

FORD MADOX FORD'S ROLE IN
THE ROMANTICIZING OF THE BRITISH NOVEL

by

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ABSTRACT

Although it is now widely accepted that the modern British novel is grounded in Romantic literary practice and ontological principles, Ford Madox Ford is often not regarded as a significant practitioner of (and proselytizer for) the new prose aesthetic that came into being near the start of the twentieth century. This dissertation argues that Ford very consciously strove to break away from the precepts that had informed the traditional novel, aiming instead for a non-didactic, autotelic art form that in many ways is akin to the anti-neoclassical art of the British High Romantic poets. Ford felt that the purpose of literature is to bring a reader into a keener apprehension of all that lies latent in the individual self--a capacity that he felt had atrophied in a rational, rule-abiding, industrialized culture. Impressed by the way that the French realists and naturalists disclosed the human condition, and fully aware of the descriptions of consciousness put forward by Pater, George Moore, Bergson, Wagner, Nietzsche, and William James, Ford worked to specify the strategies by which a novelist could realize his/her goal of making a reader apprehend that which can never be conveyed by direct statement. Ford felt that by heightening the individual's self-awareness, the "new novel" could effect an apocalyptic transvaluation of British society. Like his Romantic forebears, Ford felt that this increased breadth and intensity of individual consciousness can be realized only by means of a literary practice which is grounded in convention-breaking principles: exploration of the tension between social order and human compulsion; extended consideration of non-rational, especially unconscious, states of mind (such as dreams, telepathic experiences, sudden venting of repressed desire); description of "common" experiences; use of colloquial diction and disjunctive temporality; avoidance of narrative closure; use of a descriptive method (impressionism) that promotes non-rational "vision"; advocacy of subjective, even solipsistic, definitions of truth; and criticism of positivist values. While the extent of Ford's influence on later writers is difficult to measure, he clearly was one of the pioneers of a distinctly new commitment to fiction as an art form whose purpose and guiding principles are romantic.

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INTRODUCTION

Of all the developments and transition points that can be identified in the history of British literature, one of the most striking (because the most sweeping) instances is the appearance of the modern novel near the beginning of the twentieth century. Virtually all of the significant achievements in the novel in the first quarter of this century were made by writers who were deliberately detaching themselves from the prose-writing traditions that had, during the preceding two centuries, become highly prescriptive, not only in terms of the moral values that the novel had to endorse but also in terms of the patterns of discourse that informed the genre. Of especial interest are the writers who pioneered this dissociation from the British prose tradition, who catalyzed the innovative approach to form and content which so distinguished the novels of Joyce and Woolf from those of Dickens and Thackeray. Henry James, Joseph Conrad, and George Moore are rightly regarded as significant instigators of such a change late in the nineteenth century, for they transported across the English Channel many of the precepts that had informed Flaubert's realism and the Médan school's naturalism. One figure whose contributions to the reformation of the British novel have only recently been appreciated is Ford Madox Ford. As with many instigators of change, his significance lies more in what he helped establish as a new theoretical basis than in

what he actually achieved artistically. Indeed, more than half his novels have been forgotten, but Ford nonetheless played a major role in defining and even legitimizing the direction that the new novel was to follow once it had abjured the values and strategies of composition that were characteristic of mainstream prose fiction of the nineteenth century. He cannot, to be sure, fairly be considered to have played a more significant role in promoting this new direction than did James, Conrad, or Moore, and yet much of what he advocated and practised was more starkly, even startlingly, non-traditional than anything written by the other three.

Ford is remembered primarily for three works of fiction (The Fifth Queen trilogy, The Good Soldier, and the Parade's End tetralogy), for his role in launching the English Review and the Transatlantic Review, and for his close contact with Conrad (including collaboration on two novels) while Conrad was composing some of his best works. Many critical analyses of the genesis and subsequent development of the modern British novel refer to Ford, if at all, as a minor writer who seemingly just endorsed and imperfectly practised the innovative prose style that now is considered typical of modernism. Such a belief, however, downplays the influence Ford had in shaping the content, style, and structure of modernist prose, and it ignores the substantial body of work Ford had done on behalf of what he called "the new novel."

He was, in fact, one of the first British-born novelists to argue that a novelist's goal should be the same as that which writers in other genres (notably the Pre-Raphaelites and the Aesthetes) set for themselves: to create an aesthetically self-sufficient work, freed from any moral or political purposes. For Ford, such a goal could only be achieved through rigorous attention to the specific stylistic and structural principles that inhere in the novel form, and in the late 1890's he and Conrad spent long hours analyzing the form in order to discern those principles by which one could create a novel which more closely approached the condition of pure art. Such principles were the ones Ford used in evaluating novels in the numerous book reviews and literary commentaries he wrote in the first decade of the new century, and the necessity of promoting these principles impelled him to establish the English Review as the organ for new prose art. Because of the work carried out by Ford in establishing the theoretical basis for the new novel form, he may be regarded as a pioneer of British prose modernism; however, he may more rightly be referred to as the "Anglicizer" of the French post-naturalist novel, or as the "hybridizer" who grafted principles of Romantic poetry onto the stock of the traditional novel.

Ford, indeed, was perhaps better grounded in the principles of late-nineteenth-century Continental and British aesthetic theory than were any of the more renowned

early modern British novelists. He was virtually steeped in the avant-garde, à pat le bourgeois influence of the Pre-Raphaelites, Aesthetes, Decadents, Neoparnassians, and Rhymers, for he was the grandson of Ford Madox Brown, nephew of the Rossettis, cousin of Oscar Wilde, godson of Algernon Swinburne, and son of Francis Hueffer (the Times music critic). As a youth (or so Ford remembers it), he sat on the knee of Franz Liszt, listened to Richard Wagner talk at the dinner table, observed a drunken Swinburne extemporize poetry, debated art theory with the Garnett family, drank coffee in cafés with Kropotkin and his anarchists, and (while he lived with the Rossettis after his mother's death) listened to innumerable discussions among the radical artists who congregated in the Rossetti house. Early in life, he became fascinated by the artistic accomplishments of Flaubert, Maupassant, Turgenev, and Stendhal, but his interests extended beyond the aesthetics of prose fiction, for he read widely in current British and Continental literature, philosophy, and social history. Although he was encouraged by his family to become a writer (his grandfather actually published one of his fairy tales, overriding the teenager's objections), novel-writing was initially not his sole preoccupation, for he published books of art criticism, biography, history, and sociology before he published a novel of any note. Ford's mind, then, was shaped within what he referred to as a hothouse atmosphere in which bold

intellectual and aesthetic developments were fostered, generally in defiance of the values on which Victorian society was grounded. Ford's youth was spent at the leading edge of developments in European intellectual and artistic endeavors, and the mature Ford reflected this commitment to innovation, subjective values, and the expansion of individual and social consciousness through art.

Appropriately, the wariness of orthodoxy inculcated in Ford led him to re-appraise and react against some of the artistic principles and Fabian ideals that prevailed in the Rossetti house. Largely because of his familiarity with current trends in Continental art, he grew to feel that the Pre-Raphaelites were escapist in their idealizing of medieval lifestyles and precious or ornamental in their manner of expression. Although he fully accepted their views that art should not be a proselytizing agent and that it should not even presuppose that artist and perceiver share common values, he went further than did the Pre-Raphaelites in advocating art stripped of all intentions save that of fidelity to its own inherent principles.¹ Just as the task of a sculptor (as Michaelangelo saw it) is to manifest specific imaginative content by laying bare the

¹ Just what these inherent principles of the novel genre are is discussed by Ford at length (at times, to prolixity) in such works as The English Novel, Henry James, Joseph Conrad, "Techniques," The March of Literature, and his editorials in the first volume of the English Review. The following chapters will deal more fully with the specific features of these principles.

corresponding form lying latent inside a block of marble, so the task of a novelist (as Ford saw it) is to disclose the verbal form that necessarily is generated by the imagined narrative content. This insistence on the fusion of form and content demanded authorial aloofness, in the sense that the author had no right to impose his values (and certainly not those that prevailed in his culture) on the art whose growth he was nurturing. To Ford, art had to be autotelic and therefore judgeable only by aesthetic (and not moral) standards. If an artifact in any aesthetic genre did not accord closely with the principles which inhere in that genre, then the artifact should be labelled a construct rather than a work of art. In agreement with the French naturalists and realists, Ford believed that the principles of the novel genre entail far more than the formulation of a plausible narrative and the development of credible characters. And, as he understood the precepts of literary impressionism, prose need not be representational as long as the appropriate fusion of form and content is achieved.

Ford never went so far as to imply that plausibility has no place in a novel, but he did stress the primacy of aesthetic truth over empirical correctness. He felt that before empirical data could be registered in a novel, they must first be processed through an aesthetically sophisticated imagination, almost as though such an imagination were a well-wrought filter or lens which would

screen or modify all input so that only artistically appropriate data could be included as the content of a work of art. The purpose of such an approach to art was not to create something esoteric, but rather to bring art closer to its ideal condition of being perfectly exoteric. That is, the novel, to Ford, was not a means of reproducing empirical conditions, nor was it some mystic means of experiencing divine rapture; instead, it was a means of divulging with full candour the human experience--it could, for both creator and perceiver, help remove the blinders imposed on logical, habit-dulled minds. In short, Ford felt that through rigorous attention to the aesthetic principles which inform an art-genre, one could induce in the perceiver a greater breadth and intensity of consciousness, and thus into an apprehension of truths about human nature that could never be conveyed by direct statement: "the novel has become indispensable to the understanding of life" (English Novel 8).

What Ford saw as being the value of art bears a strong resemblance to the views that had been boldly proclaimed some eighty years earlier by the Romantic poets who were reacting against the Augustans' apparent stressing of technique and didactic content over imagination and organic form. Indeed, Ford's central intent could be described as analogous to the one Wordsworth set out for himself in his proposal for a new aesthetic basis for poetry: to escape the

artistic paralysis caused by acquiescence to the conventions of literary expression, and, through a new mode of expression, to lay bare "the primary laws of our nature." Many of Ford's commentaries on art are grounded in the same principles which inform the treatises, prefaces, letters, and marginalia of the Romantics. For example, he commends the Romantics for their attempt to revert to an oral culture (a reversion which he posited as the goal for modern novelists); he extols Henry James' advocacy of organic form in the novel (a principle regarded by Coleridge as the sine qua non of art); he contends, as Shelley had, that the very experience of true art, regardless of its "message," could effect a wholesome transfiguration of the consciousness of a culture; he, like virtually all his Romantic forebears, regards extra-rational awareness as an important means of fostering breadth of consciousness; he sides with Wordsworth in championing the experience of the common man as the material most fit for imaginative transformation into art; and he concurs with the Romantics that truth is a subjective condition which has to be divined rather than learned. Ford, however, would never have accepted for himself the label "Romantic," and he at times used the term pejoratively (as was common in his time) when referring to mere tales of adventure and bathos. He would no doubt have used an adjective like "Flaubertian" or "Impressionistic" to summarize his approach to literature, and yet these terms,

in his understanding of them, describe the application to prose of many of the precepts of Romantic poetry. Despite his objection to the name, then, Ford can be seen as one who helped "romanticize" the traditional British novel, thereby promoting the development of what is now known as the modern novel.

The ambiguity of Ford's notion of romantic literature is, of course, endemic in the very term itself. From its original application to the tales of courtly love and chivalric gallantry that were told in the Romance languages, the term "romantic" has become rather nebulous because of the diverse contexts in which it is used. Even when applied to the value-systems and innovative approach to poetry that distinguished the major English poets at the turn of the nineteenth century, it becomes difficult to provide any categorical definition, for there was almost as much diversity of outlook among these poets as there was consensus. This does not mean, however, that the term is without use, since the main precepts to which most of these poets subscribed constitute a discrete body of literary theory, something that clearly opposes itself to other discrete bodies of theory such as neoclassicism or imagism or post-structuralism. There is, to be sure, some disagreement among contemporary scholars as to which tenets can rightly be labelled romantic, but most would concur that English Romanticism can best be defined by specifying what

the Romantic poets proposed as the necessary alternative to neoclassicism. Broadly speaking, they advocated a transition from mechanically structured, mimetic, allusive literature to organic, self-referential, imaginative literature; from the poet as a spokesman for shared values to the poet as a socially extrinsic, introspective quester; from a concern with order to a concern with non-empirical vision; and from advocacy of modest social reform to radical transformation of consciousness itself.

Ford, however, did not simply regard it as his task to dust off the literary principles that had, with the deaths of Keats, Shelley, and Byron in the 1820's, become much less commonly utilized, and he did not commit himself to the task of retrieving their ontological outlook. Rather, he was influenced by the body of thought which had arisen following the subsiding of English Romanticism and which was only partially indebted to these poets' works. These later poets, novelists, historians, philosophers, and psychologists are often not labelled romantics, but their works generally manifest or are grounded in the principles which the Romantics had championed. In fact, these nineteenth-century writers frequently helped legitimize ideas that, when written by the Romantics, had seemed outlandish to the more pragmatic or morally orthodox minds of the day. Darwin and Linnaeus, for example, asserted in scientific terms what Byron had been assailed for (about

progressive stages of prehistoric life-forms) when writing "Cain." The exhaustive studies of the human unconscious by Eduard von Hartmann and William James lent an air of certainty to ideas that had seemed merely fanciful when written about by Keats or Coleridge. Henri Bergson's analyses of the relation between time and consciousness postulated cerebral functions that were little different from what had been "romantically" described as "wise passiveness" and "negative capability." The Society for Psychical Research presented, in its dryly analytical reports, "proof" of phenomena that had earlier been regarded as the speculations of romantic minds. The atheistic and solipsistic premises of Shelley's works were, by late-century, becoming more widely accepted by latter-day thinkers because of the works of scientists and theorists such as Huxley and Spencer, as well as the appeals made by positivists such as Comte, Mill, and Eliot. Pater, the Rossettis, Yeats, Symonds and Wilde were among those who had written extensively in defence of the importance and moral validity of aesthetic refinement, whereas Blake's more cryptic statements along similar lines had earned him the epithet "madman." The writings (both fiction and non-fiction) of Stendhal, Flaubert, the Goncourts, and the Médan Circle posited the artistic necessity of focusing on the experiences of the common person, a theme which Wordsworth had emphasized. Similarly, Schopenhauer's persuasive

speculations about an indifferent Will, Nietzsche's comments on the necessity of an apocalyptic fusion of Dionysian and Apollonian forces, Wagner's musical endorsement of the value inherent in extra-rational (especially passionate) conduct, Hegel's description of the Zeitgeist which shapes social values--all these lent credibility to (and for some people even legitimized) the approach to life and art that the Romantics earlier had posited.

Ford was familiar with the work of all these writers and theorists, for their ideas had been percolating through the discussions of his circle, and his father had written extensively about some of them. This is not to say that he subscribed to every such premise (for there are some fundamental contradictions among them), but the overall consequence of his reading and thinking was to align him with the premises of a re-emergent Romanticism that was not referred to by that name.

This, of course, begs the question, "what kind of romantic is Ford?" Is he in the conservative Burke/ Wordsworth camp or the radical Shelley/Blake camp, or is he a hybrid romantic whose qualities have, in effect, been selected from among the diverse features commonly labeled Romantic? Could he just be an anti-positivist who found himself using Romantic terminology that had lost much of its precision when adopted into the patois of the avant-garde? As the ensuing chapters will make clear, Ford can not be

seen as an acolyte of any one Romantic writer or faction. He had read widely in Romantic poetry, but his romantic views were most formatively shaped through his tutelage by the Aesthetes/Pre-Raphaelites, whose literary and philosophical premises in turn were shaped primarily by Romanticism as it had been nurtured throughout the century on the Continent. If Ford's romantic bent had to be labelled, he could best be included among the group that Graham Hough calls the "last romantics"² (a term borrowed from Yeats' "Coole Park and Ballylee, 1931"). To Hough, these writers' principles derive from a synthesizing or distilling over time of the premises that initially were distinctive to discrete subsets of High Romanticism. Accordingly, in this dissertation, the adjective "romantic" will refer to the ontology and literary theory of the hybrid which was fashioned from the works of the High Romantic writers. These "last romantics" arguably had established a more internally consistent body of thought than was evident

² Long before Hough used the term, Ford referred to the later Pre-Raphaelites as "the last of the Romanticists" (Ancient Lights 58), a term he used rather pejoratively in reference to starry-eyed generalists. Nonetheless, the qualities he attributes to "post-Romanticist" writers (such as introspective thought and particularized images) are distinctly romantic. Ford's imprecise and inconsistent use of the terms Romantic and Romanticist is a problem that will be addressed in this dissertation. In general, I will focus on the romantic qualities of his theory and practice as I and others define them, showing that Ford's objection to what he saw as the idealism and "sloppy passions" of the Romanticists often led him to argue for a prose style and content that are undeniably romantic.

in the works of the various High Romantics. The ensuing chapters will specify the principles of this romantic view, showing how Ford's theory and work exemplify the extent to which he strove to "redeem" the novel (and subsequently the collective English consciousness) by grounding it in the principles of this later, synthesized romanticism. Although Ford was not the first English prose-fiction writer to theorize about and practice (and even proselytize for) a romantic new novel, he certainly was the first to write extensively about both the literary basis of and the need for such a revamping of the genre.

Over the last two decades many critics have pointed out that Romanticism and Modernism can be seen as two discrete literary periods only in terms of the time frame involved, for they are grounded in many of the same principles. Earlier twentieth-century critics such as Eliot and Hulme had tried to distinguish Modernism from Romanticism because of an alleged disparity in formal qualities, and their views were generally reflected in analysts who regarded Modernism as being stylistically "drier" than Romanticism and therefore a distinct literary entity.

In the last half of this century, however, many critics began to acknowledge the extent to which Modernism was essentially a Romantic phenomenon. In 1957, Robert Langbaum objected to the alleged distinction between the two periods, pointing out that romantic art was a "modern tradition," one

that connected the work of the Romantic poets with that of twentieth-century writers; both, he contends, adhere to the common doctrine that "the imaginative apprehension gained through immediate experience is primary and certain, whereas the analytic reflection that follows is secondary and problematical" (35); both, that is, are grounded in subjectivity, despite differing formal means of expressing subjective experiences. Again, in The Romantic Survival (1957), John Bayley argued that Romanticism returned to England from France in the 1890's, appearing as Symbolist poetry and modernist prose-fiction. In the following three decades, an increasing number of critics began to argue that modernism was fundamentally romantic. In such texts as Natural Supernaturalism and A Study of English Romanticism, Meyer Abrams and Northrop Frye regarded Romanticism as a broad secularizing process of both Christian beliefs and pagan myths, a process that is as much evident in Aestheticism, Symbolism, and Modernism as it was in Romanticism; to Frye, "everything that has followed Romanticism is best understood as post-Romantic," for romanticism "is the first major phase in an imaginative revolution which has carried on until our own day" (A Study 15). Geoffrey Hartman in 1962 described the Modern writer as one who shares with his Romantic counterpart the endeavour to supersede self-consciousness in an effort to experience vision, Hartman also regarding this as a

secularizing of the Eden-Fall-Redemption pattern. Harold Bloom (who wrote and edited numerous texts on romanticism in the 1960's and 1970's) similarly pointed out the identical attempts of Romantics and Modernists to transcend self-consciousness and grant Imagination its autonomy, Bloom citing Paul de Man's observation that "every fresh attempt of Modernism to go beyond Romanticism ends in the gradual realization of the Romantics' continued priority" (6). Frank Kermode (in Romantic Image, 1964) discussed the way in which the common reliance on images (as a means of access to or expression of the autonomous imagination) links Modern writers to the Romantic poets; and Stephen Spender similarly argued (in The Struggle of the Modern, 1963) that the Modern "struggle" is, in effect, the Romantic endeavour to give primacy to Imagination over Fancy, this leading to organic poetry that manifests the "sacramental" forces of life (13, 37). Charles Schug (who, in The Romantic Genesis of the Modern Novel [1979], offered a thorough study of the resurgence of Romantic principles in turn-of-the-century prose fiction) even minimized the formal differences between Romanticism and Modernism, contending that the Romantics' apparent unconcern about rhetoric nonetheless established a new rhetoric that was only given some sophistication by the Modern stylists. And many other critics (such as John Lester, Malcolm Bradbury, James McFarlane, Irving Howe, Leon Edel, Cyril Connolly, George Bornstein, Herbert Read, David

Thorburn, and Michael Levenson) stressed the extent to which specific aspects of Modern aesthetic theory and epistemology are closely affiliated with those of the Romantic period.³

There is, in short, a substantial body of critical support for the claim that, while the modern British novel entailed a totally new approach to the genre, it was not an aube-de-siècle formulation of a radically new approach to literature; rather, it was a broadly based re-commitment on the part of the best literary minds of the day to thinking and working in line with fundamentally Romantic precepts. Romanticism was not resurrected, for it had not died. Instead, it had fallen into disfavour among English artists in the mid-nineteenth-century, although there was always a core of artists (generally rebuked for their work) who could not abandon the personal and social importance attached to the practice and theory of Romantic art. As mentioned earlier, critics such as Graham Hough and Eric Warner⁴ have described how Romanticism persisted throughout the century

³ Most of these critics do not offer a categorical definition of Romanticism which can then be mapped seamlessly onto modernism; rather, they seem to exercise their own judgement in specifying the set of Romantic features which are distinguishable in modern prose. In doing so, they seem to be taking the same "synthetic" approach to Romanticism that Ford and the other "last romantics" did.

⁴ Warner co-edited with Hough the anthology Strangeness and Beauty, part of whose purpose is to dispel the mistaken premise (fostered by Eliot, Hulme, and W. Lewis) that modern art and aesthetic thought in some way emerged as a totally new creation in the early twentieth century.

in the works of the Pre-Raphaelites, Aesthetes, and Rhymers, but most critics agree that it was on the Continent that Romanticism was most vitally nurtured, especially through the grounding of new developments in the novel in romantic literary and ontological principles. The cause, therefore, of the distinctive literary activity in early-twentieth-century England, activity that came to be known as modernism, can be seen as a melding of Continental practice with English Romantic premises. One of the significant promoters of this melding was Ford Madox Ford, bred in an enclave of Romantic culture and well versed in literary developments across the Channel.

While other early Modern novelists such as Henry James and Joseph Conrad have been recognized for their incorporation, at least in part, of Romantic principles into their novels, Ford has not received the recognition he deserves for his role in grounding the emergent novel form in such principles. Ford will no doubt always stand in the shadow of his turn-of-the-century neighbours, James and Conrad, and yet in many respects he went further than they did in severing ties with traditional prose theory and practice. The Good Soldier and The Call are arguably more innovative and formally "modern" novels than are any works by James and Conrad. And Ford was more insistent (and persistent) than the other two in demanding that the novel be aesthetically "clean," morally non-didactic, and

psychologically mimetic--by which means individuals' consciousnesses could be transfigured and a "new republic" could be generated. Certainly, neither James nor Conrad held such romantic, even apocalyptic, expectations about the impact of their art.

The purpose of the following chapters is to study Ford's role as what may be termed a romanticizer of the modern British novel, part of which role entailed "Anglicizing" French post-naturalist prose fiction. The primary focus will be on the theory of the new novel as Ford posited it (including the ontological premises, the purpose, the structure, and the style). Little discussion will be given to the literary and other cultural influences that helped shape Ford's approach to the the novel, although some attention must be given to the various sources of Ford's aesthetic theory in order to show how he synthesized diverse principles and consequently was more romantically modern than were his predecessors and most of his contemporaries. Ford's own novels do not always perfectly exemplify this theory--partially because of the haste with which he composed them in desperate attempts to generate income--and thus they will be used selectively to illustrate or corroborate the theory. Accordingly, the chapters focus on discrete components of Ford's romantic theory, with features or excerpts from the fiction adduced as examples of how Ford (at his best) put this theory into practise; no attempt

therefore is made to offer detailed considerations of Ford's novels in a chronological sequence.⁵ Since Ford, in 1915, virtually ceased all writing for some five years while he engaged in and recovered from World War I, and because his writing in the 1920's did not offer significant extensions of his fundamental theory of prose fiction, only the sixteen novels that he wrote between 1900 and 1915 will be considered--some, especially the Fifth Queen trilogy and The Good Soldier, being extensively studied because they more explicitly manifest Ford's theory. Some of Ford's post-1915 non-fiction (especially his reminiscences and his commentaries on the development of literature) will be used where such material lends clarity or precision to the discussion of Ford's developmental work on the novel.

The following chapters address the four primary features of Ford's romantic ontology and literary practice that he strove to establish as the basis for "the new

⁵ One consequence of such a an achronological study is the difficulty of tracing out the progressive sophistication of technique evident in Ford's work from the relatively unpolished works in the early 1900's to his "great auk's egg," The Good Soldier, begun in 1914. Many of the book-length studies on Ford (especially those by Wiley, Lid, and Ohmann) document the increasing proficiency with which Ford put into practice his theory of prose techniques from the time that he began collaborating with Conrad until 1914. That Ford evolved in his writing skills is an assumption that is not directly addressed in this dissertation. Rather, excerpts and principles from Ford's works in the 1898-1915 period will be cited, with little regard for their date of composition, to support the central thesis here that Ford strove to ground "the new novel" in distinctly romantic principles.

novel": he attributed significance to unconscious cerebration, especially as such served to counteract the debilitatingly rational thought fostered in an industrial culture; he established impressionism as the aesthetic means of conveying the type of vision that could apocalyptically transfigure social values; he devised literary techniques that he felt would give rise to an organic fusion of form and content; and he grounded his prose in the cadences and diction of oral speech.

The first chapter addresses Ford's belief that the unconscious must be recognized as a significant feature of human thought processes; indeed, escape from or transcendence of rational, empirical thought he regarded as a necessity for a fuller, more intense human experience. This chapter relates Ford to the Romantic postulate that, of all the unconscious or non-rational cerebral functions, aesthetic experience is perhaps the most valuable because of the very expansion of consciousness which it causes--such is the intellectual basis on which Ford's new prose theory is based. The second chapter examines more particularly the way in which this postulate gives rise to the moral and epistemological tensions that run through Ford's novels, tensions that result from a dialectic between extra-rational, even solipsistic thought, and conduct within a social framework. Ford felt that propriety was vitiating, and yet he never condoned licentious behavior, for he

believed that humanity was intrinsically good but could be prevented from doing good if placed within an industrial, pragmatic culture; the individual, accordingly, must subjectively intuit the fundamental laws of human nature-- laws that in themselves would make for socially compatible behavior without repressing the capacity for full self-understanding and -expression. The third chapter deals with the way that Ford utilized, with some modifications, the traditional features of the Romance genre as a means of not only attacking positivist or utilitarian world-views but also supplanting them with mystic means of divining truths.

The fourth chapter addresses the specific implications (as Ford saw them) that this belief in transcendence of empiricism holds for the prose-artist. Just as the Romantics esteemed Imagination over Fancy, so did Ford argue that impressionism (which he affiliated with non-rational states of consciousness) provided a closer approximation to what he called "the true truth." By freeing the imagination from the constraints imposed by the prevailing conventions of narrative discourse, the impressionist both experiences and conveys a keener vision. Indeed, Ford's description of such vision is highly similar to the moments of epiphany or ecstasy commonly attributed to Romantic prophetic poetry. The fifth chapter looks at the role Ford saw for impressionist prose in what he called "the new Republic," for he saw such prose as a direct means of re-formulating

the very basis of twentieth-century society. While Ford dismissed as futile the efforts of those (such as H.G. Wells) who used the novel as a direct means of advocating change, he felt that the novel, if composed as a work of art in line with his theory, could effect wholesale changes in the consciousness of every Briton, this in turn giving rise to (and being the *only* way of giving rise to) a totally altered society--one distinguished by mutual cooperation and respect, and by a commitment to encouraging the full development of its constituent members.

The sixth chapter examines the particular features of craft by which Ford saw a prose artifact arising from or in concert with such non-empirical vision. Reacting to the Coleridgean (and Jamesian) notion of organic art, Ford strove to integrate the processes of unconscious creation and conscious craftsmanship, so that a novel could most fully exploit aesthetic means to disclose an otherwise uncommunicable "figure in the carpet" of humanity; to this end he made use of such untraditional strategies as narratorial frame-shifts, impressionistic registering of detail, a concern for "le mot juste," disjunctive temporality, irresolution of plot, and formal foregrounding of the ineffable or the subjective. The seventh chapter explores one specific feature of Ford's theory of novel-art (and one that resulted in his being lionized by the early Imagist poets): his advocacy of what Wordsworth had

referred to as "the language of men," so that the diction and syntax of a work of art closely accord with those that inform colloquial human discourse, rather than the contrived discourse of traditional prose. Again, Ford saw colloquial speech patterns as manifestations of spontaneous thought and thus as indicators of fundamental principles within human nature. His experiments with stream of consciousness and roving reminiscences were intended to enable the novel to foreground stylistically the rhythms and vagaries of a meandering human consciousness.

The epilogue will then argue that, because of the influence Ford wielded among the avant-garde writers in pre-WWI England, he played a major role in establishing the romantic principles of form and content that sharply distinguish the modern novel from what James aptly described as the "large, loose, baggy monsters" composed by traditional novelists. That is, I will argue, as Samuel Hynes does, that "[no] English writer of our time, excepting James, had more to do with establishment of the novel as a serious art form in England than Ford did" ("Conrad and Ford" 52).

In summary, then, the central intent of this dissertation is to show that, through direct and indirect incorporation of principles from the Romantic poets, and through a belief in the importance of non-rational thought processes, Ford strove to refine the art of the novel to

such an extent that it could promote greater breadth and intensity of individual consciousness, eventually giving birth to a "new republic" grounded in the intrinsic principles of human goodness. In short, while Ford can be considered as one of the British pioneers of a radically new approach to the novel, he will be presented primarily as a synthesizing agent, one who brought together a diverse, multi-national array of literary and ontological principles, and thereby helped forge the basis on which the modern British novel could fulfill its romantic mandate.

**PROBING THE DEPTHS OF THE PSYCHE:
FORD AND THE ROMANTIC VIEW OF THE UNCONSCIOUS**

... when we look
Into our minds, into the Mind of Man--
My haunt, and the main region of my song.
Wordsworth
"Prospectus" to The Excursion

Had Ferd Madox Ford (1873-1939) been born twenty years earlier and raised in the home of, say, a merchant with Anglo-Saxon bloodlines, it is easy to envision the type of fiction-writing he would have engaged in had he developed any inclination to be a novelist. The writers whose style he would have tried to emulate would no doubt have been Dickens, Thackeray, and Trollope, and through his works he would probably have set out to endorse modest social reform in order to promote responsible moral conduct throughout the class spectrum. His narrative patterns certainly would have been based on a continuous chronology (albeit one that allows for slight digressions and an arbitrary number of episodic climaxes), and his characterization would have been a literary equivalent of representational painting. He would, in short, have endeavored to tell an engrossing tale in a clever fashion, making a few gibes at unconscionable people but never descending into stridency of tone. And if he were to have succeeded in being clever, engrossing, and decorous throughout the three volumes of his novel, Mr. Mudie would have consented to include such a work in his lending library,

and Mr. Ford would have been a popular, commercially successful novelist.

Ford, for good or ill, was not raised in such a context, and his theory and practice of fiction bear no similarity to those in this hypothesis. His paternal ancestry was German, his home environment was Aesthetic, and his intellectual influences were more avant-garde Continental than traditional British. As a consequence, Ford inquired deeply into the nature of art, and he was especially interested in the correspondence between aesthetic apprehension of art and unconscious thought processes. Through his familiarity with many of the current developments in philosophy and psychology, Ford believed that, at any given instant, what engages a person's conscious awareness is only a small part of all the activities occurring within the mind. The unconscious, he felt, was as important a part of the human experience as were the conscious workings of the brain, for in the unconscious lay many cerebral functions that not only are intrinsic to human nature but also accord more closely with what he saw as fundamental human-ness than do purely rational or fully conscious functions. Ford also realized that the behaviour such non-rational thought might generate could be repressed by vigilant consciousness, because the English socialization process stressed the importance of rational conduct. That is, "proper" conduct occurs after a conscious commitment to engage in socially acceptable action,

a process that often entails denial or repression of action urged by the unconscious. For Ford, the mind's logical faculty could (and commonly did) serve as a sentry that barred any of the workings of the unconscious from being manifested behaviourally or even being registered in consciousness. Ford never advocated total abolition of such sentry-work, but he did question the consequences of screening out what appeared to be a vast network of cerebral functions. In other words, he never supported abandonment of conscious and scrupulous conduct, but he did suggest that total denial of the unconscious was the cause of much of the sterility and social upheaval that he saw around him.

He also acknowledged that one could not easily switch off consciousness in order to experience unconsciousness, although he knew that such states of mind could be attained through mesmerism or meditation or even just a willingness to respond to intuited knowledge. Such an ability to tap into unconsciousness would, in Ford's view, be a prerequisite for genuinely artistic creativity, for he attributed the workings of imagination and aesthetic discernment to this extra-logical domain of the mind. He did, to be sure, concede that an artist had to learn consciously the specific techniques particular to that art form, but he also stressed the importance of inspiration, of moments of genius in which those techniques serve only as a means by which an artistic discovery can manifest itself. His definition of artistic

creation would overlap with the definitions of a variety of other non-empirical mental processes, such as those associated with dreaming, prophecy, Platonic Idealism, lunacy, berserk passionnal release, or various forms of mysticism. Ford seemed to feel that art begins where logic ends. That is, the source of artistic inspiration lies outside human volition, the creative process obeys no logical laws, the important human principles revealed by art are non-logical ones, and aesthetic worth is measured by non-logical standards. The artist thus is one who is more thoroughly or intensely human, because his scope of experience is more far-ranging than that of a person tethered by consciousness.

Had the Ford hypothesized at the start of this chapter been confronted by the actual Ford and his theory of art, he would probably have described his counterpart as romantic or, even worse, Gallic. Ford's views on the relation between art and unconscious thought are strikingly similar to (and, in part, directly derived from) those of the English Romantic poets, as well as those of later writers not ordinarily categorized as romantic. The goal of all these writers was to register whatever they could discern about the human experience, hoping thereby to effect a wholesale expansion in consciousness in their readers. For the Romantics, their poetry generally chronicled their attempts to discover the value or meaning of the individual human experience--as opposed to the Augustans' concern with the nature of social

relationships and the problems stemming from humanity's imperfect adherence to clearly prescribed codes of conduct. Ford similarly felt it his mandate (and the mandate of all true artists) to address the full scope of the individual human experience, a concern not, to him, evident in much of Victorian literature. Ford, for example, saw Christina Rossetti as the only Victorian poet whose works served to generate particular images rather than broad concepts in a reader's mind, thereby creating an intense experience that is expressly non-rational. To Ford, such an aesthetic was directly opposed to the prevailing tendency to deal in generalities and to struggle for absolutes: because "in outside things we can perceive no design..., we are thrown more and more in upon ourselves for comprehension of that which is not understandable and for analysis of things of the spirit" (Ancient Lights 62). Ford claimed that she was "very modern" because she was the antithesis of the other luminaries who frequented the Rossetti household, artists who "talked and generalized about life and love and [who] pursued their romantic images along the lines of least resistance," always suggesting that "the higher morals" they adumbrated ought to be "the rule of life for the British middle classes" (64-5). Curiously, Ford here uses "romantic" in the sense of "quixotic," even "sophomoric," although he elsewhere attributes quite different qualities to the High Romantic poets. In fact his claim that the modern person is better

off for being apart from the "spiritual dictatorships" of various Victorian great figures ("We have very much to work out our special cases for ourselves and we are probably a great deal more honest in consequence" [65]) accords closely with the exhortations to honest self-discovery that inform much Romantic poetry. Ford himself states that "Romanticism's most obvious aspect is that of a general revolt against the stifling conventions of the classicism of the eighteenth century," a revolt which gave rise to "the practice of public self-introspection [sic]" (March 495, 497). Such a revolt, he contends, necessarily began on the Continent (France, in particular) rather than in England, because of fundamental differences in cultural predispositions:

Roughly speaking, the Mediterranean civilization has always insisted and insists that the province of art is to delight and thus to ennoble humanity by permitting it to perceive truths for itself in the enlightenment given to it by that delight. And, roughly speaking again, the Nordic races insist that the writer--if he is to be called great or sublime--must be a director of the public conscience, telling humanity what it must think and leaving the quality of joy to take care of itself. (March 501)

Such dichotomizing of European cultures is certainly open to dispute, but it does show how Ford saw the English Romantics making a move against the cultural grain, creating art whose aesthetic properties are valuable both in themselves and because of the subjective truths they engender.

While Ford (and the Romantics) conceded that some

features of their individual natures could be understood or discerned by analytical scrutiny, they regarded the most significant aspects as those which were comprehended--that is, intuited rather than learned, revealed by some force other than an effort of will. In Shelley's well-known simile about the source of a fleeting expansion of consciousness, he likens the mind to "a fading coal which some invisible influence, like an inconstant wind, awakens to transitory brightness" (758). But as he explicitly states, "this power arises from within," and while the individual cannot regulate it, he can and should make himself as receptive to its visits as possible, for these visits attest to (and partially d'sclose) the "divinity in Man." If this divinity could be experienced in its totality (and how Shelley longed for such an experience!), then the individual could feel he had become consummately human.

From the Romantic viewpoint, the flaring up of the "fading coal" corresponds to the various imaginative, intuitive, and instinctive feats of cerebration that are not regulated by logical processes. The need to champion these extra-rational capacities of the mind was largely a reaction against the excessively empirical approach to life that was a concomitant of industrialism. When, for example, Blake inveighed in "London" against the "mind-forg'd manacles," he was responding to what he saw as the diminished capacity for an intensely human experience resulting from the suppression

of imaginative freedom. Similarly, Coleridge's distinction between Fancy and Imagination was, in effect, an endorsement of organic poetry generated not by technical skill alone but by "wisdom deeper than consciousness" ("Organic Form" 655). That is, whereas rational thought could give rise to social and technological advances, it also promoted an attenuation of consciousness, a closing of "the doors of perception." The conflict between empirical and Romantic thought did not, of course, end with the virtual surcease of Romantic poetry in the early 1820's. Throughout the rest of the nineteenth century, the anti-empiricists continued to assert their opposition to what they saw as the thwarting of full consciousness resulting from the nation-wide capitulation to decorum and a faith in science. It was within just such an anti-empiricist (or at least, anti-positivist) ambience that Ford's understanding of the nature of consciousness was shaped.

He had, for example, been schooled to esteem Carlyle's German-Romantic metaphysics¹ above Tennyson's Christian moral orthodoxy; and he was familiar with the Pre-Raphaelites' mandate to set art free from the restraints of aesthetic conventions and therefore to express a broader scope of consciousness. For all his mockery of the dreamy

¹ Despite coming to feel smothered by the intellectuals around him as he grew up, Ford was strongly influenced by his father's values and principles. Upon emigrating to England as a disciple of Schopenhauer, the elder Hueffer initially stayed with Carlyle and clearly concurred with his views.

idealism of the Pre-Raphaelites,² he always conceded that their art represented a step in the right direction. He especially commended Ford Madox Brown's innovative, anti-Academy art (derived from a monastic order of neo-medieval painters called Nazarene Pre-Raphaelites), praising its capacity to move the beholder into an "oblivion of himself" (Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood 31). Moreover, although Ford seldom directly expressed his debt to Walter Pater, Ford's aesthetic theory directly accords with (at times reading like a paraphrase of) Pater's,³ a theory grounded in Pater's understanding of consciousness. In the "Conclusion" to The Renaissance (which, in effect, served as a breviary for the Aesthetes), Pater describes consciousness as being the ephemeral perception of "a design in a web, the actual threads of which pass out beyond it"; consciousness, that is, is just one element in an infinitely extensive web of mental operations. Accordingly, since total awareness is an impossibility, the only meaningful goal for any consciousness is to "be present always at the focus where the greatest number of vital forces unite in their purest energy" (187, 188), and any such confluence of forces could

² See especially Chapter One of Ford's Ancient Lights and Certain New Reflections.

³ As will be discussed later, for example, Ford's dedicated commitment to perfecting the craft of literary impressionism clearly is the task of one who accepts Pater's axiom that "in aesthetic criticism the first step towards seeing one's object as it really is, is to know one's impression as it really is" ("Preface," The Renaissance xix).

easily be outside the range of rational understanding.

This correspondence between aesthetic experiences and supra-rational states of mind would also have come to Ford through his familiarity with Matthew Arnold's advocacy of Hellenism (with its "spontaneity of consciousness" and commitment to "see things as they really are") as a corrective to the then-prevailing Hebraism (with its "strictness of conscience" and commitment to doctrinaire "obedience"); the "confusion" that Arnold saw around him could be averted only by "going back upon the actual instincts and forces which rule our life, seeing them as they really are, connecting them with other instincts and forces, and enlarging our whole view and rule of life" ("Culture and Anarchy" 268, 278).⁴ Paul Wiley contends that Ford, especially in his polemical non-fiction, "was, in his own way, bringing up to date Arnold's aesthetic-cultural preoccupation" and was striving to inculcate in his culture

⁴ Arnold saw poetry as the replacement for religious faith, contending that the process by which one responds to poetry is a secularized version of the process by which one apprehends a divine Being--a premise that Meyer Abrams regards as fundamentally romantic. Ford's frequent inveighing against the constricted modern consciousness and his call for a newly awakened spirit very closely accord with Arnold's optimistic vision (in "Heinrich Heine") of a nascent modern spirit: "Modern times find themselves with an immense system of institutions, established facts, accredited dogmas, customs, and rules, which have come to them from times not modern. In this system their life has to be carried forward, yet they have a sense that this system is not of their own creation, that it by no means corresponds exactly with the wants of their actual life.... The awakening of this sense is the awakening of the modern spirit" (Lectures and Essays 109).

"a readier acceptance of the arts in general" (?) in order to reverse the constriction of consciousness in a rigorously rational culture. Ford asserts that "humanity has one insatiable curiosity--that as to the inner natures of men" but he points out that England has had "relatively few novelists with the conscience to give that information" (March 477). Here he seems to be using "conscience" in the French sense of "consciousness," claiming therefore that English novelists did not set out consciously to devise the appropriate prose craft by which to reveal the inner nature of humanity. To Ford, such writers pandered to the genteel English mind which "is so taken up by consideration of what is good form, of what is good feeling, of what is even good fellowship [that it] will find it impossible to listen to any plea for art which is exceptional, vivid, startling"; such a mind can not divorce aesthetics from ethical doctrine. and "it is these accursed dicta that render an audience hopeless to the artist" ("On Impressionism" 331).

Like many children, however, Ford endeavoured to go beyond the limits of aesthetic expression (even the relatively bold ones) set by his relatives and their artistic circle. That is, he concurred with them in their Romantic understanding of consciousness, but objected to the way in which they applied this understanding, especially in their medievalist focus. Rather, Ford grew to feel that, as literature, the Aesthetes' premises could be expressed more

cleanly (so that the means of expression more aptly complemented these premises) by implementing the strategies underlying contemporary French novels. As Ford recounts in Thus to Revisit, the great value of literary art is its capacity to lay bare the "hearts of men," a revelation possible only by aesthetic processes, not by direct statement (7). Hence, in what amounts to a paradox that Ford adhered to all his life, art must be consciously crafted in line with well-understood principles of technique, but also the artist must be "self-less (19)"-- that is, his work must be non-didactic and non-judgemental. He regarded the French realists' and naturalists' methods of presenting the human condition as more candid and lucid than was possible in Pre-Raphaelite or Aesthetic poetry, and as far more revelatory than was possible through traditional British prose methods. What he most admired in the French writers' works was the way they used prose to reveal the full scope of human nature, rather than to shape it or to postulate moral values.⁵ Without concern for the way people should think and behave, the realists sought to reveal the actual, and in some instances sordid, workings of the human creature. For example, he credits Stendhal, "the romantic

⁵ Ford attributed to Flaubert his commitment to what may be called literary deism, for Flaubert "clamoured unceasingly and passionately that the author must be impersonal, must, like a creating deity, stand neither for nor against any of his characters, must project and never report and must, above all, forever keep himself out of his books" ("Techniques" 23).

of the romantics [who was] perhaps the greatest literary influence of modern times," as being "the first psychological novelist [whose] heroes are all provided with real insides (March 711-12), an effect achieved by the "dry, direct" way that Stendhal presents his characters.⁶

Ford realized, however, that, despite its name, realism entailed more than presenting life-like people acting plausibly and in line with narrative conventions, for its purpose was to disclose the human experience by means of artistic selection and description of details. The "real" in realism, that is, derives not from the starkly representative content of the story's narrative, but rather from the candour with which the structure and style of the story reveal the actual nature of human consciousness. Accordingly, because of the artistry with which the events in a realistic story are presented, the reader would be led into an understanding far in excess of that which is generated by the plot details; in particular, the reader would see the full matrix of forces that inhere in the human creature, and not just those traits that "fit" within the

⁶ For instance, Ford asserts that Conrad admitted to being "very much inspired" (March 713) by Stendhal, especially the way he "presents [characters] coldbloodedly and without comment" (734). He cites Conrad's dry presentation in Lord Jim of the response of the French naval lieutenant to Jim's jump as an instance of Stendhalian romantic realism, for this presentation "extraordinarily illuminates not merely the old lieutenant himself but the psychology of all male France of his generation" (735). In reading such writing, "we make better acquaintance not merely with life but with ourselves" (737).

canons of traditional prose-fiction discourse. Thus, for the first time in the history of the novel (as Ford saw it), nineteenth-century Continental prose-artists were acknowledging that the primary aim of literary art should be to lay bare a human consciousness, an aim that became adopted by a few radical British prose writers of the 1890's (Thus To Revisit 15-19).

While he frequently expressed his indebtedness to the French naturalists, Ford also recognized that writers who scrupulously adhered to Zola's definition of naturalism (in Le Roman Experimental [1879], where literary method is paralleled to surgical technique) restricted the range within which they could work because of the prescribed objectivity of presentation. Ford praised Zola's naturalism as "a technique that was again rather a matter of a frame of mind, than any literary rules" (March 772). In other words, Ford regarded the frank description of setting and human conduct as having only limited efficacy in revealing consciousness; he saw the need for a literary form which afforded a more particular study of the individual consciousness, a form that could be termed psychological naturalism or romantic naturalism:⁷

⁷ Some critics, such as Jacques Barzun, assert that naturalism and realism are themselves modes of romantic prose. Barzun goes so far as to contend that "romanticism is realism," for both "isms" are similar in the extent to which they try to eschew conventions in order to make art reveal fundamental truths that could not be revealed by the extant literary conventions (58); Barzun sees realism,

The note indeed of the New Writing that began to prevail the world over in the nineties of last century, and that is today all-pervading is, with its precisions and scupulosities, a sort of reportage. Along with the precision of your descriptions, necessitated by their becoming an integral part of the story, grows an increasing taste in you and your readers for exactitude in psychologizing.... And you dispense almost altogether with embroideries.
(March 732)

Ford attributes the genesis of the New Writing to the realist and naturalist work done in France in the late 1880's and 1890's, especially in the works of Turgenev, Flaubert, Zola, Daudet, and de Maupassant. In the closing paragraphs to The March of Literature, Ford feels that all the best qualities of new Gallic writing can best be seen in the work of Dostoyevsky, "the greatest single influence on the world today." Like a fusion of Flaubert, Zola, and Villon, the Russian writer is what Ford calls a romantic realist; to Ford, such a term is not oxymoronic,⁸ for Dostoevsky not only can hew his images and visions out of rock but also can "delve into the human mind" and make his readers see what can only be revealed by art (775-76). And

impressionism, and naturalism as being later phases of Romanticism, although his generalization seems most convincing when applied to the later, less doctrinaire works of naturalism (i.e., when Zola's precepts were being modified to promote psychological realism).

⁸ In The Critical Attitude, Ford claims that Conrad and James limited themselves to writing of "the planes of life" with which they had personal experience, and thus they are "in the strictest sense realists, whether they treat of the romantic and the far away or of the everyday and the here" (93).

as Ford makes plain in his various discussions of the artistic principles that came to form the creed of him and Conrad, baring the full range of the human psychology (romance) by means of carefully devised reportage (realism/naturalism) was the mission of twentieth-century prose-artists. Bradbury and McFarlane see this supersedence of naturalism as actually being a deeper penetration into the reality of individual existence; where the naturalists "removed the fourth wall" to reveal domestic interiors, the new preoccupation of the 1890's on the Continent was to explore the individual's psychic interior ("Movements" 196). Or, as W.Y. Tindall succinctly puts it, for the "romantic explorers" of this time, "reality had moved from brothel and slum to the lonely head" (Forces 187). In The Critical Attitude, Ford defines the fundamental "province of art [as] the bringing of humanity into contact, person with person" in such a way that the art "awakens thought in the unthinking":

The artist is, as it were, the eternal mental prostitute who stands in the marketplace crying: "Come into contact with my thought, with my visions, with the sweet sounds that I cause to arise--with my personality." He deals, that is to say, not in facts and his value is in his temperament. (64)

Such contact could only be achieved through the suggestions implicit in carefully devised reportage, for such is the means by which the artist "voices the unvocal" (65).

The extent to which Ford ascribed value to the

operations of the "lonely head" clearly aligns him with Romantic thought, although for Ford it was virtually an axiom that pure intellection must be superseded in order that the deeper but no less significant functions of the mind could be responded to; that is, what the Romantics boldly proposed, Ford and his circle readily accepted as a given. This change in attitude (throughout the nineteenth century) toward non-rational forms of consciousness is exhaustively studied in Lancelot Whyte's The Unconscious Before Freud (1962), and while Whyte does not directly refer to Ford, his discussion of the late-century vogue of the unconscious clearly indicates the premises that Ford would have utilized when developing a prose-aesthetic grounded in this Romantic view of consciousness. In this text, Whyte traces out the progression from the "Cartesian blunder" of positing awareness as the sole criterion of mind, to the widely accepted notion in the late 1800's that awareness is only the transient entry of virtually limitless mental operations into a form that can be volitionally used or operated upon. Among those who initiated the "correction" to Cartesian dualism, Whyte lists many literary artists and philosophers who commonly are affiliated with the upsurge in British and Continental Romanticism, writers who "developed the conception of the unconscious mind as a dynamic principle underlying conscious reason,... the light of consciousness [emerging] out of the dark of the unconscious"

(112). According to Whyte, they laid the basis not only for the bold postulations about dynamic, irrational principles as the ground of existence, but also for the more scientific examination of unconscious mental processes. Whyte extensively documents how widely accepted this belief in the importance of the unconscious became by the 1870's, and he illustrates this through the popularity⁹ of Eduard von Hartmann's massive text, Philosophy of the Unconscious (1873), which subsumes most of the earlier work done on the unconscious (including both empirical and transcendental approaches) into one comprehensive system. Although Whyte finds Hartmann prolix and inconclusive, he regards his work as a symptom of the vogue of the unconscious by the 1870's. In effect, the mode of thought amongst avant-garde intellectuals had, in the span of a century, come almost full circle: the Romantic belief in reverie and attunement as important means of access into the richest (because non-conscious) levels of human experience was again becoming an accepted premise--but this time "legitimized" by the authority of science.¹⁰

⁹ "By 1882 this book had gone into nine editions in Germany; it was translated into French in 1877 and into English in 1884, and was extensively reviewed in all three countries." Moreover, "the circulation of works such as von Hartmann's suggests that at least fifty thousand Europeans paid some attention to these ideas during this decade [1870-1880]" (155, 161).

¹⁰ A. Alvarez even defines the modern movement in literature as an attempt to restore heroic stature to "Romantic Man" through the new "science of the inner life";

Ford's belief in this necessity for probing or in some way experiencing the nether reaches of unconsciousness no doubt derives in large part from his father's advocacy of Schopenhauerian philosophy. Francis Hueffer studied under Schopenhauer and, according to Ford, came to England at Schopenhauer's suggestion in order to "spread the light" of Schopenhauer,¹¹ (which he set out to do in the short-lived journal, The New Quarterly Review [Mirror 36-7]). Schopenhauer's central premise was that an amoral and inscrutable Will was the animating force of the universe, so that both the human species and the individual humans were simply manifestations of the Will; or rather, humanity collectively was a medium by which the Will could express itself. Ford himself was not as open an exponent of Schopenhauer's views as was his father,¹² but he nonetheless did endorse Schopenhauer's views that one must

he cites Lionel Trilling's conclusion that "'Psycho-analysis is one of the culminations of the Romanticist literature of the nineteenth century'" (184).

¹¹ Ford recollects Dante Rossetti's summary of Hueffer's mission:

There was a young German called Huffer,
A hypochondriacal buffer;
To shout Schopenhauer
From the top of a tower
Was the highest enjoyment of Huffer.
(Mirror 37)

¹² In his 1915 work of anti-German propaganda, When Blood Is Their Argument, Ford denounces Schopenhauer for his "typical" German militarism, and in The Critical Attitude, he criticizes Schopenhauer as "the greatest of all misogynists" (152) who helped perpetrate the myth of woman-as-ornament.

reconcile oneself to a life free of fruitless aspiration to final knowledge, and that only through the experience of art can the individual be more than a pawn of the Will; the experience of art, that is, removes the individual from the Will and from consciousness into a state that is necessarily good, and perhaps even the acme of existence.¹³ In The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, for example, Ford shows how PRB art arose from German Romantic art which, despite its Byronic gloom, was "valuable in its way, as must be all movements that set men questioning their accepted ideas" (8). The endless succession of art styles shows that "there never is and never can be, a finality"; there is no one truth or "right" way to paint, and often a painter has to depart from Academy rules in order to achieve art's highest end: tricking the beholder into an oblivion of himself (31). Similarly, in Hans Holbein The Younger, Ford distinguishes between the didactic art of Dürer and the "purely-rendering" art of Holbein, this latter quality being distinctly modern for it engenders "a mood of profound lack of thought, of profound self-forgetfulness, which assuredly is the most blessed thing which Art, in this dreary world, can vouchsafe to a man" (80). In such an unselfconscious state, one can

¹³ As Terry Eagleton summarizes, for Schopenhauer, "the aesthetic is what ruptures for a blessed moment the terrible sway of teleology, the tangled chain of functions and effects into which all things are locked, plucking an object for an instant out of the clammy grip of the will and savouring it purely as spectacle" (13).

thereby grasp the "underlying truths" that are communicable through Holbein's skill in rendering. That is, Ford felt that the very loss of awareness triggered by well-rendered art could give rise to a divining of otherwise indiscernible qualities of the human condition: "by going to the bottom of the individual, [Holbein] seems to be selecting those saliences which will make the individual really noticeable" (85).

The extent to which Ford shared Schopenhauer's view of art as a means of access into significant extra-consciousness is most evident through Ford's professed admiration of Richard Wagner and, less directly, Nietzsche--both of whom strove, in part, to use Schopenhauer's premises as the basis for a "right" approach to life. Ford wrote in 1915 that "it is impossible to have gone through life without having had some acquaintance with the writings of Ranke, Mommsen, Treitschke, Oncken, Fontane, von Wagner, von List, Richard Wagner, Nietzsche, Kant, and Hegel, since these formed, at any rate until August 1914, the ordinary reading of a normally cultured man.... [I had] this normal acquaintance with German serious literature" (Between St. Dennis and St. George 33).¹⁴ Nietzsche proposed that one's

¹⁴ In The March of Literature, Ford claims that "the artistic cause of the naturalists ... culminated in Nietzsche" who was the friend of "the romantic Richard Wagner" (722). Such a claim is certainly debatable, but it does reflect Ford's views on the correspondence between naturalism, romanticism, and Nietzschean sub-rationality.

unconscious or Dionysian compulsion and capabilities (such as instinctual urges, intuitive modes of understanding, reflexive behaviour) provided access to a more intrinsically human way of life than did conscious or Apollonian reflection; thus Nietzsche argued that art could (and should) be both an exemplar and an instigator of the process by which the vigorous demands of the deep, extra-rational self are fused with conscious and conscionable conduct. Like Meyer Abrams, who sees the Nietzschean view of art as fundamentally Romantic,¹⁵ Ford attributes Nietzschean qualities to the onset of the Romantic novel; he claims that Stendhal (whom Ford saw as the principal initiator of amoral, visionary prose fiction) was "a cold Nietzschean--or it might be more just to say that Nietzsche was a warmed-up Stendhalean" (English Novel 120). Ford seldom directly discussed Nietzsche in his fiction and non-fiction, although (as is discussed more fully in Chapter Seven), it is clearly Nietzsche whom Ford had in mind when, in Ladies Whose Bright Eyes, he named the heroine Dionissia.¹⁶

Another disciple of Schopenhauer whose influence swept

¹⁵ Abrams firmly aligns Nietzsche's theory of art with that posited by Blake and Shelley: all three Romantics consider art the means by which the individual undergoes "the Dionysian intoxication which is at the heart of mystery, of reintegration," a reintegration with the unity of forces that animate existence (318).

¹⁶ She is a nurse who communes with a temporarily comatose patient and who eventually lives extra-maritally with him in a rural retreat, in tune with the deeper rhythms of a broad life-force.

across the English Channel (and directly into the home of Ford) was Richard Wagner, whose music was based on the premise that the non-rational human drives were affiliated with "truer" or fuller self-knowledge than that disclosed by conscious self-scrutiny. Wagner saw the vast repository of stored experience and bridled compulsions within the human psyche as being an aspect of human-ness that needed to be accounted for and manifested in order for a life to be fully lived; his most explicit symbol of the teeming depths of the psyche (in contrast to the arid, institutionalized "surface" life) is the cave of Venus in Tannhäuser. Hence the preoccupation of many of his works with spiritual odysseys or forays into dark underground realms where (contrary to the punitive implications of the Christian descent into Hell) a protagonist undergoes an invigorating or even spiritually resuscitating experience.

The Wagnerian view (and, less directly, the Nietzschean view) of the value of non-rational experience would have been known to Ford while at a very young age, not only through the popularity of Wagner's music amongst the Pre-Raphaelite crowd, but also through the extensive study that his father had given to the German's musical theory and practice. The music critic for The Times as well as the editor of a Wagnerian journal called The Meister (1888-1895), Franz Hueffer was the first to champion the works of Wagner in England, most notably through his 1874 text,

Richard Wagner and the Music of the Future. Here, he traces the indebtedness of Wagner to Schopenhauer, who contended that the closest approach to "the archetypal forms which fashion the cosmos" (the most fundamental manifestations of the Immanent Will) is through music, because of all the arts music is the one least restrained by ties to phenomena (Hueffer 9-10). Wagner himself wrote that Beethoven's symphonies are so significant because they are animated by an "ordering principle" so profound that "the logic-mongering reason is completely routed and disarmed thereby" (qtd. in DiGaetani 63). Hueffer saw these ideas as the fruits of "an intuitive consciousness, which is all but independent of, and not always applicable to, the results of actual knowledge" (12), and it is this type of consciousness (later referred to as "the quiet realms of non-existence" [15]) that can be stimulated by music; to compose music, therefore, one must listen to the voice "of his own spirit speaking to him as in a dream, for it is only in dreams ... that such a state of absorption is possible" (11). Interestingly, Hueffer clarifies this distinction between "intuitive consciousness" and "actual knowledge" (presumably referring here to empirical thought) by reference to Nietzsche's comments on the music/dialogue dichotomy in Greek drama: "with Professor Nietzsche [footnote reference here to The Birth of Tragedy], we consider music in the antique drama as the representative of the Bacchic element

which forms the wild ecstatic undercurrent of the measured Apollonian self-consciousness of the spoken dialogue, and in this way becomes the symbol of that most mysterious phase of Greek and, in a sense, of human nature" (19).

That Hueffer's son also admired Wagner is both evident in Ford's own comments and stated directly in the recollections of his friends. Olive Garnett, for example, noted in her diary in 1892 that she and Ford spent an afternoon discussing "mathematical music (Prout [sic]) vs. Poetical music (Wagner)" ("Diary" 517), and Violet Hunt (Ford's lover during the 1909-15 period) mentions several times in her reminiscences (The Flurried Years) that their circle attended performances of or discussed the music of Wagner. Moreover, as John DiGaetani points out,¹⁷ Joseph Conrad was both highly knowledgeable of and influenced by Wagner's works¹⁸, and it therefore is a virtual certainty that the German's ideas would have surfaced occasionally in Conrad and Ford's extensive theorizing about the shape of the new novel. Ford's most explicit discussion of the implications of the music of Wagner comes in The Nature of a Crime which was published as a collaboration between Ford and Conrad, although Conrad asserts that he did little other

¹⁷ See especially pages 23-55 in his Richard Wagner and the Modern British Novel.

¹⁸ Conrad in a 1902 letter to Blackwood declared "I am modern," comparing himself in his innovativeness to Wagner, Rodin, and Whistler (Letters, ed. Blackburn 155).

than read Ford's manuscript and suggest a few changes.

The novella is written as a sequence of letters from a suicidal embezzler to the married woman he loves; in one of the letters, the writer speaks of the passion engendered in him by a performance of Wagner's Tristan and Isolde earlier that evening. To him, the music is at its most stirring when the eponymous lovers have consumed the love philtre and "become suddenly alive," acting no longer like mere "marionettes" for they are "under the grip of a passion -- acting ... irrationally" (45-6). The Wagnerian premise that irrationality is the key to full life "is real to us because every human being knows what it is to act irrationally ... [for] the other side of our being acts in contravention of all our rules of conduct or of intellect" (46). Indeed, much of Wagner's music could be said to make its appeal to "the other side of our being," the non-rational side that in his view (and, I would argue, in Ford's view) is more "real" than the side which impels people to act as marionettes, disengaged from Life. And for those daring enough to attribute value to irrational, impassioned conduct, they see a means of freedom from oppression:

We see a vision of a state of mind in which morality no longer exists: we are given a respite, a rest: an interval in which no standard of conduct oppresses us. It is an idea of an appeal more universal than any other in which the tired imagination takes refuge.... [Fut] the philtre could do no more than put it in a man's power to do what he would do if he were let loose. He would not bring out more than he had in him: but he would fully and finally express himself.

(46-7)

Interestingly, Ford's father contended that it was in this opera that "we perceive most distinctly the sway of Schopenhauer's philosophy, with its profound reproduction of the 'Nirwana' of individual existence, over [Wagner's] mind" (Hueffer 90). This concern with a full experience of individual existence is something that Hueffer saw as becoming a hallmark of contemporary artists. In writing of the maturation or broadening of consciousness of late-nineteenth-century artists, Ford's father had claimed that "we have tasted the bitter fruit of knowledge, and the artists of our latter days must have passed with us through the furnace of 'fierce and unfathomable thought,' purifying in it the inarticulate longings of the soul, to the not less passionate but conscious strife for ideal aims" (5, internal citation presumably from Wagner).

For Ford, the novelist--no less than the musician--must experience "unfathomable thought" and must register stylistically such an experience in order to create an ideal aesthetic for the novel. Ford, in effect, strove to apply to the novel what other writers in the 1890's were advocating as the new direction in which all artists and even scientists must move. William James,¹⁹ for example,

¹⁹ Although Ford never directly discusses his indebtedness to James's works, Jamesian ideas of the unconscious are evident in many of his novels, and in some of Ford's non-fiction he refers to Henry James only as William

asserted in 1891 that the subliminal self is part of a vast cerebral entity outside that part which engages in pure intellection, and accordingly he contended that the challenge facing science in the 90's is to go beyond the limited empirical scope of Newton and Darwin, and to accept a priori the "personal forces [which] are the starting-point of new effects" ("What Psychological Research Has Accomplished" 327). Henri Bergson, in 1891, exhorted artists to free their "mémoire involontaire" from the restraints of reason in order to experience a full breadth of consciousness which is distinguished by a "pure duration" unmeasurable by clocks;²⁰ accordingly, Bergson called upon novelists to rebel against the "word with well-defined outlines" which distorts the "thousand different elements which dissolve into and permeate one another without any precise outline:

Now, if some bold novelist, tearing aside the cleverly

James's brother--perhaps, of course, a dig at the novelist for his unflattering portrait of Ford in The Wings of the Dove. Also, in the memoirs of Violet Hunt (a contributor to Ford's English Review and subsequently Ford's lover), she describes William James as "author of one of the most widely interesting, most psychological of books, the material of half a dozen novels buried in accounts of the varieties of religious 'dopes'" (263).

²⁰ Bergson's comments clearly align him with the Romantic advocates of timeless reverie. Abrams documents at length the extent to which escape from chronology is a typically Romantic criterion (386-8); for example, he cites Rousseau who "discovered 'the supreme felicity,' in which 'time means nothing' and 'the present lasts forever, yet without indicating its duration and without any trace of successiveness'; and 'so long as this state endures one is sufficient unto himself, like God'" (386).

woven curtain of our conventional ego, shows us under this appearance of logic a fundamental absurdity, under this juxtaposition of simple states an infinite permeation of a thousand different impressions which have already ceased to exist the instant they are named, we commend him for having known us better than we knew ourselves. (Time and Free Will 133)

And George Moore (whom Ford extolled as "the greatest and most dispassionate technician that English Literature has ever seen" [English Novel 26]) argued in 1896 for a "psychic naturalism" to supersede Zola-esque naturalism, for there was profound significance to "that vague, undefinable yet intensely real life that lies beneath our consciousness, that life which knows, wills, perceives without help from us" ("Since the Elizabethans" 57).

Ford's attempts to devise aesthetic principles for psychic-naturalism in prose began in earnest when he started collaborating with Joseph Conrad in 1898. According to Ford (in Conrad 32), the primary reason that Conrad established a relationship with Ford was to take advantage of Ford's artistic heritage which presumably had endowed him with an ear for the English sentence finer than the Polish mariner's; their status as neighbours (and literary allies) in Rye on Pent farm began a few months before Conrad commenced Heart of Darkness. Thus, despite Ford's tendency to impressionistic biography, his claim seems fully credible that he and Conrad spent long evenings engaged in animated

discussions about literature,²¹ and accordingly it is highly probable that Conrad's perspective on the nature of consciousness was fully known to Ford, even if Ford had not read all that had been written by the contemporary psychologists.

According to John Galsworthy (in Castles in Spain 110), Conrad openly professed his admiration of the works of William James and Schopenhauer. The Jamesian premise that a good part of a human organism's existence is lived only in the subliminal self, undetected by the civilized conscious mind, runs through many of Conrad's works, the most forthright treatment of this premise occurring in Heart of Darkness. At the time of writing Heart of Darkness, Conrad was in almost daily contact with Ford, and apparently had Ford proofread the novella as it was being written. Heart of Darkness represents one of the first attempts of a novelist to address directly the problematic nature of the forces at play in the human unconscious. The fact that Ford

²¹ Moreover, Conrad's wife Jessie recollects Ford being "a very frequent visitor, staying with us sometimes for many days, while we used to drive often over to [Ford's house]" (48). Conrad apparently "found F.M.H. a mental stimulus" (113). She remembers that, during the period when Romance was being written, she would be kept awake late into the night by the authors' voices being "raised either in argument or enthusiastic assent" (a problem compounded by Ford's excited banging of his fists on the ceiling beams) (116). Violet Hunt remembers seeing a letter in which Conrad, holidaying in France, writes that he misses Ford's presence, "for with no other man except the inheritor of the great Pre-Raphaelite tradition of colour could he share this rapture" (233).

was involved in its germination (even if only passively) reveals his close familiarity with the ideas of those who were wrestling with the social and ontological implications of a world without absolutes. Marlow's succinct summary of droll human purposelessness --"that mysterious arrangement of merciless logic for a futile purpose" (119)--suggests that he saw truth as a subjective and protean quality which the rational mind self-deceivingly treats as an absolute. For Ford, reading this in 1898, it no doubt coincided with his understanding of the subjectivity and limitlessness of the individual consciousness, but more importantly it brought him into direct contact with someone who was breaking out of prose-writing conventions in order to create an aesthetic of prose that ascribes great significance to this unconsciousness.

Through his cultural background and his familiarity with late-nineteenth-century exponents of extra-rational consciousness, then, Ford was one of the first British-born novelists to see the artistic necessity of affiliating principles of literary realism with the newly "fashionable" ontology implicit in the psychology of the unconscious. While concurring with the naturalists in their call for narratorial objectivity, Ford felt a need to be more probing, to devise strategies of composition which would give rise to greater psychological verisimilitude, thereby disclosing more starkly the "primary laws" which inform

human nature--one of these laws being that full human-ness extends far beyond the limits of awareness. By establishing such an emphasis for his prose, Ford was laying the basis for the re-emergence in British literature of a Romantic ontology, one in which extra-rational thought and the workings of the unconscious are considered important manifestations of being.

CHAPTER TWO

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THE ROMANTIC TENSION IN FORD'S NOVELS: UNCONSCIOUS COMPULSIONS VS. CONSCIOUS DECISION-MAKING

Ford's conviction that the operations of the unconscious are an important component of the human experience necessarily carried with it definite moral implications. After all, if the vagaries of extra-logical cerebration needed to be accounted for in the re-emergent Romantic ontology and aesthetics embraced by Ford, then the values by which an individual lived also had to account for non-rational urges. A simplistic response to the ideas of Nietzsche, Wagner, Bergson, William James, etc. would be to assert that spontaneous indulgence of passions is a "truer" way of life, one that allows for full realization of all that is latent in the human psyche. Indeed, the growing emphasis in the 1890's on individualism and anti-positivism helped foment anarchism; McFarlane points out how many texts (such as the republication of Max Stirner's The Ego and His Own) "gave explicit emphasis to the importance of individual liberty in place of social constraint, to the free exercise of man's inherent powers guided only by his own personal understanding, to the rehabilitation of the individual and to the declared supremacy of subjective thinking" ("Mind of Modernism" 76). For Ford, however, the determination of the most appropriate conduct for a member of the species could not be a simple one, and many of his novels focus on his characters' struggles to determine the basis for right

behaviour, almost as though these characters were designed to exemplify those sub-de-siècle Britons who were attempting, however futilely, to forge a synthesis, a "right" ideology, out of the Hellenic-Hebraic dialectic that Arnold saw as the root cause of nineteenth-century "confusion" in England.

To Ford, the unconscious was associated with spontaneous, reflexive, intuitive behaviour, whereas the conscious mind acted in full cognizance of (if not always in accord with) the prevailing moral and social codes. And while Ford was never an advocate of recklessly impulsive behaviour, he did regard the unconscious as an essential component of human-ness, one whose urgings must fuse with or complement focused rational thought. This harkening to the urgings of the unconscious is, of course, a feature commonly attributed to the Romantic poets, for Wordsworth's "wise passiveness," Coleridge's "wisdom deeper than consciousness," Keats's "negative capability," and Blake's "Realities of Intellect" all reflect a removal into a mode of awareness distinguished more by attunement than by logic; that is, these writers extolled the value of a state of mind unregulated by social or religious orthodoxy.¹ Although

¹ Stuart Sperry argues that the irresolution and indeterminacy which arise from the interminable "process of inner discovery" are the primary attributes of the world-view known as Romantic irony; such irony was scarcely evident in Victorian literature, but he sees it re-emergent in the modern novel with its foregrounding of indeterminacy (23-4).

Ford similarly valued roving introspection, free of bounds or moral signposts, he also saw the benefits of living within a social structure. Accordingly, many of Ford's protagonists are sharply dichotomized individuals who are troubled and often broken by their incapacity to reconcile the dictates of the unconscious with the values they believe they should adhere to; such a struggle on the part of a protagonist came to be a distinctive feature of the modern novel, especially as practised by Joyce, Lawrence, Forster, and Woolf. Ford is more assiduous than his Romantic forebears in trying to establish the position of a self-responsible, even a solipsistic, individual within a society secure from wanton self-indulgence, although (and again like the Romantics) he never directly specified the qualities of an expanded or fused consciousness in a fully "wise" person. His primary goal was to reveal starkly the present state of the British mind, assuming that such a mirroring could impel a reader to pursue a more fulfilling state of consciousness.

Ford often addressed this concern in his novels by presenting the duality--and the apparent irreconcilability--of consciousness and unconsciousness within the human psyche, a dualism which the individual must come to terms with in order to avert an unbalanced and even self-destructive life. By so doing, Ford draws attention to the necessity for an exploration of the inner reaches of one's psyche, and accordingly, he frequently develops

surface/depth image patterns in which the depths correspond to the nether reaches of the individual consciousness, reaches which are normally screened from the awareness of a proper Englishman. In many of his novels, a protagonist is led into the depths or, at least, is made aware that the depths exist and contain some disturbing truths about his sub-rational self. This image occurs in a diversity of forms: the depths of an ocean (as opposed to the ships atop it), the dark hold of a ship, the unplumbed depths of a heart, the qualities that exist below the horizon, the dark underworld of Paris, the cave of an anchorite.² In such cases, the protagonists undergo (or balk at undergoing) some form of self-scrutiny, and those who succeed in their quest discern a set of principles and values by which they can subsequently live a richer, truer life. For example, the title that Ford had initially planned for The New Humpty-

² T. A. Hanzo argues that The Good Soldier is a mythic tale and that its main characters fulfill archetypal responsibilities, so that the novel is an elaborate recounting of "man's encounter with psychic darkness" (855). And Caroline Gordon, who knew Ford personally, claims that Ford (whom she remembers having translated at least one play by Euripides) "was the first contemporary novelist to use Euripides' method"; his characterization, that is, was grounded in an attempt to manifest the mythic or archetypal patterns which inform human behaviour: "For the world of which Ford writes is a pagan world, the world of older gods, a world of which, in our psychiatrically biased age is symbolized by the dark, unconscious forces latent--happily--most of the time in all of us" (21).

Dumpty was The Dark Forest,³ in order to emphasize the inscrutable, extra-social component of consciousness. (Interestingly, D.H. Lawrence, whom Ford helped launch on his career, would write a few years later that "my soul is a dark forest [and] my known self will never be more than a little clearing in the forest" [Studies in Classic American Literature] 22). To Ford, meaning; or purpose is achieved not through aspiration upward to Heaven (by adherence to prescribed doctrine) but through exploration downward into the psyche (by an effort of imagination or intuition).⁴

³ The epigraph to The New Humpty-Dumpty is "There be summer queens and dukes of a day, / But the heart of another is a dark forest." Richard Cassell points out that a probable source of this metaphor is Turgenev's Liza, wherein appears the statement, "Another person's heart, you know, is a dark forest" (Cassell 147n).

⁴ Such imagery is what Northrop Frye describes as being central to the Romantic myth, an inversion or solipsizing of the Christian scheme of spiritual upward mobility: "The metaphorical structure of Romantic poetry tends to move inside and downward instead of outside and upward, hence the creative world is deep within, and so is heaven or the place of the presence of God.... In pre-Romantic poetry heaven is the order of grace, and grace is normally thought of as descending from above into the soul. In the Romantic construct there is a centre where inward and outward manifestations of a common motion and spirit are unified, where the ego is identified as itself because it is also identified with something which is not itself" ("Drunken Boat" 16-17). Frye develops this idea more extensively in A Study of English Romanticism, where he concludes that the image of civil society as an "ark or bateau ivre" atop a dark ocean "becomes the prevailing one later in the nineteenth century," especially for Freud and the "pessimistic Romantic" Schopenhauer (32). Accordingly, for the Romantic writer, "the real event is no longer even the universal or typical historical event, but the psychological or mental event, the event in his own consciousness The theme of this romance form is the attaining of an expanded consciousness, the sense of identity with God and

Ford, to be sure, created no Alastors or Manfreds, but he did address persistently the integrative and revelatory powers of "psychological events." More so than the Romantics, however, he was concerned about the implications for the returning quester: how (if at all) can one with an expanded consciousness fit into a social framework, and is it even possible to assume that questing in the dark can disclose truths that are necessarily better than the accepted ideas on which a culture is grounded?

Samuel Hynes contends that a distinctive feature of modern fiction in general--and The Good Soldier in particular--is the way that epistemological concerns are addressed directly through technique. Whereas the omniscient narrators of Fielding reflect eighteenth-century attitudes toward empirical thought, "the modern inclination toward ... a more limited and tentative conception of the way man knows [led writers] to devise a narrative which raises uncertainty about the nature of truth and reality to

nature which is the total human heritage" (36-7). R.M. Albérès contends that this inward movement (a plunge into one's consciousness) is a defining characteristic of modern impressionism: "les paroles, les gestes menus des hommes, hésitations et arabesques, indiquent à peine quelques lignes à la surface de cette nébuleuse qui est la réalité, qui est la 'Vie.'... Loin de la vision objective, l'impressionisme en effet est une plongée dans la conscience" (190). Whereas Albérès did not directly link such "plunges" to the Romantic quest, Harold Bloom more rigorously applied Frye's thesis to post-Romantic writing, and has argued strongly (especially in The Visionary Company and The Ringers in The Tower) that the internalized quest myth persisted throughout the nineteenth century but became a more abiding concern to the modern writers.

the level of a structural principle" ("Epistemology" 226-7). Hynes therefore feels that critics (such as Mark Schorer)⁵ who see The Good Soldier as a form of complex characterization are simply wrong: the contradictions and convolutions of the narration emphasize that, for Ford, "absolute truth and objective judgment are not possible" because of "the shabby equipment" with which man tries to know (230). Hynes sees Ford's narrative method as a means of foregrounding the futility of any human attempt to reconcile convention and passion and thus to follow with certainty any prescribed way to live.

That there is no easy reconciling of the dual cerebral modes is a recurrent feature of Ford's work, but it is nowhere so extensively addressed as in The Good Soldier. As Zohreh Sullivan has pointed out, this novel is a reworking of the confrontation-with-darkness theme that Ford had seen addressed most explicitly in Heart of Darkness and that would have surfaced in his long discussions with Conrad on Pent Farm. Both Marlow and Dowell are narrators who see

⁵ For example, in his foreword ("An Interpretation") to the Random edition of The Good Soldier, Schorer asserts that the novel describes "a narrator who suffers from the madness of moral inertia" and that "the author, while speaking through his simple, infatuated character, lets us know how to take his simplicity and his infatuation" (xiii). In Hynes's view, there is no authorial presence directing us "how to take" the characters. Hynes no doubt would also dispute R.W. Lid's claim that Ford both "condemned" Ashburnham and "suggested a mute and perverted dignity which ... placed [Ashburnham] in a position of relative superiority to a world that was even more corrupt than himself" (5).

civilization as a screen that hides the individual's terrible solitariness, yet who see that the screen is not without value for those afraid of such solitude. Despite their glimpses into the dark domain of human unconsciousness where no meaning or purpose is discernible, both return to a civil, "well-lit" world--Marlow to London whose populace scurried about filching money in blithe ignorance of life's inscrutability; Dowell to the smoking-rooms where he passes evenings talking with fellow "simulacra." The two writers' commitment to explore this issue (i.e., the value of a screen interposed between the conscious mind and the unconscious mind) is clearly shown in a 1901 letter that Conrad sent to the New York Times; here he rebuts a negative review of The Inheritors (largely Ford's work) by "explaining" the intent and the aesthetic principles by which he and Ford strove to develop their fiction. In essence, he contends that he and Ford saw the purpose of fiction being to reveal the intractable duality of "egoism" and "altruism":

The only indisputable truth of life is our ignorance. Besides this there is nothing evident, nothing absolute, nothing uncontradicted; there is no principle, no instinct, no impulse that can stand alone at the beginning of things and look confidently to the end. Egoism, which is the moving force of the world, and altruism, which is its morality, these two contradictory instincts, of which one is so plain and the other so mysterious, cannot serve us unless in the incomprehensible alliance of their irreconcilable antagonism.... The only legitimate basis of [fiction] lies in the courageous recognition of all the irreconcilable antagonisms that make our life so

enigmatic, so burdensome, so fascinating, so dangerous--so full of hope. They exist! And this is the only fundamental truth of fiction. (Congo Diary 75)

At its simplest, The Good Soldier can be considered an elaboration of this "irreconcilable antagonism," whereby the appearances or facades of the Dowells and Ashburnhams are the consequences of their conscious attempts to be seen as moral and decorous, while their real natures are animated in large part by their unconscious. For example, however much the two couples' intimacy resembles a minuet, "it wasn't a minuet that we stepped; it was a prison--a prison full of screaming hysterics, tied down so that they might not outsound the rolling of our carriage wheels as we went along the shaded avenues of the Taunus Wald" (7). This image of an ornately decorated carriage hiding an ugly emotional tumult neatly represents Ford's general view of the English as a people whose concern with "keeping up their appearance of calm pococurantism" (248) not only masks emotional distress but also causes it; the very act of concealing or repressing unconscious needs and compulsions for the sake of civility actually foments the anxiety that renders barren so many reticent British lives.⁶ Ford, however, does not

⁶ A. Alvarez, in his "Introduction" to The New Poetry (1962) suggests that what "has happened in the last half century is that we are gradually being made to realize that all our lives, even those of the most genteel and enislanded, are influenced profoundly by forces which have nothing to do with gentility, decency, or politeness. Theologians would call these forces evil, psychologists, perhaps, libido. Either way, they are the forces of

advocate precepts to live by; he simply explores the extent to which the unconscious is constrained by British decorum, leaving ambiguous his views on the right balance of self-repressive propriety and self-expressive autonomy. Dowell, then, is not simply a mouthpiece for Ford; by professing bewilderment about the lack of certain guides in his life, and by retreating into a pallid ritualized lifestyle, Dowell dramatizes one response (i.e., *acedia*) to the fundamental dilemma that Ford felt must be addressed in "the new novel." In addressing these concerns, the new novelist would not be proselytizing overtly in support of social order or dark irrationality; rather, by baring the qualities of a British consciousness, he would impel a reader to choose to modify the qualities or bounds of his own consciousness, this in turn triggering a broad social transvaluation (the nature of which will be discussed more fully in Chapter Four).

The repression of the inner self is most obviously shown in the novel through the occasions when, because of momentary relaxation of the conscious mind, the subconscious manages to thrust itself into a character's awareness.⁷ For instance, when Dowell first learns of Florence's adulterous liaison with Edward, he reacts with characteristic aplomb:

disintegration which destroy the old standards of civilization" (26).

⁷ Or, as Bergson puts it, if "an accident upsets the equilibrium of the brain, ... the darkened images come forward [from the 'mémoire involontaire'] into the full light" (Matter and Memory 97).

"I don't suppose I felt anything, unless may be it was with that mysterious and unconscious self that underlies most people. Perhaps one day when I am unconscious or walking in my sleep I may go and spit upon poor Edward's grave" (104). Similarly, when Dowell hears of Florence's suicide, his consciousness is so "anaesthetized" that he "thought nothing, absolutely nothing" (108); therefore his statement, "Now I can marry the girl," reflects an unconscious desire, for he fully realizes that he "never had the slightest conscious idea of marrying the girl.... It is as if one had a dual personality, the one I being entirely unconscious of the other" (103). Edward's love of Nancy is equally hidden from his conscious self, for he thought that he merely felt a parental attachment to her, "but of more than that, he had been totally unconscious. Had he been conscious of it, he assured me, he would have fled from it.... But the real point was his entire unconsciousness" (111). Thus, when he finds himself alone in the darkness, his conscious mind lulled out of vigilance, he is startled to hear himself profess his affection for her.

Even the virginal, dutiful Nancy is given to sudden releases of frenzied feeling from within her subconscious, such as on the evening when "she undressed with great care and meticulously folded the clothes that she took off. Sometimes, but not very often, she threw them helter-skelter about the room" (227). The unconscious impetus for this

sporadic clothes-flinging is her intuited and imperfectly repressed recognition of Edward's impermissible affection for her; only when Leonora later tells her outright that Edward was devotedly in love with her did "she know with her conscious mind what she had known within herself for months --that Edward was dying ... of love for her" (227). Nancy is perhaps too much a paragon of naive life-on-the-surface, but her collapse into insanity nonetheless starkly dramatizes the surface/depth duality. Contrary to most critics who treat Nancy as the thorough "symbol of innocence," Sondra Stang points out how Nancy is really half-saint, half-Maenad, capable of both demureness and cruelty ("A Reading" 557). Arthur Mizener suggests that her "Shuttlecocks" comment reflects her being "tossed like a shuttlecock between her conscious mind's convent-trained view of things and her unconscious passion for Edward" (Saddest Story 270).

Ford also addresses this conscious-unconscious conflict in his earlier novels, although less overtly so than in The Good Soldier. For example, in the Fifth Queen trilogy, Katherine Howard consciously sets out to adhere to clearly defined doctrine, yet at moments she nonetheless does behave spontaneously, in line with dark instincts. This inconsistency, in fact, is a troublesome aspect of the novel, for what she proclaims herself to believe in is belied by some of her actions. Her speeches, especially in

the last book, read like carefully rehearsed pronouncements by someone who is consciously posing as a paragon of Catholic virtue, and thus she often reduces herself to the role of stereotype: the world-abjuring, rhetoric-spouting martyr who is unconcerned about death because her eyes are on God. In action, however, she does violate those very Christian precepts that she asserts should be held inviolable: she strangles (almost to death) her cousin and she seriously stabs Throckmorton, although she deplores violence as a feature of a non-Catholic age; she commends Henry for his "marvellous well done" (546) lie about Culpepper's presence in her bedroom, yet she has a "mad fury for truth and the letter of Truth" (411); she beseeches Henry to pardon all his Cromwell-supporting enemies, yet she grows so furious with the bemused Lady Rochford that she holds a dagger to her and spits out that "I am the Queen [and] I have the power to slay whom I will and none question it" (536); and she readily engages in a plot to destroy Cromwell ("the main [thing] is that Privy Seal be cast down" [204]), yet she asserts that "I am too true to mix in plots" (290). These self-contradictions in her behaviour could be regarded as a failure to create a credible character; that is, as soon as Katherine loses the ingenuousness and humility (that she had in the first book) and takes on the ostentatious piety of a Catholic queen, then Ford loses control of her as a character. A more charitable way of

looking at the problem of Katherine (and one that is more consistent with Ford's views on the duality of the human psyche) would be to see her as a figure who seeks the security of explicitly dichotomized values by which to live her life (i.e., the Catholic "compartments" of good and evil), and yet who is necessarily incapable of escaping the compulsions generated by her unconscious. From this view, Katherine's behaviour, like Nancy Rufford's sporadic clothes-flinging, reflects the tension between intellectual constructs and self-preservative instincts, between "surface" ethics and "deep" predilections.

In The Benefactor, the first novel he wrote after his collaboration with Conrad, Ford similarly explores the consequences when lives of self-denying altruism are disturbed by irrepressible unconscious urgings. In many ways, the relationship between George Moffat and Clara Brede follows that between Edward Ashburnham and Nancy Rufford. Moffat has devoted his life (and his inherited wealth) to abetting the development of promising young artists, even though every one that he ever helped spurned him upon becoming successful--some even burdening Moffat with huge debts that eventually impoverish him. Moffat, however, is aware of the exploitation and lack of appreciation, but he feels it his duty that "you must never lose a chance of helping any lame dog over a style [sic] (9). It is through his contact with his neighbours, the Bredes, that Moffat is

made responsive to non-altruistic compulsions. Mr. Brede's insanity, which leads him to feel persecuted by demonic forces, gives Moffat "a faint glimpse of that sinister survival of the black history of man" (268). This awareness of atavistic capabilities lurking deep in the psyche soon has direct pertinence to Moffat, for his affection for Clara (made manifest when a robust Argentinian proposes to take her away) momentarily obtrudes itself in his consciousness: "All the barriers of altruism were levelled before a passion not to be held off. He wanted Clara Brede.... Rationally or irrationally, for better or very much for worse, she had for him a charm" (278). (Earlier, Moffat, doodling with a pen while engaged in conversation with a love-struck friend, drew some ornate "C.B." monograms and then wrote out "Clara Brede," but when he grew conscious of having written something, "he looked at the name uncomprehendingly" [111].) Because Moffat is still married, he consciously vows to refrain from expressing his feelings, but in a heated exchange "he had told Clara that he loved her. It had slipped out. He had hardly realised it at the time. He had hardly heard himself speak" (306).

Moffat's new-found capacity for allowing promptings from his unconscious into his life is metaphorically paralleled by his removal out of his house, to the construction and decoration of which he had devoted most of his life. Because he had imposed on himself such a limited

range of thought, "the whole of his past had grown d'im and entirely negligible [for] it hadn't been a life, it was the merest dallying with trifles.... [His house] had crushed him with its beams, its mullioned windows, its groined stones; it, and what it represented--the frame of mind" (295). Alternatively, Moffat comes to accept that while he is in the presence of Clara, he experiences "a bliss of unconsciousness" (344), a bliss unattainable by any conscious means. He announces to Clara that he wishes to take her to Italy where they can live as unconsciously as possible, losing themselves in each other and in the beauty of the art to be seen there. His ideal therefore becomes, for the moment, not self-sacrifice but selflessness; in a fervent plea for a joint descent out of consciousness through aesthetic absorption, Moffat sounds like an advocate of Romantic self-transcendence:

It's in looking at such things that we can forget ourselves. Some things are so beautiful that one can look at them for a long time, absorbed, unconscious. And, don't you see, it's then that one is happy.... There's something for both of us together. It's that forgetfulness, it's that getting outside ourselves into communion with a spirit that absorbs us--it's that that is getting below the horizon. (345)

This praise of getting below the horizon⁸ is openly

⁸ This notion of plunging out of thought into a profound communion is also evident in a poem Ford published a few years later. The poem's speaker tells how, when he and his beloved are together, they go "past mists and veils and shimmer and shine and haze/ Into the deep and silent places,/ The still unfathomable spaces/ Where the brain

received by Clara, for she had lived a similarly altruistic life as nurse-maid for her deranged father. Like Moffat in his unconscious doodlings and unintended announcement of his love, Clara had been "startled and shocked" (89) to hear herself talking aloud about Moffat; thus, when he speaks of their unconscious life together in Italy, freed from the burdens of his house and all that it stands for, she is warmly responsive. She realizes that "social codes, framed by men for the purposes of men, were nothing to her"; in abandoning these codes and the mantle of duty she had always worn, she senses herself succumbing to some "paralysing" and "blissful" condition from below the horizon (346). However, the conscious mind regains ascendancy, for Moffat realizes that it would be a dereliction of duty to impugn Mr. Brede's name by living extra-maritally with his daughter. Thus, "the spirit of self-sacrifice" (347) envelops both of them, and they regretfully abandon their chance at unconscious happiness in order to do what they (Moffat more so than Clara) consciously know to be the proper thing. Clearly, the primary benefactor of this decision is society, although George and Clara also "benefit" by continuing to be accepted within their society--a point Ford himself shortly came to realize when he met some social isolation (most notably the pointed exclusion from Henry James's circle of accepted

sleeps and the mind too sleeps/ And all the deeps stretch out beyond the deeps/ And thought dies down before infinity" (High Germany xvi).

colleagues) because of his adulterous liaison with Violet Hunt.

The novel's ending is ambiguous. Clara's departure from Moffat signals the end of any intimacy between them, but they arguably have the solace of knowing that they stopped short of jeopardizing the English moral order. Ford pointedly attaches no moral to the novel; he leaves it up to the reader to infer whether or not their separation is a good or bad course of action. A similar ambiguity is evident in The Good Soldier, where Dowell describes the virtually total ascendancy of conscious will over subconscious desire, although he often admits that he does not know what is the right way to live. Through Dowell, Ford simply creates a tension that illustrates (without being tendentious) the surface/depth duality within the human mind. When, for example, Leonora feels that Edward's philandering is finally over, thus obviating any further need for her Catholic vigilance over and manipulation of her profligate husband, she begins to drift along with whatever inclinations happen to generate themselves in her unconscious self: "Having been cut off from the restraints of her religion, for the first time in her life, she acted along the lines of her instinctive desires" (203). Dowell, however, is not fully certain that this loss of restraint signals some discovery by Leonora of her true self: "I do not know whether to think that, in that [instinctive

behaviour] she was no longer herself; or that, having let loose the bonds of her standards, her conventions, and her traditions, she was being, for the first time, her own natural self" (203).⁹ Dowell can not say for sure whether the unconscious is the source of fully human conduct or merely the means of access into some volitionless flux. And when he hears her comment on the rules of the adultery game, he asks the reader whether her view is what only a harlot would think or "what every decent woman ... thinks at the bottom of her heart? Who knows?" (9). Similarly, Dowell, after reflecting on whether or not the "proper man" is the decorous gentleman or the lust-indulging "raging stallion," concludes:

I don't know. And there is nothing to guide us. And if everything is nebulous about a matter so elementary as the morals of sex, what is there to guide us in the more subtle morality of all other personal contacts, associations, and activities? Or are we meant to act on impulse alone? It is all a darkness. (12)

For Dowell, the answer is that there is no answer. But for Ford, the quest for an answer is indispensable to a fully lived life, even though the search for moral absolutes is necessarily futile. By means of such questing, the individual is obliged to determine for himself the

⁹ T.A. Hanzo contends that, upon seeing Leonora in this condition, Dowell "finds himself at boundaries he cannot pass, where human desire and passions lie beyond his power to conceptualize, before the depths of the psyche where other modes of consciousness are operative" (848).

appropriate degree of interplay between volition and abandon. As such, the novel, in Sondra Stang's view, "is a kind of parable of the struggle of the human species for existence in a civilized state" ("A Reading" 559).¹⁰ Dowell's bemusement and his eventual withdrawal into the sanctuary of genteel country-life reflects the fear of self-reliance that Ford saw so prevalent in his countrymen. Ford thus is heavily ironic in his depiction of Dowell's acceptance of the sanctuary. Dowell likens the neatly patterned life at Nauheim to "an extraordinarily safe castle" and a "tall ship with white sails" that seems "the proudest and the safest of all the beautiful and safe things that God has permitted the mind of man to frame. Where better could one take refuge?" (12). Dowell concedes that their gracious but regulated lifestyle is an illusion (i.e. framed by the mind of man), but one that affords shelter from what Dowell perceives to be the intolerable horror of patternless, amoral, valueless existence outside the refuge. The ship floats atop a vast and mostly opaque sea of

¹⁰ Richard A. Hood goes further than Stang; he regards The Good Soldier as the paradigmatic modern novel, for Ford takes the phenomenological basis of Conrad's impressionism "and pushes this concept to its extreme." To Hood, just as the object in an Impressionist or Post-Impressionist painting is significant only in terms of the relationship that exists between itself and the viewer, so does Ford's extreme impressionism in The Good Soldier treat narration as a kind of object which, through its absence of conventional meaning, simply exists as a pastiche of narrated fragments, generating meaning only within a reader's subjective apprehension of the work (458-59).

cerebral activity whose depths hide frightening subjective truths, yet although it is a delusion to claim that the passengers' breadth of awareness is in any way comprehensive, "surely, surely these delusions are necessary to keep us going" (47). The surface or conscious mind not only generates the principles of social and moral order, but also it can (in Dowell-like people, most of the time) convince itself that these principles are universal absolutes. Or, to use Dowell's analogy, "if for nine years I have possessed a goodly apple that is rotten at the core and discover its rottenness only in nine years . . . , isn't it true to say that for nine years I possessed a goodly apple?" (7). And although the rot inside the apple here refers to Florence's adultery, the analogy clearly has broader applications to the "goodly" consequences of deriving contentment from the surfaces of life, irrespective of the actual condition of the core. Indeed, Nancy's insanity stems from her discovery that civility was only a screen that masked dark human proclivities; when she discovers that the marriage sacraments are not eternally inviolable, she is beset by fears of the unknown that underlies appearance:

In her eyes the whole of that familiar, great hall had a changed aspect. The andirons with the brass flowers at the ends appeared unreal; the burning logs were just logs that were burning and not the comfortable symbols of an indestructible mode of life. (220)

Another agent of delusion by which one's fears of the unconscious self can be allayed is, for Dowell, love. He sees love as a means of melding oneself with another, of "[losing] his identity, to be enveloped, to be supported" (115). This external support or enveloping, however, is not so much a means of experiencing a devout self-transcendence or self-consummation as it is a means of defence or security, in the sense that a twin-hulled catamaran is less prone to sink or overturn than is a single-hulled ship. For Dowell, "the mainspring of [love is that] we are all so afraid, we are all so alone, we all so need *from outside* the assurance of our own worthiness to exist" (115). In this view, love allows one to experience a sense of fullness without having to come to terms with all that is lying latent in the self. Many would argue that such an experience is not so much love as self-fear, and Dowell regretfully concedes that even this "relief from the sense of loneliness, the assurance of our own worth ... shall pass away as the shadows pass across sundials. Well, this is the saddest story" (115).

A more common attitude of the characters in this novel is to spurn any form of emotional involvement with others; such people have become so well conditioned to the principles which regulate ship-board life that ontological questions never trouble them and love never is necessary for them. Dowell conventionally refers to the heart as the

source of affection, but in describing the nature of the heart, he uses the same surface/depth image pattern that he applied to cerebral activity. In the opening paragraph, for instance, Dowell admits that "I had never sounded the depths of an English heart. I had known the shallows" (3), and he later concedes that this limited awareness also applies to himself: "Who in this world knows anything of any other heart--or of his own?" (155). Dowell's incapacity to "sound the depths" manifests Ford's view that the typical Briton has rigorously prevented the urgings of the heart from surfacing into conscious activity.¹¹ In a 1907 Tribune article, Ford openly stated his belief in a correspondence between the experience of emotion and a familiarity with an intrinsically human "essential": "It is one of the capital defects of the life we lead that, in the large, we have no acquaintance with 'les émotions fortes'--with the emotions that arise from the essentials of life" (qtd. in Harvey

¹¹ In England and the English (in which Ford directly addressed the nature of the English "game" and the decorum-as-refuge premise that prevails in The Good Soldier), he claims that because the Englishman "is aware--subconsciously if you will--of the depth of his capacity to feel, [he] takes refuge in his particular official optimism. He hides from himself the fact that there are in the world greed, poverty, hunger, lust, or evil passions, simply because he knows that if he comes to think of them at all they will move him beyond bearing. He prefers, therefore, to say--and to hypnotise himself into believing--that the world is a very good--an all-good--place" (354).

154).¹² This sense that the heart, as the source of such essentials, is an unexplored entity within the psyches of the genteel is effectively paralleled by the apparent cardiac problems experienced by some of the characters in The Good Soldier. Ford is ironically using apparent physiological disorders to symbolize actual psychological disorders. Florence and Edward especially typify the people whose cardiac muscles are mis-diagnosed as being weak, and yet whose deficient understanding of the nature and worth of love is a symptom of a weak heart; their deaths result not from cardiac seizures, but from heart attacks of a non-physiological order.

Having been raised by two chaste, quasi-aristocratic aunts (like "members of an ancient family under some curse-- ... so gentlewomanly, so proper" [79]), Florence developed into an avaricious, calculating woman such that "the only main idea of her heart, that was otherwise cold -- was to be a county lady in the home of her ancestors" (90).¹³

¹² Ford uses a similar phrase in praising Henry James's capacity to bare fundamental truths through art: James mastered "the supreme trick of art today" which entails capturing the simultaneity of surface conviviality and deep turmoil; his books impart "vibrating reality," for the reader's "mind passes, as it does in real life, perpetually backwards and forwards between the apparent aspect of things and the **essentials of life**" (James 153).

¹³ Ford clearly concurs with E.M. Forster's succinct comment in Abinger Harvest that a proper English (and no doubt New English) upbringing leaves people "with well-developed bodies, fairly developed minds, and undeveloped hearts."

Florence had the potential for heartfelt conduct, but her staunchly volitional approach to life has left such potential undeveloped; consequently, she becomes a purely superficial creature whose will keeps her securely on the surface of life, like a water-bug blithely flitting across deep waters: "she seemed to dance over the floors of castles and over seas and over and over the salons of the modistes and over the plages of the Riviera--like a gay tremulous beam" (14). That this skimming over the depths (note the five "overs") makes her a mere effigy of humanity is bluntly shown through Dowell's final recognition "that Florence was a personality of paper, that she represented a real human being with a heart, with feelings, with sympathies, and with emotions only as a bank note represents a certain quantity of gold" (121). Her whole existence was mere "theatrical display" in which she consciously feigned the unconscious and unpremeditated behaviour that she knew would in certain circumstances be considered appropriate. For example, she once threatened (to Leonora) to "cast herself on her knees at [Dowell's] feet, and to declaim a carefully arranged, frightfully emotional outpouring as to her passion" (118). And the final act of her life, after consuming the poison, was to "arrange herself decoratively upon her bed" (119). Her death was a pose, as her life had been mere conscious gesturing.

It is, of course, ironic that Florence feigns a cardiac

problem as a consequence of a coldly dysfunctional heart, but this is also perfectly symptomatic of the reliance on surfaces as felt by those who fear the depths. However, for Edward--who also dies from a figurative, not literal, heart problem--the situation is more complex. Like Florence, he was raised in the context of an austere, tradition-bound family, so that even at age twenty-two he still had a "virgin intelligence" that was "keen on mathematics, on land-surveying, on politics" (137) and that gave him "much the aspect of a prig" (158). But unlike Florence, the depths of Edward's being have not been so immured as to be incapable of influencing his behaviour. Indeed, his mother saw the necessity of getting him married when "the merest reflex action" (137) impelled him to take a second look as an attractive girl passed by. Nonetheless, this reflexive response, which attests to his unconscious yearnings, proves incompatible with the decorous life that, through breeding, he consciously endeavours to lead. As a result, the marriage to Leonora locks him into a situation whereby these yearnings would have to be either thwarted or else gratified at the cost of agonizing remorse. Dowell even speculates that Edward "would have been much less agonized" if he had simply become "a tramp of gentlemanly address, having, maybe, chance love affairs upon the highways" (60).¹⁴

¹⁴ Similarly, Conrad suggests that Singleton's freedom from consciousness is what prevents the Narcissus's mate from being agonized: "He was in perfect accord with his

Leonora's pragmatic Catholicism (which generated "her necessity for reticences [and] coldness of manner [204]) precludes her serving as a means of gratification for Edward's deep-rooted needs, and hence his compassionate (but far from passionate [58]) kissing of the Kilsyte nurse reflects his suddenly felt awareness of an unconscious need for "an ultimately satisfying woman" (51). Only in the witness box at the ensuing trial (when he is forced to reconsider the experience in the train) does he consciously respond to the feeling of the girl's body against his, at which point "the girl appeared desirable to him--and Leonora completely unattractive" (157). The nurse and the "cold, or at any rate, well-behaved" (159) Leonora represent the two irreconcilable poles of his life: the former a figure in contact with whom the depths of his being could be both experienced and expressed, and the latter a figure whose stolidity accords with what his conscious mind believes to be a properly lived life (as judged by socially instituted values). Like Nancy's "shuttlecock," Edward alternates between the two poles, first engaging in unconscious-generated conduct, then undergoing a period of remorse, repentance, and resolution to act as "good people" do. In effect, Edward was caught between a desire to be good in the

life" and if one were to "cultivate in that unconscious man the power to think[,] then he would become conscious,--and much smaller,--and very unhappy" (Letters, Jean-Aubry I.215).

"conscious" sense of dutiful and reticent, and good in the "unconscious" sense of compulsive and self-expressive. The incompatibility between depth of feeling and conventional morality becomes intolerable when his scruples forbidding quasi-incestuous activity conflict with his deeply felt longing for Nancy. This conflict eventually causes him to "break up" (132), and the victory of his scruples (allowing Nancy to leave with seeming indifference to him) leaves him with such an empty existence that he chooses to end it.

Of all the characters in the novel, Dowell is the one who most explicitly typifies consciously groomed conduct. He too is a product of an austere, "good" family--such an exemplary product, in fact, that life for him is a spectator sport. He delights in train rides where phenomena pass by for his disinterested observation (42), and when asked what he does, he points out that he does nothing--he just drifts in line with whatever external forces impinge on him (42). The paragon of decorum, he allows nothing reflexive or impulsive to disrupt the pattern of his life: "I stood upon the carefully swept steps of the Englischer Hof, looking at the carefully arranged trees in tubs upon the carefully arranged gravel whilst carefully arranged people walked past in carefully calculated gaiety, at the carefully calculated hour" (21). Indeed, the featurelessness of his life is neatly implied in his name: John Dowell not only has associations with John Doe (the identity-less Everyman), but

also with a dowel, a featureless cylindrical peg of wood that readily fits into a round hole. (Also, and ironically, his name could be read as "do well," with clear suggestions of the pejorative use to which the word "good" is put throughout the novel.)

Only the stunning deaths of Florence and Edward and the mental derangement of Nancy compel him into a recognition, however fleeting, of the extent to which there are powerful currents of life below the surface. But even in his final state of awareness (i.e., that of the retrospective narrator of the saddest story) he only concedes that inner compulsions are irreconcilable with the demands of civility. After all, these compulsions that he has discovered lead him to speculate that perhaps the lives of all "good people [are] broken, tumultuous, agonized, and unromantic lives, periods punctuated by screams, by imbecilities, by deaths, by agonies" (238). By contrast, he also realizes that, because of such compulsions, civility is necessary for "society must go on; it must breed like rabbits. That is what we are here for" (254). And the only way for society to exist is "if the normal, if the virtuous, and the slightly deceitful flourish, and if the passionate, the headstrong, and the too truthful are condemned to suicide and to madness" (253). His is a despairing world-view, one in which the surfaces of lives, the parts that engage in an intricate social mechanism powered by "conventions and

traditions" (238), must be preserved from the cog-wrecking intrusion of deeper needs and desires, but De will resignedly accept this. At novel's end, his life among the "simulacra" which people the smoking-rooms (7) is once more regulated by routine and restraint, although he has gained sufficient awareness to realize that it is "petering out" without meaning or value -- an awareness best represented by his observation of the grace and prettiness of Nancy, "and to think that it all means nothing, that it is a picture without a meaning" (254).

The very same surface/depth image had been utilized by Ford four years earlier in his much slighter novel, The Portrait, a rather predictable comedy set in eighteenth-century Kent. The central concern is a wager among four gentlemen (including the protagonist Mr. Bettsworth), and the story deals with the often-scurrilous behaviour that some of them engage in to win. The wager entails discovering the model for a highly esteemed painting of a country maiden. The model actually is the well-known Lady Eshetsford who is aware not only of the wager but also of Bettsworth's desire to marry her. Troubled only by his steely composure, she consents to the marriage only if he carries on with his search; she is presented as being unusually perceptive about human nature and presumably feels that the very questing process would be edifying for him. Mr. Bettsworth ultimately does get his bet's worth in the

form of a moral and social education, for during the course of the novel, he is made to see for the first time the dark underside of both his own nature and his country's judicial system.

Initially a man who had been schooled to contain his feelings and to "count forty" before expressing any views, Bettesworth finds himself piqued by such emotions that he impulsively showers kisses on Lady Eshetsford and later assaults his brother. In the former instance, he pointedly neglects to count forty and suddenly finds himself "pulling down [her] mask and cover[ing] her face with burning kisses" (81); in the latter instance he has just been liberated from a lightless cell and has virtually lost his capacity for restraint, for an unreasoning rage "cast him as if from a sling" upon his brother. Finally, feeling himself defeated and humiliated, he retreats into humble isolation at his manor, but Lady Eshetsford discloses to him her identity, makes it possible for him to win the wager, and agrees to marry him. The clear implication is that his search has disclosed to him ungovernable qualities of his psyche that he had previously never acknowledged; this in turn has diminished his haughtiness and has led him to experience more intensely the affection he has for Lady Eshetsford. His removal of her mask while kissing her is paralleled at the novel's end by her voluntary removal of the fan from in front of her face, thus symbolizing subtly the value to

questing below the surface of things.¹⁵

A similar presentation of the surface/interior dichotomy is made during Bettesworth's incarceration (as a result of another bettor's chicanery) in a dark cell along with a dying harlot, an unjustly imprisoned beggar, and a maverick cleric. While there, his belief that the gracious demeanour of gentlemen attests to the thoroughgoing probity of England is shattered, for the cleric tells him:

I tell you that this is England, a Christian land that is like ripe fruit, of a great outward beauty and ruddiness, but all rotten within.... For here, but that the fair seemliness of the surface is neither visible nor in evidence, you have an epitome of all this land. (205)

The implications and especially the ethical ambiguity of this "rotten-fruit-with-outward-beauty" image are far less developed here than in other of Ford's novels, for The Portrait seems to be a hastily composed novel that bears little evidence of the scrupulosity of technique that he so strongly advocated and not infrequently practised. Nonetheless, it does reflect Ford's abiding concern with the dark, disturbing, and often inscrutable nature of that which lurks below the mere appearances which preoccupy the lives of so many Britons.

¹⁵ John Lester, in Journey Through Despair, sees this mask motif as a central feature of the modern novel, for this motif (like "the Romantics' keen vision of an ideal behind the real" [136]) reflects the abiding modern concern with the significant unconsciousness hidden behind conscious awareness.

To Ford, then, a high proportion of significant occurrences (both social and cerebral) take place below the threshold of conscious awareness of the typical Briton. This threshold is one that has been imposed on the mind of the individual by a society whose cornerstone is rules. These rules not only cordon off a certain range of consciousness within an individual but also foster the belief that such circumscription is good and necessary. Ford saw such circumscription as endemic to the Anglo-Saxon culture, one which had persisted as the culture progressed through a sequence of modifications to the rules which informed it. He recognized that the first major challenge to the worth of a highly conscious, rule-abiding society arose with the Romantic poets, and he was aware that the sub-threshold range of consciousness was being accorded great significance by many of the keen minds (both scientific and artistic) of his day. Since he regarded it the role of the novelist to register the human experience as it is, not as narrative convention has shaped it, he generally addresses in his novels the confrontation between conscious thought and unconscious predilection, between the poses required by convention and the unregulatable compulsions generated by the sub-threshold psyche. Only through such a presentation can the reader be encouraged to pursue an expansion of consciousness, and only when this occurs can Britons become more than mere dowels.

CHAPTER THREE

91

FORD MADOX FORD AND "THE MYSTERY THAT COMFORTETH": ROMANCE AS AN ESCAPE FROM POSITIVISM

To Ford Madox Ford's way of thinking, the dawning of the twentieth century was distinguished by a debilitating emphasis at every social level on logic and highly specialized thinking. For him, such a development necessarily resulted from the upsurge in technological developments which virtually demanded that any one mind could address itself only to one field of study; the generalist simply could not be sufficiently knowledgeable to function effectively in any scientific or manufacturing enterprise. A corollary to this, as Ford saw it, was specialized or compartmentalized corporate structures, political systems, and even religious organizations. In The Soul of London, Ford describes "the Modern Spirit [as] great organizations run by men as impersonal as the atoms of our frames, noiseless, and to all appearances infallible" (41).¹ As a result, the individual within any such structure would find it difficult, if not impossible, to get a broad

¹ Ford's definition here is very similar to Matthew Arnold's definition of "the modern spirit" as one driven by "an immense system of institutions, established facts, accredited dogmas, customs, [and] rules" ("Heinrich Heine" 109). Ford openly concurred with Arnold's advocacy of literature as a Hellenizing agent, even to the extent that Ford attributed to the "new novelist" the vatic capacity of fostering a near-apocalyptic transvaluation of his/her culture into one grounded in principles of subjectively intuited goodness and self-realization. (See especially Ford's editorials in the first three issues of the English Review.)

understanding of the purpose or scope of that structure. Being aware of his or her status as a functional component within an institution, the individual would feel impelled to accept such circumscription of awareness as a feature of contemporary life. To remedy such narrowness of vision was, Ford contended, the novelist's mission; as Paul Wiley points out, Ford's slogan, "The impression over the Statistic," gave responsibility to the imaginative artist for "present[ing] a unified vision of the world at large" (43). For Ford, "that particular and very frightening Figure in the Carpet, the moral purpose of the universe," can not be apprehended rationally; it could be discerned, if at all, only by aesthetic means (Henry James 45-6).

Moreover, Ford felt that, throughout the last few decades of the nineteenth century, his culture had grown increasingly reliant on science to offer rational explanations of phenomena whose nature had previously been inexplicable, so that seemingly all phenomena could (and soon would) be described as manifestations of the inviolable laws of Newtonian mechanics, thermodynamics, etc. Accordingly, any mode of thinking not grounded in a logical or empirical basis (such as intuition, divination, faith, extra-sensory perception, superstition, communion with non-empirical beings or forces) was coming to be treated as risible. Ford, however, saw any limiting of cerebral activity as a lessening of the breadth and intensity of

one's life. This does not mean that he shared Yeats' belief in the Sidhe or attended Madame Blavatsky's séances, but he nonetheless felt that the level of consciousness experienced by devotees of Yeats and Blavatsky was more enriching than that generated by skeptical rationalism. Ford, in fact, came to regard the analytical mind as his most potent enemy, that which could restrict the free play of his (and the nation's) consciousness. Ford's frequently espoused view that literature could spearhead the deconstruction of analytical thought and the positivistic world-view is one that Bradbury and McFarlane see as one of the defining and germinal features of the Modernist movement:

The significance of de-creating the given surface of reality; intersecting historical time with time according with the movement and rhythm of the subjective mind, the pursuit of the luminous image, or else of fictional order sustained against consecutive story; the belief in perception as plural, life as multiple, reality as insubstantial; these crucial notions form into a creative compound long before the First World war and are there in the last century. ("Name and Nature of Modernism" 50)

Such "crucial notions" would have formed the basis for much of the late-night discussions on literary theory by Ford and Conrad in the final years of the nineteenth century. Ford directly rebuked analytical minds in much of his non-fiction as well as in novels like The Inheritors, and, somewhat less directly, he dealt with the insipidity of decorously constrained minds in many of his novels that address the English character. However, it is in his

romances that Ford most openly challenged coldly empirical thought, for here he often centered his novels on the influence of mythic or mystical beings or on the ability of mortals to call into play supernatural forces. His intent in creating such non-realistic fiction was not so much to promote belief in fairies as it was to disclose the pallid and spiritually arid lives of merely rational people, thereby promoting a non-rational and non-dogmatic faith in values that were subjectively discerned. In this sense, Ford was clearly working in the tradition of the medieval Romances, those allegorical tales which generally entailed conflict between spiritually valiant mortals and some form of opposing transcendent force. The label "romantic," of course, eventually came to be applied to those writers whose preoccupation with transcendent forces (especially on a secular level) was a distinguishing feature of their works. Hence, writers of Gothic novels, mythopoetry, paeans to Nature, spiritual odysseys, and other such departures from realism or Christian theology have all been termed romantic. And while such a term was, in many people's eyes, pejorative, Ford purposely set out to work in this tradition, even to the extent of subtitling several of his novels, "A Romance."² He objected to what he saw as the

² And yet Ford in 1919 defined the Romance as almost non-literature: "Let us say that amorphous, discursive tales containing digressions, moralisations and lectures are Romances, and that Novels have unity of form, culminations and shapes" (qtd. in Harvey 216). Such flippant

excessive vividness or over-intensity in some romantic writing, although he did concede that writers like Dostoyevsky (who represents "the Romantic movement coming back") "may be a step forward towards a region of other-worldliness--of the other-worldliness that so desperately today we need" (qtd. in Harvey 184).

Perhaps the simplest common feature in romantic works is the assumption that the empirically impossible is possible, that violations of reason are not only valid but highly important means of access into heightened levels of being. Ford similarly strove to lead his readers into an appreciation of extra-logical experience, often by lampooning the new breed of Spencerian cynics, agnostics, and empiricists. The novel in which he most explicitly establishes the supremacy of faith to reason is his 1908 work, Mr. Apollo: A Just Possible Story. The central premise in this novel is that Phoebus Apollo manifests himself in twentieth-century England and affiliates himself with a group of Modern thinkers. His capacity to create "impossible" effects polarized some of this group's members: a few refuse to be impressed by his "stunts," accusing him of charlatanism that could not withstand rational scrutiny, while others abandon their rational, Huxley-influenced

generalizations that are not consistent with previous statements are characteristic of Ford and thus at times have to be disregarded, especially in a case such as this where a significant body of his work opposes this broadly general definition.

approach to life, ultimately believing in the presence of inexplicable forces.³

The pretext for Apollo's visit is to understand (and to judge by divine standards) the state of the nation in the twentieth century; "divine" here can be read as "Fordian," as Apollo often expresses views or makes judgements that clearly are Ford's, and he manipulates events in order to reveal the values that Ford, in his non-fiction of the time, was either endorsing or deploring. Apollo's initial contacts are with the judicial system and with missionary Christianity, both of which depict the limited extent to

³ Although Ford's romances often entail the presence of non-physical beings, his religious orientation defies categorization; at various points in his non-fiction, he has seemingly served as an exponent of Catholicism, deism, humanism, solipsism, determinism, and existentialism. If there were to be one common factor that runs through much of Ford's speculations about non-empirical forces, it would have to entail a belief in some sort of invisible entity, inaccessible to human consciousness, which can meddle with the workings of the empirical world. Such meddling is not done in support of any known (or knowable) moral order, and often reflects only divine sardonicism. For while Ford never went so far as to regard humanity as a victim of malicious forces, he at times did imply that temporal events attested to a divine but droll sense of humour. In The Good Soldier, for example, he suggests that the coincidental occurrence of significant events on August 4th was "one of those sinister, as if half-jocular and altogether merciless proceedings on the part of a cruel providence that we call a coincidence" (77). Elsewhere, he seems to imply that these forces generally are indifferent to the activities within an automatically functioning universe. That is, he seemingly accepts Conrad's view that the universe is a machine which "knits" but could never be manipulated into "embroidering": "it has knitted time, space, pain, death, corruption, despair, and all the illusions, . . . [although] to look at the remorseless process is sometimes amusing" (Letters Jean-Aubry I.316).

which the modern (i.e. pragmatic) mind can approach a clear sense of the nature of existence. His startling incarnation in Anglesey Square results in his arrest, to which he consents only in order to examine English justice. While the judge ironically harbours thoughts that the British judicial system "was as near the Golden Age as we may know in this world" (13), Apollo points out to the judge that the material presented in the court was true only by the standards of "human machinery" (23). To Apollo, a legalistic consideration of facts is an inadequate means of access to truth.⁴ Similarly, his encounter with the aptly named Mr. Todd ("tod" being German for "death") reveals the spiritual bankruptcy of those who profess to be Christians but who only make token adherence to the doctrine in order to achieve selfish or social-utilitarian ends. Indeed, Mr. Todd endorses "muscular Christianity" and deplores "the namby-pamby school" who favour devoutness of worship to social action; Christianity to him is a means of ensuring that "every man will do his duty" (41). He too believes that latter-day England is in a Golden Age because of the reasonable civic order that prevails. However, when Apollo supernaturally leads him into a "foreign" state of mind by asking him the "unreasonable" question--"What were the

⁴ This Apollonian view of the discrepancy between legal proof and true knowledge suggests Socrates's "Dialogue with Theaetetus," where Socrates shows how a jury's response to "facts" is often not the same as true knowledge.

aspirations of all these people?"--Mr. Todd is surprised to hear himself answering candidly, "they fill graveyards" (36).⁵ That is, dutiful or muscular Christianity (as manifested in the value system of Mr. Todd, whose concerns are more social than spiritual) creates people whose concern for social order retards any drive for an expanded or spiritually exalted consciousness. And as Ford discussed in England and the English, the English accept the Bible only because of the reasonable conduct that it promotes, not because of the spiritual uplift it can afford (314-5).⁶

By far the most outspoken exponent of agnostic

⁵ Ford contends that James's travels and his trans-Atlantic culture "have left him with no further message than that--that the soul's immortal but that most people have not got souls--are in the end just the stuff with which to fill graveyards" (James 141). Here, Ford attributes this lack of soul to people's incapacity to discover for themselves principles of honourable conduct.

⁶ Victor Cheng goes so far as to assert that England reveals Ford's dichotomous view of arid Protestantism and supernatural Catholicism: "Ford laments the loss in the Protestant religion of those instinctive, intuitive, non-rational elements that form both the appeal and the authority of the Roman faith, that sense of humble faith in mysterious rituals, prayers, and divinity" (308). Cheng's argument that Ford is a champion of Catholicism is, however, not always supported by other statements in this text, such as in the "Heart of the Country" section where non-liturgical communion with nature is extolled. Ford did commend Catholicism for its greater sense of mystery, and he at times referred to himself as a Catholic, but he can hardly be considered to have regarded orthodox Catholicism as a means of redsewing the priggish British-Protestant consciousness. For example, Cheng's discussion of "the passionate and Catholic intensities of the Leonoras of the world" (308) seems to ignore the numerous references to the frigidity and concern with appearances instilled in Leonora and Nancy through their stern Catholic upbringing.

rationalism is Mr. Clarges, whose mission in life is to expose the gimmickry by which any supposedly supernatural effects are created. He finds himself confronted not only by mediums, mind-readers, and hierophants but also by post-Huxleyean scientists, the ones who regard no knowledge as absolute and who define reality as something nebulous and relative. Such new thinkers could almost be labelled romantic scientists, for they endorse the "open mind" and regard empirical thought as an illusion clung to by those who need to know.⁷ Accordingly, when he finds himself at a discussion evening with a group of such new scientists, Clarges assails them for having "destroyed knowledge [and] substituted the open mind.... You see all the old stuff of the dark ages cropping up again. They've begun with destroying knowledge; they're going on to recreate mysteries and ghosts. It's all coming over again. Priestcraft!" (106). For him, "knowledge" is limited only to that which is empirically demonstrable, and any other forms of knowing are both wrong and retrogressive. He regards the new scientists' proof of "psychic phenomena and ghosts" as a symptom of a move toward "temples and incense and mummary,"

⁷ Ford here seems almost to be paraphrasing Pater's "Coleridge": "Modern thought is distinguished from ancient by its cultivation of the 'relative' spirit in place of the 'absolute.' Ancient philosophy sought to arrest every object in an eternal outline, to fix thought in a necessary formula, and the varieties of life in a classification by 'kinds,' or genera. To the modern spirit nothing is, or can be rightly known, except relatively and under conditions" (Appreciations 65).

and since Apollo appears as some new champion of Delphic science, Clarges apprehensively views him as "a symbol of a power that lurks in darkness" (111).

In his writings, Ford seldom directly discussed the extent to which he was familiar with current developments in science, especially atomic physics, but he no doubt was aware of the "romanticizing" of science begun near the turn of the century.⁸ The Newtonian and Euclidean descriptions of the empirical world were not, of course, disproved, but they were seen to be an inaccurate means of describing the essential nature of the universe; scientists were discovering that matter, energy, and time were so inextricably interrelated that "solidity" and "temporality" were seen to be just the conditions that earth-dwellers had accustomed themselves to. In the place of Newtonian mechanics and Spencerian mechanism, properties such as

⁸ For example, Max Planck's quantum theory, which proved to be the death knell for Newtonian mechanics, was published in the last month of the nineteenth century. In 1905, Einstein published the first version of his special theory of relativity, and three years later, Hermann Minkowski first proposed a four-dimensional space-time geometry. The implications of such movement to a superseding of Newtonian postulates certainly would have surfaced in the discussions during Ford's and Conrad's six-year period as neighbours and literary collaborators. Conrad was especially intrigued by the unknown and seemingly unknowable nature of the physical universe, as is best shown in his well-known letter to Edward Garnett in 1897, written a few months before his close friendship with Ford. Here Conrad discusses how X-rays suggest that the universe and human consciousness are both driven by an arbitrary pattern of waves, so that an infinitude of universes could exist simultaneously (see Letters to Garnett 143).

indeterminacy, randomness, and arbitrariness were being used to define the nature of the universe. Einstein himself contended that "the most beautiful and most profound emotion that we can experience is the sensation of the mystical"⁹ (qtd in Barnett 116), and later Niels Bohr would maintain that the primary criterion of post-Newtonian thought must be a tolerance of ambiguity. Atomic physics, in effect, was legitimizing the Romantic world-view for, as Northrop Frye points out, to the Romantics "the sublime emphasized a sense of mystery and vagueness, not of order or purpose, ... addressing the individual or solitary man rather than the community" (A Study 28). It is just such a romantic celebration of mystery that informs many of Ford's novels; there can be no valid basis for dismissing the planes of thought (to use Ford's term) by which non-empirical input is cerebrally processed.¹⁰

⁹ Einstein continues: "He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead. To know that what is impenetrable to us really exists, manifesting itself as the highest wisdom and the most radiant beauty which our dull faculties can comprehend only in their most primitive forms--this knowledge, this feeling is at the centre of true religiousness."

¹⁰ Maria Kronegger points out how the scientists' commitment to a relativistic, atemporal universe parallels and perhaps contributes to the growing commitment to impressionistic prose with its breakdown of regular chronology and spatial solidity (27). Mas'ud Zavarzadeh claims that even such axioms as "2+2=4" and "black is not white" began to disintegrate in the presence of post-Euclidean mathematical postulates and paradoxical light-emission theories, so that "the controlling metaphor of culture changed from 'order' to 'entropy'" (15). And W.Y.

Although the premise that there is not a singular, knowable universe could be the basis for despair, Ford posits faith as a necessary and valid means of endowing life with value and meaning; such, in fact, is the lesson learned by the two mortal protagonists of Mr. Apollo: Alfred and Frances Milne. These two undergo an ontological crisis throughout the novel, eventually being weaned away from Clarges' empiricism, accepting in its place a heartfelt faith in some form of divine force.¹¹ As a young man, Alfred had "accepted the fact that Darwin and Huxley and the free-thinkers of the last century had blown the Deity to rags" (80), but he follows his wife in beginning to doubt the determinist view that the human individual is simply a sentient, reasoning being that ceases totally to exist upon death. Even prior to Apollo's arrival, Alfred had been growing despondent because of his sense that a rational life in a purely mechanistic universe carried with it little value: "What was wanted was something that would restore to

Tindall describes how, in "confirm[ing] the old romantic distaste for mechanism and matter, ... the new physics, unlike the old, could not deny the religious possibilities of which [the modern romantics] dreamed" (151).

¹¹ In a Tribune article written shortly before Mr. Apollo was published, Ford concurred with Father Hugh Benson that "the battle of today is no longer between Catholicism and the Protestants, but between the forces of belief and the forces of unbelief." He further commends "modernist" novel-writers who could meld technical rigor with religious faith (qtd in Harvey 156). Two years earlier, Ford's friend C.F.G. Masterman had written that "faith in the invisible seems dying, and faith in the visible is proving inadequate to the hunger of the Soul" (In Peril of Change xii-xiii).

him a faith in himself," for logic alone could not function as a godhead (167). (In a poem published in 1904, Ford presents the dialogue of a couple, in which the woman laments that "a crabbed, ancient, dried biologist," who reduces consciousness to mere neural tissue, is responsible for "this dead-dawning century that lacks all faith,/ All hope, all aim, and the mystery/ That comforteth" [Collected Poems 113].)

For Alfred, then, Apollo confirms the greater truth of a life centred upon faith rather than reason.¹² Apollo does not seek reverence, nor is he seeking to revive an Olympian religion; rather, he discovers the necessity to kindle in these desperate Britons belief in any god or principle outside the limits of reason. In effect, any form of worship is necessarily right, for no one god is the absolutely right one:

You [Clergymen] have denied, that is to say, the existence of the Gods of other men. For other men have found attuned to them Gods with six arms, Gods with the semblance of cats, Gods that revelled in the smell of blood, or Gods born of women. These Gods--and one God in especial that was the Lord God of the people of Israel--you and your friends have unceasingly fought against, and so unceasingly have you fought that you

¹² Meyer Abrams defines Romanticism as "a revolt not against orderly creation, but against compulsion, against conditioning, against all unnecessary limitation that presents itself as being necessary." Hence, a feature of such writing (one that is very evident in Mr. Apollo) is "Druidism" or "apocalyptic demonstrations that the garments of ideology or of supposed thought that we wear must be thrown aside if we are to explore our human imaginative heights and depths" (Ringers 324).

have taken no time to consider what it is that is attuned to you.... But the universe is very great--being infinite--and in it there is room for a multitude of Gods--even for an infinite number. (194)

Apollo argues that the worship of a godhead is subjective, and is evident even in the non-doctrinaire values adopted by iconoclasts such as Clarges; the very fact that Clarges conducted himself as a "good man" attests to the "divine principle that inspired him," for "if you've any ideal you have a God" (195-6).¹³ In other words, Clarges' scrupulous behaviour shows that he had divined the a priori principles of conscionable conduct that Ford felt inhered in human nature. That Clarges refused to regard the existence of these principles as an indicator of a valuably non-logical condition of consciousness is, for Apollo, the cause of his unhappiness with life.

Ford's intimation here that Clarges was being (or, at least, should be) superseded by the "open-minded" seekers of "attunement" suggests the re-emergence of what Frye terms an open mythology--"a structure of imagination out of which beliefs come, rather than directly one of compulsory belief... [thus making] new types of belief possible" (A Study 16). Indeed, Frye sees the "polytheistic imagination"

¹³ Curiously, Charles Hoffman writes that "Apollo asserts that he himself is the Godhead, the one God" and that Ford was presenting "a monotheistic concept of God" (47, 48), even though Hoffman himself cites one of the numerous references in the novel to the importance of worshipping gods.

concomitant to the Romantic mythology being reaffirmed by late-nineteenth century studies of the unconscious:

When our attention is focused on ourselves and our existential relation to nature, as distinct from the attention of science which is turned toward natural law and the attention of theology which is turned toward an intelligent personal God, we become immediately conscious of a plurality of conflicting powers. (17)

The conflicts generated within minds whose unconscious is imperfectly repressed is a common feature of Ford's works, and the polytheism endorsed by Apollo therefore amounts to an advocacy of subjective values which the individual must intuit.

For Frye, the Romantic cosmology is a secularization of the Christian Fall-Redemption cycle; according to this vision, mankind "fell" from a perfect fusion with organic nature into an alienated state of constricted consciousness (and self-consciousness);¹⁴ Romantic redemption entails re-integration into a pre-existent state by means of some form of gnosis, "an overwhelming of the reason with mysteries that only faith, thought of as an intuitive or non-analytic mode of consciousness, can reach" (20). The best-known reference to a pre-existent state of total identity (from

¹⁴ Spender similarly describes the "Second Fall of Man" (i.e., the post-Edenic fall) as one resulting from "the introduction of scientific utilitarian values and modes of thinking into the world of personal choice between good and evil, with the result that values cease to be personal and become identified with the usefulness or destructiveness of social systems and material things" (26).

which we come "trailing clouds of glory") is Wordsworth's "Intimations of Immortality" ode. A similar treatment of this matter occurs in Ford's version of the "prelapsarian" state of consciousness--a short story titled "The Other."¹⁵ In this story, an infant, Christina, engages in conversation with the precreate soul, called the Other, which inhabits or even is "the World Before." The infant, however, is losing contact with the Other who implores her to return in order to avoid the pain and limited awareness of organic life. The phenomenal world becomes progressively engrossing for Christina (paralleled by a simultaneous forgetting of the qualities of pre-existence), and the story ends when Christina speaks her first word. At this point, the Other leaves, for she (interestingly, a female force) "knew that never again would Christina have speech with her & never again know her presence." That is, the infant's first step into the discursive structure on which reason is based terminates her capacity to hear and communicate with the vast extra-rational force or condition of which she had been a part (and which still exists outside her conscious awareness). Ford does not paint as sombre an image as Wordsworth does about the "Shades of the prison-house" that begin to screen out pre-conceptual knowledge, but he does

¹⁵ This story was first published in The Presence of Ford Madox Ford (143-144), edited by Sondra Stang. She estimates that it was written in 1898. In The March of Literature, Ford describes the "Intimations Ode" as one of the most beautiful works by Wordsworth (701).

imply that such knowledge is affiliated with atemporal bliss.

In Mr. Apollo, the god's reappearance is intended to promote the redemption of fallen England, not through reason but through faith or imagination. His mission (like that of the vatic Romantic poet) is to engender gnostic expansion of consciousness; his foe is agnostic rationalism. Because of the incapacity of most Britons to extend their minds beyond empirical thought, Apollo agrees to help popularize the feats of a stage mystic, one who seemingly can project his thoughts into the minds of others. Clarges, of course, is delighted to have discovered the "trick" by which this feat is achieved (and he is terribly chagrined to learn that his explanation is wrong), whereas Apollo admires this feat primarily because it is inexplicable. To explain away the mystery of either thought-projection or the operation of the sun would be to destroy the very beauty and spiritual uplift that inheres in mystery. To Apollo, the stage mystic "exercised a power more nearly divine" (290) than that of people who pursue doctrinaire approaches to morality and social responsibility. After all, the things of this world, including its systems of government, are of less value to Apollo than the powers called into play by the conjurer.¹⁶

¹⁶. Apollo even contends that the writer of romances is of greater significance as a conjurer than the writer of serious or didactic literature. If "right doctrine" and "truth" are just arbitrary human constructs, and if good (i.e., godlike) conduct is achieved by faith or an extension

Or, as one of Apollo's new admirers puts it, "we do need something to take us out of ourselves" (254), to transcend the limits that Spencerians sought to have imposed on the mind. Ford, then, seems to be carrying on with the practice that Frye attributes to the German Romantics; with the "fading" of the Christian Creator, "the Greek gods leap into an almost obsessive vitality, not as gods, but as images of a human wholeness and spontaneity which has been destroyed by self-consciousness" (100). Apollo finds especially apt the description by one of the new scientists of the changes through time of Catholic beliefs (such as papal infallibility): like a rose with an infinitude of petals within its bud, church doctrine appears and is discarded as the bud opens. There is no end to the exfoliation of petals, nor is there any final truth to be disclosed about the nature of worship.

Thus, by the end of the novel, the ingenuous Mrs. Todd is shown as having the powers of consciousness that others lacked; she "had in recompense [for her lack of cleverness] an intuitive power of reading the moods of those she loved" (265-6). And when Alfred accepts Apollo's claim that empirical reality is not really a "permanent thing," he undergoes a breakdown, lapsing into a dream-like state in which all he can say is "I believe! I believe!" (305).

of consciousness, then romance is a highly worthwhile form of art.

Frances and he are to be the priests of Apollo, not because Apollo demands or even cares about their reverence, but because "it is by the worshipping of Gods that men attain to happiness" (309). Appropriately, the poem which captivates Mr. Todd's daughter and her fiance is "Ode on a Grecian Urn," in which Keats apostrophizes the Beauty that can "tease us out of thought" into an apprehension of non-rational Truth.

The physical presence of Olympian deities on English soil also serves as the catalyzing agent for the action in The Young Lovell,¹⁷ although the gods in this romance are far less personal than in Mr. Apollo. Set in 1485 on the Eastern Marshes just below the Scottish border, the novel relates how a variety of supernatural beings, most significantly a White Lady, influence the outcome of an intra-family power struggle over land titles, money, and brides. The novel opens with Lovell ending a night of prayer and meditation by struggling against a host of tempting spirits, including Helen of Troy, the Witch of Endor, and various other infernal spirits. The clearly satanic forces Lovell can resist, but then he finds himself confronted with "the old, ancient gods of a time unknown-- the gods to whom the baal fires were lit.... Angels, some said they were, not fallen, but indifferent" (4). Then

¹⁷ In a letter, Ford calls this novel "a Romance of the Borders" claiming that it is "rather like 'The Fifth Queen,' but, in a sense, more romantic" (Letters 56).

Lovell meets the local witch who foretells his fate, a prediction that proves accurate in every detail. Immediately after hearing her prophecy, he pursues a chimerical cloud of light into the moors and then leaves "that very real world" and lapses into a ninety-day trance (during which time all the witch's prophecies are fulfilled). The trance actually is a protracted period of wordless communion with a captivating fairy or goddess, although while in this condition Lovell loses all sense of temporality. (The description of the total dearth of time in Lovell's reverie reads like a paraphrasing of Henri Bergson's description of the achronological duration that distinguishes non-conscious thought; to Caroline Gordon, Lovell's timeless rapture is exactly like that of Tannhäuser [15].)¹⁸

Lovell eventually surfaces from what appeared to be a "deep dream," but he is forever dissatisfied with the temporal world which seems so trifling and pallid in

¹⁸ In a pastoral-romance verse drama The Face of the Night (1904), Ford presents a legend from Gnosso about a young soldier who becomes enraptured by a vision which he perceives in the stars, as though it were the figure in the universe's carpet; this vision leads him to "have thought the utter thought," and he consequently disengages himself from temporal life. His commitment to abandon his previous lifestyle and to venture out in quest of "the face of faces" in some nebulous nether-world results in his being stoned to death by the others who accuse him of blasphemy. This spiritual quest for a liaison with a profounder soul or anima is reminiscent of Shelley's "Epipsychidion" and fits the description of the "gnostic romance" that Abrams defines as a central quality of the Romantic tradition (Ringers 3).

comparison with that which he has experienced. He confesses to a monk that "ever since [he] saw that lady's face this world has seemed as a mirror and an unreality to [him]" (133) and the monk tries to save Lovell's Christian soul by preventing any further lapses into trance. The entrancement of Lovell is not merely an hallucination, however, for several other characters encounter this White Lady, although they see her only briefly while she follows after Lovell. There are, as well, various other supernatural beings who manifest themselves in the novel, beings both divine (such as Saint Katherine [180]) and secular. The White Lady, a veritable Belle Dame Sans Merci, proves to be the most beguiling of such beings, and although she appears to many people, they all perceive her as having different facial qualities and they attribute to her membership in different spiritual orders. To the monk Francis, for example, she is one of the fairies or "little people" who abound in the world, whereas for the Bishop Palatine she is a fugitive spirit from Byzantium who relocated her mythological domain (including its denizens) in Almain.

In counselling Francis about the right response to such a being, the Bishop cites Lucretius (and, almost verbatim, Mr. Apollo): "The universe is very large and in it there is room for a multitude of gods" (239). Contrary to Apollo, however, he believes that only one of these gods is the right one, so that this White Lady has to be a false

god, one who engages each individual on a level of thought peculiar to that individual. He readily accepts the existence of the multitude of non-corporeal beings, even those of non-Heavenly origin, and thus his approach to spiritual life is that the Jehovah-related beings are right and all others are wrong. However, the Bishop is a nervous, Satan-obsessed man who speaks in "a pitiful babble" (235) when discussing the White Lady, and thus he seems to be more of a frightened Christian jingoist than a convincing spokesman for Christian devotion. As in Mr. Apollo, Ford suggests that non-empirical experiences are accessible to the human mind and that there are as many modes of such experiences as there are human minds.

The novel closes with Lovell engaged in a form of mythological astral travel; his body is immured in a hermitage (established, ironically, by the Church for ascetic anchorites who want to expiate their sins), whereas his consciousness has shifted into the marble temple and asphodel meadows that belong to "the mistress of the world" (306). This domain (very similar to that pictured in the Bishop's book on Greek mythology [232]) is freed from temporality and allows for the imaginative experiencing of life at the level of myth. Rationally, Lovell is aware that committing himself to such a lady "would be accounted a felony of the deepest magic kind in any ecclesiastical court" (67), but he is incapable of resisting the allure of

living mythically, even though he realizes that such experience entails rejection of empirical reality and Christian salvation. Ford, however, is not implying this rejection is commendable, but only that it is possible. To him, there are innumerable conditions of consciousness to which the individual can gain access, and while permanent immersion in non-temporal consciousness is not healthy, one should not categorically restrict one's imagination to mundane preoccupations.¹⁹

In his other romances where gods and fairies do not enter the plots, some form of supernatural force does surface. For example, in The "Half Moon" (A Romance of the Old World and the New), Edward Colman also is apprised of his fate by a witch-like fortune teller. She warns Colman that, because of Anne Jeal's unrequited love for him, "Anne Jeal may pray a man to death; there are Saracen prayers; Anne Jeal may sweat before a fire the waxen dummy of a man" (75). Such sorcery is what Jeal does practise, but the "modern" Colman refuses to grant credence to supernatural powers, and thus takes no steps to avert their influence. While in the New World, he is told by a close friend of the "solidified mist" and other such spirits that are visible

¹⁹ To Sam Hynes, "Ford's conception of the relation of man to his circumstances was a romancer's conception: circumstances may torment, but because they change they do not ultimately matter, and man can, by an effort of will, transcend them. Reality is ultimately subjective, life is mirage and Romance and subject to change as the mind changes" (76).

but unvanquishable and that could be marshalled to work against a person. Again, Colman scoffs at the idea. However, when Anne Jeal finally resigns herself to the fact that Colman would never love her (learned by trans-Atlantic divination) she implements her voodoo powers to cause his death. The story's primary focus is on the qualities of Colman, especially his "modernity" and the steadfastness of his love for Magdalena, but Ford again illustrates his premise that non-empirical forces are accessible to the human mind--even though there is little evidence that Ford actually believed in voodoo mysticism. Figures such as Anne Jeal would be typical elements of what Northrop Frye calls popular Romanticism; he concedes that such women often are "absurd creatures, drizzling like a Scotch mist and fainting at every crisis in the plot, but ... their sensibility puts them closer to superior forms of consciousness and perception" (A Study 29). To him, ghosts and other occult images are tokens of "the kind of vision that a highly developed imagination might attain of a world of awakened human powers," a world of full reality to which we are blinded by consciousness (116-7).

This romantic notion of escape from consciousness into a richer and more pleasureable level of reality is most evident through the experiences of Ford's characters who are dreaming or febrile or comatose. As has been mentioned, the feverish Alfred Milne finds himself exalted to a supra-

empirical level where he joyously rants, "I believe," and the astral-travelling Lovell escapes into a timeless mythic world, but Ford's most extensive treatment of this transcendence theme occurs in his 1910 novel, Ladies Whose Bright Eyes.²⁰ The novel's story-line involves a modern businessman-publisher, William Sorrell (knighted "for selling bum cyclopedias" [345]) who is knocked unconscious in a train accident and "awakes" in the year 1326.²¹ Through his experiences there, he grows to realize that the civilization of the twentieth century is distinguished by "atrophied knowledge, atrophied faith, atrophied courage" (345), for virtually no-one could exist autonomously (because of specialized labour) and no-one has any commitment to principles or beliefs. The simplicity and integrity and unsullied natural world of the fourteenth century are presented as better bases for life--ones that would be equally good in the twentieth century. At novel's end, it turns out that the three hundred pages of medieval vision were generated in his mind by a telepathic nurse, and when Sorrell regains consciousness, he and she retire into

²⁰ This novel was republished in 1935 in order to update its twentieth century components (through references to such technological advances as trans-Atlantic air travel). Its title comes from Milton's "L'Allegro," in which the narrator appeals to the Grace Euphrosyne to bring mirth and delight; part of the appeal (lines 115-124) is for dreams of chivalric pageantry with "stores of ladies, whose bright eyes/ Rain influence, and judge the prize."

²¹ Or 1327--Ford uses both dates throughout the novel.

the country to live simple lives animated by faith.

For all its flaws (the novel is often very prolix, as Ford parades his knowledge of medieval garb, cuisine, housing, manners, jousting, etc), Ladies in many ways typifies what Frye termed the romantic comedy, as popularized by Shakespeare:

[It] begins with a world presented as a world of ordinary experience ... with repressive characteristics usually attached to it. This world collides with another world associated with sleep, dream, magic, fairies, sexual desire, and a more direct contact with a physical nature unspoiled by human perversity. I call the latter world in Shakespeare ... the "green world," a phrase occurring in both Prometheus Unbound and Endymion.... The victory of the green world in the comic action indicates that desire and love are not merely impotent expressions of a "pleasure principle" feebly struggling against reality, ... but mighty powers capable of subduing reality to themselves. (A Study 98)

Frye further contends that "the green world" of such romances is "a Dionysian world, a world of energy and exuberance" (99). From this view, it becomes very appropriate that Sorrell's marriage with this Dionysian world is effected by his marriage with the rustic nurse, Dionissia. In Sorrell's dream, she does represent the pleasure principle, arguing that "pleasantness is ... the whole of life" and being unaware of the meanings of the words duty, ambition, and responsibility (252). As the corporeal nurse, Dionissia is Dionysian not just in the sense of a sensualist, but in the sense of someone who is "full-blooded" and who can move resolutely into the future

because of a profound sense of self. She has, in a word, "faith," and while Ford does not specify what this faith entails, he does indicate that it derives "from hard, unatrophied things and minds" (350)--presumably implying that she and the reborn Sorrell are in touch with some founding principles of human-ness.

That the dream worlds of Sorrell, Lovell, and Milne represent movements toward a more valid truth and reality is in itself highly typical of romantic thought; Barzun contends that the Romantics dealt so extensively in dreams because of "a desire to capture the most fleeting of human experiences and turn them to the uses of deeper understanding" (67). In such works, the process of self-understanding is often presented as the crossing of a threshold leading beyond mundane consciousness. This indeed is what Frye sees as a strong formal link between the romance and the work of the Romantics: in the romance of the Middle Ages, "the knight turns away from society and rides off into a forest or other 'threshold symbol' of a dream world. In Romanticism, this form revives, [but] the poet himself is the hero of the quest" (A Study 37). The premise that the dreamer beyond the threshold may be "right" and the conscious person deluded would have come to Ford, at least in part, from his familiarity with the works of the seventeenth century writer, Don Pedro Calderón de la Barca. In The March of Literature, Ford devotes four pages to the

Spaniard and his "philosophico-religious dramas," including a thorough plot summary of La Vida es Sueño (Life is a Dream).²² Ford's "The Other," written at about the time that he and Conrad were beginning their collaboration, is a simpler but perhaps more direct treatment of the view that mortal experience is a form of passing illusion. And while Sorrell is in his dream, he similarly recognizes that his corporeal life has made him and others into "phantoms" whose lives, as they were currently being lived, were valueless; when he returns to consciousness, he sees the tenuity of this life and realizes that "this was the dream" (341). Certainly, the significance attached to dreaming in many of Ford's romances (i.e., that dreams provide the expansion of consciousness from which some form of faith or intenser human-ness can be derived) links him with the romantic view that one must remove oneself beyond the threshold.

Literature which is both escapist and psychologically probing is reflected more overtly in the type of romantic

²² Ford also describes how influential Calderón was on the British and German Romantics, yet he curiously omits reference to the one person best known to him who also was indebted to Calderón--Conrad. The epigraph to An Outcast of the Islands is from La Vida es Sueño ("For the greatest crime of man is that he ever was born"--a line also cited by Schopenhauer in The World as Will and Idea), and, as Camille La Bossière has argued, the Calderón analogues in Conrad's fiction and letters are extensive. Indeed, the comment by Stein in Lord Jim (written when Conrad was collaborating with Ford on Romance) that "a man that is born falls into a dream like a man who falls into the sea" (214) closely suggests the Calderón view that empirical, rational life is the illusion and that dreams provide a fleeting immersion in pre-existent "reality."

fiction which Ford wrote in collaboration with Conrad and that, to lesser extents, surfaced in the novels he subsequently wrote on his own. For a good portion of Conrad's Romanticism, David Thorburn discusses Conrad's sophisticated use of the adventure story, whose essential premises "originate in the defining pieties of the Romantic movement" (102). He cites Geoffrey Hartman's claim that the Bildungsroman, entailing a journey through peril to self-discovery, was first exploited artistically by the Romantics; for Thorburn, Conrad reinvigorated this genre, returning to its "high seriousness" that had been lost with mere adventure-tale writers such as Marryat, Stevenson, and Kipling. Thus, when Ford in 1899 showed Conrad his pirate story manuscript (Seraphina, later published as Romance), Conrad readily agreed to collaborate on its rewriting. The novel itself is an imperfect embodiment of the stylistic precepts that Ford and Conrad were at the time fixing for the "new novel," but it does reflect Ford's commitment to use the adventure story as a means of exploring the human psyche.

Stevenson had claimed that the elements of adventure "have on them the dew of man's morning; they lie near, not so much to us, the semi-artificial flowerets, as to the trunk and aboriginal taproot of the race" (qtd. in Thorburn 54). To a greater extent than Stevenson, however, Conrad and Ford saw the primality of adventure as being revelatory

of fundamental human nature, so that "the interior voyage of discovery . . . , as in the Romantic poets, parallels these outer journeys" (104). Thorburn further sees the common Conradian narrator (an older man recounting his or someone else's youthful experiences) as being in the tradition of what Abrams identified as the

greater Romantic lyric, a poetic form whose defining features are the play of memory across time and the juxtaposing of an older poet with his younger self. The central poems of the English romantics and many Conrad works focus especially on the extraordinary distance between narrator and actor, between the active, unreflective young voyager in his glad animal vitality and his older self, wiser perhaps, but also passive, somehow diminished. (103-4)

What Thorburn does not address as thoroughly is the nature of the "discovery"--the awareness or knowledge attained by the young venturer and divulged by the old narrator. As discussed in Chapter Two, the upshot of the modern romantic quest most often is uncertainty, a discovery that the surface-depth duality of the mind is forever irreconcilable and that illusions are needed to hide the lack of final answers. In this sense, many of Ford's novels can be considered adventure romances, except that the adventures are less overtly grounded in derring-do, Ford opting instead to use characters who, venturing into the terrors of self-reliance, quietly battle social conventions. Accordingly, The Good Soldier can be seen as a "greater Romantic lyric," for it is narrated by the older, "wiser"

Dowell who, having matured into an awareness of ethical ambivalence and thus "diminished" quietism, recounts his journey into awareness.

The attraction of adventure literature for Ford also derives from his interest in the Troubadour literature of medieval Provence, a literature in which Ford had read widely (largely because of the enthusiasm for it held by his father, who wrote the libretto for the music to the opera, "The Troubadour"). His text, Provence, is a paean to that region's culture and climate, and he implies that thirteenth century Provence was a period whose cultural values were such that human potential could be more fully realized than they could in the "Faithless" twentieth century. Although he elsewhere acknowledges the sordidness of the Middle Ages,²³ he does aver that the knights' courage and their whole-hearted pursuit of love (the basic material of the earliest Romances) attests to an intenser mode of life. Ladies Whose Bright Eyes presents a generally flattering portrait of knights whose frank and vigorous deportment

²³ For example, "medieval history was a long series of matters decided by blows" (England and the English 280). He also deplored "the sadly medieval eccentricities" ("Future in London" 1104) that were being popularized by the Morris crowd, who "never looked medievalism, with its cruelties, its filth, its stenches, and its avarice, in the face" (Memories 18). In Ladies Whose Bright Eyes, Ford pointedly refers to the garbage and sanitation problems, as well as the self-interest, that did exist in medieval England along with the knightly virtues. Violet Hunt remembers Ford commenting that "in the days when knights were bold," avarice was even more evident than currently (92).

contrasts sharply with twentieth century flaccidity. And in several of his novels, he works in references to the Troubadours' romances and other like stories of passion and gallantry.²⁴

One other closely related sub-genre of the literary romance tradition which surfaces in Ford's works is that of the pastoral romance in which bucolic bliss is presented as an escape from consciousness, especially the contemporary consciousness dominated by institutionalized thought.²⁵

²⁴ In The Good Soldier, for instance, Dowell refers to Ashburnham as the Cid, Lohengrin, and Le Chevalier Bayard (226), and he recounts the Provençal tale of the wealthy man who virtually offers his wife to a glamorous Troubadour (very suggestive of the Dowell-Ashburnham relationship). Even Ashburnham's citing of Swinburne ("Thou hast conquered, O pale Galilean" [251], from "Hymn to Proserpine") is redolent of gallantry: the speaker of the poem, a pagan Roman emperor fatally wounded by a Christian, expresses his devotion to the lushness and beauty of the love represented by Venus, as opposed to the pale, barren love that Swinburne attributes to Mary and Christianity. Thus, the full line of Swinburne's poem ("Thou hast conquered, O pale Galilean; the world has grown grey from thy breath" [line 35]) not only summarizes Edward's acceptance of defeat by his wife, but also suggests his romantic world-view that is incompatible with a more arid, institutionalized world.

²⁵ Although in 1911 Ford satirized the back-to-the-land movement in The Simple Life Limited, he was always enamoured of rustic life and of the lifestyles that through the centuries had almost become an organic part of a rural region. And while he disliked some aspects of the art of the later Pre-Raphaelite crowd, he enthusiastically embraced their ideal of the medieval "Small Producer," and he spent much of his mature life before World War I living in cottages in the south of England. Like the Lake poets of a century earlier, he saw nature as a means of access to some form of spiritual betterment, and (like their scheme for a Pantisocratic commune) he spent a year of tutelage on an Anarchist/Fabian commune with the Garnetts and Stepniaks and Kropotkins and David Soskice--Ford wearing smock and gaiters and informing the Russians about English agricultural lore.

With the possible exception of Ladies Whose Bright Eyes, Ford never wrote any genuinely rustic novels (in the sense of being novelistic counterparts to "Michael" or the Simon Lee poems), but he did write a long impressionistic tribute to rural wholesomeness and beauty and simplicity, The Heart of the Country. The style is somewhat fulsome and lacks the limpidness that Ford so admired in Hudson's nature-prose,²⁶ but Ford makes clear his belief that a non-institutionalized life allows one an expansion of consciousness. The basic premise of the text is that each person has his own Heart of the Country, meaning that the individual in direct contact with nature establishes closer contact with himself. Ford offers an extensive and very Wordsworthian commentary on the capacity of nature to give man a more "teeming life" (22) because of the depths of the soul that it can touch; for example, he contends that the townsman who ventures into the country goes through "a sort of purification":

He will have lost his Identity [and] will take to himself a new form, a new power of influence for good or evil, a new knowledge He will grow wise.... If the high roads [of abstract thought] might lead us to some palace of human truth, somewhere along the

²⁶ For example, "At that blessed moment [when a city-dweller decides to visit the country] he loses touch with the world, casts off his identity, heaves a sigh as if a great weight had fallen from his shoulders, or even moves his limbs purposelessly in order to realise to the fullest how a free man feels. He has shaken off his identity [and] cannot be recalled to earth." And once in the country, "on his face he feels a sudden coolness, his foot falls more lightly, he draws a deeper breath. It is because he is breathing the breath of a free wind" (9, 11).

footpaths [of Nature] we might find Nirvana and the
Herb Oblivion. (69, 74)

Through such loss of self-consciousness, the countryman "begins to make acquaintance with mysteries of the earth, ... to frame his own reading of the green kingdom" (99); Ford subsequently devotes two chapters to a discussion of simple rural folk he has got to know, focusing on their attunement and their "masterfulness" in life. In his concluding chapter, he asserts that, given the ephemerality and inconsequence of the individual human existence, a country life allows one to "fuse into the tide of humanity," a process that is not mere dissolution but expansion (217).

Such views are fundamentally romantic, and they accord closely with Frye's notion of redemption into unity with nature from which we "fell" upon being born into subjective consciousness. Indeed, Ford's reference to new knowledge and new form through loss of identity reads like a paraphrase of Frye's description of nature in the romantic perspective: "Nature is a better teacher than books, and one finds one's lost identity with nature in moments of feeling in which one is penetrated by the sense of nature's 'huge and mighty forms'" (Study 19). Ford, to be sure, was less earnest than his Romantic forebears in identifying "nature-gnosis" with literary creation, and he even balks somewhat at the idea of total reintegration with nature. In fact, his discussion of the Heart of the Country at times resembles Heart of

Darkness, for he acknowledges that a person, in an "attempt to track down that master-thought of his existence," may get "swallowed up" (33) by the Heart of the Country and may become lost to normal human interaction. He cautions that total loss of self-consciousness could occur if the country wins the "struggle" with the mind--just as Kurtz lost himself to the darkness after being swallowed by the Congo jungle. Ford's attitude toward identification or attunement with some vast amoral flux of nature seems indeed to be that of Marlow, who peeped over "the edge" but then withdrew, returning to the "sepulchral city" where people stave off darkness by devising faith in "great and saving illusions" (Darkness 120, 129). Ford's ambiguous attitude toward loss of self-consciousness positions him between what Frye describes as two poles of romanticism: the Rousseauistic romantic who regards the city as "a kind of cancerous growth destroying the relation of man and nature" (19); and the conservative romantic who regards civilization as the necessary basis for some form of faith or transcendence (such as Carlyle's "organic filaments") that supersedes "sterile enlightenment" (27). Most often, Ford's description of himself as a Tory nostalgic for chivalric ideals and eighteenth-century gentility would put him in the conservative camp, but at times his antipathy toward technology and civic artificiality leads him to propound what Frye sees as the Rousseau doctrine.

Despite the varying degree of nature-reverence in Ford, his overall attitude toward the empirical world remained firmly romantic. He accepted unquestioningly the existence and importance of "other-worldliness," and accordingly he endorsed whatever modes of thought were necessary to divine the nature of what lay beyond empirical reality. A Catholic in name only, Ford nonetheless extolled the value of faith, which he saw as the commitment to values that were divined by the individual, not prescribed for him. Hence, his polytheism was really a form of romantic solipsism, such that each person would, through an expansion of consciousness, gain contact with a subjective god. His novels do not offer thorough studies of all the ontological implications of such beliefs, but the great number of ghosts, mystics, mythic gods, and supernatural occurrences in his novels, most obviously in his romances, reflect his commitment to counteract the increasingly rational, pragmatic thought in the twentieth century. Accordingly, by establishing such an emphasis for his prose, Ford was laying the basis for the re-emergence in British literature (and thus in the collective British consciousness) of a Romantic ontology, one in which extra-rational thought and the workings of the unconscious are considered important manifestations of being.

**IMPRESSIONISM AND "FINE UNCONSCIOUSNESS":
THE APOCALYPTIC MISSION OF FORD'S NEW AESTHETIC**

Contemporary neurological research has revealed that the cerebral processes which are affiliated with aesthetic sensibility are primarily located in the right hemisphere of the brain, the same hemisphere that is held to be the source of most non-rational (and even non-conscious) thought processes such as intuition, inspiration, hallucination, and dreaming. Ford, of course, had no such knowledge of neurological processes, but he nonetheless was keenly aware of the distinct link between the imagination and the unconscious. For an artist engaged in creation, the imagination generates both content and form in much the same way that dreams are shaped and knowledge is intuited. For a perceiver of an artifact, the imagination transmutes perceptions of form and content into sensations of pleasure in much the same way that sexual rapture or an epiphanic experience induces a loss of rational awareness--a condition that Ford described as an "oblivion of the self." In Ford's view, as in the view of the Aesthetes and Decadents, art for both creator and perceiver is one means of tapping into a realm of consciousness which is inaccessible to rational analysis but nonetheless is an important aspect of the human experience--human cerebral functions can not be ranked according to some hierarchy of validity. Accordingly, he felt it his mission to perfect the literary technique which

would most vividly engender in a reader such a diversification (and intensification) of consciousness.

As a result of his reading of the Continental realists and of Walter Pater,¹ Henry James, Stephen Crane, and others, Ford came to regard impressionism as the literary tool best suited to reverse a narrowing of consciousness:

[Ford] viewed Impressionism, much as the Goncourts had done, as a subtle method of representing the shades and complexities of modern feeling by means of a prose instrument more refined than that of abstract and logical statement, more capable of play upon the nerves and senses, especially the visual which had been sharpened by the teachings of Ruskin, Pater, and other advocates of trained contemplation of the spectacle of existence. (Wiley 46)

This subtle method which works on the reader's nerves, Wiley states, can "epitomize--perhaps even epiphanize--the essential meaning of places or events and thus arrive at once, through the writer's imaginative apprehension, at the summarizing point that a sequence of abstract data fails to reach" (48). Impressionism can be considered an attempt at sustained epiphany, in which a carefully selected incident

¹ Ford's views seem largely influenced by Pater's impressionistic history in The Renaissance, especially the "Preface," in which Pater adjures the critic "to know one's own impression as it really is" (xix). Ford contended that Pater, Wilde, Meredith, and Moore, were the first British writers to devote themselves to the "art of fiction" instead of the mere content of story-telling, and by so doing they pioneered the supplanting of the English "nuvvle" by the Continental novel (English Novel 133). Presumably it was these writers' preoccupation with purity of style and fidelity to imaginative vision that led Ford to list 1892 as the year that "the art of the novel [was] born to consciousness" (qtd in Harvey 187).

carries with it universal implications (and yet is free of the arcane nature of much Symbolist writing). The impressionist novelist, then, can lead the reader into a breadth of understanding which would be impossible for a more traditional artist to achieve.

At its most straightforward, impressionism entails a response to pure sensory data, whereby the artist reacts to whatever effects register in his sensibility when he perceives, say, a transient array of colours and forms. The sense data create, fortuitously and ephemerally, an impression in the artist's sensibility, and he endeavours to reproduce this impression by means of some medium such as words or water-colours. For Ford, however, literary impressionism was a process by which more than just the phenomenal world could be artistically transfigured--the origin of the impression could be some undefinable resource deep within the self.² In Ford's view, by departing from conventional narrative patterns, impressionism afforded the means by which perceptions, feelings, memories, intuitions, or prophetic experiences could be most powerfully

² In this sense, literary impressionism becomes difficult to distinguish from symbolism, although in practice the latter generally is a less accessible (and at times very enigmatic) literary form grounded in open symbols and highly fluid image patterns. John Bayley describes the emergence in England in the 1890's of intensely subjective literature as "the Romantic movement returning from France," with the writer "going underground" to grapple with and disclose great mysteries (Romantic Survival 43).

communicated to another person.³ The problem that confronted Ford--as it did all impressionistic renderers of non-rational experiences--was that freedom from artistic convention obliged the artist to be more inward-focused and to be reliant on the unregulable resource within the self. In short, impressionism to Ford was a means of achieving the same sorts of written revelations that the Romantic poets strove for but often failed to achieve because of overly "gilded" or "diffuse" phrasings (see especially his discussion of the discrepancy between the Romantics' "mind" and their style in The March of Literature [695-703]).

The Romantics were haunted by the elusiveness of this internal resource, agonizing over their attempts to spur it into activity and experiencing ecstasy whenever the voice of Art spoke through their imagination. Shelley's admission of shrieking and clasping his hands in ecstasy during his fleeting periods of contact with Intellectual Beauty typifies the exaltation associated with artistic activity, although Wordsworth is perhaps the most eloquent commentator on the sublimity of what in The Prelude he called "spots of

³ In 1890, the Norwegian writer Knut Hamsen itemized the cerebral activities that the impressionist sought to register: "Secret stirrings that go unnoticed in the remote parts of the mind, the incalculable chaos of impressions, the delicate life of the imagination seen under the magnifying glass; the random progress of these thoughts and feelings; untrodden, trackless journeyings by brain and heart, strange workings of the nerves, the whisper of the blood, the entreaty of the bone, all the unconscious life of the mind" (qtd in McFarlane "Mind" 81-2).

time"; to him, these moments removed one into a timeless, ineffable condition akin to religious rapture but not involving a transcendence of the self. Rather, they gave rise to an intensification of the self. For Ford, the artistic presentation of impressions entailed just such an intensification of the self.⁴ Ford's mandate for his impressionism seems directly related to Henri Bergson's earlier cited call for a "bold novelist" to record the "infinite permeation of a thousand different impressions" that continually well up in the human mind.⁵ The task of Bergson's novelist seems to be exactly that which Ford assigns to the "great imaginative writer [who] lives ... and then renders his impressions of what life has done to him.

⁴ In discussions which do not mention Ford but pertain directly to Ford's advocacy of art-induced "oblivion," Meyer Abrams and John Lester point out how the experience of ecstasy is a distinguishing feature of modern writers, one that affiliates them with the Romantic poets in their attempts to escape the stultified thought of an unduly rational culture (see especially the "Ecstasy" chapter in Lester's Journey Through Despair and Chapter Eight in Abram's Natural Supernaturalism). Frye similarly sees the Romantic use of epiphanic moments as a feature of modern novelists (A Study 158-9), and Spender lists, as one of his six features of modern literature, the "Alternate Life," in which art induces "borderline ecstatic or sexual experiences" that normally are deadened by "the abstract supra-personal forces of machinery and social organization" (87, 89).

⁵ This fidelity to perception without any logical screening is what Paul de Man sees as a fundamental feature of Romantic (and Bergsonian) thought; in his essay on the romantic image, he maintains that "poetics of 'unmediated vision,' such as those implicit in Bergson, ... fuse matter and imagination by amalgamating perception and reverie, sacrificing, in fact, the demands of consciousness to the realities of the object" (70).

He lives, that is to say, in, if possible, a fine unconsciousness ... but certainly in an unconsciousness" (Mightier 207 [Ford's ellipses]). Such is the very sort of experience which, in 1905, Ford was referring to as the moments when people really live: a period of reverie entailing "a suspension of intellectual faculties--a bathing in the visible world" (Soul of London 119-20).

It was this very intention of sacrificing the demands of consciousness in order to apprehend and express different modes of "reality" that, according to Ford, drove him and Conrad to devise a new prose aesthetic. Ford states that, as a result of the Pent Farm collaboration, he and Conrad committed themselves to the goal of "giving a sense of the complexity, the tantalisation, the shimmering, the haze, that life is" (Conrad 204). As though in reference to William James's halo of consciousness or Bergson's permeation of impressions, Ford pointed out the diffuseness of mental operations at any given instant,⁶ a diffuseness that was in no way recognized in traditional novels which implied that all characters' thoughts were always rigorously

⁶ In a 1922 Yale Review article on the qualities of Joyce's presentation of consciousness, Ford commends Joyce for noting that "the mind of every man is made up of several--three or four--currents all working side by side, all making their impress or getting their expression from separate and individual areas of the brain. It is not enough to say that every man is homo-duplex; every man is homo x-plex. And this complexity pursues every man into the minutest transaction of his daily life.... It is this tenuous complexity of life that has its first artistic representation in the works of [Joyce]" (qtd in Harvey 224).

focused. Ford, rather, saw that even the most focused of minds drift through a haze of associations; when he was a soldier under bombardment, he noticed how his mind would call forth diverse and often mundane images, for "you were there, but great shafts of thought from the outside, distant and unattainable world infinitely for the greater part occupied your mind. It was this effect, then, that Conrad and the writer [Ford] sought to get into their work, that being Impressionism" (Conrad 205). In a 1901 letter to the New York Times, Conrad describes the ontological view out of which arose the aesthetic principles of The Inheritors, which, as Conrad himself admits, was largely written by Ford:

It is only the writer's self-forgetful fidelity to his sensations that matters. But, whatever light he flashes on it, the fundamental truth remains, and it is only in its name that the barren struggle of contradictions [within the human psyche] assumes the dignity of moral strife going on ceaselessly to a mysterious end--with our consciousness powerless but concerned sitting enthroned like a melancholy parody of eternal wisdom above the dust of the contest. (Congo Diary 76, written on the Pent Farm, Aug. 2, 1901)

Because Ford strove to devise this new prose technique which was "self-forgetful" and cerebrally mimetic, David Thorburn links him with Woolf as Modern Romantics: both felt that older fictional methods did not allow for "the modern awareness of the complexities of the inner life [and] the ways in which one's subjective vision selects and colors experience. Both ... tried to devise techniques that would

do justice to the new complexity they saw before them" (Thorburn 158).⁷

Although Conrad never openly referred to himself as an impressionist, Ford contends that "we accepted without much protest the stigma 'Impressionists' that was thrown at us [for] we saw that Life did not narrate, but made impressions on our brains. We in turn, if we wished to produce on you an effect of life, must not narrate but render impressions" (Conrad 194-5).⁸ Ford, in effect, was rejecting the precision of outline in Pre-Raphaelite painting and was opting instead for the effect of the Impressionist painters, where the brush-strokes merged in the perceiver's mind; Ford saw literary impressionism working at the same level of

⁷ Ford was very explicit in advocating the new formal basis for prose, and thus it seems curious that Herbert Howarth would allege that Ford theorized about new subject matter but never realized that "[he] couldn't proceed without making an end to the old forms" (45).

⁸ Elsa Nettels states that Ford was wrong in making this claim, for Conrad expressed a strong dislike of the French Impressionists (comparing their work to that of lunatics [Nettels 278]). However, she also states that Ford, like many other later critics, was right to assert that Conrad's style was indeed impressionistic: Conrad did not want to be grouped with the French Impressionists for he felt that they simply captured surfaces, whereas he, like Ford, strove to make an impressionistic style serve the purposes of revealing the depths of life which can never be disclosed through direct statement. Conrad's objection to the label could also be due to the nebulousness of the term as it was used to refer to a literary movement in the decade or so before and after 1900. To many people (such as Zola in his Salon de 1880), impressionism was synonymous with naturalism and modernism, and even verged upon symbolism. Others saw both impressionism and naturalism as being "a natural evolution of romanticism" (Kronegger 25).

perception, so that the reader is led to feel he is experiencing life vicariously and is not simply processing material contained in conventional narrative discourse.⁹ In elaborating on this highly mimetic but untraditional rendering process by which a novel simulates "the general effect that life makes on mankind," Ford's description reads almost like an account of the flashes of Bergson's "mémoire involontaire":

Life does not say to you: In 1914 my next-door neighbour, Mr. Slack, erected a greenhouse and painted it with Cox's green aluminium paint.... If you think about the matter you will remember, in various unorderd pictures, how one day Mr. Slack appeared in his garden and contemplated the wall of his house. You will then try to remember the year of that occurrence and you will fix it as August, 1914, because having had the foresight to bear the municipal stock of the City of Liege you were able to afford a first-class season ticket for the first time in your life. You will remember Mr. Slack--then much thinner because it was before he found out where to buy that cheap Burgundy of which he has since drunk an inordinate quantity, though whisky you think would be much better for him! Mr Slack again came into his garden, this time with a pale, weaselly-faced fellow, who touched his cap from time to time.... At this point you will remember that you were then the manager of the fresh-fish branch of Messrs. Catlin and Clovis in Fenchurch Street.... What a change since then! Millicent had not yet put her hair up.... (Conrad 193 [Ford's ellipses])

⁹ Ford, then, can be seen as extending the well-known definition of romance that James offers in his "Preface" to The American. James contends that the romantic stands for the things "we never can directly know; the things that can reach us only through the beautiful circuit and subterfuge of our thought and our desire." For the romantic writer, therefore, "the way things don't happen may be artfully made to pass for the way things do" (Prefaces 32, 34).

Or, as Ford summarized in a 1914 article written for Poetry and Drama, the "method" of impressionism "founds itself upon analysis of the human mind" ("On Impressionism" 328).¹⁰

That Ford saw impressionism as a technique devised to complement the Romantic ontology is evident in The March of Literature, where he traces a line from Byron through Stendhal to the fin-de-siècle writers of psychological realism, even going so far as to assert that Stendhal "was perhaps the greatest literary influence of modern times" (711). Ford views him as the consummate romantic in the Byronic tradition as well as the first psychological novelist, for he presents dispassionate constatation of the "real insides" of his characters; indeed, he took "romanticism to the extremes of the ridiculous and ... modern conscious literature has been engaged on nothing less" since the 1890's when his writing was fully appreciated. The verisimilitude that derives from the "psychological activities of his characters as they ... contemplate the world" (715) was, Ford claims, the inspiration of Heart of Darkness and the stories of Henry James (Ford remembers James declaring that Flaubert and the

¹⁰ In her Literary Impressionism, Marcia Kronegger maintains that registering the vagaries of unmarshalled and thus largely unconscious thought is the impressionistic mandate, for such a process captures "'sensation as free from reasoning and will as it can possibly be.'" This aesthetic principle recalls Schopenhauer's statement of the artistic process as the contemplation of the world independently of the principle of reason" (37, internal citation from art critic L. Venturi).

Goncourts were "pale pastiches" of their romantic compatriot). Ford implies that impressionism as pioneered by Stendhal is based on a rejection of traditional novelists' use of stock descriptions in accord with accepted literary conventions, opting instead to "convey to the world their genuine impressions of life as they saw it" --a move that necessarily incorporates "elements of queer surprise" (738). From this arose "the main and perhaps most passionate tenet of impressionism" (767): the exclusion of the author from the pages, for as soon as the author appears as a commentator, the verisimilitude of the story (and thus the reader's engagement in it, the clarity with which he ~~sees~~) is lost. Ford later contended that the most distinguished exponent of impressionism in England was Dorothy Richardson, for she has totally abstracted herself from the pages of her novels and has, by means of stream of consciousness, consummately rendered the psychology of her characters (773). Thus, he concludes that if there were ever to be a perfect work of literary art, it would have to entail a fusion of Dostoyevsky's insights into the depths of the human mind with the art of the impressionists (776).

Ford regarded impressionism as a threat to the typical British mind because this technique was so explicitly anti-intellectual in its concreteness; such minds, inimical as they were to sense-for-sense's-sake, were seen by Ford as dangers not only to art but also to the state of the nation:

The really dangerous person for the artist will be the gentleman who, chancing to put his hand into the ground and to find it about as warm as the breast of a woman, if you could thrust your hand between her chest and her stays, will not accept the experience as an experience, but will start talking about the breast of mother-nature. This last man is the man whom the artist should avoid, since he will regard phenomena not as phenomena, but as happenings with which he may back up preconceived dogmas. ("On Impressionism" 332-33)

Ford proceeds to extol the value of "the man with the quite virgin mind--the man who will not insist that grass must always be painted green, because all the poets, from Chaucer till the present day, had insisted on talking about the green grass, or the green leaves, or the green straw" (333); such a non-doctrinaire mind could quite readily accept and delight in the painting of, as Ford suggests, a purple haycock, because haycocks can seem purple if one is blessed with a "peasant intelligence" unshackled by a dogmatic belief in the greenness of country landscape.

At the same time that he was writing this article on impressionism, Ford was working on The Good Soldier, and he directly incorporated this "green vs. purple" conflict into the novel. During the train trip through Germany with his wife and the Ashburnhams, Dowell twice mentions that, with no immediate need to attend to his wife, he withdrew from the others and "was pleased to be off duty" (42). That is (and for one of the rare times in the novel), he relapses from his typically dutiful, diligent, dogmatic (and, to Ford, dangerous) state of mind:

I like being drawn through the green country and looking at it through the clear glass of the great windows. Though, of course, the country isn't really green. The sun shines, the earth is blood red, and purple and red, and green and red. And the oxen in the ploughlands are bright varnished brown and black and blackish purple.... In another field are little mounds of hay that will be grey-green on the sunny side and purple in the shadows.... Still, the impression is that you are drawn through brilliant green meadows that run away on each side to the dark purple fir-woods.
(41-2)

This momentary capacity of the "off-duty" Dowell to respond directly to impressions (as opposed to perceiving the world in line with accepted ideas) is neatly underscored when, for the only time in the novel, he spontaneously "burst out laughing" upon seeing a cow pushed upside-down into a creek: "It is just so exactly what one doesn't expect" (42). Impressionism, as Ford used the term, could be defined as the technique by which the viewers/readers are led to see what they have not been led to expect; that is, they are obliged to exercise the non-rational or "peasant" domain of consciousness that has been so thoroughly anaesthetized in all the dowel-like people of turn-of-the-century England.

Similarly, in The Heart of the Country (1906), Ford described the "sacred" and "supernatural" responses, the "moments of sensuous delight," that "the real peasant" can experience when he pauses in his work and is keenly but "inarticulately" attentive to the world around him. In attempting to convey the kind of experience that is inaccessible to "the connoisseur" (who speaks "from the

outside" because of his erudition), Ford often in this book used impressionism. For example, here is Ford's attempt to capture the feelings of a garden-worker who, at dusk in summer, perceives the world near his cottage:

The whitened apple trunks stand out like the pillars of an aisle down by the hedge; the glow of the supper fire dances visible in reflection on the cottage ceiling, the sound of the brook becomes important in a windless dusk. And the air having grown cool after the sun had set, I have thrust my hand into the earth to feel for potatoes, and found it flesh-warm..., like the breast of a woman. (173-74)

Even in his historical fiction, Ford set out "to let you see where we stand.... I try to give you what I see to be the spirit of an age" (Lights xv)--even if by so doing (such as in his portrait of Katherine Howard as a Catholic martyr) he departed from commonly accepted "facts." When, for example, his extensive study of Henry VIII⁹ had led him to a clear imaginative apprehension of the Tudor-Stuart age, he initially began a history text on the period, but then abandoned this in favor of what came to be the Fifth Queen novels. These novels are intended not as the "story" of

⁹ In a 1904 letter to Richard Garnett, for example, Ford speaks of "the great many texts" that he has read on the times of Henry VIII, and he asks Garnett (a keeper of printed texts in the British Museum) for help in researching the extent to which the texts of Plautus, Tertullian, and other ancient writers influenced the theological climate of early 16th century England (Letters 20).

Katherine Howard,¹⁰ but as an evocation of the dark, Machiavellian ethos that had supplanted the old Catholic ways, and accordingly Ford renders his impression through the perpetual use of shadows, dim cresset-light, dark chambers, hidden passageways, ferret-like faces, etc. The following passage is typical of the tenebrous ambience that pervades the novels:

It was raining a fine drizzle, so that the air of the gardens smelt moist even against the odour of the torches. The old knight pulled the hood of his gown up over his head, for he was hoarse with a heavy cold. It was pitch black beyond the gate house; in the open fields before the wall torches here and there appeared to burn in mid-air, showing beneath them the heads and the hoods of their bearers hurrying home, and, where they turned to the right along a narrow lane, a torch showed far ahead above a crowd packed thick between dark house-fronts and gables. They glistened with wet and sent down from their gutters spouts of water that gleamed, catching the light of the torch, like threads of opal fire on the pallid dove colour of the towering house-fronts. The torch went round a corner, its light withdrew along the walls by long jumps as its bearer stepped into the distance ahead. Then it was all black. (141)

The impression generated by such description clearly is one of menacing darkness, of hidden threats and pervasive malice. And such was the very impression that Ford had of the Tudor-Stuart age: it was a time of political deviousness and dark plots, a time when idealism and candour were cause

¹⁰ Thus critics such as Charles Hoffman seem to have missed the point of impressionist writing when they object to the historical "inaccuracy" of this novel; to Hoffman, the novel "fails" because "the lack of justification in history--indeed, the reverse is true-- makes the whole theme seem based on a false premise" (41).

of peril. But what is significant here is that the primary shaping influence for the content and style of the novels was the impression that initially had germinated in Ford's sensibility. The impression drove the development of the novels; the novels did not simply contain word-pictures. Prior to the writing of a single word, Ford's imagination would have had to engage in some sort of creative fusion that would lead to an overall impression, and all the ensuing words would be generated out of this impression. Accordingly, the reader of such words would be brought not into an understanding of concepts but into an aesthetic harmony with the writer's impression.

In regarding impressionism as a means of leading readers to see the phenomenal world in non-conventional ways, Ford was positing a distinct link between sensory acuity and depth of understanding, between sight and insight. In this sense, he clearly aligns himself with the Romantic poets who argued that clarity and particularity of optical vision is a pre-condition for clarity of a more significant, almost prophetic vision.¹¹ For example, Blake, in "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell," asserts that the apocalyptic cleansing of the doors of perception would

¹¹ Abrams maintains that, in the twentieth century, "the chief definitions of transforming vision have continued to be recognizable, if sometimes distorted, variations on the Romantic categories of freshness of sensation, revelatory Moments, and the rectified outlook which inverts the status of the lowly, the trivial, and the mean" (411).

"come to pass by an improvement in sensual enjoyment" (Plate 14); Shelley, in his "Essay on Poetry," commended poetry for its power to "withdraw life's dark veil from before the scene of things" and to purge "the film of familiarity which obscures from us the wonder of our being" (760); in Biographia Literaria, Coleridge similarly praised poetry's "supernatural" capacity to excite a person into vivid perception of the "wonders of the world before us," wonders that customarily are masked behind "the film of familiarity" that has left us with "eyes [that] see not, ears that hear not" (645); and Carlyle asked, "Poetic creation, what is this too but seeing the thing sufficiently" (qtd. in Abrams 375). The Romantics were not merely advocating increased attention to sensory data, but rather were emphasizing that sensitivity was needed in order for a person to gain a keener non-empirical vision into the principles of human nature, for the prevailing mode of perception was what Blake deprecatingly called "Single Vision and Newton's sleep" (single vision referring only to optical perception of the commonplace and to what Herbert Marcuse would later describe as one-dimensional thought). Rather, the breadth and intensity of what the Romantics considered true vision, attainable only by breaking the bonds of proprioceptive habit, should lead one to perceive the forms and forces that inform the empirical world; it should induce an awareness of human truths that are ineffable and are only experienceable

through the vision unfolded to what Shelley termed "inward sight."¹²

This goal of devising an artifact that induced fullness of vision became one of the central precepts of Ford's writing. Throughout his extensive collaboration with Conrad, Ford openly adhered to Conrad's approach to "seeing," which is highly similar to the Romantic notion of vision.¹³ Conrad's artistic creed is most succinctly presented in the 1897 "Preface" to The Nigger of the 'Narcissus', where he committed himself to the task of using the written word "to make you hear, to make you feel--it is

¹² Abrams offers an extensive cataloguing of Romantic descriptions of sight: "'Single vision,' the reliance on the 'bodily,' 'physical,' 'vegetable,' 'corporeal,' or 'outward eye,' which results in a slavery of the mind to merely material objects, a spiritual sleep of death, and a sensual death-in-life--to this way of seeing poets opposed the liberated, creative, and resurrective mode of sight 'thro', and not with the eye,' or of sight by means of the 'inward eye,' the 'intellectual eye,' the 'imaginative eye,' or simply, 'the imagination.' The shift is from physical optics to what Carlyle in the title of one of his essays called 'Spiritual Optics,' and what Blake and others often referred to as 'Vision'" (Natural 377).

¹³ Because of this emphasis on precision of vision in much of modern writing, Irving Howe, in The Idea of the Modern, describes the early Modern writer as having "filial dependence on the Romantic poet" (14), and Frank Kermode sees the intense visionary capacity of the Romantic mind as being a central tenet of Modern writing: "The work of art itself is symbol, 'aesthetic monad'; utterly original and not in the old sense 'imitated' ; 'concrete,' yet fluid and suggestive; a means to truth, a truth unrelated to, and more exalted than, that of positivist science, or any observation depending upon the discursive reason; out of the flux of life, and therefore, under one aspect, dead; yet uniquely alive because of its participation in a higher order of existence, and because it is analogous not to a machine but to an organism" (Romantic Image 43).

before all, to make you see. That--and no more, and it is everything" (ix). Had Conrad written nothing but these well-known sentences, they could be considered simply a commitment to representational art, to create carefully detailed word-pictures. But earlier in the "Preface," Conrad defines his intention in terms that could almost have been copied from A Defence of Poetry or the Lyrical Ballads' "Preface"¹⁴ or Biographia Literaria: "All art, therefore, appeals primarily to the senses, and artistic aim when expressing itself in written words must also make its appeal through the senses, if its high desire is to reach the secret spring of responsive emotions" (ix). Just as the Romantics saw art as a revelation of the truth inherent in the forms of perceived matter, so did Conrad view his art as revelatory:

And art itself may be defined as a single-minded attempt to render the highest kind of justice to the visible universe, by bringing to light the truth, manifold and one, underlying its every aspect. It is an attempt to find in its forms, in its colors, in its light, in its shadows in the aspects of matter and in the facts of life, what of each is fundamental, what is enduring and essential--their one illuminating and convincing quality--the very truth of their existence.

Like the Romantic quester, Conrad describes the artist (as distinct from the thinker or philosopher) as one who

¹⁴ In Conrad's Romanticism (1974), David Thorburn provides an extensive discussion of the parallels between the two manifesto "Prefaces" of Conrad and Wordsworth (148-152).

"descends within himself" and subsequently makes an appeal "to that part of our nature which ... is necessarily kept out of sight , ... to that part of our being which is not dependent on wisdom." An artistically induced vision, in short, is one that allows a person to "see" that which is out of sight and to understand that which is unframeable by words.¹⁵

That Ford subscribed to Conrad's Romantic premises is apparent not only in his later comments on the role of art but also in the very nature of his writing during the 1898-1904 period when his collaboration with Conrad was at its most intense and productive.¹⁶ Sam Hynes even asserts that as a result of this collaboration "Ford went a good deal further toward complete subjectivism than Conrad did [for] Ford's Impressionism denied external reality as an objective

Such an intention is virtually identical to that which Harold Bloom attributes to the "program of Romanticism": "Enlarged and more numerous senses are necessary, an enormous virtue of Romantic poetry clearly being that it not only demands such expansion but begins to make it possible" ("Internalization of Quest-Romance" 11). And Irving Howe maintains that modernism most explicitly reveals its "filial dependence" on the Romantic poets through its stressing of subjective perception that often verges on pure solipsism: the modernist creed is "I see, therefore I am" (14, 15).

¹⁶ Grover Smith points out how Ford's impressionistic technique evolved from objective "saturation" (i.e., a compiling of distinct details) to a more diffuse "congestion" of external detail and internal reflection once Ford began using time-shifts. And while Smith is right in claiming that Ford stopped short of Proustian extremes, his argument that Ford avoided the Bergsonian flux and created instead a "shooting gallery reality" (i.e., bombarding a reader with details) seems less convincing (G. Smith 35-6).

check on the artist's 'rendering'" ("Conrad and Ford" 53); to Hynes, that is, Ford eventually came to develop a style that, by being more impressionistic than Conrad's, moved the novel even further away from the tradition of narratorial precision and explicitness.¹⁷ In his Joseph Conrad reminiscences, Ford cites the "make you see" passage and then asserts that "that same belief was previously and profoundly held by the writer [i.e. Ford]...."¹⁸ We for so long had the same aims," the most important one being to "make humanity see the few very simple things upon which this temporal world rests."¹⁹ The vision induced by such writing, however, was more than merely optical, for, as Ford wrote of Turgenev's prose, "he had the seeing eye to such an extent that he could see that two opposing truths were equally true" (Mightier 208). In effect, Ford maintains that

¹⁷ Similarly, Lawrence Thornton contends that Ford's impressionism, unlike Conrad's, functions as "a structural paradigm of modern man's experience... [and thus] in terms of their impact on modern fiction, it is Ford who must be seen as 'the more influential writer'" (11).

¹⁸ Ray Brebach disagrees with Ford on this point, claiming that Ford's 1898 draft of Seraphina is at a far remove from the precepts adumbrated in the 'Nigger' "Preface." There is little evidence in Ford's pre-1899 work to show that he had embraced the impressionist "make you see" creed before his collaboration with Conrad. Only subsequent to this collaboration does Ford's theory and practice clearly reflect such an approach to prose-writing.

¹⁹ In his 1902 study of William Rossetti, Ford criticized his uncle's obsessive treatment of poetry as "a matter of mists hiding, of glimmers confusing the outlines of things, [for] ... his real gift was that of laying bare, of catching the essential characteristics very clear-headedly" (Rossetti 185).

the literature he (and Conrad) set out to create was literature which bared what Wordsworth had called "the primary laws of our nature"--and impressionism was the mode of prose-writing that most starkly bared these laws.

Ford (like the Romantics) felt that his literary art could help redeem a society that was growing increasingly fragmented and rationalist.²⁰ To Ford, such redemption entailed the same process as that which Frye defines as the central aim of Romantic art: using aesthetic means to achieve an apocalyptic end--i.e., to bring the reader into a state of awareness "which Romanticism regards as a larger structure of reality including the given reality of experience" [A Study 125]. In this sense, Ford shared with the Romantic poets, as well as with his romantic contemporaries, the belief that the very experience of art by an individual triggers a clarity of vision as to the nature of humanity, this in turn catalyzing a change in that individual's attitude toward the moral and social systems that prevail around him. The final consequence of such an alteration of individual consciousnesses is a wholesale transvaluation of the prevailing social ethos.²¹ Whereas

²⁰ In The March of Literature, Ford contended that the ancient Greek and Roman writers wrote with such lucid, fused expression because they lived within smaller, less technological, and thus more organic communities.

²¹ Thorburn, in his study of the romantic nature of Conrad's prose, groups Ford with Conrad and Joyce in what he referred to as the "antiapocalyptic temper" of the modern English novel because of their Romantic focus on (even

the aim of didactic art was to promote widespread belief in (and behaviour in accordance with) specific principles, the aim of Ford's impressionist art was to engender deeper self-awareness, this in itself being a sufficient end, for whatever behaviour is manifested by fully self-aware people is necessarily good.²² By advocating such a purpose for the novel and by composing fiction in accord with this purpose, Ford helped redefine the relationship between the novelist and what he saw as "the new republic," a relationship unique to the twentieth century.

For Ford, the novelist, as opposed to the "nouvlist," is capable of effecting a pronounced change in social orientation primarily because he records, disinterestedly and limpidly, what can be seen by a mind freed of all

celebration of) the ordinary (155). Thorburn, however, seems to be treating apocalyptic literature as only that which pessimistically addresses some form of social collapse.

²² Ford's belief in the morally regenerative value of art is distinctively Romantic. In "A Defence of Poetry," for example, Shelley posited that "the great instrument of moral good is the imagination," where for him "moral good" refers to whatever condition a person's consciousness is in after poetry has "awakened and enlarged the mind by rendering it the receptacle of a thousand unapprehended combinations of thought." Shelley conceded that any such combination is not necessarily the result of a conscious intention by the poet to instil that particular thought. The poet is simply a medium by which certain broad ontological principles ("the unchangeable forms of human nature") are brought into the consciousness of the auditor; or, more specifically, the poem removes the auditor out of the limited scope of awareness engendered by mundane preoccupations, leading him into an apprehension of "the image of life as expressed in its eternal truth."

presuppositions. By means of such recording, the novelist will "come nearer to the truth than either moralist or pedagogue who have always some arrière-pensée with which to stultify their instructions" (Mightier 283). The novelist, however, need not endeavour to be as impersonal or objective a recorder as is, say, a television camera. Ford maintained that the individual temperament of the artist had to be the filter through which perceptions passed in order to become endowed with both truth and aesthetic merit: he defines the novelist's goal as presenting "simple records [or] renderings of life transfused by the light of their writers' temperaments as modified by their vicissitudes" (March 740).²³ Whereas a "nouvlist" would "transfuse" his observations through his moral values or political beliefs or other rational constructs, the novelist would utilize something more unconscious or intrinsic (and, to Ford, more fundamentally human) as the source of truths.²⁴

²³ Zola similarly qualified his definition of naturalism (initially intended to be a literary counterpart to dispassionate anatomical surgery) to be "un coin de la universe vue à travers un temperament."

²⁴ Ford often used the word "truth" in reference to a state of consciousness rather than to something which is rationally verifiable. For example, he once referred to Trelawney's impressionistic biography of Shelley as being "the true truth" (Revisit 191). For Ford such a term is not a tautology; instead, it suggests a higher plane of veracity than mere empirical truth. Ford was notorious for what Hynes refers to as his "romancing memory" (78), even to the extent that Conrad's biographer, Jean-Aubry, dismissed Ford as a pathological liar. In defence of this tendency, Barzun claims that the distortion committed by an artist in making an object "disclose itself fully" is typical not only of the

Ford's view of the nature of artistic creation (which he claims he learned in large part from reading James but which in some respects goes beyond James's premises) bears striking similarities to the Romantic view of the artist as an Aeolian harp, a carefully tuned instrument by means of which truth and simple beauty can manifest themselves: "[The artist] is a sensitized instrument, recording to the measure of the light vouchsafed him what is--what may be--the truth" (Mirror 210). By recording such "truths", the writer places the reader "at a height from which we may better observe ourselves and our neighbours (English Novel 46).²⁵

Because "nuvvlists" fabricated instead of rendered, Ford saw their work resulting in "a sort of beggardom of political theories. It remains therefore for the novelist--and particularly for the realist among novelists--to give us

romantic desire for vivid revelation but also of the Aristotelian credo that "poetic truth is sometimes truer than history" (72, 73).

²⁵ As Meyer Abrams points out, Wordsworth realized that the creation of a millennial condition would be the result, not the cause, of a sharp increase in the number of sensitized or liberated imaginations: "The recourse is from mass action to individual quietism, and from outer revolution to a revolutionary mode of imaginative perception which accomplishes nothing less than the 'creation' of a new world. And this re-creative way of seeing will perhaps in the course of time become available to 'the progressive power ... of the whole species.' To proclaim this discovery is the task which, in the closing passage of The Prelude, Wordsworth calls upon Coleridge to share with him, as 'joint-labourers in a work/ Of [men's] redemption'" (338). As someone who also believed in the "redemptive" function of the literary artist, Ford certainly can be considered one of Wordsworth's "joint-labourers."

the very matter upon which we shall build the theories of the new body politic" (James 48). In the first issue of The English Review (1909), Ford's editorial addresses the need for the writer to fulfill his "utilitarian function in the Republic" by awakening thought, not through exhortations but through "expression of himself . . . , the expression of his view of life as it is, not as he would like it to be" (160). Ford goes on to commend Henry James for his "great value to the Republic" because he never discloses his private views: "He himself never appears, he never buttonholes us, he never moralizes, he never drags round his pictures of life so as to make it appear that, if the social state were what he desires it to be, all would be well with the world" (160). Indeed, he "consider[s] as traitors to the Republic those who set up false ideals of the possibilities of life" (qtd. in Harvey 153). Instead, James registers that which his sensibility and imagination has cast as being "most real, most permanent, and most fugitive in the life around him" (English Review 159)--and as such it functions as a more important form of history than does that recorded by scholarly historians.²⁶ Ford, then, attributes to the new (post-Victorian) novelist what Wordsworth attributed to the new (post-Augustan) poet: "There is no object standing

²⁶ In the "Preface" to his biography of Conrad, Ford claims the most accurate biography is a novel, one that provides a "rendering of such affairs as are our human lives" (vi).

between the poet and the image of things; between this, and the biographer and historian, there are a thousand" ("Preface" to Lyrical Ballads 603).²⁷ In Ford's view, the novelist has a social obligation to approach as closely as possible the image of things, for "life is a thing so complicated that only in the mirror of the arts can we have a crystallized view or any vicarious experience at all, [and thus] only from the arts can any safety for the future of the State be found" (Critical Attitude 29).²⁸ Ford was fond of citing Flaubert's claim "that had the French really read 'Education Sentimentale' France would have avoided the horrors of the Debacle [sic]" (160), and he saw the new century as being equally in need of (yet blind to) the socially redemptive powers of art--especially in "England, the country of Accepted Ideas" (160)²⁹. He even contended

²⁷ Ford even cites Wordsworth when advocating that the artist should deal with direct and often commonplace observations rather than abstract contemplations: because the light from stars in the zenith is of "no diviner origin, no purer essence" than the light from humbler, more low-hanging stars, "Then, to the measure of the light vouchsafed, / Shine Poet! in thy place, and be content" (qtd. in March 702).

²⁸ Ford's views of the novelist as a cultural analyst who leads readers into an apprehension of what is hidden mesh with those of his close friend, C.F.G. Masterman, whose 1908 text The Condition of England speaks of the necessity for the novelist to lay bare "the hidden life of England, ... the temper, mettle, response, character of an island race" (17).

²⁹ In a 1907 Tribune article, Ford wrote that "the English education is directed towards giving a man settled manners, settled ideas, settled beliefs, and a standard of probity. It is directed remorselessly against his

that the novel-as-chronicle could have "serious claim to the position of a saviour of society" (qtd. in Harvey 173).

This romantic idea of the artist saving society Ford no doubt derived in part from his father's views on the contemporary Artist-as-Savior: "For the artist is to be the longed-for-Messiah, to deliver future generations from the fetters of custom and prejudice, and I need not add that this artist is to speak to the nations from the hallowed boards of a truly popular stage" (Hueffer 13). Hueffer goes on to describe the latter-day artist-Messiah's role as similar to that of the Greek dramatists, who played an integral role in instituting the Hellenic culture and values. He later writes approvingly of Wagner's treatise, Art and Revolution, which "tries to demonstrate the close connection between the regeneration of political life and similar tendencies in contemporary art" (70).

Ford, in short, saw the artist as a precipitator of a wholesale, even apocalyptic, transformation of social mores and individual consciousnesses, and thus clearly is allied with the Romantic conviction that the true poet (as distinguished from mere poetaster) is a prophet whose clarity of insight into the nature of humanity should serve

developing any independent thoughts" (qtd in Harvey 151). His distaste for Accepted Ideas no doubt was influenced by Flaubert's satiric Dictionnaire des Idées Recues, in which Flaubert mocks the clichés, tautologies, and platitudes that were sadly symptomatic of bourgeois fixity of thought. Ford presumably regards his education, at least in its effects on him, to have been different from an "English Education."

as the basis for a re-oriented social order.³⁰ Indeed, he offers this as his (and other like-minded novelists') mission statement: "Once we have rendered our day with a due vision for the inner truths of it--then the World can draw its own morals.... But the important thing is that the World should have an aperçu of itself as it is" (Mightier 268).³¹ The absence of this aperçu "makes naturally for a pessimism that demands relief either in the drugs of the happy endings of falsified fictions or in the anodynes of superstition--one habit being as fatal to the human intelligence as the other" (English Novel 125). For Ford, as for his Romantic forebears, the traditional approaches to art functioned, in effect, as the opium of the masses, and he felt it his duty, as an artist of the imminent "new Republic," to supplant narcotics by true vision.

³⁰ Ford typifies what Northrop Frye saw as the extension of Romantic thought into the twentieth century: "Romanticism has brought into modern consciousness the feeling that society can develop or progress only by individualizing itself, by being sufficiently tolerant and flexible to allow an individual to find his own identity within it, even though in doing so he comes to repudiate most of the conventional values of that society" (A Study 48).

³¹ In light of Ford's extensive commentary on the purpose of his historical fiction, it is difficult to accept Sam Hynes' rather sweeping assertion that "until he was forty, Ford had no themes, and he consequently imitated not life, but other men's romances" ("Spirit" 20).

CHAPTER FIVE

THE WILL VS. THE MILL: SUBJECTIVE VALUES IN THE NEW REPUBLIC

In his retrospective summary of the literary forces at play in fin-de-siècle England, Mightier Than the Sword, Ford points out the polarizing of those writers who chose to write non-traditional novels. On the one hand there were "reformers of all types [who] declared that no work of art could be real art if it were not also a work of propaganda for the Left.... The novel became a vehicle for every kind of 'ism' [so that] the serious novel as a whole interested itself almost solely in sociological questions" (178). Set against those were the adherents of the literary practices of Flaubert, Maupassant, and Turgenev:

That camp proclaimed that a work of art must be a passionless rendering of life as it appears to the artist. It must be coloured by no exaggerations, whether they tend to exalt either the Right or Left in politics. The public function of the work of art in short was, after it had given pleasure, to present such an epitome of life that the reader could get from it sufficient knowledge to let him decide how to model both his private and his public lives. (179)

But just how can a reader "learn" from impressionist prose, and what is the "knowledge" that Ford felt could be gleaned from reading such prose? What is the reasoning that led him to speculate that if humanity had read Heart of Darkness (with its non-didactic, "constatational" narratorial style), "we might very well have been spared the horrors of our mondial debacle [WW I]" (March 771)?

Like his Romantic predecessors, Ford felt that the best means of getting readers to develop moral self-reliance is an aesthetic one: the very process of responding to art serves to counter the harnessing of consciousness that necessarily occurs in an industrial culture. To Ford, the traditional novel helped perpetuate this culture, for it duped people into accepting pallid lifestyles and orthodox patterns of thought. The impressionist novel, by contrast, simply but artfully presented the human condition, so that the reader could see with unwonted clarity and thus would be able, even obliged, to infer a "right" (and necessarily subjective) set of values. Ford here comes very close to concurring with Oscar Wilde's well-known statement on the extent to which aesthetic experiences shape subsequent perceptions or attitudes: "Life imitates art." Ford, however, was more forthright than his cousin in pointing out the moral responsibilities that must be borne by those who create such art: "[The artist's] duty, then, ... is to persuade his day to improve itself" (March 697).

Ford did realize that it would not be easy for the "new novel" to give rise to a new social order in which each individual would determine his own moral values. And however much Ford asserted that this transition could occur only through non-didactic prose, he did at times use his fiction polemically--not so much to prescribe "right" values for his readers as to alert them to the perils of

institutionalized values. The enemy forces that Ford most often attacked were decorum and scientific rationalism.¹ The former led one to subordinate the discovery of individual human verities to the maintenance of a stable, tradition-bound society; the latter led one to subordinate this discovery to the creation of an efficient (and probably socialistic) society. Like the Romantics a century earlier, Ford felt that the present day was poised on the brink of a calamitous and perhaps irreversible collapse into regimentation of thought. Ford addressed this transition into twentieth century pragmatism most directly in the Wellsian scientific romance, The Inheritors, which he began to write with Conrad shortly after he finished Heart of Darkness.² The Inheritors is not all a good exemplar of the impressionist, "make-you-see" prose that Ford and Conrad were extolling at this time, but it does clearly depict what they saw as the enemy forces.

Conrad's letters to Wells in the 1898-1900 period indicate that both he and Ford were deeply impressed by Wells's novels, especially The Time Machine, The Invisible Man, and The Island of Dr. Moreau. All of these works

¹ In his "portrait" of Hardy, Ford begins by discussing the two gangs of persecutors who dogged Ford's youth: "orthodox Anglicanism and Virtue," and "Established Rationalism" (Mightier 123).

² Ford contends that Conrad contributed no more than 2000 of the novel's 75,000 words, although these words "crepitate from [my] emasculated prose like firecrackers amongst ladies' skirts" (Conrad 142).

present a social context in which an individual or group of individuals is freed from the constraints imposed by a sense of proper conduct. Like Wells, Ford deplored not only human baseness, but also any stultifying code of moral orthodoxy by which such baseness could be kept in check. But, very much unlike Wells, he saw aesthetic sensitivity (and not science) as the cornerstone of an improved social framework. Wells nonetheless helped lay the seeds of Ford and Conrad's concern with the source of "right values"; these novels of Wells seem to have directly influenced the primary thematic concerns of both Heart of Darkness and The Inheritors.³ But whereas Wells implied that the human animal needs to be harnessed by reason into a social utility grounded in scientific principles, Ford and Conrad advocated a more subjective basis for right conduct, one that is not based on any illusions such as absolute truth, knowledge, or the

³ In The Time Machine, for example, Wells's vision of a future dichotomizing of human sensibilities (into the troglodytic, Dionysian Elois and the blithe, Apollonian Morlocks) bears a close parallel to the forces that give rise to the struggle Kurtz experiences between the allure of primal, sub-rational gratification of desires and the appeal of restrained "fidelity." Similarly, the dissolution of Griffin's corporeal presence in The Invisible Man (thereby freeing him from any concern about proper behaviour) suggests the dissolution of Kurtz's restraints as he melds into the darkness of the Congo jungle; and the insular Dr. Moreau's lapse into grotesquerie further comments on the consequences of a failure to constrain the socially disruptive predilections of the human dark side.

supremacy of reason⁴. From their rather solipsistic perspective, there is no final authority that issues or legitimizes a set of "true" principles of thought and conduct; Ford and Conrad felt that England must lose all vestiges of what Arnold had called a Hebraic culture. Right conduct, rather, must be self-determined. Like all romantics who reject any authoritarian imposition of moral codes, Ford felt that a culture-wide expansion of individuals' consciousnesses would give rise, if not to a utopia, then at least to a state in which human lives are most fully lived. Ford never directly addresses the dangers posed by such a premise (is it acceptable for, say, Jack the Ripper to act in accord with the values and compulsions that strongly present themselves to him?), for his focus is more on the desiccation of lives within an excessively rational culture where the prevalence of Accepted Ideas militates against the pursuit of self-determined truths.

Like Wells's works, The Inheritors is a thinly veiled parable (to Ford, "an allegorico-realist romance" [Conrad 141]) of a future society grounded in a wrong set of values;

⁴ A good illustration of the difference between Ford's and Wells's approach to science and the reasoning mind can be found in their time-travel novels. In Wells's The Time Machine, the protagonist is transported through time by a machine, and the view presented is the post-Darwinian thesis that mankind is headed for destruction unless it ameliorates its social system. In Ladies Whose Bright Eyes, the protagonist is transported through time by dream and by telepathic powers, and the view presented is that one should withdraw from the social process in order to become a morally autonomous entity.

for Ford and Conrad, these values are not those of cannibals or lechers, but rather are those derived from a wholehearted commitment to the scientific ethic that Wells so revered. The three Fourth Dimensionists in the novel (prototypes of and agents for a vaguely described abstract future society) engage in various nefarious activities in order to subvert the attempts of the old guard to maintain a society founded on an intrinsic human dignity--an obvious allusion to the pragmatism of Joseph Chamberlain and the old-fashioned values of Arthur Balfour.⁵ The proponents of life as an applied science are "a race clear-sighted, eminently practical, incredible; with no ideals, prejudices, or remorse; with no feeling for art and no reverence for life; free from any ethical tradition; callous to pain, weakness, suffering, and death" (11-12). This future condition is shown to be an extrapolation of contemporary ethical conditions, Ford and Conrad deploring the extent to which their society was prepared to let base motives hide under a veneer of proper conduct. The parallels to Heart of Darkness here are overt: the colonizing ventures of the

⁵ Conrad, in a letter to Ford, summarizes their purpose as being to "attack not individuals but the spirit of the age--the immoral tendencies arising from a purely materialistic view of life" (Letters, Jean-Aubry I.313). And Ford, in a poem published in 1897, "The Old Faith to the Converts," similarly criticizes the new order; the "old faith" tells us that we can abandon our "new songs" and "come back to the old places"; but the poem's closing line is ominous: "But we shall never return" (Collected Poems 142).

Belgians in the Congo become colonizing ventures of the French in Greenland;⁶ the Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs becomes the Society for the Preservation of Polar Freedom; the rapacity underlying the Europeans' role as "emissaries of pity, science and progress" (H of D 41) becomes the Eskimo-exploiting avarice operating in the guise of "progress, improvement, civilisation... -- more light!" (Inh 121); and the "fascination of the abomination" (H of D 8) becomes "a fascination that was very nearly a fear" (Inh 19). Just as Marlow finds himself in a hazy middle-ground between civilized altruism and primal self-gratification, so does Granger find himself forced into moral subjectivity because of a revulsion from both the darkness of greed and the cold light of pragmatism.

In The Inheritors, Ford and Conrad are explicit in pointing out that right values derive not from strict adherence to some prescribed code of decorum, but rather from an understanding or an intuiting of the good qualities that inhere in human nature. Robert Green goes so far as to generalize that, in revulsion from science and bourgeois values, "Ford turned inwards and made his own feelings-- particularly the notion of pristine honor defending itself against intrigue, calumny and pragmatism--the true subject-

⁶ Ford points out that "the sub-villain was to be Leopold II, King of the Belgians, the foul--and incidentally lecherous--beast who had created the Congo Free State in order to grease the wheels of his harems with the blood of murdered negroes" (Conrad 141).

matter of his work" ("Exploded Tradition" 228). The individual, in effect, needs to attune himself to some a priori principles of conscionable conduct, principles that had always surfaced throughout British history, despite changing social conditions and thus had established traditions of full human goodness. Only now with the onset of technological sophistication (and the consequent atrophy of human sensibilities) are these principles put in jeopardy. Ford, however, did not offer a blanket endorsement of all English traditions, many of which he regarded as stultifying; what he valued most highly was the humanism and moral self-responsibility that had been possible within the British culture, even if such qualities guided the lives of only a small portion of those so bred. The Inheritors, in short, is an account of the widespread loss of this moral self-reliance and of the success of one individual to discover within himself (and not within his society) the values he must live by.

The journey of Granger into awareness of the right way to live is not very different from the broadening of Marlow's insights into life as result of his venture into the darkness. Granger begins as "a writer with high--with the highest--ideals" (4), but he succumbs to the lure of fame and wealth by accepting an offer to write tawdry popular journalism; while in the darkness of Paris he has an epiphanic moment of true seeing ("Suddenly the thing dawned

upon me with the startling clearness of a figure in a complicated pattern--a clearness from which one cannot take one's eyes" [167]), and then he returns to London ("as if [returning] from an under world" [253]) where he earnestly but futilely resists the onset of the reign of the Fourth Dimensionists.⁷ And although Granger endorses "old-fashioned" values, these are not simply the values of Victorian gentility or medieval chivalry; they are the values that should suggest themselves in any age to anyone who strives to find fundamentally human principles to live by. Granger, then, is heroic not so much in what he does but in what he sees: the principles of right conduct that derive from clarity of self-understanding. This gives him the capacity to avoid losing the dignity and sensitivity that Ford and Conrad saw being expelled from their increasingly industrialized, specialized society. As in Blake's image of the "dark, satanic mills," Ford and Conrad describe the prevailing social ethos as "an immense machine --unconcerned, soulless, but all its parts made up of bodies of men: a great mill grinding out the dust of centuries"

⁷ Charles Hoffman contends that "Granger in The Inheritors is remote from the heart of darkness and can only report his impressions of the horror second and even third hand" (26). Hoffman, however, seems to overlook the Paris episode, and his insistence that the "sense of the reality of the horror" needs to be more clearly revealed seems predicated on the belief that Ford was intending to treat the novel's primary concern as the corruption of de Mersch, rather than the maturation of Granger.

(316).⁸

Whereas the capacity for humanism and moral self-reliance previously had lain only with a privileged few, Ford saw the nineteenth century as a time when, paradoxically, more people were freer to be self-reliant but they collectively were also being subsumed by a growing institutionalization of thought. The increase in moral freedom Ford credits to the Romantic era, the period in which the mind was first liberated from the narrow limits of revealed religion, thereby allowing diverse moral codes within the one culture:

By the time the thirty years or so that stretched between 1790 and 1820 had impinged on the world it had gradually become evident, on the Continent at least, that so many different codes of morality could synchronize in the same era, in the same nation and even in the same small community. (English Novel 117)

But as he implied in The Inheritors, romantic individualism and iconoclasm were being overwhelmed by contemporary mercantilism and pragmatism, so that again the romantic approach to self-determined values was needed. Ford states this premise most directly in Ancient Lights:

We are losing more and more the sense of a whole, the feeling of a grand design, of the co-ordination of all Nature in one great architectonic scheme. We have no

⁸ Thirty years later, in Provence, Ford still laments the presence of "the unreined Machine" which has attained virtual ascendancy over mankind and thus has prevented any capacity for individual moral autonomy, this in turn making possible the reign of Hitlers and Stalins.

longer any time to look out for the ultimate design.... And if in outside things we can perceive no design but only the fortuitous materialism of a bewildering world, we are thrown more and more in upon ourselves for comprehension of that which is not understandable and for analysis of things of the spirit. (62)

In his other novels, Ford never addresses so explicitly the necessity of a society-wide endeavour to "see the few very simple things upon which this temporal world rests," but he virtually always paints characters who either lack this insight or else have it but are consequently made to suffer at the hands of a more myopic society. Through such characterization, Ford foregrounds the importance of defining the self and its individual value system, irrespective of the directives of society at large. For example, in The Good Soldier, Edward Ashburnham's destruction results from his adherence to values unsuited for the "fortuitous materialism" of the twentieth century. Always the "good soldier," he faithfully tried to follow the values that he has discerned to be good.⁹

Ford saw that if more people could be induced to be faithful to what they understood to be right, then the

⁹ As T.A. Hanzo points out, the apparent source for the title of The Good Soldier reflects Ford's typically secular (and rather ironic) use of Catholic liturgical matter, for he seemingly borrowed from the Roman missal's Epistle for August 4th (the date on which all the novel's major occurrences coincidentally take place): "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.... Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (Timothy II 4:6-7, 2:3).

twentieth century's social directives would be transformed, perhaps largely eliminated. The ultimate purpose of his prose is to effect a re-orienting of the means by which people establish moral codes to live by. Even in his historical romances, Ford's protagonists generally suffer the fate of those who are out of tune with the spirit of their age; consequently, Ford did not simply comment on the relative values of past social standards, but instead drew attention to the need for a contemporary Briton to avoid being a mere product of the contemporary Zeitgeist.¹⁰ He felt that "[his] business in life, in short, is to attempt to discover, and to try to let you see, where we stand.... I try to give you what I see to be the spirit of an age" (Lights xv) in the hope that his readers will subsequently chart out an appropriate course for their lives. Even his so-called costume dramas set in all of the past seven centuries serve to make twentieth century Britons aware of (and averse to) any form of History or social destiny that tends to blind them to the "primary laws" latent in them. In Return to Yesterday, Ford explicitly states that in his historical romances "I took historical characters [and]

¹⁰ Grover Smith describes "the implied authorial presence" in Ford's historical fiction as one who, in effect, states "'This character has done such and such, and you can understand why, because I am here to remind you. He is one of us, though in his speech and system of beliefs the meaning of his acts must assume a different form; all you need to do is reflect a moment, and you will see in him the same human machinery as in yourself'" (35).

invested them with entirely modern psychologies" (284); that is, he was trying to reveal not the trappings of past cultures but the qualities that always have informed the human psyche. That many critics regard these historical romances as costume dramas perhaps indicates the difficulty Ford had in trying to reveal the enduring human spirit by means of a broad array of historical fiction.

Ford's perception of European history as a sequence of Zeitgeist is partially indebted to Hegel (whom he describes, in Between St. Dennis and St. George, as one of the German philosophers whose ideas he had studied). But in his study of British culture, England and the English, he discusses the extent to which his concept of historical progression was influenced by historian John Richard Green, whose Shorter History of the English People was studied by Ford in school. Based on Green's quasi-Hegelian view of progressive European Zeitgeist, Ford posited his theory that every phase of history is a "psychological age" and in "any given age the nation having the largest number of individuals most fitted to deal with the peculiar circumstances of that age-- that nation will be the one on the top of the market" (278). The three Zeitgeist periods in the last 800 years were, in Ford's (quite oversimplified) view, the Medieval period (pre-1480, distinguished by mysticism, naive idealism, and altruism), the Tudor-Stuart period (1480-1688, distinguished by Machiavellian opportunism and self-interest), and the

Puritan period (1688-1900, distinguished by pragmatism, moral earnestness, and liberty within the limits of decorum). Many of his historical novels illustrate the qualities of these Zeitgeists and the differences between them, although Ford does not paint one Zeitgeist as being preferable to others. For example, The Young Lovell is set in an inter-Zeitgeist transition period, the first regnal year of Henry VII, at which time the displacement of chivalry by Italian "spying and treachery" defined the onset of "a new age" (196). In the novel's dedication, Ford refers to his fascination with "the psychology of the Old World in the days of Hudson [when] the Dark Ages were finally breaking up" (vi). The novel itself addresses the turmoil generated when a visionary knight from the old order (Lovell) is confronted with the new order of scheming, law-manipulating politicians, and it ends with Lovell swept off into a mystic plane of existence inhabited by heroes and goddesses.

Ford attributes England's past political success to its ability to produce the great men of their age (i.e., those whose qualities perfectly meshed with the Spirit of their times), but he contends that the fourth age which is about to establish itself, unless people do something to prevent this otherwise inevitable turn of the wheel, will be an age bereft of any great men. This new age is destined to be the age of the specialist with a greatly narrowed range of

thought, for the advances of technology and the continual extension of democratic freedoms have forever ended the capacity of one person to extend mastery over a nation, much less a continent. Ford felt that even in the late 19th century, people could still be "generalized" and thus could feel themselves perfectly integrated into a social and moral pattern. But, in what could be described as aube-de-siècle future shock, Ford saw that the accelerating rate of change was eliminating (or making indiscernible) any prevalent social ethos; the new Zeitgeist will be a mechanical age in which people accept their mediocrity and abandon all pursuit of what Ford labelled truth. And more so than in previous eras, the individual feels little compulsion or capability to define himself in isolation from the Zeitgeist. Gone were the Medieval mystic ideals, the Tudor-Stuart schemes for power, and the Puritan precepts of decorous liberty, and in their place are the soulless forces of unbridled capitalism.

In a short philosophical verse-drama published in The Face of the Night in 1904, Ford presented a conflict between two characters: "The Spirit of the Age" and "The Mother." Like a condensed version of Shelley's Prometheus Unbound, this drama presents an authoritarian demiurge ("The Spirit of the Age," much like Shelley's Jupiter) that boasts of its rise to dominance and its "interminable" ascendancy over the earth; however, this demiurge or spirit is shown to be just one phase in an endless sequence, a point made clear by the

speeches of the eternity-figure ("The Mother," very similar to Shelley's Demogorgon). The backdrop to Ford's drama is "a great city [where] battalions of staring, dun-colored, brick houses, newly finished, with vacant windows, bluish slate roofs and yellow chimney pots, march on the fields which are blackened and shrouded with fog" (43). The "Spirit" brags of the smoke from its factories and "the dun of the lives and desires" of the millions enthralled to it, people afflicted "with such a fever,/Such a madness of gold-getting,/Such forgetting/Of the Thing that you called Truth" (46). He mocks "the fool" who predicted that one day humans "shall utterly refuse to face again/The turmoil and the hum/Of all these wheels and wheels and wheels and wheels and wheels,/This clattering of feet/And hurrying no-whither" (48). He further derides someone else's descriptions of a cataclysmic end to his dominion, but is clearly troubled by the long speech of "the Mother" in which she calmly points out the ineluctably cyclic progression of Zeitgeist; she announces that the time will come when people will grow insightful enough so that they will revolt against the prevailing materialistic and frivolous values, although (much like Demogorgon's closing prophecy) this future Spirit too will pass. Many of the lines of this verse-drama could easily have been penned by almost any of the Romantic poets, for the anti-industrial sentiments and the prophecy of a post-industrial millennium typify much Romantic thought.

What is interesting is Ford's claim that the prevailing spirit will be overthrown only by a collective change in consciousness when people finally exert their will and say:

"Hold; enough of our making-believe.
 Ah, children, leave striving and leave
 The little small things that we deemed
 Above price; all the playthings that seemed
 Worth a world of contriving and strife." (52)

As discussed earlier, Ford saw the artist, particularly the new novelist, as the prophet who can instigate such a transformation of consciousness.

In all his discussion of Zeitgeist, however, Ford does not attribute specific relative values to these periods; he does not, for example, extol the Medieval ideals and deplore the subsequent Tudor power ploys, but rather he implies that each age simply had a prevailing ethos to which people either adapted themselves or didn't. Many of his novels centre on a figure who is better suited to an earlier time and thus suffers unavoidable defeat, but he does not imply that that earlier time necessarily produced morally better individuals. Many critics concur with Robert Green that "at the heart of Ford's work is a struggle between retrospective idealism and the gritty unsympathetic materialism Ford saw around him" (Ford 188).¹¹ Such a claim, however,

¹¹ This general view is also adopted by two other critics who have written extensively on Ford, Arthur Mizener and Sam Hynes, Mizener asserting for example that Ford turned to the past to find a "golden age" when life's "permanent values had been able to realize themselves in action" ("Historical Romance" 569).

oversimplifies Ford's attitude to the past, for he did not view the past through rose-coloured spectacles. As William Gass summarizes in his essay on The Fifth Queen, "[Ford's] themes concern the conflict between periods, the dependence of principles (alas!) on times, our changing attitudes towards vice and virtue. Katherine Howard's sweet waist is grasped by the Geist" (34). In H. Robert Huntley's 1970 book on Ford, he disputes the prevailing pre-1970 critical views that generally treated Ford's protagonists as figures of honour who struggle to find an absolute "right" set of values in some past era; Huntley argues, rather, that Ford's fiction, when read in the light of England and the English, is unified through the recurrent use of an "alien protagonist": "[Ford's formula] consists of taking a dominant historical type from one historical period and placing him in the alien and hostile world of a different age" (61). Although Huntley's thesis provides a helpful perspective on Ford's method, he nonetheless attributes to Ford a dismay over the supplanting of "fixed standards of judgement" by moral relativism, whereas the ambiguity and ontological uncertainty consistently expressed through Ford's protagonists do not seem to reflect any dismay by Ford over the apparent absence of absolutes.¹²

¹² Interestingly, Huntley's book-length study of Ford's "comprehensive theory of historical development" was published three years after an article in which Huntley derided Ford's "otiose temperament" which led Ford to plagiarize Flaubert and to earn himself the title of "the

Perhaps Ford's most explicit discussion of the distinction between two Spirits of the Age occurs in his art history text, Hans Holbein the Younger. Here, Ford treats Holbein's work as a paradigm of the "new world" which had supplanted the old world whose qualities are manifest in the works of Dürer. He feels that Dürer captured the mysticism and naivety of a world in which people were candid and trustworthy but always dreamed of or aspired to a higher spiritual condition--a quality evident especially in the dreamily poetic or even "fanatical" eyes. Dürer was didactic, always "attempting to amend by his drawings the life of his day" (34). By contrast, Holbein registered the skepticism and shrewdness of an age in which politics took precedence over spiritual concerns, as is clear through the calculating and distrustful eyes in his paintings. Typical of his times, Holbein had no evangelical mission to "amend"; rather, he set out only to render his time. While Ford feels that Holbein's non-didactic approach to art is preferable, he also makes plain that neither age can be labelled "better"--they simply have differing qualities. That Ford did not regard the Medieval era as a lost ideal is evident in his rebukes of William Morris who "never looked medievalism, with its cruelties, its filth, its stench,

clown prince of letters" ("Flaubert and Ford" 285, 287).

and its avarice, in the face" (Memories 18).¹³

This view is also evident in his treatment (a year after the Holbein text) of the court of Henry VIII. His depiction of Katherine Howard as a devout adherent to Medieval Catholicism does not imply that Ford endorses such idealism--it simply shows her as an historical anomaly who must suffer the consequences of being anomalous. In the Fifth Queen trilogy, Ford offers a detailed rendering of the "affair" of Katherine Howard in her clash with the Machiavellian ethos of the Tudor-Stuart period. Although many critics have taken the novels to reflect what they see as Ford's nostalgic yearning for an era dignified by its chivalric code (what Borowitz refers to as his "tragic view of the lost innocence of an earlier time" [496]¹⁴), these novels do not simply endorse the values of one Zeitgeist over those of another. Ford stresses the problems attendant on one who is out of step with her time, but he also makes

¹³ In The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, Ford mocked the literary Aesthetes for their starry-eyed veneration of medieval life, and in The March of Literature, he again criticizes those who escape into fantasies of bygone ages: "The middle ages was a tumultuous, mad, bloodthirsty, sadistic affair," and the false glorifying of this period (as in Tennyson) "ended in a complete literary slovenliness" and "sub-nauseating sissiness" (698).

¹⁴ Curiously, Borowitz claims that, in The Good Soldier, Ford presents Edward's adulteries as being romantically valorous ("Edward's pursuit of women was an unsuccessful modern surrogate for the deeds of valor of an earlier time" [494]), and yet she also maintains that Ford criticized the Pre-Raphaelites for their "treatment of adultery as medieval romance" (489).

clear that reversion to an earlier ethos is no solution: the individual must understand herself and must not let a prevailing or a past dogma prescribe the values she lives by.¹⁵ Through the rendering of Katherine's struggles, then, Ford scrupulously adheres to his impressionist's creed of pointing no moral, although the novels' readers are clearly led to infer the value of acting in accordance with what they subjectively conceive as being right.

It would be inaccurate to describe Katherine Howard as the heroine of the novels, at least in the Fordian sense of heroism being a manifestation of self-understanding. And just as Ford does not portray Katherine as being "right" in her insistence on the absolute truth and moral necessity of Catholic doctrine, he also does not fully deplore the duplicities of his various villains. Indeed, the villains are deplorable only to the extent that they show meanness of spirit; their mercurial values and self-focused behaviour are a consequence of human nature and are not in themselves indicative of villainy. Accordingly, Katherine's adamant refusal to accept the necessary subjectivity of the human condition moves her into the realm of caricature. By adopting so inflexible a commitment to orthodox dicta, she

¹⁵ Some three years later in The Critical Attitude, Ford directly criticizes those who, as Katherine Howard does, "like to lose [themselves] in meditations upon the Isles of the Blessed," for such behaviour amounts to "idealising of a past which in its day was no more romantic than is our own" (187-8).

loses touch with the human-ness of both herself and her society, and, especially throughout much of the third book, she becomes a cardboard figure from a morality play;¹⁶ she does not realize (as Ford explicitly states elsewhere) that the truths by which humanity collectively lives are protean, and that a new social truth (which has evolved out of the prevailing social conditions) is no less valid than the ones which preceded it. Similarly, she fails to see that allowing her own values to evolve in accord with her broadening life experiences is necessary in a world where absolutes cannot exist. The Widow Annot therefore serves as an effective foil to Katherine, for this worldly hostess believes "that it is better to be lied to than to know truth," even accepting Udal's avowal of love as "the lie I want to hear" (269).

For all his menacing appearance and his record of treachery, Throckmorton comes closest to being the novel's hero, at least in the Fordian (and distinctively Modernist) sense that he is always in full control of himself and acts

¹⁶ In The Alien Protagonist, Huntley asserts that Katherine's resoluteness in the third book is not a stylistic flaw, just a necessary manifestation of her thorough-going medievalism (Alien Protagonist 96); thus, for critics such as Hoffman who regard the novel simply as an attempted portrayal of Henry VIII's fifth wife, Ford's novel is a stylistic failure, because in "having chosen to render her as the embodiment of high idealism, he cut himself off from her reality as a woman" (43). It cannot be denied that the stiffness of her posturing as a martyr to Catholic ideals (especially in her 1200-word speech to the tribunal) does make for a rather lame, even clichéd, ending to the trilogy, but such caricaturing doubtless was Ford's intent.

in line with what he intuitively to be the most appropriate course of behaviour. He is not purely selfish as is the Duke of Norfolk, nor is he craven like Cranmer; he is a devoted supporter of the King and works to promote civil order by whatever means his values will allow. He was granted his farms in Lincolnshire because he helped subvert a rebellion of anti-King forces, and he turned against Cromwell only because he saw that Cromwell was gaining so much popular (and military) support as to be a threat to the King. More importantly, however, he could justify all his actions to himself, and he is the only character in the novel (other perhaps than Culpepper) who can feel a deep and pure love unqualified by any political or religious motives. Throckmorton, that is, has established for himself a set of values that reflects both his own definition of "good" and the nature of the social climate in which he must live.¹⁷ For example, in his Rogues' Alley cellar discussion with Katherine, he states (and subsequently substantiates these claims) that "I am an honourable knight.... If I have undone men it was for love of the republic. I have nipped many treasons in the bud. The land is safe for a true man because of my work" (146). That is, however distasteful his

¹⁷ Arthur Mizener sees Throckmorton as "another Henry" (Saddest Story 134), but whereas the king unhappily vacillates between Catholic piety and cunning statecraft, Throckmorton achieves the necessary reconciliation of these conflicting forces, and thus of all the novel's characters, he is the only one whose life seems to be in a happy state of equilibrium.

actions may have been, they were honourable because they were done in support of a cause that he subjectively judged to be good. He professes his love of virtue and wisdom (146), but he makes clear that these qualities are not defined by external agents such as the Church; rather, they are arrived at through subjective appraisal of all that life's experiences endow a person with. Each man is "as God made [him] ... but some of us strive to improve on the pattern" (172).

Thus, to Throckmorton, virtue is a dynamic condition, constantly being redefined as the individual's store of experience broadens. The conventional criteria of virtue as spelled out in Christian doctrine simply do not provide a universally applicable gauge of integrity, and the terms "good" and "evil" do not mean anything except in the understanding of the user of these terms; indeed, according to this ethical-relativist view of Throckmorton, "there are no evil men, since no man believeth himself to be evil" (168). He also counters Katherine's rhetorical question, "What can be good that is set in array against the elect of God?" (170), with the subjectivists' creed: "Good is that thing that you wish" (172). Knowledge is also subjective; Throckmorton feels that knowing the king only means knowing "his private image of the King" (358). And when Katherine accuses him of being part of "a vile pack," he points out the meaninglessness of such labels: "How shall you decide

what is vileness, or where will you find a virtuous man?" (150).

Throckmorton goes on to point out that man's nature has always been an alloy of conflicting attributes, and that for all Katherine's romanticizing of the social framework in which the "Old Masters" lived, there never has been a society totally regulated by (and judgeable by) one narrow range of ethics and motives. Just as Seneca's Rome had its villains, so too is Tudor England "a goodly world, with prizes for them can take them. Yet virtue still may flourish ... [even though] the times are evil times" (150). Throckmorton thus implies that, irrespective of one's socio-political ambience, the individual can behave in a fashion that he would regard as honorable, and he would be dishonest to himself if he did not constantly revise his values; this, of course, does not justify the opportunism of political chameleons such as Wriothesley, whose changing stances are based on greed, not on a conscientious revision of values. Throckmorton, in short, is an heroic exemplar of the conscionable subjectivism that Ford saw as the basis of personal integrity in any age. There is little evidence in the text to support the views of critics such as Arthur Mizener, who contends that "when [Throckmorton] meets Katherine, with her beauty and her idealism, he begins to see that his idea of himself has been a self-deception" and thus changes "in order to fight the world for her cause"

("Historical Romance" 570).

The contrast between Katherine's adherence to doctrine and Throckmorton's belief in the subjectivity of values is effectively imaged in the cellar scene: Katherine feels nauseated by the darkness and pleads for a light, whereas Throckmorton contends that "when you have been in this world as long as I you will love black night as well" (149). Her eyes only "see the black and white of a man. The grey they miss"; and after all, this is "no yea-nay world of evil and good" (173). The indeterminacy presented here--i.e., that the qualities of dark and light and all the hues of grey effectively obviate any absolute code of values--does open Katherine's eyes so that she soon realizes that the dangerous "game" in which she's embroiled has no easily dichotomized values: "It was not precisely any more a world of black and white that she saw" (186). Nonetheless, her eventual death is a direct result of her incapacity to establish "grey" or variable values that she could modify in accord with what she, in any given context, determines to be appropriate and honourable.

Similarly, in The "Half Moon", (subtitled "A Romance of the Old World and the New") Ford focuses on the consequences befalling those who cling to ancient traditions and codes of conduct that have lost legitimacy in "modern" 17th century England; Edward Colman's love for medieval, Catholic Magdalena and the antipathy he provokes in the

dark, manipulative Anne Jeal clearly reflect his unsuitability for the modern ethos, and his death is a direct result of this incapacity to adapt to this ethos--unlike the modern Henry Hudson who was consummately adapted to the spirit of his age. Ford described this novel as an attempt to depict the "under selves of modern men," and he sought to disclose the qualities of this modernity by juxtaposing it with an anachronistic Anabaptist outpost in England (qtd. in Saddest Story 135).

In all these historical romances, Ford explores the conflict between a set of social forces and an individual whose values are at variance with those generated by such forces. All of his novels set in contemporary England similarly centre on figures who are out of tune with the prevailing ethos of their times. Most of such figures (like Edward Ashburnham, Etchingham Granger, Christopher Tietjens, Don Kelleg) are presented as suffering because the values they adhere to do not help them adapt to the standards which prevail in contemporary England. Their values often are the ones attributed to an earlier age, although Ford is never so simplistic as to imply that a reversion to feudal or liberal-aristocratic social conditions would make for a perfect world, and he makes clear that no social system in England's history forged what he would regard as good

individuals.¹⁸ He acknowledges that the medieval world was a violent and avaricious one, and he concedes that future ages may look nostalgically at the early twentieth century (London 171). In part, Ford's novels address his quasi-Darwinian thesis that the culturally fit survive and the unfit do not. Implicit in this thesis is a belief that one should not concern oneself with adaptation either to contemporary social values or to those that seem better through retrospection¹⁹. Rather, one's success in life should be measured by the degree of individual self-insight. In this sense, Granger is perhaps the most heroic of Ford's early protagonists, for he wilfully rebels against absorption into the nascent twentieth-century Zeitgeist, opting for integrity to values he has divined to be right. As such, he is the archetypal romantic hero.

The difficulty of such rebelling against any social or moral orthodoxy is a central concern of most of Ford's novels, for he points out that the alternative to such

¹⁸ Norman Leer describes Ford's protagonists as "limited heroes," for they are not intended to serve as moral paradigms who illustrate right values; rather, their heroic stature derives from their struggle to dissociate themselves from any collective standards.

¹⁹ In Romance, Ford makes plain that the glamorizing of pirates is a consequence of the distorted, rose-colored view afforded by the passing of time since the heinous acts of pirates were regarded as being deplorable. In fact, he even points out how the view of the Spanish culture as being glamorous is only a result of its remoteness and distinction; to the Spanish, the English are equally glamorous because of their similarly distinct attributes of phlegmatic decorum.

orthodoxy is self-reliance, and the very subjectivity implicit in this is, for most people, terrifying. Doing what one intuitively feels to be right is not as easy as doing what one has been told is right--especially when one intuitively feels that the self, as Ford understood it, is a vast and largely unconscious entity existing for no apparent purpose in a universe bereft of absolute standards. Adherence to culturally accepted standards is therefore tantalizing because of the freedom from anxiety it affords. In his non-fiction (especially England and the English), Ford directly points out how English civility is the only means by which many people can continue to cope with existence, almost as though the rigidity of social codes obviates any worrisome concern with a life that science has shown to be barren of value or meaning. He somewhat deprecatingly points out how, for the twentieth century Englishman, "his religion is almost entirely a standard of manners," not a sensitivity to spiritual wonders (England 317), and yet he concedes that the very mundanity of such a set of guidelines forestalls the fear that existentialists would later refer to as angst. In attaining perfect manners, the Englishman has, in Ford's wry view, sacrificed art, emotion, and self-awareness, but nonetheless "it is true that in repressing its emotions this people has discovered the secret of living" and accordingly it has invented "a saving phrase: 'You will play the game'" (340). Playing by the rules means repressing any emotions

and speculations about life's value that, if expressed, would make England "uninhabitable" (340). For Ford, "truth is an impracticable thing, ...[since] life itself is an illusion" (345),²⁰ but the Englishman still deludes himself into revering Truth because it provides practical standards and the Englishman "is so much a creature of the game that he is intensely wearied if he is told that the game of life has no rules" (351); "what he dreads above all things is a world in a fluid state, and what he suspects above all is the open mind" (352). Ford is repelled by mannered English gamesmanship and yet he concedes that it does function as a sanctuary from the terrifying solitariness of the "open mind." He concludes in The Soul of London that the consummate English condition is "a state of quiescence" (114).

The novel An English Girl (published in the same year as England and the English), directly addresses the implications for a culture which esteems civility above emotion or social idealism. The "girl", a young woman named Eleanor Greville, is the very incarnation of upper-class English civility: "I'm not in the least exceptional, mentally. In my class there are thousands like me" (173).

²⁰ Ford's view of truth as a subjective, protean condition is at least partially indebted to his years of collaboration with Conrad, who asserted that "truth is no more immortal than any other delusion" and that his is "a view that rejects all formulas, dogmas, and principles of other people's making [for] these are only a web of illusions" (Letters, Jean-Aubry I.174, 184).

She dutifully adheres to the codes of behaviour established for her "beautiful cloistral life" (33), and she functions throughout most of the novel as a sanctuary. For her American fiancé, Don Kelleg, she (along with her phlegmatic father and their dark, old estate) symbolizes the dignity and reserve that so drastically counterpoints the rapacity and philistinism of his compatriots:

Sitting there, doing nothing, waiting for life to pass, she seemed exactly to represent what he most delighted in. If she did not represent--if he did not feel for her--passion, she did represent a feeling for the Best. She held all the charm of a life so ordered that [it] represented something as near a perfect, a heavenly peace as you could find on the earth. (12-3)

This peace, however, is achieved largely through a withdrawal from life, a disengagement from anything that lacks refinement or restraint--just as Eleanor decides that she will refrain from entering a friendship with any American woman because of the querulous or strident tone to their voices. The Anglophile Kelleg comes to regard a quiet passionless life with her in an unpretentious manor-house as the ideal mode of existence, this a legacy of the distaste that his mother bred in him for his ruthlessly capitalistic father. Kelleg's attainment of his Anglo-Elysium is, however, thwarted (and thus arises the dramatic focus for the novel) when he learns that his father's sudden death has left him heir to billions of dollars, and hence burdened with the responsibility of managing this fortune.

This rather over-simplified pretext for a novel (i.e., how should one behave if he were the richest man in the world and functioned as the kingpin of American capitalism?) serves as Ford's means of depicting the nature and implications of a coolly English withdrawal from life. Many of the characters function quite openly as symbols of value-systems amongst which Kelleg has to choose. His father is a virtual caricature of crass, meretricious, dollar-obsessed Americanism. Repelled by this, Kelleg has to choose between committing himself to two women: Eleanor, who represents a quietist, aesthetic haven; and the Statue of Liberty, who represents the utopian conditions of liberal democracy he could create by using his wealth to realize his "semi-socialist ideals" (118). In short, the novel traces out Kelleg's reaction to his dilemma: should he make America a Fabian utopia, or should he become an epicene English aesthete?²¹

Initially he, with the Greville family, travels to America to fulfill his duty of restructuring his father's corrupt corporate empire, fully realizing that he is opposed by the prevailing "spirit of the age" (17); like so many of Ford's protagonists, Kelleg is "hopelessly out of date with his time" (268) and thus suffers the consequences of being

²¹ Kelleg bears some similarities to Ford's portrait of Henry James, whose "mission in coming to the Old World was to find a milieu, an atmosphere, upon which America might safely model hers" (James 141).

anomalous. A major feature of this spirit in America is a pro-capitalist attitude that has led to the lionizing of his successful father even by those he exploited.²² Initially, he sets out to replace this spirit with "the standard of Eleanor" (106), but upon encountering the raffish, materialistic crowds in New York City, Kelleg realizes how futile his efforts would be. Then, when he discovers that his father's will cleverly precludes any socialistic scuttling of the Kelleg empire, he returns to England with its secure "atmosphere of Cathedral closes that, as he saw it, was the best that Europe had to offer" (296).

Ford, however, is not simply mocking the American way of life, for by making Kelleg so quixotic he also is lampooning the values of the Fabian Pre-Raphaelites. Kelleg's admiration for a quasi-medieval "settlement" in New Jersey and the fact that "he is for Aestheticism right or wrong" (268) lead Eleanor to point out that "if you want William Morris effects and floppy gowns this isn't the place to come for them" (263). Kelleg, that is, feels that the "miracle of modernity [has not] a single touch of poetry or

²² Ford's view that the mercantile spirit had totally pervaded twentieth century America and commercial London is made evident in his text on James where he describes business actions as "a matter of dirty little affairs incompetently handled by men of the lowest class of intelligence." He claimed that if some natural disaster destroyed the business structure of New York and London, this mercantile spirit is so pervasive that "in ten days the whole system would be running again, conducted by men of similarly mediocre intelligences. Of them this world contains millions and millions" (James 60).

of the finer feelings" and that therefore a reversion to the "ideals of past ages" is needed (118). Just as Katherine Howard futilely tried to reinstate the values of a past Zeitgeist, so too does Kelleg try to supplant the prevailing Zeitgeist with that of medieval England. He sees the ocean liner as a metaphor for his times: whereas "ships had been fine, graceful, air-swept vehicles for the Finer Spirit" (119), today's massive, graceless boats look like gigantic packing-cases inside whose "warmth and tranquillised security slept [people] in those innumerable precisely similar cells" (117). Kelleg, however, is an almost pathetic figure whose socialist ideals and medieval fantasies and aesthetic yearnings leave him destined to live a frustrated life spent in fruitless attempts to save American society from itself.

Unlike Etchingham Granger in The Inheritors, Kelleg does not discover that defining and developing his self should be the primary mission in his life, regardless of the values that prevail in his time. After he describes to Eleanor's father his view that the future of the plebeian American masses rests in his hands to mould, Mr. Greville corrects him with "What you ought to do ... is to find yourself" (127), pointing out that neither great wealth nor endless proselytizing could, by themselves, institute a change in the spirit of the age. Indeed, that Kelleg's ardent socialism has disabled him from engaging properly in

life is reflected in his incapacity to paint well. While studying art under Whistler, Kelleg was rebuked for his socialist preoccupations: "You can't paint a spade because you can't see the thing that the light plays on; you see the hunger in the entrails of the peasant who's going to dig with it!" (128). Kelleg's social-reformist zeal has dulled his capacity to experience life at an elemental or primary level--just as Ford (and later Virginia Woolf) saw polemical novelists incapable of creating the art that bares life.

Kelleg is a hapless figure who typifies the two wrong reactions that one can take in response to the nascent spirit of the age in the twentieth century. He wants to convert Americans to the "European virtues [of] Poetry and the Higher Thought" so that they would admire medieval gowns and Fra Angelico (269), but such a project would not move him or other people closer to fundamental human-ness. His other response, retreat into aesthetic sanctuary in England, similarly is portrayed as being an incomplete engagement in life. That he finally chooses to forsake his Pre-Raphaelite life with Eleanor for a life crusading against American political graft is really of little consequence, for he has moved no closer to an appreciation or understanding of the primary laws.

Eleanor is the one who fleetingly comes closest to appreciating the human qualities that are evident in Americans, despite their aesthetically unrefined culture.

Amidst the crowds of people on the boat returning from Coney Island (with its "meretricious, thoughtless 'attractions'" [263]), she allows her "art student's education" to lead her to appreciate the genuine emotions induced by the color and bustle; she accepted that "the scene was beautiful, and the lovers around them [were] in the right to love rhythmical, inane tunes and rituals" (263). She even suggests that the "unintended" beauty of the city at night could be "just a little symbolical of humanity [for] it does beautiful things unconsciously" (285). However, in reference to her professed delight in the crude beauty of America, her father points out, "you've hypnotised yourself into loving things that normally you couldn't stand" (269). That is, only through some mesmerizing process that allows for non-conscious responding to life does she begin to undergo a broader and more vitalizing array of experiences. She fears that perhaps she may not be able to accompany Kelleg back into "the atmosphere of Cathedral closes" but once she is back on English soil, she realizes that she is irremediably English and that her flirtation with American abandon was just a passing aberration. She therefore remains what she was--a paragon of English girlhood. To confirm her role in the novel as a symbol of English aloofness from life, Ford closes the novel with a letter criticizing her for this very aloofness, a letter written by an Italian-American (himself a representative of non-English ebullience). Although it

makes the novel's ending rather contrived, this long letter serves as Ford's letter to his own compatriots, rebuking them for their disengagement from life:

I know you very well: how typically English, how typically cold, how typically good, you are. You consider, you women of your class and race and type, that the first thing in life is to form a standard, a rule of conduct, and then to live up to it.... [You feared] that yours wouldn't have been one of those English families that live always in a sabbatical calm, that run by clockwork everywhere among your fat, green, tranquil hills and valleys.... And your ideal--the ideal of all of your good, Tory, English type--is simply that of a life that runs smoothly, decently, quietly--a life in which every man and woman knows exactly his part and has exactly his ideas. (303-5)

The writer goes on to clarify what should be a Briton's approach to life, the approach taken by emigrants to America "who are stifled at home--who can't stand your atmosphere of accepted ideas" (305). He points out to Eleanor that "you've got another plane of thought upon which you could have decided... [but] all you English are cowardly: you are afraid of your emotions: you are afraid that if you become passionate you will lose dignity. That's why you insist on maintaining your frigid exteriors" (306-7). He concludes that the English "duty to be frigid" results from a culture-wide failure of imagination. As "The English Girl" who seemingly never will mature into individual womanhood, Eleanor can not allow herself to function on a non-standard plane of thought, and thus she is an icon of what in Ford's view is the tethered English consciousness.

In England and the English, Ford presents an anecdote that typified for him the devastating consequences of sacrificing emotion for the sake of the game: he accompanied a married friend who was taking an adolescent girl to a train station; Ford was aware that they (both "'good people,' as the English phrase is") shared an intense but forbidden love and that this was to be the last time they ever saw each other. Their final words involved a discussion of changing weather conditions and at their final parting Ford's friend merely touched his cap. Ford describes this proprietous masking of searing emotions as "appalling" (E and E 338), although he does point out that such behaviour ensures a stable society in which people behave predictably. This anecdote was incorporated directly into the closing pages of The Good Soldier (and the consideration of English "goodness" is the focus of the whole novel); in many ways it could be said to have engendered not only this novel but also many of the others that Ford wrote.

In A Call, for example (the 1910 novel that bears striking similarities to The Good Soldier), Robert Grimshaw is brought to realize how valueless has been his life of service to the needs of others and to the standards of his public school; only the discomfiting (although mistaken) belief that his friend is an adulterer startles him into a disturbing introspection:

He was revealed to himself for the first time by words over which he had no control. In this agony and this prickly sweat the traditions--traditions that are so infectious--of his English public-school training, of his all-smooth and suppressed contacts in English social life, all the easy amenities and all the facile sense of honour that is adapted only to the life of no strain, of no passions; all these habits were gone.... And having been trained in the English code of manners never to express any emotion at all, he had forgotten that he possessed emotions. (281-2)

This dichotomy between the passional life and the decorous life is clearly shown through the two girls to whom Grimshaw is attracted: the vapid Pauline ("there's nothing in her" [15]) and the dark, vigorous Katya who so defies traditional values that she would agree to live with Grimshaw only if they were not married. Grimshaw contends that he and his peers are "the children of the age" (34) and that "it is that [a meek 'inanimate' nursemaid] that our civilization has bent all its energies to produce" (219). However, because he sees Leicester walking with the wanton Etta Stackpole "down the back streets [that] are as empty as sin and as black" (63), and because he talks with "the black pope" who allows him "to come for a moment out of the ring, very visible and circumscribed, in which he moved" (221), Grimshaw finally discovers "that I'm not the man I thought I was" (290)--he acknowledges Katya's greater strength of will and self-understanding (appropriately, Katya is a psychiatrist), and then he consents to live with her extra-maritally. The fact that she subsequently offers to marry him does not undercut the central premise that Ford presents

here: the individual needs to step outside the circumscribing ring imposed by the spirit of the age, to acknowledge the validity of one's compulsions, and to behave in accordance with what one senses or intuits to be right.

For Ford, then, the artist had an important role to play in the genesis of the "new republic" that he saw as the necessary alternative to the coldly pragmatic social framework that deadened most people's aesthetic and emotional capabilities. In his view, the novelist should function virtually as a prophet, one who could use his imagination to fashion works of art that, by the sheer impact of their aesthetic qualities, could broaden the consciousness of each individual, thereby allowing for emotional and other non-rational forms of experience. Consequently, the whole moral tone of the society would change, for each individual would be more closely in tune with the primary laws of humanity and thus would be strongly predisposed to be good. Good, in this romantic (some would say starry-eyed) definition, refers to the conduct of one who conscientiously adheres to the principles that he divines to be right, after having been led into a thorough consideration of the nature of the human experience. The very ambiguity of this nature (stemming from the amorphousness of the unconscious) means that right conduct can never be codified. Nonetheless, Ford, like his Romantic

predecessors, felt that the very act of stimulating the imaginations of a society's members would bring about the onset of a millennial social order where, without social or religious orthodoxy, human potential could be most fully nurtured. By endowing the novel with the responsibility for this imaginative stimulation, and by proselytizing for a similar attitude on the part of his fellow novelists, Ford was instrumental in redefining the standards by which many twentieth-century novels were written.

CHAPTER SIX

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FORD AND THE GERMINATION OF ORGANIC PROSE

Ford's conviction that an industrialized, positivist culture atrophied all but the mind's rational faculties carried with it several corollaries. Again, these corollaries link Ford to the central Romantic precept that art, especially literature, should effect a broadening and intensifying of one's insight into humanity in general and the self in particular. From the Romantic perspective, the purpose of art is, for the creator, a realization of all that otherwise lies latent in the human soul, and for the perceiver, a revelation of the fundamental principles of existence. Art should not be something that is deftly assembled, but rather should be something that fashions itself and thereby manifests its own operational laws. The necessity for approaching the art of the novel with such a belief was most explicitly put forward (in England) by Henry James, but Ford, in applying what he learned from James, went far beyond "the master" in devising new aesthetic standards and techniques for the organic novel.

Ford saw the shaping spirit of any artifact as a force that exists independent of conscious control, a force that can be nurtured but never regimented; the artist is a medium through which this force drives the development of an aesthetic organism from some seminal state into full and

final fruition. Such a belief in the organicism and autonomy of art was earlier espoused by the Romantic poets who, as Geoffrey Hartman sees it, explored the interface between volition and imagination: "The theme engaged by the great Romantics is that of a general (Keats called it 'gregarious') progress of imagination, of which the artist is a mediator. He reveals in what relation he stands to his own mind--which presupposes for mind (or imagination) an existence apart from ego" ("Reflections" 39-40). The Romantic poet, in other words, let imagination rather than established poetic structure drive the creative process; Ford similarly argued that craftsmanship, while important, only abetted imaginative development--it did not drive such development. Although all ages (even the Augustan and Victorian) had acknowledged that poetic genius sometimes entails breaking the rules, there was always an implicit assumption that the rules by and large were needed in order to make art an understandable affair. Through rules, the artist knew which effects should be striven for and which tools could be used to produce such effects; through rules, the perceiver knew when an artifact was good (i.e., right effects produced by right tools) and therefore merited appreciation. Technique, of course, was not something that the Romantics or Ford spurned, but rather was something that they saw as a form of nutrient: for the artifact-organism to develop all that is potential in its nature, the artist-

medium need be capable of fostering such growth. In other words, technique was something through which art came into being--it was not something that assembled art. That strict adherence to rules was held by the Romantics to be inimical to art is clearly pointed out by Harold Bloom in a commentary on Coleridge, but one which is applicable to all romantic artists, including Ford:

The obvious implication of even a permissive formulation of rules is that the work of art is a thing that is made, and for a certain purpose, that of satisfying the expectations of the audience. This was a conception of art which Coleridge passionately rejected, as did all the Romantics--a work of art was not to be thought of as an object consciously contrived, like a mechanical device, with the end in view of gratifying the settled taste of the public, but as an autonomous and living entity, coming into being and growing and developing as a tree does, by the laws of its own nature. If it gives pleasure, as a tree may indeed give pleasure and of the highest kind, this is not its defining purpose, which is, rather, simply to come into being, to fulfill, as it were, the demands of its own nature. Its author does, to be sure, in some sense bring it into being, but in doing so his conscious intention and intellect play but a secondary part. ("Coleridge" 634)

Ford's commitment to organic art is largely a consequence of his admiration of the aesthetic theory which underlay Henry James's approach to the novel. In an effort to raise the novel to the same level of artistry as that held by poetry, James argued that the novelist must dispense with the traditional utile/dulce novel and must consider the

novel's sole purpose to be aesthetic.¹ In his "The Art of Fiction," James first openly addressed the importance of what in effect was the "organic form" whose virtues the Romantics had extolled.² In it, James rebuked the idea that a novel's aim was merely to amuse or to instruct, claiming rather that "a novel is a living thing, an organism" that grows, if at all, in a refined sensibility. Like the Romantics, James made clear that art was not produced through mere rapture, but could be induced to manifest itself within a carefully prepared imagination; such an imagination would be like "a huge spiderweb of the finest silken threads suspended in the chamber of consciousness, catching every airborne particle in its tissues ... convert[ing] the very pulses of the air into revelations." From this arises "the power to guess the unseen from the seen, ... to judge the whole piece by the pattern" ("Art of Fiction" 172)--a capability that, as discussed earlier, Ford similarly attributed to impressionist prose. Once a grain

¹ In an 1882 letter thanking William Dean Howells for his praise of James's pioneering role in creating the "art of fiction," James contended that he and Howells were being "immolated on the altar of Dickens and Thackeray" because of their attempt to make the novel into a true art form (qtd. in Spilka 105).

² In The Romantic Genesis of the Modern Novel, Charles Schug sees this article as "the initiation of a deliberate romanticization of the aesthetic medium of the novel" (75).

or germ³ implants itself in such a sensibility, it grows in the fashion that it must, with form and content as interdependent as the stem-structure and foliation of a plant. In practice, this entails rendering not just real human actions but more importantly the "psychological reasons" behind such actions; such rendering necessarily precludes the inclusion of any moralizing content⁴. Five years later in "The Future of the Novel," James again criticizes the traditional novel, maintaining that English novelists feared the process by which art had to be produced, preferring the "safety [which] lies in all the loose and thin material that keeps re-appearing in forms ready-made" (249).

Ford's admiration of James' artistic creed is evident in the various "portraits" he wrote about James, but is most explicit (even somewhat fulsome) in the 1913 text, Henry James: A Critical Study. Ford here commends James for his

³ The German Romantic A.W. Schlegel had claimed that in "true" art (as opposed to mechanical or derivative art), "organical form is innate; it unfolds itself from within, and acquires its determination simultaneously with the perfect development of the germ" (qtd. in Orsini 21).

⁴ James is less than explicit about the extent to which a novel should be allowed to address immorality. He abjures Besant's "conscious moral purpose" as the starting point for a novel and he contended that a concern for propriety has vitiated the English novel, but he could never feel comfortable with the French writers' handling of "unclean things" (qtd. in Spilka 113). He dryly implies that a fine sensibility simply would never allow the germination of art that carried it with an endorsement of immorality, although coarseness could not categorically be excluded from a novel for decency's sake.

commitment to eschewing the proselytizing endeavours of "propagandists" such as Dickens and Thackeray and "the reforming novelists of today" such as Galsworthy and Wells (69). Rather, because James let his novels grow in accord with their own inherent pattern, he "never committed the sin of writing what he 'wanted' to write," unlike a traditional novelist who "ruins the 'form' of his works by dragging in digressions about erotics, humanitarianism, engineering, or what you will." For Ford, the lesson he learned from James was that "the novelist is not here to write what he 'wants' but what he has, at the bidding of blind but august Destiny, to set down" (122). The operation of this Destiny he illustrates through citation of James's "Preface" to What Maisie Knew, which is "another instance of the growth of the 'great oak' from the little acorn" (qtd. in James 160). The novelist's mandate is to allow the flow of words to evolve organically and thereby to evoke in the reader the sense that "a feeling of destiny,... a grim semblance of an implacable outside Providence" (161) was shaping the growth of the novel. For example, the reason Ford so extolled W.H. Hudson's prose style was that "he writes down his words as the good God makes the green grass to grow"⁵--the product thus can never be analyzed so as to reveal the construction

⁵ Keats, as Spender points out, similarly described the organic Imagination (as opposed to mere Fancy) as one in which "poetry grow[s] as naturally as the leaves of a tree" (Spender 27).

process (Mightier 73). The work of Hudson and James, then, reflects what Coleridge had called "productive unity" (which generates that which it unites) and not "derivative unity" (which results from the juxtaposition of parts).

Ford no doubt found one of the most appealing aspects of James's handling of organic prose to be the American's focus on the consciousness of an individual rather than the traditional focus on the specific emotions and thoughts of a character. Because of Ford's conviction that the novel should serve to make a reader more aware of the nature and significance of his (and others') consciousness, James's shift in focus was the first move in a direction that Ford, through stylistic innovation, eventually pushed much further than James ever did. The most extensive treatment of the theory underlying James's break from the narratorial pattern of the "large, loose, baggy monsters" (84) of Victorian fiction occurs in the prefaces he wrote for the 1907 Scribner's edition of his works (later compiled by Blackmur in The Art of the Novel). Here, James likens the narrator to a lens or window through which pass some of the formless and haphazard details of life, but whereas the traditional novelist would regard the details themselves as important, James contended that it was the nature of the window that was valuable. The window is the consciousness of the narrator, and what is significant is the operation of this consciousness in reponse to the vagaries of life; artistic

value derives from the author's capacity to fuse form with content while registering such operations. The shift in focus thus must be from "the tangle of human relations" to the consciousness of these (63). Such a focus, in turn, makes possible an aesthetic intensity, the pursuit of which affiliates James so closely with the Romantics.⁶ Accordingly, each novel is a different entity because centred in a different consciousness, even though generated in the same imagination (i.e., James's). After all, the "organic form" (84) of a work of art makes the author into someone whose work is done in cultivating the soil (i.e., in responding sensitively to life), not in constructing an array of stems and leaves. For example, James maintains that he does not devise plot details, for they arise "by an impulse of their own"; if he were to ask of himself what a character should do next, the details would say "'trust us--you write and we'll show you'" (53).

The inscrutable nature of form and its affiliation with the primary laws is perhaps best illustrated in James's 1896 work, "The Figure in the Carpet," a phrase which Ford often used when referring to the concept or principle which

⁶ Schug, in his chapter on James in Genesis, offers a thorough discussion of the formal similarities between James and the Romantics, although he points out that James was a far more conscious practitioner of the features of romantic form.

determines the composition of a work of art.⁷ For example, in Henry James, Ford writes scathingly about the "brow-beating, 'advanced' intellectuals" who oversaw his education and who enjoined him to seek in James "the Profound Moral Purpose" which allegedly was made up of socialism, free thought, and anti-bourgeois aestheticism (44-5). Ford, of course, grew to realize that he would never be able to isolate in James' novels "that particular and very frightening Figure in the Carpet, the moral purpose of the universe" (45-6), for James's writing simply renders life and thus, to Ford, necessarily can disclose no final or absolute purpose beyond the form of the novels themselves; any figure in a novel's carpet can be apprehended only aesthetically, not rationally.

Ford, nonetheless, did not imply that organic

⁷ The story centres on the search by the narrator and his friend Corvick for the one "inner meaning" (194) that subtly informs all the works of the novelist, Vereker; this meaning was "something ... in the primal plan, something like a complex figure in a Persian carpet, ... the very string that [Vereker's] pearls are strung on" (192). The narrator fails to discover this despite having "admirably calculated," but Corvick manages to divine the figure by escaping thought and engaging in "unconscious cerebration" (200). Appropriately, it is while in India ("fancy finding our goddess in the temple of Vishnu") that he gives "the magic shake" so that "they fell, in all their superb intricacy, into the one right combination" (199). He shares this vision with only his wife (author of the aptly titled novel, Deep Down) and both die without divulging the figure, seemingly because the breadth of vision entailed cannot be captured in mere words; that is, the figure is apprehendable only as an organic form, and it could be no more clearly "explained" than could the nature of the force that animates any other living organism.

impressionism merely entailed the Muse-inspired outpouring of unpremeditated art. Rather, he saw the process as one entailing a meticulous crafting so that technique complemented the overriding organic form.⁸ He mockingly described the "enemy forces" as those who proclaimed that to be an artist "you had to put some vine leaves in your hair, take pen or brush and paper or canvas and dip pen or brush in inkstand or paint pot, and Art would flow from your fingertips" (Mightier 145-6). Ford here seems to be criticizing the prevailing twentieth-century view of the romantic approach to art, the type of view held by influential anti-romantic critics such as Hulme, Eliot, and Pound. In the 1970's, this view was strongly defended by Maurice Beebe, who contended that Modernism was distinct from Romanticism primarily because of its greater and more conscious concern with form. And yet, as Charles Schug argues in Genesis, modern fiction (such as practised by Ford) is "the product of a deliberate romanticization of the aesthetic medium: the explicit and conscious concern of modern novelists for the aesthetics of their art in itself does not disqualify them as Romantics but rather could suggest that they are the natural inheritors of a Romantic legacy" (7). The Modernists, in other words, were

⁸ Or, as James phrased it in the "Preface" to The Lesson of the Master, the novelist must acknowledge "the truth that the forms of wrought things ... were, all exquisitely and effectively, the things" (Blackmur 219-20).

consciously emulating the formal characteristics that had far less consciously informed the Romantics' writings, and Schug goes on to establish the correspondence in form between Modern novels and Romantic poems, regardless of the degree of conscious artistry. He rebuts Beebe's claim that impressionism (where subject is subordinate to viewer, almost to the point of solipsism) distinguishes modern fiction from Romantic poetry, maintaining instead that the impressionist technique is an application of the Romantic tendency to capture sensory data as "purely" as possible. Schug regards Ford's novels as a "thorough" application of "the Romantic aesthetic," both in their discontinuity of structure and in their foregrounding through form of subjective values.

The stressing of artistic rigor implicit in what Schug calls "deliberate romanticism" (22) may seem to be incompatible with the notion of organic art, for the conscious activity of revision seems more a feature of mechanistic construction than organic growth. For Ford and James (and no less for Coleridge and Wordsworth and Shelley), organicism referred to the inherent form of the work, rather than any specific sequence of words, so that revision was not only permissible but also a necessity in order to achieve the most thoroughgoing formal unity.⁹ No

⁹ Throughout Genesis, Schug cites substantial critical opinion defending the view that Romantic poetry does manifest a concern for structure and aesthetic orderliness,

doubt, Ford and James were working under the Paterian definition of organicism, in which "afterthoughts, retouchings, finish, will be of profit only so far as they too really serve to bring out the original, initiative, generative sense in them" ("Style" in Appreciations 33); and as G. Orsini points out, only the most literal-minded would not see the organic creation process as one calling for corrections which "replace an inorganic detail with one that is organic" (27).

For Ford, the actual subject matter would be subservient to both technique and form, for virtually any subject matter could serve as the basis for organic art.¹⁰ In fact, for his contemporary fiction in which Ford sought to foster clear insight into the nature of the age, he could easily have accepted James's claim that the plot details took care of themselves as long as the writer appropriately managed technique. His claim that people now were bereft of any sense of pattern and had thus lost contact with any

albeit a dynamic and organic order.

¹⁰ In 1901, Ford wrote to Edward Garnett suggesting that there should be a "popular Library of Literature" which discloses "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 & noble ideas entertained, by said Great Writers, of elevating & of making the world a better place. The idea, I say, keeps booming in my head--why couldn't one make some sort of nucleus, just some little attempt at forming a small heap on which people could stand & get a point of view with their heads a few inches above the moral atmosphere of these Islands" (Letters 15).

source of values led him to propose the "Affair" as the vehicle for impressionist prose. To him, the specialization of the twentieth century eliminated any Great Men, and thus an episode from the life of virtually any directionless, morally uncertain person can be epiphanic--as long the strategies of proper Affair-writing are adhered to.

Because the technique must function as an incarnation of its form, the novelist had to be scrupulous in ensuring that he not lapse into melodrama or digression or pontification. Accordingly, Ford felt that an Affair had to be free of panoramic scope or what he referred to as the "strong situation," these being the highly artificial features of the traditional novel (which resembled "a series of short stories with linked characters" [Thus to Revisit 42]). By creating such features, the traditional novelist invents rather than renders--he is more a "recounter of anecdotes" (James 67) than an historian. Ford even suggested that traditional novelists (who lacked the rigor of true artists) would be better employed writing facile verse, a medium more suited to their "unmanageable language, their untidy minds, their lack of definiteness" (Mightier 132). Instead, the impressionist writer's aim would be for limpidness, in line with the Flaubertian ideal of the "subject-less novel": "What seems beautiful to me [Flaubert] and what I should like to do is a book about nothing, a book with no exterior attachment ... a book which

would have almost no subject, or whose subject at least would be almost invisible, if that is possible" (Flaubert's Correspondances, qtd. in Kronegger 73).

The organic impressionist would, to be sure, want his work to be poignant and to have an engrossing sense of movement toward an inevitable end, but these effects would have to be achieved through apt selection of details. Such details could be very commonplace, but the task for the novelist would be to squeeze them to the utmost (to use a term that James, Conrad, and Ford commonly used when describing the art of the novel¹¹). Squeezing a few selected details thus obviated any tendency to episodic (and thus inorganic) prose, leading instead to the primary criterion of an Affair: a focus on "one embroilment, one set of embarrassments, one human coil, one psychological progression," leading to one culmination (Revisit 44). This stressing of unity and density reflects Ford's admiration for what he saw as the organic cohesion that distinguished ancient Greek and Roman writers--this a product of the more evident sense of pattern in their societies.

Ford saw James as the pioneer of the impressionistic squeeze, for, given that "the supreme function of

¹¹ Ford recollects that Conrad used to describe writing as taking a subject and "'squeezing the guts out of it'" (English Novel 140), and Ford describes "the real crime against the Holy Ghost" as "not squeezing the last drop of blood out of your subject when you are writing a book" (Conrad 135).

Impressionism is selection,... Mr. James has carried the power of selection so far that he can create an impression with nothing at all" (James 152). Squeezing creates "vibrating reality"; that is, it creates "the sensation ... that the mind passes, as it does in real life, perpetually backwards and forwards between the apparent aspect of things and the essentials of life" (153). He illustrates what could be a typically "squeezable" situation in which such vibrations could occur:

Things have been going to the devil with you for some time; you have been worried and worn and badgered and beaten. The thing will be at its climax tomorrow. You cannot stand the strain in town and you ask your best friend--who won't be a friend any more tomorrow, human nature being what it is!--to take a day off at golf with you. In the afternoon, whilst the Courts or the Stock Exchange or some woman up in town are sending you to the devil, you play a foursome, with two other friends. The sky is blue; you joke about the hardness of the greens.... From what one of the other men replies you become aware that all those three know that tomorrow there will be an end of you; the sense of that immense catastrophe broods all over the green and sunlit landscape. You take your mashie and make the approach shot of your life whilst you are joking about the other fellow's necktie, and he says that if you play like that on the second of next month you will certainly take the club medal, though he knows, and you know, and they all know you know, that by the second of next month not a soul there will talk to you or play with you.

That, you know, is what life really is--a series of such meaningless episodes.... And that is what Henry James gives you--an immense body of work all dominated with that vibration--with that balancing of the mind between the great outline and the petty details. (155)

Indeed, the balance between the "great outline" and the "petty details" summarizes the central intent of

impressionism: to fuse form and content into one organic, "vibrating" whole.

Mere squeezing and tightness of focus would not in themselves make for a good novel, for the movement of events within the novel would have to be indicative of the forces that Ford saw shaping the design to the prevailing spirit of the age. He stressed the importance of inevitability within a novel, the sense that every event is driven by some relentless force of causation: when reading a novel, "one wants to feel, not that the Finger of Chance is the ultimate factor of the lives set before us, but that all the little chances and all of the few great haps of a life are only manifestations of the only thing that is worth the thinking about ... of cause and effect" (Letters 11, Ford's ellipses). The events in the novel, that is, should structure themselves so that collectively they manifest the ambient or prevailing forces, in much the same way that the branches of a tree atop a wind-swept bluff manifest, even on a calm day, the qualities of the prevailing wind.

As a legacy of his study of naturalist writers, he felt that "all the history of the world" has produced the qualities of an individual, and that the novelist should disclose "the concatenation of the effects of the one damn thing after another that life is" (English Novel 141). In other words, the novelist has to reveal the workings, at any particular moment in history, of the "implacable outside

Providence," the force of Fate or Destiny or Zeitgeist whose nature slowly changes through time and which causes this sequence of "one damn thing after another." Ford felt that a reader "asks for something to take the place of the Trinity and the Finger of God," and the novelist therefore must work carefully with environment and heredity in order to show how his characters "could not possibly have done but what they did"; through such fidelity to pure causality ("like certain acids acting on certain salts"), the novelist can "hypnotize" a reader into an unusually keen insight into the forces at play on the human "salt" (Letters 11). Such hypnosis is, to Ford, produced by reading a novel whose organic unity reveals (to use Coleridge's term) "the being within," as it is discerned by the writer's "implicit wisdom deeper than consciousness" ("Organic Form" 656).

The net effect of squeezing is that "every incident, every word, every apparent digression, makes towards the inevitable end" (James 161). Failure to achieve such inevitability is what Ford saw as the stylistic weakness in writers such as Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky who present details "without much consideration of whether they have any effect in carrying the story forward, or are of any other use than that of expressing passionate convictions of the author" (qtd. in Harvey 163). This criticism of Dostoyevsky's style (although, as cited earlier, Ford admired the Russian's

romantic "otherworldliness") was disputed by P.P. Howe,¹² which in turn led Ford to defend his insistence on purity of form and inevitability of narrative flow:

Let me try to define what 'form' means for myself. Laying out a novel is much like scheming out a campaign at auction-bridge, when you see both your own hand and the dummy's, and you may put it that every word in a novel should help the story forward towards the taking of that last trick which is your final effect.... The 'strong scene' is the curse of the novel.... What we need, what we should strive to produce, is a novel uniform in key, in tone, in progression, as hard in texture as a mosaic, as flawless in surface as a polished steel helmet of the fifteenth century.... Of course I know that there is the danger of becoming too flawless, arid, soulless, and so on. But ... it is not of that cold, clear flame that in [England] we need stand in dread. (qtd. in Harvey 183)

The somewhat paradoxical implication here that an organic novel should resemble a flawless steel helmet may derive from Pater's own suggestion that an "organically complete" work is one in which culling of all otiose or facile material yields a style that resembles "obstinate, durable metal" (Appreciations 20, 29).

Not only must the novel capture the inevitability of events within an *Affair*, but also it must proceed with what Ford referred to as "progression d'effet," a compiling of related impressions that cohere to create a desired effect and that lead to a progressive increase in narrative tempo so that the reader grows more caught up in the events. Part

¹² P.P. Howe. "The Russian Novel." Outlook 17 Jan. 1914: 76-7.

of the rationale for this is that it contributes to the organic unity of the impressionist novel, for it precludes the chain of climaxes of the contrived episodic novel.¹³ Another consequence of "progression d'effet" is that it underscores the inevitability of the novel's events, just as the speed and fascination irreversibly increase when one falls within the grip of the impersonal, unrelenting force of a whirlpool. By being so caught up within the persistent causal flow of such a narrative, the reader presumably would be able to experience vicariously the blind causal forces at play within the culture at large.

An interesting instance of how "progression d'effet" was consciously used to manifest a novel's form occurs in Ford's description of his involvement with the ending of Heart of Darkness.¹⁴ According to Ford (in Conrad 169-70, although this is nowhere corroborated by Conrad), Conrad had initially intended to end the novella with Kurtz's words, "The horror." But because "horror" carried a more melodramatic connotation than did the French "l'horreur" which Conrad was thinking of, they decided that such an

¹³ R.W. Lid likens the theory of progression d'effet (with its breaking of temporal linearity) to Seurat's theory of pointillism, in which light is broken up onto quanta of colour whose arrangement engages sensibility more readily than does representational art (Lid 103).

¹⁴ This recollection, like most of Ford's, can be regarded as a product of his "impressionistic memory," but, regardless of its historical accuracy, it nonetheless does serve to illustrate Ford's approach to the creation of organic form.

ending would be too contrived and thus would destroy the organic wholeness which had otherwise prevailed in the novel. That is, the sheer triteness of ending a novel with a man's dying words would deflect attention away from the overriding form of the novel (which entails an exploration of the depths of the human psyche). To ensure that his novel had such unity, Conrad composed the final interview with the Intended which "locks in [the] narrative description into one suggestive view of a whole phase of life" (Letters, Blackburn 154). Thus, all the details of Marlow's tale, including the death of Kurtz, function as elements in the persistently intensifying suggestion or impression of a phase of life which is culminated by Marlow's lie to the Intended. Ford concedes, though, that for some readers such an approach results in "the ends of his books hav[ing] sometimes the air of being rather slight compared with the immense fabrics to which they are the appendages" (Conrad 185).

Moreover, because the purpose of an *Affair* was to lead a reader into an imaginative apprehension of truths that were suggested by carefully juxtaposed events, the novelist has to avoid any obviously artificial manipulating of events--such as the ending of a story with an event that implies completion or termination. After all, if the events are intended to typify life, then ending a novel with, say, the protagonist's death or marriage would imply that the

novel is a product of traditional fictional patterns, thereby eliminating its capacity to suggest insight into life as it is.¹⁵ This belief of Ford's that total resolution of plot weakens a novel's suggestiveness led, however, to a falling out with Edward Garnett because of his unappreciative review of Mr. Apollo. As Ford recounts it:

You say the book is a failure at the end because I have resisted the temptation to bring in a Northcliffe 200 ft. high. It seems to me to be a treachery to Form. I wanted to achieve a Greek vase & you say it is spoilt because I have not turned it into a Chinese dragon-pot with a black dragon, spouting fire, moulded and engraved, as an excrescence. I cut out three whole chapters devoted to N. to avoid this. (Letters 29)

Ford's intention to create in Mr. Apollo a Greek vase sheds interesting light on a discussion in the novel itself as to "whether you could express the psychic emotions of Keats's 'Ode to a Grecian Vase' [sic] in terms of paint" (61). Ford, that is, seems to be arguing for art that is marmoreal rather than climactic, art that has no explicit end and thereby can "tease us out of thought/As doth eternity."

Perhaps the most explicit indication of this aversion

¹⁵ To José Ortega y Gasset, such irresolution is a primary criterion of literary impressionism: "A novelist must proceed in the same way as the impressionist painters who set down on canvas such elements as the spectator needs for seeing an apple, and leave it to him to give this material the finishing touches.... Nonimpressionistic painting, superior though it may be in other respects, suffers from one shortcoming: that it represents its objects altogether finished, mummified and, as it were, past. That actuality, that existence in the present tense, which things possess in impressionistic pictures is irremediably missing" (Dehumanization of Art 64).

to resolution occurs in the "Epistolary Epilogue" to A Call. The novel proper ends on an ambiguous note, for despite Katya's relenting to marry Grimshaw, he stands "desolately" and seems uncertain how to respond to the sudden recent developments. The epilogue then begins with three pages of heavily ironic "happily-ever-after" conclusion,¹⁶ following which Ford lampoons the readers who need such closure to fiction and cannot respond to the impressions alone. Such a need Ford likens to "the desire for gin-and-water," for the typical readers "go to books to be taken out of [themselves], I to be shown where I stand" (299). Indeed, the readers' habituation to the novel-as-anodyne was the very element that Ford saw as the main impediment to the acceptance of the epiphanic organic literature around which he hoped to see the development of a new republic. As he tells his typical reader,

Whereas for you the end is something arbitrarily final, such as the ring of wedding-bells, a funeral service, or the taking of a public-house, for me--since to me a novel is the history of an "affair"--finality is only found at what seems to me to be the end of that "affair." There is in life nothing final. So that even "affairs" never really have an end as far as the lives of the actors are concerned. (299)

¹⁶ The closing sentences to this "conclusion" run: "And so, with a moisture at the contemplation of so much happiness bedewing our eyes, we lay down the pen, pack up the marionettes into their box, ring down the curtain, and return to our happy homes, where the wives of our bosoms await us. That we may meet again, dear reader, is the humble and pious wish of your attached friend, the writer of these pages" (297).

Ford's attempts to refocus the expectations of the typical reader are indicative of what Alan Friedman sees as a distinctive feature of the rise of the modern novel. Friedman contends that at the onset of the twentieth century, "the English novel moved gradually from a closed form of experience to an open form of experience," where "open" refers to the ambivalence and irresolution with which a novel ends. He sees the novel manifesting a new attitude toward experience itself, an attitude which perceives experience as a "flux" or a "continual expansion" in which the "stream of moral outcomes" is interminable (15-16). Thus, the open novel does not seek to present a limited progression (such that a character progresses from one definable ethical state to another fixed state), but rather he sets out to render a segment of the stream, all the while implying that the segment is just part of a boundless flux. Friedman sees the move away from closed novels to be such that the forward motion of the novel becomes driven not by narrative convention but by fidelity to experience, this being a more fundamentally "organic" component of the novel (xiii). Friedman further sees the charting out of the new architectonics of the novel undertaken by Conrad and Ford as significant catalysts in the move to the open novel, although he points out that "progression d'effet" as used by Conrad and Ford underscored the expansion of experience, not the accelerating motion toward some fixed ethical state (97-

98).

The same view could be taken toward A Call, the ambivalence of whose ending makes it exemplary of the "flux of moral outcomes" that life is. And such a premise further identifies Ford and the open novel with the onset of what Langbaum saw as the "modern tradition" of romanticism:

The romanticist is thus always in the process of formulating values, although he never arrives at a final formulation. Like Faust's, his career of experience ends not logically, with the formulated truth, but naturalistically, with death. What he does achieve, however, as a positive achievement, is an expanding potentiality for formulating values, an expanding area of sympathy and insight out of which values of increasing refinement can emerge. (Poetry of Experience 26)

This condition is perhaps most evident in the closing pages of Ladies Whose Bright Eyes, where Sorrell and Dionissia are committing themselves to a life together, a life forever freed from the fixed values of the social order they are leaving behind. The novel ends with their embarking on a course of moral self-reliance--not the conventional "closed" wedding. This ambiguity is made most evident **stylistically** through the abrupt shift into disjointed narration and dialogue in the last five pages of the novel; as though suggestive of a newly awakened mind, these pages consist of elliptical, unfinished sentences, non sequiturs, and a tone of tenuity and wonderment.

No doubt Ford's most successful attempt at composing an organic novel is The Good Soldier (notwithstanding the

claims of critics such as Pritchard and Daiches who regard it as being so crafted that it cannot deeply engage a reader). Although the closing paragraphs contain Ashburnham's suicide, this death has long before been made known to the reader, so that the novel ends not with sudden drama but with the last factor pertaining specifically to the Ashburnham-Dowell Affair. The sense that his suicide is an inevitable consequence when people of his temperament find themselves in the current spirit of the age is made apparent through the "progression d'effet," for the intensity of the emotional turmoil progressively builds towards the end of the novel. The novel's final scene--where Dowell leaves Ashburnham to cut his own throat and does not violate "English good form" by expressing his feelings for his anguished friend--serves as the final vivid image that "locks in" the total impression generated by the novel. Through the novel's swirling chronology which creates the odd juxtaposition of Dowell's memory fragments, Ford moves to the opposite extreme from the episodic novel. Any one fragment would seem incomplete and lifeless in itself, and yet when compiled, the fragments fuse into a vividly revealing impression of life in Edwardian England. The novel, then, is an organic, "open" entity in which content and technique are inseparable from form.

**FORD MADOX FORD AND THE LANGUAGE OF MEN:
THE ROMANTIC USE OF "ORAL PROSE" IN THE MODERN NOVEL**

One further corollary of Ford's romantic understanding of the nature of the unconscious was the premise that fictional protagonists need not be well-bred or well-educated; the measure of their literary worth would be the extent to which they serve as exemplars of that which inheres in the human individual. At its simplest, this entails a focusing on the experiences of the common person. In his explicit endorsement of the need for the novel to reflect the cerebral vagaries and meandering discourse of the common person, Ford was deliberately resurrecting an aesthetic principle that he recognized as having largely died out (in Britain, at least) with the demise of High Romanticism in the 1820's.¹ And by so doing, he ventured

¹ In championing the potentially significant experiences of the common person, the Romantics were endeavouring to break the traditions that had, in their view, tightly circumscribed eighteenth-century thought and behaviour. Although the pastoral had for many centuries extolled the virtue and even the sanctity of the simple life, such literature tended to be so allegorical that its characters seemed valuable only to the extent that they could serve as exponents of Christian devotion. The Romantics, by contrast, were more intent on capturing the intrinsically human qualities that lay latent in every individual--a purpose that Abrams sees as the "secularization of inherited theological ideas" which informs Romantic poetry and much of modern literature. Accordingly, they seldom addressed the nature of social relationships or the necessity of modifying one's behaviour to accord with a set of orthodox precepts. Rather, a common

beyond the criteria that traditionally limited a narrative's syntax, diction, chronology, and logical continuity, thereby helping establish the narrative patterns that became distinctive to the modern novel.

The narrative theory which Ford posited for his "new writing" is highly similar to that of Wordsworth, who (in the 1802 "Preface" to Lyrical Ballads) contended that only through use of "the language of men" and common occurrences could a poet disclose truths that can be grasped imaginatively.² In a 1913 letter to C.F.G. Masterman's wife Lucy (who had sent Ford some of her poems), Ford offers what at times reads like a paraphrase of Wordsworth's "Preface." He describes her work as being like that of too many other writers:

(although far from exclusive) focus for their works was the way in which an individual's life experiences served to forge his understanding of life, and if this understanding lacked sophistication or conventional moral value, the Romantic writer would nonetheless regard it as fit material for poetic development.

² "The principal object, then, which I proposed to myself in these poems was to choose incidents and situations from common life and to relate or describe them, throughout, as far as possible, in a selection of language really used by men; and at the same time, to throw over them a certain colouring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual way; and further, and above all, to make these incidents and situations interesting by tracing in them, truly though not ostentatiously, the primary laws of our nature" (595-6). Wordsworth, that is, set for himself the literary goal of disclosing "the essential passions of the heart," the "elementary feelings" (596) that distinguish human nature but which have largely been lost through sophistication and restraint.

That is what is the matter with all the verse of today; it is too much practised in temples and too little in motorbuses--LITERARY! LITERARY! Now that is the last thing that verse should ever be, for the moment a medium becomes literary it is remote from the life of the people, it is dulled, languishing, moribund and at last dead. (Letters 54)

The artificiality of consciously literary writing could be obviated by "prob[ing] yourself much more deeply and harshly ... [for no] clearness of thought is possible unless one either is or has been intensely religious." By religious, he means that one should escape the orthodoxy of "Accepted Ideas" and engage in subjective self-scrutiny, for "Our Lord and his teachings are dead.... It is for us to get at the new truths." Such new truths can be expressed only "in the clear pure language of our own day and with what is clear and new in our own individualities." In short, "what the poet ought to do is to write his own mind in the language of his day" (55). Many of Ford's own poems deal with the earnest simplicity of rustic folk, often using their dialect and syntax extensively in the poems. His "formula" for poetry (very similar to the poetic creed in Wordsworth's "Preface") is that a poem must be derived from observation of everyday occurrences and must be "prose-like"; that is, it must be free of ornate diction, artificial rhymes, and any imposed metre that "interferes with the personal cadence of the writer's mind under the pressure of the recorded

emotion" (Thus To Revisit 207).³

To his mind, the literary conventions that had prevailed in England throughout the last three quarters of the nineteenth century (and that were still persisting in the twentieth) served only to coerce an artist into making his imagination obey artificial rules of conduct.⁴ Pre-Modern writers typically regarded literary verisimilitude as consisting of a neatly sequential narrative in which plausible characters engaged in actions, dialogues, and ruminations that were systematically clarified by the narrator. However, Ford's understanding of the vast extra-logical component of consciousness would not allow him to accept traditional patterns of prose discourse as being suitable constraints to work under. Because a stream of thought consists of discontinuous fragments, then any

³ Ford contends in Thus To Revisit that poetry is "written with a source of emotion but with a cool head" (190)--a premise that is very similar to Wordsworth's well-known discussion of poetry as "emotion recollected in tranquillity" ("Preface" 608).

⁴ In Thus To Revisit Ford describes the currently moribund state of literature resulting from the prevalence of "half-artists" who "spin conventions that they clothe with obscure language" (10). Similarly, in Ancient Lights, he bemoans the popularity of Rossetti's "The Blessed Damozel," for it convinced many aspiring poets "that writing was a matter of digging for obsolete words with which to express ideas forever dead and gone" (53). Ford thus claims that the reader for whom his (and other modern writers') fiction is intended is the one who reads sensationalist newspapers rather than the Times Literary Supplement, for intellectual readers familiar with aesthetic doctrines "[acquire] with the ABC of any art the knowledge of so many conventions that it is almost impossible to make any impression upon their minds" ("On Impressionism" 331, 329).

literary artifact whose structure is chronologically continuous represents a step away from art's primary objective of presenting aesthetic forms that accord closely with the forms or modes of human consciousness.⁵ Contrary to Formalist doctrine, Ford contended that literature should not consist of a textual system whose constituent devices "estrangle" or defamiliarize discourse. And since colloquial speech most closely discloses the spontaneous workings of the mind, then Ford argued that its cadences and patterns should serve as the basis for truly artistic prose achievements. Or, as Stephen Spender describes the process, "the street speaks the idiom and the idiom, in the mind of the artist, invents the form" (84).

Some of Ford's most direct comments about "right" literary language arose through his involvement with the Imagist movement in poetry. His editorship of The English Review in 1909-10 put him in contact with young writers ("Les Jeunes") such as Ezra Pound, Wyndham Lewis, Frank Flint, Hilda Doolittle, Richard Aldington, and D.H. Lawrence. The impressionist theory that he endorsed came to

⁵ Fredric Jameson sees this development in ideological terms: "the modernist gesture" is one which promotes subjectivization of individual experience because of a revulsion before "the reification of social life [and] the commodification of late nineteenth-century capitalism." Thus, "the most influential modernist strategy is surely that marked by the 'discovery' of the interior monologue and organized around the exploration of the individual consciousness and its unconscious from the inside, around the verbal 'rendering' of the inner reality of the monad" (39).

serve as the basis for the "imagism" that set itself so severely against the flaccid, derivative poetry that, in their view, had prevailed throughout much of the reign of Victoria. In Ford's two 1913 articles in the journal Poetry, "Impressionism--Some Speculations," he recaps how his early exposure to the affected and prolix poetry of Swinburne, Tennyson, and the Pre-Raphaelites repelled him, for their writing was too fantastic, whereas Ford claims that a poet must "get a sort of truth, a sort of genuineness into [his] attitude towards life" (II.223); Ford sees it to be his and other writers' aim "to register my own times in terms of my own times" (I.179)⁶. He concedes that modern life is "hazy" and a "gnat-dance" (i.e., bereft of clear patterns or meanings), but through hard, exact phrasing and the careful juxtaposing of images, a reader can be led to experience events in his consciousness more intensely than would otherwise be possible. Hence, an austere and precise description of a dustbin at dawn could be more suggestive of life and more emotionally involving than could a traditional ode to nature (I.183).

Pound claims that Ford was the primary catalyst involved in Pound's evolution beyond the "stilted language" that marred his early (pre-1911) poetry. In the obituary he

⁶ Ford includes these two articles in the "Preface" to his 1913 and 1916 Collected Poems; because of the firm advocacy of clear but colloquial language in this "Preface", D.L.L. Smith goes so far as to describe it as "perhaps the most important critical document of its day" (67).

wrote for Ford, he recollects Ford's uproarious laughter upon reading Canzone, and Pound claims that this laughter saved him two years of wasted effort, for it forced upon him the necessity of using a "living tongue" (Prose 431-2).⁷ However, just as Wordsworth had cautioned about misapplication of his "language of men" principle, both Pound and Ford distinguished between mere casual speech and meticulous selection of words,⁸ the relentless search for les mots justes that Ford often claimed was the founding principle of impressionist writing. That is, for Ford, the words and the syntactic patterns of well-written prose or poetry should be commonplace, for the effect of any sentence or line derives not from the words per se, but from the intensity of friction that these words create as the author rubs them against each other. In The March of Literature, Ford maintains that "the whole fabric of modern art depends

⁷ Two years later, Yeats wrote Pound, thanking him for helping get him (Yeats) "back to the definite and concrete, away from modern abstractions" (qtd. in Homberger 291). Prior to this time, Pound had described Ford as the antithesis to Yeats, who is highly subjective, symbolist, and associative--all which qualities Pound regarded as "slither" (qtd. in Lindberg-Seyersted 12).

⁸ In a 1915 article for New Age, Pound wrote: "I shall give the names of the men who embody [the 'simple ideas' informing contemporary literature].... Ford Hueffer, a sense of the mot juste. The belief that poetry should be at least as well written as prose, and that 'good prose is just your conversation.' This is out of Flaubert and Turgenev and Stendhal, and what you will. It is not invention, but focus.... The common word is not the same thing as mot juste, not by a long way.... Mr Hueffer is the first man who has made enemies by insisting on these ideas in England" (qtd. in Harvey 576).

on [juxtaposition]," and his definition of the effect achieved by careful juxtaposition suggests the intense "intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time" that Pound attributed to the image:

The juxtaposition of the composed renderings of two or more unexaggerated actions or situations may be used to establish, like the juxtaposition of vital word to vital word, a sort of frictional current of electric life that will extraordinarily galvanize the work of art in which the device is employed. That has the appearance of being a rather hard aesthetic nut to crack. Let us put it more concretely by citing the algebraic truth that $(a+b)^2$ equals not merely $a^2 + b^2$, but a^2 plus an apparently unearned increment called $2ab$ plus the expected b^2 . (March 734)

Words, then, should be treated as pieces of drab-looking flint that spark upon contact, rather than as gemstones whose contact generates no "galvanizing" effect. Or, as Pound punningly referred to the hard prose favoured by himself, Flint, and Ford (Hueffer): "Flint I dare say sparks only under repeated and steely impacts, Poundings or Hoofings" (qtd. in Lindberg 56).

Although evident to lesser extents in his earlier novels, Ford's use of carefully crafted colloquial narration is best exemplified in The Good Soldier. In fact, it is because of this mode of narration that the novel works so effectively as an exploration of the surface/depth duality of human consciousness. By eschewing omniscient narration for the sake of a rambling, digressive, self-contradictory retrospection, Ford achieved the psychological realism that

he felt was far more revelatory than was conventional storytelling. Dowell himself points out the inadequacy of orthodox narration:

I don't know how it is best to put this thing down--whether it would be better to try and tell the story from the beginning, as if it were a story; or whether to tell it from this distance of time, as it reached me from the lips of Leonora or from those of Edward himself.

So I shall just imagine myself for a fortnight or so at one side of the fireplace of a country cottage, with a sympathetic soul opposite me. And I shall go on talking, in a low voice while the sea sounds in the distance and overhead the great black flood of wind polishes the bright stars. (12)

Such a fireside chat mode of narration is, in effect, a dramatic monologue, with the reader serving as the quiet listener who occasionally makes gestures of surprise or interrogation that are responded to by the narrator; presumably the reader even gets up with the narrator from time to time in order to admire the moon during breaks in the narration (12-3).

In The Poetry of Experience, Robert Langbaum treats the dramatic monologue as a distinctively romantic form of literature, for it obliges the reader to sympathize with (rather than judge) the speaker (29), thereby leading the reader into a more direct experience of "passion, power, strength of will and intellect, just those existential virtues which are independent of logical and moral

correctness" (86).⁹ Such non-judgemental sympathy with the narrator (leading to vivid vicarious experience) was indeed the express aim of Ford and Conrad:

We wanted the Reader to forget the Writer--to forget that he was reading. We wished him to be hypnotised into thinking that he was living what he read--or, at least into the conviction that he was listening to a simple and in no way brilliant narrator who was telling--not writing--a true story. (Thus to Revisit 53)

It was this very colloquial quality ("the prose rhythm") of Browning's dramatic monologue that led Ford to describe him as one of the two or three poets "who were born since 1790 [i.e., after the Romantic poets] and who did not consider verse-making as something aloof from life, art, form, and language" (Thus To Revisit 133). To Ford, then, the conventions of syntax and diction by which traditional literature was structured actually prevented any vicarious experience, and thus could not lead a reader into a fuller understanding of the "primary laws" that inform humanity.¹⁰

⁹ This moral independence is what Charles Schug describes as a Romantic feature that significantly shaped the form of the modern novel (especially the use of the unreliable or spontaneously speaking narrator) (Genesis 42).

¹⁰ Ford singled out Thackeray as one who constantly obtruded his authorial presence on the reader. He complains that just when you were vicariously with Becky Sharpe on the eve of Waterloo, Thackeray would "thrust his moral reflections upon you" and thus "you were back in your study reading a book of made-up stuff," almost as though Thackeray felt the need "to impress you with the conviction that he was a proper man to be a member of the Athenaeum Club" ("Techniques" 23).

This colloquial monologue style of narration to which he attributes such aesthetic value is similar in kind to that of Heart of Darkness and The Turn of the Screw, but Ford has pushed the technique much further than did Conrad or James, and thus The Good Soldier is more forthright an exemplar of the narrative mode that came to be a hallmark of much modernist fiction.

Towards the end of the novel, Dowell acknowledges that such a mode of narration has made for a rather labyrinthine tale, but he feels the resulting realism and intimacy is worth the difficulty:

...when one discusses an affair--a long, sad affair--one goes back, one goes forward. One remembers points that one has forgotten and one explains them all the more minutely since one recognizes that one has forgotten to mention them in their proper places and that one may have given, by omitting them, a false impression. I console myself with thinking that this is a real story and that, after all, real stories are probably told best in the way a person telling a story would tell them. They will then seem most real. (183)

In order to achieve this effect of having his story "seem most real," Dowell simulates the vagaries of conversational speech, making use of colloquial phrasings (such as "anyhow," "you know," "Well ...," "Let me think where we were," "Queer, isn't it?"); corrections of prior mis-statements (e.g., "I see that I have unintentionally misled you when I said that Florence was never out of my sight" [88]); as well as countless digressions, abrupt tonal shifts, and sudden breaks in chronology. While some readers

find this style too involuted,¹¹ it clearly does serve to lend vigour and credibility to a fictional set of events that, if narrated conventionally, could seem melodramatic, even implausible. After all, Ford was not writing an account of adultery, but was addressing the problematic duality associated with being a "good person." Therefore, a continuous chronology (culminating in the 1913 suicides and Dowell's discovery of the hidden emotional tumults) would not sufficiently foreground throughout the novel the surface/depth or semblance/truth dichotomies. As it stands, the distinction between the illusions of "good" conduct and the disturbing reality of the unconscious is constantly made evident, for Dowell frequently shifts back and forth between his no-longer-deluded narratorial awareness and his earlier limited awareness--both recognizing and recoiling from a universe terrifyingly bereft of purpose or meaning. While telling his tale, for example, he can assert both that Edward was a "perfectly wealthy" gentleman who "was as devoted [to Leonora] as it was possible to be" (8-9), and that "for years he was my wife's lover" (50) and endured "grinding poverty" (129). Both conditions cannot be simultaneously true, nor can the two couples' relationship

¹¹ While not objecting to the discontinuous narration, Robert Green regards the novel's "carefully engineered" form as an indicator of modern "elitist" art which could appeal only to higher levels of society and intellect (50-1), but Ford's use of a colloquial narrator hardly seems to merit Green's adjectives "austere," "disciplined," and "elitist."

have been both "a minuet" (6) and a "screaming prison full of hysterics" (9), and yet by making such contradictory statements, Dowell emphasizes two approaches to life which are, for a Briton, irreconcilable: that of a person who allows himself to see only the surfaces produced by wilful civility, and that of a person who is cognizant of the capacities inherent in the unconscious.¹²

Ford no doubt regarded the fireside chat mode of narration as the most effective stylistic means of melding form and content, for not only could he thereby juxtapose dual levels of awareness, but also he could simulate the totally unvolitional way that unconscious compulsions well forth into conduct that is psychologically "true" (in the Fordian sense of being revelatory of deeply engrained predispositions or desires). For example, just as Dowell concedes that, despite his admiration of Edward, "perhaps one day when I am unconscious or walking in my sleep I may go and spit upon poor Edward's grave" (104), he also lapses on occasion into scathing philippics against Florence, almost as though his rambling recollections periodically tap into his deep hatred of the woman who so abused his trust.

¹² A failure to appreciate this dualism at work is what leads some critics to question the plausibility of Dowell's naivety throughout the nine years of the *ménage à quatre*. Douglas Hewitt, for example, objects to the novel because "only a complete fool" could have been unaware of his cuckoldry, and therefore Ford fails in his attempt to "present him as a thoughtful man whose judgement we must often respect" (172).

When, for instance, he is speaking of his image of Florence standing forlorn on the vast plain that is the hand of God, he placidly mentions that it was his obligation as nursemaid to succour her, but then his tone abruptly shifts into acerbity as he admits that, in the darkness of night, he never does go to her comfort: "[I] hate her with the hatred of the adder, and even in the palm of God.... For I hate Florence. I hate Florence with such a hatred that I would not spare her an eternity of loneliness" (71). He goes on to deem her a "whore" whose interference in the Ashburnham marriage reflected her "sheer, imbecile, spirit of district-visiting" (71), and yet he soon after reverts to his sedate narratorial tone, again referring to her as a "poor thing" victimized in part by familial values (85). Such a shift parallels the momentary loss of control by Leonora when Florence touches Edward's wrist (in effect launching their adultery). Florence pulls Dowell aside and, with "a really horrible lamentation in her voice," implores him to see into the depths of human behaviour (45); indeed, "her face was exactly that of a person looking into the pit of hell and seeing horrors there" (46). But her composure returns as she manages, by an effort of will, to repress her terrifying insight into human nature: "And then suddenly she stopped. She was, most amazingly, just Mrs. Ashburnham again," and as such, she speaks "in her clear hard voice" (46) about a matter that masks her unsettling insight into "the cause ...

of the whole sorrow of the world" (45).

Rather than rely on a traditional novel's narrator (who would describe explorations of the unconscious, if at all, in measured, syntactically well-groomed sentences), Ford saw the inherent contradiction in such a narrative style; conversely, he saw how fidelity to the tonal vagaries of oral story-telling could achieve through style what could only be lamely achieved through explanatory discourse.¹³ Ford claims that he followed Conrad in employing this "new form" of narration, but he also implies that he pushed this technique further than did Conrad:

That we [Conrad and Ford] did succeed eventually in finding a new form I think I may permit myself to claim, Conrad first evolving the convention of a Marlow who should narrate, in presentation, the whole story of a novel just as, without much sequence or pursued chronology, a story will come up into the mind of a narrator, and I eventually dispensing with a narrator but making the story come up in the mind of the unseen author with a similar want of chronological sequence. ("Techniques" 33)

Kenneth Graham argues that a distinguishing feature of the early modern novel is "the deployment of a radically new

¹³ In Conrad's Romanticism, David Thorburn discusses the "impressionist strategies" by which Conrad narrated the Marlow stories; likening Marlow to the narrator of Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey," Thorburn contends that Marlow's jumbled chronology and direct addresses to his listeners serve "to transform Marlow from a mere narrative convenience to a credibly evoked human being whose hesitations and failures and desperate involvement in the task of understanding and narrating constitute in themselves a more compelling drama, a drama which rivals the more traditional story of Jim's adventures" (119).

openness, obliquity, and contradictoriness of narrative forms both in the large-scale movements of narration and in the smallest details of descriptive language, scene, and dialogue, [thereby articulating] a response to a world of new uncertainty and danger" (1). He develops this study of "post-Romantic" indirection through analyses of Conrad, James, and Forster; he does not mention Ford, and yet The Good Soldier exploits technical indirection perhaps more explicitly and effectively than do many of the texts Graham considers. Indeed, Ford's artful use of colloquial style in order to underscore the uncertainty of modern existence is neatly catalogued through Sondra Stang's summary of how Dowell engages the reader in his (Dowell's) own struggle for a figure in the modern carpet:

He [Dowell] is a faux-naif of the most artful kind, a master of obfuscation, a manipulator of every trick in the catalogue. There are overstatements, understatement;, denials, lies, evasions, contradictions, accusations, exaggerations, puns, irrelevancies, logical fallacies, omitted links, digressions, sharp anticipations, delayed explanations, swings of mood, and explosions great and small. He embarrasses, bullies, confuses, and tests the reader; he presumes on his credulity; he cloys, simpers, condescends; he writes of "monstrous things" in a "frivolous manner." He spirals up and down, toward and away from his point, buries it, conceals it, flatters and misleads with false emphasis; he lurches from self-denigration to self-promotion and back; he suddenly varies the intensities and the volume and pushes himself into the story. And he repeats. ("A Reading" 546n)

Moreover, the juxtaposing of tonally impassioned prose alongside more equable narration underscores the multiple

levels at which a consciousness can operate--often simultaneously. For the intrusion into a story of a narrator's bewilderment by or revulsion from deep truths stylistically discloses the multi-level functioning of human consciousness. This, in turn, emphasizes the view held by Ford and Conrad (as well as all the other thinkers of the day who helped shape this new approach to the novel) that there are no absolutes and truth is a subjective, protean quality.¹⁴ As mentioned in Chapter 1, Ford's understanding of consciousness led him to realize that the human mind does not function in a linear fashion; the present is a shifting amalgam of memory fragments, sensory data, emotions, logical operations, intuitive associations, and spontaneously generated images--all without any sharp figure/ground distinction or causal alignment. Wylie Sypher goes so far as to label The Good Soldier "an exercise like Cubist painting,¹⁵ which treated its subjects by seeing them from contrary points of view simultaneously" (62), and Ford

¹⁴ In fact, Ford justified his characters' digressive speeches, their unfinished or elliptical sentences, and their non-sequitur dialogue as being "invaluable for gaining a sense of the complexity, the tantalisation, the shimmering, the haze, that life is" (Conrad 204). Charles Schug sees this use of formal means (such as disjunctive chronology, colloquial discourse, and "lying" narrators) to foreground the subjectivity of truth as an instance of the Romantic form manifest in the modern-novel form.

¹⁵ Ford would have objected to such a label, for he saw the Cubists (and Vorticists and Futurists) as foregrounding themselves in their work, strutting their genius for admiration, whereas Impressionists such as he strove for authorial effacement and therefore greater appearance of "truth" (Thus to Revisit 139).

himself commented that impressionists such as he were rendering literarily what Futurist painters were presenting (although more self-flauntingly) on canvas: "fragments of impressions gathered during a period of time, during a period of emotion" (Outlook, May 16, 1914). The novelist (whose task he saw as being similar in nature to that of the Imagist poet) must strive to capture not a chronology but a simultaneity--or, at least, the matrix of diverse cerebral activities that occur within a limited span of clock-time. This contiguity of disparate images is what Joseph Frank describes as the spatial form of the modern novel, the purpose of which is to induce the sensibility of the reader into fusing the images into a unity--much like the way that the sensibility of a perceiver "fuses" the distinct brush strokes in an impressionist painting or the shapes in a cubist painting (50).

A novelist, of course, cannot achieve the total simultaneity possible within a cubist painting (such as Picasso's painting of both a full-frontal and profile perspective of a woman's face), but the near-simultaneity of discontinuous narration is a close simulation. Marshall McLuhan saw cubism as a forerunner of the collapse of a logocentric society reliant on the sequentiality of thought fostered by linear print; he saw electronic media as the agents by which a reversion to a pre-literate culture was being effected, a culture distinguished by oral and aural,

not visual, modes of communication. And while Ford can not be labelled a precursor of McLuhanism, his views do accord with those that McLuhan would later express about the altered consciousness of the 20th century. And just as McLuhan lauded William Blake and other Romantics for their resistance to the "charter'd" thought and "mind-forg'd manacles" that prevailed in a post-Gutenberg print culture, so did Ford (although less directly) extol the Romantic commitment to "oral art" as a corrective to the problems caused by literary discourse.

In his treatise on the origin and development of the novel, The English Novel, Ford directly addresses the consequence of the printing press on literary style. While his knowledge of historical facts is inexact (e.g., he asserts that Chaucer had William Caxton as an "intimate" and wrote "for the Press" [44] even though Chaucer died some twenty years before Caxton's birth and fifty years before Gutenberg's invention), he does offer some interesting observations on the effect that the press had on the reorientation of the literary mind. He views the appearance of the press as the death knell for oral poetry, the disappearance of which he regards as a "retrogression" (44); this, in turn, gave rise to "the Occidental reader" disaffected with the metrical romances of an oral or Oriental culture. The imaginative writer accordingly strove to create works that more closely resembled consciously

wrought disquisitions than the workings of an oral mind-- what McLuhan would later refer to as acoustic space. Hence arose the "intolerably pompous, allegorical and dull" works of writers such as Spenser (43); in Ford's view, the print-oriented Elizabethans discovered "that words could be played with as if they were oranges or gilt balls¹⁶ to be tossed half a dozen together in the air," so that writers, like colts, vied to see "who could kick heels the higher and most flourish tail and mane" (64).

The human need for fiction and not moralizing or grandiloquence, however, eventually gave rise to the emergence of the novel, which, in Ford's view, was the first step back to an oral culture, a culture whose attributes he regards as more fully human. Such a culture is grounded not in logical discourse but in gossip, and "the fact is that gossip is a necessity for keeping the mind of humanity as it were aerated and where, owing to lack of sufficiently intimate circumstances in communities gossip cannot exist, its place must be supplied--and it is supplied by the novel" (10). Although Ford felt that the eighteenth-century novel reflected this reversion to literary gossip, he nonetheless alleges that its artificiality of style (and thus its infidelity to human nature) almost necessarily generated

¹⁶ In a letter to poet Iris Barry, Ford objected to her "frigid" use of words, contending that "you seem to be looking at the reader and saying: 'See what I can do with seven silver balls!' Forget yourself, mon amie!" (Letters 88).

revolt.

In The March of Literature, Ford commends the "simplicities of the Lake and Cockney Schools of poets," for these schools served as a healthy corrective to "the complete, bewigged artificiality of Pope and the eighteenth century" (25). He later comments that this artificiality virtually compelled the early nineteenth century writers "to invent a new language--one differing altogether from the by-now-exhausted classicisms that produced the effect of having been air that had been breathed over and over again to the point of rarefaction. Wordsworth tried to revivify his private vernacular by reducing it to the language of a child or that of a field labourer purged of dialect and misspelling" (693). Other than these poets, Ford finds the writing of William Cobbett (the radical, populist essayist) as well as that to be found in the country newspapers, to be the few literary means of access to the human condition of the time. Such writing was done in "fine, nervous, expressive vernacular prose" that captured "the clear simple language [of] auctioneers' catalogues, local law reports and conversations in better-class alehouse parlours" (693-4). Subsequent to this brief incursion of the vernacular into literature, however, "this tendency once more gradually passed away before the comparative artificialities and pastiches of Tennyson and the Pre-Raphaelite poets" (25), so that "the majority of 'serious' writing expressed itself in

a language lying between the extremes of the dreadful moral rhetoric of a Ruskin or the heavy and morose dogmatisms of a Herbert Spencer" (694-5).¹⁷ Ford here seems to be echoing the concern expressed by his father (Francis Hueffer, the Times music critic and editor of a Wagnerian journal) that, in mid-nineteenth century poetry, "a mere counting of syllables had taken the place of metrical accentuation" (Hueffer 20). Hueffer, that is, maintained that English poetry had, to its detriment, become divorced from the metrical qualities that inform English speech.¹⁸ He goes on to blame the increased emphasis on logical speech (presumably referring to elaborate or contrived syntax) as the reason for the disjunction between poetry and the depths

¹⁷ In The English Novel, Ford describes the "new novel" as an aesthetically evolved outgrowth of what he referred to as the "English Nuvvle." Such works, as typically written by nuvvlists such as William Black and Walter Besant, were "written for the would-be gentry by the near-gentry," and the images they generally evoke are of "a world so conducted that those amiable but not bright personages shall lead amiable, idle, and almost blameless existences in an atmosphere of curtsyng and cap-touchings" (105-9).

¹⁸ From his father, Ford would also have learned that fidelity to quiet colloquial diction and syntax not only disclosed more openly the rhythms and patterns of spontaneous (albeit culturally shaped) cerebral activity, but also approached more closely the very fountainhead of Art as "spoken" by a Muse. For example, Hueffer contended that the true musician, the best exemplar of which was Wagner, "approaches the original sources of existence ... [because] the musician is alone with his inspiration. He only listens to the voice of the spirit of the world, or, which is the same, of his own spirit speaking to him as in a dream"; such a musician has shut out the empirical world for "he composes in a state of clairvoyance" (Hueffer 10-11).

of human emotion (81).¹⁹

To Ford, this disjunction was most apparent in the growing prevalence of "literary Language [which] had grown perfectly unfit for the communication of any kind of daily thought" (Mightier 276). And since daily thoughts are commonly expressed through the vernacular, Ford saw the use of slang as one means of revitalizing literature. He, for example, recollects being delighted to hear "some such colloquialism as 'all was gas and gaiters' off [Henry James's] lips," and he describes the aesthetic decline of James as the time when "Mr James got further and further from the limpid beauty and simplicity and force and gas and gaiters of his original vernacular" (Mightier 278). Ford even speculates that in a future Utopia where "all novels shall be read out from gramophones to public assemblies," the limpid colloquial style of James's best works would be ideal. He exemplifies this reversion to simplicity by reference to the closing paragraph of Heart of Darkness, whose language is "so low-keyed, so of the vernacular, so just, so fluid that when you read you have again no sense of reading." The proximity of Conrad's diction and syntax to

¹⁹ As a result of her study of Ford's unpublished manuscripts on music, Sondra Stang feels that Ford's early experimentation in music-writing (most often in a Wagneresque vein) substantially influenced the style and narrative strategies of his novels. This is especially evident in "his preoccupation with the movement of the book, the movement of the individual consciousness, the 'progression d'effet,' the pairing of his characters, his experiments in chronology" ("Music" 219).

that of an oral story-teller is so close that a reader does not regard the story as a literary construct but rather as a real occurrence within the reader's consciousness (March /71). Ford, "working beside Conrad, [set out] to evolve for myself a vernacular of extreme quietness that would suggest someone of some refinement talking in a low voice near the ear of someone else he liked a good deal" (Mightier 278)²⁰.

Ford saw his reversion to colloquial diction as a return not only to the epiphanic power of Romantic poetry but also to the vigorous Homeric (and anti-Virgilian) narrative style. Just as Flavian in Pater's Marius the Epicurean inveighed against the loss of aesthetic sensitivity through the growing conventionality of second century written discourse,²¹ so did Ford argue in The March

²⁰ In a 1914 review of Dostoyevsky in Outlook, Ford objected to the Russian's unrelenting power, claiming that "the only thing that I can imagine as an ideal is a book so quiet in tone, so clearly and unobtrusively worded, that it should give the effect of a long monologue spoken by a lover at a little distance from his mistress's ear" (qtd. in Harvey 184).

²¹ "While the learned dialect was yearly becoming more and more barbarously pedantic, the colloquial idiom, on the other hand, offered a thousand chance-tost gems of racy or picturesque expression, rejected or at least ungathered by what claimed to be classical Latin.... Others might brutalize or neglect the native speech, that true 'open field' for the charm and sway over men. [Flavian] would make of it a serious study, weighing the precise power of every phrase and word, as though it were precious metal, disentangling the later associations and going back to the original and native sense of each.... Latin literature and the Latin tongue were dying of routine and languor; and what was necessary, first of all, was to re-establish the natural

of Literature that true literary art survived not through Latin literature but through the "underground" Romance literatures. Or, as he dramatically phrased it:

The [Roman] poets with whom we have been dealing were the Official Poets of the Roman Imperial Court--and, of course, of the intelligentsia and the gentry like Pliny the Younger. The stanzas of a Virgil might be sung on the popular stage, but, as a rule, the infinitely hybrid, sweated, uproarious populace who stank and polluted in the latifondia beneath the Capitoline Hill would not know anything of the hexameters and pentameters that majestically rolled above their heads.... And in the meantime they evolved a language and verse measures that suited their lazy tongues and roaring mouths. In those subterranean darknesses they were evolving the language and the poetry of the Romance period--of Chaucer, of Ronsard and the French, Italian, Provençal and Spanish of today ... and of all that is intelligent in our own language and poetry. What they did in those centuries is the real heritage that Rome gave to the world because, in effect, they gave us ourselves. (233)

For Ford, then, prose was a means by which a reader could be led into a clearer, even epiphanic, insight into fundamental human nature, and the extent to which prose could effect such insight was determined by its degree of fidelity to the diction and cadences which informed a culture's oral patterns. Such a prose theory was unacceptable to those who regarded literature as a medium for conveying moral lessons or for flaunting their ability to juggle gilt balls, but Ford saw the return to oral literature as a move that was both morally important and

and direct relationship between thought and expression, between the sensation and the term, and restore to words their primitive power" (88-9).

literarily sophisticated. In his view (as in the views of all the romantic writers reacting to an increasingly rational, industrial world), oral literature could function as a significant reversal of the institutionalization that was atrophying so many lives by closing off so much of an individual's consciousness. Exposure to such literature could lead a reader to see more keenly into the humanity that he shares with other people, an insight that ideally could lead to the reformation of society. Paradoxically, writers of this "simpler" literature would be forced to be more rigorous in their composition, for they could not resort to the artificial patterns of narrative discourse that novelists traditionally used. Instead, they would have to create prose that would beguile a reader into thinking that he or she was listening to someone tell tales in which would be distilled something intrinsically human. Thus, an oral writer would have to grope always for the mot juste, the one word that could lend sharpness of detail to an image or could fuse disparate details into a suggestive impression. And even if Ford did not always perfectly practise his own theory, he was a significant factor in the adoption of non-traditional prose styles that came to distinguish the Modern novel.

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