horrors of 1870' (Hueffer 1914l, p. 174; 1905). Flaubert and Maupassant were acknowledged as masters of their particular modes of realism, and Ford developed their verité after his own fashion. His friendship and collaborations with Conrad, whose precision and brevity he praised (Ford 2002, pp. 228–31), influenced the development of his literary impressionism, a form which Paul March-Russell observes 'had a lasting effect' on the short story (March-Russell 2009, pp. 91–2).¹⁰ Rebecca Bowler summarises: 'key tenets of this impressionism were the rendering of experience as multiple and fragmentary, the suppression of authorial commentary, and a concern with the subjective and objective: the objective rendering of subjective experience' (Bowler 2016, p. 18). These topics surface repeatedly in these stories as ghostliness, uncanniness, psychological distress and distortion, and verbal and narrative absences. Ford's critical essays on the subject were published first in modernist periodicals: 'Impressionism—Some Speculations' appeared in *Poetry* (August 1913), and the two parts of 'On Impressionism' straddled the beginning of the War in *Poetry and Drama* (June and December 1914), the second appearing alongside studies by Remy de Gourmont of 'French Literature and the War', and Edward Thomas of 'War Poetry' (Hueffer 1913a, 1914n, 1914m; de Gourmont 1914; Thomas 1914). While the second essay does not directly address the War, Ford does consider a hypothetical character's German ancestry (Hueffer 1914m, p. 325), criticises the popular novelist and propagandist Hall Caine compared to Flaubert and Maupassant, asserting that 'the great majority of mankind are, on the surface, vulgar and trivial—the stuff to fill graveyards' (Hueffer 1914m, p. 328), and praises Tolstoy (Hueffer 1914m, p. 330).¹¹ The language echoes his first article of the War (WP 207). Once the War starts, it is never far from the surface in Ford's writing which, for the conflict's duration, is mostly short.¹²

3. Ford's 1914 Short Prose about the War

Ford registers the magnitude of the war immediately, writing by the end of 1914 about 'the immense wall built across August of 1914, like the wall of Hadrian across Britain' (Hueffer 1915d, p. 15); he uses a similar metaphor, 'this crack across the table of History', in *A Man Could Stand Up*—(1926), the third volume of the *Parade's End* tetralogy (Ford [1926] 2011, pp. 17–18). His developing response is played out in his weekly column for the *Outlook*, a conservative weekly; Lucinda Borkett-Jones charts more extensively the shape of Ford's writing in this periodical (Borkett-Jones 2019). He ponders the aesthetic impact of the conflict, in general, and on himself, ruminating on 'the future of the arts when we have a little quiet again' (WP 208) (Hueffer 1914k), and bemoaning his inability to write poetry at a moment in which many found it desirable, even necessary:

I simply cannot do it. I should like to; but the words do not come. There is the blank sheet—and then. . . nothing. It is, I think, because of the hazy remoteness of the war-grounds; the impossibility of visualising anything, because of a total incapacity to believe any single thing that I have read in the daily papers. (WP 209) (Hueffer 1914c)

The complexities of the moment are evident here: that ‘hazy remoteness’ was characteristic of Ford’s impressionism, while the final clause is ironic given that the *Outlook*’s conservatism often tipped over into jingoism. Without invoking the war directly, he repeats his desire ‘to drop creative writing for good and all’ in the second article of ‘On Impressionism’ (December 1914); in the essay ‘Arms and the Mind’ (written September 1916), he bemoans the loss of his ability to “‘visualize things” [...] anything I had seen, and still better, anything I hadn’t seen’ (WP 36).¹³ His creative abilities are displaced into reportage: in his first article of the conflict he asserts that ‘Pictures of the horrors of war in no way appal me’ (WP 207), going on to imagine a litany. Having started with gloomy commentary on the value of literary criticism in wartime, he concludes:

men have no rights—they have only duties. And if some millions of men die in the making clear of these things, their lives will have been well spent since, dying so, they will have removed from this sad world one of its scourges and many of its terrors. (Hueffer 1914l, p. 175)

Ford seems to have no sense that he might put himself in mortal danger; he would not enlist until the summer of the following year. He continued to write.

These columns, titled ‘Literary Portraits’, became only superficially tied to their subject matter for much of the remainder of 1914, as Ford ‘fanc[ied] that we are in for eight years of war’ (WP 208) and set himself to working through the topic of Anglo-German relations, overtly politically, implicitly personally. Barbara Korte follows Adrian Hunter in suggesting that ‘the short story seems to speak “directly to and about those whose sense of self, region, state, or nation is insecure”’ (Korte 2016, p. 42). Wartime made even more vivid for Ford a topic of which he was already all too conscious. He had written about it previously, including on the strength of ‘war feeling in Pure Germany’ in late 1911 in the *Bystander*, which would publish ‘The Scaremonger’ and ‘Fun!—It’s Heaven’, and had regularly featured Ford’s criticism and creative works (Hueffer 1911b). These issues feature in earlier short stories: ‘The Baron’ (1903) sees an Englishman in the War Office visit his German relations. The enmity between England and Germany is also addressed in ‘What Happened at Eleven Forty-Five’ (1911), in which a fatal coincidence in England leads to a German waiter’s murder of his family and then suicide; the warning about what might happen if war broke out is barely concealed (Saunders 1996, vol. 1, pp. 361–63). At the outbreak of war, Ford is compelled to try to master rhetorically his Anglo-German identity. In a late August 1914 article for the *Outlook*, pointedly entitled ‘The Face of Janus’, he pleads that ‘his Britannic Majesty has no more loyal servant than myself’, asserting the primacy of the British soldier while arguing to revive the phrase ‘the gallant enemy’ (WP 208) (Hueffer 1914b, p. 270). By October, Ford is still keen to humanise Germany, describing its rural poverty: ‘to poke fun at Germania [...] has always seemed to me to be like poking fun at a starving child with its nose glued against the windows of a cookshop’ (Hueffer 1914e, p. 430). Ford distinguishes between regions of Germany, describing ‘this series of articles, which has latterly resolved itself into a frontal attack not so much upon Germany as upon Prussian culture’ (Hueffer 1914g, p. 493).¹⁴ As we have already seen, he would return to this in the second essay of ‘On Impressionism’, too.

Vituperation persisted, and the Saturday after the Wednesday publication of ‘The Scaremonger’, Ford responded scathingly to George Bernard Shaw’s critique of German and English jingoism, ‘Common-Sense About the War’, first published as a supplement to the *New Statesman* on 14 November 1914. He attacked Shaw for being ‘stupid to the extent of revealing his own self-interest’, reading it as ‘the announcement that the Marxian Socialist intends to get the lion’s share of the spoils at the end of the war’. Shaw, for Ford, is ‘thoroughly Teutonic by blood and German by training’ (Hueffer 1914h, p. 693; see Hueffer 1915h). By contrast, Ford situates himself as ‘for many historic reasons a hot-headed anti-Prussian, Prussianism being the death of all I value in the world’, repeating the separation between Prussian militarism, which he later explicitly articulates as un-German, and the culture of Germany which gives life its value (Hueffer 1914h).¹⁵ Ford argues, in a manner which would have been persuasive among contemporary rhetoric, but which

bears little scholarly scrutiny, against the idea that England has an equivalent militarism. These claims are undercut by the continuing linking of the conflict with the effects of the Franco-Prussian War (1870–1). As so often in wartime writing, Ford looks back to the impact of previous conflicts, highlighting ‘the constant Prussian endeavour since 1870 [...] to build up a national spirit not of the German people, but of the German Empire’ (Hueffer 1914g, p. 493; see Hueffer 1915c, 1915i, 1915k). The rhetoric of German might was prevalent at the time.

4. ‘The Scaremonger’

The resulting fears of invasion spawned a literary genre enduring from George Tomkyns Chesney’s ur-text novella *The Battle of Dorking* (1871) beyond the First World War, extensively mined and parodied in short form (Bulfin 2018; Clarke 1992).¹⁶ Ford addresses this in unpublished stories of the 1890s: ‘A Romance of the Times Before Us’ imagines war between England and Germany; ‘The Land of Song: a phantasy’ is about a boat which beaches on the coast; ‘A Mother’ focuses on smugglers in 1815, the date hardly coincidental (see Saunders 1996, vol. 1, pp. 104–8). ‘The Scaremonger’ sits in this lineage, a tale of the febrile environment of late 1914 in the UK. It satirises Ford’s acquaintance Edward Heron Allen, a friend of Hunt’s who was shrilly talking about the possibility of a German invasion. The story intervenes in a literary marketplace in which existing invasion texts were republished, and new stories by prominent authors added to those fears. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s ‘Danger! Being the Log of Captain John Sirius’ was published as Europe stood on the cusp of war in July 1914 in the *Strand*; the narrative was accompanied by paratextual expert commentary on its plausibility (see Liggins et al. 2011, pp. 136–37). Doyle focuses on naval invasion, and at the beginning of ‘The Scaremonger’, the area’s Lieutenant asserts the importance even of ‘this collection of bungalows and bathing places’ (WP 142) (Hueffer 1914o, p. 276). However, where Doyle outlines the naval situation, following earlier works such as Erskine Childers’s *The Riddle of the Sands* (1903), Ford concentrates on the impact of propaganda on the individual. By the time ‘The Scaremonger’ appeared, on 25 November 1914, the Retreat from Mons and ensuing ‘Race to the Sea’ made such issues immediate; the First Battle of Ypres had petered out in wet, freezing conditions.

Both ‘The Scaremonger’ and ‘Fun!—It’s Heaven’ were published in the *Bystander*, a conservative weekly, in the last issues of November of 1914 and 1915, respectively. The issue was billed as a Christmas issue. A regular contributor, Ford was familiar with the magazine’s context and sympathetic, if questioningly so, to its position; understanding its tone elucidates our reading of the stories. G.E. Studdy’s cover illustration sets the mood for the 25 November 1914 issue, a walled British house, bulldog snarling and flag flying, approached by Father Christmas with a sack of presents over his shoulder and a bomb in the other hand, followed by a humorous editorial about the deleterious effect of reading newspapers and books about the war (‘Our Vision’ 1914). Satirical commentary punctuates the magazine, with an article entitled ‘Does Germany Count? By Our Military Expert Who Can’t’ (‘Does Germany Count?’ 1914), and a later cartoon captioned ‘Thanks to the newspapers, our emotions from hour to hour are subject to the most violent fluctuations’ (‘Correct Expression’ 1914). ‘The Scaremonger’, spanning three pages and with an illustration by Alick P.F. Ritchie on each, is followed by a serious article on war rumours (R. S. 1914).¹⁷ The story characterises the fevered mood of late 1914: Ford wrote in the first month of the war about ‘reading sedulously for the daily journals in order to find a grain of truth or interest’ (Hueffer 1914a, p. 237). It was also significant as the *Bystander* had stopped accepting short stories at the outbreak of war, ending its own embargo with Ford’s piece (Maunder 2011b, p. xlv). The magazine’s editorship clearly saw the public mood as one of barely-contained hysteria foaming around a core of demonstrable support for the conflict, and Ford responded directly to these conditions.

A decade before the Tietjens family first appears in *Parade’s End*, in this story the Squire of Bleakham—his name needs no interpretation—is an archetypal fading aristocrat, a symbol of the decline of English traditions in the face of modernity who sees it everywhere

but in himself: ‘The words “national degeneration” were continually on his lips’ (WP 143–4). Before the war, he is contentedly out of time, ‘devoted to so serious a study of the works of Horace and the medieval Latinists that he found never a minute, even, to devote to the study of the newspapers’ (WP 142–43). The war jolts him from his intellectual attachment to a dead civilization and forces him to engage with the New Journalism, which the narrator critiques: ‘In the last fifteen years the papers have, you know, made much progress in the conveying of excitements. And the Squire had had to read them then. They had revenged themselves amply for his neglect of them’ (WP 143).¹⁸ Their revenge is his rapid decline, and the Squire becomes almost immediately ghostly:

the Squire’s features had fallen away; colour had deserted them till they had the dull opacity of alabaster; his grey hair had, in the four months of war, grown absolutely white—paper-white. His mouth dragged over to one side; only his eyes had any sign of life. These even sparkled when he spread panic in the village. (WP 143)

The Squire’s deterioration warns against replicating his behaviour. He is pale and fragile, paper-thin and alabaster-soft, while the lopsided mouth suggests partial paralysis following a stroke. He is constantly on the brink of death until he achieves it, perhaps echoing the fate of the soldiers dying in the war. Spectral presences recur in Ford’s war stories, a defining feature of his impressionism.

The Squire’s Germanophobia is rooted in a contretemps with a German Latinist, with whom he argued over his edition of Petronius’s *Satyricon* and ‘over the proper pronunciation of the ode “Planco Consule”’ (WP 144).¹⁹ ‘Immediately afterwards the war had broken out’, the narrator reports, the context arcane in the story but obvious to its readership. Ford points ironically to Horace’s odes,²⁰ inviting comparison with Plancus, a Roman consul notorious for his changes of affiliation for safety and progression; the opening line of that ode’s final quatrain translates as ‘With whitening hair the temper cools’.²¹ The Squire’s newly-white hair soothes little. Ford saw German intellectuals as particularly culpable in an October article for the *Outlook*, criticising the nation’s professoriat as ‘a curse [...] the death of learning with its substitution of philology for scholarship’, particularly war-hungry; he wrote in three further articles about the relationship between German culture, education, and the Prussian state (Hueffer 1914e, p. 431; see also Hueffer 1914f, 1914i, 1914j; see Borkett-Jones 2019, pp. 143–45). In ‘The Scaremonger’, somewhat unbelievably, the Prussian professor informs the Squire he has asked his naval brother to target Bleakham; the Squire feels that he has betrayed his country by hosting the professor previously, enabling him to know the area.

The disorder, chaos, and confusion of the story’s denouement ask readers to recognise and calm the situation around them, as the military fails to restore order. The Lieutenant of the area musters troops to perform a mock capture of the Squire to shock him back to reality. This is disrupted by an actual German submarine invasion, made surreal as it is led by an East Prussian Cycle Corps, which the assembled troops are then able to foil. The Squire’s tragedy is that he is right. He is present to defend his territory, but because of his newspaper-influenced inability to interpret the situation he is unable to act correctly

The casualties of the mid-Kents amounted to three men wounded, and they were wounded by the revolver of the Squire who had advanced alone against the submarine, firing twelve shots from two revolvers. He was found by a Boy Scout at the edge of the tide next morning, with a nasty hole in the middle of his alabaster forehead. He had turned the last shot against himself. (WP 148)

Hysteria is harming Britain, and so is suicidal, even when it has its facts right. The story echoes Ford’s very first response in print to the War, on 8 August 1914 in the *Outlook*, in which he claims: ‘Whichever side wins in the end—my own heart is certain to be over France; I think I would cut my throat if the German Fleet destroyed the British Fleet’ (WP 208). Returning to the vexed issue of his Anglo-German identity, he wrote later that month that

I quite contemplate being murdered by a mob here for my German sympathies; I quite contemplate being hung [sic] by the German troops, if they invade this country, for having subscribed the roll of British subjecthood and having set myself down for service under the British Crown. (Hueffer 1914b, p. 270)

While Ford was committed to writing for the government, he would not set himself down for military service for another ten months.

* * * * *

Continuing his articles for the *Outlook* at the beginning of January 1915, a busy year for him on all fronts, Ford was in a reflective but still pugilistic mood. In his 2 January column, he muses on the possibility of justifying war:

in the beginning of the year 1914 I would have dogmatised cheerfully in the columns of the *Outlook* as to any topic beneath the sun except the integral calculus or the sailing of schooners. And so I ask myself: Is it wrong to thank God for the deaths of a million of one's fellow-beings? (Hueffer 1915d, p. 15)

The narrowing of horizons is painfully apparent in Ford's columns of the first year of the conflict, and his first columns of its second continue the sense of urgency, articulating his desire for German internment, and saying that the editor has told him that he has 'grown monotonous [...] certainly since 4 August 1914, I have been in a sort of trance of attack—of attack upon Prussia' (Hueffer 1915f, p. 79).²² These articles informed Ford's propaganda, *When Blood is Their Argument* (March 1915) and *Between St Dennis and St George* (September 1915); the long form leavens the mix somewhat from these columns (see Lemarchal 2004; Wollaeger 2006, chap. 3; Jain 2006). By June 1915, Ford is nudged to move on from his articulations of German horrors and French genius and return to book reviewing in his columns, doing so complainingly with commentary on Pound's *Cathay* and a book on yerba maté tea, but still finding time in the article to critique the use of poison gas (Hueffer 1915b, p. 801). A month later, in late July 1915, he enlisted, a bulky 41-year-old, and was gazetted on 13 August (Saunders 1996, vol. 1, pp. 479, 486). On the cusp of enlistment, he criticised James Douglas's review of the war number of *Blast*, the column becoming an obituary in which he outlined the military record of its subject, Henri Gaudier-Brzeska: 'Put in this cold language this is a record fine enough—I wish I had it behind me' (Hueffer 1915g, p. 143; see also Hueffer 1919a). His columns for the *Outlook* finished on 21 August, after which 'Fun!—It's Heaven' was his next periodical publication. From being a weekly contributor, after enlisting he published only 20 items in periodicals in the subsequent 4 years up to and including the publication of 'Pink Flannel'.²³

5. 'Fun!—It's Heaven'

The *Bystander* Christmas issue of 1915, in which 'Fun!—It's Heaven' appeared, was slightly more sober than the previous year. Ritchie's cover design depicts a Santa Claus on the rooftops, framed by searchlights, weighed down by responsibilities, and ready for service when called. A satirical editorial muses on the range of views on the appropriateness of humour and its particular types during wartime, poking fun at the apparent inevitability of military metaphors ('Editor's Apology' 1915, p. 287). Fun there still is, though, in pieces such as 'Alice in Censorland', which she describes as 'a very stupid place', a personified Christmas Bystander revealing his 'message to my readers': 'The—mas Bystander wishes all his readers a—mas, and a—New Year.—on earth, and—will towards men' ('Alice' 1915, p. 297). Faith, cheer, and hope are blanked out, alluding to uncertainties about the whereabouts and wellbeing of friends and family members created by the obfuscation of censorship. The body text of Ford's story is broken up by a cartoon entitled 'Passed by the censor—' of a pleased woman reading a letter, captioned '—but not for publication'; the news, presumably romantic, even sexual content, offers some relief (Leste 1915). The issue also features the iconic cartoon of the War, Bruce Bairnsfather's 'One of our minor wars', better known by part of its caption, one of two men in a shell hole saying to the other 'Well, if you knows of a better 'ole, go to it'; Bairnsfather's cartoons were a major draw for buying

the *Bystander* (Bairnsfather 1915). Ford's story is surrounded by and surrounds cartoons, with which its rather arch tone sits oddly. However, other essays offer more measured commentary. The story's viewpoint echoes the editorial, which is in turn picked up in an article focusing on difficulties of tone and content in wartime for novelists (R. S. 1915). The war's increasingly interminable duration is highlighted by W.H.B.'s 'Looking forward: pars [sic] from the papers of ten years hence', all of which imagine that the war is still ongoing in 1925 (W. H. B. 1915). Hunt also features in the issue, 'The Fascination of the Dark' musing on the oppressiveness of blackout darkness. She uses the phrase 'a true Zeppelin night', but the article is not from their collaborative volume of the same name, for which Ford supplied short linking sketches, published the previous week (18 November) (Hunt 1915; Hunt and Hueffer 1916; see Saunders 1996, vol. 1, p. 484). The mood has shifted from gung-ho hysteria to the fear and desperation of stasis.

If Ford's story is not exactly humorous, it is certainly characteristically peculiar. Its focus on coping, and the difficulty of communication with an absent (or dead) partner, is an acute commentary on its moment; the evasions and obliqueness of impressionism are a form by which the omnipresence of the conflict can be addressed. 'Fun!—It's Heaven' is set in a multifaith space, and focuses on a conversation between a lay sister and an elderly doctor, who despairs at having to break bad news to Joan, the fiancée of a soldier named Dicky Trout: 'How can you console a child of nineteen whose lover of twenty-two has been shot through the head after ninety minutes in the trenches? There is no consolation. It is the most final thing in the world' (WP 149) (Hueffer 1915j, p. 327). The sister offers the consolations of religion, *contra* the doctor's despairing rationalism. Joan's grief manifests as a concern that 'he won't ever have any fun again; not any fun! [. . . T]he lights, and the white paint and the young girls; and the tea, and the river, and the little bands playing "Hitchy Koo"' (WP 149–50). The doctor relates his conversation with Joan, and it is not clear whether this is his or her quotidian idea of fun. Either way, it imagines a pre-war world, thinking back to the ragtime hit of 1912; Mary Dudziak argues that in the wartime imagination, the 'future is, in essence, the return to a time that war had suspended' (Dudziak 2012, p. 22). The longing is for the pleasures restricted in wartime in general, let alone denied by death in it. The barely double entendre of the chorus of "Hitchy Koo" makes clear one thing that Joan feels she is missing: 'say he does it just like no one could/when he does it, say, he does it good' (Gilbert et al. 1912, p. 5).²⁴ The lay sister's desire to 'hear the tune of "Get Out and Get Under"', a 1913 song that is not really about fixing an automobile, clarifies further the ubiquity of wartime sexuality. The delicate line Ford treads between the tragedy of the soldier's death and the need to keep believing in good things beyond wartime attests to his sensitivity both to contemporary debates and the tone of the magazine.

The doctor poignantly accompanies Joan to visit the training camp in the Midlands where Dicky spent his last months; Ford is clearly also commenting on his own recent training. The doctor invites the lay sister to

Try to imagine the Mossloft Range for yourself. In the squalid suburbs of a hideous city, on a dirty, flat expanse of sordid grass, some banks of clay, like long graves. And, in them, beneath the squalid clouds, clay-coloured figures reclining, intent, gazing at the banks before them, at a distance. And flat, black shapes, like the heads and shoulders of devils peep up over the banks in front and lob away. Fun! (WP 150)

The inspiration seems likely to be a new camp at Cannock Chase, on the outskirts of Stoke-on-Trent, whose population soared in the early years of the twentieth century and which would officially become a city in 1925.²⁵ The first camp there was named Rugeley, after the town to its east side; Ford gives the same name to 'Sylvia Tietjens' portentous ducal second cousin' in *Parade's End* (Ford [1925] 2011, p. 47). The clay evokes the potteries, but also the Flanders mud which Ford had already described movingly in *Antwerp*. The extent of the description evokes the narrative painting of Ford's maternal grandfather, from whom he took his chosen name, Ford Madox Brown, while its relative lack of precision also evokes the French Impressionist painters. The indistinct nature of the figures, drab and/or

black, also recalls Pound's 'In a Station of the Metro', while the blackness also registers the depression from which Ford tried to escape by enlisting. The doctor describes 'plumes of dim flames running away down the wind and invisible smoke because the sky was just smoke! Fun! The proper fun for a boy of twenty-two, the sweetheart of a girl of nineteen. Well, I suppose it is alright' (WP 150). The bitter irony concerns the idea of fun in wartime, but also that Ford was not a boy of twenty-two, despite his romantic entanglements. After the war, training camps often came to be looked back on relatively fondly by soldiers, as a time before the horrors of the front line became known. Dicky can never develop that nostalgia.

Ford's impressionism registers here as the ghostly apparition of soldiers; uncanniness, disembodiment, and hauntings, manifestations of Ford's impressionism, are common to all these stories.²⁶ Spectral connections are the theme of pre-war stories such as 'The Medium's End' (Hueffer 1912) and 'Telepathy' (Hueffer 1913b); we might read the telephone's ghostly voices of '4692 Padd' (Hueffer 1908) in a similar light.²⁷ Here, Ford imagines both what will happen to young soldiers such as Dicky, but also attempts to reconcile and rationalise what might happen to himself. Ward observed that 'death and life are uncertainly poised' in the contemporary short story (Ward 1924, p. 16), while Malcolm sees 'The ghost or supernatural story [...] as] the paradigmatic anti-mimetic text. A vision of the world that precludes the supernatural is shown to be defective. The world of the dead, or the supernaturally monstrous, intrudes into the world of the living', and requires 'a revision of an empirical understanding of the world' (Malcolm 2016, p. 62).²⁸ As the doctor 'sees' the band playing 'Hitchy Koo', the historical frame is skewed, with language, dress, and action of the eighteenth century; the return to this moment anticipates Tietjens's preference for that era in *Parade's End* (see Haslam 2014). However, he then moves from this ante-room into a 'long white inner room [...] full of young men in khaki, sitting at little tables, laughing with the young girls, chaffing the waitresses even—and eating éclairs'; one of these men is Dicky Trout (WP 151). Fun. The men are heading to Ypres, which the initial readership would associate immediately with the first German use of poison gas in the Second Battle (April–May 1915) and with the widely-circulating ghost story to which the doctor alludes: 'Marlborough's men got out of their graves and fought for us at Ypres' (WP 152) (see Liggins et al. 2011, pp. 134–5). This returns us supernaturally to the Battle of Blenheim (1704). Andrew Mauser links the supernatural element to Arthur Machen's popular story 'The Bowman' (1914) (Mauser 2011a, p. 95), which does the same with the Battle of Agincourt (1415); Ford's propaganda volumes both take their titles from Shakespeare's *Henry V*, and he had written in the second month of the war about being able to see 'former wars [...] much more clearly' (Hueffer 1914c, p. 334). The doctor's glimpse of the past ends with a word from the ghostly Dicky: 'I was fed up with Ypres, but it's all the fun of the fair here. And Joan will be here! Fun! I tell you it's Heaven' (WP 151–2). Joan has had a similar vision and takes the veil to achieve ongoing spiritual communion. In late 1915 the imperative for consolation is clear, with the narrator concluding that 'Assuredly if there were no Heaven we whom Flanders has not yet claimed must will one into existence with all the volition of united humanity' (WP 153).

* * * * *

Ford's first attempts to parse his military experience came shortly after he was shell-shocked in late July 1916 at the Somme, suffering physical and mental ailments, notably amnesia. This led to a flurry of literary activity. His next periodical publication was the poem 'Nostalgia', dated approximately a week before his shell shock, at Albert on 22 July, and published in the 14 September *Westminster Gazette* (Hueffer 1916a).²⁹ The poem looks back wistfully to the England left just a few weeks ago. Ford also wrote a preface to Hunt's *Their Lives* (1916), as well as material that would be rewritten as part of *No Enemy* (1929), and the 'Arms and the Mind' essays, the latter two of which have been commented widely (see Skinner 2002; Chantler and Hawkes 2015). I comment briefly here on two understudied short pieces from the period of Ford's military service. Firstly, Ford's preface

to his translation of Pierre Loti's pamphlet *The Trail of the Barbarians*, dated 9 August 1917, is revealing about his state of mind:

It has been my ambition, for more years than I can remember, to devote the closing stage of my life to rendering into English some masterpiece of a French stylist. Well, here is the rendering of the masterpiece of a French stylist; and Fate wills it that it has been performed between parades, orderly rooms, strafes, and the rest of the preoccupations that re-fit us for France. . . so it is not a good rendering. You need from 11.45 pip emma of 8/8/17 to 11.57 pip emma of 9/8/17 for the rendering of almost any French sentence !. . . (Hueffer 1917, p. v)

The precarious nature of life is still uppermost in Ford's mind, allied with characteristic self-deprecation and the constancy of his appreciation for the French literature which underpinned his impressionism. Ford only demurs from an agreement with Loti on the claim that France is irreparable, concluding that 'in France nothing is irreparable, since France possesses the secret of eternal life' (Hueffer 1917, p. vi). The secret in the face of military conflict, presumably, is the enduring work of prose stylists.

First published in French in the *Revue des Idées* in November 1918, Ford's essay 'Pon. . . ti. . . pri. . . ith' continues to struggle to connect with the landscape: physical, but also literary and cultural (Hueffer 1918; see Saunders 2000, p. 155). He reflects on the scars created by the violence of industrial modernity and concludes with his regret that he cannot find any copies of Flaubert in ruined Rouen, the captain to whom he talks again invoking the Franco-Prussian War (WP 35). The essay registers Ford's continuing self-definition as an outsider even in war, the great communal effort, an Anglo-German litterateur in a Welsh regiment. The fragility of national identity again comes to the fore:

And when you hear "Pontypridd" said by the fields of France, you see rise up before you the rocks, the fir trees, the waterfalls of the Golden Valley; the castles, Castell Goch and the "mountains" of Caerphilly; the clouds, the chimneys and the gigantic wheels of the Rhondda; the salt marsh sheep of Porthcawl and Sker. . . (WP 34)

A romanticised version of rural south Wales is contrasted with the similar land that is currently being fought over, offering a way out of the grotesqueries of war via the imagination less than a week before the deaths in Mametz Wood of many of the men Ford memorialises here (WP 34). The impressionistic fragments of wartime memory amid the imaginative desire to be elsewhere attest not only to Ford's mental state but the wartime imperative to see beyond it.

6. 'Pink Flannel'

If (unusually) we take Ford's word in writing to Stella Bowen that 'Pink Flannel' is 'a silly story I wrote in the line two or three years ago', then we might see it in the light of the mid-war work sketched above (Saunders 2000, p. 155). The story is about an adulterous assignation to be conducted on leave, evoking previous short stories on this topic such as 'L'Affaire Ingram' (1899), which involves the humiliation of a young officer; 'Below the Stairs' (1906); and 'A Silence' (1909) (Hueffer 1899, 1906, 1909). While it describes 'ninety-six hours' leave' (WP 154), there are commonalities with the essay 'Trois Jours de Permission', published in the *Nation* in September 1916 (Hueffer 1916b, 1919b). In 'Pink Flannel' a voice calls 'The Major wants: *Mr Britling Sees It Through*'; H.G. Wells's novel was being serialised in the *Nation* when Ford's earlier essay was published. This story was published on 8 May 1919 in *Land & Water*, a periodical which was notorious for anti-German sentiment during the war. It sits among ongoing commentary on war and peace, including regular contributions by authors including A.P. Herbert, whose novel of shell shock and desertion *The Secret Battle* was published in volume form at the end of May, and Joseph Conrad, whose *A Rescue* was being serialised. Siegfried Sassoon's poem 'Cinema Hero' was published in the previous issue (Sassoon 1919), whose cover featured a picture of Lloyd

George and Edwin Montagu, then Secretary of State for India, titled 'The Paris Imbroglío', as negotiations prior to the Paris Peace Conference continued haltingly.

'Pink Flannel' powerfully situates against each other the disordered, brutally parodied domesticity of trench life with a transgression against conventional domesticity on the home front. The protagonist, W.L. James, frets over a forgotten safe place for a letter containing details of the adultery he plans, or at least hopes, to commit with Mrs Wilkinson on his brief leave; the misplaced letter trope is a common one from Victorian fiction.³⁰ At the front he finds comfort in 'calculat[ing] the chances' of injury by various kinds of weaponry (WP 155), anticipating the preternatural gifts of Ford's later protagonist Christopher Tietjens in *Parade's End*. The weighing of odds attempts to impose logic on a chaotic, infinitely dangerous situation. James's imaginative reverie of the projected dinner encounter is in a touchingly different register:

He would keep her waiting twenty minutes in the vestibule of his hotel while he had a quick bath. By 6.45 they would be dining together; she would be looking at him across the table with her exciting eyes that had dark pupils and yellow-brown iris! Her chin would be upon her hands with the fingers interlocked. Then they would be in the dress circle of the theatre – looking down on the nearly darkened stage from which, nevertheless, a warm light would well upwards upon her face . . . And she would be warm, beside him, her hand touching his hand amongst her first . . . And her white shoulders . . . And they would whisper, her hair just touching his ear . . . And be warm . . . Warm! (WP 156)

This reverie divests James of the traces of war, bathing first, and then returning to heterosexual domesticity, albeit a form which as adultery comes with its own dangers; James fears that he will be stood up. The trip to the theatre connotes that civilian life is a remembered performance for soldiers in wartime, the lights falling somehow on the audience. Ellipsis would become a characteristic Fordian device in writing about the war (Sorum 2007; Haslam 2011, p. xxxvi; Dutton 2021), and Head argues for the 'disunifying effects of ellipsis and ambiguity, indicating how this kind of disruption establishes a connection between text and context' (Head 1992, p. 2). The ellipses demand imaginative filling, indicating thoughts that cannot be completed, here pointing to the gap between the home front and the Western front.

James's forgetfulness, echoing Ford's own amnesia, is resolved by a vision, a similar structure to 'Fun!—It's Heaven' and a recurring device of his impressionism. He prays to St Anthony, the patron saint of the lost (people, items, faith, love) who in some countries is also known as a marriage saint. Here, St Anthony comes through for the adulterers, as the location of the letter comes to James in a Fauvist vision of Swan and Edgar's shop on Piccadilly Circus, a noted place for assignations which was also hit in the last Zeppelin raid on London on 19 October 1917:

'You perceive? Pink flannel!' [. . .] 'Pink!' the saint said: 'Bluey pink!'

Yes: there were pink monticules, pink watersheds, cascades of pink flannel, deserts, wild crevasses, perspectives . . .

W.L. James looked at St Anthony with deep anxiety: he was excited, he was bewildered. The saint continued to point a plum finger, and the crowd all round tittered.

The saint slowly ascended towards a black heaven that was filled with the beams from searchlights . . . (WP 157)

The fantastic civilian landscape is filled with eruptions, the vision refracting the landscape of the trenches into a surreally soft cataclysm. The searchlight beams bitterly parody the idea of a heaven as James snaps out of his reverie into frantic action, retrieving the pocket book and the letter within it from the tunic of a comrade, 'under the pink flannel intended to hold a supply of pins' (WP 158). The protagonist recalls that as an attack had begun, he panicked not for his own life, but to hide the letter: 'he had tried to shield to the

best of his ability the woman he loved at the cost of quite great danger to himself. For the rum jar had flattened out the wretched sandbags of the trench exactly where he had been standing'. (WP 158) The story is one of a near miss, an escape due to the adultery, but also of amnesia, infidelity, and extreme duress, buttressed by the hope of a life beyond it which leads the protagonist to think that 'I may be worthy of her even yet', his sleep fading into the same reverie of dinner and theatre as the waking reverie from earlier in the story (WP 158). Whether we view this as a story of its possible composition in 1916, or its publication in 1919, the need to imagine a world beyond the war remains clear.

* * * * *

Ford's literary production slowed in his post-war recovery, and there is little periodical publication between 'Pink Flannel' and 'The Colonel's Shoes'. Back across the channel, he contributed three essays on 'English Country' to the *New Statesman* (August–September 1919; later part of No Enemy), another account of Gaudier's life and career for the *English Review* (October 1919), and five review essays for the short-lived *Piccadilly Review* (October–November 1919); he began this series by describing it 'as a friendly enquiry into how literature has survived Armageddon than as any browbeating disquisition', asking for progress in criticism as 'before the 4 August 1914, we certainly had not even the rudiments of an agreed critical language' (Ford 1919, 2002, p. 186). Even after the war, it seems impossible to avoid viewing its start as the moment at which things changed. His creative slump, as he recuperated at Red Ford in Sussex, wrestling with manuscripts that would remain unfinished such as *True Love & a G.C.M.* and *Mr Croyd* is punctuated by brief publications such as the following short stories, which rehearse themes and incidents that would later be reused.

7. 'The Colonel's Shoes'

The portrait of a soldier at the limits of his physical and mental endurance is the focus of 'The Colonel's Shoes' (1920). The story was first published on 11 January 1920 in *Reynolds's Newspaper*, an enduring and popular Sunday publication, in an issue that is dominated by issues of peace and reintegration. The headline article is 'How Peace Was Signed With Germany', lauding the conclusion of the conflict, the birth of the League of Nations, and the end of 'the proud German hopes for world domination' ('How Peace Was Signed' 1920). Problems of military reintegration recur in the news stories, including the execution of a Russian-Jewish soldier in the British Army for murder ('Poetry in Condemned Cell' 1920), an indecent assault case brought by a soldier against a civil servant ('Soldier's Complaint' 1920), and the apparent accident of a soldier found drowned in a well ('Soldier Drowned in Shallow Well' 1920). The military connection is invariably the headline, the ghost of the war contributing to the creation of further soldierly ghosts. That the motif becomes so prominent in Ford's war writings is a manifestation of his moment, seen through his impressionist lens. 'The Colonel's Shoes' begins with a post-war encounter on a train, for Ford a liminal space where unlikely encounters and indiscretions can happen. Ford had written a thematically similar story before the war in 'The Case of James Lurgan' (1911), and the railway is vital in *Parade's End*, both the tetralogy and, in it, the war beginning with Tietjens on a train (Hueffer 1911a; see Haslam 2003). This story is about a space between places, an in-between state of disassociation, and also about the slow healing of the body politic: it looks back to the darkest days of the war, but also speaks to its own moment, in which post-war recoveries, both personal and social, seemed perilous in the face of poverty and industrial unrest.

The story is told at two removes, to the narrator by an Irish Medical Officer, which contemporary audiences would have understood as suggesting unreliability. It focuses on the relationship between a preternaturally close uncle and nephew, Lieutenant-Colonel Leslie Arkwright and Lieutenant Hugh Arkwright, as they try what is suggested to be a vexatious case of military discipline brought by the unscrupulous Captain Gotch, pseudonymised by the narrator (the implication of the slang 'gotcha', which dates back to the 1920s, seems pointed).³¹ Gotch is a type of man that the 'inexperienced like [. . .] enormously; the experi-

enced hold their tongues about them' (WP 161); the questioning of his 'soundness' parallels the treatment of the Jewish staff officer Levin in *Parade's End* (Hueffer 1920; Saunders 1996, vol. 2, p. 212). For Saunders, the primary characters all contain elements of their author: 'If "Lieut. Hugh" sounds like Lieut. Hueffer, and the worn out Colonel sounds like the Ford who wrote to Hunt from Rouen, "I am tired of fighting", it is Gotch who embodies many of Ford's concerns about what he might be like' (Saunders 1996, vol. 2, p. 34). Perhaps predictably, then, Gotch is humanised by a form of artistry, popular for his 'fine baritone voice', in which he 'would sing popular sentimental songs of the day, and put in nasty meanings and raise one brown eyebrow when he came to them' (WP 162). However, we are told that 'his own company was nasty' (WP 162), and it should not then be a surprise that the culminating suggestion is he should apply to 'look after Divisional Follies', a barely punning suggestion (WP 168). The relationship between instinct, training, performance, and action is vital to the story.

These men are operating at the limits of their endurance, and the narrator opines that 'There were many who went over the edge of unreason—but there were many and many who stayed, by the grace of God, just on this side of the edge' (WP 160).³² If they are men on the right side of an edge, it is a close-run thing. The 'indefatigable' Colonel, who will not delegate and as a consequence whose 'mind was overloaded' (WP 162) seems to be suffering from narcoleptic exhaustion. His nephew suffers from a different malady, reported by the MO to be 'depressed about his health' and seeking medication (WP 164). The MO wonders if his illusions were 'pink and red or bottle green blackbirds', echoing the technicolour hallucinations of 'Pink Flannel', but is told by Hugh that 'it was queerer than that' (WP 165). The kinship between Leslie and Hugh becomes an instance of haunting, possession, even shapeshifting:

suddenly Hugh heard his uncle's voice say in his ear, "I can't keep. . . . Oh God, I can't keep. . . . I'm falling. . . . falling. . . ." And then—he himself—he, Hugh, himself – was sitting on the hard wooden chair at the CO's table. He felt older, older; and wiser, wiser; and surer of himself than he had ever felt sure. (WP 166)

The repeated assertion by Hugh of his own identity makes clear that this is a form of transfiguration, Hugh's reserves of energy sustaining his uncle, while perspicacity passes in the other direction, turning the younger man against Gotch, previously his ally. The moment anticipates the bodily dissociation of Tietjens in *Parade's End* as he talks to General Champion, his godfather and Commanding Officer, about an arrest that has been maliciously mistakenly attributed to him (Ford [1925] 2011, pp. 227–30). While these stories are interesting in their own right, it is clear that Ford continued to process his wartime experiences as he developed his own principles of fictional form.

8. 'Enigma'

The other two post-war stories about the conflict are less successful, which explains why 'Enigma' did not appear until its first publication in *War Prose* (Ford 1999), and 'The Miracle' was only published after the successes of the *Parade's End* novels. Saunders dates 'Enigma' to between September 1920 and November 1922; it is not impossible that this is the story that Ford sends to his agent, J.B. Pinker, on 20 August 1920. Pinker appears to have suggested that war stories are out of fashion, with Ford responding: 'It is nonsense to talk of the story as a war story; it isn't, tho' I suppose it has a war-frame to an idea. And if OUR HEROES are to be taboo in the Press it is a bad business'.³³ Thinking of the story as the product of a moment close to 'The Colonel's Shoes' would situate it at an early stage in Ford's recovery, suggesting a stage of experimentation in this relatively marginal form for him, at a moment when he was searching for inspiration. There is no periodical context here, but the story is still worth considering.

'Enigma' deals with a disappearance whose only witness Young Price, a man who had been in the Fordian narrator's battalion, is shell shocked: his implied unreliability continues to ask the questions about the impact of war on literature and narrative that had concerned Ford since 1914. The narrator muses

I suppose it is possible, even in the twentieth century, to vanish. I mean, to go out completely, in a minute, leaving as you say of hares, the form still hot after you. Without any debts left behind you. Just walking out of the house. That was what the quite pleasant young couple, Mr and Mrs Rockingham-Denman had done. One's evil mind suggests the worst to one: but there was no worst discoverable. Nothing. Not even any good foot-prints. A complete blank! (WP 171)

This is an unsolved, unsolvable detective story: the fantasy of disappearance is revealing for the recuperating Ford, struggling with his inability to return to creative prominence and productivity. The inconspicuousness of the couple is a form of blankness that allows the sorts of hauntings, transpositions, and evasions we see. Young Price's attempts to be employed by the disappeared couple are the only traces of them. Their encounter is related as dream-like good fortune; they establish their credentials by tenuous points of military intersection, and as a consequence 'Price's description of them would have described two thousand other couples' (WP 176). The impressionistic rendering leads to them making him an offer 'to live with them; to take all the animal-responsibility and two thirds of the profits' (WP 176). It is an offer that seems too good to be true and proves to be, Price's bubble burst almost immediately by their departure, apparently in response to a similarly unspecified suspicious-looking man. The couple's blankness also makes them a palimpsest onto which fantasies of veteran post-war prosperity can be inscribed, in the face of substantial material hardships for many. The necessity of imagining a better world is stressed, along with the difficulties of making it a reality.

The story is complicated by the fact that it is again the narrator's secondhand relation with a further unreliable narrator—a device common in Ford's impressionism. Indeed, Ford would later write back to around this moment, suggesting that 'everyone who had taken physical part in the war was then [in 1919] mad. No one could have come through that shattering experience and still view life and mankind with any normal vision' (Ford 1934, p. 48). Young Price is described at length by the narrator:

Young Price was one of a hundred thousand—a little better off than some, he had come out of the army with his undistinguished university career that should have fitted him to be a schoolmaster or something like that, completely stopped. Real, bad—and I assure you quite genuine—shell-shock had made it absolutely impossible that he should continue his studies. [. . . T]he greatest part of his small capital [got] into the hands of ingenious swindlers with a sham automobile agency. So he had an incredibly small sum a week, interest from a few railway shares which he was determined not to sell, and had been tramping about the country with a ruck-sack in search of agricultural work. (WP 173)

The hundred thousand alludes to the first Kitchener battalions, the initial enlistees in the British Army, romanticised in Ian Hay's *The First Hundred Thousand* (1915), suggesting the arduousness of long wartime service in a way that would have been recognised immediately by the first readers. Young Price's shell shock immediately places him as an unreliable narrator, throwing into question his interpretation of the encounter, and also his analysis of their disappearance, which he puts down to an elopement. Again, the narrator, Young Price, and Mr Rockingham-Denham manifest different attributes of Ford and Christopher Tietjens: the impecunious habits, the holding on to railway stocks, and the fascination with the rural (see Walters 2021). Ford also refuses the conventional resolution of the detective story, stating that 'I have no answer to offer to this enigma' (WP 176). These factors point us to the ongoing hardships of those suffering from shellshock and demobilised in the post-war world, the struggles, as Ford was experiencing, to reintegrate, to find work, which echoed the precarious state of the reconstruction effort.

9. 'The Miracle'

Ford's final short story about the First World War, 'The Miracle', was published in the *Yale Review* of Winter 1928, and reprinted in the *English Review* in 1930. Both of these

publications align with the War Books Boom of the turn of the post-war decade (see [Frayn and Houston 2022](#)), a moment at which an author like Ford, who had by then achieved at least critical success for his fiction about the conflict in the *Parade's End* tetralogy, was doubly able to capitalise on remaining material about the war. The story narrates a bombing raid seven years ago; this suggests that the story is set in 1923, and the composition date may be closely aligned; Saunders notes the possibility of its autobiographical elements, but places its composition after Ford had finished *Parade's End* ([Saunders 1996](#), vol. 2, pp. 257, 280). The *Yale Review* is a much more academic publication than those in which Ford's previous stories appeared, pointing to a change in his literary status and perhaps arising from the visiting lectureships in the US he would intermittently take up. The war is registered primarily in non-fiction book reviews, notably one which covers five books on Germany and the war, and one of Mussolini's autobiography ([Dawson 1928](#); [Greenfield 1928](#)).

'The Miracle', like all of these stories, returns to an epiphanic moment, a common short story and, indeed, modernist trope. A post-war veteran who has become a brilliant but absent-minded Fordian/Tietjens-esque professor recounts the revelatory moment for his faith, the appearance in his rucksack on a wartime bombing raid of the cigarettes, necessary for lighting the fuse, which he is convinced he has forgotten to pack. The answering of his prayers leads to his belief that there is 'a Special Providence', but also strengthens his belief in himself; his new wife, to whom he tells the story, realises it is his own faulty memory which underlies the apparent miracle. Saunders outlines the narrative, the autobiographical context, and the connections to *Parade's End* ([Saunders 1996](#), vol. 2, pp. 257–58). Here, however, I examine briefly the story's focus on remembering and forgetting ten years on from the conflict. The narrator tells his wife that

I remembered with absolute precision—that I had forgotten. It was no hallucination. I remembered not only that I had forgotten, but *how!* [. . .] You see! I remembered! I remembered the *action* of forgetting. As I went out of the hut, I had had the sensation that something was unsatisfactory. Omitted! You know what I mean about that sensation: it is like a little thirst And there I was with that sudden remembrance. (WP 184) ([Ford 1928](#), p. 329)

This, the story's pivotal moment, addresses the more general experience of the 1920s in recalling the conflict, the position on the cusp of remembering and forgetting a characteristic form of the modernist story which, for Claire Drewery, 'may thus be interpreted in terms of tension and contradiction as opposed to conveying a transcendent insight' ([Drewery 2016](#), p. 135). Here it is both: the Professor experiences his revelation, while tensions and contradictions are recognised by the Professor's wife, identified only in terms of her previous identity as the former Miss Sinclair, and the reader. Ford makes clear here that both remembering and forgetting are active processes in themselves, realising that the war continues constantly to be registered indirectly, in traces, in absences. Whether written five or ten years after the conflict, it is now receding and its memory is becoming formalised, as the story's conclusion recognises. The Professor's wife tells him

I should suggest that on this anniversary we should. . .you might like to. . .go to a service at the Cathedral. And, side by side. . .oh, offer thanks, and whatever it is you do to confirm yourself in. . .Faith!

With an ecstatic face he had tiptoed to the head of the bed and now, bending down, he folded her in his arms. (WP 185)

The anniversary seems to be of the event, but its publication in December 1928 would point its first readership clearly to the ten-year anniversary of the Armistice, which was widely commemorated. She realises that his faith is rooted in his own absent-mindedness, but understands the importance of this self-belief to his subsequent success, the characteristically Fordian elliptical hesitations conveying her resistance both to faith and the shattering of his illusions. Inverting the narrative of 'Fun!—It's Heaven' in survival and post-war marriage, the story reminds us that romantic intimacy was another aspect of life that became precarious in wartime, and must be cherished, literally clung on to. It

is apposite that Ford's final short story addressing the First World War finishes on these terms, amid the social and political uncertainties of Europe in the 1920s.

* * * * *

Ford's short stories warrant further sustained critical attention in and of themselves, as well as for their role in Ford's oeuvre more generally. The success of digitisation programmes means that Ford's periodical contributions are more accessible than ever, and the frameworks for discussing periodicals are now robustly established. That said, work still tends to focus on the coterie magazines which are typically associated with high modernism; we have a wealth of scholarship, for example, on Ford, the *English Review*, and the *transatlantic review*. Even in the *Journal of Modern Periodical Studies* or the *Journal of European Periodical Studies* there is little work on, or even mention of, the more popular periodicals such as the *Bystander*, the *Outlook*, or *Reynolds's Newspaper* in which these stories appeared. The literary contributions to these publications, Ford's included, warrant further consideration as ephemera becomes more accessible.

Here, I have argued that these stories are important in developing Ford's impressionism, as well as acting as the proving ground for his fictional response to the hardships of, and recovery from, his wartime experiences. The heavenly and/or hysterical nature of Ford's pre-1916 impressionism becomes transmuted into forgetting and more sustained absences. The overall method remains relatively consistent, but the devices and tropes by which it is enacted shift as Ford hones his form *en route* to his masterpieces, the *Parade's End* novels. The teetering of these narratives on the cusp of the natural and supernatural, rational and insane, absence and presence, highlights the enduring impact of the First World War both on Ford and more generally in the post-war decade. Bringing these stories together for the first time shifts our understanding of the development of Ford's response to the conflict and his literary style more generally.

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Notes

- ¹ Einhaus only glances at Ford, referring to his founding of the *English Review* (Einhaus 2013, p. 44), to the reprinting of 'Fun!—It's Heaven' in Andrew Maunder's anthology (Maunder 2011a; Einhaus 2013, p. 69), and to his production of 'anti-German writing independent of a government commission' (Einhaus 2013, p. 121).
- ² For a selection of Ford's short critical writing, see Ford (2002). There is a huge amount that is not yet collected, although the forthcoming Complete Works of Ford Madox Ford may change this.
- ³ These stories are all contained in Ford (1999). I give parenthetical references to that edition in the body text using the abbreviation (WP), and cite details of the first periodical publication at the first quotation from each story; Saunders does not reproduce these articles in their entirety. I style him as Ford Madox Ford in this essay, but in the first references to periodicals I use the name under which the pieces were published, for the most part, Ford Madox Hueffer.
- ⁴ Digitization projects such as the *Modernist Journals Project* (1995-) have made many early-twentieth-century periodicals accessible, and a wealth of Fordian material therein is yet to be recuperated fully to the critical conversation.
- ⁵ The essays of Harding (2010) offer valuable context, but do not include any work on the short stories nor, indeed, the range of periodicals for which Ford wrote beyond those that he edited.
- ⁶ Rebecca Beasley discusses Ford, Conrad, and the *English Review* extensively in Beasley (2020), chap. 2. She discusses the publication of 'The Raid' on pp. 164–65.
- ⁷ The series 'Literary Portraits', a wide-ranging series in the *Daily Mail* which ran weekly from 20 April to 20 July 1907, was Ford's first regular column, then moved to the *Tribune*. See Harvey (1962, pp. 147–9).
- ⁸ Ford to J.B. Pinker, 4 October 1919, text ALS Huntington. Unpublished. Thanks to Paul Skinner for this information.
- ⁹ Ford is commenting on A.E. Coppard's 'The Higgler', also in this issue, but the suggestion of autocritique is unavoidable.
- ¹⁰ Shaw parallels the short story and impressionist art (Shaw 1983, p. 13), although Head critiques her lack of nuance in doing so (Head 1992, p. 14).

- 11 Caine's war enthusiasm would likely have come to Ford's notice through his propaganda work for Ford's friend C.F.G. Masterman's War Propaganda Bureau.
- 12 *The Good Soldier* might be cited against this claim, but the novel was largely completed before the conflict began.
- 13 This and the companion essay 'War and the Mind' were not published until 1980 and 1989 respectively. They are most easily accessed in Ford (1999), pp. 36–48.
- 14 A continuation of this article is in the following issue, (Hueffer 1914q).
- 15 On Prussian un-Germanness, see Hueffer (1915a, p. 141).
- 16 On this topic in Ford, see Parfekt (2006). Ford would later review Herbert Gorman's biography of Alexander Dumas: *The Incredible Marquis* (Ford 1929). He claims to have read novels by Dumas under bombardment in Armentières (see Saunders 2000, p. 162).
- 17 On Ford, propaganda and rumour, see Tate (1998).
- 18 On the complexities of Ford's position in relation to New Journalism see Rogers (2019, pp. 308–10).
- 19 Ford writes about the Satyricon in Hueffer (1914d).
- 20 He states a preference for Tibullus and Ovid over Horace and Virgil in (Hueffer 1914p).
- 21 Horace, *Odes*, 3.14, l. 25 (trans. A. D. Godley).
- 22 For his agitating for internment, see Hueffer (1915e, p. 47).
- 23 See Harvey (1962, pp. 214–16); Saunders (2000, p. 155). Aside from the stories named, Ford publishes 9 poems (plus one reprint/rewrite), 9 essays, 3 standalone pieces, and the 6 essays of the 'Men and Women' series in the *Little Review*.
- 24 On the spinster and the First World War, see Einhaus (2016a, pp. 108–11).
- 25 On Cannock Chase and the First World War, see Carpenter et al. (2018).
- 26 Foley asserts the ghostliness of Ford's poem *Antwerp* (Foley 2017, pp. 69–74). On spiritualism and the First World War see, for example, Owen (2004); Falcon (2023).
- 27 '4692 Padd' (Hueffer 1908) is the basis for Ford's novella *A Call* (1909).
- 28 On the nineteenth-century roots of this genre, see also Cox (2016).
- 29 The poem is also known as 'The Iron Music'.
- 30 The Imperial War Museum's 'Lives of the First World War' database reveals that there was, in fact, a W. L. James in the Welsh Regiment, in which Ford served, during the First World War <<https://livesofthefirstworldwar.iwm.org.uk/lifestory/2579082>> (accessed 15 August 2022). The man who hands the letter to James in the story is called Caradoc Morris, of whom there was an instance in the Canadian Expeditionary Force. <<https://livesofthefirstworldwar.iwm.org.uk/lifestory/5680944>> (accessed 15 August 2022). Canadian troops feature prominently in Ford's later *Parade's End*. While this may be a coincidence, it is a notable one.
- 31 The name Arkwright is repeated from *Zeppelin Nights* (WP 216).
- 32 Saunders (1996, vol. 2) uses this quotation as the epigraph and title for his chap. 3, '1917: The Edge of Unreason', which deals with Ford's experiences in the dog days of the war.
- 33 Ford to J.B. Pinker, 1 September 1920, TLS Huntington, Unpublished.

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