

**‘THE ’IND LEGS OF THE ELEPHINK’:
PANTOMIME, PROPHECY, AND TOSH IN
*PARADE’S END***

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With the end of *A Man Could Stand Up* –, Ford gives us the climax but not the conclusion of *Parade’s End*, his sequence of novels on England, the English, and the First World War. On the night of the Armistice ending the war, Ford’s hero, Christopher Tietjens, the Tory gentleman and Anglican saint, is reunited with his long-lost love, Valentine Wannop, the suffragette and classicist, in Gray’s Inn, London. Valentine and Christopher are joined there by some comrades-in-arms who had served under ‘Good old Fat Man’ Tietjens during the war.¹ ‘Over here! Pom Pom Over here! Pom Pom! That’s the word, that’s the word; Over here . . .’ these comrades sing, at the top of their lungs (*MCSU* 217). As Tietjens and Valentine dance, it feels to her as if the whole world round them were ‘prancing around’, and they were hubs for all those ‘roaring circles’ that were turning round England on that longed-for night, when they could first make love, their world no longer at war (*MCSU* 217). A French phrase comes to mind that helps her figure how it feels being moved by this less martial kind of music than she and her fat man have moved to before, a phrase that shows what Ford himself was feeling as he wrote *Parade’s End*: ‘*Les petites marionnettes, font! font! font. . .*’ (*MCSU* 218).

Ford stages Valentine and Tietjens as marionettes, archetypes and emblems of fairy-tale romance. With the last three lines of *A Man Could Stand Up* –, Valentine will cast herself and Tietjens – and Ford will cast them both – in terms that suggest generic bearings for *Parade’s End*, bearings that will keep the connotation of Valentine and Tietjens as fairy-tale figures, but cast it in their native terms of Englishness, the essence of the whole tetralogy: ‘On an elephant. A dear, meal-sack elephant. She was setting out on. . .’ (*MCSU* 218). The figure of the ‘meal-sack elephant’ conveys in its immediate sense the weight of physical girth. Ford tells us in *Some Do Not . . .*, the opening volume of *Parade’s End*, that his hero is ‘big’ and carries

'more weight' than he should, being 'shapelessly' swollen like 'a bladder of lard'.² But in a less immediate yet more important sense, the figure conveys as well a sense of Tietjens' fictive weight within the tetralogy. 'Elaborate' of 'character' and 'phrase', Ford's hero is described in the closing volume, *Last Post*, as 'protuberant' in places, with a mannered extravagance that gives him his air of an elephant composed from 'sacks' of 'meal', built up from bladders of lard.³ Bulky both in physical and fictive terms, the elephant Tietjens will 'balloon' throughout *Parade's End* as an assemblage made from meal-sacks of Englishness that Ford had larded up before the war (*SDN* 316). The meal-sack elephant will take on even greater fictive weight if we regard him in the context of a genre that his figure implies, a genre that will clarify Ford's project in the wake of the war, having larded-up reserves of English essence throughout his career. That genre, as Thomas C. Moser suggests, is the English pantomime, in terms of which Ford's sequence is staged,⁴ and staged in ways a consciousness of which will help us recognize the fairy-tale drama of archetypes and emblems Ford mounts around Tietjens, and that Tietjens mounts himself, in staging himself, performing himself, within the terms of what I want to suggest is a pantomimic mode. That mode draws on English pantomime or pantomime-proper toward the innovative end of staging Tietjens' performance as prophetic tosh – a mixture of 'prophecy' and 'tosh,' to use the terms that his estranged wife Sylvia uses to describe the ambiguity in Tietjens between what seems, on the one hand, to be the 'nonsense', 'rubbish', or 'twaddle' that 'tosh' denotes in Edwardian slang and what, on the other hand, will prove to be a genuine insight into English conditions which Tietjens possesses by virtue of this same quixotic distance from mere common sense (*SDN* 191, 193).

In the autumn of 1915, well into the First World War, Sylvia remembers an occasion two or three years before, when Tietjens had 'prophesied' what 'at the time' had seemed 'to her' to be 'a lot of tosh' – the fact that 'about the time grouse-shooting began, in 1914, a European conflagration would take place which would shut up half the houses in Mayfair and beggar their inhabitants' (*SDN* 193). Tietjens had made this prediction in the German spa town of Lobscheid, to which his wife was then retired to be retrieved by him in the wake of her adulterous affair with his acquaintance Perowne. Not long before that, on the train down from London to Rye, where he would soon meet Valentine, Tietjens had prophesied the same sort of seeming tosh

to his friend and flatmate Vincent Macmaster, who would soon begin his own affair at Rye with their hostess, Valentine's friend, Edith Ethel, Mrs Duchemin. 'War, my good fellow', Tietjens assures Macmaster, 'is inevitable, and with this country plumb centre in the middle of it. Simply because you fellows are such damn hypocrites' (*SDN* 27). Among the broader range of hypocrites whom Tietjens has in mind are Liberals like Macmaster himself. This political dimension of Tietjens' more widespread critique of a pervasive English infidelity to moral ideals can be traced to certain postures of Ford's which anticipate Tietjens' own both in their substance and their style.

In *Blasting and Bombardiering*, his memoir of the same era covered by *Parade's End*, Ford's friend and fellow writer Wyndham Lewis remembers an occasion in the same time frame as Tietjens' prophecies when Ford had made some similar predictions which had also been received as tosh before then being fulfilled.⁵ Breakfasting with Lewis and their hostess Mrs Turner, Ford had rejected the latter's own conventional wisdom that that '[th]ere won't be any war ... [n]ot here', that 'England [wouldn't] go into a war' (*BB* 61). 'England would', Ford was quick to reply (*BB* 61). The 'walrus moustache' and 'large', 'protruding', 'fish-blue eyes' of Lewis' description of Ford recall Ford's own descriptions of Tietjens and other figures in *Parade's End* in the terms of a caricature that gives these figures their aspect of 'masks [from] pantomime' (*BB* 61-62, *SDN* 74). And just as Lewis' description recalls the elephantine and pantomimic mask of Tietjens, so too does the response of Mrs Turner anticipate the various responses that Tietjens receives which view his prophecy as tosh. 'But Ford', Mrs Turner had protested, 'England has a Liberal government. A Liberal government cannot declare war' (*BB* 61). Even Lewis, who would later come to style himself the enemy of all such English Liberal common sense, at this point could only concur: 'Of course it can't. A Liberal government can't go to war. That would not be liberal. That would be conservative' (*BB* 61). 'Omniscient, bored, sleepy, [and] sunk in his tank of sloth' Ford had then responded to Lewis through a pantomimic 'mask' 'faintly' touched with 'derision' at both his friend's and Mrs Turner's 'childishness' (*BB* 62). Ford had disagreed with them both, since 'it has always been the Liberals who have gone to war'. 'It is *because*' the government is Liberal 'that it *will* declare war', the 'wise old elephant' had prophesied (*BB* 62).

Reciprocal, reversible ironies exist between prophecy and tosh in Ford's life as remembered by Lewis and likewise in his art as

epitomized by Tietjens. These ironies recall the terms of pantomime. Within these pantomimic terms, certain postures are struck and certain statements made which are offered up as prophecy yet then prove in time to be tosh. But at the same time, and within those same terms, certain postures and statements that strike their observers and hearers as manifest tosh prove in time to be self-ironizing prophecies. Tosh within these pantomimic terms entails prophetic stances so radically at odds with a given status quo that they are apt to be dismissed as the rubbish, nonsense, or twaddle of tosh's derivation from Edwardian slang. These stances go to certain extremes that open them up to being ironized as tosh of this manifest kind. They go too far. But by this very virtue of going too far, they reach out further in certain directions than other, more conventional stances, and therefore go far enough out to get at certain wayward truths that common sense cannot grasp. So the wise old elephant Ford proves right about the coming war, just as Tietjens the meal-sack elephant proves right about both that and many other things pertaining to the dying Liberal England of his day. The same quixotic posture that ensures that certain statements of his will be dismissed as tosh is also what enables the irony that serves to satirize the state of things in radical, indeed prophetic ways. Ford's staging of Tietjens turns often on instances intended as prophetic by Tietjens that are gently satirized as tosh by Ford. But it turns also, and more often, on apparent tosh from Tietjens that proves in time to be prophecy. Ford is drawn to pantomime in mounting such a staging since satire and romance reside together in that mode side by side, with romance satirized by common sense, but also with conventional wisdom satirized in turn by quixotic and prophetic forms of radical romance.

Pantomime connotes for our purpose here a popular English genre of plays put on from Christmas to Easter each year for children and adults – part-comic, part-tragic, part-satiric, and part-romantic plays blending histories, legends, and mythologies of English identity. Pantomime achieved its current form in the period just prior to the death of Queen Victoria in January 1901, a turning point for English identity, when Englishness itself became a means of self-reflection for a culture faced with staging itself, performing itself in post-Victorian time. Pantomime by 1901 would be distinguished by its condensation of prior modes, each of which contributed a part that helped to make the compound and composite mode of pantomime a key resource for English artists as they sought to dramatize and to characterize their

unsettled senses of identity. Chief among these prior modes were *commedia dell'arte*, the harlequinade, fairy-tale extravaganza, and music-hall burlesque. *Commedia dell'arte* was an early modern form of comic drama, based on topical themes, about the archetypal figures of Columbine, Harlequin, Pierrot, Pulcinella, and Pantaloon, the figures who would later form the basis for both the French children's theatre of marionettes and the English institution of the Punch and Judy show. *Commedia dell'arte* spread from Italy through Europe as a whole, and found a home in England in the form of the harlequinade, the prototype for English pantomime, which started with an 'opening' consisting of a fairy-tale mixture of English mythology, legend, and history, after which the *dramatis personae* would reveal themselves, in 'transformation' scenes, to be reprises of the archetypal figures of *commedia dell'arte*. This harlequinade gave rise in mid-Victorian times to a separate theatrical mode, the fairy-tale extravaganza, which detached the prior 'opening' and used it as the basis for a spectacle of fanciful artifice, allusion, and wit, in which whimsy and poetry were merged. And fairy-tale extravaganza then gave rise in its turn to yet another theatrical mode, the music-hall burlesque, the prototype for vaudeville and variety, in which the *dramatis personae* of the harlequinade and the extravaganza were subject to pastiche and parody, subject to a more unsettled irony than in those prior modes. By 1901, each of these successive modes had merged in the pantomime-proper as performed today, a literary space distinctly suited to the end to which its means have been put throughout the century and more since Queen Victoria died, the staging of English ambiguity in modern or postmodern times.⁶

The nature of the Englishness staged by the pantomime-proper can be seen in the advertisement of one late-Victorian pantomime as being all at once 'symbolical, hyperbolical, parabolical, grotesque, picturesque, and grand'.⁷ These terms of the pantomime-proper would occupy Ford throughout the modernist *annus mirabilis* of 1922, the year of *The Waste Land* and *Ulysses*, the year Ford started mounting his parade of English archetypes and emblems in the pantomimic mode. Just how much the pantomime-proper was on Ford's mind at this pivotal point is made apparent in an under-read work from the following year, *Mister Bosphorus and the Muses*, Ford's first and only venture into pantomime-proper as distinct from the pantomimic mode, that genre made clear by its full, extended title, which demonstrates the pantomime's capaciousness, its modernist capacity for irony,

pastiche, and parody: *Mister Bosphorus and the Muses or a Short History of Poetry in Britain: Variety Entertainment in Four Acts* [. . .] *With Harlequinade, Transformation Scene, Cinematograph Effects, and Many Other Novelties, As Well As Old and Tried Favorites.*

If one replaces 'Bosphorus' with 'Tietjens', one gains a fitting alternate title for the more extensive effort Ford turned to next, the most important work of his career, and among the most important in the modernist mode. The pantomimic mode of *Parade's End* is elephantine, protuberant in places, and freighted with fictive weight that the mode makes dance in the figure of Tietjens with a curious grace. This pantomimic mode will serve to satirize yet also to romanticize those archetypes and emblems it will stage. It is a mode in which those archetypes and emblems can be ironized and yet have their ethos reaffirmed. Like Yeats' later effort in 'The Circus Animals' Desertion', Ford's effort in *Parade's End* is one of reassessment and revision of the archetypes and emblems of the author and his culture, and the ethos that they seek to represent. Ford's 'meal-sack elephant' Tietjens, his Tory gentleman and Anglican saint, is a 'stilted boy' like Yeats' own Cuchulain and Ossian, a 'player' on his author's and his culture's 'painted stage'. But where Yeats' archetypes themselves had taken all his 'love', and not 'those things that they were emblems of', Ford's Tietjens is a player for a different stage, one cast in a different mode from Cuchulain's and Ossian's.⁸ That stage is the post-war world, in which the gentlemen and saints of Ford's own prior career prove 'insupportable' on previous grounds.⁹ That mode is the pantomimic mode, in which those archetypes and emblems are subject at once to satirical burlesque and to extravagant romance, a mode in which those archetypes themselves still elicit Ford's love, but also and more so those things that they are emblems of – those aspects of his prior ethos, the ethos of Englishness, which Ford reassesses, revises, and restages for the post-war world. Ford's prior Englishness proves insupportable on previous grounds, but part of what *Parade's End* does is to discover other grounds of support for a revised and restaged mode of Englishness, not that of his prior career and yet an Englishness all the same, the Englishness of pantomime, with its ironic, self-satirical recasting of the archetypes and emblems of the author's and his culture's prior romance. Within this pantomimic mode of Englishness, Ford's prior postures still retain real force, but they have been recast in significant ways. Their traditions are imagined ones that recognize the fact and acknowledge it in how they are staged. Ford

does not abandon stilted boys like Tietjens as Yeats abandons figures like Cuchulain and Ossian. He keeps those painted players onstage, but trains them to perform themselves in innovative ways that acknowledge their own stiltedness, alongside the fundamental stiltedness of everything else in an unsettled, unsettling modernity.

Ford stages Tietjens, and Tietjens stages himself, through elephantine inflations that focalize and ironize his thoughts, and situate his postures in the pantomimic mode. Among these are Tietjens' Pilgrim's Progress toward the Old Heaven, the Land of Hope and Glory glimpsed with Valentine amid the birds and flowers of the Kentish fields; his theory and theology of Englishness; his English Holy Trinity of Landowner, Steward, and Atmosphere of the Estate; his penchant for mortification, like his saviour Jesus Christ; his status as a sort of Russian trickster, a holy fool; his mystical devotion to his mother, that bothering woman, the Anglican saint; his piety and passion for a France and for a French Foreign Legion paradoxically more English than the English status quo; his honour and fidelity, his sense of feudal duty to an Englishness distinct from that same status quo; his posture as a lonely buffalo outside his own herd, oblique and critically aslant to its ruling class; his elephant's memory; his prophecy that sounds like tosh; his flouts and jeers against conventional wisdom, the militant modernity and moral laissez-faire that finally issue in war.

These elephantine inflations serve to indicate the status of Tietjens' performance, and Ford's own staging of Tietjens, as postures in the pantomimic mode, with Tietjens posed as an *alazon* and posed as an *eiron* in alternate turn – poised between the status of an object and the status of an agent of an irony. These postures, this poise, are enabled by the instability of all of those hierarchical relationships on which the force of irony depends, and the dramatized irony of pantomimic novelists like Ford perhaps especially so.¹⁰

Consider these ironic reversals, these transformation scenes within Tietjens' performance. From Tietjens' point of view, he is an *eiron*, a modern Jeremiah. And in keeping with this role of *eiron*, he engages in prophecy – satirical burlesque against the status quo. But this burlesque will seem to most of his peers to be an instance of tosh – extravagant romance on behalf of an eccentric and quixotic kind of Englishness at odds with what they take for common sense. Tosh of Tietjens' type will seem to them to be the province of the *alazon*, the Russian trickster, the holy fool. And in keeping with this role of

alazon, Tietjens does indeed affront what counts as common sense. But this extravagance is nonetheless, or therefore, still recognized by Ford as constituting all the same a subtle instance of burlesque, a subtle instance of prophecy, the province of the *eiron*, the modern Jeremiah, satirizing the age, in this case the age that issues in the First World War. Thus Tietjens can be seen to be an *eiron* after all, not just an *alazon* – the author of a pantomimic prophecy and not mere tosh.

These pantomimic transformation scenes serve to ironize irony, to modernize modernity, in overlapping turn. They give us ironic modernity and modernist irony subjected to themselves in self-reflexive ways. Ford's staging of this reciprocity and reversibility of ironic hierarchies and generic trajectories is clear in a transformation scene on the Western Front in France, where the elephant Tietjens is enlisted in 'The Rag-Time Army', 'a Falstaff's battalion' of 'odd-come shorts', of 'drapers' and 'milkmen' and 'clerks', of 'music-hall performers' and 'scene shifters' from the pantomime stage (*MCSU* 95, 94, 75). Like its counterpart, the pantomime horse, the figure of the pantomime elephant has been a stock attraction of the Boxing Day stage, with the horses, elephants, and other circus animals in question being played by pairs of actors who work their legs on hidden pairs of stilts. The fact that Tietjens' hind legs are pantomime stilts is one that readers may have sensed but which is only now confirmed as he finds a common ground between himself and the comrades-in-arms he has come to command, the new friends with whom he first looks forward to a world beyond the war.

Contrasting his own Tommie's helmets to those that are worn by their antagonists the Huns, the new commanding officer Tietjens is impressed by how the difference in designs helps 'rub it in' for all concerned just what a 'rag-time' performance it is in which their company is engaged (*MCSU* 104). 'A Hun against a Tommie looked like a Holbein *landsknecht* fighting a music-hall turn', he explains (*MCSU* 104). With his pudding-bowl helmet 'tumbled forward on his nose', a Tommy looks less like one of Holbein's knights than like 'a fellow' with 'a soap-dish' on his head, pulling faces for 'the children' in a play (*MCSU* 103-4). 'Stand at ease: stand easy', Tietjens orders his men, and '[for] *God's* sake put your beastly hats straight!' (*MCSU* 95). 'No, this isn't a drill', he explains, 'It's only that your hats all at sixes and sevens give me the pip!' (*MCSU* 96). Tietjens' fastidious complaint is met with mocking incredulity among the 'quite unfeudal' company of mailmen, drapers, clerks, and others whom

Tietjens has come to command (MCSU 75). 'You 'eer the orfcer. . . .' one of them says, 'Gives 'im the pip we do! . . . Goin' for wawk in the pawk wif our gels we are. . . .' (MCSU 96). The notion that one of Tietjens' orders evokes of a military march as a gentleman's proverbial walk with his lady in the park brings to mind a knees-up, a bawdy music-hall song about the Bois du Boulogne, a park in Paris, and the site of assignations of gentleman with courtesans. 'As I wawk along the Bor dee Berlong / Wiv an independent air. . . .' a man called Runt begins to sing, at the top of his lungs. 'W're's me swegger-kine, you fellers!' he says, burlesquing his new commanding officer's extravagant air. 'Did you ever hear Coburn sing that, Runt?' Tietjens asks, referring to a music-hall performer whom he himself has heard. 'Yes, sir', Runt answers, swelling with evident pride. 'I was the hind legs of the elephant when he sung it in the Old Drury panto!' 'Ind legs 'f the elephink! . . . good ol' Helefink', Runt muses, feeling strangely moved. 'I'll go 'n see 'n elephink first thing I do in Blighty!' he exclaims. '[And] I'll give every man of you a ticket for Drury Lane next Boxing Day', Tietjens replies, just as moved in his own way as Runt. 'We'll all be in London for the next Boxing Day,' he promises – London '[or] Berlin!' (MCSU 96). 'Oo-er! Djee 'eer 'im?' Tietjens' men begin to murmur, 'Di'djee 'eer the orfcer? The noo C.O.?' 'Mike it the old Shoreditch Empire, sir, 'n we'll thenk you!' one soldier replies. 'I never keered fer the Lane meself!' another soldier interjects. 'Give me the old Balham for Boxing Day' (MCSU 97). Tietjens grumbles that the preference of his 'poor [bloody] unit' for the Shoreditch Empire and the old Balham over Drury Lane – 'the *locus classicus*' of pantomime – is 'typical of England', which is growing more unfeudal every day (MCSU 118). But still he will resolve to do his best for this 'very decent lot' whom he has come to command (MCSU 119). It was 'really a duty – a feudal duty!' – performed for the sake of these 'rag-time fellows', these 'heroes, call them heroes', these comrades in arms (MCSU 118). As Ford's narrator explains:

[Tietjens] was bound to do his best for that unit. That poor b—y unit. And for the poor b—y knockabout comedians to whom he had lately promised tickets for Drury Lane at Christmas [. . .] An immense sense of those grimy shuffling, grouching, dirty-nosed pantomime-supers came down over him and an immense desire to give them a bit of luck [. . .] (MCSU 118)

Tietjens is fit to burst with Englishness, lost in the war, but found now in the figure of the fat man, Ford's elephant, his

marionette. That Englishness has now been made eccentric and quixotic by the state of things, the militant modernity and moral laissez-faire that have issued in war. Tietjens' sense of duty must be staged, or rather restaged, for the world beyond the war – recast in the pantomimic mode, with its satiric and romantic points of view on that eccentric and quixotic way of playing one's role. Ford's staging of Tietjens' sense of duty in the pantomimic mode is made most clear in those scenes where that same duty manifests itself through moral obligation to his comrades in arms. Tietjens' duty shows most clearly in his promise to his men to buy them tickets to the pantomime on Boxing Day at Drury Lane. Tietjens recognizes that his own 'Feudal Spirit' and the spirit manifested by his men is an eccentric and quixotic spirit due to be 'broken' by the same conventional wisdom that had issued in war. 'It was a queer idea', he muses, this 'deliberate destruction' of 'esprit de corps' that was 'insisted' on now by 'the Home Authorities'. Such feudal spirit was bad for 'Trench Warfare' it seems. 'At any rate, as presently arranged', a soldier's lot was a lonely affair'. It used to be 'comfortable' and 'cosy'. A soldier fought with men from his own 'hamlet', commanded by 'the parson's son'. 'Perhaps' such cosiness and 'comfort as that were no longer 'good for you,' he muses, no good for the militant modernity that issues in war (MCSU 127). But Tietjens has resolved, both despite and because of this, to give whatever cosiness and comfort he can to his men, to manifest, that is, a kind of Englishness possession of which has marked him out all along as being out of step with modern times, oblique and critically aslant to their home authorities.

Tietjens' charity, his solidarity resembles an alternate vocation he himself has entertained, and one that Ford has drawn on for an image for the pantomimic role his meal-sack elephant plays. That alternate vocation is the role of the priest, the martyr, the saint, which, like the gentleman's role, is an eccentric and quixotic role when cast within the terms of that modernity that issues in war. As Tietjens leads his men up toward the trenches, and seeks to give those heroes any comfort he can, he calls to mind a Roman Catholic priest, a 'Papist Padre', and that padre's own vocation, early on in the war, to bring such comfort as he can to another group of ragtime heroes, those enlisted in his pastoral care:

Once he had heard a Papist Padre preaching in a barn, under shell-fire [. . .]
The Padre had preached about very difficult points in the doctrine of the

Immaculate Conception, and the men had listened raptly. He said that was common sense. They didn't want lachrymose or mortuary orations. They wanted their minds taken off. . . . So did the Padre! Thus you talk to the men, just before the event, about skylarks, or the hind-legs of the elephant at the old [Drury] Lane! (MCSU 134).

Ford's rendering of Tietjens' memory here enacts another pantomimic transformation scene, a magic transformation of the Papist padre preaching in the barn into the Tory gentleman at Drury Lane, and of the gentleman at Drury Lane into the padre in the barn. And it is likewise like a magic transformation of the Christmas Incarnation into pantomime on Boxing Day, and of pantomime on Boxing Day into an incarnation of hope for ragtime heroes in the world beyond the war. Such transformations, such juxtapositions are the pantomimic stuff of *Parade's End*. Tietjens the bureaucrat yields Tietjens the gentleman, and Tietjens the gentleman yields Tietjens the saint. Then Tietjens the saint yields Tietjens the fool, and Tietjens the fool yields Tietjens the elephant, the pantomime persona, the pantomime dramatist, staging himself, performing himself in the pantomimic mode. The strange and unexpected proximity of all these roles he plays is clear not only in the juxtaposition of Tietjens and the padre in the barn, but also in the juxtaposition of both these actors with a self-reflexive figure for Ford's own staging and performance of Tietjens, and the whole of *Parade's End*, in the pantomimic mode.

Just before his memory of the padre in the barn, Tietjens is struck by a ragtime hero called Slocombe, known for taking up his copy-book and pencil whenever he can. A crucial feature of the First World War was what a literary war it was, not just the war of modern times that brought the most important works of literature, but also, and not coincidentally, the one that was fought by the most highly literate and literary mass of men. One archetype and emblem of the war that Ford commemorates like no one else does is the image of writing about the war during the war. Tietjens' impression of Slocombe merits full quotation here for how the archetype and emblem it stages of the literary warrior and war-time litterateur casts the act of wielding copybook and pencil in the midst of the war, and casts it not in the expected lyric or satirical modes of war poets and memoirists like Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sassoon, and Robert Graves, but rather in the pantomimic mode in which Ford stages *Parade's End*, and nowhere else with so much self-reflection as in this snap-shot scene from the Western Front in France:

The man writing in a copy-book had his tin hat right over his eyes. Engrossed, he sat on a gravel-step, his copy-book on his knees. His name was Slocombe and he was a dramatist. Like Shakespeare. He made fifty pounds a time writing music-hall sketches: for the outer halls. The outer halls were the cheap music-halls that go in a ring round the suburbs of London. Slocombe never missed a second, writing in his copy-books. If you fell the men out for a rest when marching, Slocombe would sit by the roadside – and out would come his copy-book and his pencil. His wife would type out what he sent home. And write him grumbling letters if the supply of copy failed. How was she to keep up the Sunday best of George and Flossie if he did not keep on writing one-act sketches? [. . .] Slocombe was slovenly as a soldier, but he kept the other men in a good humour, his mind being a perfect repertoire of Cockney jests [. . .] Slocombe wrote on, wetting his pencil with his tongue. (*MCSU* 129-30)

If the figure of the padre in the barn bears the sense of comic drama in the Christian liturgy, then the nearby figure of Slocombe – a dramatist like Shakespeare, with his copybook, composing Cockney jests and knockabout turns for the popular stage – bears in turn the sense of liturgy within the comic drama of the music halls and pantomimes, the sense of prophecy in tosh, in the Cockney jests and knockabout turns of *Parade's End*, the elephant whose hind legs Slocombe's effort reconfirms, and in a manner that reflects Ford's own.

NOTES

- 1 Ford, *A Man Could Stand Up* –, ed. Sara Haslam, Manchester: Carcanet Press, 2011 – henceforth *MCSU*; p. 217.
- 2 Ford, *Some Do Not . . .*, ed. Max Saunders, Manchester: Carcanet Press, 2010 – henceforth *SDN*; pp. 6, 19.
- 3 Ford, *Last Post*, ed. Paul Skinner, Manchester: Carcanet Press, 2011, p. 43.
- 4 Thomas C. Moser, *The Life in the Fiction of Ford Madox Ford*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980, pp. 214-54. In addition to Moser's chapter on 'Parade's End as Christmas Pantomime', my reading of *Parade's End* in terms of English pantomime is informed by Ambrose Gordon's chapter on 'The War as Fairy Tale' in *The Invisible Tent: The War Novels of Ford Madox Ford*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1964; Martin Green's discussion of English modernity in terms of *commedia dell'arte* in *Children of the Sun: A Narrative of 'Decadence' in England After 1918*, New York: Basic, 1976; Timothy Weiss's discussion of Ford in relation to fairy tale romance in *Fairy Tale and Romance in Ford Madox Ford*, New York: Lanham, 1984; Ann Barr Snitow's discussion of Ford's progress 'from comic irony to romance' in *Ford Madox Ford and the Voice of Uncertainty*, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1984; and

Joshua Esty's discussion of English modernism and popular drama in his chapter 'Insular Rites: Virginia Woolf and the Late Modernist Pageant-Play' in *A Shrinking Island: Modernism and National Culture in England*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004.

- 5 Wyndham Lewis, *Blasting and Bombardiering*, London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1937 – henceforth *BB*; pp. 61.
- 6 For this and further background on English pantomime, see: R. J. Broadbent, *A History of Pantomime* (1901), New York: Arno Press, 1977; A. E. Wilson, *King Panto: The Story of Pantomime*, New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1935; Michael R. Booth, *Victorian Spectacular Theatre, 1850–1910*, Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981; Michael R. Booth, *Theatre in The Victorian Age*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991; Paul Harris, ed., *The Pantomime Book: The Only Known Collection of Pantomime Jokes and Sketches in Captivity*, London: Peter Owen, 1996; and Jim Davis, ed., *Victorian Pantomime: A Collection of Critical Essays*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.
- 7 Wilson, *King Panto*, p. 152.
- 8 William Butler Yeats, 'The Circus Animals' Desertion', *The Collected Poems of William Butler Yeats*, ed. Richard J. Finneran, New York: Scribner, 1996, pp. 346–8.
- 9 Max Saunders, *Ford Madox Ford: A Dual Life*, 2 vols, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996, I, p. 108.
- 10 My discussion of irony is informed by D. C. Muecke's *The Compass of Irony*, New York: Methuen, 1980. An irony entails a hierarchy between two points of view, that of the object of the irony or *alazon* and that of the subject of the irony or *eirón*. At a lower level, the irony depicts a situation as seen less clearly by its *alazon*; at a higher level, that same situation as seen more clearly by its *eirón*. And an irony likewise entails, in intellectual terms, that ignorance and knowledge be opposed: at a lower level, the irony depicts a mental problem as understood incompletely, due to ignorance, by its *alazon*; at a higher level, that same mental problem as understood more fully, due to knowledge, by its *eirón*. And an irony entails furthermore, in ethical terms, that vice and virtue be opposed: at a lower level, the irony depicts a moral dilemma as judged incorrectly, due to vice, by its *alazon*; at a higher level, that same moral dilemma judged more rightly, due to virtue, by its *eirón*. And, finally, an irony entails, in experiential terms, that naiveté and maturity be opposed: at a lower level, the irony depicts conditions as misunderstood, due to naiveté, by an *alazon*; at a higher level, those same conditions as understood more wisely, due to maturity, by an *eirón*.