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Isabelle Brasme

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MUSICALITY IN FORD MADOX FORD'S *PARADE'S END*: TOWARDS MODERNITY

Isabelle Brasme

The young Ford Madox Ford – then Ford Hermann Hueffer – seemed destined to be a musician. His father, Francis Hueffer, was a renowned musicologist and music critic, and a fervent Wagnerian.¹ His sister was a Wagnerian singer with some recognition.² Ford started his artistic career by composing music. Even though he eventually devoted himself to writing, the influence of music is very much present throughout his literary work. Ford's early novels have been said to be musical in their extensive use of assonances, and more specifically Wagnerian in their sometimes heavy use of leitmotifs.³ However, musical influences in the *Parade's End* tetralogy, which is usually considered Ford's achievement in maturity, are richer and subtler. I shall explore the presence of musicality in *Parade's End*⁴ and show how, whilst drawing inspiration from nineteenth-century music in an apparently traditional and somewhat expected manner, Ford's writing enacts a transition towards modernist writing.

The musical paradigm in *Parade's End* is threefold; it may be analysed in terms of symphony, of the structural use of leitmotifs, and of a shift from a contrapuntal mode to one of atonality. Ford's writing in *Parade's End* first partakes of elements of the nineteenth-century symphony, but also of the military marches that were prevalent in the musical soundscape of the novel's context; the tetralogy's very title refers to a military and therefore highly institutional and conventional musical form. Elgar's first *Pomp and Circumstance* march, which includes the *Land of Hope and Glory* song, is explicitly mentioned in the narration. It was first performed in 1901 and was played at King Edward's coronation in 1902. In this respect, the tetralogy may seem to acknowledge an allegiance to tradition – and to one that is specifically English. The “parade”, however, is at an “end”; the use of leitmotifs and tonal shifts makes the musical influence much more complex and innovative than it may initially appear.

¹ Francis Hueffer was the chief redactor of the *Times*' musical section from 1878 until his death in 1989; See Stang 183.

² See Max Saunders, *Ford Madox Ford: A Dual Life*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) 100.

³ For more information on Ford's experience with music and on the influence of music on his earlier works, see Sondra Stang and Carl Smith, “‘Music for a While’: Ford's Compositions for Voice and Piano”, *Contemporary Literature* 30.2, 1989, 183-223.

⁴ The *Parade's End* tetralogy was first published as *Some Do Not. . .* (1924), *No More Parades* (1925), *A Man Could Stand Up*– (1926) and *Last Post* (1928).

Secondly, leitmotifs are not merely used in the novel as themes structuring the action; as in a Wagnerian opera, they are worked into an intricate network that points to hidden meanings; they tell us more on the story than is made explicit through the narrative. It is through this powerful use of leitmotifs as inspired by Wagner's works, then, that Ford's text departs from a traditional linear narrative to generate a complex web of meanings, and is thus endowed with modernist qualities.

The multifarious echoes generated by the various leitmotifs come to be superimposed whilst retaining their distinctiveness, in a manner redolent of fugal music. The mode of the counterpoint is even more potent on a smaller scale, through the dialogues: voices are made to coexist yet each remain separate. The absence of unison highlights the variety and irreconcilability of individual perspectives and thus points to a major concern in modernist aesthetics.

The narration calls attention to its own musical influences: characters mention music in an offhand or even derisive manner, thus inviting the reader to reconsider the seemingly reverential treatment of conventional music. Indeed, the apparently flawless symphony of voices performed by a quintessentially English high society quickly dissolves into a grotesque cacophony. Just as the perspective shifts, sometimes imperceptibly, from one character to the next, so the tonality moves constantly from a major key to a minor one, from a perfect chord to a more disturbing and complex set of irreconcilable notes, finally giving way to atonality.

1. Musical motifs and overtures

Ford highlighted early in his career the fundamental symbiosis he felt between words and music. Sondra Stang underlined the powerful influence Ford's father had on his son in this respect:

Ford speaks of Wagner's 'message . . . in the language of united tones and words', a phrase that refers to his father's abiding faith that words and music must be, indeed, 'united' – as they were pre-eminently by the troubadours (188).

Structural motifs can be found throughout *Parade's End*. The tetralogy's main title and those of each of the four novels thus function as recurring motifs that structure the novels and

contribute to strengthening the “*progression d’effet*”⁵ imparted on the reader. A broad analogy may therefore be drawn between the effect created by recurring motifs in *Parade’s End*, and the musical themes that serve as frameworks in nineteenth-century symphonies. However, the analogy is more specific than a mere similarity in the structuring of the work of art. Let us examine a specific motif. Christopher Tietjens, the main character in the tetralogy, is repeatedly animalised throughout the four novels. His wife Sylvia, and his future lover Valentine, although antithetical in most respects, both assimilate him to a bullock: Valentine sees him running through a gate “like a mad bullock” (*SDN* 109⁶); Sylvia considers he is “no more responsive” to women “than a bullock in a fattening pen” (*NMP* 415). Tietjens compares himself to a buffalo: “why was he born to be a sort of lonely buffalo outside the herd?” (*SDN* 128), a phrase later echoed by his wife: “he was the lonely buffalo” (*NMP* 438). Sylvia also compares him to a sick bulldog that she tortured in the past (*NMP* 416-417); this is also the final image we receive of him at the end of the fourth volume: “heavily, like a dejected bulldog, Christopher made for the gate” (*LP* 835). The animal theme that runs through the four novels is therefore sustained with words that are oddly consonant: “bullock”, “buffalo”, and “bulldog”. The choice of words may therefore seem conditioned more by their sonic proximity than by their actual meaning. The alliterations that can be heard throughout the text, from one motif to another, thus endow these repetitions with the dimension of an actual musical theme. It is as though Ford put into practice the concept of tone as defined by Roger Scruton in terms of causality and intention:

When we hear music, we do not hear sound only; we hear something *in* the sound, something which moves with a force of its own. This intentional object of the musical perception is what I refer to by the word ‘tone’. (Scruton 19-20)

The succession of notes that generates a tone is established by the composer; unlike sounds, its causality is independent from physical laws. Likewise, the succession of metaphors assimilating Tietjens successively to a bullock, a buffalo, and a bulldog, appears much more determined by aesthetic intention, than justified by physical verisimilitude. A genuine tone seems to be building up along the narration – a tone in this instance attached to Tietjens’

⁵ “Every word set on paper – every word set on paper – must carry the story forward and [. . .] as the story progresses, the story must be carried forward faster and faster and with more and more intensity. That is called *progression d’effet*, words for which there is no English equivalent.” (Ford Personal Remembrance 210)

⁶ References between brackets are all to the Penguin edition of *Parade’s End*: Ford Madox Ford, *Parade’s End*. Abbreviations refer to the four novels: *Some Do Not . . .* (*SDN*), *No More Parades* (*NMP*), *A Man Could Stand Up—* (*AMCSU*), and *The Last Post* (*LP*).

character, which follows him and contributes to his characterization throughout the four novels.

An analysis of the tetralogy's opening page may sustain the analogy between *Parade's End* and nineteenth-century symphonic works. In the manner of a musical overture, the incipit introduces a variety of themes that shall be constantly recalled and interweaved within the course of the novel, at a lexical and at a symbolic level. The description of the train compartment that serves as a backdrop to the first scene is particularly pregnant with meaning.

The two young men – they were of the English public official class – sat in the perfectly appointed railway carriage. The leather straps to the windows were of virgin newness; the mirrors beneath the new luggage racks immaculate as if they had reflected very little; the bulging upholstery in its luxuriant, regulated curves was scarlet and yellow in an intricate, minute dragon pattern, the design of a geometrician in Cologne. (*SDN* 3)

The phrase “virgin newness” shall find an ironic pendant in the depiction of Tietjens' marriage, since Tietjens' wife, Sylvia, had a lover before marrying him, and since her son, born seven months after the wedding, may not be Tietjens'. This theme, or rather its inverted reflection, constitutes a central element in the tetralogy's plot, and obsesses many a character in the course of the novels. Similarly, the dragon pattern gracing the train's upholstery is the work of a German geometrician: while this may evoke the intellectual, philosophical and artistic influence of Germany over English society, it may also herald ironically the World War to come: *Some Do Not . . .* opens in 1912. The two main elements – themes – of the narration in *Parade's End*: the question of Sylvia's fidelity and of her son's paternity, on the personal scale, and the subject of the Great War, on the historical scale, therefore underlie the tetralogy's very first sentences.

In a subtler, but no less significant manner, elements of the incipit also recur uncannily in the opening of the second part of *No More Parades*:

In the admirably appointed, white-enamelled, wickerworked, be-mirrored lounge of the best hotel of that town Sylvia Tietjens sat in a wickerwork chair [. . .] (*NMP* 379).

The echo with the tetralogy's first sentence is both lexical and syntactic: to the initial clause “in the perfectly appointed railway carriage” corresponds the phrase “in the admirably

appointed [...] lounge”; the adverb merely changes from “perfectly” to “admirably”, which remains very close in meaning. The first sentences in each opening are built along a chiasmus: the first sentence in *Some Do Not...* starts with “the two young men [...] sat” and then mentions the location; the opening in *No More Parades* begins with the location before stating Sylvia’s position: “Sylvia Tietjens sat”. The second incipit is thus built as a symmetrical reflection of the first one – a notion further sustained by the mention of many mirrors in both passages. However, the reflection is radically altered if one considers the contexts in which each incipit takes place: England in 1912 in the case of the first, France in 1917 for the second, just a few kilometres from the front. The recurrence of the same themes therefore takes place in two drastically different contexts. In this respect, these two incipits may bring to mind opera overtures, which introduce and highlight the action on stage. In Verdi’s *La Traviata*,⁷ for example, we find the very same melodic line in the first nine bars of Act I and Act III – the prelude to Act III being set just a half-tone above that of Act I, and the tonality thus shifting from C# minor in the prelude to Act I, to D minor in the prelude to act III.



Ex. 1. Giuseppe Verdi, *La Traviata*, Act I, Prelude.

⁷ Although there seems to be few traces of Ford mentioning Verdi, there is no doubt that the composer was an important part of Ford’s musical education. The analogy is striking between the opening sentences of the *Parade’s End* chapters here mentioned, and the opening bars of *La Traviata*’s first and third acts. This analogy, I confess, is one drawn from my own experience of both Ford’s and Verdi’s works; however, I believe that it provides a new and useful perspective on Ford’s art of composition in *Parade’s End*.



Ex. 2. Giuseppe Verdi, *La Traviata*, Act III, Prelude.

In both openings, the background is the eponymous character's interior. The action is however dramatically altered, since the first act displays a festive scene, while the final one stages Violetta's death. The use of the exact same melodic line to open both acts renders the changes between the first and the third act all the more salient, and give the listener or spectator a more poignant sense of the passing of time. In the two opening sentences we have described from *Parade's End*, as in these opening melodic lines, the atmosphere created by the first occurrence is simultaneously recalled and inflected through the second occurrence, which sounds like the first one, yet takes place in a context that has shifted significantly.

Within the Verdian repertoire, the trilogy that exploited this effect of themes most notably, *La Traviata*, *Rigoletto* and *Il Trovatore*, dates back from the middle of the nineteenth century (1851-1853). The influence of symphonic music on *Parade's End* thus reaches relatively far back in time. However, the most obvious and most frequently noted musical influence on Ford's work is that of Wagner, an influence highlighted when Sylvia hums the beginning of *Tannhäuser* in *No More Parades* (NMP 442). Wagner's most imposing work, *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, is also a tetralogy: the coincidence may not be entirely fortuitous. An analysis of the writing in *Parade's End* along Wagnerian paradigms shall establish that Wagner's influence on Ford reaches more deeply than studies on Ford have hitherto made evident.

2. Wagnerian leitmotifs: repetition and modernity

Ford's first novel, *The Shifting of the Fire*, has been classified as "Wagnerian" by Sondra Stang:

The Shifting of the Fire, his first published novel, is saturated in Wagner (and Berlioz), leaning hard on the *leitmotiv* in its structural organization. (Stang 218)

The Shifting of the Fire is indeed structured along themes related to specific words that recur obsessively within the narration. The most obvious theme is that of the title: in each crucial moment of the plot, the characters see the fire shift within the grate. Furthermore, alliterations and assonances are numerous, and at times laboured to the point of clumsiness, bespeaking the young author's manifest interest in creating a musical dimension to his text; leitmotifs and musicality are worked out in a subtler and more complex manner in the later work *Parade's End*.

Wagner's works yield themselves easily to literary analysis because of the representational inflection Wagner impressed on melody. This change is often considered as the starting point for a major revolution in the history of music and of its reception. Roger Scruton explains the way in which melody acquired a representational status in Wagner's operas:

it was Wagner who did most to change our musical understanding, so as to approach the representational paradigm. Although his use of the leitmotif had been anticipated, he transformed the device into something very like an orchestral language, permitting the musical articulation of thoughts that could be conveyed in no other way: like the thoughts conveyed by the Greek chorus, which show the defective understanding of the protagonist, by supplying what the protagonist himself cannot conceive. (Scruton 136)

Scruton then goes on to illustrate this notion through an analysis of the final scene in *Die Walküre*, the second part of the *Ring* tetralogy:

The melodic line [sung by Wotan], at once repeated by the orchestra, gives the theme which had been sung by Brünnhilde herself, when she revealed that Sieglinde is pregnant by Siegmund, with a child who will be the greatest of heroes. [...] We recuperate from the music a complex and indeed astonishing thought, namely this: Brünnhilde has chosen mortality through her defiance, precisely in order to love the child of Siegmund with a human love; while Wotan has conferred mortality on her precisely so that the hero of whom he stands in need should enjoy her help and protection; at the same time,

Brünnhilde does not consciously intend what is now inevitable, just as Wotan does not consciously understand. [. . .] Had the thoughts I have just sketched been expressed by either of the characters, the drama would have collapsed entirely. The wonderful climax of this opera depends entirely on the subconscious nature of the forces that are coming to fruition, now in this character, now in that. (136-137)

The unravelling of Wagner's tetralogy draws its major strength from the fact that the deepest truths about the characters, truths that go beyond their own understanding, are not expressed explicitly, through the characters' words, since they are not conscious of them; instead, they are suggested through the leitmotifs performed by the orchestra.

Leitmotifs thus act both as a signal for and as a commentary on the action. The same process is at work in *Parade's End*. It is probably most manifest in the development of the love relationship between Valentine and Tietjens. The lexical symmetries achieved by the narration between Valentine and Tietjens serve as a virtual means of union between the two characters. In the second part of *Some Do Not . . .*, Valentine remembers the cart ride she took with Tietjens at the end of the first part. The event had initially been exclusively narrated through Tietjens' perspective; Valentine's feelings were then absent from the narration, since they were impenetrable to him:

She appeared golden in the sudden moonlight. Before she was quite up, Tietjens almost kissed her. Almost. An all but irresistible impulse! He exclaimed: 'Steady, the Buffs!' in his surprise. She said: 'Well, you might as well have given me a hand.' [...] He couldn't believe she could be so absolutely calm: the after-wash of that impulse had been so strong in him that it was as if he had tried to catch her to him and had been foiled by her. She ought to be indignant, amused, even pleased. . . . She ought to show some emotion. . . . (SDN 137-138)

Valentine's own recollection of this same event, in the second part of the novel, both reflects and inflects Tietjens' perception:

There came back to her overpoweringly the memory of their drive together and the moment, the overwhelming moment, when, climbing out of the white fog into the blinding air, she had felt the impulse of his whole body towards her

and the impulse of her whole body towards him. A sudden lapse, like the momentary dream when you fall. . . . (SDN 235)

The parallelism of the phrase “the impulse of his whole body towards her and the impulse of her whole body towards him” highlights the fact that Valentine, unlike Tietjens, was conscious of the reciprocation in their emotions; interestingly, as well, the key word in both Valentine’s and Tietjens’s reflections is the same: “impulse.” Another chiasmus is established within this same page: Valentine thinks she hears Tietjens tells her “dear”: “He added: ‘It’s queer, dear . . .’ In the tumult of her emotions she was almost certain that he had said ‘dear’” (SDN 235). During the cart ride in the first part of *Some Do Not . . .*, Tietjens has a similar doubt: “He wasn’t certain she hadn’t said: ‘Dear!’ or ‘My dear!’” (SDN 140). These mirrorings connect the characters beyond their own consciousnesses, since *Some Do Not . . .* does not end on the resolution of their affair. It is only at the end of the third novel in the tetralogy, *A Man Could Stand Up*—, that the characters become lovers. Significantly, when Valentine decides to become Tietjens’ mistress on Armistice Day, she thinks again about the cart ride they took six years earlier – referring here to Tietjens as “it”:

Once she had been out with it for a whole night in a dog-cart! [...] And she had certainly wanted it to kiss her – in the moon-lit mists [...]. If, then, she did it to-day . . . to-day . . . today – the Eleven Eleven! Oh, what a day to-day would be. . . . (AMCSU 522)

This ultimate reference to the event confirms the structural role this leitmotiv carries out in the development of the love relationship within the novel, beyond the characters’ own consciousnesses and beyond what is articulated by the narration. It becomes apparent here how leitmotifs in *Parade’s End* do not merely structure elements of the plot into a network: they express and make us sense the action in a way both subtler and more efficient than would be possible through narration alone. With the use of leitmotifs, a sub-text is thus established that reveals the characters’ underlying and still subconscious feelings. Through his musical competence and his deep interest in Wagner, Ford explores the Wagnerian leitmotiv in a manner both precise and innovative, which eschews – and helps us avoid – a pitfall in the interpretation of Wagner’s work. Ford’s accurate use of the leitmotiv indeed reminds us of the risk that consists in seeing a Wagnerian influence at play in a literary work simply because of the presence of musical themes.. Karl Beckson highlights this oft-made mistake:

Wagner is perceived as the primary influence on a great many authors and works, when, it seems, the source of the influence is far broader, for the entire Romantic movement in nineteenth-century culture is involved, of which Wagner is a major manifestation. (91)

It is possible to delineate a difference within *Parade's End* between a broader nineteenth-century influence, such as in the symphonic use of themes which we observed, and a more specifically Wagnerian use of motifs.

Indeed, the Wagnerian use of leitmotiv is more complex and modern than is often considered. As we just observed, it is not a mere theme underlining and structuring the action in the manner of broader nineteenth-century musical motifs, but bears a definite – if subterranean – influence on the action. It is through the full exploitation of the leitmotiv in a specifically Wagnerian sense that Ford's text achieves a major shift from tradition to modernity. The modernity of Ford's writing comes into play within the detail of the text, where truths are revealed obliquely, through an underlying musical network and not through the main voices. Wagner's marginal and transitional status among the European musical movements of the end of the nineteenth century may be likened to Ford's own situation within the literary movements of his time.

Ford's use of the Wagnerian leitmotiv may even pave the way towards a radically innovative aesthetics at work within *Parade's End*. Scruton notes that Wagner compared the function of the leitmotifs played by the orchestra and that of the chorus in a Greek tragedy:

The music in the orchestra pit is in a crucial sense no part of the action: it was likened by Wagner, with some truth, to the chorus in the Greek theatre. The music is responding to what occurs on the stage, feeding from it, and feeding into it. When the characters sing, they attach their feelings to the musical line, borrow the great force of sympathy with which the orchestra surrounds their action, and project their emotions into our hearts. But this is not representation. Rather, it is a special case of expression, in which the orchestra sometimes joins in the feeling expressed, sometimes withdraws from them – resonating, as Wagner perceived, like the chorus in a play. (Scruton 135-136)

Max Saunders uses the very same analogy to demonstrate that the structural motifs interspersed within *Parade's End* are less traditional than they may appear. He thus illuminates the recurrence of the phrase “some do not” in the tetralogy's first novel:

Certainly here Ford wants the phrase to stand for more than a network of private allusions [. . .]. He wants to elevate these into the dominant subjects of the novel. But when he has an old tramp, who has no more involvement with the story, echo the full phrase yet again, [. . .] there is more at stake: “Some do!” He spat into the grass; said “Ah!” then added: “Some do not!”” (p. 342⁸). It is a moment of disconcerting unreality, disconcertingly dual because the phrase is also the title of the novel we are reading, so it places us dually within and without the fiction at the same time. While doing so, it gives an intimation of a controlling force operating behind the story. It represents a departure from the Conradian scruple of “justification” – of building up a sense of inevitability by preparing each effect (such as making it seem inevitable, rather than fortuitous, that these onlookers should utter the *mots justes*). They act like the chorus in Greek tragedy. (Saunders vol. 2 273-274)

The overtly artificial quality of the leitmotiv, as it signals the novel’s own constructedness, breaks the fictional illusion and thus offers a discourse on the literary act, on the notion of realism, and on its limits. Acting as a chorus, leitmotifs do not only underline or shed light on the action, but also constitute a metatextual commentary on the act of writing. Such a gesture is decisively innovative. Ford thus brings forward the literariness of his fiction and intimates a reflection on the act of fabulation. With this use of metatext brought about by the deliberate highlighting of the leitmotifs’ constructedness, *Parade’s End* does not merely break away from traditional realist fiction and tie in with modernism; the gesture may seem to reach even beyond modernist preoccupations.

Wagner’s and Ford’s tetralogies also share an ultimate common trait. Both leave their reader or audience with an impression of monumentality. The musical dimension is thus paired with a powerful material aspect. *Parade’s End* and Wagner’s *Tetralogy* indeed both offer us the experience of a complete artwork – *Gesamtkunstwerk*. This is due as much to their actual length (*Parade’s End* runs over a thousand pages in a paperback edition; a performance of the *Tetralogy* may last thirteen to seventeen hours) as to the impression of length created by the work of art. The action in *Parade’s End* takes place over about twelve years, but its ramifications in the past are infinitely far-reaching: they imply not only the characters’ past and heritage, starting with the first Tietjens, in the seventeenth century, but also that of the Western civilisation, which led to the 1914-1918 cataclysm. The sudden

⁸ p. 280 in the Penguin edition.

accelerations and slowdowns in the narration also contribute to the notion of length. Similarly, in *Der Ring*, time is being handled both on a colossal scale, and in a contrasted manner: the plot is sometimes protracted over several generations, and sometimes, on the contrary, extremely contracted. The immense scale also touches on the mythical status of either world described, each in its own context – Nordic mythology or twentieth-century History. Both describe the jeopardized destiny and the collapse of a world and of a civilisation, be these divine or human. Both end with the image of a new world emerging from the ruins of the old one.

In both cases, such vastness may daunt and even discourage the reader or audience. Listening to or attending a performance of *Der Ring* in its entirety is no mean achievement; the same holds true, some may say, for *Parade's End*. This immensity may also lead to inconsistencies – suggesting that these works may prove somewhat unmanageable for their creators as well as for their public. Unless, one may consider, these inconsistencies are deliberate and contribute to create the impression of a work that may never be fully mastered. And in the case of Ford, this notion is deepened through the shift towards atonality.

3. Counterpoints, modulations, and atonality

Ford's extensive use of leitmotifs generates a multitude of echoes that reverberate constantly within the text. They create a variety of musical voices and of melodic lines that propagate and interweave as the text unfolds. Besides the deferred echoes studied above, the text is also interspersed with more immediate echoes. The narration thus occasionally shifts into a stichomythic dialogue, as in the following exchange between Sylvia and her mother:

“Mother, **didn't** you one day ... say that you had done with men? [. . .]”

Mrs. Satterthwaite said:

“I **did.**”

“And **did** you keep to it?” Sylvia asked.

Mrs. Satterthwaite said:

“I **did.**”

“And **shall** I, do you imagine?”

Mrs. Satterthwaite said:

“I imagine you **will.**” (*SDN* 28-29)

The progression of this dialogue, marked by a striking economy in words, hinges on the modulation of the auxiliaries: “didn’t” is followed by “did”, “shall” becomes “will.” The text thus proceeds through anadiplosis: its progression is based on subtle variations within the repetitions that characterize the passage. These variations are themselves underscored by the repetition of the clause “Mrs. Satterthwaite said.” The phrase, recurring each time in the exact same form, resonates in the manner of a continuous bass part. The melodic line, which may appear to be broken through the swift stichomythia, is therefore actually sustained throughout the dialogue. This feature is common to many conversations in the novel. Vladimir Jankelevitch’s definition of the counterpoint proves here highly relevant:

Le contrepoint lui-même a une âme, en ceci que le parallélisme de ses *voix* a été expressément réglé *note pour note* par une volonté musicienne qui fait chanter *ensemble* ou *converser* plusieurs *parties mélodiques* également *expressives*, et pourtant l'une sur l'autre brodées dans le colloque vivant de la polyphonie.

Counterpoint itself has a soul, in that the parallelism of its *voices* was expressly set *note for note* by a musical will that has several *melodic parts* sing *together* or *converse*, parts that are yet stitched onto one another in the living colloquium of polyphony. (Jankélévitch 224; my translation)

The alternation of a questioning, a responding, and a narrative voice in the aforementioned passage implies three different inflections and may thus evoke a contrapuntal song. The analysis may be pushed further and reveal the presence of a fugal composition, in which three melodic lines respond and interweave.⁹ Ford highlighted his attachment to the fugal form in a later work, *Provence*:

The – literally and only literally – meaningless contrapuntal passages of Bach are infinitely more emotional and the cause of emotion – and they are much more mystically so than the most realistic programme-music founded on the most earnest and ingenious renderings of the snorting of dragons, Valkyrs or serpents.¹⁰

⁹ “A polyphonic composition constructed on one or more short subjects or themes, which are harmonized according to the laws of counterpoint, and introduced from time to time with various contrapuntal devices.” “Fugue,” *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., 1989.

¹⁰ Ford Madox Ford, *Provence* (1935, New York: Ecco Press, 1979) 233.

Ford is therefore not only inspired by Wagnerian or nineteenth-century symphonic works: the influence of baroque music is also at work, and may even seem to be favoured as a superior influence. As with his literary influences, Ford's musical inspiration is characterised by a deep eclecticism.

The sixth chapter of *Some Do Not . . .* opens onto a monologue by Tietjens that makes the musical analogy explicit while introducing yet another radically different musical reference, through Elgar and the parade music:

“‘Land of Hope and Glory!’ – F natural descending to tonic, C major: chord of 6-4, suspension over dominant seventh to common chord of C major. . . . All absolutely correct!” (*SDN* 106)

Tietjens offers us here a masterly tonal analysis. While revealing on this occasion his own competence as a musician, Ford confirms our intimation that musical references in *Parade's End* are not fortuitous, but deeply significant. However, his intention here reaches far deeper. The text also suggests the possible musical models that might have inspired and informed its genesis. The *Parade's End* tetralogy certainly does not strive to imitate a march like that of *Pump and Circumstance*, here mentioned by Tietjens: as its title signals, the “parade” here is at an “end”. Tietjens' tone is profoundly derisive; his feigned wonder at the march's alleged perfection, “absolute correct[ness],” is antiphrastic.

The pervasive irony in Ford's writing introduces modulations to the mainstream discourse. The ideological system depicted by the novel may thus be assimilated to a symphony made up of shifting, if not discordant, tonalities. The ideological representation in the novel is indeed constantly inflected by satire, which is conveyed in the text by an often disconcerting mix of tones. Tonalities in *Parade's End* are multiplied and mix up to the point of being sometimes heard simultaneously and therefore voiding one another, giving in to a strikingly innovative atonality. The breakfast at the Duchemins rendered in the first novel (*SDN*, pp. 90-104) provides an illustration of this phenomenon. The weekly breakfast hosted by Reverend Duchemin is celebrated within the British elite portrayed in the novel as an eminent rite of preservation of traditions, at the heart of the sanctuary of good manners that constitutes the Duchemin rectory. Yet this very ritual provides the occasion for the cracks in the civilisational edifice to become most apparent. The collapse of values is conveyed through a vertiginous polyphony. As conversations superimpose and intermingle, so do tonalities. The most obvious key of the passage is that of social satire; yet the scene also partakes of the

burlesque, through Reverend Duchemin's obscene remarks and Macmaster's heroicomic efforts to restrain him; of the pathetic, when Mrs. Duchemin's distress is depicted; and of the romantic, through the nascent understanding between Macmaster and Mrs. Duchemin. Establishing a dominant tonality proves impossible, as is also occasionally the case with Wagner, notably with the oft-noted *Tristan* prelude:

We may be reluctant to say that the prelude to *Tristan und Isolde* is really 'in' A minor – not because it is in some other key, but because it is 'in' no key at all. (Scruton 261)

This shift towards atonality in Wagner heralds the musical experiments of the twentieth century, such as the works by Arnold Schönberg or Alban Berg which bring tonality to a point of crisis. Similarly, Ford's text enacts a transition between nineteenth-century influences and an aesthetics of rupture. With Ford, polyphony shifts towards cacophony. Every character tells his or her own part, yet fails to be heard by the others. Discourses overlap without any manifest link, precluding the emergence of any apparent harmony. The many instances of defeated conversations in *Parade's End* testify to this: every character pursues aloud his own interior monologue, without any concern for the interlocutor's attention or answer. Dialogues in *Parade's End* often sound rather like double – and often dissonant – monologues than actual conversations: each follows his or her own train of thoughts independently of the other. These deliberate harmonic ruptures place us specifically in an aesthetics of the counterpoint such as it is used in twentieth-century composition: "Counterpoint endows simultaneous voices with melodic independence, within a single harmonic structure" (Scruton 262).

Instances of this phenomenon are everywhere to be found in the tetralogy. Here are just a few examples taken from the first volume: "But Tietjens was not listening" (Tietjens not listening to General Campion, *SDN* 77); "but he was following his own train of thought, just as she wasn't in the least listening to him" (Tietjens and Valentine, *SDN* 113); "She hadn't really been listening" (Valentine not listening to Mark, *SDN* 228); "Valentine, for the first time in her life, hardly listened to what he said" (Valentine and Tietjens, *SDN* 253). The narration makes this conversational malfunctioning explicit during a conversation – or rather, precisely, a non-conversation – between Sylvia and Tietjens:

They played that comedy occasionally [. . .]. So they would talk, sometimes talking at great length and with politeness, each thinking his or her thoughts till they drifted into silence. (*SDN* 164)

The crisis of the Western harmonic system is most patent in the musical rendering of senselessness of war. On this occasion, the fugue imagery is made explicit in one of Tietjens' considerations on the noise made by the soldiers on the front:

From outside came a continuing, swelling and descending chant of voices; at times it would seem to be all one laugh, at times one menace, then the motives mingled fugally, like the sea on a beach of large stones. (*NMP* 319)

Tietjens assimilates the noises of the war to an incoherent fugue, a “chant” that keeps changing keys and never settles on a definite tonality.

The Great War shed a glaring and unequivocal light onto the crisis of Western civilisation. Through his highly operative use of musical imagery and a heightened sense of cacophony to render the world at war, Ford reveals the necessity for a new medium – be it musical or literary, or a conflation of both – to express the loss of a stable system of thought and values. Ford's enlightened use of techniques borrowed from music thus shapes his exploration of new narrative forms. His use of the musical paradigm throughout the text is endowed with a metapoetic quality, which invites a reflection on the obsolescence of conventional aesthetics and of the necessity for a radically new mode of artistic expression.

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