# EMPIRE OF THE FUTURE: *THE INHERITORS*, FORD, LIBERALISM AND IMPERIALISM

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*The Inheritors*, published in June 1901, was Ford's first book of the Edwardian age. At least, though it was produced in collaboration with Joseph Conrad, most of the writing was by Ford, who thought fewer than two thousand of the book's seventy-five thousand words were Conrad's, and that his contribution had been 'to give each scene a final tap'.[1] And, though mostly written before Edward acceded to the throne, its subject is the future, especially the future of England, and of the British Empire. It thus looks forward to the political and social changes of the period that was to become known as Edwardian. *The Inheritors* is one of Ford's most intensely political novels, in that it demonstrates how attuned he was to the political debates of the turn of the century; the arguments mapped out so well by Robert Green, between conservatism and 'social imperialism', and within the Conservative party between Arthur Balfour and Joseph Chamberlain.[2] Green's fine analysis of the book as primarily a political *roman à clef* follows Ford's description of it in his memoir of Conrad as:

> a political work, rather allegorically backing Mr. Balfour in the then Government; the villain was to be Joseph Chamberlain who had made the [Boer] War. The sub-villain was to be Leopold II, King of the Belgians, the foul – and incidentally lecherous – beast who had created the Congo Free State in order to grease the wheels of his harems with the blood of murdered negroes and to decorate them with fretted ivory cut from stolen tusks in the deep forests. (*JC* 133-4)

Ford recalled that the political subject was what most drew Conrad to embarking on this second collaborative project, in parallel with their first, major, collaboration, *Romance* (1903), begun earlier but not published till later. Ford said that, prior to Conrad's involvement, he had conceived of *The Inheritors* as 'an allegorico-realist romance' which 'showed the superseding of previous generations and codes by the merciless young who are always alien and without remorse' (*JC* 134).

As that hybrid term 'allegorico-realist' suggests, *The Inheritors* is an early example of Ford's interest in generic fusion. It strikingly combines its political – 'realist' – satire, with something more speculative and fantasmatic. For its 'merciless' and 'alien' young are alien in a metaphysical sense: invaders from the 'fourth dimension', and the novel is thus also a foray into science fiction;[3] with Ford, and to some extent Conrad as well, hoping for some yield from the territory their mutual friend H. G. Wells had been marking out; rather as, with *Romance*, they were trying to make their mark in the Stevensonian mode of pirate adventure.

Both the political and science fiction aspects of *The Inheritors* turn on a sense of the future: a future which is an end of things – principles in political life, humanity in social life – as well as a beginning. The novel poses its present – the present of the Boer War – as a crisis; the turn-of-the-century as a turning point. Ford later described the Boer War as 'a chasm separating the new world from the old'.[4] This essay argues that *The Inheritors* offers a series of *anticipations* about that new world emerging from the chasm of the crisis of the old world: the new world of the Edwardian future. It compares Ford's political comments with the writings of his friend C. F. G. Masterman and his circle, noting how Ford's anti-imperialist stance positions him with the more progressive 'New Liberals' who would later contribute to his *English Review*.[5] It also discusses the ways in which his subsequent Edwardian fiction continues to be interested in the future, and the kinds of future it projects. My interest in Ford as a futurologist is matched with another sense of anticipation: that of how *The Inheritors* can be seen as prefiguring so much of his later Edwardian work; to the extent that much of his writing from 1901-15 might be seen as working through some of the anticipations in this early novel.

*The Inheritors* was in fact only Ford's second published novel, coming out nine years after *The Shifting of the Fire*. He had drafted others, but his only prose fiction published between 1892 and 1901 was the fairy-tale *The Queen Who Flew* (1894) and a short story.[6] He had published biography, art criticism, poetry, and topography, and would continue to work in all these genres, and various combinations of them. But it was his meeting and collaboration with Conrad that gave him his bearings as a novelist.

It may seem surprising to propose Ford as a futurologist. He is usually seen as a prolific writer of retrospect, whether in his books of reminiscence, of cultural history, or in his historical novels. One way

of thinking about how the future and history might relate in his work would be to say that his historical fictions often turn on our sense of what the future turned out to be for the characters. When the novels deal with real history, as in the *Fifth Queen* trilogy (1906-8), Ford sometimes works with counterfactuals, as when he plays his white-washed Katherine Howard against the more compromised one of the received history.[7] Whatever the leeway for judgement, we know her fated execution. In such cases, a character's future adds a degree of dramatic irony to their present choices and hopes.

One might think that historical fiction about invented characters would need to dispense with such historical irony. Yet in *Ladies Whose Bright Eyes* (1911) Ford finds an ingenious structural device to produce a comparable effect. The protagonist, the publisher William Sorrell, is concussed in a train crash and comes round in the fourteenth century. Though the satire of the book concerns his ignorance of the past, and reliance on mod cons, there is a poignant undertow suggesting that *he* – and his ignorance – is the future to which the medieval *savoir faire* will lead.

*Ladies Whose Bright Eyes* is narrated in the third person but uses Sorrell as the focaliser. The point of view is primarily his. From the point of view of the medieval characters, however, the plot appears very different. Sorrell suddenly appears out of nowhere, the man from another dimension, who is to inherit their world. He is one of the inheritors; a clear example of how *The Inheritors* can be seen as setting out the paradigms of so much of Ford's later work.

Ford wasn't to follow *The Inheritors* with speculative fantasies about the future in the Wellsian manner. He understood that his gifts as a novelist lay in understanding the past and observing the present. But he did write about the future – whether of society, culture or the arts – throughout his career. For example, *The Soul of London* (1905) ends on 'the problem which is set before London – the apotheosis of modern life': the fact that 'No occidental cities, great in the modern sense, have existed, none have begun to exist until the beginning of the Commercial Ages'.[8] The solution to this problem of the 'great' city – what later urban theorists have termed the 'megalopolis' – must lie, says Ford, 'in the evolution either of a healthy city or of a race with a strong hold upon life'; and he goes on to contemplate what he calls the 'creatures of the future'.[9] He followed his trilogy about *England and the English* (1905-7) with a long essay on 'The Future of London', published as the last chapter appended to a large two-volume

work by W. W. Hutchings entitled *London Town Past and Present* (1909).[10] Later, in one of the earliest assessments of Joyce's *Ulysses*, he imagined the book's impact on the literature of the future:

> *Ulysses* contains the undiscovered mind of man; it is human consciousness analyzed as it has never before been analyzed. Certain books change the world. This, success or failure, *Ulysses* does: for no novelist with serious aims can henceforth set out upon a task of writing before he has at least formed his own private estimate as to the rightness or wrongness of the methods of the author of *Ulysses*. If it does not make an epoch – and it well may! – it will at least mark the ending of a period.[11]

Such things especially mattered when, as Ford thought then, and throughout the 1920s and 1930s, the period that was ending was that of European civilisation: 'beautiful talents are the desperate need of these sad months and years', he had written in 1921, 'when we tremble on the verge of a return to barbarism. . . .'.[12] Much of his writing from the mid-1930s came out of this anxiety about the future, and was dedicated to defending and celebrating the Latinate civilization he hoped would protect Europe from such a fate.[13]

Confronted with the upheavals in Western societies and cultures in the early twentieth century, many writers found themselves coerced into prophetic modes. Wyndham Lewis gave a vivid account of a house-party on the eve of the First World War at which Ford is the only one to realize, and to predict, that war is about to be declared.[14] But Ford's futurology is stylistic as well as vatic – is perhaps more unusual and more pervasive at the level of style. For his style is marked by a surprisingly frequent use of the future tense. 'You will say' is one of his habitual turns of style. Yet, as the following two passages show (from near the beginning and the end of *The Good Soldier*), his rhetoric of anticipation runs deeper:

> So I shall just imagine myself for a fortnight or so at one side of the fireplace of a country cottage, with a sympathetic soul opposite me. And I shall go on talking, in a low voice while the sea sounds in the distance and overhead the great black flood of wind polishes the bright stars. From time to time we shall get up and go to the door and look out at the great moon and say: – 'Why, it is nearly as bright as in Provence!' And then we shall come back to the fireside, with just the touch of a sigh because we are not in that Provence where even the saddest stories are gay.[15]

> In twenty minutes or so I shall walk down to the village, beneath my own oaks, alongside my own clumps of gorse, to get the American mail. My

> tenants, the village boys and the tradesmen will touch their hats to me. So life peters out. I shall return to dine and Nancy will sit opposite me with the old nurse standing behind her. Enigmatic, silent, utterly well-behaved as far as her knife and fork go, Nancy will stare in front of her with the blue eyes that have over them strained, stretched brows. Once, or perhaps twice, during the meal her knife and fork will be suspended in mid-air as if she were trying to think of something that she had forgotten. Then she will say that she believes in an Omnipotent Deity or she will utter the one word 'shuttle-cocks', perhaps.[16]

Or, to take a less well-known illustration, in the third essay of 'Women and Men' (written before the war, though not published till near the end of it), Ford launches into an extraordinary address to an imagined female listener conducted almost entirely through an extended use of the future tense:

> There is no knowing what type of Abstract Man you will not, if you are a woman, select as your normal male being. Supposing that, in the home of your childhood the particular 'He' was always being held up to you, by your mother, your nurse and your female servants, as somebody gross, negligent, self-indulgent [. . . .] In that case the odds are that you will for the rest of your life regard the normal man as something clumsy, stupid and wanting in what you will consider to be female fineness, delicacy and intuition.
>
> And this will be your normal vision of Man. From time to time you will be in the quickened condition in which you will really pay some attention to the idiosyncrasies of some few particular men. Roughly speaking, while you are at your boarding or your high school you will find prevailing among your school-fellows an extraordinary, a vivid curiosity not so much regarding the nature of men as regarding the mysteries of sex. This curiosity you may or you may not share, but whether you share it or no you will have no means of satisfying it. Your mother will hardly give you any details and certainly not your father. In the nature of things you will be kept more or less rigidly from contact with the male animal [. . . .]
>
> You will hear from your school mates that the creatures called 'Boys' are something different from yourself, but actually you will not observe much difference. You will not, I mean, observe it for yourself.[17]

We may think of it as a postmodern ambition to write a whole novel in the future tense, as Christine Brooke-Rose did in *Amalgamemnon* (1984). Ford doesn't do that; but he does write long passages of novels and discursive prose in that tense; or gives special prominence to futurological moments; as when, in *Parade's End*, Tietjens recalls finding a man at the War Office early on in the war 'devising the ceremonial for the disbanding of a Kitchener battalion', during which 'the adjutant would say: *There will be no more parades. . . .*'.[18]

Such a moment might give us pause, since it is far from a simple anticipation of the future. It imagines the adjutant planning one future (the ceremony) which will anticipate another. His imagined speech act is not merely predictive, but performative: he is issuing a military decree. Furthermore, Tietjens, several years into the war, is looking back in memory to the past when this forward-planning was taking place. It is thus a complex moment of historical irony. Tietjens' point is that what may have been simply military pragmatism then now appears 'symbolical' of a loss of integrity (*NMP* 27). In other words, the planning of one kind of future now appears as an inadvertent prediction of quite another future.

Of course, in taking the phrase as 'symbolical', Tietjens is making his own ('allegorico-realist') prophecy: that 'parade' will go out of the world in this other, moral, sense. Yet from another point of view, it might be said not to be a prophecy at all. Not just because what it predicts is the lack of a future for the order he believes in – 'No more Hope, no more Glory, no more parades for you and me any more. Nor for the country. . . Nor for the world, I dare say . . . None . . . Gone . . . Na poo, finny!' (*NMP* 27). But also because what he's really talking about is the present. The disaster has already occurred. The effects in the second example from *The Good Soldier* and the one from 'Women and Men' are comparable. With Edward Ashburnham dead and Nancy Rufford insane Dowell feels he has lost any possibility of future happiness. His future is predictable because hopeless; a repetitive petering out. It can only be the same as the present, so his future tense is effectively drained of any future content. In the passage from 'Women and Men', predictability is again the issue. The future tense claims omniscience about how gender is acculturated. Given the premise, certain developments are inevitable. Yet here too the effect is disconcerting. Since Ford is addressing adult readers, the descriptions of what they 'will' do as school-children is an anachronism. Here too, the tense does not really refer to a future time, but functions as a logical complement to the conditional: supposing you had this kind of childhood, then you would – *now* – have these kinds of ideas. It is to be expected that a writer who prided himself on developing the 'time shift' with Conrad would work such effects through tense shifts. In the epigraph to *Romance* Ford had written:

> If we could have remembrance now
> And see, as in the days to come

> We shall, what's venturous in these hours [. . . .]

Thomas Moser shrewdly describes this as expressing Ford's 'characteristic longing to leap out of the present so that he can look back at it'.[19] The argument of the poem is that the present will seem more romantic when it has become a distant memory. And that to imagine that romance now, we need to leap into the future: 'the days to come'. One of the unpublished novels Ford had written just before the collaboration with Conrad was called 'A Romance of the Times Before Us'. The 'before' is ambiguous, but mainly refers not to the past, but the times ahead, which anticipate a German invasion (and thus a host of Edwardian novels on that theme).[20]

The turn of the century was notoriously beset with anxiety about the changes the future might bring, and produced a surge of futurological fiction, from William Morris' *News from Nowhere* (1890) to Wells's *The Time Machine* (1895) and *The War of the Worlds* (1898), which is simultaneously a critique of the present. That paradigm had been established even earlier, in Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward: 2000-1887***,** which was first published in 1888, and explicitly imagines viewing the time of writing from the perspective of the future. If the lines of *fin-de-siècle* futurology had thus been drawn in the last Victorian years, the Edwardian period was also to prove intensely futurological. As we shall see, much of this work is predictated on a sense of crisis. It appears a common human tendency to define one's epoch in relation to cataclysmic events, such as world wars; or the Atomic Age; or, more recently, with the collapse of Communism, the End of History, 9/11, the digital age, and so on. Yet much of the early twentieth-century writing contemplating the future, and expressing this sense of a break between past and future, struggles to identify a comparable seismic fault-line. It is often fraught with anxiety about change, but contemplates a multiplicity of small changes rather than one overwhelming one. Or perhaps that anxiety is the point. Such discourse poses futurology as an anxiety about an uncertain apocalypse, rather than expressing the condition of being post-apocalyptic.

At this point I want to introduce the figure of C. F. G. Masterman, or rather reintroduce him, as he's already well known to Ford studies. He was an MP from the 1906 Liberal Landslide, and a cabinet minister briefly in 1914. But he was also a prolific writer and journalist – including being an occasional literary journalist. His best

known book, *The Condition of England*, was published in 1909 when he was in parliament. Ford reviewed it in the *English Review*.[21] Like much of Masterman's writing, it is concerned with change; with weighing up its advantages against its disadvantages. This attitude is best expressed in the title of his early collection of essays, *In Peril of Change: Essays Written in Time of Tranquillity* (1905). The subjects covered there range widely across politics, literature, and philosophy. The four last essays give a stronger religious emphasis; he had been influenced by Christian socialism in his youth, and repeatedly expresses anxiety about the decline of Anglicanism.

These books were written several years after *The Inheritors*; we don't know if Masterman read Ford's novel – though he certainly read, and reviewed, Ford later, from *The Heart of the Country* (1906) and *The English Girl* (1907) onwards.[22] Nor can we be sure when they got to know each other; though Ford had probably met him in 1897 when they were members of the same golf club at Hythe. But it wasn't till Ford's liaison with Violet Hunt that he and Masterman became close – from around 1909 till Ford left Hunt, and then England, after the war.

Thus I'm not arguing for any direct influence either way in this earlier, turn-of-the-century, period. Nor that Ford is producing similar laments for secularisation. Rather, that Masterman's anxious sense that a watershed of some kind has been reached, without being able to explain it, might put *The Inheritors* in a new light. For Masterman, the nineteenth century is dead and buried. But he doesn't yet know what will follow; just that it will be perilous. Samuel Hynes captures this uncertainty beautifully when he categorizes Masterman together with Galsworthy as 'Undecided Prophets'.[23] The title essay of *In Peril of Change* picks out three institutions as especially imperilled: the landed interests; the Established Church; and the Protestant faith. If they have all survived longer than was often predicted in the previous century, their passing seems to Masterman gradual but inevitable:

> each year and each day exhibit some subtle advance, as one man after another realises that the sanction has vanished for some particular restraint, and that nothing is keeping him from pursuing the desirable course but the forces of custom and routine.[24]

*The Inheritors* is very much an expression of that anxiety, and Ford's fourth dimensionist a personification of very much that new rejection of any traditions of piety, altruism or restraint. Her ability to

make Granger feel she has destabilized Canterbury Cathedral shows the power she represents over feudalism and the church, and faith in either. The difference, though, is that what in *The Inheritors* has sometimes been criticised as inadequately realised, might, according to this reading, be seen as a presentation of that inadequacy. Ford, that is to say, rather than sounding Edwardianly vague about the future (when compared to a more scientifically accomplished writer like Wells) might, instead, be parodying, or at least criticising or diagnosing, that very predicament. Ford's language of an alien future certainly echoes Masterman's imaginary shifts of perspective and time:

> The Victorian Age, which now, alike in its sobriety and its sanguine dreams, stands so remote in the background of the memory of those who are living in an alien time, will be stamped in the record of the future as an age of hurrying change.[25]

If the Victorian past seemed a foreign country by 1905, another reason why the time might have seemed 'alien' was that that year saw the passing of the 'Aliens Act', responding to anxiety about immigration by trying to restrict and police it.[26] From that perspective, the future too could be made to seem 'an alien time'. Andrzej Gasiorek has examined how Ford's *The Soul of London*, also from 1905, resists the xenophobia reflected by such legislation. Ford, whose father had been a German immigrant, instead celebrates London's capacity to assimilate all cultures and ethnicities. Granger, after all, is in love with the alien fourth dimensionist. Ford offers her as a representative of the future; but his subject is also the future's uncertainty, its menace and the anxiety it incites.

That *fin-de-siècle* feeling of cataclysm and anxiety, I've suggested, was to prove paradigmatic for Ford. Many of his Edwardian books turn on a contrast or transition between the old world and the new. A sense of moral cataclysm – of chivalric altruism seeming antediluvian in the contemporary world – is the theme of *The Benefactor* (1905) as it is of *The Good Soldier*. In the *Fifth Queen* trilogy (1906-08) Ford explores the Tudor period as an earlier time of perilous change. The contrast is between the old and new faiths, with Thomas Cromwell presented as the man of the future, helping to shape the modern world. (There are close connexions between the political intrigues of *The Inheritors* and Cromwell's Machiavellian tactics in the *Fifth Queen* trilogy; and also the modern domestic political jobbery satirised in *Mr. Fleight* (1913).) In *Mr Apollo* (1908), the God

of the old, Classical, world descends on the new; pursuing his own quest for what one might call 'The Soul of London' in the Edwardian metropolis. In *The 'Half-Moon': A Romance of the Old World and the New* (1909), the Old and New Worlds are Europe and the American colonies; but also the historical past and the present. The contrast between old and new was also the cornerstone of the account of a changing England and the English in the trilogy of that name, as it was in Masterman's books.

However, Masterman's sonorous and metaphorical language produces an effect of vagueness. His literariness enables him to sound wise and sensitive about the problems posed by modernity while remaining non-denominational enough not to offend his electorate. Whereas, as we have seen, Ford was able to give a much more specific cause for his sense of cataclysmic rupture between past and future: the Boer War – that is, the Second Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902. That event, near the beginning of his career, had felt like 'the end of everything' (*AL* 235); another way in which Ford's Edwardian writing anticipates his future work: the apocalyptic sense of war as bringing things to an end. Like his grandfather Ford Madox Brown, Ford was able to imagine *The Last of England*. Masterman, as an aspiring English politician, could scarcely be expected to do that. If he was personally drawn to the elegiac note, he could not afford to let his elegies tell the saddest story.

What was it, though, that made the Boer war feel so cataclysmic to Ford? One reason is that it was perhaps the first moment at which he felt himself threatened and intimidated for his political views. He was certainly alienated from the mainstream jingoism. In 1911 he described himself as having been 'as hot a pro-Boer as any one well could be' (*AL* 245). His point in saying that was to explain how nonetheless he was elated when Mafeking was relieved in May 1900. That event led to riotous jubilation in England. And, as the historian G. M. Trevelyan shows in another book involving Masterman, there was also widespread harassment of people expressing views critical of the government at the time; abuse countenanced by the Conservative party.[27] Ford experienced something similar, according to *Return to Yesterday*:

> being profoundly impressed by the uselessness to England of the British Empire and with the savage nature of the Dopper Boers and wishing solely that South Africa might be returned to its real owners, the natives, and Kruger and Mr. Chamberlain hung on the same gallows, I was once chased for three-quarters of a mile along New Oxford Street by a howling mob of patriots.[28]

There was nothing new in Ford taking up positions unpopular with his audience: but the Anarchists or Fabians or writers he was used to arguing with were intellectuals. They might get irritated, and abuse him verbally, but they wouldn't have chased him howling down the street.

*Return to Yesterday* was written thirty years after the Boer War, when Ford had begun his relationship with Janice Biala, and he was perhaps writing it with her much more left-wing and 1930s communist-leaning views in mind. On the other hand, there's no reason to doubt Ford's (and his wife Elsie's) oppositional stance to the war in 1900. In *Joseph Conrad* he describes how they encountered anti-British hostility in Bruges that summer when the Hueffers and Conrads took a working holiday there during their collaboration. Olive Garnett's diary confirms the story, and in a way that indicates an irony that they should be assumed to be anti-Boer.[29]

The salient point here is not what Ford thought about the Boers; but that his analysis in the end is of the failure of imperialism. That is why the war had such a cataclysmic effect. Though technically an eventual British victory, the British had for the first time since the Norman conquest felt in peril of defeat. That, and the fact that such a threat came not from another imperial power but from within the empire itself, and from such a relatively small and lightly-armed group, must have been deeply troubling to the imperial mindset.

An earlier Masterman-related book had appeared while the Boers remained undefeated after two years of war, and in the same year as *The Inheritors* – 1901. This was a collection of essays called *The Heart of the Empire: Discussions of Problems of Modern City Life in England. With an Essay on Imperialism*. No editor is cited, and the preface is anonymous. But the opening chapter is Masterman's, on 'Realities at Home', and there are essays on 'Imperialism' by G. P. Gooch (who would contribute to Ford's *English Review*), and on 'Past and Future', by G. M. Trevelyan.

*The Heart of the Empire* is about England and cities and especially London. But that feeling that the empire was in a state of crisis was what was driving Masterman and his collaborators to examine its heart; taking their lead, perhaps, from Conrad's 'Heart of Darkness' (1899). John Attridge has shown how Ford's *English Review* gathered together a group of progressive political thinkers advocating the 'New Liberalism'.[30] Their anti-Imperialism was a crucial aspect of the political stance of the *Review,* contrasting with Ford's own pro-

nouncements of a more Tory nature, if of a histrionically antediluvian Toryism. (Ford may have written some such pieces, as for example 'A Declaration of Faith',[31] precisely in order to voice a view opposed to those of the New Liberal contributors.) Criticism of *The Inheritors* has tended to see it as a lament for a defunct Toryism, rather than seeing that view as in dialogue with a more radical one, taking a critical look at the uselessness of imperialism.

To that extent Ford's analysis here too goes beyond that of Masterman (especially once in office, when he'd have found it difficult to utter such unpopular views). It is here, too, that, even if *The Inheritors* wasn't really a full collaboration, the influence of Conrad was strongest. Ford had been involved with the revisions of 'Heart of Darkness', and of course knew of Conrad's first-hand knowledge of the Belgian Congo.[32]

From another point of view, Ford takes Conrad's searching look at imperialism a stage further. What he does in *The Inheritors* is imagine imperialism from the perspective of the subjugated. One of the chapters he contributed to Violet Hunt's Edwardian book of 1913, *The Desirable Alien*, is entitled 'How it Feels to be Members of Subject Races'.[33] That's the subject of *The Inheritors*; and that, ultimately, is why the indeterminacy of the fourth dimension is so well-judged in the book; because, for the imperial subjects, that's where the imperialists do seem to emanate from, with their apparently metaphysical powers and impenetrable desires.[34] Another book by Masterman and others was called *To Colonise England* (1907). It is concerned with agriculture, and argues that Britain had missed out on the revolution in European agriculture. The first chapter opens with a quotation said to be the 'message' given by the Prime Minister, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, responding to Joseph Chamberlain's exhortation to develop Britain's colonies: 'We must colonise our countryside'.[35]

It is a truism of imperialism that the primitive mind encountering the developed white man views him as god-like. Again, that's what Ford gives us, but from the perspective of the subject races, in *Mr. Apollo* (in which the actual god materialises rather as the fourth-dimensionist of *The Inheritors*, and with equal pitilessness). But Ford conjures a sense of fourth-dimensional powers in his less fantastical novels of modernity too. In *A Call* (1910), for example, in which telephony, hypnosis, and desire are all presented as forces from another, metaphysical, dimension; and, of course, in *The Good Soldier*. Formally, that novel owes most to *The Inheritors*, in both

first-person form, and in its tone of resigned sad retrospection. But it also owes its sense of characters being controlled and manipulated by forces they can't grasp or don't fully understand; to that extent, the fourth dimension, for Ford, is passion.

Lest that appear to claim the fourth dimension of *The Inheritors* as something timeless and eternal rather than Edwardian and futurological, I shall close with some remarks on the nature of the future that the fourth dimensionist represents. Beyond its indeterminacy or lack of specificity, is there anything specific we can say of it? What kind of prophecy does it constitute? I quoted Ford saying 'it showed the superseding of previous generations and codes by the merciless young who are always alien and without remorse'. Thus youth, generational conflict, is one determinant. The inheritors, in a word, are what Ford later tended to call *les jeunes* – the young – when he was referring to younger modernist authors. But in 1901, he knew he was one of the radical modernizers of fiction, himself advocating remorselessness in art; pitiless rendering; a Flaubertian aloofness.

The efficiency and energy of the fourth dimensionists, together with their indifference to the chivalric values of the past, puts them politically on the side of the reformers, against whom Ford campaigned constantly; and might seem to range them among the individualists in his fiction (like Leonora Ashburnham or Florence Dowell in *The Good Soldier*, say, or Edith Ethel Duchemin in *Parade's End*), who are also so inimical to Fordian altruists. Nevertheless, the inheritors are not egotistical aesthetes; rather, they are curiously impersonal. And that paradox of personality and impersonality too was to become central to Ford's conception of 'impressionist' aesthetics. *The Inheritors*, that is to say, is an early example of Ford's tendency to refract aesthetic concerns through whatever subject he happens to be exploring. The project of impressionism, he said (adapting Conrad) was 'above all to make you see. . . .' (*JC* 167). The fourth dimensionist makes Granger see differently. In its use of modern techniques to render Granger's sense of alienation from the future, *The Inheritors* expresses a split which anticipates much in Ford's subsequent Edwardian writing, and even postwar work such as *Parade's End*. As suggested in the Introduction, his modernist concern with the visionary, the epiphanic, was more often addressed to the past than the future; to the fictions of history: a paradox which enabled Ford to explore his own contradictions as a technical pioneer whose experiments positioned him as at once anachronistic and prophetic.

There is, finally, another, and socially more significant difference to be registered between Ford's projection of the future, and those of his political and historical contemporaries. Where someone like Masterman slips into the menacing language of alien invasion, what he is airing is an anxiety about the working class; again, as manifested during the Boer War:

> But while men have slept other forces have arisen and changes taken place even as yet unappreciated by the majority of the people. Throughout the century the population of England has exhibited a continuous drift into the great cities; and now, at the opening of a new era, it is necessary to recognise that we are face to face with a phenomenon unique in the world's history. Turbulent rioting over military successes, Hooliganism, and a certain temper of fickle excitability has revealed to observers during the past few months that *a new race*, hitherto unreckoned and of incalculable action, is entering the sphere of practical importance – *the 'City type' of the coming years*; the 'street-bred' people of the twentieth century; the 'new generation knocking at our doors'.[36]

But where the perilous change is seen by such writers to come from the working class; or in other cases from immigration, especially Jewish immigration; or the threat posed by an actual military invasion by another Imperial power, especially Germany; in Ford's case the book's conception of the future is as woman. Not the mythical archetypal version of woman as oracle or sibyl or seer (or, we might add, the troll-like figure of Hilde Wangel alluded to in Masterman's characteristic quotation here, from Ibsen's *The Master Builder*). But simply, as the sex that is finally in the twentieth century beginning to come into political and social consciousness in a new way, and make itself felt as never before. Certainly this is not without its own quotient of anxiety for Ford. But ultimately, one of its most striking anticipations is the way *The Inheritors* presages his interest in, and commitment to, the Edwardian suffragettes.

## NOTES

1 Ford, *Joseph Conrad: A Personal Remembrance*, London: Duckworth, 1924 – henceforth *JC*; pp. 134, 136. Though some critics have made larger claims for Conrad's involvement – see for example Mario Curreli, '*The Inheritors*: Conrad and Ford's extravagant story', in *Collaboration in the Arts from the Middle Ages to the Present*, ed. Silvia Bigliazzi and Sharon Wood, Studies in European

Cultural Transition, vol. 35, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006, pp. 103-19 – most of it preceded the actual composition. Conrad inscribed a copy of the novel for George Keating, saying: 'There is little of my actual writing in this work. Discussion there has been in plenty. F. M. H. held the pen': reproduced in Ford, *Return to Yesterday*, London: Gollancz, 1931, p. 205.

2 Robert Green, *Ford Madox Ford: Prose and Politics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981, pp. 13-29.

3 See Laurence Davies' fine discussion of the *Inheritors* in relation to non-Euclidian geometry and speculative fiction in this volume, pp. 188-91.

4 Ford, *Ancient Lights*, London: Chapman and Hall, 1911 – henceforth *AL*; p. 154.

5 See John Attridge, 'Liberalism and Modernism in the Edwardian Era: New Liberals at Ford's *English Review*', *Ford Madox Ford, Modernist Magazines and Editing*, ed. Jason Harding, IFMFS 9, Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2010, pp. 169-83.

6 See Saunders, *Ford Madox Ford: A Dual Life*, 2 vols, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996, vol. I, pp. 102-9. Ford, 'L'Affaire Ingram', *Outlook*, 3:74 (1 July 1899), 709-10.

7 See Seamus O'Malley's chapter here on *The Fifth Queen*.

8 Ford, *The Soul of London*, London: Alston Rivers, 1905, pp. 173-4.

9 The term 'megalopolis', usually understood as a conurbation, figures in Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of the West* (1918) and Lewis Mumford's *The Culture of Cities* (1938).

10 See Brian Groth, 'Ford's Saddest Journey: London to London 1909-1936', in *Ford Madox Ford and the City*, ed. Sara Haslam, IFMFS 4, Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2005, pp. 81-92.

11 Ford, 'A Haughty and Proud Generation', *Yale Review*, 11 (July 1922), 703-17 (p. 717).

12 Ford, *Thus to Revisit*, London: Chapman and Hall, 1921, p. 15.

13 Besides Ford's books *Provence* (1935) and *Great Trade Route* (1937), see 'Que Pensez-Vous de la France?' ('What do you think of France?'), *L'Intransigeant* (5 January 1934), 1-2; republished and translated by Dominique Lemarchal in *Ford Madox Ford, France and Provence*, IFMFS 10, ed. Dominique Lemarchal and Claire Davison-Pégon, Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2011, pp. 29-42.

14 Wyndham Lewis, *Blasting and Bombardiering*, revised edition, London: John Calder; and New York: Riverrun Press, 1982, pp. 58-9.

15 Ford, *The Good Soldier*, ed. Max Saunders, Oxford World's Classics, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012, p. 18.

16 *Ibid*., p. 192.

17 Ford, 'Women and Men: III', *Little Review*, 4 (April 1918), 54-65 (pp. 57-8).

18 Ford, *No More Parades*, ed. Joseph Wiesenfarth, Manchester: Carcanet 2011, p. 27.

19 Thomas C. Moser, *The Life in the Fiction of Ford Madox Ford*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980, p. 49.

20 The manuscript, dating from 1896, is at the Carl A. Kroch Library, Cornell University. See Saunders, *Ford Madox Ford: A Dual Life*, I, 106. On Edwardian invasion novels see Samuel Hynes, *The Edwardian Turn of Mind*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975, pp. 34-53.

21 Ford, review of Masterman, *The Condition of England*, *English Review*, 3 (August 1909), 182-4; in Ford, *Critical Essays*, ed. Max Saunders and Richard Stang, Manchester: Carcanet Press, 2002, pp. 73-5.
22 Masterman reviewed *The Heart of the Country* in the *Daily News* (9 May 1906), 4: and *An English Girl* also in the *Daily News* (28 September 1907), 3.
23 Hynes, *The Edwardian Turn of Mind,* pp. 54-86.
24 Masterman, 'In Peril of Change', *In Peril of Change: Essays written in Time of Tranquillity,* London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1905, pp. 301-31 (p. 326).
25 *Ibid*., p. 303.
26 See Andrzej Gasiorek, 'Ford Among the Aliens', in *Ford Madox Ford and Englishness,* ed. Dennis Brown and Jenny Plastow, IFMFS 5, New York and Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006, pp. 63-82, p. 64.
27 G. M. Trevelyan, 'Past and Future', in *The Heart of the Empire: Discussions of Problems of Modern City Life in England. With an Essay on Imperialism*. London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1901, pp. 398-415 (p. 410). The book is discussed further below.
28 *Return to Yesterday*, pp. 77-8. The Dopper Boers were the more conservative and Calvinist members of the South African Dutch Reformed Church in the Transvaal. Paul Kruger was the State President of the South African Republic during the Boer War.
29 Saunders, *Ford Madox Ford: A Dual Life*, I, 125.
30 John Attridge, 'Liberalism and Modernism in the Edwardian Era'.
31 'A Declaration of Faith' [signed pseudonymously, as 'Didymus'], *English Review*, 4 (February 1910), 543-51.
32 See Ford, *Mightier Than the Sword*, London: Allen and Unwin, 1938, pp. 88-9.
33 First published as 'High Germany: I. How it feels to be members of subject races', *Saturday Review*, 112 (30 September 1911), 421-22; Ford's essay became Chapter XVI of the book.
34 Rather as, in E. A. Abbott's 1884 classic, *Flatland*, discussed elsewhere in this volume by Laurence Davies, the fictional author, confined to a two-dimensional existence, is perplexed by the sudden appearance of an expanding and contracting circle, as a three-dimensional sphere passes through his planar world.
35 C. F. G. Masterman, W. B. Hodgson and others, *To Colonise England,* London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1907, p. 3. Campbell-Bannerman was actually reported as saying, in the Albert Hall, setting out the policy of the Liberal Government on 21 December 1905 (after his General Election victory on the 5th): 'We desire to develop our undeveloped estates in this country; to colonize our own country; to give the farmer greater freedom and greater security in the exercise of his business; to secure a home and a career for the laborer, who is now in many cases cut off from the soil. We wish to make the land less of a pleasure-ground for the rich and more of a treasure-house for the nation': *The World's Famous Orations*, Vol. V, Great Britain – III, 1865-1906, ed. William Jennings Bryan, New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1906, p. 236. See M. P. Cowen and R. W, Shenton, *Doctrines of Development*, London: Routledge, 2003, p. 6.
36 Masterman, 'Realities at Home', in *The Heart of the Empire*, pp. 1-52 (p. 7; my emphases).