LETTERS TO AND FROM TOULON: FORD MADOX FORD AND EZRA POUND'S PROVENÇAL CONNECTIONS

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Most of the work that has been done on Ford Madox Ford's complex relations to Provence has been done in terms of the inscription of Provence in the fiction, particularly in *The Good Soldier*. Two articles, one by James Trammel Cox published in 1961 and another by Stuart McDougal published in 1979, take up the initial remark of Dowell, as he sits to ponder his story looking at 'the great moon and say[ing]: "Why, it is nearly as bright as in Provence!"'[1] Both critics comment on the numerous parallels drawn between Edward and the troubadours of Provence, or on a possible comparison between the sufferings of Dowell and those of unloved Peire Vidal. Cox thus links back the reference to Ford's lifelong love for Provence:

> This 'passion for Provence' should cause the Ford reader no surprise. It is frequently expressed in his non-fiction. In *Return to Yesterday*, for example, he tells us that it was his knowledge of the dress of the 'ladies of the Courts of Love' that occasioned his first visit to the Cranes at Ravenbrook [. . . .] According to Ford, his father was an authority on the poetry and the language of the troubadours and was 'elected a member of the Félibrige, the Provence Academy for the promulgation of the Langue d'Oc.' Ford himself is the author of a typically intimate and discursive 'impression' of the cultural history of the area in *Provence*. In the winter of 1925 he lived in Provence and did some of his best writing there in *No More Parades*.[2]

In contrast, McDougal attempts to translate it into narratological terms:

> [Dowell] becomes increasingly preoccupied with the question of how he can order the materials of his art and, by extension, his life into an artistic whole. It is here that the example of Peire Vidal becomes so important. For Peire Vidal, as Ford knew, used the materials of his own life in his poetry to such an extent that the anonymous author of his *vida* interpreted Vidal's poetry autobiographically, as did Ford's friend Ezra Pound in his poem 'Peire Vidal Old'.[3]

In neither case do we find an actual interrogation of what is the common denominator of both interpretations, namely the problematic interaction and impossible reconciliation between life and art, between the irredeemable immersion into the real of chaotic times and the vital quest for beauty. This line of thinking is taken up in two much more recent articles published in Italy: in 2003, Michela A. Calderaro published 'Ford Madox Ford: A Provence of his Own,' in which she comments on Ford's vision of Provence in *Provence: From the Minstrels to the Machine* with a special interest in the ambivalences of travel writing;[4] in 2006, Laura Colombino published an essay in a collective book on Anglo-American modernity and the Mediterranean in which she related Ford's passion for Provence to the solar myth as found in Primitivist painters such as Gauguin.[5] And indeed much of Ford's interest in Provence coincides with his aesthetic: 'to look at life and make patterns of it – as did Cézanne at Aix-en-Provence.'[6] Now 'to look at life and make patterns of it' can be read in two contrasting ways that are embodied respectively by Ford Madox Ford and by Ezra Pound: when the former moves towards increasing aestheticization and seclusion from the world, the latter insists on commitment to the point of unreason. But in both cases the relation to truth becomes fragile, the very persistence of truth questionable and Provence's patterns more and more correspond, in Ford's words, 'not [to] a country, nor the home of a race, but a frame of mind.'[7]

It is from this perspective that the correspondence between Ford and Pound from 1924 to 1936 can be reconsidered: when Ford was based much of the time in Provence, on Cap Brun, and Pound was becoming the poet from Rapallo; and when Ford attempts to deal with Pound's idiosyncratic version of Provence and its disturbing political inflections. In 'Mediterranean Reverie,' Ford dreams of following the complex shore of the Mediterranean from Toulon to Rapallo, thus physically linking two poets of similar inspiration, if not of similar agendas.

> One once had friends. The cities swarmed with them. One could go towards any of the cardinal points or between them in any direction to find joyous discussion of things worthy the attention of proper men. That is all done. The world's arguments are grim – and profitless. It is to me great consolation to let my mind wander along the pink corrugations of these Mediterranean beaches. Their rocks hardly fret at all the blue water, and, when the thoughts have sufficiently but not too far pursued the shore, they shall come on where Ezra

> sits plucking – in the name of poets – figs from the dusty thistles of this world. So all in our civilization is not lost.[8]

1. A Short Walk around a Friendship

If Ezra Pound had but two friends with whom he kept a lifelong correspondence, these are Ford Madox Ford and William Carlos Williams. Because Williams was never so preoccupied with Provence as he was with Spain, and above all with America and the construction of an American idiom for American poets, he never even considered spending more than the occasional month in Europe, a place which in his travel memoir he calls Pagany. Yet he knew Ford and he knew him for his love of Provence, and generosity to fellow poets, as his poem 'To Ford Madox Ford in Heaven' (1944) evidences: not only does Williams pay homage to Ford, the 'heavenly man,' uncorrupt in his love of 'flesh,' 'drink,' and 'whore,' but above all he does it through a praise of Provence, and through an indirect praise of Ford's poetry. Indeed, the poem takes up the very title of Ford's love declaration to Provence, 'In Heaven,' and weaves it into the claim for a heaven on earth, which Ford would have made for himself in Provence. Contrary to the Ford/Pound Provençal connections, which we shall examine, the Ford/Williams connection is sensual and materialistic, at the same time an assertion of the worldly pleasures underpinning the intellectual attraction, and perhaps a jab at the pretensions of an intellectualized Provence. In Williams' poem, Provençal Ford is not in reverie any longer, he is in the world, a man who, for all his love of Provence, used the myths of the troubadours, and of courtly love to undermine as well as construct the characters of Edward Ashburnham and Dowell; to bring out their naivety, in seeing only the ethereal and beautiful in a love that never stays abstract but, once carnal, can prove as destructive as it is pleasurable. Williams' Ford is rather 'gross', as in the last stanza of the poem, but he is in fact the great absentee in the relationship that linked the American poet to Pound.

> Provence, the fat assed Ford will never
> again strain the chairs of your cafés
> pull and pare for his dish your sacred garlic,
> grunt and sweat and lick
> his lips. Gross as the world he has left to
> us he has become
> a part of that of which you were the known
> part, Provence, he loved so well.[9]

When Ezra Pound mentions Ford in the *Cantos*, he refers to the 'Fordie' who was one of the first people he met in London in 1909, but scarcely to Ford's connection with Provence or Paris rather than London. And, contrary to the disputes that animated, and occasionally threatened the correspondence between Pound and Williams, the thirty-year friendship between Pound and Ford was, in Brita Lindberg-Seyersted's words, 'without ruptures, quarrels, or serious disagreements':

> True, they sometimes disagreed and showed their irritation, be it at an incomprehensible way of writing or at a stubborn unwillingness to take no for an answer, and there were whole aspects of their lives they never discussed, if we are to judge from their correspondence and their writings about each other: family, love, politics. It was indeed a *literary* friendship.[10]

Eager to justify, and maybe to overemphasize, the title she has chosen for her edition of the correspondence, Lindberg-Seyersted fails to define what 'literary' means in this context. Indeed the letters deal very little with literary issues, or the debates that Ford and Pound engaged in in conversation or through reciprocal reviews of their books. These are sometimes quoted in the *Pound/Ford* volume but the letters themselves are at first sight of very minor interest. Among the many preoccupations that were common to Pound and Ford, three are more evident: 'their love for and knowledge of Mediterranean culture; their dedication to literature; and their unselfish and tireless promotion of writers and writing' (*P/F* ix). In the letters, what appears most is the business aspect of the relationship, one which started as early as June 1909, when Ford published Pound's Provence-related poem 'Sestina: Altaforte.' Appearing in the *English Review*, it is Pound's first poem to be published in a magazine with sizable readership.

Thus, despite significant divergence especially on the issue of literary impressionism, Ford is one of the Imagists of the first anthology with the poem from the German period entitled 'In the Little Old Market-Place', 'and indeed if Imagism meant relying on visual and oral perceptions to render states of mind, [Ford] had certainly been an Imagist years before the movement was even heard of' (*P/F* xiii). In 1919, in a review of Pound's *Quia Pauper Amavi* for the *Piccadilly Review*, Ford calls him the 'Bertran of the modern world' (*P/F* 29-30), effectively tying together the friendship and the interest in the troubadours of the Provençal world. In the years from 1924 to 1936, when Ford sends Pound his last letter from Cap Brun,

Pound is moving further and further away from the ideal vision of Provence and Provençal culture which imbues the early poems, some early cantos, and the notes gathered by Richard Sieburth under the title *A Walking Tour in Southern France*.[11] But Ford constantly draws the poet back to this ideal of writing and living, one based on tolerance and intellectual enjoyment. In this respect, his description of Ezra Pound in the memoir *Return to Yesterday* is significant, since it stresses Pound's Romance connection.

> When I first knew him his Philadelphian accent was still comprehensible if disconcerting; his beard and flowing locks were auburn and luxuriant; he was astonishingly meagre and agile. He threw himself alarmingly into frail chairs, devoured enormous quantities of your pastry, fixed his pince-nez firmly on his nose, drew out a manuscript from his pocket, threw his head back, closed his eyes to the point of invisibility and looking down his nose would chuckle like Mephistopheles and read you a translation from Arnaut Daniel. The only part of that verse that you would understand would be the refrain: *Ah me, the darn, the darn it comes toe sune!*" [. . . .] Where he studied the Romance languages I could not gather. But his proficiency in them was considerable when you allowed for the slightly negroid accent that he adopted when he spoke Provençal or recited the works of Bertran de Born.[12]

A similar evaluation returns in Ford's appraisal of Pound in his 1933 'Mediterranean Reverie':

> I do not recall anyone – not even Peire Vidal – who ever had the rhythmic virtuosity of the poet of Rapallo – or, indeed, his scholarship, erudition in fantastic human instances and invention [. . . .] The 'XXX Cantos' make up part of an immense epic history of the world as it centres round the Mediterranean. (*P/F* 132)

Pound's viewpoint is however different: in his mind, and in his discourse to Ford, Ford is a businessman of letters, one slowly beginning to unravel as his memoir fails to account properly for the past. Both Pound's unpublished review in Italian of *Return to Yesterday*, and a letter directly sent to Ford underline this critical stance of Pound's:

> As a reaction against these scoundrels [of the university] young Ford rigidly adopted a kind of antiprecision attitude for the next 40 years. He does not wish to, and perhaps he cannot, express the precise thing, if this thing does not have a corresponding meaning. He persistently falsifies trivial details. This is a danger in itself, but Ford has his own kind of courage. It is a sure way of making pedants angry. It certainly irritates me, and has done for twenty years, but now that I see the explanation it irritates me less.

> What does it matter to me, for example, if I was born in Idaho or Montana. The danger lies in this, that it is difficult to know when a detail is, or will be, trivial, and when it can become important.[13]
>
> ERROR an' shockin' error; my dear Fordie
> There never was an never will be a "horse trolley"
> vide P; 315.[14]

2. The Sadness of the Times

As a matter of fact, such comments are symptomatic of a more overall discrepancy between the two poets in their approaches to the difficulties of the times. It does not seem purely coincidental that both Ford and Pound should seek some retreat from the world precisely during the 1920s and 1930s; one need not return here to the nitty-gritty of the Great War's aftermath, the traumas both poets had to try and cope with, the Depression, and the general topsy-turviness of the geo-political world of the period. However, as Pound finds his 'heaven' in fascist Italy, albeit in the small seaside resort of Rapallo, he does not stray from his attempt at publicly and politically dealing with the changes brought about by the new world order. In this respect, his Provence – or his Mediterranean South – takes on a very different complexion from what Ford is after and hopes to find in his Cap Brun retreat. Cap Brun is meant to be an actual transfer from reality into the dreamed world of beauty and purity which Provence has come to mean for him. The paradox lies in the fact that, when one considers for instance the irony of his allusions to Provençal lore in *The Good Soldier*, in which courtly love, if ideal, is shown as utterly unfit to the realities of man-woman relationships, one is left to wonder to what extent he believes in the efficiency of the Provençal cure.

Interestingly enough, the letters between Ford and Pound from 1924 to 1935 are evidence of both a link and a radical separation between the two poets. If Ford clings to Provence, it is not because he forcibly wants to impose his vision of an ideal land and culture, but because he clings to the 'lies' of fictionalization at the same time as he recognizes them: why should one be forbidden to dream, and to cling to the dream as a mental refuge? Why could one not try, if not to live this dream, at least to live with it? In her account of those years in the introduction to the selected correspondence, Brita Lindberg-Seyersted thus reminds us that Ford and Janice Biala saw Toulon as 'their ideal seasonal home,' where Pound meant his move to Italy as a final exile, a definite divorce from America, and effectively, the rest of the world:

> [Pound] was drifting further and further away from his home country in the sense that he felt less than fully informed about the literary situation over there; he was disgusted with bureaucracy and censorship; he was beginning to be immersed in subjects that he could not discuss with Ford. (*P/F* 91-2)

When she finds that any discussion of Pound and Ford set in a biographical context must confront two stumbling blocks – Pound's anti-Semitism and Ford's distortion of facts, his 'lies' (*P/F* x) – however, one could be tempted to temper this dichotomy. Pound's options, not only his anti-Semitism but also his blind support of the Fascist regime in Italy and admiration of Benito Mussolini, are not just a stumbling block; they stand for a lasting turn with major consequences for the writings and the aesthetic decisions of the poet as he starts on a wholly didactic, if obscure, trend in poetry as well as in prose. By comparison, Ford's 'lies' are white lies, or rather poetic licenses, which are all in keeping with his initial take on the instability of individual perceptions whereby he acknowledges that any writing is fictional, and that in no case can the agent of this writing be discounted as neutral. In this respect, M. L. Rosenthal's reading of Ford's *Provence: From Minstrels to the Machine* in the volume *Ezra Pound and the Troubadours* edited by Philip Grover gives us invaluable keys to understand why the letters from Toulon are so matter-of-fact, whereas the reviews are so dreamy and inventive. It maybe also provides clues as to the push to the writing of *Parade's End*, 'this psychological panorama of the collapse of the Edwardian world, and the emergence of a new, more brutal and more banal one' (*P/F* 80) that took place at the same time.

> Ford Madox Ford's 1935 volume called *Provence: From Minstrels to the Machine* has all the faults often charged to him. It is wayward, uneven, digressively anecdotal, and egocentric [. . . .] Nevertheless, it is a marvelously suggestive and winning book [. . . .] In it Ford presents himself very much as he would have liked, at age 62, to be remembered: as poet and translator, bon vivant, humane savant, and sensitized carrier of Europe's embattled artistic and cultural traditions in the face of rampant commercialism. (Rosenthal 111)

Despite its title, *Provence* is less about Provence and more about Ford himself: yet another of his distorted self-portraits, stemming from the belief that any writing is a form of self-portraiture. The passion then is less for Provence than for 'the possibility that old dreams can be cherished while their whole underpinning is crumbling' (Rosenthal 114). Provence is a 'memory stronghold' (Rosenthal 113),

and the interest in the Albigensian heresy does not have the same import for Ford as for Pound: in Pound, the notion of heresy is a licence to fight against dogma but not a warning against dogmas; in Ford, it turns into a claim for the freedom to interpret, to see history in the here and now, to propose alternative truths to the univocal discourse of order. In Rosenthal's terms again, Provençal tradition is attractive not as a tradition but because it is 'creatively ritualized' (Rosenthal 113), thus turned into a reservoir for unending aesthetic re-creations.

So when Pound writes to Ford, to advise him on how to define his poetic sources as he comments on *Cathay*, his summary of the Provençal inheritance cannot but jar with Ford's own re-creation of Provence; to Pound, in a letter written on 30 July 1920, Provence gave 'Rhyme,' where China provided 'Eye,' and Greece 'Ear, onomatopoeia, quantity' (*P/F* 35-6). Later, in June 1921, from Saint-Raphael, he was to give a bitter description of a Riviera sunset that is loaded with indirect criticism of Ford's own writing:

> The sun sets like a blazing barrel head, orange & stage pink. – all the unrealities of the musical comedy stage – being evidently the authentic tradition of some damn mediterranean realist.[15]

Is Pound here covertly damning Ford as a 'mediterranean realist'? One is left to wonder, but what is certain is that Pound's own use of Provence, by the 1920s, is behind him. He may not see any longer how to invest the Provençal material into his present agenda, one marked by prescription and categorization. Ford on the other hand is aging and has come to see Provence not as the place where dreams come true (if he ever saw it that way), but as the place where the failure of dreams, the overall 'drought' of the times can be acknowledged, and at least momentarily endured. If *Provence*, the book, is a travel book, as Michela Calderaro purports, it is the book of a travel towards the resignation and the relief of forgetfulness, and towards an acceptance of irredeemable loss. In this respect the last letter from Toulon to Pound, dated September 1936, tragically marks the acceptance of failure, and the relinquishing of the right to dream: 'Indeed things are pretty low here and likely to remain so. We are having to give up this place and go and live in one room in Paris'.[16]

The departure from Provence for the United States and a professorship at Olivet, is a renunciation of the fantasticated source of creativeness, of a land that after giving now fails to provide. The poem

entitled 'Vers l'oubli' thus picks up on the metaphor of the drought, but to stress that the land needs watering to keep on yielding: Provence works as inspiration only so long as the poet nourishes it with his own fictions.

> We shall have to give up watering the land
> Almost altogether.
> The maize must go.[17]
>
> Well then:
> We have outlived a winter season and a season of spring
> And more than one season of harvesting
> In this land
> Where the harvests come by twos and threes
> One on the other's heels.[18]

With the end of the Provençal times the sadness of the times cannot be gay any longer, and the return is to menial work, and a debased way of surviving, in which harvests are few and far between.

3. In Lieu of Provence: the Pound/Ford poetic debates

As a consequence, Ford and Pound's Provençal connections can eventually be seen as crystallizing what both united and separated them as poets throughout their careers: the relations between poetry and prose, the question of doctrine, in literature and elsewhere, the issue of history and the contemporaneous past. Of course, these points are mostly absent from the correspondence, as they would have been such bones of contention as to threaten the relationship, but they appear, with increasing acuteness in the reviews that were written in the late 1920s and early 1930s.

Poetry and prose

Ford has been said for a long time to be a minor poet – and Pound is no mean advocate of the superiority of his fiction over his poetry. It is however to be kept in mind that Ford is one of the first to argue for the use of everyday language in poetry, and to put this to effect in his own poems. He denied any boundaries between the prosaic and the poetic, hence between poetry and fiction – or essay at that. As is often the case, Pound's official position and his practice seem to be at odds: technical prowess in poetry is seen by him as potentially detrimental to the message the poet wants to convey, since the beauty of the lines might come to obfuscate the seriousness of his subject. On the other

hand, his poems are so eminently technical, especially in the *Cantos*, that their topic can be detected only with great difficulty, and the most intense passages are often those that depart from the initial project. In 1927 for the review of *Personae*, Pound's collected short poems, in the *New York Herald Tribune Books*, Ford Madox Ford thus finds himself in the uncomfortable position of defending Pound against the accusations of elitist erudition, while he enumerates the extreme diversity and density of his references:

> My ears are continually deafened by those who object to the work of Mr. Pound – by those who allege that he is erudite! Just heavens! He is no more erudite than any man of considerable knowledge of the world. In literature it is no matter whether your knowledges arise from an intimate knowledge of life in the Bronx or the Tombs in 1926, or from an intimate knowledge of life in China to-day, in France in the fourteenth century, or in Carthage of the time of Hannibal [. . . .] It would then appear to be merely captious to object to Mr. Pound placing his poems among the troubadours, the Chinese, or in the days of Sigismondo Malatesta. Time – any given moment of time – goes so swiftly and so irrevocably that there is no day that can proudly claim immortality for itself [. . . .] So that it matters very little where or at what date a poet places his poems. What is requisite is that he should be erudite in his knowledge of the human heart. (*P/F* 85)

To be 'erudite in [the] knowledge of the human heart' though, is virtually never on Pound's agenda, and I have demonstrated on another occasion that even the elegiac end of the *Cantos*, dedicated to Olga Rudge, is but a decoy.[19] It is however very much a part of Ford's agenda as he plunges into the penumbrae of human desires and motivations in his novels. It is thus also a sign that for the 1933 review of *XXX Cantos*, Pound asks Ford to advertise his Rapallo concerts rather than the poem, forcing Ford into understating what he actually sees as the important work in poetry.[20] Pound's insistence on having Ford write about the music might be purely opportunistic, but it might also be a way of preventing him from expounding on his major idea, which appears for the first time in his 1914 review of *Cathay*: the best quality in Pound's poetry is that it is made of condensed novels. Thus the best *Cathay* poem, according to Ford is 'Liu Ch'e' because it is 'in reality a tiny novel, and as such is doubly interesting to me who am only a dabbler in verse'.[21] And the qualities of the *XXX Cantos* arise from their ability to apply the novelistic demand of *le mot juste* set by Ford's favorite French writer Gustave Flaubert.

> Almost any line of his [. . .] is like the trumpet-call awakening of a good novel. Mr. Pound has, of course, learned a great deal from the novelists – perhaps more from Flaubert than from any other individual, though obviously the Romance and Italian poets of before fifteen hundred and seventeenth-century English – and the Yellow Press and railway time-tables – have all played their parts with his rhythms. (*P/F* 132)

Doctrine and freedom

The core of the Ford/Pound version of the debate over freedom of thinking and how to be a leader of the avant-garde is to be found in Ford's review of Pound's *How to Read* published in *The New Review* of April 1932. In it, he rather scathingly attacks the very essence of the project and its modalities. How could Pound, in Ford's view, have the ambition of teaching how to read, of giving reading lists to potential students of literature, of having a recipe, so to speak, to make up a good poet? The review begins with a probably fictitious account of the pretensions of bourgeois London women, and their ways of only addressing their equals, despising the rest of humanity, and only dealing with insider topics. Ford's ironical claim to have forgotten all of the conversation overheard as a child but its beginning – 'We are all married women, aren't we?' – builds into a burden repeatedly attacking Pound's didacticism and the naivety of his generalizations:

> But, whenever I sit down to write anything sincere and thought about, I find myself still glancing around me and saying: 'We are all – oh, say Popes – aren't we?' Because it is hypocrisy and worse to write anything sincere and thought about for the general. Ezra, then, gives us his notes of a craftsman, and I hope we are all . . . oh, men who have thought with sincerity about one craft or another. (*P/F* 101-2)

Pound's doctrinaire stance sits ill with Ford. His use of the Provençal poets in *How to Read* to construct an all-engulfing theory of literature based on value judgments, and all made to measure for himself, cannot but produce half-baked versions of Pound himself, failing to favour 'inventors' to the benefit of 'imitators,' to take up Pound's own terminology: says Ford, 'if a student of genius studied and exactly conformed to the precepts of the book, we should have half another Ezra' (*P/F* 103). It is thus unsurprising that Ford should refuse to review Pound's *ABC of Economics*, although the reason might be not so much that he disapproves of his straying away from poetry (after all, the work on the *Cantos* continues despite the forays into

economics and politics) as that the text comes as yet another example of the dogmatic spiral in which Pound is caught.

> It is not good that the general should hear too much truth. We must begin by conceding that it is for human beings that we write. The general should not hear that [. . . .] The fact remains that you must write either for Humanity as a whole or, like Ezra, for a sublimated Ezra-Superman. (*P/F* 103)

In the end, what Pound finds objectionable in Ford's literary impressionism is precisely what Ford values, so that the letter of December 1931 sounds as a rebuff, but stands also as a typically Poundian misreading of Ford:

> However/// that damn wheeze about "impression" impressionist <defence-mechanism?> (part of it conducive to virtue) but still; you are better when being scientific (re/ durability of birds), you object to a defect of science namely the failure to examine the evidence.[22]

Ford is not interested in the evidence, since there might be none anyway: all evidence is proof of what the viewer wants to demonstrate, and not a stepping stone to an as yet unheard-of truth. Impressionism is not a 'defence mechanism' that would be part of an overall process of denial. On the contrary, it is what happens once denial is done with and one has come to accept the fallibility of it all.

History and time

This is why Ford calls Pound's poetry a 'Literature of Escape' in the 1927 review of *Personae*, at the same time as he sees in him 'the historian of the world [. . .] who is far more truly the historian of the world than any compiler of an outline of history' (*P/F* 85-6). More than commenting on Pound's poems, and taking a swipe at H. G. Wells's *Outline of History*, he is outlining his own conception of history and time: one he strangely shares with Pound but carries out to very contrasting consequences. In the same way as Pound considers history in the present, and hunts down the traces of the old Provence along the paths of contemporary Provence, Ford sees all of history as contemporaneous. However – and this might be the root of the divergence – this pushes Pound to provide an entire re-reading of history in terms of the present, one that leads to subsume past and present under categories that are limiting and, to say the least, questionable. The dogmatic stance exposes the result to the accusation of falsifying and mystifying, where Ford proves more self-aware, and

able to conceptualize what he is doing to the past. As he comments on Pound as 'another Bertran de Born', he also ironically picks up on Pound's bombastic tone and debunks it:

> So with his collected poems Mr. Pound sets out, another Bertran de Born, splendidly swaggering down the ages. Another Bertran de Born, indeed, poking out his flame-colored forked beard into the faces, menacing with his cane the persons of the Kings of England, of France, of Navarre and of all the big business and all the meanness of the universe. They will probably hang him as the Kings of France and Navarre and England so nearly did for Bertran at Alta Forte. (*P/F* 87)

Here the glorious past of Provence, made present, seems a little out of place and exaggerated: the point is not to reinstate this past (one of Pound's utopian life-works) but to posit it next to the quotidian, as help, as foil, as dream. Thus, in Brita Lindberg-Seyersted's words:

> Graham Greene may have been the first to point to similarities in the methods of Ford's writings and the *Cantos*. He suggested that it is in their handling of time that a work like Ford's *Provence* and the *Cantos* are similar; simultaneity is essential here. Hugh Kenner has also drawn parallels between Ford's time-shift technique and the handling of time in the *Cantos*. Pound's ideogrammic method can be linked to Ford's recommendation that in dialogue the speeches of the characters should be juxtaposed, rather than follow each other as answers to the previous speech. (*P/F* xii)

But one might add that this time-shift technique does not allow in Ford for a blending of the past into the present, and even less for a reducing of the present to an idealized past: if juxtaposition is to be taken for granted, the past is no more than an alternative, optional though desirable fiction. Consequently, Ford's famed 'mythomania', his 'cavalier handling of facts', his mixing-up of life and fiction are not just 'the [. . .] backbone of the story-telling technique of his reminiscences', nor a negligent disregard for 'factual truth' (*P/F* x). They are the accepted final recognition that truth is relative, and that the dreams we may construct are all that we own. And this should deter us from imposing our will on the world, even in fantasy. It leaves Ford with the perilous task of surviving the everlasting Provençal drought.

> For this is a corner of France,
> And this the kingdoms of the earth beneath the sun,
> And this the garden sealed and set apart
> And that the fountain of Jouvence. . . .
> And, yes, you have a heart.[23]

NOTES

1 Ford, *The Good Soldier*, ed. Martin Stannard, New York: Norton, 1995, p. 15.
2 James Trammell Cox, 'Ford's "Passion for Provence",' *ELH* 38:4 (1961), 383-98 (pp. 397-8). In fact it was *A Man Could Stand Up* – which was begun in Toulon, in January 1926.
3 Stuart Y. McDougal, '"Where Even the Saddest Stories are Gay": Provence and *The Good Soldier*,' *Journal of Modern Literature* 7:3 (1979), 552-4 (pp. 553-4). The 'vida' is a brief life of the troubadour.
4 Michela A. Calderaro, 'Ford Madox Ford: A Provence of his Own,' *Annali di Ca' Foscari,* 42:1-2 (2003), 37-48.
5 Laura Colombino, 'Negotiating with Gauguin's "Solar Myth": Art, Economy and Ideology in Ford Madox Ford's *Provence*,' Caroline Patey, Giovanni Cianci, Francesca Cuojati, eds, *Anglo-American Modernity and the Mediterranean*. Milan: Cisalpino, 2006, pp. 51-64.
6 Quoted in M. L. Rosenthal, 'Round about Ford Madox Ford's Provence,' Philip Grover, ed., *Ezra Pound and the Troubadours*, Gardonne: Fédérop, 2000 – henceforth 'Rosenthal'; pp. 111-22.
7 Ford, *Provence: From Minstrels to the Machine*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1938, p. 66.
8 Ford, *Critical Essays,* ed. Max Saunders and Richard Stang, Manchester: Carcanet, 2002 – henceforth *CE*; p. 296.
9 William Carlos Williams, *Collected Poems*, 2 vols, New York: New Directions, 1988, vol. 2, p. 96.
10 Brita Lindberg-Seyersted, ed., *Pound/Ford*, London: Faber, 1982 – henceforth *P/F*; p. vii.
11 Richard Sieburth, ed., *A Walking Tour in Southern France: Ezra Pound among the Troubadours*, New York, New Directions Books, 1992.
12 Ford, *Return to Yesterday*, New York: Liveright, 1932, pp. 373 ff.
13 Pound, 'Appunti: Return to Yesterday. Memorie di Ford Madox (Hueffer) Ford' (1931): *P/F* 97.
14 Pound to Ford, Rapallo, 27 December 1931, *P/F* 100.
15 Pound to Ford, 4 June 1921, written from St Raphael: *P/F* 55.
16 Ford to Pound, Toulon, 6 September 1936: *P/F* 140.
17 Ford, 'Vers l'oubli [L'oubli – Temps de sécheresse],' *Selected Poems*, ed. Max Saunders, Manchester: Carcanet, 1997, p. 150.
18 Ford, 'Vers l'oubli [L'oubli – Temps de sécheresse],' *Selected Poems* 153.
19 See Hélène Aji, 'Melancholy in Lieu of Recantation: Ezra Pound's "Drafts and Fragments",' *EREA*, 4.1 (Spring 2006), 37-42.
20 Half of 'Mediterranean Reverie' is almost exclusively devoted to the programme of Pound's concerts, and praise of his qualities in fields other than poetry.
21 Ford, *Outlook*, 33 (9 May 1914), 636, 653: *CE* 153.
22 Pound to Ford, Rapallo, 27 December 1931: *P/F* 100.
23 Ford, 'Vers l'oubli [L'oubli – Temps de sécheresse]', *Selected Poems* 154.