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The First World War, Madness, and Reading between the Lines of *The Marsden Case*

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Abstract: *The Marsden Case*, Ford's first published novel after the First World War, has received relatively little critical attention. This paper aims to redress the balance by offering a sustained reading which illustrates how the context of the First World War interacts with a major theme in Ford's oeuvre, madness. It follows Ford's maxim that the novel was a place for inquiry and illustrates how Ford's narrator explores the questions of who succumbs to madness and why. It highlights a debate at work in the novel on the role of talk in creating or curing nervous breakdowns. The novel's opacity is part of a challenge to the wisdom of directly confronting or revisiting painful experiences, which speaks not only to the effects of the war but to the value of emerging Freudian psychotherapy.

Keywords: First World War; war fiction; madness; shell shock; Freud

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1. Introduction

The Marsden Case (1923) (Ford 1923) occupies a precarious position in Ford's oeuvre and has received relatively 'little critical attention' (Frayn 2021, p. 187). Max Saunders highlights a central issue as its 'problematic' relationship to the First World War (Saunders 2012b, p. 110), with contemporary reviewers judging it 'effective' despite obvious plot absurdities, but later critics finding its obliqueness about the war 'false' (Saunders 2012b, p. 111). A secondary but related issue is that it has been overshadowed by the two novels between which it falls, *The Good Soldier* (1915) and *Some Do Not*.... (1924). This is best illustrated by Thomas Moser's assessment of it as containing 'only one memorable paragraph and one brilliantly conceived' scene comparable to *The Good Soldier* and finding it as 'plausible preparation' for *Parade's End* (Moser 1980, p. 209). Ann Barr Snitow argues for its 'unstable fluctuations' as characteristic of 'Ford's rehearsal novels', and places it as a 'weaker' version of *Parade's End* (Snitow 1984, pp. 202–3). Such framing has led to the novel being most often discussed in comparison to Ford's other novels. Saunders, for instance, briefly aligns it with *Mr. Fleight* (1913) and *That Same Poor Man*[1] in its tendency to extrapolate from a character's personal experiences to the broader social context (Saunders 2002, p. 134). Moreover, it has generally been read as part of Ford's war writing because, as Andrew Frayn observes, it might elide 'combatant experience' but it deals with the impact of war (Frayn 2015, p. 128). Its obliqueness about war is sometimes interpreted as a psychological avoidance. Saunders reads it as a mind 'needing—to write about something else in order to regain sanity' (Saunders 2012b, p. 110), and Frayn argues for it as indicative of Ford's inability to 'face directly the impact of war' (Frayn 2021, p. 187).

However, there are reasons to step aside from Ford or the war as the primary explanations for the mental disturbance depicted in the novel. In a letter to Edgar Jepson, Ford claimed it as the 'story of [W.R.S.] Ralston, the first translator of Turgenev' (Ford 1965, p. 149). Ralston, whose father was in litigation for many years over a claim to the Ralston estates, suffered depression in later life and was found dead with 'a gutta percha sheet over his head and a bottle of chloroform in his hand'.(Waddington 2007)[2] His life seems to have 'suggested' to Ford elements of the plight and attempted suicide of 'Marsden' of the novel's title (Ford 1965, p. 149). If this was Ford's intended subject, then the war is

a context which gives it resonance rather than its primary focus. Additionally, Saunders' suggestion that it depicts a mind losing touch with sanity allies *The Marsden Case* with the broader theme of insanity found throughout Ford's oeuvre (Saunders 2012a, p. 105). Ford's biographers have extensively discussed the origins of his preoccupation with insanity and what it suggests about him and his writing.[3] It is not the intention here to reprise or extend this narrative. Instead, this paper will illustrate the value of *The Marsden Case* in its own right by offering a sustained reading focused not on what it reveals about Ford, but what it has to say about madness.[4]

This shift from the term 'insanity' to 'madness' reflects the fact that the latter is used much more extensively by Ford.[5] Madness has a long history predating its medicalization. Andrew Scull, in tracing this history, argues for madness as a 'phenomenon [. . .] found in all known societies' and as a common-sense term which has stood the test of time (Scull 2015, p. 11). The categories of those regarded as 'mad' range from the melancholic or manic to those 'who do not share the common-sense reality most of us perceive' or are delusional, people who refuse to conform to the standards of their culture through to the those who might be deemed demented (Ibid). Madness, therefore, is a term which captures a wide range of psychological disturbances, and it is in this sense that it is used in the discussion which follows. Roy Porter's history of madness concludes that madness has been conceptualised and responded to differently over time, with conflicting opinions on whether it is a 'reality, convention, or illusion' (Porter 2002, p. 4). Early 20th century medical culture is best characterised as in transition, undergoing what Philip Kuhn describes as a 'profound process of change' (Kuhn 2016, p. xiv).

As Ford held that a novelist should be a 'historian of his own time' (Stang 1989, p. xvi) and that the novel was a means to 'inquire into every department of life' (Ford 1924, p. 208), his depictions of madness reflect the stance and debates of the time in which they are set. Seamus O' Malley positions Ford's writing as parallel to a generally accepted 'modernist period' and responsive to its concerns, such as 'the emergence of psychoanalysis' (O'Malley 2015, p. 51). *The Marsden Case* is notable as the first novel in which Ford names Sigmund Freud, and its content displays a questioning stance on psychoanalytic therapy. More generally it encapsulates the transition for which Kuhn argues, depicting competing approaches to nervous illness with a distinction between curative approaches which privileged physical or organic causes and those based in belief in the power of the mind to effect healing.[6] Whilst it is not irrelevant that *The Marsden Case* is, as Frayn argues, a 'necessary step' towards his 'creative interpretation' of the war (Frayn 2021, p. 187), this framing can overwhelm the intersection with the theme of madness. As Saunders points out, the novel 'forms a diptych, with the war falling between the two halves' (Saunders 2002, p. 135). In other words, the war happens off the page and is refracted through the narrator's story. It helps to view war as adjacent to madness rather than as the container for it because as this paper will show, Ford surfaces a broader range of causal factors for mental disturbance. Most significant of these is the way in which language, spoken or written, expressed or withheld, can damage or restore someone's equilibrium. This is central to the inquiry Ford conducts into Freudian approaches.

The 'Case' in Question

As with *The Good Soldier*, Ford creates a narrator to conduct his inquiry: Ernest Jessop, an author who had previously been a barrister, a man used to the language of cases. What then is the 'Marsden Case'? The ostensible story concerns the fortunes of George Heimann,[7] a young man Jessop meets 'three weeks before the outbreak of the war' (Ford 1923, p. 1) in his publisher's office. Part 1 of the novel, covering a single day, begins with an altercation between George and the unscrupulous publisher Mr. Podd, witnessed by Jessop. This entangles Jessop in the life of someone who, until then, had been a stranger. This one day exposes him to tensions between George and his sister, Marie Elizabeth,[8] on the question of whether to pursue claims of legitimacy as the children of Earl Marsden. He meets their companion and adviser, Miss Jeaffreson,[9] and the German poet whose work is the subject

of the dispute with Podd. He gives a lecture at a literary gathering, stages a shadow play in a nightclub, brings together George and Clarice Honeywill, a woman with whom they both fall in love, and learns about Freud's theories from Miss Jeaffreson. The second part of the novel deals with George's war time attempts to acquire legal proof of his legitimacy, his father's suicide, his detainment by German officials, his release secured by the German poet, the suspicion with which he is treated on his return to England, his treatment for nervous complaints and a failed suicide attempt.

Though the novel's title makes George its subject, John Meixener argues for 'two stories' at work with Jessop's own 'more interesting and deeply felt' (Meixener 1962, pp. 193 and 194, respectively). Presenting the novel as a case signals this duality, for Saunders has shown it to be a word Ford uses with nuance and to specific effect (Saunders 2015). Here, it hints at the legal and medical proceedings central to George's story, in the language of the novel's narrator, himself also a medical case. This reading, therefore, considers both stories rather than simply the 'Case' Jessop offers up. The importance of Jessop's language is intimated by foregrounding his status as a professional writer. The opening scenes take place in his publisher's office and his new relationships are shaped by literary connections. For instance, George has translated the epic poem of the 'preposterously important German poet' (Ford 1923, p. 5), Professor Edouard Curtius, and his sister funded its publication. Miss Jeaffreson cultivates both Podd and Jessop in the hope of finding a publisher for her book, 'a *Child's Guide to Nietzsche*' (Ford 1923, p. 19). Yet, contrary to the suggestion of another claustrophobic small circle like those which dominated Ford's pre-war writing, *The Marsden Case* has a 'clamorous cast of characters' (Meixener 1962, p. 194). Around forty characters are introduced in Part 1, ranging from family members and friends attached to George, Jessop or Clarice, Jessop's professional contacts, German and British officials, and, characters who appear briefly, like bit part actors in a play. Part 1 creates the impression, therefore, of an overwhelmingly crowded day through which George and Jessop must navigate. That some characters have pseudonyms, others disguise their identity, and some are routinely misnamed by fellow characters creates an environment of uncertainty and confusion. It serves Jessop's aim of showing in that 'season of 1914', that the tone of interpersonal relationships was strained, and the 'world. . .. was mad' (Ford 1923, p. 13). It is against this backcloth that George's story unfolds. Jessop's commitment is to tell it in such a way that readers 'get the feeling of the world into which poor Heimann had got', and so 'better understand the pressure to which his poor brain was subjected'[10] (Ford 1923, p. 13).

2. Two Stories of Madness

2.1. The "Poor Boy"

The story Jessop purports to tell is of how 'that harassed boy' (Ford 1923, p. 17) came to attempt suicide, yet his own story is always present, told obliquely, through his account of the 'Marsden Case'. It is useful to first consider the overt story before examining what it reveals of Jessops' own. Jessop's narrative is packed with people, incidents, misunderstandings, miscommunications, and missed opportunities. Yet, beneath the surface action is a maelstrom of emotion, distress, and desperation. It is a story of a mind disintegrating under pressure. At least this is the way Jessop elects to tell George's story. The early reference to George as harassed sets the tone for the account of 'trials' (Ford 1923, p. 17) to which he is subjected. Central to these is the court case resulting from the row between George and Podd. Jessop describes their argument as 'one of the most repulsive' (Ford 1923, p. 1) he ever witnessed. Repulsive is a strikingly strong word with connotations of the need to drive back an attack, and of deep disgust sufficient to make one ill. It is an early hint of Jessop's own mental state for he, after all, is not the person under attack. The quarrel between Podd and George is conducted mainly in personal slurs, anticipating the way in which Sylvia Tietjens undermines the reputation of her husband in *Parade's End*. George accuses Podd of having defrauded Professor Curtius and Marie Elizabeth in the arrangements for publishing the poem. Podd retaliates by labelling George and his sister a 'pair of bastards. With an escaped criminal for a father' (Ford 1923, p. 13). Jessop says he

was later strenuously cross-examined at the trial 'as to the exact words' (Ford 1923, p. 10) exchanged. It is a subtle claim from an ex-barrister, now author, that his account can be trusted. Words matter to Jessop, and they betray his sympathies. Podd, for instance, is 'no philanthropist', and 'honeyed' only when attempting to 'swindle you' (Ford 1923, p. 2). George, in contrast, has 'so little' of his heart in the dispute that when he put his hands around Podd's throat, it was 'no more than a reflex action', which anyone might have (Ford 1923, p. 14). It seems an odd defence of violent behaviour. At a narrative level the scene is arguably a dramatization, the inciting incident for the train of events which befall Jessop's central character, George. However, as discussed later, Jessop's own story reveals it to have deeper significance

The ostensible story primarily addresses the question of why George attempted suicide and Jessop proffers a range of reasons. For instance, George is positioned as pre-disposed by family background. His father is introduced as 'alarmingly ill—mentally, rather than physically' (Ford 1923, p. 48) and 'subject to violent, sudden and incomprehensible fits of rage' (Ford 1923, p. 55). George himself describes his father as 'over sensitive' with a 'violent brooding nature' (Ford 1923, p. 156). Jessop's observation that George 'dwelt' on issues and had a natural courage which would not allow him to 'run away from his own thoughts' (MC, p. 24), allies him with this father, implying that George has inherited characteristics which make him vulnerable to the same mental instability. Hereditary madness is an explanation for psychological disturbance found in Ford's early novels, such as *The Benefactor* (1905), where the brooding Reverend Mr. Brede ends up in an asylum. Reading across Ford's novels in this way surfaces the sense of war as a new context which might generate different forms of madness but not replace those already existent in society. Here, the intertextuality acts as a hint that George, like Brede, may act in ways which prove detrimental to him.

Yet, Jessop holds others more accountable. He explicitly places blame on those closest to George. Just as Dowell in *The Good Soldier* blames Edward Ashburnham's suffering on the incessant talk of Leonora and Nancy, Jessop refers to Miss Jeaffreson and Marie Elizabeth as 'vampires' who are 'clawing all over George' (Ford 1923, pp. 63 and 78). They are part of the 'pack' whose talk drove George to almost 'the same end as his father', suicide (Ford 1923, p. 273). This complicates the suggestion that George's heritage alone accounts for his suicide attempt. Miss Jeaffreson is singled out as 'the villainess' in the early stages of George's problems (Ford 1923, p. 17). Jessop describes her mode of talking as never 'crudely definite' but as cloaking her intended meaning in hints obvious to him but which would not stand up to scrutiny in a 'libel suit' (Ford 1923, p. 31). It was in this way, he suggests, that a plain young woman seeking publication might share over lunch with an 'obscure Don Juan' like Podd, 'salacious details' about her friends (Ford 1923, p. 35). Specifically, he proposes, Miss Jeaffreson had supplied Podd with the 'hideous' information he had 'hurled' at George that morning, betraying her friends in self-interest (Ford 1923, p. 35). She is not the only character to sacrifice George's interests to her own, but her significance lies in illustrating the power of talk and terminology. It is not accidental that she is the character intellectually attached to the ideas of 'a professor called Freud' (Ford 1923, p. 31). Indeed, Jessop believes the 'steely fervour' (Ford 1923, p. 40) with which she pursued these 'new' (Ford 1923, p. 37) ideas was instrumental in what he refers to as the 'ultimate catastrophe of George Heimann' (Ford 1923, p. 40). Notice the repeated elision by Jessop of the word suicide, a feature characteristic of his narrative, discussed later. Here, he focuses his narrative on making the case against Miss Jeaffreson. Her determination to make him, a 'comparative stranger', into a 'distinguished convert. . .. . .. of the complex' is offered as illustrative of the fervour he claimed proved detrimental to George (Ford 1923, p. 40). The word 'convert', with its religious undertones, positions belief in psychoanalysis almost as an act of faith. This is certainly Jessop's stance on Miss Jeaffreson, whose belief is unswerving. On an occasion when he told her that George was in 'a highly nervous condition' and so best left alone, she reacted with 'hungry and dangerous' eyes and pronounced it 'a remorse complex' (Ford 1923, p. 102/3). She clings firmly to this view, to the extent of offending Marie Elizabeth

with suggestions that a 'girl in Berlin' with whom George might not have 'behaved quite. . .' makes it certain that his complex was 'the Remorse one!' (Ford 1923, p. 104) As Barbara Farnworth points out, Freudian terms were accessible to the public, if not fully understood, in the war years (Farnworth 2015, p. 86). Ford could, therefore, assume that contemporary readers understood the 'eclectic, diluted'[11] versions of Freudian theory in circulation and would have recognized that, as Jessop makes clear, Miss Jeaffreson's confident assertions were no guarantee of expertise.

Jessop labels her 'an Intellectual' whose discipline he never discovered and who he suspects of being merely an 'appreciative audience to whoever was on the most advanced fringe of thought' (Ford 1923, p. 31). In effect, he makes exactly the kind of insinuation of which he accuses Miss Jeaffreson, seeding doubt about her competence to make such judgements. Yet his own judgements are often based on little more than inference. In the example above, for instance, he extrapolates from his own reactions to Miss Jeaffreson to her impact on George. It is significant, therefore, that he says that her capacity to talk 'a great deal more' than he recounts, would leave him 'all of a dither' as he tried not to listen (Ford 1923, p. 40). As to be 'all of a dither' means to be agitated, Jessop's claim here is that relentless talk of itself is mentally disturbing. It is an oblique challenge to the therapy to which Miss Jeaffreson is so attached, which became known as the 'talking cure', a phrase coined by Breuer's patient, Anna O, who also described it as '"chimney sweeping."' (Breuer and Freud 1937, p. 20). Of course, Breuer's therapy and Freud's own approach rested on the patient doing the talking rather than being subjected to it, but the intimation that talk, of itself, might disturb recurs later in the novel. At this point Jessop uses it to make Miss Jeaffreson dangerous on two levels, her insistence on the value of talking, and her determined use of a language which 'tabulated' the subtleties of human relationships (Ford 1923, p. 31). Her account of a professor inferring Jessop's views on the relationships between the sexes from his writing leaves him appalled. In part, this is because he sees that it gives him the kind of cachet which motivates Miss Jeaffreson to attempt to cast personal and literary 'snares' around him (Ford 1923, p. 32). It is more than a personal criticism, however, because Jessop's claim to be interested in human relationships but not in reducing them to categories is an assertion that his narrative offers a more holistic understanding of the 'Marsden Case' than such psychological theories. This is not new territory for Ford. His Edwardian novels, such as *Mr. Apollo* (1908), engage in the contemporary debate about the limits of scientific rationalism (Mizener 1971, p. 140). Freud, originally a neurologist and allied to the medical profession, can be read as representative of the authority of Science. Jessop, with his attentiveness to language, stands for Literature, and the challenge it offers to the kind of categorization on which Science depends. This matters because, in Miss Jeaffreson's hands, Freud's theories become labels applied to people. Jessops' narrative shows the damage that this can do.

The narrative which Jessop offers is designed to show how successive conflicts layer up George's problems over time, with language and talk central to this process. Podd attaches the word 'bastard' to George, Miss Jeaffreson the term 'complexes' and Clarice's father, Dr. Robins, a general practitioner who studies '"Nerves"' as a 'hobby' (Ford 1923, p. 164), worries that George might become a 'neurasthenic husband' to his daughter (Ford 1923, p. 260). This is worth pause for its intertextuality with an extract from an unpublished piece of Ford's war writing, *That Same Poor Man*, in which a young man who had served in the war consults a mind specialist as to whether he 'dare propose to marry'(Ford 1999b, p. 266). The ex-soldier worries that he is going mad because he could not bear to hear 'vivid words concerning the late war' (Ibid). After laying 'bare his mind' to 'The Specialist' he is simply advised to avoid such words, to marry, have a family and live with his 'dreads for a year or two' (Ibid). Its parallel in *The Marsden Case*, is Dr. Robins' speculation that George's brain has been affected by two years of 'silent worrying' about his illegitimacy and 'six months of disturbed hell!' at the hands of 'that infernal Jeaffreson woman'.(Ford 1923, p. 164) Much as the mind specialist advised the young soldier to avoid 'vivid words', so Dr. Robins argues that George needs to escape such pressure or he will have a worse time

than anyone 'before these days' could imagine, from 'sheer gnawing of the mind' (Ford 1923, p. 164). The reference to 'these days' constitutes a claim to modern knowledge, to an acceptance of psychological factors in nervous illness.[12] Yet, in labelling Miss Jeafferson 'infernal' he distances himself from her, as if drawing the line at Freudian theory. However, though his prognoses imply specialist knowledge, he is a general practitioner whose work is mostly midwifery. In practice, therefore, he shares with Miss Jeaffreson an amateur status in relationship to nervous illness and a personal agenda. His desire to protect his daughter makes him quick to leap to examination and diagnosis of George's frenetic behaviour when they first meet. George was not technically his patient and he was no more entitled to diagnose than Miss Jeaffreson, but he did, leaving Jessop to later reflect that it had not been 'perhaps very good for George' because he 'put into the boy's head ideas of nervous symptoms that would have been just as well not there' (Ford 1923, p. 257). Saunders points out that it is an 'alarming psychological truth' that mental illness can be produced in this way (Saunders 2002, p. 145). In Jessop's narrative it is a suggestion that George was damaged by Robins, effectively adding another reason to those he had already offered as causal in George's eventual suicide attempt. Alongside hereditary predisposition, uncertainty of origin, and interpersonal tensions is the power of language. Sara Haslam's observation that, post-war, Ford lost belief in 'the power of words to induce comfort and happiness', is supported by *The Marsden Case* (Haslam 2002, p. 84). In Jessop's story words are presented as more likely to hurt than to heal.

It is important to note that the range of reasons Jessop proposes for George's despair do not arise from his war service but predate or are adjacent to it, unlike the character in *That Same Poor Man* whose problems arise directly from his soldiering. However, the war itself magnifies some of George's problems, notably national origin. For instance, when war breaks out, George is told by Clarice that he will need to prove that he is not 'a German spy' (Ford 1923, p. 152). Whilst Jessop initially dismisses the suggestion as 'melodramatic' (Ford 1923, p. 152), he quickly concedes that, in the strained season of 1914, even singing German songs in a night club would necessitate such proof. Lucinda Borkett Jones reads the novel as inherently concerned with 'identity politics' and reflective of Ford's 'own experience of wartime anti-German hatred in Britain' (Borkett-Jones 2019, p. 165). Certainly, in Part 2, George's inability to prove his legitimacy as the son of an English peer drives the plot. This, and the potential threat of internment facing Marie Elizabeth, leads Jessop and his brother to insist that it is George's 'plain duty' to go and 'fetch' his father from Germany (Ford 1923, p. 158). It is an interesting development, not least because George has a letter from his father stating that 'on no account in the world' should he go to him if war broke out (Ford 1923, p. 152/3). It is a letter Jessop claims that he was unable to read because his 'mind would not stick to the longer sentences' (Ford 1923, p. 152/3), constituting another hint that Jessop's own story is not straightforward. Jessop's first meeting with George was only three weeks before the outbreak of war. The almost coercive influence he and his brother exert over George conveys the precariousness of his uncertain nationality. It certainly persuades him to travel to Germany, contrary to the instructions of the father of whom George says that if 'anything happened to him' he would 'go out of (his) mind' (Ford 1923, p. 157).

Once there, he learns that his father has hung himself and is prevented from either seeing the body or attending a funeral. As a result, Jessop says, George developed a 'terrible and powerful obsession' with the image of his father hanging from a 'great height, with pigs rooting in the leaves underneath' (Ford 1923, p. 211). It became a persistent obsession which eventually, 'by its very wrongness' saved George's life (Ford 1923, p. 211). Despite this obviously difficult bereavement, Jessop's narrative focuses on the mental stress caused by the German officials who detained George. His bereavement is barely mentioned other than by reference to George's comment that it had been 'hell!' to be alone with the knowledge of his father's death and the thought that he might have prevented it had he gone a day earlier (Ford 1923, p. 216). Instead Jessop concentrates on the feeling of 'near suffocation' generated by the 'impression of overwhelming power' that the officials created in George (Ford 1923, p. 216). He feared both that he might never escape and that he might

'unconsciously' attack a man he refers to as 'the Assessor' and come to himself to find him 'choked at his feet!' (Ford 1923, p. 217). This, rather than bereavement or the 'impression' that he was captive is what George experienced as the 'most ghastly feeling of his life' (Ford 1923, p. 217). George's 'hell' lies in the conflict he experiences. His sense of being caught between not wanting to assault the man and fearing that he might is presented as a battle between his 'intellect' and an 'impulse' which, were he to 'give way to' it, would signal that he had 'gone mad' (Ford 1923, p. 217).

It would be perverse to claim that this representation does not carry undertones of Freudian concepts, but it is useful to hold open other possibilities. After all, the notion of a shadow self which might elude control has literary heritage in, for instance, *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) by Robert Louis Stevenson, or in the doppelganger, a figure which features in Ford's later *When the Wicked Man* (1931). Equally, Dowell's claim in *The Good Soldier* that 'the passionate, the headstrong, and the too-truthful are condemned to suicide and to madness' resonates with the way Jessop positions George (Ford 2012, p. 167). Jessop's focus on captivity, foreign officials, and intimations of violence all hint at the war in the oblique style for which the novel is noted. Yet, the tension between wanting and not wanting to kill also carries literary import. Borkett Jones records the ambivalence to the hostilities felt by authors steeped in prewar German culture and literature, including Ford (Borkett-Jones 2019, pp. 109–13). George, whose dispute with Podd arose from his affiliation with Curtius, a German Professor of English Literature, represents such figures. Much like authors who 'hated the German military machine' but could not bring themselves to hate the 'German people' (Borkett-Jones 2019, p. 109), when his release is arranged by Curtius, George does 'not really doubt' the humanity which the poet is at pains to claim for his compatriots (Ford 1923, p. 224). Although George will ultimately enlist to fight against the country which betrayed his father's belief in its 'honour' by crossing the Belgian Border, he is more associated with the literary and words than with soldiering and weapons (Ford 1923, p. 223).

It matters, therefore, that Dr. Robins told him that the mental dissonance he had experienced had a 'definite scientific name amongst mad doctors' one denoting that he had been 'pretty near either suicidal or murderous mania' (Ford 1923, p. 218). George's inability to recall the precise term is less relevant than the doctor seeding the idea of his susceptibility to a mania in which he might kill someone else, or himself. Jessop's accusation that Dr. Robins put ideas in George's head carries force here. It is part of the case Jessop is making, that George's attempted suicide was related to the words used about him. For instance, on George's return to England he falls foul of two journalists of the 'less reputable press' (Ford 1923, p. 67) who hated Germany and Jessop, loved Podd, and who had been at the night club when George had performed 'German songs' (Ford 1923, p. 152). They write of George as 'a dangerous alien' speaking perfect English and dressed 'in the uniform of an officer in the Guards' (Ford 1923, p. 267). When public belief in their claims leads to the burning down of his boarding-house, killing his 'landlady, an old German woman', a coroner concludes that, as someone himself suspect, George should have been more prudent than to reside with another alien. He therefore holds George 'morally responsible for the old thing's death' (Ford 1923, p. 277). The Evening Paper suggests that both George and his landlady should have 'been shot on Tower Hill' (Ford 1923, p. 277). These are no longer people with any direct connection to George, but representatives of a society trapped in and destabilized by war, and they attack in words. George is suspect, alien, dangerous and even imprudent. He defends himself not in words but in action, going missing for three days until found by Clarice and placed in the care of her father.

Part 2 of the novel is, as Ambrose Gordon observed, overcrowded with developments (Gordon 1964, p. 27). George's misfortunes accumulate with indecent haste. His open court case places him in breach of bail conditions. He is the subject of public censure. Well-meaning attempts by Mr. Pflugschmied to raise international awareness of what he labels the 'persecution' of the 'heirs to Marsden Moor' by 'British Officialdom' rebound on George (Ford 1923, p. 279). As his problems stockpile and interweave, it becomes easy

to lose sight of George himself, as his friends do. In the immediate period before his suicide attempt George kept 'his mouth absolutely shut' on personal matters, confining his exchanges to topics of interest to others: America with Mr. Pflugschmied, chickens with his sister, his outstanding court case with Miss Jeaffreson's brother, and 'psychotherapeutics' and 'auto-suggestion' with Miss Jeaffreson (Ford 1923, p. 280). In other words, they talk at him. Financially stretched and low spirited themselves, they fail to notice that George has become withdrawn. He is eventually roused by Pflugschmied's misreporting of a chicken guana formula which George had hoped to sell to supplement their income. It led to another attack on him, this time by an 'enraged scientist' because the faulty formula would 'kill any green thing' (Ford 1923, p. 283). This 'finally broke George's patience' (Ford 1923, p. 283).

Although 'by then raging mad', George's commitment to decorous behaviour meant none of his companions 'suspected anything' (Ford 1923, p. 283/4). Nor apparently did Jessop. At least, though he noted George's 'deadness of voice', slow movement and listless questioning of him when he was witness at his trial, he was more preoccupied with his own feelings (Ford 1923, p. 284). He was disappointed that his expectation of recognition, having travelled a long way to help George, 'never came,' (Ford 1923, p. 284) and was 'bitterly hurt' by George's 'absolute indifference' to his congratulations on his acquittal (Ford 1923, p. 288). George had responded 'that they hadn't had a leg to stand on' in 'a ghostly—really a ghostly!—voice' (Ibid). Jessop also describes George's voice as like a machine. It is a depiction which suggests the kind of dissociation frequently associated with trauma, in which a person is numb or feels detachment from a physical sense of self (MIND (The National Association For Mental Health) n.d.). If Jessop had noted these things at the time, he had not acted on them but simply accepted Clarice's explanation that George was avoiding her not him, to honour his promise to her father. When she assures him that she is not 'going to let anything *happen* to George' she effectively 'took him off' Jessop's hands, and 'gradually (he) forgot George' (Ford 1923, p. 292/3). Like George's other friends, Jessop could be accused of not caring enough but if this is a retrospective admission of culpability, it is offered without contrition. Why might this be? Jessop's slight acquaintance with George or his hurt feelings are plausible reasons. More pertinent to the case Jessop is making, however, is the sense that any potential negligence on his part was the least of George's problems. George was tipped into the kind of madness which led to his suicide attempt not by any single factor but by the gradual accretion of different kinds of pressure. Notably, the final straw for George was reaching the conclusion that he would 'have to write to the papers!' (Ford 1923, p. 315) In other words, he would have to break his silence on personal matters and put painful things into words. The challenge of putting difficult experiences into words is something Ford himself noted during the war (See Ford 1999a, p. 37), and his recovery from it has been attributed to his 'ability to write about them' (Chantler and Hawkes 2015, p. 5). However, the depictions in *The Marsden Case* are more equivocal. Of course, in this narrative it is Jessop putting things into words. It is not George's unmediated account of his experiences, but a story shaped by Jessop. As he narrates George's story, Jessop reveals his own.

2.2. A Shadow Story

Jessop's story unfolds in the language he uses and in the questions it raises. For instance, why does he feel the need to tell the story of the 'Marsden Case' at all? Why does he empathize so strongly with a young man he had never met before, to the extent that the 'look of pain on that boy's face' was 'too much' for him? (Ford 1923, p. 14) A clue lies in his description of George's voice as 'ghostly'. Jessop's story is haunted. Told with hindsight and from the perspective of a man recently returned from distinguished war service, it is partly a lament for a time when the 'old George' had been a 'courteous, and visionary boy' (Ford 1923, p. 334) and Jessop could let his brother leave for war without having resolved a disagreement between them. However, its retrospective nature is significant psychologically. Karolyn Steffens argues for 'belatedness' as central to both

Freud's conception of trauma and Ford's writing about it (Steffens 2015, p. 41). In both, the retrospective revisiting of the original traumatic experience is an attempt to regain emotional and cognitive ownership of events which defied this at the time. This raises the possibility that Jessop's narrative constitutes his own effort to come to terms with events.

As discussed, Jessop's narrative focuses on George. It is notable that he draws attention to George's apparent 'foreignness' from the outset (Ford 1923, p. 4). In their first meeting, Jessop is 'certain that he was as English as could be' (Ford 1923, p. 6), whilst Podd is commensurately uncertain about this 'man without origins, without a name' (Ford 1923, p. 12). That George is a form of cipher for the experience of war is betrayed not only by questions of identity, shown above to be of huge import in wartime, but by Jessop's language. Podd's accusations of illegitimacy are words which 'detonated' (Ford 1923, p. 12). Jessop tells him to 'hold (his) tongue' (Ford 1923, p. 12) for fear that George might kill him. The 'note of pain' in George's voice is compared with a soldier 'half of whose chest had just been blown away' (Ford 1923, p. 13). When George put his hands to Podd's throat Jessop 'imagined' Podd's 'obscene blue eyes being pushed by strangulation out of their sockets' (Ford 1923, p. 13). Violence permeates Jessop's account of this first meeting. Violence, and fear. He claims to have been frightened throughout and 'could have screamed' (Ford 1923, p. 13) before George stopped, just short of strangulation. Vivid images of physical violence are accompanied by intimations that words themselves are dangerous, that they could make the situation explode. Just as he advises Podd to avert danger by saying nothing, Jessop asks George to 'cut some of this out', to curtail his allegations to avoid litigation (Ford 1923, p. 8). George, however, insisted that 'one must be prepared to stick to his words' (Ford 1923, p. 15) and Podd 'perjured himself' (Ford 1923, p. 10) to obtain a warrant. They conduct a battle of words which, when Jessop says it made him 'more afraid than I can tell you' (Ford 1923, p. 13), suggests hyperbole. Why would an argument between a man he found repugnant and another he barely knew make Jessop so afraid that he can't voice it? One answer is suggested by his emphasis on sound, on Podd's howling, which 'gave the effect of half a dozen men all caterwauling together' (Ford 1923, p. 13) against George's calm denunciations, a 'feat of self-control' (Ford 1923, p. 16). Jessop may have survived the war, but it has not left him. Podd's loudness and George's stillness mirror the alternation between falling bombs and periods of tense calm in trench warfare, and between men like McKechnie in *Parade's End* who shout obscenities under bombing (Ford 2011, p. 113) and those like Tietjens who block their fear by not putting it into words.[13]

Jessop's account of the personal dispute is a way of talking about the bigger conflict into which they were all soon to walk but his evasiveness is not wholly war related. His claim to have been more afraid that he could say it is not simply a suggestion that some things are too difficult to put into words. It is counsel that, as he advocated to George and Podd, it is sometimes better not to do so. His comments on writing about the war illustrate this. 'This is not', he asserts, 'a war novel' (Ford 1923, p. 143). Though he would 'willingly wipe out of (his) mind every sight. . .. every sound. . .every memory' (Ford 1923, p. 143), of the war, it is 'impossible' and would be a 'wicked' capitulation to the demands of 'non-participants' to do so (Ford 1923, p. 144). It is a direct challenge to the position of those who, like the specialist in *That Same Poor Man*, assert that no one wanted to hear about the war. For Jessop, acquiescence constitutes a denial of the 'Armageddon' which had 'seared' the 'eyes, the ears, the brain and the fibres of every soul to-day adult' (Ford 1923, p. 144). This is an arresting statement, centred on the word 'sear' which literally means to scorch flesh with intense heat. Its associations with damage, impairment, and disfigurement conjure up the physical wounds of war. In parallel, the image conveys the sense of an experience indelibly branded not only on the physical senses, but on the mind. Ford recorded his own inability to put into words the 'extraordinarily coloured and exact pictures' in his mind, as if his brain had stopped or closed down (Ford 1999a, p. 37). Jessop might feel that he ought to put words to the images but if he is unable to do so, it will create the same mental conflict and dissonance that George experienced about killing. Additionally, if war experiences are inexpressible, then there is no obvious salve in the way

there might be for a physical wound. Just as the slightest touch on a wound revives pain, so talking about painful experiences might revive mental anguish. When Jessop refers to every person 'now adult' he co-joins anyone who lived through the war to this mental wound. Taken alone, this serves as a justification for his obliqueness about the war. When combined with explicit references to Freud in his narrative, it suggests something more. Freud explained his therapy as 'nothing. . .but an exchange of words' between patient and therapist (Freud 1922, p. 13). It was an exchange designed to effect a cure when a therapist brought the unconscious mental processes driving symptoms into a patient's conscious understanding (Freud 1922, p. 237).

It signifies, therefore, that Jessop directly questions whether talking helps to reduce or merely cements painful experiences. He lays out the debate early in the novel when he when he muses that:

> it has never been really settled whether, if you have a sensitive spot in your consciousness, it is better to avoid dwelling on it so that, as it were, you may efface it by the friction—as you may rub spots out of clothing. There is one school that holds you should "dwell" . . .. .But there are others who say that, by dwelling on these painfulnesses, you raise all sorts of buried reminiscences, all sorts of remorse for past sins, omissions, or mere foolishness. (Ford 1923, pp. 23–24)

This raises the stakes. It is not only other people's words which might damage, but one's own, vocalized or merely thought. Jessop's narrative is itself a dwelling on past events. It begs the question of why he is so concerned with the experiences of a man with whom he spent part of a day and had a few subsequent meetings before becoming largely estranged? One answer is that George is a case study for Jessop, himself 'a newly recovered nerve patient' (Ford 1923, p. 335). He is a container for what Jessop wants to say about psychological breakdown.

This makes it pertinent that Jessop's nervous problems predate his war service. Part 2 opens with him at his brother Fred's home, 'enervated and weak in all (his) joints' (Ford 1923, p. 138). He 'wasn't well' but neither was he 'ill' and called in Dr. Robins 'out of curiosity rather' (Ford 1923, p. 138). Yet despite Jessop's minimizing, a prescription of bed rest proved unnecessary because he 'did not want to get up at all' (Ford 1923, p. 138). Indeed, he often did not get up until dinner time, but then dressed for it. These contradictions obfuscate Jessop's problems. However, that he is referring to a pre-war period is confirmed when he dates a conversation during this illness with George as 'on the fifteenth of July, two days after the evening of the Night Club' when he had been at his brother's home for 'just twenty-four hours'.(Ford 1923, p. 141) He then states that for the following 17 or 18 days things were quiet because the doctor ordered that people be 'kept away' from him (Ford 1923, p. 141/2). The implication here is that Jessop had been placed on bed rest, a cure often used with neurasthenic patients (Shorter 1997, p. 129), of whom Dr. Robins later remarks that there are 'more of those in the country than you would think' (Ford 1923, p. 162). However, this relative peace after what Jessop recalls as 'that hateful end of a season' (Ford 1923, p. 142) proved to be the lull before the storm.

When Jessop saw Professor Curtius with 'an engrossed expression' and his 'expressionless' brother pass by his window he says that he 'knew that there was going to be a war' (Ford 1923, p. 143). He dates this as 2nd August, after which Fred is 'agitating' him with suspicions about the Heimanns and Curtius (Ford 1923, p. 145). He recounts 'worrying as in a nightmare' about his culpability in George's decision not to have secured the birth certificate which would have proved his nationality (Ford 1923, p. 147). He was clearly still unwell because this is the point at which he says that he had been unable to concentrate sufficiently to read the letter from George's father. He recalls only 'a sprawling, masculine hand' which suggested to him that it was the letter of 'a madman—of a man mad with pain, perhaps' (Ford 1923, p. 154). Notice how a man's words can lead him to be labelled a 'madman'. It is another instance of Jessop projecting, and revealing, his own pain. This is reinforced by the fact that the conversation in which he and Fred pressure George into

going to Germany ends 'untidily, with sentences left unfinished', and a reminder from Dr Robins that Jessop is his 'patient' (Ford 1923, p. 159). Jessop's illness, however, does not deter Dr. Robins from questioning him about George, who he thinks 'wants looking after' (Ford 1923, p. 161). Asked how he knows, he responds 'I study: I collect: neurasthenic symptoms' (Ford 1923, p. 162). If what Dr. Robins looks for are neurasthenic symptoms, then that is what he will find. It is a remark which suggests that his offer to look after George carries a pre-determined diagnosis. It is also a subtle way in which Jessop calls into question his own treatment.

Apart from the fact that Jessop was ill, these conversations are from recall at least seven years later[14], making the accuracy of his account doubtful. For example, he claims that during this period he 'had to go up to Town twice for that confounded trial', something Dr Robins had sanctioned and to which his brother had driven him (Ford 1923, p. 139). His description of the trial outcome indicates that he means the one between George and Podd, but he had earlier said that this did not take place until May or June 1915, by which time he was 'an officer of Her Majesty's Army' (Ford 1923, p. 10). Additionally, his earlier claim to have been cross-examined is replaced by the complaint that he 'was not even called to give evidence' (Ford 1923, p. 142). He dates the trial as taking place on the twentieth and twenty-first of July (Ford 1923, p. 139) and much later in the narrative places the 'final stage of the Podd trial' in the middle of July, a year after the initial altercation with George (Ford 1923, p. 283). As if accounting for the earlier discrepancy, Jessop mentions that it was meant to have taken place in May twice and June once but had been adjourned by Podd's counsel. Yet, this does not account for the confusion. Jessop's period of illness had been at the end of the 1914 season shortly after meeting George, which does not align with the trial dates, and it seems highly unlikely that Dr. Robins would have released a patient who was sequestered, bedridden and being prescribed 'cat's valerian' (Ford 1923, p. 138). Valerian, a herb with mild tranquillizing effects used for insomnia and anxiety was, 'during the First World War [. . ..] a primary treatment for shell shock' (Cummings 2002, p. 39). Its mention raises the issue of why and when it was prescribed for Jessop, of whether he suffered a second breakdown. More important than the question, however, is what the apparent confusion signifies.

The possibility that the discrepancies are Ford's error is undermined by the repetition in the latter stages of the novel that the trial happened in 1915. It is more plausible to assume that the confusion is deliberate and designed to convey that Jessop's recall is unstable. This matters because the reader is in Jessop's hands, following the case he makes. It is a narrative offered by a man who self identifies as an 'only just recovering neurasthenic' and who strongly identifies with George (Ford 1923, p. 328). This is the point of the 'Marsden Case'. It allows Jessop to displace onto George an account of how cumulative pressures can become intolerable and fracture even stable minds. After all, George is judged by Dr Robins to be 'twice as stolid' as the 'relatively degenerate' Jessop (Ford 1923, p. 164). Robins' positioning of Jessop as degenerate is complex. Scull argues that Morel's 1857 Treatise on degeneration influenced perceptions for generations (Scull 2015, p. 243). It perpetuated a view of biological inferiority mirrored in medical and literary texts, notably Émile Zola's *Les Rougon-Macquart* series, which portrays characters whose madness or suicide derives from their ancestry (Scull 2015, p. 247). Jessop, therefore, appears to be 'tainted' and so predisposed to breakdown under pressure (Scull 2015, p. 244). However, as Scull points out, medics increasingly found degeneration to be an uncomfortable explanation when applied to those who fought in the war, as Jessop did (Ibid). It creates an ambivalence about the cause of his problems. Taylor Downing, in exploring shell shock in the First World War from the perspective of the military response to it provides useful insight (Downing 2017). He identifies a distinction in diagnoses of nervous problems between rank-and-file soldiers and officers. Whilst ordinary soldiers were commonly described as suffering from shell shock, 'often seen as a form of hysteria', officers were more often diagnosed with 'neurasthenia', an illness attributed to being worn down by their responsibilities (Downing 2017, p. 89). Furthermore, in the early phases of the war, medical staff were inclined to

believe that those with a past history of nervous conditions were 'much more likely to be affected' (Downing 2017, p. 92). Jessop's claim, therefore, to be a newly recovered neurasthenic does not preclude the possibility that he suffered shell shock during the war, a point further discussed below.

However, as Jessop was ill before his war service, it is useful to examine how he portrays the immediate war period. He explains that no-one seemed to bother about George because there was 'too much' else to of concern with when the 'very slates on the roof' seemed to 'be whispering agitated news' (Ford 1923, p. 150). He suggests a kind of systemic hysteria in which everyone was caught. This reflects the change in tone between the two parts of the novel. Part 1, a day crowded with people and with competing demands on Jessop, appears to lead to the collapse which leaves him enervated at the start of Part 2. Part 1 personalizes the pressures faced by individuals, such as the incessant talk which agitates both George and Jessop. The opening of Part 2 foregrounds the anxiety of imminent war which envelops all the characters. If no-one is immune from such pressures, why does it appear to affect Jessop more acutely? This question suggests why Jessop reviews the other case of nervous breakdown he knows, that of George. Jessop's narrative essentially explores whether it helps to dwell on painful experiences, using his own and George's experience as cases. This is why the issue of talk permeates the account; the excess of it and the lack of it. The impossibility and undesirability of effacing the war does not, for Jessop, translate into a need to immerse himself or others in painful topics. George, on the other hand, is plunged into painful discussions, both personally and professionally.

One way to illustrate this is through the treatment of loss and grief. George's grief at the death of a man he knew to be his father, but who he could neither acknowledge as such nor be acknowledged by, was likely to have been complex but Jessop gives it little space. To understand why this might be, it helps to notice a litany of deaths in the narrative. For instance, Jessop records that his brother and Curtius, are now 'both dead of course' (Ford 1923, p. 150). Miss Scott, who hosted the Ladies Club literary event he attended in that 1914 season, he believes was 'killed in an air-raid. Anyhow, she is dead. I wish she wasn't' (Ford 1923, p. 69). A 'poor fellow' who took courage from hearing Clarice sing and feeling as if he was 'in a teashop: in Blighty' is also 'dead now' (Ford 1923, p. 272). The blend of small, personalizing details with the blunt factual statement of their death gives each instance impact. Taken together they are the kind of memorializing for which Jessop argues. They are not forgotten, individually or collectively. The simple wish that Miss Scott was still alive stands for all the war dead. By implication, it is not necessary to dwell on the detail. In contrast, George holds onto a vivid image of his father's death to the extent that he tries to recreate it. Jessop describes it as a detrimental obsession, something which finds its parallel perhaps in his own inability to remove from his memory the sights and sounds of the war in which he had fought.

Jessop subtly highlights similarities in their nervous problems. Much of his description of the way George is subjected to talk and 'pushed into. . .. combat by the united strength of his women', can be seen as a form of projective identification (Ford 1923, p. 27). In part, this is because it is never entirely clear why Jessop becomes sufficiently ill to need rest and care within days of meeting George. He mentions briefly that two to three days earlier he had 'been so badly manhandled by a woman' that he did not 'rightly know what (he) was doing' (Ford 1923, p. 83). He would 'see things vividly for an hour or so, and then. . .. dimness—a wavering' in which he could hear himself 'speaking collectedly or with cynicism' (Ford 1923, p. 84). It was, he claims, the worst sort of '"underself"' to have!' (Ford 1923, p. 84) The placing of 'underself' in quotation marks implies that Jessop is drawing on specific terminology in circulation, but not with any conviction. The obvious implication is that it relates to Miss Jeaffreson's Freudian lectures to him. However, Ford's use of the term connects this scene back to some of his Edwardian novels exploring different states of consciousness,[15] where it is linked not to Freud but to Frederick Myers.[16] When Jessop says he heard himself speaking, it suggests a mental activity outside his conscious awareness. This connects to a recurring motif in Ford's oeuvre; the idea of different levels of

knowing, best illustrated by Dowell, in *The Good Soldier*. Jessop's reference to an 'underself', therefore, creates intertextuality with Ford's pre-war novels and primes the observation that Jessop's experience of mental detachment from his surroundings is comparable to the scene in *The Good Soldier* when Dowell discovers Florence's infidelity.[17] Both represent a form of dissociation. This perhaps explains why Jessop finds George's introspection courageous. Where George steps into the pain, Jessop steps outside of it. This is reflected in the treatments they undergo. Jessop has people kept away from him, is given a drug designed to reduce anxiety and lies in bed reading novels but not 'excitable journals' (Ford 1923, p. 143). The letter from George's father presumably constituted excitable material, but its significance goes beyond this. It contained words from a mind not in control of itself, someone Jessop labelled a 'madman'. Jessop chooses to say less and so shield himself from such judgements.

Hence, just as it is unclear precisely how Jessop became ill, his recovery is equally opaque. In September 1915 he appears to be well for he could by then 'read quickly' the documents showing Marie Elizabeth's legitimacy and lend her money for the court case (Ford 1923, p. 299). He recalls Clarice accompanying him to the train station in September 1915 when his 'last leave' had been curtailed. This seems to spark a memory of a train station at Hazebrouck where he was waiting for a train to return him to the front. This setting is itself suggestive for, as Trevor Dodman argues in his discussion of the opening scene of *Some Do Not*. . ., 'railway spine', a term used to capture nervous disorders following rail accidents, can be seen as a precursor for shell shock (Dodman 2015, p. 6). It signifies too that Jessop dates the Hazebrouck memory hesitantly, as February 1917, two years into his war service (Ford 1923, p. 301). Jessop's statement that he was 'not well, of course' and 'had just come out of hospital', is another clue (Ford 1923, p. 302). However, his added 'I think' makes it uncertain. He expected to see the 'invalid N.C.O'. but instead saw Clarice, who refers to him as 'Dear Ernest', complains that he never wrote, and suggests that he allow George to 'get (him) a staff job' because he is 'not fit' and 'can't go on' (Ford 1923, p. 303/4). Why Clarice might have been in France in September 1917 is unexplained. Their exchange ends with Jessop saying that 'She must have put her right foot down on the invisible ballast, and there was nothing but inky darkness beneath my face' (Ford 1923, p. 304). It is clearly an unstable memory, confused perhaps in time or place. It could be a hallucination especially as it coincides with 'A *great* crash' which he attributes to a German bomb destroying much of the train on which he was waiting (Ford 1923, p. 304). At least he 'daresay that was what it was', but he had 'nothing personal to record' and was 'not, after that, much good' until 1921 (Ford 1923, p. 304). Whether he had been in hospital before or after the bombing is unclear. Under its impact, however, he appears to have lost consciousness and been badly affected. As no physical injuries are mentioned, it implies shell shock. Dodman's observation that the 'fractured and confusing chronologies' in *Parade's End* 'stand in for shell shock's insidious disruptions to consciousness, memory and time' can equally be claimed for Jessop's account (Dodman 2015, p. 53).

However, by the time he encounters George, now Lord Marsden, in 1921 he was 'supposed to be cured;' having recently returned from 'a cold-water-cure institute' (Ford 1923, p. 324). This had been 'the last stage of a mental pilgrimage begun among beastly horrors, lasting for horrible years' (Ford 1923, p. 324). He now had 'the insatiable craving of one nearly come back into active life—for the details of active life' (Ford 1923, p. 326). The claim to desire a return to life works on two levels. It implies both the physical near death of surviving the train bombing, and the war, but also implies a form of death in life from years of mental suffering which had culminated in his treatment at the cold-water-cure institute. There is a correspondence between what Jessop does not make explicit and the craving for action, for immersion with other people and their lives. It expresses a desire for a turn outward, not inward. This is the essence of the storyline of Jessops' illness. Outwardly he tells George's story, but he weaves through it incomplete, ambiguous accounts of his own illness, leaving readers to deduce that he had suffered shell shock, and possibly amnesia. It is an intimation lent weight by the knowledge of Ford's own experience at the Somme

(Saunders 2012b, p. 2), about which he was less equivocal than his narrator character, writing to his daughter that he 'wasn't so much wounded as blown up by a 4.2 (inch artillery shell) and shaken into a nervous breakdown' (Saunders 2012b, p. 23). Jessop, in this reading, is as damaged as the man whose story he purports to tell.

2.3. To Dwell or Not to Dwell

It is in the telling of the two stories that Jessop explores how best to deal with mental distress. His own story reflects a 'least said, soonest mended' philosophy. In contrast, George's nervous illness is inherently associated with talk. George himself admits to not 'bearing. . .very well' the 'alternations. And the talk', or 'The Jeaffrresons [. . ..] on the 'phone for hours' (Ford 1923, p. 153). George, a man attuned to the power of language, is unable to keep their words out of his ears. He is a man keen to stay out of the Press who repeatedly finds himself a topic in newspapers. Miss Jeaffreson and Dr. Robins, in putting terminology to his behaviours and feelings, influence how he sees himself. Even questions from Dr Robins about 'buzzings in the ears, voices, visions, obsessions', are enough to give George 'ideas' (Ford 1923, p. 259). Both could be accused of having their own obsessions: Dr. Robins with finding neurasthenic symptoms and Miss Jeaffreson with Freud. If Dr. Robins' obsessions put ideas into George's head, Miss Jeaffreson's determined his treatment. When she finds George 'rushing backwards and forwards, like a mad sentry, between two thorn trees' she follows him, repeatedly telling him that 'if he did not keep still he would go mad' (Ford 1923, p. 315). When Jessop adds that he 'daresay it was a good thing to do' he insinuates the opposite. He credits her with at least recognizing that George was beyond her ability to help and with getting him to 'a soul-straightener of sorts, a man in whom she had implicit confidence' (Ford 1923, p. 314/5). That Jessop does not share this confidence is revealed in the qualifier 'of sorts'. He goes on to say:

> What that soul-straightener did to George I don't know. I have as to these matters an absolutely open mind. George told Clarice that the fellow made the whole of his past life rush before him in a few seconds, like an adder going through heather on a hot day. (Ford 1923, p. 315)

The simile for George's experience of the process conjures up the image of a snake slithering by so swiftly that you might doubt having quite seen it. The specificity of an adder, the only venomous British snake, implies a kind of poisoning as past images flash through George's mind. It conveys at least ambivalence about the method. Whether it is Jessop's or George's simile is ambiguous, but Jessop's position is less so. He undercuts the claim in his first sentence by describing the method as designed to dig up 'secrets of the past' (Ford 1923, p. 316). Not only does he know its purpose, but he provides examples of the treatment. His description of word association is oversimplified to invite derision: if the doctor says the word 'Father!' and a patient 'instantaneously. . .answered "Kicks!" they knew he had a brutal male progenitor' (Ford 1923, p. 316). George, however, had confounded this with his response of 'Swine!' (Ford 1923, p. 316) Whilst the expert interpreted this to mean that 'George's father had behaved badly to him', in fact, George had been recalling the image of the pigs beneath his hanged father (Ford 1923, p. 316). It was these pigs, Jessop proposes, that 'really saved George'[18] or the policeman or 'of course, Clarice' (Ford 1923, p. 316). The comments that it 'may well have been the soul-straightening expert!' and that the process was probably 'all right' lack conviction (Ford 1923, p. 316). When he follows them with the observation that the process, which 'took a long time for completion: days, hours, or years!', had been since 'speeded up' he suggests that it almost certainly was not, in fact, 'all right' (Ford 1923, p. 317).

Even if it was effective, Jessop questions the necessity. Miss Jeaffreson may have acted out of 'genuine affection' for George, but her actions were driven by her obsession with getting him to a doctor who practiced the theories she espoused (Ford 1923, p. 315). So dogmatic was her pursuit that she had not 'sense enough' to pass on the information that he would later that day be acknowledged as Earl Marsden (Ford 1923, p. 315). No young man, Jessop argues, 'would hang himself if he suddenly learned that he had come in for a

title and a good lot of money' (Ford 1923, p. 318). Instead, George is left believing that he remains under suspicion as an enemy, a situation only rectified when Clarice showed him the newspaper in which his legitimacy is confirmed (Ford 1923, p. 321). Until this point he had been 'comatose for three days' and Clarice was 'of the opinion' that the treatment by the soul straightener had left 'his poor mind. . .. whirring through all the minutiae of all the unpleasantness that had ever befallen him. '(Ford 1923, p. 321) In a deft sleight of hand Jessop makes Clarice a witness in his case, someone providing evidence to support his doubts about the new talking therapy.

Whether the therapy itself or the inadequacy of the therapist was the blame, there was clearly a failure of the promise that bringing painful issues to the fore somehow resolved them. Kuhn's research uncovered an eclectic approach in Britain with doctors likely to meld hypnotism, suggestion therapy, and Jungian word association techniques with Breuer and Freud's cathartic approach (Kuhn 2016, p. xvi). This is borne out by oral testimony from those who served in the war. For example, a Red Cross nurse recalls that that some doctors 'dabbled' in 'analysis' of the 'Freudian school and whilst such amateurs 'might get the men on their feet for a time' they soon relapsed' (Perry n.d.). Jessop's depiction of Miss Jeaffreson and Dr. Robins as practicing various therapies of which they are not masters of them is part of the case he is making for the damage they did to George. Thus, the suggestion that Miss Jeaffreson's confidence in the therapist to whom she had handed over George was misplaced is reiterated by Jessop when he is reunited with George and Clarice in 1921. He observes that Clarice's 'naïve interest in his (late) maladies' was no more than a quest for hints on what remedies to try if her husband relapsed (Ford 1923, p. 335). To the woman he loves, Jessop represents only a 'sufferer expert in nerve cures of the old-fashioned kind' (Ford 1923, p. 335). Jessop claims Clarice as the source of all he has revealed of George's 'later vicissitudes' (Ford 1923, p. 335), again co-joining her to his account. It was Clarice who told him that 'The Straightener' had said that the failed attempt to hang himself had saved George's 'reason and his life' for only the shock of that 'could have cleared up all the complexes' of his 'worried brain' (Ford 1923, p. 335). This is an explanation with a different theoretical base, that shock could cure. This is one of the points at which, as suggested in the introduction, the novel depicts the confused range of approaches to nervous illness. Ford's inclusion of shock therapy probably reflects exposure to the idea during his war service, for there is some evidence that the idea of a 'reverse shock' strategy was used with shell shock victims (Stagg n.d.). In the novel the reference constitutes an apparent admission that talking therapy had achieved little if George's near-death experience had effected his cure. Certainly, Clarice was determined that he would never try it again. Her appeal to Jessop, with his experience of old-fashioned cold-water institutes, signals lost confidence in the 'newest, auto-suggestion treatments' (Ford 1923, p. 335). Thus, Jessop appears to close the case on the question of whether raking over painful incidents is curative.

Yet his case is not quite complete. Jessop's earlier resistance to people being tabulated, in the way these treatments appear to do, is related to the reminder that he is, after all, 'a poet' (Ford 1923, p. 335). Thus, he speaks as a writer when he says that 'no immensely long psychological analyses' of his would help readers to see how George was driven to attempt the same suicide as his father (Ford 1923, p. 273). Nor would tracing the 'poor boy's brain gradually dissolving' add anything; it would be 'pathology' to 'write all that' (Ford 1923, p. 273). He claims to have no interest in elaborating his account with descriptions of places he had never seen and 'inventions of mental crises for which (his) insight alone was the warrant' (Ford 1923, p. 273). However, this invites scepticism. Jessop's narrative of George's case has included examination of the potential causes of his breakdown, much as a pathologist might study a disease. Though he claims impartiality by citing where information has been relayed to him by others, his recall is shown to be questionable, making it unlikely that he has remembered conversations exactly. He has almost certainly filled in gaps from the personal insight he seeks to disavow. Perhaps most importantly, the whole story is the one Jessop wants to tell. His promise to the reader had been to create a

sense of the world which had put George's mind under such pressure. This is the point of the frantic piling of one incident upon another. It is to show that it is not single big shocks or traumas which push someone to breakdown, but the slow accretion of acts and omissions. The story he tells is of a mind in pain. He can tell George's tale in the way he does because he enters sympathetically into his experiences. Though he may draw on the insights from his own experiences, Jessop is also Ford's author character, someone who need not rely on psychological analyses to show how mental distress is induced or where it leads. He has a facility with words, when to use them and when not.

He has chosen to use them to tell this story. One rationale for it lies in his comment that if the 'Intelligentsia' understood how 'terrible, and how long a strain on the mind war really was' they would not so easily drive 'poor fellows again into such pain in the mind' (Ford 1923, p. 304). Those who fought were not magically shielded from 'all temporal cares' but instead their minds retained the 'old evils, old heartbreaks and the old cruelties' awaiting them at home (Ford 1923, p. 305). This is why Jessop says it is not a war story and is why his pre-war breakdown matters. He had taken these vulnerabilities with him to war and the combination left him open to 'the idea of being killed' (Ford 1923, p. 305). This is the parallel with George who, exposed to a barrage of 'stupidly cruel' behaviours, lost the will to live (Ford 1923, p. 305). George is an example of how someone might be driven to the edge of sanity but also code for the things Jessop cannot say directly of his own experiences. His description of the letter from George's father as that of a madman in pain, signals this. In its equation of mental anguish with pain it claims the legitimacy more commonly accorded to physical illness. It also shows Jessop's understanding that to write his experiences directly would be a re-immersion in the experiences and memories he wants to leave behind. That there is good reason to avoid this is suggested by the fact that though neither man dies they are damaged. Despite years in treatment, Clarice's concern for George illustrates that recovery is not an assured state. Jessop too is still 'quivering with nerves' (Ford 1923, p. 333).

This complicates Jessop's case against talk and its associated therapies, for his own approach seems no more successful. Yet, to conclude this would be to miss the point. Jessop's answer to the question of why both he and George suffer breakdowns lies in their willingness to confront the painful areas of life. Whilst Jessop's obliqueness might indicate that he lacks the introspective courage he attributes to George, his whole narrative performs the same function, but is written not spoken. Behind the shield of fiction, he tells his story in lacunae, making it necessary to read between the lines and to notice what is not said. Just as he uses George's story to illustrate how people breakdown because they reach a personal threshold of pressure which they cannot tolerate, so he chooses another story to illustrate the legacy. This is the point of the tale, in the final chapter, of the 'once weeping waiter', whose wife has been 'murdered' and 'daughter carried off' who will be returned, by the grace and largesse of George and Clarice, to preside over a hotel 'sacked by Cossacks, gutted by Servians, (and) burned by Austrians' (Ford 1923, p. 336). It is a 'poor little fairy tale', to imagine that this man who had 'so frightful a nervous breakdown' could just return, unmarked, to the life he had before (Ford 1923, p. 337). By implication, neither can he. Thus, *The Marsden Case* ends as it began, in a story. The stories of George Heimann and Ernest Jessop are there to show that sheer cumulative worry can bring people to the brink of their sanity. In that sense, it anticipates the strategy Ford adopts in presenting the war in *Parade's End* (Ford 2007, p. 206). If, as Ford argued, 'piling horrors on horrors' about the war would lead people to close their minds in self-preservation, then critics like Gordon who found the sheer volume of trials facing George tiresome prove him right (Ibid). Jessop's more quietly expressed anguish is more palatable and so is likely to elicit the compassion and understanding for which the novel calls.

3. Concluding Comments

This paper has argued for *The Marsden Case* as part of Ford's war writing but that discussion of it should not be limited to this frame of reference. Some concluding remarks

on its relationship to Ford's aesthetics and the theme of madness in his oeuvre are therefore necessary. Ford's aesthetics, as discussed previously, rest on treating the novel a vehicle for inquiry and offering a subjective history of his own times. These are enacted in *The Marsden Case* in two ways. Firstly, beyond the parallels between George and Jessop's breakdown lies the juxtaposition of different approaches to helping them. Jessop's 'old fashioned' cures are those Kuhn identifies as based in assumptions of a somatic cause whereas George experiences the newer therapies designed to engage the mind in self-healing. Ford uses his characters to explore the 'old' and the 'new' approaches in a way which makes it difficult to conclude that either is effective. In that sense, he is representing back to contemporary readers the confused state of medicine as it would have been experienced by those suffering nervous illness. Of course, the war brought this into sharp relief, but Ford's characters show that nervous illnesses originating from other sources were not replaced by those generated by war but persisted alongside them. Secondly, the focus on language and words has import beyond the difficulty of describing war. Mark Micale observes a 'convergence of the psychiatric and the literary', evident in form and genre, in the early twentieth century (Micale 2004, p. 6). Specifically, he notes the centrality of 'the spoken word' as patients told their 'life story' to a 'hypnotist, psychotherapist, or psychoanalyst' who then offered an interpretation and produced a 'narrative of their own', often directed to a medical readership (Ibid). In essence, this is what Jessop does with George. This is why Ford makes him an author, someone attuned to power of words and stories, who presents his case to a more general readership. It is notable, therefore, that Jessop suggests that some stories are best not told, that some experiences evade language and that words can be weapons. Ford might have lost confidence, as Haslam argues, in the beneficial power of words, but not in their force. It is an understanding which paves the way for *Parade's End*, in which words are weaponized.

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Notes

1 Saunders states that it also sometimes titled *Mr. Croyd* or *The Wheels of the Plough*

2 Gutta percha is a form of rubber used as a sealant in dentistry, making the suggestion here that Ralston intended suffocation in his sleep.

3 See Mizener (1971), Moser (1980) and Saunders (2012a) and (2012b) for a sequential exploration.

4 This approach derives from my recently submitted thesis which explores Ford's treatment of madness in his novels.

5 A word search using software programme *antconc* on the *Delphi Complete Works of Ford Madox Ford* (2013, Version 2) shows over 100 uses of 'madness' and over 300 of 'mad' but less than 30 of 'insanity' and 'insane' combined.

6 Kuhn, p. xvi observes that a wide range of practices, including different types of psychotherapy, hypnosis, psychic and faith healing, ran concurrently.

7 In the novel George is referred to as both Heimann and Marsden and by a pseudonym, James Pearson, so for clarity his forename is used throughout.

8 Marie Elizabeth, known as Heimann, is claiming the right to the name Marsden and marries twice, to Jessop's brother and to Mr. Plugschmied, so her forename is the most stable reference point.

9 Though her first name is given as Eleanor she is generally referred to as Miss Jeaffreson by other characters, so this convention is maintained.

10 Jessop repeatedly uses the word 'poor' in relation to George, referring to him repeatedly as a 'poor boy.' See pages 74 and 273 for instance.

11 Ibid. Farnworth cites Suzanne Raitt.

12 Pre-war medical opinion largely considered nervous problems to be physically located. See, for instance, Kuhn (2016, p. xiv) who records a shift away from materialist medical thinking which ascribed mental diseases to physiological or organic causes.

13 Tietjens is renowned for his 'complete taciturnity', see p. 9 in Ford (2010) and after his war service he tells Mrs. Wannop that he has not 'really spoken to a soul for two years', p. 199 in *A Man Could Stand Up-'*.

[14] As the final chapters are set in 1921 the novel is presumably written no earlier than this.

[15] For instance, *Ladies Whose Bright Eyes* (1911) and *The Young Lovell* (1913). Its significance to Ford's treatment of madness is discussed in a recently submitted thesis and is not replicated here. The most pertinent point to this paper is the source of the term 'underself'.

[16] Frederick Myers, was a leading member of the Society for Psychical Research. In the Glossary to his book, Myers (1903, p. xxi) he defines the term "subliminal" as indicating a consciousness below that of normal waking consciousness. Ford knew key members of the Society and seems to use the terms 'underself' and 'subliminal self' interchangeably. See page 56–57 of *The Marsden Case*.

[17] See p. 78 in *The Good Soldier.*

[18] In the novel George miscalculates the length and angle of the rope needed to hang himself because of assumptions he made about the presence of the pigs, meaning that the policeman could hold him up until the rope was cut.

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