

Brita Lindberg-Seyersted, Ed., *Pound/Ford: The Story of a Literary Friendship*. London. Faber and Faber. 1982.

As early as in 1928 Bernard Fehr, in his *Die englische Litteratur des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts*, said that "Hueffer ist wohl der Begabteste unter den Extremen." One of Hueffer's (Ford's) poems "To All the Dead" Bernard Fehr characterized with a single word: "Futurismus." This evaluation, by a Swiss scholar, is remarkable and was not shared by most contemporary English critics. Ezra Pound, I am sure, had he known Fehr's remarks, would have hailed such an evaluation. It is true, however, that for many years Ford Madox Ford was overshadowed by many of the other "modernists," and as to his influence on Pound it was neglected for a long time, whereas T.E. Hulme was almost always mentioned as the person who helped to bring about a change in modern English and American poetry. But Ezra Pound himself never tired of saying that "the critical LIGHT during the years immediately pre-war in London shone not from Hulme but from Ford (Madox etc.) in so far as it fell in writing at all." Today it seems to be generally accepted that one of the most important influences on Ezra Pound was Ford Madox Ford. Ford was to Pound what Pound was to Eliot. Significantly Americans were the first to recognize Ford's merits. Joseph Brewer, president of Olivet College in Michigan, secured Ford an appointment as a writer/critic in residence. Ezra Pound's and Ford Madox Ford's friendship had as a result — perhaps — that it was Ford who became an "expatriate" in Pound's "patria."

In 1969 Herbert Schneidau, in *Ezra Pound: The Image and the Real*, demythologized Hulme's role in connection with Imagism and said that "there is a need for further investigation of the Hueffer-Pound relationship, which involved more than a mere exchange of views" (p. 36). In 1982 that need was fulfilled. Brita Lindberg-Seyersted, one of Scandinavia's finest Americanists, published *Pound/Ford: The Story of a Literary Friendship*. Which is a most impressive piece of scholarship. Her book is not a mere record of an exchange of views between Ford and Pound, but, as the title indicates, the *story* of their *literary* friendship; she has not only edited letters and essays but has written a "narrative." This approach (combining scholarship and narrative) makes the book a most fascinating one to read, while it is at the same time a storehouse of information of great importance to both "Poundians" and "Fordians" — if the latter group can be said to exist. To Pound scholars Brita Lindberg-Seyersted's book will be as valuable as Forrest Read's *Pound/Joyce*, a book which *Pound/Ford* obviously resembles. One of her aims has been to make of the letters "a legible and pleasing text" and in this task she has succeeded, even though one can easily imagine that it must have been a difficult job to render Pound's "idiosyncratic typing and writing habits" (p. xix) in "a somewhat tamed fashion." On the whole the book is indeed a pleasing text.

What new things has the juxtaposition of Ford and Pound then introduced? In *The Georgian Literary Scene* Frank Swinnerton concluded that to him Ford "remains both in himself and in his writings an unsolved puzzle." Of course Brita Lindberg-Seyersted's book has not solved the puzzle, but as far as one can judge from the letters and essays by Ford in this volume, there is nothing particularly puzzling about his views and ideas. In her introduction Brita Lindberg-Seyersted mentions Ford's alleged "mythomania," but she also makes clear that this "does not mar his letters" to Pound. In his letters Ford appears very matter-of-fact. She explains this, however, psychologically by claiming that there was no need to "lie" or pose when addressing his friend" (p. x). If Ford does not "lie" in his letters neither does he reveal much about private matters. In 1957 Alice B. Toklas wrote to some friends that some day she would "tell them some killing stories about" Ford. As far as I know, she never came round to doing so, and neither does Brita Lindberg-Seyersted: There is next to nothing-in the letters about intimate or private affairs. She also notes that they do not mention the war. Yet the letters must have been read by their wives. The majority of the letters end with phrases such as "love to Dorothy" (Pound) and "salut à Stella" (Bowen). They are not always entirely silent about private matters, however. In a letter from 1920 Ford complained to Pound about Violet Hunt's "incursions," and he told Pound how these incursions were "really bad for Stella" (p. 44), who, Brita Lindberg-Seyersted informs us, was pregnant. A year later (1921) we find Pound writing "with salaams to Stella & Esther" and in 1922 even "benediction of E[sther] J[ulia]."

There is also surprisingly little literary gossip in *Pound/Ford*. While Ford was in U.S.A. he wrote Pound on behalf of a committee of writers which had been constituted to "celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of John Crowe Ransom's Professoriat at Vanderbilt," on his departure from that university. Would Pound sign a message? What did Pound answer? About Morton Zabel, the American literary critic, Pound wrote: "Dear Ford/PRIVATE. I take it Zabel is sheer SHIT and will do nothing to maintain decent (sic) critical standards" and about Ransom he wrote in the same letter "'/The enc/is as good as I can do for Ransom who has, sofar as I know always opposed better stuff than his own/at least that gang of southern morons has allus been in opposition to the undersigned SO FAR AS I KNOW" (p. 246). Ford and Pound disagreed here and in fact they often disagreed, especially as far as other living writers are concerned. For instance it must have been a thorn in Pound's side that Ford thought so highly of Arnold Bennett. Pound had to admit that also Bennett had learnt his technique from the French masters although he could not help saying, "Arnold Bennett, chromiumplated and efficient *cash-register* who acquired the French technique" (99). In Pound's important essay about Ford's *Collected Poems* he had to see a parallel between himself and Bennett: "So it remains for a *prose craftsman* like Arnold Bennett to speak well of Mr Hueffer's prose, and for a *verse-craftsman* like myself to speak well of his verses" (p. 17, my emphasis).

Many letters are about their economic problems. It is indeed depressing to read this exange from 1931:

Dear Ezra,

Could you lend me a little money? ...

It worries me as much to write this as it will you to read it.

Dear Ford

Here's the hors d'oeuvres. I will try to make up the rest of the hundred bucks within a fortnight. I am bloody damn sorry the strain has arruv at such point. My own earnings are merely derisoire. (p. 93).

A couple of years later Ford wrote to Pound: "I *ought* to have plenty of money for there is plenty of demand for my writing in your country — but it does not work out that way" (p. 119). And Pound answered "We all OUGHT to have plenty of money. I have thought so for twenty years" (p. 120). All their understandable preoccupations with money in the letters thus provide us with what Peter L. Berger has called the "experiential background" to, at least, Pound's economic theories.

In her last chapter Brita Lindberg-Seyersted quotes Pound on T.S. Eliot: "The fun of an intellectual friendship is that you diverge in something or other and agree on a few points" (p. 181). The dictum also applies to the relationship between Ford and Pound. Brita Lindberg-Seyersted has told the story of that intellectual friendship most admirably.