

Following their first gathering in Münster, Westphalia, the city of Ford's ancestors, Fordians present a multi-faceted image of this Anglo-German and Francophile English Modernist. International interest in the Hueffers' German background will be triggered by two articles on Franz Hüffer and the references to Münster and Westphalia in Ford's writings. Excursions in politics and poetry and Ford in context provide a framework for "Aspects of *Parade's End*", the edition and simultaneous translation of which into major European languages forms the most important project for the new Millennium.

Nach ihrer ersten Tagung in Münster, Westfalen, der Stadt der Vorfahren Fords, bieten Ford-Forscher und -Freunde ein vielfältiges Bild des Deutsch-Engländer und frankophilen Autors der englischen Moderne. Ausflüge in Politik und Poesie und Ford im Kontext seiner und unserer Zeit bieten einen Rahmen für die "Aspekte der Tetralogie *Parade's End*", deren Edition und zeitgleiche Übersetzung in wichtige europäische Sprachen das bedeutendste Projekt für das neue Jahrtausend darstellt.

Der Band enthält Zusammenfassungen in deutscher Sprache, eine Bibliographie und ein Register. Geplant sind überdies eine Anthologie ins Deutsche übersetzter Texte Franz Hüffers und Ford Madox Fords sowie ein Bildband mit deutschen und englischen Texten, der drei Generationen der Hüffer in Münster und Westfalen dokumentarisch porträtiert.

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Jörg W. Rademacher (Ed. / Hg.)

Modernism and the Individual Talent Moderne und besondere Begabung

Re-Canonizing Ford Madox Ford (Hueffer)
Zur Re-Kanonisierung von Ford Madox Ford (Hüffer)

Symposium Münster June / Juni 1999



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III. ASPECTS OF PARADE'S END: FORM AND CONTENT

1. Michela A. Calderaro, Mestre-Venezia

Ford Madox Ford: *No More Parades* and the Modernist Approach to Punctuation

The famous literary collaboration between Joseph Conrad and Ford Madox Ford at the turn of the last century was important not only because of its actual output, but mainly in terms of the new form it introduced. Both writers embarked at the beginning of their period of coauthorship, which lasted from 1898 to 1908, on a quest for new ways to express the new reality they had been witnessing.

Society around them was undergoing major changes at the time, and to represent this process faithfully they believed the novel required a New Form, that is, a perfect blend of form, content, pattern, language and technical devices that would create something unique, where a single word or even a single comma might hold the meaning of a whole work.

Language had to be simple, it had to give the reader the impression of the real flow of life, it had to be the language used in small and very close social groups by cultured men and women; it had to be "the vernacular of an extreme quietness that would suggest someone of some refinement talking in a low voice near the ear of someone else he liked a good deal"¹. Simplicity was to be attained through a meticulous search for *le mot juste* and an almost musical *rhythm* – with the use of repetitive sentences and words which are 'morphed' one into the other as the narrative goes on.

Even after they had ended their collaboration both Conrad and Ford persisted in their quest for the simple language, the perfect form.

In *No More Parades* the simplicity, "the vernacular of an extreme quietness", is also achieved through the use of excessive punctuation. Punctuation has indeed a special character of redundancy, its use follows a non-codified system, as an infraction to a syntactical codified system of meaning; so as to achieve a greater stylistic freedom. Indeed, the infraction itself becomes the message².

While in what is now considered a manifesto of Modernist prose, that is James Joyce's *Ulysses*, the formal dissolution of a text and its following recomposition and reorganization is sometimes achieved through the deletion of punctuation in interior monologues, in Ford's work the formal dissolution is achieved through redundancy. And whereas in Joyce the deprivation of meaning and its subsequent restoration is created by using redundancy, alliterations and repetition of words, in *No More Parades* this deprivation is produced by redundant and repetitive punctuation.

The new connections, which in Joyce's prose are provided by the imaginary association of words, in *No More Parades* are often introduced in the form of ellipsis (or suspension points). These ellipses either constitute periods in which the narrator's mind wanders away from his narrative, only to return later with a different textual occurrence, or, as in Sylvia Tietjens's monologues, function as non-linguistic elements thanks to which a non-linguistically expressed occurrence triumphs over the text, thus becoming an essential part of the narrative.

I have chosen to proceed by sampling and to divide the discussion on Ford's use of punctuation into two sections, one focusing on interior monologues and the other on dialogues. Although the use of punctuation in both may seem very similar there are also some interesting differences.

Monologues

Anacolusion – that is ellipsis dots – is used to emphasize a shift in a character's line of mind or to provide continuity between different textual occurrences. However, to stress the character's quest, or his search for meaning, Ford often combines dots with colons. In the following examples dots and colons are placed almost at the center of the passage, isolating a brief sentence.

The first passage contains three semantically connected sentences. Suspension points provide a transition from the first sentence to the second; colons are used within the second sentence; and a simple full stop comes between sentence 2 and 3:

... Settling down out there, a long way away, up against that impassable barrier that stretched from the depths of the ground to the peak of heaven ...

Intense dejection: endless muddles: endless follies: endless villainies. All these men given into the hands of the most cynically care-free intriguers in long corridors [...]³

The suspension points represent a moment of reflection, an inner pause to form an opinion on the action. Tietjens describes his current feeling and explains its causes. Here colons stand for consequential gateways in the process of finding meaning in the situation he and his men are left in. From "intense dejection" – which is semantically tied to the previous sentence – to "muddles", which in turn leads to "follies" and to "villainies", we arrive at "All these men given into the hands of the most cynically care-free intriguers" – the third sentence, which is semantically connected to "villainies".

Also in the second example dots provide continuity between different occurrences, and here, too, colons are used to denote the stages of formulating a thought:

He wondered what was his own motive at the moment. Why had he asked the general that? ... The thing presented itself as pictures: getting

down bulkily from a high French train, at dawn. The light picked out for you the white of large hunks of bread – half-loaves – being handed out to troops themselves invisible. . . . The ovals of light on the hats of English troops: they were mostly West Countrymen. They did not seem to want the bread much. . . . A long ridge of light above a wooded bank: then suddenly, pervasively, a sound! . . . For all the world as, sheltering from rain in a cottager's wash-house on the moors, you hear the cottager's clothes boiling in a copper . . . Bubble . . . bubble . . . bubbubbub . . . bubble . . . Not terribly loud – but terribly demanding attention! . . . The Great Strafe! . . .

The general had said: [...] (*No More Parades* 289)

Here ellipses take on a double value: On the one hand they connect different textual occurrences, serving as links in the seemingly illogical stream of Tietjens's thoughts and surfacing memories. On the other, they are used to introduce a break, a parenthetical thought. The whole text from "The thing presented itself as pictures" to "The Great Strafe" represents such a thought⁴.

Some twenty pages in chapter 3, part I (84-105), are structured in a similar way. Christopher is recollecting all that happened during the night, and is also trying to sum up his relationship with Sylvia. Ellipsis dots mark a point where external action intrudes on Christopher's line of thought, thus affecting its course: he might say she had gone mad. But, if he said she had gone mad he would have to revise a great deal of their relationships, so it would be as broad as it was long. . . .

And here, following the suspension points, is where the outside world interrupts Christopher's recollection:

The doctor's batman, from the other end of the hut, said:

"Poor – O Nine Morgan! . . ." in a sing-song, mocking voice. . . .

For though, hours before, Tietjens had appointed this moment of physical ease that usually followed on his splurging heavily down on to his creaking camp-bed in the doctor's lent hut, for the cool consideration of his relations with his wife, it was not turning out a very easy matter.

(*No More Parades*, 86-87; my italics)

The words pronounced by the doctor's batman – preceded and followed by ellipsis dots – cut Tietjens interior monologue into two sections. In the first he considers the two men talking on the other side of the hut. In the second, following a long digression about the doctor's batman and McKechnie, he goes back to analyzing his relationship with Sylvia.

Yet in other situations, ellipsis dots that split sentences and mark a structural break are used to allow for a pause in the face of an unexpected intuition:

And why was he in this extraordinary state? . . . For he was in an extraordinary state. It was because the idea had suddenly occurred to him that his parting

from his wife had set him free for his girl. . . . *The idea had till then never entered his head.*

(*No More Parades* 90; my italics)

Christopher's sudden intuition not only changes the course of his thoughts, but also the perception of his own reality. Dots here stress Christopher's bewilderment, as if he were still confused, waking from a dream, or a nightmare.

Christopher's mind is constantly engaged in evoking long-past events, feverishly bouncing back and forth, from past to present. Fragments of battle scenes, voices and names are connected by dots which, while separating the various occurrences, create different narrative levels as in the following excerpt:

Fragments of scenes of fighting, voices, names, went before his eyes and ears. *Elaborate problems.* . . .

Tietjens' mind is bombarded by seemingly disconnected images (First Level):

The whole map of the embattled world ran out in front of him – as large as a field. An embossed map in greenish *papier mâché* – a ten-acre field of embossed *papier mâché*:

Now the present bursts in with the image of the dead soldier (Second Level): with the blood of O Nine Morgan blurring luminously over it.

And back to past scenes (Third Level):

Years before . . . How many months? . . . Nineteen, to be exact, he had sat on some tobacco plants on the Mont de Kats. . . . No, the Montagne Noire. In Belgium. . . . What had he been doing? . . . Trying to get the lie of the land. . . . No. . . . Waiting to point out positions to some fat home general who had never come. The Belgian proprietor of the tobacco plants had arrived, and had screamed his head off over the damaged plants. . . .

But up there you saw the whole war. . . .

This ellipsis introduces a dramatic pause (Fourth Level):

Infinite miles away, over the sullied land [...]

(*No More Parades*, 308; my italics)

Before turning our attention to punctuation in dialogues, I would like to close the analysis of its use in interior monologues with a couple of passages in which Sylvia is the protagonist.

Invariably, in Sylvia's monologues dots emphasize her confused state. Her frenetic mind rushes between overlapping, half-formed images burdened with anxiety. Especially in the first excerpt ellipsis dots stress the intense toiling of Sylvia's panicking mind at the prospect of meeting Christopher: all of her thoughts are unfinished, separated by dots and with no apparent continuity:

She was trembling. . . . She looked, fumblingly opening it, into the little mirror of her powder-box [. . .] . . . Drake – the possible father of Michael – had given it to her. . . . The first thing he had ever given her. She had brought it down to-night out of defiance. She imagined that Tietjens disliked it. . . . She said breathlessly to herself: "Perhaps the damn thing is an ill omen. . . . Drake had been the first man who had ever . . . A hot-

breathed brute! . . . In the little glass her features were chalk-white. . . . She looked like. . . she looked like . . . She had a dress of golden tissue. . . . The breath was short between her white set teeth. . . . Her face was white as her teeth. . . . And . . . Yes! Nearly! Her lips. . .

(*No More Parades*, 176; my italics)

Suspension points, together with sentences such as "Drake had been the first man who had ever", "hot-breathed brute", "The breath was short between her teeth", "her lips", create an atmosphere full of sensuality and violence that are very much part of Sylvia. At first reading, Sylvia's monologue might seem disjointed and missing some unvoiced words. Yet we soon learn that the dots, besides demonstrating Sylvia's confusion at that moment, charge the sentence with added power, more than the presumed words they replace could. Indeed, the dots make the omitted words stand out.

The second monologue recalls the death of the white bulldog, and is perhaps the one that demonstrates best the complexities of Sylvia's mind, her anger and resentment. Dots here serve as a device that switches back and forth between Christopher and the dog and thus express transferred emotions. The pauses between images of the dog – white and fat – and of Christopher – just as white and fat – stress the similarities between the two and clarify the real target of her violent fury:

"And got the rhinoceros whip and I lashed into it. . . . There's a pleasure in lashing into a naked white beast. . . . Obese and silent. . . . Like Christopher. . . . I thought Christopher might. . . . That night. . . . It went through my head. . . . It hung down its head. . . . A great head, room for a whole British encyclopædia of misinformation, as Christopher used to put it. . . ."

(*No More Parades* 196)

Notice also how the ellipsis dots help Sylvia switch from her *head* to the dog's *head* and to Christopher's *head*.

In the third of Sylvia's monologues we can see how the main function of ellipsis dots is to substitute words otherwise unutterable and of course unprintable. This, by the way, is a recurrent feature of all her interior monologues. And, again, by leaving out the unprintable words – which are often associated with sex – Ford creates a stronger impact:

The room where they were dancing was very dark. . . . It was queer to be in his arms. . . . [...] In his arms! . . . Of course, dancing is not really. . . . But so near the real thing! So near! . . . "Good luck to the special intention! . . . " She had almost kissed him on the lips. . . . All but! . . . 'Effleurer', the French call it. . . . [...] All these months without. . . . My Lord did me honour. . . .

(*No More Parades*, 235)

And one should not try to interpret Sylvia's omissions as residual Victorian propriety. The omissions in her case are fully, and maliciously, intentional, and serve to portray more graphically than words the scenes evoked in her mind.

Dialogues

The use of punctuation, ellipsis dots in particular, in dialogues is in large part similar to its use in monologues. However, in dialogues these dissolutions, the pauses, the suppressions, and their graphic rendering – dots – are often signs of a possible "aphasia" – that is, the inability to express or comprehend 'verbal signs'.

There are "expressive aphasias", "receptive aphasias" and "amnesic aphasias". The latter are particularly interesting to us in that aphasics of this kind display disturbances of selection of lexicon, they *seem* to have forgotten words, verbal forms, all antonyms, and they pause trying to recall missing words, just as characters often do, or seem to do, in *No More Parades*.

I said 'possible aphasia' since these pauses are at times actually fabricated by the character himself or herself. They are the signs of a feigned reserve and unease.

In his long interview with Christopher, General Campion seems troubled by the embarrassing situation: dots stress his 'pretended' reserve and discretion when he refers to Christopher's and Sylvia's private affairs:

"An officer's private life and his life on parade are as strategy to tactics. . . . I don't want, if I can avoid it, to go into your private affairs. It's extremely embarrassing. . . . But let me put it to you that. . . . I wish to be delicate. But you are a man of the world! . . . Your wife is an extremely beautiful woman. . . . There has been a scandal. . . . I admit not of your making. . . ."

(*No More Parades* 287)

Yet, clearly, Campion's meditated pauses express not only his discreet embarrassment, but also his wish to drop hints regarding Christopher's and Sylvia's moral behavior. Notice how dots connect the phrase "Your wife is an extremely beautiful woman" to "There has been a scandal".

Ellipsis dots are also used to build up expectations. In Part I, during the, at times, hilarious dialogue between Christopher and Levin, going up and down the hill, dots are skilfully used to create a sense of expectation, sometimes by substituting Sylvia's name, which leaves Christopher, and us, with the misconception that the person waiting in General Campion's car, must be Valentine:

"No. . . not in bed. . . . Not with a V.A.D. . . . Oh, damn it, at the railway station. . . . With. . . . The general sent me down to meet her. . . . and Nanny of course was seeing off her grandmother, the Duchesse. . . . The giddy cut she handed me out. . . ."

(*No More Parades* 67)

While in situations where either Christopher or Campion are present ellipsis dots stand for an assumed social discretion, in Sylvia's case they are carefully planted with an intent to hurt Christopher.

Around the dinner table with Christopher and Sgt. Cowley, she addresses the sergeant and leaves key sentences unfinished – for Christopher's benefit, of course, in order to tease him and embarrass him:

... He [some hypothetical officer] knows how all the men are feeling ...

But not what the married women think ...

Such as herself, surely.

or the . . . the girl. . . ."

Hinting at Valentine.

[...] "Of course he [the hypothetical soldier, but hinting at Christopher] may never be going to see his only son again, so it makes him sensitive."

This is an indirect threat aimed at Christopher: she might deny him the right of seeing his son:

"The officer at Paddington, I mean. . . ."

Planting a pause in order to appraise Christopher's reaction to the word Paddington.

"It's quite a nice place [Birkenhead, where she made Christopher believe she would go into permanent retreat] . . . but I should not think of staying there for ever. . . ."

(*No More Parades* 173-174; 175)

As a last example on the use of punctuation I read a passage in which dots practically link Sylvia's interior monologue to her conversation with Cowley, marking a transition from the real dialogue to her thoughts and back.

Here, too, dots serve Sylvia as substitutes for words with sexual reference in order – purposely – to give them additional weight. We see her as a vibrant, fiery woman, full of violent emotions, but also of humanity. We may not want to redeem Sylvia fully and forgive her sins and schemes – and some would argue that she deserves any punishment she might get – yet the brief glimpse we get of her tormented soul may make us feel she should be granted another chance – a chance she would most likely botch (because she is indeed "a flame that is always burning itself out", as Emerson would put it; whereas Christopher, just like Ashburnham, is "the fine soldier, the excellent landlord [...] the upright, the honest"⁵):

"They said of him. . . . He was always helping people." . . . "Holy Mary, mother of God . . . He's my *husband*. . . . It's not a sin. . . . Before midnight. . . . Oh, give me a sign. . . . Or before . . . the termination of hostilities. . . . If you give me a sign I could wait." . . . "He helped virtuous Scotch students, and broken-down gentry. . . . And women taken in adultery. . . . All of them. . . . Like . . . You know Who. . . . That is his model. . . ." She said to herself: "Curse him! . . . I hope he likes it. . . . You'd think the only thing he thinks about is the beastly duck he's wolfing down."

(*No More Parades* 177-178; Ford's italics)

And finally, returning to my introductory proposition, namely that Ford's use of punctuation in *No More Parades* is just as Modernist as Joyce's in *Ulysses*, I want to add that while Molly's thoughts follow one another on the page *without* interruptions or pauses, replacing the 'classic' text and providing a lively image of her consciousness and feelings, Sylvia's churning mind is presented to us through *plenty* of interruptions and pauses, effectively bringing us closer to the scorching flame of her passion.