Ford Madox Ford

Edited by
Frank MacShane

The Critical Heritage

FORD MADOX FORD: THE CRITICAL HERITAGE

THE CRITICAL HERITAGE SERIES

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FORD MADOX FORD

THE CRITICAL HERITAGE

Edited by

FRANK MACSHANE

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The publisher has gone to great lengths to ensure the quality of this reprint but points out that some imperfections in the original may be apparent

General Editor's Preface

The reception given to a writer by his contemporaries and near-contemporaries is evidence of considerable value to the student of literature. On one side we learn a great deal about the state of criticism at large and in particular about the development of critical attitudes towards a single writer; at the same time, through private comments in letters, journals or marginalia, we gain an insight upon the tastes and literary thought of individual readers of the period. Evidence of this kind helps us to understand the writer's historical situation, the nature of his immediate reading-public, and his response to these pressures.

The separate volumes in the *Critical Heritage Series* present a record of this early criticism. Clearly, for many of the highly productive and lengthily reviewed nineteenth- and twentieth-century writers, there exists an enormous body of material; and in these cases the volume editors have made a selection of the most important views, significant for their intrinsic critical worth or for their representative quality—perhaps even registering incomprehension!

For earlier writers, notably pre-eighteenth century, the materials are much scarcer and the historical period has been extended, sometimes far beyond the writer's lifetime, in order to show the inception and growth of critical views which were initially slow to appear.

In each volume the documents are headed by an Introduction, discussing the material assembled and relating the early stages of the author's reception to what we have come to identify as the critical tradition. The volumes will make available much material which would otherwise be difficult of access and it is hoped that the modern reader will be thereby helped towards an informed understanding of the ways in which literature has been read and judged.

B.C.S.

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Introduction

Ford Madox Ford (*né* Hueffer) began to write at a time when political, social and artistic standards were starting to change in a radical way, without yet taking on definite new characteristics. The long Victorian era, with its dominating, even domineering, figures like Dickens and Thackeray, Arnold and Tennyson, Browning, Carlyle and the Rossettis, was drawing to a close, leaving in its trail what appeared to be a school of minor figures, many demoralized by the prospect of trying to equal the work and attain the status of their predecessors. With its gradual dissemination of literature to the masses, the nineteenth century had created a much larger audience than had previously been known, and a great number of books of all kinds were published every year. Although the expansion of the reading public was generally beneficial, it was accomplished mainly by an increase in what Ford was to call 'nuvvle writers'—men and women for whom the novel was entertainment only, who wrote romances of the sort that today appear on television. In this new flood of fiction, serious artists tended to lose their identity. The difficulties they encountered in gaining recognition were increased by the tendency of journals and newspapers to devote little space to the reviewing of fiction. The long quarterly articles of the early nineteenth century were replaced by omnibus reviews in which half-a-dozen or more novels were dealt with in a few hundred words. Critics and reviewers gave most of their attention to histories, biographies and topical works of sociology and politics.

The neglect of serious imaginative literature indicates a lack of critical thinking during much of the period that led up to the First World War. The extraordinary affluence and material prosperity of English life encouraged this blandness. The large middle class was self-satisfied, happy with the combination of industrialism and imperialism that brought millions of pounds into British banks every year. This new class had obtained considerable political and social power, replacing the older aristocracy and landed gentry, and had no intention of giving it up. The Press, which it controlled, supported the *status quo* and was hostile to any questioning of commercial standards. The national genius for compromise encouraged moderation, and the new commercial

forces gained power without much disorder. Ideas and influences that could not be reconciled with them were ignored; if that did not work, they were suppressed, as the Boer War and the suffragette movement testify.

From the literary point of view, the irresponsibility of this society is revealed by the absence of serious literary people on the staffs of the literary journals. Many of the more important of these, starting with the *Quarterly Review* and the *Edinburgh Review* and continuing on down through *Blackwood's*, the *Athenaeum*, the *Academy* and the *Saturday Review*, had been founded in the early years of the century by poets and novelists and by others who had mature literary standards and a sense of purpose. But by the 1890s most of them had become intellectually moribund though still influential. Most of the contributors to these papers were not literary: neither novelists nor poets, they rarely wrote books of any kind. Their lack of experience in literary creation made them self-indulgent and may well account for the querulousness that was so widespread in journalistic criticism during the decades that led up to 1914. It certainly explains the academic viewpoint of many of the articles—their remoteness both from life and from an understanding of the intention of artistic creation.

The widespread indifference and hostility expressed by the English journals towards imaginative literature led to a gradual withdrawal of writers from the official world of letters. In the 1850s the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood had tried to influence public opinion by working within the system: they hoped to convince by sound argument rather than by confrontation. But their efforts failed, and they were either ignored or laughed at. The successors to the Pre-Raphaelites were therefore forced into extreme positions. Angered by the rigidity of established codes of morality, the aesthetes of the 1890s flung their challenges directly into the faces of the middle classes. They were outrageous because they thought the middle classes were outrageous. The spirit of Oscar Wilde and of the decadence would never have become so widespread had not the literate public not become so unnaturally protectionist, allowing its own feelings of humanity to dry up.

The Wilde scandal released the latent hostilities of the middle classes towards the arts. Many writers were fearful that this case would be permanently damaging to English letters, discrediting them for good. In a period of growing conformity, this was a disquieting possibility. For this reason a group of writers, among them W. E. Henley and R. L. Stevenson, emphasized the need for experience, for living a life

of adventure and action. Despite its fresh air of manliness, the implication of this movement was that experience was more important than literature. This attitude, which reached its apogee in the work of Kipling, was in its way as damaging to serious literary activity as was the behaviour of the decadents.

More than most young writers, Ford was aware of the nuances of these events and the consequent politics of English artistic criticism. His father, Francis Hueffer, was music critic for *The Times* and, through conversations with his uncle by marriage William Michael Rossetti and with Christina Rossetti, Ford knew a good deal about the making and breaking of literary and artistic reputations. After the death of his father, he was brought up by his grandfather, Ford Madox Brown, who had been a mentor to a number of the original Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Through his acquaintance with the work of these painters, Ford learned how a man could become corrupted, how, for example, Millais with his extraordinary talent, could cheapen his art with sentimental paintings and even advertisements. Millais was elected President of the Royal Academy and made over £100,000 in a year, whereas his contemporary, Ford's grandfather, stubbornly maintaining his standards, remained poor, little exhibited and less known.

Brought up in this atmosphere, Ford learned at an early age how influential personal friendships and enmities could be; how criticism was so much a matter of private opinion, often a combination of mixed and suspect motives. These experiences discouraged him so much that he was tempted to do anything rather than be an artist. Later, when he realized that he had to write, he began as an author of children's books. After early work in a minor key, he developed his own standards, basing them on precepts learned from his father and his grandfather. Madox Brown devoted himself entirely to his work, refusing to alter his art for any purpose, either to teach a moral lesson or to flatter a prospective buyer. He was capable of spending twelve years on a single painting, as he did for *Work* and he did not die a rich man. Moreover, he gave Ford a 'rule of life' which Ford himself always tried to follow:

> Fordie, never refuse a lame dog over a stile. Never lend money; always give it. When you give money to a man that is down, tell him that it is to help him to get up; tell him that when he is up he should pass on the money you have given him to any other devil that is down. Beggar yourself rather than refuse assistance to any one whose genius you think shows promise of being greater than your own.[1]

From his father, Ford learned the need for internationalism in the arts. Dr Hueffer was a German by birth, and he introduced Ford to European culture, especially French literature and German music. This experience made him realize how ignorant and parochial most English critics and writers were, and he therefore devoted a tremendous amount of energy to encouraging what he later called an international republic of letters. During the period of his collaboration with Joseph Conrad, Ford became one of a small group of men who took a Continental attitude towards writing and who addressed their English audience with the seriousness that neither the decadents of the 1890s nor the hearties of the 'Henley Gang' had attempted. Realizing that these writers, including Henry James, were not properly appreciated and that there was no journal in England giving them the understanding they deserved, Ford in 1908 founded the *English Review* in which he published the work of Hardy, Hudson, Wells, Conrad, James, Galsworthy, Cunninghame Graham, Yeats, Belloc, Pound and introduced Wyndham Lewis, D. H. Lawrence and Norman Douglas. At the same time Ford wrote editorials which he later collected under the title *The Critical Attitude* (1911) and in which he attempted to establish a set of criteria for judging literature.

Ford's intentions were partly influenced by his Pre-Raphaelite background and by his experience as an art critic. His books on Holbein, Rossetti and Madox Brown show his attraction to the methods of art criticism. A critic of painting or sculpture does not dwell on the subject of the work but discusses the way in which it is executed. Ford wanted literary criticism to place a similar emphasis on technique. Even before founding the *English Review*, he had written to Edward Garnett, who had edited a series of art books, suggesting that Garnett's publishing house bring out a similar series 'conceived on the broad general idea of making manifest, to the most unintelligent, how great writers *get their effects*. As distinct from the general line of tub-thumping about moral purposes, the number of feet in a verse, or the amiable and noble ideas entertained by said Great Writers, of Elevating and making the world a better place.'[2]

This last sentence reveals Ford's own experiences as a subject for reviewers. The critics of the 1890s wanted optimism; they wanted the world in which they played an influential role to be praised. They wished current standards to prevail or to be slightly improved on a moral scale; they preferred the formal rhetoric that acceded to these standards to the colloquial and informal which questioned them. On

the whole, despite their bookishness, the critics of Ford's early work are extraordinarily vacuous in their comments (No. 1). The reviewer in the *Academy* (12 November 1892) writes of Ford's fairy story, *The Feather*: 'The story begins well and goes on pretty well and ends in absurdity.' In a later number of the same magazine, another children's book is criticized in this way: 'The story is well, but not too well, written. . . .' These emptinesses are balanced elsewhere by a general distaste for Ford's openness and freedom in using the vernacular. Thus the *Athenaeum* (5 November 1892): 'Mr. Hueffer's latest excursion into the domain of fairyland is marred by two conspicuous defects—the infelicitous choice of names and the still more infelicitous intrusion into the dialogue of the "scores", the "chaff" and the puns of the modern humorist.' Or the *Saturday Review* (5 November 1892) on his first novel: '. . . if the object be to present people and events at once odious and tiresome, unnatural and commonplace, flippant and dull, no better method can be devised. . . . It would not be easy to write a worse book in a worse way . . . [The characters] are in perfect accord with the author as to bad grammar and wrong spelling.'

Discouraged by such reviews, Ford was also upset when a book was ignored. In 1904 he wrote to H. G. Wells that three months after the publication of his book of poems, *The Face of the Night*, he had received only five reviews, three of them in provincial papers, and that as a consequence only four copies of the book had been sold. The variety of Ford's literary undertakings may have brought about this neglect, since critics, who like categories, did not know whether to call him poet, novelist, biographer, topographer, art historian or fairy-story writer. Even the collaboration with Joseph Conrad, which was designed to bring fame and riches to both men, proved useless, for although there were more reviews than usual and a certain amount of interest in the collaboration itself, the various books were ill received. On the whole, the first ten years of Ford's writing career were disastrous. The apprenticeship was to prove beneficial later on, but the period itself was depressing. Then, in 1905, with the publication of the first of a trilogy dedicated to the English countryside, his fortunes changed. Edward Garnett told Galsworthy what had happened:

By the way you will be interested to hear that Hueffer has at last been boomed, boomed furiously! And has come into his own. I am so very, very glad. I think that this success may go a long way to putting him definitely on his feet.

A young enterprising firm took up his London book and brought it out with the title: *The Soul of London*. The manager happened to strike on Harmsworth

accidentally—and H. read the book for 10 minutes, and said 'We'll give it a column.' The manager, most astutely, went to the *Chronicle* and *Daily News* etc., and said 'H. is going to give this a col., what'll *you* give?' *They* said a col. and a half! etc. etc. So the boom came off all on one day, and the glorious Press was filled with trumpetings of *The Soul of London.*

It *is* very good, you know; the best thing he's done. And I hope and trust it will definitely pick him up, for if ever a man wanted recognition, poor Ford does.[3]

Unfortunately, this 'boom' was short lived, and Ford's critical reception gradually declined to its usual level. As editor of the *English Review* from 1908 to 1909 his position did nothing to improve his status; on the contrary, as Edgar Jepson was later to explain, it was positively damaging:

Ford demanded a quality of writing in that review such as no review had demanded before, or has since, and it was by that demand that he so hindered the recognition and advancement of his novels. As editor he rejected the work of so many critics. For the life of me I do not see what else he could have done; there was his standard of writing, and they could not reach it. I felt sorry for them, for they tried so hard to write. But after all it is hardly fair to expect a man, who makes it his business to teach other people to write, to be able to write himself.[4]

The reviews of Ford's books published during the decade that preceded the First World War, reflect the same indifference to his work that typified the earlier period. In 1909 his agent, J. B. Pinker, noted that Ford's sales averaged only 2,000 copies per novel. Pinker was generally able to secure decent advances, but the books rarely sold enough to cover them, with the result that there was little advertising. Moreover, since his books did not sell widely, Ford was forced to move from one publisher to another. *The Good Soldier* was Ford's forty-sixth book, and up to 1915 he had had to deal in England alone with twenty-two different publishers. He appeared on the lists of many publishers, but he was never really important to any one of them. Ford was aware of this situation and expressed his dismay in a 1914 letter to Pinker:

I have worked damned hard for many years to establish my name as a good will and that's all there is to it—conceit or no conceit. I don't need money and, unless I can get a good price, I won't sell my immortal soul to any of your blooming devils.

I want also stability; I can't think it to be either good or gracious to go jumping about from publisher to publisher as I have done in the past.[5]

In a literary sense there was some justification for Ford's poor critical reception, for as Ezra Pound observed, much of his 'best prose was probably lost, as isolated chapters in unachieved and too-quickly issued novels'. Most critics emphasized Ford's failures, rarely recognizing what he was trying to do. Only his fellow professionals, or at least those who understood what writing is, wrote intelligently about him. For this reason, most reviews of Ford's work published during this period are uninteresting today; only the few essays written by Rebecca West (Nos 12 and 14) or Arnold Bennett (No. 8), R. A. Scott-James (No. 6) or C. F. G. Masterman (No. 5), Ford's friend and a member of Asquith's government, have enduring qualities. The importance of *The Good Soldier* was recognized by a few of these writers, including Dreiser in America (No. 13), but coming during the war, it failed to solidify Ford's reputation as a novelist.

Indeed, for the first two decades of his literary career, Ford was mainly respected as a poet. His books of verse were only a small portion of his total work, but they were given critical attention. In part this was due to the greater popularity of some of Ford's fellow novelists, especially Galsworthy, Wells and Conrad, among whom Ford was generally considered a minor and junior practitioner. Among the poets, however, he seemed a pioneer, and in the early period of the *English Review*, he was taken up by a number of younger poets, especially by Ezra Pound, who found him a natural ally and in some respects a mentor. In 1913 Pound wrote of Ford that 'He and Yeats are the two men in London. And Yeats is already a sort of great dim figure with its associations set in the past.'[6] Ford's reputation as a poet was also enhanced by his association with the literary movement known as Imagism, which in the immediate pre-war years brought attention to several of its members, especially Richard Aldington, F. S. Flint, John Gould Fletcher, Hilda Doolittle and above all, Ezra Pound. These poets created a ferment by writing about one another's work, and Ford as an elder statesman, as Madox Brown had been to the Pre-Raphaelites, benefited from their attention (Nos 15–20). A frequent visitor to salons and a noted host himself, Ford was always invigorated by discussions of literary theory. With Conrad and Henry James he had formerly engaged in long conversations which led to theories of fictional impressionism, and these ideas he now applied to the looser forms of verse in which he and his younger contemporaries were writing. Ford's own essays on poetry, especially the article 'On Impressionism' which was later used as a preface to his *Collected Poems*

(1913), were important literary documents, and at least one of the articles written about Ford by other poets, Pound's 'Mr. Hueffer and the Prose Tradition in Verse' (No. 18), has become a landmark in the criticism of modern poetry.

These are the enduring aspects of Ford's literary activities, but at the same time he was involved in a number of affairs and episodes that adversely affected his personal reputation and standing as a literary figure. The most important of these were the legal proceedings that led to his separation from his wife and his establishment in London with Violet Hunt. At a time when divorce and disgrace were synonymous, these events proved to be damaging. Less important but in many ways representative of the pettiness of contemporary literary life in London were the extraordinary personal attacks made on Ford by Ada Elizabeth Jones, later the wife of Cecil Chesterton, using the pseudonym of J. K. Prothero (Nos 36, 37). In a review of a book written in collaboration with Violet Hunt, she attacked Ford as a Jew and a coward. In *Good-bye to All That* Robert Graves has described the hysterical xenophobia which the pressures of the war created among non-combatants, and in *Kangaroo* D. H. Lawrence has recounted the same leaden malice with which he and his wife, Frieda, were treated while living along the south coast in wartime. But the attack on Ford, who was then serving in the Welch Regiment, and the correspondence that followed it seem even more sordid and personal.

A later episode which was also damaging occurred after Conrad's death, with the publication in 1924 of Ford's testimonial volume, *Joseph Conrad: A Personal Remembrance*. Ford said that he had written this book 'at fever heat and in an extraordinarily short time for I had, as it were, to get it out of my system.'[7] Nevertheless, to hostile eyes, it looked as though Ford was cashing in on Conrad's reputation and the attention he was receiving in the months immediately following his death. Mrs Conrad stirred up trouble by publicly refuting some of the statements in the book (No. 39), and that led to a public discussion of the collaboration and of standards of literary accuracy (Nos 41, 43, 44). Ford had written *Joseph Conrad,* as he stated explicitly in his preface, in the form of a novel, because he believed that form most appropriate to his memorial, but to clear his name he documented the facts in an article called 'Working with Conrad'. Today the controversy seems petty, but the reviews of Ford's book, including those written by Edward Garnett (Nos 40, 42), the man who introduced Ford to Conrad, have historical interest as texts in literary attitudes and values.

They relate closely to the question of what truth really is, whether it is an objective reality, perceivable by all in the same way, or whether it is open to personal interpretation and subject to unconscious predilections.

Ford firmly believed in the relativity of truth, and his whole literary stance is based on it. 'Modern life', he wrote, 'is so extraordinary, so hazy, so tenuous, with still such definite and concrete spots in it, that I am forever on the look-out for some poet who shall render it with all its values.'[8] This is what impressionism is: the totality of all the little truths. The little perceptions and observations that affect one another are combined to create an awareness of the complexity of life itself, at a level deeper than that of a simple causal or linear progression. Ford used this method in his fiction, and he also used it in his reminiscences, with predictable results. In his first book of memoirs, *Ancient Lights* (1911), he explained his method:

> This book, in short, is full of inaccuracies as to facts, but its accuracy as to impressions is absolute . . . My business in life, in short, is to attempt to discover, and to try to let you see, where we stand. I don't really deal in facts, I have for facts a most profound contempt. I try to give you what I see to be the spirit of an age, of a town, of a movement. This cannot be done with facts.[9]

Despite this assertion, and others like it, which made it clear where he stood, Ford was constantly criticized for the inaccuracies of his reminiscences. Impressionism was acceptable in fiction, but not otherwise and, starting with the reviews of *Ancient Lights*, there were always outraged individuals ready to attack Ford for his alleged untruths. Even his own uncle, W. M. Rossetti, wrote a letter to the editor of *Outlook*, listing the errors, page by page, he found in *Ancient Lights* (No. 35). Ford's attitude towards facts always got him in trouble, and the correspondence columns of the magazines where the reminiscences appeared are full of corrective letters, fortunately not always so solemn as Uncle William's (No. 38). If the Conrad controversy harmed Ford more than any other, the greatest public furore arose from a statement in *Return to Yesterday* in which Ford asserted that King George V had threatened to abdicate in 1914 in order to force the government to agree to his request for a conference at Buckingham Palace to resolve the Ulster question of that year. This statement was reprinted in the papers at the height of the 1931 crisis and caused a considerable uproar. The *Daily Herald* published its story under the front-page headline MONSTROUS STORY ABOUT THE KING and various ex-ministers and palace

officials denounced Ford's statement. His publisher, Victor Gollancz, loyally defended it for revealing 'a magnificent example for genuine kingship'.

While this episode has no literary importance, the doubts that were repeatedly linked with Ford's reminiscences damaged his reputation as a literary figure. In fact, Ford belonged to three different literary generations, not counting his Pre-Raphaelite background. The first of these involved his friendship with men like Conrad, James, Galsworthy and Wells; the second, placed in France, brought him into association with many of the leading figures of Paris during the 1920s—Joyce, Gertrude Stein, Hemingway, Pound. The final group was mainly American and included Allen Tate and Caroline Gordon, Katherine Anne Porter, William Carlos Williams and Robert Lowell, then a student. There were many reasons for this progression through literary generations, but one may be traced to the reminiscences and the reviews that accompanied them. By writing so extensively and openly about his associates, Ford eventually alienated them. He was not indiscreet but open, and not all writers, especially those with a developed sense of their own importance, enjoy anecdotes about their early days.

Ford was nearly fifty when, in the early 1920s, he left England for good. As author of *The Good Soldier* and editor of the *English Review* he had achieved much, but had little to show for it. The works he wrote immediately after the war revealed a kind of mental shell-shock: despite several attempts, he was too close to his own war experiences to write well about them; while the books that dealt with pre-war life, such as *Thus to Revisit* (1927), a volume of criticism and memoirs combined, and the satirical *Mr. Bosphorus and the Muses* (1923) seemed self-consciously literary. The move to France, first to Provence and later to Paris, helped his perspective and also gave him a tremendous new impetus. The physical change was invigorating, but Paris in the 1920s was also the literary centre of the world. Ford soon found himself with many old friends and many new, a member of a vigorous post-war literary generation that was eager to throw over the gentilities of earlier literary styles and to confront actuality as it had been revealed in the war and its immediate aftermath. With the encouragement of Ezra Pound in 1924 he founded a new literary magazine, the *Transatlantic Review*, in which he published the work of many writers living in Paris, including fiction and verse by Pound, Joyce, Gertrude Stein and, among younger writers, Cummings, Glenway Wescott and Ernest Hemingway. Although not so controlled and polished as its

predecessor, the *English Review*, the *Transatlantic* was nevertheless a vigorous monthly, experimental, open and, in so far as it took risks, somewhat uneven.

These activities were valuable in their own right, but they also helped bring Ford out of the literary doldrums he had experienced in Sussex immediately after the war. The Anglo-French literary *ambiance* of post-war Paris seemed a natural outgrowth of the wartime alliance; and during this period Ford wrote the four novels that make up the *Parade's End* tetralogy: *Some Do Not* (1924), *No More Parades* (1925), *A Man Could Stand Up* (1926) and *Last Post* (1928). While the publication of these novels was overshadowed by the more immediately resounding successes of Joyce's *Ulysses* and Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*, it was evident that Ford was producing major work. For the first time in his life, he found himself a best-seller, and his success with these novels brought him a position and a respect that stayed with him for the rest of his life.

Parade's End did not seem as impressive as *Ulysses* when it came out because it appeared to be comparatively old fashioned, emerging from the impressionist tradition rather than breaking with it. In time, the originality of Ford's achievement was to be recognized, but despite the respectful praise given these novels, most English readers thought him less than Galsworthy and Mottram (whom they understood better), while most Americans considered him less than Joyce. Early reviewers agreed that the novels as they came out were 'remarkable' or 'brilliant' (Nos 23–6), but it was not until the series was completed that critics began to grasp the achievement of the whole work (No. 30). The most perceptive reviewers tended to be fellow-novelists such as L. P. Hartley and William McFee (Nos 31–2), but even these were few in number. As editor and critic, Ford had written extensively on the work of his contemporaries, and of writers much younger than he; he had also printed their work in his magazines and encouraged book publishers to bring out their poems and novels. Yet with rare exceptions, those he helped ignored him. As Katherine Anne Porter noted in 1932:

> I have myself noticed for some time that Ford has a special genius for nourishing vipers in his bosom, and I have never seen an essay or article about him signed by any of these discoveries of his. I can make nothing of this, except that I have learned that most human beings—and I suppose that artists are that, after all—suffer some blow to their self-esteem in being helped, and develop the canker of ingratitude. As if, somehow, they can, by denying their debt, or ignoring it,

wipe it out altogether. . . . If I could really understand this warp in most human minds, or hearts, I would be God, I suppose. . . .[10]

In similar fashion, Ford, the most international of English authors, enjoyed no reputation at all on the Continent. In the *Transatlantic Review* he published the work of many European writers, but except for a volume of propaganda published in Paris during the First World War, his own books remained untranslated and unknown. Writing in the tradition of the French novel, while dealing with intensely English subjects, he undoubtedly disappointed the expectations of readers accustomed to H. G. Wells and Arthur Conan Doyle.

Nevertheless, the reputation Ford made with the publication of *Parade's End* (a title not used until the omnibus collection put out by Knopf in 1950) brought about the first articles that dealt with his work as a whole. These all appeared in America, where the Tietjens series earned its greatest success, and they were written by some of the more important journalist-critics of the day. Herbert Gorman and Granville Hicks both wrote extensively about him in the *Bookman* (Nos 58, 59), while Burton Rascoe and M. D. Zabel wrote at length about his life and work in the *Nation* and *Arts and Decoration* (Nos 28, 47). Most of these essays emphasized the fact that Ford was an unjustly neglected writer.

Ford's success as the author of the tetralogy was followed by a low period in the early 1930s. Part of this decline was brought about by financial difficulties. Ford was justified in supposing that he might earn a steady income from his past work, especially after the success of the tetralogy, but he chose an unstable publisher for his most successful work. *Some Do Not* was brought out in New York by a new firm called Seltzer, and the book sold 40,000 copies. Soon afterwards, this publisher failed and Ford never received anything beyond his advance. The Tietjens series was then taken over by the A. C. Boni Company with an agreement to publish both his future work and a selection of his past work to be known as the 'Avignon' edition. Boni did indeed republish *The Good Soldier* in 1927, but refused to bring out other novels in the collected edition, only publishing Ford's new novels in the Tietjens series. Their failure to publish his older work undoubtedly cost Ford a great deal of money since at the time his reputation was at its height and the books would probably have sold well.

Ford's financial difficulties were to be aggravated by the depression; and his powers as a novelist seemed to flag after the exertions required

by *Parade's End.* Most of Ford's best work in the last decade of his life was devoted to reminiscence, literary criticism and topographical writing. These books contributed further to Ford's creation of his own literary legend. The usual charge of inaccuracy continued to be made, but books like *Provence* (1935) and *Great Trade Route* (1937) made it evident that Ford was on to something much more than literary conversation pieces. In these books he was indirectly but deliberately preparing a set of values and a code of decency that despite the war have validity today (No. 49). There was also a testamentary quality in his last work, especially in the long *March of Literature* (1938), his survey of the world's literature from Confucius to the present day. From humdrum reviewers, these books received predictable notices. People like Middleton Murry and Edward Sackville-West, who stood on the fringes of literary life, could not understand Ford's purpose and attacked him for his commissions and omissions (Nos 45, 55), but in fact these attacks were rare. In his last years, Ford created little interest among critics. His works were noticed, generally politely, but with scant enthusiasm.

An inevitable consequence of this neglect was an increasingly desperate financial condition. Towards the end of his life, Ford found it almost impossible to find publishers for his work. He had hoped to write a three-volume *History of Our Own Times*, but no publisher would take it. He was therefore forced to return to the writing of novels, which he did not want to do, and in 1936 even wrote a detective story, *Vive Le Roy* (No. 50). His last five books were brought out by four different New York publishers. In England, where some of his later books were not published at all, he was finally taken up by Sir Stanley Unwin who undertook to publish all his last works and even made him a loan of £250 a few months before his death.

Despite the penury of his last days and the critical neglect he had to endure, Ford was widely respected by fellow novelists. He wrote two experimental novels in his last years, *The Rash Act* (1933) and *Henry for Hugh* (1934), and among Ford enthusiasts these were appreciated. But the young novelists who were most impressed by Ford's work, and wrote most extensively about it, considered his late work all of a piece, as one gigantic literary production in which fact and fiction merged and flowed in and out of each other, and which in sum constituted a marvel of human literature. V. S. Pritchett and Graham Greene, who reviewed nearly all of Ford's last books, admired the tremendous skill and ease with which he handled his material (Nos 48–

51, 54, 56). For Greene especially, who was then at an early stage in his career, Ford was a master whose works were to be read in a professional fashion.

If Greene and Pritchett were almost alone in publicly celebrating Ford's achievement, there was a silent underground appreciation. During the last few years of his life, Ford spent prolonged periods of time in New York and also taught at a small Michigan college called Olivet, where other writers occasionally held classes in writing and literature. These activities involved him with a number of American writers whom he saw frequently and sometimes visited. E. E. Cummings, William Carlos Williams, Katherine Anne Porter, Allen Tate and Caroline Gordon, Ford had known for fifteen years or more; Sherwood Anderson and Theodore Dreiser were his immediate contemporaries, and anxious to welcome him as a colleague. There were yet younger writers, including Robert Lowell and Jean Stafford, for whom he was a mentor and example. Ford's strong sense of literary movements and of co-operative activity among artists led him to found a society which he called 'Friends of William Carlos Williams'. Its purpose was to call attention to Williams and also to Cummings and Edward Dahlberg whose work then lacked recognition. The society would meet for dinner at the Downtown Gallery in Greenwich Village at which there would be readings and discussion of the work of the writer selected for honour on the particular evening. It was a short-lived group, partly because of Ford's own ill-health.

Ford died in June 1939, at a time when the world was preoccupied with the growing European conflict. Except for notices written by Pound and Greene (Nos 61, 62), his obituaries were scant and inaccurate, dismissing him as a man of unfulfilled promise. To counter this neglect, James Laughlin printed a collection of essays and statements honouring Ford in the *New Directions Annual* for 1942. Testamentary in quality, these essays nevertheless reflect the widespread respect Ford's achievement had earned him among other writers (Nos 63–6).

During the war, Ford's name virtually dropped out of sight. The subject-matter of his fiction dated and he faded into the generally obscure shadows of Edwardian literature. Then in 1948, with the publication of Douglas Goldring's biography, he again came to public notice (Nos 67, 69). Goldring had served as Ford's sub-editor on the *English Review*, and his book emphasized the personal side of Ford's life, especially the confusions of his love life. For this reason, it re-