The Challenge of Bewilderment

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Chapter 6

Reification and Resentment

in Parade's End

In writing Parade's End, Ford declared: "I wanted the Novelist in fact to appear in his really proud position as historian of his own time."¹ The Tietjens saga would thereby fulfill what Ford called his "one unflinching aim—to register my own times in terms of my own time."² In these declarations, Ford aligns himself with Balzac, Stendhal, and Tolstoy as a bearer of the novel's traditional responsibility to present a faithful portrayal of and a critical commentary on the contemporary life of society. But Ford's tetralogy does not adhere to the norms of classical realism. Parade's End is one of Ford's most daring sustained experiments with techniques for rendering the vicissitudes of human understanding and the vagaries of unreflective experience. Perhaps surprisingly, his first conception of this panoramic chronicle of England's tumultuous passage from the Edwardian period through the Great War to the twenties was "an imaginary war-novel on the lines of What Maisie Knew."³ Now Ford praises James as "the historian of one, of two, and possibly of three or more, civilisations," and the master himself insisted that the novelist is no "less occupied in looking for the truth . . . than the historian."⁴ But it is still difficult to see at first how the

³Ford, It Was the Nightingale, p. 162.
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techniques appropriate for rendering the consciousness of a young girl are
those best suited for painting the broad picture of social change.

We confront here an issue we also faced in our discussion of *Nostromo*. The focus of literary impressionism on the drama of interpretation would seem to stress the private to the exclusion of the public. *Parade's End* is therefore an important exhibit in the debate over whether the modern novel's turn inward necessitates a decline in the genre's social conscience. The question is: Can Ford resolve the apparent contradiction between his ambition to write history and his commitment to dramatizing the dynamics of understanding?

*Parade's End* responds in the affirmative by cutting beneath the question and exploring its foundations. The subject of Ford's novel is the very meaning of the terms *self* and *society*—the opposing poles that are the defining parameters of classical political realism. *Parade's End* seeks to explicate the terms that make historical fiction possible. In doing so, it criticizes the reification of self and society into objectlike entities—a reification of which a naive empiricism is guilty. Beneath the self's fiction of stable identity, Ford's tetralogy exposes a sea of obscure, prepredicative perceptions and associations. At the other pole, Ford suggests that society seems like a substantial, independent entity only as an abstraction from the concrete experience of horizonality. *Parade's End* explores how society and history are paradoxically part of the self and yet alien from it at the same time—part of its lived situation, which it is thrown into and also helps to create, but also an irreducible otherness that may be experienced as an anonymous force from without. *Parade's End* experiments with methods for depicting the processes by which self and society constitute each other in a simultaneously centrifugal and centripetal creation of meaning.

Ford's novel socializes the hermeneutic circle. The whole is the horizon of history and the parts are its players, their circumstances, their views, and their interests. By multiplying perspectives, depicting the clash of conflicting ideologies, and fragmenting the order of his narrative, Ford seeks to educate the dialectical imagination of his readers—to cultivate

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5This error mars, for example, Marlene Griffith's otherwise illuminating analysis of the novel. She assumes that "the individual" and "society," "internal" and "external reality," are stable, pregiven entities the novel seeks to reconcile. Actually, though, *Parade's End* calls into question the very meaning of these terms. It challenges the assumption of the natural attitude that self and society have the independence and self-evidence of fact. See Griffith, "A Double Reading of *Parade's End*," in *Ford Madox Ford: Modern Judgements*, ed. Richard A. Cassell (London: Macmillan, 1972), pp. 137–51.
their ability to make and criticize totalizing syntheses while calling for reflection about what such totalizations entail. The multiplicity and fragmentation of *Parade's End* are a challenge to the reader's capacity to see the social world whole. But they also reveal that every totalization is nothing more than a provisional hermeneutic instrument, inherently incomplete because it is only one among many possible modes of construing society.

Ford follows the lead of James and Conrad in moving back from representing a social world to exploring the processes of world construction. But his strategy of social vision differs from theirs in accord with the defining emphases of his own kind of impressionism. For example, where *Nostromo* projects a model of the being of society, *Parade's End* offers not an ontological paradigm but an ontic depiction of the particular circumstances of a given historical situation. Ford returns to the ontic, however, not to revive the conventions of social realism but to question their epistemological foundations. Ford's approach to social issues is therefore similar in some respects to the politics of James's fiction. Both novelists explore the political implications of the structure of knowledge. Both locate the problem of power in the rivalry between self and other, and both unmask the epistemological authority of social codes. But Ford explores the relation between self and society at a more primitive level than James does. Although both are concerned with the coercive, naturalizing power of conventions, Ford is more interested in the often bewildering obscurity with which social and historical pressures are felt in the lived experience of the perceiver.

*Parade's End* has been evaluated both positively and negatively for its commitment to the life of its age. Ford himself felt that its wealth of historical detail put it at a disadvantage: "I think *The Good Soldier* is my best book technically unless you read the Tietjens books as one novel in which case the whole design appears. But I think the Tietjens books will probably 'date' a good deal, whereas the other may—and need—not."

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Ford may have a point, but we should not overemphasize the liability of *Parade's End* to lose interest as the Great War fades from modern memory. Although a portrait of its times, Ford's novel is not a historical document like a parliamentary Blue Book or a social treatise like Engels's *Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844*. As all works of art, *Parade's End* transcends the circumstances of its origins. It reaches beyond them even if it does not ever lose touch with them. Rather, it uses its contemporary circumstances in its attempt to hold itself open to future readers. A large part of the novel's ability to reach beyond its temporal framework results from Ford's concentration on what self and society mean and how they constitute each other. By explicating the epistemological and existential processes whereby history makes men and women just as they make history, Ford discovers a way of immersing himself in the contemporary scene while exploring an issue with a significance that transcends the limits of its setting. The novel's hermeneutic analysis of the horizon between the individual and history is the basis of its own claim to speak beyond the horizon of its time.

*The Good Soldier* has also been ranked above *Parade's End* on formal grounds. Hynes gives the generally accepted evaluation: "Whether *Parade's End* is as good as *The Good Soldier* depends on whether one prefers the limited, perfect performance or the large, imperfect one."7 What Dr. Johnson said of *Paradise Lost* is probably also true of Ford's tetralogy—no one has ever wished it longer. As many readers have noticed, *Parade's End* is marred by sloppy writing and imperfect control.8 But there are also epistemological reasons for the complaints of tedium and excessive length which Ford's novel has received. In rendering the level of unreflective experience by presenting the unclarified perceptions and memories of his characters in various degrees of order, Ford seeks to emulate the richness, variety, and obscurity of lived immediacy. This mammoth effort results in long expositions of small slices of life—*A Man Could Stand Up* devoted to

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the morning and evening of Armistice Day and a day in the trenches, for example, or The Last Post given over to just a few hours on the day of Mark Tietjens's death. Ford's microscopic dissection of the daily life of consciousness brings to mind Stanley Cavell's warning: "if a person were shown a film of an ordinary whole day in his life, he would go mad." 9

Because the construction of meaning depends on the discovery of consistency, Cavell's maddened spectator would be disturbed by the absence of organizing schemata to direct and structure his attention. Similarly, Umberto Eco has noted that live television transmissions can seem boring because they are not organized by interpretive paradigms: "It is only natural the mediation of Dowell's reflections, The Good Soldier lessens this risk. Only occasionally does Dowell re-create his original, unsynthesized impressions of an event (as in his depiction of his perceptions at Florence's death), and then he does so very briefly. For the most part he renders instead his search for constructs to organize and clarify his past. The greater fidelity of Parade's End to the vagaries of unthematic understanding opens up the unreflected realm more directly and more extensively than The Good Soldier does—and for that reason may tire or exasperate the reader more.

Their differences notwithstanding, Parade's End is in many respects a continuation and extension of The Good Soldier. Unreflected knowing and belief in understanding—major hermeneutic issues in The Good Soldier—are also central to Ford's investigations in his tetralogy into the status of self and society. As I show in the first part of my analysis, Christopher Tietjens undergoes a series of bewildering dislocations that undermine his confidence in the stability of his identity and in the independence of the social order. Immersed in the confusion of the presynthetic, he can only emerge by projecting new beliefs about himself and his relation to the otherness of history. The second part of my analysis focuses on two themes.
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announced in *The Good Soldier* and treated more extensively in *Parade's End*: how the individual is the home of care when conflict rules the collective, and how action is rendered incalculable by the alienation of social systems. Both themes meet in the way Tietjens is made a scapegoat to rivalries spawned by resentment between jealous aspirants to an apotheosis of the self.\(^{11}\) If these rivalries feed on the opacity that divides the self from others, then Christopher's final intimacy with Valentine is an ambiguous triumph and defeat where reciprocal openness and care claim a tenuous victory only by retreating from the center of the social world.

*Beyond Reification: The Status of Self and Society*

Fixity, stability, and order have their uses, but they can also be symptoms of reification. They prevail as *Parade's End* opens—vulnerable, but still dominant. At the outset, Christopher Tietjens is the image of a fixed self with a stable position in a social order. As Robie Macauley notes, Ford's hero would like the world to be "an equable and logical mechanism in which God, Man, and Nature have a balanced relationship"—"a place of feudal order and harmony" where "there are laws of science, morality, or theology to cover every event."\(^{12}\) Although the dislocations that meant the end of empire have begun, Tietjens's world is still a law-governed structure. This is evident, for example, in the way he and others typically define him. He is "Tietjens of Groby," "the youngest son of a Yorkshire country gentleman."\(^{13}\) This way of fixing identity by its position in a system of

\(^{11}\) It may seem contradictory to use the term *self* after having demystified it, but this is only an apparent inconsistency. To begin with, a quest for personal apotheosis reifies the self by deifying it. To use the term *self* to describe the object of its concerns is thus appropriate. More important, however, to unmask the reification of the self is not to deny the existence of the self—only to redefine that existence and to change our understanding of its being-for-itself. After Christopher is forced to abandon his reified sense of identity, he is not selfless; his task, rather, is to reconstruct an identity which recognizes that its status is simply that of a construct, objectified in the eyes of others, but volatile and obscure in its innermost unreflective being.


\(^{13}\) Ford, *Parade's End*, pp. 5, 48–49. Subsequent references will be given parenthetically in the text. As previously noted, I cite the 1950 Knopf edition, which includes all four novels of the tetralogy: *Some Do Not*. . . (1924), *No More Parades* (1925), *A Man Could Stand Up*—(1926), and *The Last Post* (1928). I refer to *Parade's End* as a single entity because it must be seen in its entirety in order to understand the transformations Tietjens undergoes.
relations is typical of the landed gentry, but it has broader epistemological implications. It encourages the notion that society is a determinate, independent entity because it suggests a transcendental structure of potential roles which is indifferent to who happens to be filling them at the moment. A transcendental logic governs not only identity but also behavior. Along with everyone else in their class, Tietjens and his father “were like two men in the club—the only club; thinking so alike there was no need to talk” (p. 7, original emphasis). Norms for understanding the world and standards for conduct seem to exist in certain, unquestionable form outside of any individual. Their autonomous power maintains stability and harmony in personal relations by strictly but silently regulating the potential volatility of the self.

This world is less secure than it seems, however. In a process of naturalization familiar to us from Conrad, artificial constructs have taken on a misleading guise of necessity. Each piece in the system is actually guaranteed of its identity by nothing more than its relation to other positions. Norms and rules preserve their power only as long as their users agree to practice them. But just as Marlow never doubts his code until the scandal of Jim exposes its contingency, these are revelations Tietjens will not have as long as his world holds together.

Tietjens is an eccentric character, of course, “an extraordinary fellow,” as Macmaster exclaims, “almost a genius!” (p. 9). He is irreverent toward authority, so unorthodox in his views that Sylvia calls him “immoral” (see pp. 39–40). Instead of undermining his position in the social structure, however, Tietjens’s idiosyncracies are a strategy for preserving stability and order. His irreverent originality is the response of an ironist who keeps peace with an inadequate world by jesting with it about its failure to live up to his ideals. Tietjens’s independence as a thinker and the intellectual brilliance he disdains to show put him above the battle for position. They seem to make him immune to the insecurities that beset those with an uncertain or changeable place in the structure. He is thus a striking contrast to his friend Macmaster, the anxious careerist and social climber. Tietjens’s idiosyncracies help create “the mask of his indolent, insolent self” (p. 15) by means of which he presents a front of indifference to the social world. Instead of putting him at odds with the social system, his eccentricities are a defense against its inability to make order and reason perfectly prevail.

Tietjens’s use of idiosyncracy to protect a code that reduces the self to a position in a system and to an instrument governed by preestablished rules reveals two paradoxes of reification. First, subjectivity must be employed
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in order to make the self an object. Tietjens exerts considerable originality in the defense of values that would suppress individuality. Second, a reified self never loses its subjectivity even when it is objectified. The objective and the subjective alternately seem more dominant in Tietjens's character. His idiosyncracies make him seem at some times a comic caricature and at others a remarkable individual. He can be both because the role of eccentric, unpredictable genius is an act he puts on; at some times its status as a role stands out, and at other times his originality in playing it.

Tietjens's personal traits mirror his social ideals. It might seem incongruous that such a reactionary character as the "Tory of the Tories" (p. 106) should be an expert at modern mathematics and statistics. But their significance to him parallels the values of his political beliefs. Tietjens reflects at one point about the "way his mind worked when it was fit: it picked up little pieces of definite, workmanlike information. When it had enough it classified them: not for any purpose, but because to know things was agreeable and gave a feeling of strength" (p. 70). The tabulating, taxonomic mind of the statistician preserves order by assigning everything to a place and fixing its relation to all other items in the structure. If the everyday world sometimes fails to obey the laws of logic, then mathematical calculation provides a pure, rule-governed haven to which he can retreat.

Tietjens is "a perfect encyclopaedia of exact material knowledge" (p. 5). His positivistic, empirical attitude insists that reality is determinate and discoverable. Tietjens's hermeneutic assumptions are a fitting counterpart to his Tory ideology of order and stability. His ability to correct "from memory the errors in the Encyclopaedia Britannica" (p. 10) gives him a semblance of omniscience which confirms his faith in the independence of fact and reason. If the Encyclopaedia is unreliable as an epistemological origin, Tietjens preserves the authority of "Truth" through his own infallible memory.

As his story begins, then, Tietjens is a reified self in a reified world. He has a stable identity defined by an indubitable code of conduct. His sense of self is secure in its position in a hierarchical social order, confirmed in its certainties by its omniscience and its classificatory powers, protected against disillusionment by its ironic attitude toward imperfection. The rest of the tetralogy will devote itself to undermining this point of departure. Tietjens's certainties are challenged by a seemingly endless series of bewildering experiences. His history consists of one unsettling dislocation after another, as even a partial listing of the highlights of the novel suggests: Sylvia absconding to Brittainy with Perowne, Valentine Wannop's suffragist
raid on the golf course, Reverend Duchemin’s outbreak of obscene lunacy, the collision in the fog with General Campion’s automobile, the apparent suicide of Tietjens’s father, the bank’s failure to guarantee Christopher’s overdraft, O Nine Morgan’s death, Sylvia’s antics in the war zone, Christopher’s arrest and assignment to the front, the daily anxieties of the trenches, the confrontations with Mark and Sylvia which complicate Christopher’s reunion with Valentine on Armistice Night, the felling of Groby Great Tree, Sylvia’s assault on the Tietjens household in the Sussex countryside, and on and on. Tietjens’s description of life at the front applies with only slight exaggeration to his entire story. His is indeed “a world in which, never, never, never for ten minutes did you know whether you stood on your head or your heels” (p. 373).

The bewildering dislocations in Tietjens’s topsy-turvy world call into question the status of both self and society. Because of the disorienting experiences Christopher and other characters repeatedly undergo, the typical states of mind in Ford’s novel are confusion, astonishment, absent-mindedness, and preoccupation. These are all moods that foreground the unreflective aspects of experience. Defying the assumption that personal identity can ever be stable in structure and clear in outline, they reveal at the bottom of the self a prepredicative surge and flow of loosely synthesized, seemingly haphazard memories and perceptions. This dislocation of the self is paralleled by a more general breakdown of order which demystifies the seeming independence and solidity of society. When the norms and rules Christopher cherished are overthrown, they can be seen more clearly for what they were than they could when their successful operation allowed them to be taken for granted. Their disruption shows them to have been shared constructs for understanding and behaving with only the semblance of independence inasmuch as they formed a system that transcended any of the participants in it.

Let us first examine more closely what the bewildering disorientations in Parade’s End reveal about the self. Throughout the novel Ford tries to suggest in a variety of ways a level of understanding beneath the synthetic compositions of a consciousness that is fully, reflectively in control of itself. One of the first indications that the stability of Tietjens’s identity is under attack comes when his preoccupation with Sylvia’s schemes and with the uncertain paternity of his child prevents him from concentrating: “it gave him a nasty turn. He hadn’t been able to pigeon-hole and padlock his disagreeable reflections. He had been as good as talking to himself” (p. 78). When his taxonomic powers fail to hold his thoughts in order, Tietjens
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discovers a whole realm of obscure associations within himself which defy his efforts to compose them. Tietjens's consciousness passes through the novel in various degrees of clarity and order as he is more or less successful in molding his unreflective impressions and memories into consistency. Similar shifts in degree of coherence also characterize the other perspectives Ford dramatizes. A preponderance of ellipses and broken-off sentences indicates an extreme presynthetic obscurity (see particularly Sylvia's confused associations at the end of Part 2 of No More Parades, p. 443). The relative measure of syntactic continuity in the novel's language and narrative structure provides an index of whether reflection or the unreflected holds the upper hand.

Ford develops various strategies to render unreflective comprehension. When Sergeant Major Cowley speaks, for example, Christopher thinks: "A tender butler's voice said beside him: . . ." (p. 310). This is a category mistake, similar to the one Christopher makes in his perception of General Campion's oncoming car before the crash: "Not ten yards ahead Tietjens saw a tea-tray, the underneath of a black lacquered tea-tray, gliding towards them, mathematically straight, just rising from the mist" (p. 139). Not simply perceptual errors, these mistaken assignments of categories should recall the man who perceives a steel ring instead of a pistol pointed at him. The sergeant major is enough like a "tender butler" and the car is enough like a "tea-tray" to prevent us from dismissing the image. Because these gestalts are not totally illegitimate, and because they are not quite metaphors (they claim to be literally what Tietjens heard and saw), the reader must attribute them instead to a rudimentary level of comprehension. In both cases the mistaken category suggests a more primordial gestalt than a complete synthesis would create. Without structures Ford could not describe Christopher's sensations. Rendering them through categories that both are and are not mistaken is a way of using linguistic structures to suggest an incompletely structured mode of perception.

A similar point is suggested by the metonymy in "a tender butler's voice said." This is a typical, recurrent locution in Parade's End. Almost an independent, disembodied agent, the voice speaks instead of the person. An autonomous part replaces the whole of the sergeant. This metonymy suggests an earlier level of synthesis prior to the composition of parts into a whole which would assimilate the voice to its owner and identify him as the actor. (Recall similarly the floating heads and detached physical features in Dowell's perception of those around him on the night of Florence's suicide.) Ford uses the part-whole structure of metonymy to suggest an
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incomplete synthesis of parts into wholes. Once again he manipulates structures of language to convey rudimentary, not quite fully structured, perceptual forms.

In both of these examples, Tietjens is a curiously passive observer. He does not constitute his perceptions; rather, his perceptions happen to him. The overwhelmed perceiver is a typical occurrence in *Parade's End*: “Macmaster’s mind simply stopped. He was in a space, all windows. There was sunlight outside. And clouds. Pink and white. Woolly! Some ships. And two men: one dark and oily, the other rather blotchy on a blond baldness” (p. 57). The extreme generality of Macmaster’s sensations re-creates the obscurity of precritical perception before reflection has analyzed, differentiated, and categorized its contents. The preponderance of vague perceptions also suggests that the observer is not fully in control. The dazed passivity of the baffled Fordian consciousness renders the receptivity of unreflective meaning-creation as opposed to the more active, directing, and structuring attention of self-consciousness. The Jamesian observer is typically hyperactive because the observer is constantly composing the world and testing interpretive constructs. The Fordian perceiver is, by contrast, often a passive recipient of perceptions that seem to force themselves upon the perceiver or to take the perceiver by surprise because they are not controlled by reflection.

All of these strategies of description have the effect of making things strange. They re-create the kind of disorienting experience that the bewildered Tietjens has not only at the front but also throughout his history: “This was like a nightmare! . . . No it wasn’t. It was like fever when things

14Moser similarly notes that Ford’s phrasing often makes the observer “a passive object rather than an active agent, . . . the battered recipient of impressions he does not want” (*Life in the Fiction of Ford*, p. 151). Stephen Crane’s impressionism has much in common with Ford’s epistemology here. Crane’s techniques for rendering Henry Fleming’s bewildered perceptions of battle are strikingly analogous to the descriptive procedures I have analyzed in *Parade’s End*: “Once the youth saw a spray of light forms go in houndlike leaps toward the waving blue lines. There was much howling, and presently it went away with a vast mouthful of prisoners. Again, he saw a blue wave dash with such thunderous force against a gray obstruction that it seemed to clear the earth of it and leave nothing but trampled sod” (*The Red Badge of Courage* [1895; rpt. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1960], pp. 220–21). Like Ford’s figures, which are recognizable perceptions but also category mistakes, these metaphors (the “howling, houndlike spray,” the “blue wave,” and so on) are linguistic structures that, because they diverge from the gestalts we would expect from a lucid observer, suggest a not yet fully synthesized perceptual experience. Crane’s reader—like Ford’s—must negotiate a double task: replacing these categories in order to understand what is happening, but at the same time preserving them to appreciate what the scene feels like to Henry.
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appear stiffly unreal. . . . And exaggeratedly real! Stereoscopic, you might say!" (p. 589; original ellipses). This is a central paradox of Fordian impressionism which we have seen before—the unreflective realm is dazzling and illuminating even as it is also confusing and disturbing. Its immediacy makes things seem strangely, strikingly vivid, but its incoherences distort them and make them unrecognizable. Ford's rendering of primordial perception is particularly appropriate to war and periods of upheaval, the very topics of Parade's End. These are times when life seems strange, both unusually vivid and bizarre, because available categories refuse to make sense of the world and the unfamiliar overwhelms the familiar. 15

Parade's End sometimes describes unreflective experience as if it were a second, semi-autonomous self. This leads Mizener, among others, to argue that the novel shows "the extent to which the governing impulses of men come from the unconscious." 16 Some of Ford's language does encourage a psychoanalytic description of our divided self. But the subordinate mind in Parade's End is not only a home of libidinal impulses; it is also a certain kind of semiconscious thought process, a realm of meaning-creation which may or may not be swayed by the pull of repressed sexual desires. Hence my identification of it as unreflective rather than unconscious. The unreflective is a mode of intentionality characterized by obscurity and by habitual, automatic operation, as well as by the drivenness that can signal the presence of desire.

In tandem with its dislocation of personal identity, Parade's End demystifies the reification of the social world. Perhaps surprisingly, the reduction of the self to the position of an object in a system can allow it the illusion of autonomy. The reason is that the self enjoys a sense of independence when society is passive and unobtrusive, and such stability results when all parts of the structure are steady and in place. As Some Do Not . . . opens, the hierarchical order of the class structure stabilizes and tames the social world. When society is static, it seems to leave the self alone. Christopher's early equanimity depends on the quiescence and fixity of society's otherness. These permit him to cultivate the illusion of independence because he can be sure that the social setting will not surprise him and

15 Ann Barr Snitow also observes that in Parade's End "the most painful aspect of the war is the pressure it puts on the human mind's capacity to control and order experience" (Ford Madox Ford and the Voice of Uncertainty [Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1984], p. 214).

unexpectedly defy his calculations. As insidious rumors about him begin to mount, however, and as unexpected and unpredictable events break through with increasing frequency, Christopher can no longer maintain the belief that even the most private regions of existence are independent of their social situation. In Parade's End, the social world seems to change from static to dynamic, from passive to active, as the veils of reification are stripped away and a quiescent backdrop becomes an adverse otherness. This metamorphosis is not just the consequence of the social upheavals that catapulted Victorian England into the twentieth century. These changes themselves reveal what it means to be in society. Whether the otherness beyond our horizons is peaceful or turbulent, to be in society means for Ford to find oneself thrown into a situation beyond one's complete control.

The different images of Christopher at the beginning and the end of the tetralogy mark his passage from a proud independence made possible by a static, passive social order to the beleaguered but valiant humility of a self struggling with a trying situation. At the outset, "in the perfectly appointed railway carriage" (p. 3), Tietjens is the imperturbable, omniscient candidate for Anglican sainthood who has no doubts about his personal ascendancy. At the end, the weary, "dejected bulldog" (p. 835) who heads off with his bicycle to retrieve some forgotten prints is a self chastened in its pride by the adversity it has undergone and still faces. Between these two poles, Christopher learns that to be in society means to confront across one's horizons manifestations of otherness which defy total management. Losing his illusion of independence, Christopher gains in humanity as both he and his world seem less fixed, stable objects than interdependent poles of a dynamic, if often hostile, not always reciprocal, relationship.

Parade's End suggests that we experience the otherness of society and history most dramatically when we are overtaken by bewildering, uncontrollable events. This kind of experience is particularly forceful and frequent in times of rapid change, turmoil, and war, as in the period Ford's novel portrays. What it means to be thrown into a social situation is brought home vividly to Tietjens as he finds himself thrown around by his circumstances. This is an external being-overwhelmed which is the social, historical counterpart to the internal being-overwhelmed which the unreflected aspects of the self can cause.

Ford does not depict the self as totally powerless, however. Forced to abandon the illusory independence of an idiosyncratic younger son in a hierarchically structured club, Tietjens must seek a better-grounded free-
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dom—a freedom that acknowledges the constraints of its situation and makes what it can of its limited possibilities. This may mean accepting the rigors of the front in order to welcome the responsibilities of command and comaraderie with the "other ranks" as the only varieties of power and community which his circumstances allow. Or it may mean trying to find in the chaos of the Armistice celebrations a way of clearing a path to a meeting ground with Valentine. Or it may mean compromising with conditions hostile to love and work by retreating to the countryside to live with Valentine and sell furniture to visiting Americans. If the otherness across its horizons sets limits to the self, then the challenge is to transform those constraints into possibilities for acting and being even when adversity seems greatest. This is a challenge Christopher understands better at the end than at the beginning of his story.

The otherness of society may seem anonymous and objective because it confronts the self as the impersonal force of limitation. But Parade's End insistently traces social structures back to their origins in intersubjectivity. Society seems more or less like an object to the extent that its intersubjective dimension is more or less opaque. For example, the first part of Some Do Not. . . . includes all the elements customarily identified as the causes of the downfall of liberal England: the conservative revolt in Parliament, the militant protests of the suffragists, labor unrest, and the Irish question. But all of these factors are introduced with an extreme indirectness that emphasizes they are aspects of Christopher's lived situation, not objective entities or impersonal forces. The dispute between the Liberals and the Conservatives manifests itself in a "bitter social feud" (p. 50) that makes two M.P.'s down at Rye keep their distance from each other. Valentine Wannop, of course, implicates Christopher in the struggle of women for the vote. The Irish rebellion appears first in the quandary General Campion voices to Christopher over whether to accept the job "of supressing the Ulster Volunteers" (pp. 61–62) and then in the execution of Father Consett, Sylvia's Irish priest, by the British military (see p. 413). The striking miners never enter the novel, but Christopher reworks the statistics for the Labour Finance Act during his tumultuous weekend in Sussex.

So personal and indirect a portrayal of the causes for the demise of Edwardian liberalism amounts to an attempt to convey how history is constituted in and through one's lived experience. The persistent, repeated indirectness of Ford's presentation of historical developments emphasizes

that society is not an autonomous entity but a network of relationships. All great historical fiction implicitly assumes, of course, that society is an intersubjective field where the causes of social change are horizontal to the experience of individuals. Tolstoy invokes horizontality, for example, when Napoléon receives only a small walk-on part in *War and Peace* because this great historical personage is at most indirectly related to the lives of the major characters. Ford is similarly less interested in dramatizing the causes of liberal England's death for their own sake than in demonstrating that we identify them only by abstracting from concrete, lived experience.

*Parade's End* again and again exposes the bases of society and history in subjectivity and intersubjectivity. For example, it is customary (and epistemologically necessary) to characterize historical periods with sweeping, abstract labels—the Edwardian era as a time of transition, the Great War as the deluge, the twenties as an age of renewal. In *Parade's End*, these characterizations become concrete and lived again. Ford locates their origins in the collective mood of his cast of characters—the indeterminate feeling of being between the old and the new in the first half of *Some Do Not*. . . , the strain and collapse Tietjens and the others undergo during the war, the beleaguered attempt to start over again which he and Valentine make in *Last Post*. The defining characteristics of a period are traced back to their foundation in the prevailing state of mind through which people understand and live their circumstances. It is an important function of all historical fiction to revivify the lived experience behind the abstract characterizations of a period or an event. *Parade's End* calls attention to the epistemological principle that legitimates this function. The reader of Ford's tetralogy becomes acquainted with historical change by following the changes in the way all the various characters perceive the world and interpret their experiences. Historical generalizations are attempts, Ford implies, to summarize what is shared by the many different hermeneutic paradigms through which the world is actually experienced at any given moment.

*Parade's End* similarly suggests that hierarchical order is not proof of society's autonomy but the result of collective classificatory practices. These reveal themselves when they break down—when it is no longer clear where and how to assign positions. "That was why promiscuity was no good," Mark Tietjens thinks; "a constant change of partners was a social nuisance; you could not tell whether you could or couldn't invite a couple together to a tea-fight" (p. 748). Perhaps especially sensitive to this issue because of his own difficulties with divorce, Ford suggests that one function of mar-
riage is to order personal relations by clarifying and stabilizing the positions that constitute a social structure. Similarly, Christopher's doubts about the paternity of his child are not only a psychological trial (and they are that). They are also a threat to classification, inasmuch as they introduce uncertainty into the lines of kinship which define the Tietjens of Groby. This uncertainty emphasizes that social order is an intersubjective work of classification, and not an autonomous, transcendental logic. Parade's End shows that society is a lived, collective practice even when its practice denies its own subjectivity by creating reified structures.

History is the temporal dimension of the social world, and here too Parade's End attacks reification. History may seem to solidify into an objective order (the deception of dates), or it may seem to obey impersonal, transcendental laws (the logic of the movement from one period to the next). Ford's novel explores how time is actually lived, both privately and publicly, subjectively and intersubjectively, within the self and with others. Once again it is the breakdown in the relation between private and social time which shows what that relation entails. A minor but revealing instance of this is Sylvia's bewilderment when she thinks ten minutes have passed while she is lost in thought—only to look at her watch and find just one minute gone (see p. 417). Such a divergence between the tempo of one's reveries and the rate of movement of the minute hand is possible (and common) because clock time abstracts from lived time in order to structure, regulate, and socialize it (all of which it here fails to do). Sylvia's surprise suggests that temporality is both solipsistic and intersubjective, both a private experience of passage opaque to other selves and a shared medium where my moments correlate to yours (a correspondence that has temporarily broken down for her). The horizontal relation between the self's temporality and the time of others is brought out as well in the novel's repeated reference to the amazement of the soldiers that their friends and family at home share the same sunrise and sunset, the same hours and days, inasmuch as the quality of the moments on the two fronts is so different.

Great events are moments of extreme temporal pressure when the horizon between individual and social time can stand out with special vividness. By situating Christopher and Valentine's reunion on Armistice Day, Ford makes private and shared time converge and diverge simultaneously. The two characters are an isolated island (Valentine even misses hearing the siren as she makes her way through an underground passage to receive a telephone call about Tietjens), but the sea of historical happening presses
them on all sides (unlike Carlyle, in Edith Ethel's anecdote about his obliviousness to Christmas, they cannot ignore the time of others). Their experience shows how history is lived at the intersection of the self's time and time-with-others. *Parade's End* depicts history as a paradoxical temporal otherness, simultaneously beyond the horizons of the self and yet constantly with it as it lives its own time.

Buffeted from within and without, Tietjens faces the challenge of reconstructing himself and his world. At the beginning, indubitable rules predetermine Tietjens's behavior; if your wife leaves you, for example, you must simply accept the situation without protest or public display. After the war breaks out, however, “there was nothing straightforward, for him or for any man” (p. 236). Tietjens finds that “he had outgrown alike the mentality and the traditions of his own family and his own race. The one and the other were not fitted to endure long strains” (p. 752). To Valentine, this change seems all to the good. For her, “the war had turned Tietjens into far more of a man. . . . He had seemed to grow less infallible. A man with doubts is more of a man, with eyes, hands, the need for food and for buttons to be sewn on” (p. 233). His mask of untouchable perfection and indifference torn off, Tietjens becomes more human. No longer a reified self in a reified world, he is a vulnerable subjectivity. This is the salutary disorientation Christopher's bewildering dislocations bring about.

It is not an end in itself, however, but only the first step toward a reorientation in his understanding of himself and his world. He must rebuild them without reifying them once again. Dominated by unreflective preoccupations, Christopher finds himself confused because “there was too much to think about. . . . so that nothing at all stood out to be thought of” (p. 378; original ellipses). Tietjens must thematize and organize his obscure, haphazard memories and associations, even if he must also not mistake tentative, retrospective clarity for final, stable certainty. Tietjens is tempted to say “Damn all principles!” when they fail to keep his social world logical and orderly (p. 144). But he still needs guiding beliefs: “one has to keep on going,” he thinks. “Principles are like a skeleton map of a country—you know whether you're going east or north” (p. 144). For Tietjens, this is a new, nonreified way of regarding principles. No longer autonomous truths or the fixed rules of the club, they now seem to him to be simply hermeneutic guideposts—a pragmatic necessity even if they have no firmer foundation than their own provisional success in directing him.

As his brother Mark thinks later, one “must have a pattern to interpret
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things by. You can't really get your mind to work without it" (p. 832). Mark points out the need for interpretive paradigms to fit things together consistently. But these constructs are simply tools, justified by their usefulness, and not independent, positive truths. Mark stresses their instrumentality: "The blacksmith said: By hammer and hand all art doth stand" (p. 832). Parade's End depicts order as a temptation and a trap, but it also shows the hermeneutic necessity of structures and categories. The decisive distinction is whether an arrangement is regarded as a pregiven objectivity or as a work-in-progress.

Tietjens's attitude toward interpretation changes as he moves beyond his early empiricism. This transformation can be charted in his different assumptions about numbers. He begins with the unbounded faith of a positivist that statistics yield certain truth if calculated properly. First with the actuarial tables for the Labour Finance Act and then in calculations about battle damage in France, however, Christopher is asked to lie with figures. These requests anger him not because they would compromise him personally but because they are an affront to the epistemological integrity of statistics, to their claim to match up with reality. Only gradually does he realize that numbers can be used to lie because they are signs—a problem for interpretation, therefore, and not in themselves a guarantee of truth. Although the honest Christopher refuses to condone deception and manipulation, he acknowledges in his response to Mrs. Wannop's inquiry about illegitimacy rates in wartime that statistics both disclose and disguise what they stand for and thus pose challenges in construing their meaning. Although the figures show no increase in illegitimate births, he notes, that does not necessarily mean that sexual habits have not changed. The very balance in the numbers could indicate a division of attitude among the troops—some Tommies exercising restraint out of concern for leaving a fatherless child, other soldiers indulging in a last fling that they would not allow themselves in peacetime. Both groups are behaving differently than they otherwise would, by this interpretation, but the changes cancel each other out and the numbers remain the same.

When Tietjens finds at the front that "his mind began upon abstruse calculation of chances . . . of direct hits by shells, by rifle bullets, by grenades, by fragments of shells," he takes it as "a bad sign" precisely because "figures were clean and comforting things" (pp. 547, 549). Where Tietjens had earlier valued the illusion of rule-governed order which mathematics gave him, now he finds in figures a temptation, a misleading refuge from contingencies he cannot escape—from the ever-changing
immediacy of experience in the trenches, and from the unpredictable otherness of war. Tietjens's change in occupation from statistician to a dealer in old furniture suggests a transformation in his way of understanding the world, almost as if Mr. Ramsay in Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* were to convert from his relentlessly analytic empiricism to his wife's subjective intuition. If statistics suggested to Tietjens hermeneutic certainty, timeless truth, and causal logic, then a different, nonreified cluster of implications is associated with his work in antiques: the subjective divination of value, meaning unfolding in history, objects as an embodiment of human creation and social practice. Tietjens's abandonment of numbers for furniture represents an epistemological shift from the positivistic quest for fact to the hermeneutic explication of meaning and value.

Ford's fragmented narrative makes thematic and problematic in the reader's own experience the need for "a pattern to interpret things by." *Parade's End* defies the expectation of narrative coherence in order to foreground the tentativeness and duplicity of any organizing structure even as it demonstrates that consistency and order are requirements for understanding. Taking full advantage of the freedom to move across widely diverse perspectives, events, and modes of perception which third-person narrative allows, *Parade's End* extends to epic proportions the rambling, back-and-forth strategy of storytelling which *The Good Soldier* employs. Ford's fragmentation offers the reader paradoxical effects: a greater than usual experience of immediacy from the novel's rendering of the relative incoherence of the unreflective realm, but also an opportunity to achieve a new self-consciousness about the process of building consistent patterns because of the resistance we find to our efforts to establish connections.

For example, because of the many time shifts in Ford's novel, the order of events as they happened to his characters rarely parallels the sequence in which they appear in the narrative. This pervasive discontinuity has been frequently discussed, and it has prompted some critics to give plot summaries that restore events to their "original" order—bringing together materials as widely scattered as the events of Armistice Day, which Ford distributes across a variety of perspectives in the last two novels of the tetralogy. 18 Although helpful as guides to the bewildered reader, the main

18For example, see Cassell, *Ford: A Study of His Novels*, pp. 207–10, and Mizener, *Saddest Story*, pp. 510–15. Sondra J. Stang even considers Mizener's chronology important enough to include as an appendix to her book (see *Ford Madox Ford* [New York: Frederick Ungar, 1977], pp. 132–37). Moser points out, however, that the novel's handling of dates is often hopelessly confused (see *Life in the Fiction of Ford*, pp. 318n–20n).
impression these summaries leave is how little they have to do with our actual experience of the novel. The disappointment that accompanies the relief of being presented with the results of the reader's quest for coherence is an indication that this very search is what *Parade's End* is about.

Ford's strategy of fragmentation highlights various aspects of the process of understanding. *Parade's End* disrupts chronological order by leaving gaps between sections of the novel (the several years that separate the two parts of *Some Do Not* . . . , for example), between the perspectives it dramatizes (as in *Last Post* with its many alternations in viewpoint), or within a single perspective through temporal jumps and omissions of crucial information. All of these blockages in the reader's quest for consistency are commentaries on the role of belief as a tool of hermeneutic composition. As narrative structures these gaps serve the epistemological purpose of foregrounding our need for hypotheses if we are to achieve hermeneutic syntheses—to discover patterns and connections that link up what was separate. The eradication of some of these gaps requires not only synthesis, however, but also imaginative amplification. This is the correlative in the reading experience to the role of belief in filling out hidden sides. Although Ford does not portray Christopher's original tour of duty at the front, for example, his loss of memory is a powerful hint of the unspecified trauma that gave him shell shock.

This is also an instance of delayed specification, as Ford gives more and more clues about the transformation Tietjens has undergone since the reader last saw him at the scene of the automobile accident before the war. Such gradual, partial specification is not only an incitement and an aid to our guesses about hidden sides. It also calls attention to the temporality of consistency building and emphasizes that it is an anticipatory and retrospective operation. Ford frequently begins a book or a section with an unspecified "he" or "she" in circumstances left obscure. Consider the first words of *The Last Post*: "He lay staring at the withy binders of his thatch shelter" (p. 677). Who "he" is (Mark Tietjens) and why he is lying there (an extraordinarily complex matter) do not become clear for many pages. The reader's bafflement at what is going on demonstrates how understanding depends on the projection of expectations—a process thwarted here and thereby foregrounded for reflection by Ford's refusal to orient them. Retrospective constitution is the principle of construal which prevails in much of *Parade's End*, and the backward-looking "Aha!" of the delayed discovery of coherence is a comment on the temporal dynamics of the quest for consistency.
Reification and Resentment in *Parade's End*

*Parade's End* employs several different devices that not only help the reader search for patterns but also prevent the tetralogy from falling into total disarray. Hence, for example, the parallels, echoes, and repetitions many readers have noticed throughout the four novels: the obsessive images that haunt some characters; such recurrent themes as the “single command” and the need for communications drills; phrases that act as leitmotifs, such as “the egg and spoon race,” “touch pitch and not be defiled,” or Sylvia “pulling the strings of a shower-bath.”19 Both disorienting and reorienting, Ford’s strategy of fragmentation disrupts continuity at one level but reinforces it at another through the links these repetitions suggest. This contradictory movement suggests both negatively and positively that meaning requires “a pattern to interpret things by.”

A similar effect results from the repetition of the titles of the novels within the texts themselves. Although the reappearance of a title encourages the creation of links across disparate parts of the narrative, each occurrence gives the phrase a different meaning. Thus “the last post” signifies the bugle’s call, the end of the war, “the Last of England” (p. 727), Mark’s retirement to his shelter, and the possible end of the Groby line if Christopher’s son is not his. By creating a pattern through repetition but simultaneously disrupting it through changes in meaning, these variations facilitate consistence while preventing it from rigidifying into an objectlike stability. The implication is that the work of establishing consistency is never done—that there is no final coherence, but that every pattern is tentative, subject to change, shattering, and renewal. Ford thus duplicates in the reader’s own experience the lesson Christopher learns—that patterns are essential for comprehension, but that our paradigms are only provisional guides.

The often-discussed symbolic dimension of *Parade's End* widens the reader’s search for interpretive patterns beyond individual characters and their relationships to more encompassing totalizations that would extend to their historical world. J. J. Firebaugh was one of the first to read Ford’s novel as “an allegory of social decay” where Christopher stands for traditional values in abeyance, under attack from such symbolic moderns as the hateful Sylvia and the hypocritical Macmaster, with salvation figured in the merger at the end of the political right and left when the Tory joins forces with the social radical.20 As other readers have noted, however, such


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correspondences soon break down. Cassell points out, for example, that Valentine "is not essentially a radical at all" but a "Latinist, pacifist, and sensitive intellectual" who dislikes her militant activity for women's rights.\(^{21}\) Similarly, the idiosyncratic Christopher is hardly a typical conservative, and his attitude to the world undergoes more subtle and more sweeping changes than Firebaugh's scheme suggests. We have, then, a curious situation: *Parade's End* encourages an allegorical reading, but it refuses the correspondences that its own symbolic patterns suggest.

Part of the reason for this paradoxical state of affairs is, of course, that Ford's characters have both realistic and symbolic dimensions. The complications of their psychological and social situations give body to the allegory but at the same time question its simplifying designs.\(^{22}\) Ford's contradictory allegorical strategy also has a hermeneutic function. The suggestions of allegorical meaning are an aid to the reader in totalizing the work's world. They encourage the construction of broad configurations of significance which link up individual characters and events in social, historical wholes. But the breakdown in correspondences destabilizes the allegory. Like the collision between the auto and the horse cart in *Some Do Not* . . . , with its connotations of the clash between the new and the old, modern technology and the traditions of the land, any single allegory offers a scheme for fitting the elements of the novel into a coherent whole. But because no one set of correspondences can organize the entire novel, *Parade's End* defies the reader's desire for a stable, orderly scheme like Firebaugh's. The endorsement of tradition implicit in the collision, for example, wars with the novel's critique of the reifying effects of established customs.

Refusing to stabilize in static, one-to-one correspondences, the novel conducts the reader through a series of to-and-fro movements that encourage totalization, disrupt it, and then facilitate synthesis again. Compelled to abandon a totalization the novel itself had suggested, the reader is called upon to recognize that such configurations are only provisional.


\(^{22}\) *Parade's End* therefore resembles that other great quasi-allegorical novel of the 1920s, *The Magic Mountain*. What Thomas Mann says of his novel and its characters also applies to Ford's novel: "It passes beyond realism by means of symbolism, and makes realism a vehicle for intellectual and ideal elements." As a result, the characters "appear to the reader as something more than themselves," but "this does not mean that they are mere shadow figures and walking parables." Mann goes on to insist on the verisimilitude of his cast. See "The Making of *The Magic Mountain*" (1953), in *The Magic Mountain*, trans. H. T. Lowe-Porter (New York: Vintage, 1969), p. 724. Ford's tetralogy is a similar conjunction of the allegorical and the realistic, which refuses to allow either pole to stabilize or to dominate the other.
groupings that are necessary for understanding but that cannot claim the very finality and totality they seek. By using allegory but also subverting it, *Parade's End* provides the reader with training in the process of synthesizing the relations between self and society—but it also warns against reifying either pole into the static entity that a straightforward correspondence between levels of meaning would suggest.

*Powerlessness and the Politics of Resentment*

Because *Parade's End* plays such paradoxical games with its reader, there are many different ways of totalizing the image of society it offers. But all of them must answer Robie Macauley's well-known question: “Why is Christopher Tietjens so endlessly persecuted?” (p. x). As Melvin Seiden points out, “a catalogue entitled, ‘What Erroneously is Said or Believed about Tietjens and by Whom’ would be a formidable one.”

The persecution of Tietjens extends Ford’s exploration in *The Good Soldier* of how the epistemological barriers between selves can cause antagonism and violence. Amplifying the political implications of the earlier novel, *Parade's End* develops a full-fledged picture of rivalry and resentment as the mainsprings of modern society.

The politics of resentment have their epistemological origin in the paradox of other minds. Almost from the beginning, for example, Christopher and Valentine are victims of others’ misinterpretations. Rumors are an insidious manifestation of the solipsistic side of personal relations. As Mark Tietjens notes, “no man knows what another man is doing when he is out of sight” (p. 786)—or, one might add, what he is thinking when he is in view. But rumors are also intersubjective. What everyone says becomes true by the weight of communal assent, and the victim is powerless to protest. Valentine discovers how validation by intersubjective agreement can go wrong when Mrs. Duchemin insists: “Seven people in the last five weeks have told me you have had a child by that brute beast [Christopher]: he’s ruined because he has to keep you and your mother and the child. You won’t deny that he has a child somewhere hidden away?” (p. 260). The helplessness of the victim of communal misunderstanding is one reason why Christopher claims: “One’s friends ought to believe that one is a

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gentleman. Automatically. That is what makes one and them in harmony. Probably your friends are your friends because they look at situations automatically as you look at them” (p. 497). As Strether also learns to his sorrow, resentment and conflict become possible and even likely as soon as mutual understanding cannot be simply assumed.

Ford’s handling of dialogue dramatizes the distance between selves. Verbal exchanges alternate with renderings of a character’s private reveries. This counterpoint of the intersubjective and the solipsistic is accentuated by such phrases as: “His mind said to himself while his words went on” (p. 317), or “She wanted to say. . . Actually she said. . .” (p. 669). Similarly, Christopher may divine Valentine’s private meanings, but in doing so he stresses her opacity: “I remember the thoughts I thought and the thoughts I gave her credit for thinking. But perhaps she did not think them. There is no knowing” (p. 347). Even when we as readers are most intimate with a character’s consciousness, we are constantly reminded that the mind we are inhabiting is closed to the others in the novel. This is brought home most powerfully in The Last Post when we commune with Mark’s thoughts while his silence makes him a mystery to the rest of his world. The reader is thereby made to share Christopher’s realization of “how shut in on oneself one was in this life” (p. 319). He tells General Campion: “I’m enormously sorry, sir. It’s difficult to make myself plain”; the general replies: “Neither of us do. What is language for? What the hell is language for?” (p. 492; original emphasis). Language would not be possible if solipsism prevailed, but it would not be necessary if intersubjectivity were guaranteed. The failure of language to make individuals mutually transparent is the hermeneutic prerequisite for the persecution Christopher suffers.

If opacity between selves is the necessary precondition for resentment, it is not in itself a sufficient cause. Other forms of strife could result from it, as could attempts to reduce it through empathy and compassion. Rivalry and resentment dominate Christopher’s world for reasons having to do with the reification of the self and society. Tietjens’s attempt to achieve a perfectly secure, orderly identity can also be seen as a drive for an apotheosis of the self. Paradoxically, denying the self by suppressing its fluidity and volatility is also a way of elevating the self by trying to mold it into perfect form. At the beginning of the novel, the brilliant, absolutely self-confident Tietjens seems at times to have conquered human limitation and to have attained an incarnate infinity. (His great bulk would then be a slightly ironic reminder that this Christlike candidate for Anglican sainthood is nonetheless still earthly and finite.)

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By cultivating a front of indifferent self-sufficiency, Tietjens presents to others an impenetrable opacity that suggests an achieved transcendence—an independence from the constraints that prevent lesser mortals like Macmaster, Edith Ethel, and Sylvia from attaining the apotheosis they desire. These others are only too aware of deficiencies in themselves and their circumstances which stand in the way of their dreams of perfection: Macmaster's pre-Raphaelite heaven which would transcend the mundanity of his humble backgrounds and occupational worries, Edith Ethel's aesthetic grandeur which would lift her beyond the suffering and embarrassment her mad husband brought her, Sylvia's longing for continuous excitement which would defeat the disappointments of boredom. The opacity of others becomes a breeding ground for envy and rivalry because Tietjens's apparent self-sufficiency is an irritant to the vanity of those around him. If his promise of perfection seems unbroken, while their dreams remain unrealized, then they may set out to humble him in order to challenge his ascendancy and to assert their own claims. This is a temptation that the characters in Ford's novel either take up actively (as do Sylvia and Edith Ethel) or succumb to reluctantly and inadvertently (as do Macmaster and General Campion).

*Parade's End* suggests that the breakdown of a reified society encourages such a temptation. Without a stable social hierarchy to establish structures of dominance and subordination, everyone is potentially equal—and thus potentially a rival to every other self's special claims. Similarly, when generally shared rules no longer control conduct, individuals are free to pursue their own private visions of apotheosis. Each competes with others who put forth rival claims in a war of all against all. Ford is a radical social thinker in demystifying fixed conventions and stable hierarchies to show that they give the social world only an illusory semblance of autonomy. But Ford the conservative suggests as well that reified structures, although a mystification, are useful in warding off the warfare that vanity and jealousy may provoke. This contradiction reveals Ford's ambivalence about society's turn to modernity. The breakdown of traditional structures and rules is liberating in the sense that it releases the self from the prison of reified form. But the cost of this liberation is, Ford fears, an outbreak of savage interpersonal violence.

A frustrated desire for apotheosis helps explain Sylvia's contradictory attitude toward her husband. At least from her point of view, their relationship is a rivalry fueled by mutual opacity. Christopher is for Sylvia the only exception to the rule that "taking up with a man was like reading a
book you had read when you had forgotten that you had read it” (p. 394). Although “her idea of a divvy life” once was “to go off with a different man every week-end,” she admits “that after a short time she would be bored already by the time the poor dear fellow was buying the railway tickets” (p. 394). Sylvia is thwarted in her dream of infinity—her desire to transcend the familiar, to escape the mundane, to discover (in the words of a lyric that haunts her) “the face not seen: the voice not heard” (p. 201). Disappointed in her hope for transcendence, she finds a substitute in the exercise of power. If she cannot have what she desires, she can at least make others desire her. Their longing for her testifies to her superiority, and she expands her power by refusing to reciprocate.

The difficulty, however, is that this strategy fails with Christopher. He is to her as she is to others—impenetrable, mysterious, untouchable, and therefore powerful, desirable, superior. Mark Tietjens describes his brother as “a regular saint and Christian martyr and all that. . . . Enough to drive a woman wild if she had to live beside him and be ignored” (p. 731; original ellipses). Sylvia finds Christopher both fascinating and infuriating. His personal idiosyncracies and immoral views make him unique, out of the ordinary, a source of endless surprise. But they anger her even more because she finds in them a threat to her own claims. The unpredictable Christopher refuses her power. Sylvia is both intimidated by and incensed “at Tietjens’ terrifying expressionlessness, at that completely being up to a situation” that he demonstrates again and again (p. 406). His unflustered opacity signals boundless resources where she is only too conscious of her limits. In return, “she desired to make him wince” (p. 430)—to torment him and humiliate him as a way of breaking down his mask and asserting her own ascendancy.

This is one reason why, as Mark thinks, “Sylvia delighted most in doing what she called pulling the strings of shower-baths. She did extravagant things, mostly of a cruel kind, for the fun of seeing what would happen” (p. 731). In addition to gratifying her craving for novelty and excitement, these antics proclaim Sylvia’s ascendancy as a mover over those she sets in motion. Although her schemes frequently backfire or injure the wrong party because she is unsystematic, she is usually less interested in the ends she is pursuing than in the gratification she finds in exercising the means. Sylvia’s will to power is epitomized in her “long cold glance” (p. 406), which asserts her superior freedom and power as a perceiving subject over those who cannot return her gaze. Hence the ability of Father Consett to haunt her because, as Sylvia remembers, “he knew me. . . . Damn it, he
knew me!" (p. 415; original emphasis and ellipses). Tietjens's impenetrability similarly elevates him over her inasmuch as he refuses to back down under her proud, defiant stare. For Sylvia, the maddening paradox of her relation with Christopher is that the more she persecutes him, the more his refusal to fight back increases his ascendancy—the power of the martyr over his assailants.

Sylvia's persecution and Christopher's martyrdom are an extreme case of the devastation that, in Ford's view, rivalry and resentment wreak on personal relations in the modern world. Jealousy and vanity are almost everywhere the main motives of the characters in Parade's End. The structure of Sylvia's relation with Christopher is the structure of social relations in general. Consider, for example, the resentment Tietjens causes through his generosity. A willingness to help people might seem to strengthen the social bond. But Tietjens's selflessness fuels the rivalry between selves. As Marie Leonie observes, "apparently there was no one in the world who did not dislike Christopher because they owed him money" (p. 777). Heading their ranks would be Edith Ethel Duchemin, later Lady Macmaster, who "was and always seemed to be a little cracky," Sylvia thinks, "about the late Macmaster's debt to Christopher" (p. 787).

Edith Ethel's psychology is an echo of Sylvia's. This becomes evident when they confront each other at one of Mrs. Duchemin's Friday afternoon assemblies of London's cultural dignitaries (see pp. 246–54). Her Fridays are laid out as a scene of worship, with the idol placed in the center, and with lesser mortals arrayed in concentric circles around it, their relative ascendancy ranked by their distance from the altar. Artistic achievement and social status become tokens of personal divinity. Edith Ethel uses the idol to assert her own ascendancy; hers is the power of the idol maker over both the god and its worshipers. She orchestrates the desire of others and subordinates the idol to her scheme. She also triumphs vicariously through Macmaster, inasmuch as he is elevated by his privileged proximity to the idol's aura; he stands closest to the divinity of the day in the capacity of high priest, mediator between it and the rest of the worshipers. Sylvia upsets this arrangement, however, when her commanding presence exiles the celebrity from the center of attention and attracts everyone instead to herself and Valentine's mother. She thereby defies Edith Ethel, who had relegated Mrs. Wannop to the outskirts.

This battle between Sylvia and Mrs. Duchemin demonstrates that power and personal ascendancy are the latter's goals, and that culture is for her an instrument of vanity. Similarly, although Christopher cares little about...
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Macmaster's debt, it rankles Edith Ethel because it marks a limit to her claims to privilege. As Christopher's debtors, she and her husband stand lower than their creditor, while her ambition is to stand among the highest of the high. In an intrusion rare for the author famous for banishing the author, the narrator states at one point: "It is, in fact, asking for trouble if you are more altruist than the society that surrounds you" (p. 207). The reason is not the obvious one—that less generous people will fleece you. Rather, in a world of vanity and rivalry, altruism can cause resentment because the recipient can see it as a reminder that his or her promise of perfection has failed. Generosity then betokens an ascendancy the debtor envies because he or she desired it.

The rivalry and resentment that devastate Christopher's world are a particular historical manifestation of a universal tendency toward internal warfare in society—or at least that is the implication of one of the novel's best-known passages. Tietjens wonders

why it was that humanity that was next to always agreeable in its units was, as a mass, a phenomenon so hideous. You look at a dozen men, each of them not by any means detestable and not uninteresting, for each of them would have technical details of their affairs to impart; you formed them into a Government or a club and at once, with oppressions, inaccuracies, gossip, backbiting, lying, corruptions and vileness, you had the combination of wolf, tiger, weasel and louse-covered ape that was human society. And he remembered the words of some Russian: "Cats and monkeys. Monkeys and cats. All humanity is there." (P. 79)

This passage redefines the Rousseauian argument that natural man is

24Katherine Anne Porter offers a similar analysis of the ingratitude Ford himself suffered because of his legendary generosity to aspiring young writers—his "special genius," she calls it, "for nourishing vipers in his bosom": "I have never seen an essay or article about him signed by any of these discoveries of his. I can make nothing of this, except that I have learned that most human beings—and I suppose that artists are that, after all—suffer some blow to their self-esteem in being helped, and develop the cancer of ingratitude. As if, somehow, they can, by denying their debt, or ignoring it, wipe it out altogether" (quoted by Frank MacShane in "Two Such Silver Currents," in The Presence of Ford Madox Ford, ed. Sondra J. Stang [Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981], p. 233). Harold Bloom's argument that a poet resents and for that reason misrepresents or denies his or her precursors is based on a similar psychological principle (see The Anxiety of Influence [New York: Oxford University Press, 1973]).

25As many Fordians have noted, the quoted phrase about "cats and monkeys" actually comes, with slight alteration, from Henry James's story "The Madonna of the Future" (1873). Ford himself attributes it to this work in his study Henry James, pp. 140, 143.
virtuous and society corrupts by suggesting that any grouping of individuals escalates the possibilities of violence. In Tietjens's view, the distance between selves is manageable with individuals. But the likelihood of misunderstanding and conflict escalates in groups according to a kind of multiplier effect. As the number of divisions between selves increases, people become more anonymous to each other, more opaque. People in themselves may not be evil, but the chance of disagreement and misinterpretation increases to the point of inevitability when the joining together of a dozen individuals multiplies the gaps dividing them from 12 to 144—hence Christopher's assertion that combining people in a community inevitably leads to antisocial conduct.

If *Parade's End* depicts modern society as particularly violent and anarchic, one might ask what prevents the community from disintegrating altogether. Tietjens himself is the answer. He is a negative rather than positive mediator, however. He is a scapegoat who unites the warring “cats and monkeys” by allowing them to band together against a single other. Tietjens encourages his own victimage because of his “mania for sacrificing” himself (p. 460). Christopher's penchant for personal disaster seems at times like a desire for self-punishment, as if he must do penance for the hubris implicit in his pretense of achieved apotheosis. If so, then his need for suffering makes a diabolical match with his world's demand for an outlet for the violence inherent in community. As a scapegoat, Christopher makes possible a cathartic release of potentially disruptive internal tensions that might otherwise split apart the community that makes him its victim. His antagonists are united by little more than their shared resentment of him. The relentless persecution of Christopher Tietjens is not merely his personal plight, then. It is an example of scapegoating as a mechanism for providing at least some social cohesion in an anarchic world.26

What Ford said of Conrad could apply to himself as well—that “he prized fidelity . . . above all human virtues and saw very little of it in this world.”27 Hence the reappearance in my analysis of *Parade's End* of many of the same issues that occupied our readings of *Lord Jim* and *Nostromo*: apotheosis, mediation, power, and scapegoating. But Ford's treatment of them also differs from Conrad's to the extent that fidelity is for him an ontic rather than an ontological concern—an experiential end in itself and

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not a means of overcoming contingency. Where Conrad depicts the quest for apotheosis of a Jim, a Gould, or a Nostromo as an attempt to conquer the inessentiality of human being, Ford portrays the self’s drive for ascendency as an existential battle for power. The scapegoating of Jim permits the community to delude itself about the ontological necessity of its standards and conventions, but the persecution of Christopher Tietjens is primarily a social mechanism for channeling interpersonal violence. If mediation in *Nostromo* is an attempt to achieve oneness in spite of ineradicable differences, the multiplication of gaps which society brings about is for Ford not an ontological dilemma but an existential tragedy. Both writers are dismayed that conflict prevails over fidelity, but they differ in their mode of analysis. The relation between the politics of Ford and Conrad is the relation between the ontic and the ontological, existence and being.

The often-noted opposition of Sylvia and Valentine symbolizes to Christopher two fundamental alternatives in personal relations:28 “[Valentine] and Sylvia were the only two human beings he had met for years whom he could respect: the one for sheer efficiency in killing; the other for having the constructive desire and knowing how to set about it. Kill or cure! The two functions of man. If you wanted something killed you’d go to Sylvia Tietjens in the sure faith that she would kill it: emotion, hope, ideal; kill it quick and sure. If you wanted something kept alive you’d go to Valentine: she’d find something to do for it” (p. 128). The opposition of Sylvia and Valentine suggests two basic responses to the opposition of self and other—exploiting its potential for warfare or reducing it through compassion. Although Sylvia’s indefatigable will to power gives her demonic stature and seems to make her unique, she actually typifies the impulse toward destruction which *Parade’s End* depicts as the norm in a society of “cats and monkeys.” Sylvia may seem perversely driven in her compulsion to do Christopher in, but she belongs to the “normal type” that Dowell describes in *The Good Soldier*—the type that Leonora becomes when she stops trying to cure Edward and starts killing him. Because a destructive drive for apotheosis is so prevalent, Valentine’s selfless capacity for constructive giving is especially precious and precarious. Although not a scapegoat like Christopher, she too is an outsider because she deviates from the norm. Their relation is an attempt to establish a home for care in an atmosphere of conflict.

Two aspects of their relation are especially curious—how important talk

28 Of the many commentaries devoted to this contrasting pair of characters, see especially Stang, *Ford*, pp. 117–18.
is to their definition of love, and how indirect their long-delayed coming together is. At the beginning of the novel Christopher devalues discourse: "As Tietjens saw the world you didn't 'talk.' Perhaps you didn't even think about how you felt" (p. 6). Silence helps sustain the stability of a hierarchic world. The divisions between selves have been used to create a structure—an order based on differences—which talk might disrupt. When this structure weakens, the values of silence and discourse are reversed. Silence becomes disruptive because it increases the opacity on which antagonism thrives, and conversation becomes therapeutic.

Near the end of the novel, Christopher has radically changed his attitude toward dialogue: "One has desperate need. Of talk. I have not really spoken to a soul for two years" (p. 659). He defines love as "infinite conversation" (p. 635), and Valentine agrees: "Why did she take it that they were going to live together? She had no official knowledge that he wanted to. But they wanted to TALK. You can't talk unless you live together" (p. 651; original emphasis). For both of them, love is "the intimate conversation that means the final communion of your souls" (p. 629). If the failure of language to guarantee transparency makes possible the widespread conflict and misunderstanding that Ford's novel portrays, then an allegiance to the values of "curing" demands a commitment to improving the effectiveness of speech. D. H. Lawrence would no doubt find this insistence on talk too cerebral and therefore an obstacle to passionate communion—the all-absorbing merger of bodies which the mind prevents, in his view, by insisting on distinctions. But Ford is skeptical that physical passion can eradicate the differences between selves. (His own tumultuous love life would suggest, alas, that it often increases them.) His hero and heroine define love in terms of talk because Parade's End portrays intimacy as the never-finished work of clarifying the opacity of the other. Where Lawrence celebrates the darkness of the self as an avenue to mystical communion, Ford criticizes it as a potential source of violence and misunderstanding which speech must try to eradicate.

The union of Christopher and Valentine is postponed for so long not

29Janice Biala similarly emphasizes conversation in describing her relationship with Ford: "The years I spent with him were a long passionate dialogue. Starting from opposite points of view, opposite backgrounds, each convinced the other, converted the other. . . . We had such a hell of a lot to say to one another. There wasn't enough time for everything we had to say" ("An Interview with Janice Biala" [1979], in Stang, Presence of Ford, p. 222).

30On the biographical reasons for Ford's fear that physical passion might result in violence, see especially Moser, Life in the Fiction of Ford, pp. 39–121.

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only by adverse circumstances (although these certainly play their part) but also by the very stubbornness of the obstacles to intersubjectivity. Christopher and Valentine are intuitively at one throughout most of the novel, but at the same time they are plagued by misunderstanding, misadventures, and separation. Even when close to finally joining together, they are reticent in each other's presence. They are united only by a phone call from Mrs. Wannop, who, ironically, is trying to keep them apart. Valentine thinks: "Her mother had made their union. . . . Her mother had spoken between them. They might never have spoken of themselves!" (p. 669). The two are mediated by a third. Although Christopher's ruminations about "cats and monkeys" discount the antagonisms between two isolated individuals, diads in Ford's world are capable of infinitely prolonging the division between them. This holds true even when they desire union as Christopher and Valentine do. A mediator is necessary to overcome oppositions, or else differences will continue to produce more differences. But Ford suggests that positive mediation is unavailable (as opposed to the negative mediation of scapegoating)—or accessible only indirectly and inadvertently, as in Mrs. Wannop's phone call. The forces of division dominate in Parade's End. Even those who seek communion must rely on accident and chance; they are powerless in themselves.

An inability to control one's destiny pervades Christopher and Valentine's world. Paradoxically, for example, although those pursuing apotheosis are driven by a relentless will to power, their projects usually result in their impotence. Sylvia is the embodiment of this paradox as she transforms over the course of the tetralogy from a seemingly omnipotent demon into the pathetic, petty figure at the end who will stoop to almost any devices in her ineffectual quest for vengeance. Christopher and Valentine openly acknowledge their lack of agency by frequently referring to "Providence" ("Provvy," Valentine calls it—a nickname that domesticates destiny in lieu of mastering it). Part of their sense of fate reflects the role of chance in their lives, whether for good or for bad. Theirs is the powerlessness of not knowing what will happen next in the trenches, the vulnerability to accidents like the collision with General Campion's car, the unpredictable luck of a windfall (or a loss) in the antique business, or the good fortune of Mrs. Wannop's phone call. Once again more ontic than the ontological Conrad, Ford sees in the reign of chance an existential contradiction rather than proof of the world's lack of essential design. The contradiction is that chance may seem liberating because it suggests the openness of the possible, but that even happy accidents demonstrate our powerlessness because they show the ascendancy of otherness over the self.
Chance may be unavoidable, but Ford’s novel suggests that its rule can be exacerbated or diminished by people’s acts. Because he grounds chance in existence rather than being, Ford regards it as more variable and controllable than Conrad does. *Parade’s End* portrays powerlessness as, in many respects, a function of social organization. An important example is the reification of the troops into instruments for “higher” considerations—the attitude that Christopher laments in deriding the “imbecile national belief that the game is more than the player” (p. 305): “That’s the Game! And if any of his, Tietjens’, men were killed, he grinned and said the game was more than the players of the game” (p. 306). The anonymity of the game and the helplessness of those played by it are especially maddening because the players constitute the game through their actions. They sustain their powerlessness through their own powers.

When asked why unrest prevails in the command depots, Christopher replies: “It isn’t the officers and it isn’t the men. It’s the foul system” (p. 224). *Parade’s End* offers a remarkably insightful critique of the alienation spawned by modern bureaucracy. Although the product of collective human activity, the system seems anonymous and independent because it transcends the control of its participants. Instead of cooperating as members of a group to realize shared aims, the participants in an anonymous system feel like passive links in a chain. Buffeted by its movements, they are helpless even though the chain would not exist without them. Hence, for example, “the process of eternal waiting that is War. You hung about and you hung about, and you kicked your heels and you kicked your heels: waiting” (p. 569). Those who wait are part of a group, but in a serial rather than cooperative relation. Instead of being able to determine their destiny through joint action, they must wait powerless for one link in the chain to affect the next. Fate as seriality—as the lack of effective cooperation—repeatedly maddens Christopher: in the breakdowns in the supply chain when the short-range interests of another unit defeat not only the good of his outfit but even the other’s long-term advantage, or in the frustration of receiving orders that disband a company of soldiers just after they have been molded into a competent unit.

The desire to replace seriality with effective cooperative action lies behind Christopher’s wish for a single command—“one brain which could command” the efforts of all and “not a half-dozen authorities requesting each

other to perform operations which might or might not fall in with the ideas or the prejudices of any one or other of the half-dozen" (p. 469). By making unified action possible, a single command would overcome the powerlessness of isolated links in the chain. It would put a stop to the mutual thwarting of each other's interests which the failure of cooperation leads to. It would substitute the genuine freedom of collective action for the illusion of freedom which individual links pursue by defying the group. It is not, however, a perfect remedy. Ford's skepticism about the destructiveness of power suggests the dangers of consolidating authority. His recognition of the powerlessness resulting from failed collective action stands opposed to his fear of the risks of domination, exploitation, and violence when any group solidifies. Christopher's desire for a unified command is called into question by the tetralogy's many warnings against giving any individual the tempting opportunity to expand his or her powers.

Mark Tietjens's silent withdrawal from the world is a striking dramatization of Ford's sense of the powerlessness of individuals and the failure of institutions. Mark the master bureaucrat of the transport division had "thought he had done his job of getting things here and there about the world to some purpose" (p. 736). In contrast to Christopher and Valentine's resigned acceptance of "Providence," Mark "was accustomed to regard himself as master of his fate" (p. 739). His discovery of his powerlessness is consequently all the more devastating. Seriality shows once again its dominance over effective cooperation when Britain chooses a course of frustrating France at the end of the war instead of aiding its allies—pursuing its individual short-term advantage in a way that, Mark fears, will have disastrous long-term consequences for all. His alarmed surprise at his government's decision reveals him to be a link in a chain, buffeted by events beyond his control, and not the mover in a cooperative enterprise he had considered himself.

Mark's powerlessness threatens his integrity, and he feels that only retreat can save him. His withdrawal into silent passivity is, however, an ambiguous solution to his dilemma. It is both a defeat and a triumph. "He was finished with the world," he thinks; "It was like being dead—or being a God" (p. 728). He is both powerless and omnipotent. Humbled if not humiliated, Mark has given up the struggle. But his proud silence asserts his ascendancy over the political arena he has disdainfully abandoned. With Mark's retirement, Parade's End rejects an institutional solution to the social ills of Britain. If the game defeats a player of Mark's stature, or at least
forces him to withdraw, social reform on a grand scale does not seem possible.

Ford is not a complete quietist, however. Parade's End depicts a different kind of retreat as a potential new beginning. By withdrawing from the round of rivalries that disenfranchise them, Christopher and Valentine seek to establish a personal meeting ground where love and work might thrive. The conclusion of their story dramatizes the social solution to conflict and alienation implied by The Good Soldier—Ford's faith in the personal salvation promised by the establishment of small, rural communities of independent producers. In line with Ford's paradoxical turn to individualism to restore care when antagonism reigns in the collective, Christopher and Valentine pursue communion by abandoning the community. Their new life is an island of "tranquil devotion," "a queer household—queer because it was so humdrum and united" in contrast to the tumults and dissensions of the world outside (p. 792). Only through the abandonment of society do truly social relations become possible. Similarly, where action in the wider world invariably leads to disappointment or disaster, their household has reduced its ambitions and its sphere of engagements in order to increase its chances of controlling its fate. Domestically, the Tietjens brothers and their women are relatively self-sufficient, and Christopher's furniture business is an enterprise of distinctly limited proportions.

The ending of the tetralogy has been called "a sentimental indulgence, . . . a fairy tale, a wish, the symbolization of something [Ford] wanted to be."32 Actually, though, Christopher and Valentine's resolution is replete with ambiguities that suggest Ford's awareness of the limitations of his political platform. Parade's End suggests that the new beginning it depicts is at most a humble proposition, in some ways more negative than positive, and that its likelihood of success is at best uncertain. Christopher and Valentine's travails "had induced them . . . to instal Frugality as a deity" (p. 818). Modesty is their byword: "a little money, a little peace" (p. 822). Their lives are spare in almost every respect. The positive values that recur throughout the novel and that triumph at the end all have a negative valence—not only frugality but also chastity, duty, discipline, self-sacrifice. All entail self-abnegation, motivated by the hope that one can master one's fate through self-denial. Ford advocates through this beleaguered couple a kind of stoic asceticism as a response to alienation. Ford's paradise is less an indulgence than a mortification of the self.

32Meixner, Ford's Novels, p. 221. Also see Green, Ford: Prose and Politics, pp. 163–67.
It is questionable, furthermore, whether sacrifice will have its rewards. The invasion of Sylvia and Mrs. de Bray Pape, although successfully repulsed, shows that personal asceticism cannot make the self immune to the world on its horizons. The boorish American woman's condemnation of their cottage, for example, as not "fit for human habitation" (p. 711) shows Christopher and Valentine still victim of others' misinterpretations. Their living room is a showroom, open to customers for Christopher's business. Dealing in furniture preserves their involvement with the world they have left behind. Christopher and Valentine remain social beings, then, implicated in and even dependent on the sphere from which they have retreated. Their attempt to retire from the social world confirms that they are inescapably participants in it.

Their private resolution leaves unresolved the social dilemmas from which they have sought to disentangle themselves. It is uncertain, for this reason, whether their child will be able to avoid the suffering they have endured. Despite the protection of its parents, it will be born into a world where rivalry, resentment, and powerlessness prevail. The child's vulnerability suggests the weakness of the island fortress its parents have erected. Hardly the wish fulfillment of a fairy tale, the conclusion of Parade's End combines admiration for the resiliency of noble individuals with skepticism about the prospects for making the social world less hostile to care and agency.33

Readers of Parade's End will probably not run to the barricades after finishing it—or, for that matter, retreat to the countryside. Nostromo and The Princess Casamassima are equally unlikely to lead to political action. The point here is not only that Ford, Conrad, and James are ultimately conservative in their politics, with little faith in radical social change. More important, it is also that there is not an immediate translation from the kind of action reading entails to action in the social world. As readers of James, Conrad, and Ford we receive from their political narratives—as we do from all fiction—a transformation in our consciousness. Marx may be right that the goal is ultimately to change the world, not just the way we interpret it.34 But if literature has a political function, it can only be the modest but indispensable one of altering its reader's understanding of the meaning of life in society. The next step—the move from self-consciousness to action—cannot be decided by reading alone.

33 For further defenses of the tetralogy's ending, see Andrew Lytle, "A Partial Reading of Parade's End or the Hero as an Old Furniture Dealer," in Stang, The Presence of Ford, pp. 90–95; and Snitow, Ford and the Voice of Uncertainty, pp. 231–33.
34 See the famous eleventh thesis on Feuerbach: "The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it" (in Karl Marx, The German Ideology, ed. C. J. Arthur [New York: International Publishers, 1970], p. 123; original emphasis).