Modernism, History, and Memoir-Writing in Ford Madox Ford

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Ford and Memoir-Writing

Memoir-writing has been a preoccupation of this last decade, in what Nancy K. Miller terms "a kind of fin-de-sicle gasp of self-exploration" (421). Writers, ranging from the prominent to the unknown, jumped on the memoir-writing-bandwagon, with a cursory survey of memoirists between 1991 and 2001 yielding names such as Erica Jong, Stephen King, Eudora Welty, Edward Said, Liz Smith, Henry Louis Gates, and Barbara Bush. But what does it mean to write a memoir? Is the memoir an account of personal experience, or is it a chronicle of the history of the times? What relationship does the memoir bear to historical narrative, and to what extent does it reflect an individual's unique perspective? Leslie Schenk, for one, defines the memoir simply "as a more-or-less one-time attempt at summing up" (475). But what seems more compelling to me is Nancy Miller's account of the memoir as a collective rather than a personal enterprise, one that reflects the writer's times and historical context. "The genre of the memoir is not about terminal 'moi-ism,' as it's been called, but rather a rendez-vous, as it were, with the other," Miller writes, suggesting that "what seems to be going on between memoir writers and their readers is a relational act that creates identifications" (422, 423). For Miller, a memoir comes to life in a process shared by memoir-writer and memoir-reader, a process that transmutes the individual or the personal into a universalizable, shared communal text: "however solitary, memoir reading, like memoir writing, participates in an important form of collective memorialization, providing building blocks to a more fully shared national narrative" (424). In our "post-modern world" in particular, Miller terms the memoir a "record of an experience in search of a community" (432).

【Keywords】 Ford Madox Ford, narrative, history, memoir, reminiscence, autobiography, persona, parable, *Memories and Impressions*, *It Was the Nightingale*

The early twentieth century "modern" world served as another period of turmoil and fragility not unlike our late twentieth/early twenty-first century. In this essay I will explore the elusiveness of the memoir form as at once a personal and a historical record through examining the writings of Ford Madox Ford, the prolific early twentieth-century modernist writer most famous for his novel *The Good Soldier*. All of Ford's writing defied generic boundaries: his biographer Max Saunders writes that Ford "metamorphos[ed] all [the] major forms [of English prose]: the novel, the memoir, literary criticism, travel writing, even historical and cultural discourse" (v). Ford wrote that his "business in life . . . is to attempt to discover and to try to let you see where we stand," and he sought to present a history of his age through fictional and semi-fictional narratives (*Memories and Impressions* xviii).[1] Disregarding strict "factuality," Ford rather offered memorable anecdotes and illuminating metaphors depicted with an artistic vividness. Moments of narrative or reflection, self-deprecation or self-elevation are Impressionistic moments of epiphany, and they are "accurate" for Ford insofar as they convey a sense of the period.

The memoir form itself occupies a position somewhere between autobiography, novel, and history. While the memoir, autobiography, and history seem to contain claims to "fact," the narrative-making process is itself a fictional one in all these forms, and the author pursues his/her own agenda in deciding on the mode of self-representation. For instance, Bette Kirschstein writes that Ford's imprecise differentiation of "facts" from "impressions" in part allows him to address his own uncertain masculinity. Kirschstein suggests that Ford employs a "remasculinizing technique" in his writings to overcome a sense of insecurity about his masculinity (159). As such, Ford's memoirs do not make a claim for factuality, but he does make a claim for representing the spirit of an age. Ford is aware of his audience, aware that memoir-writing is not just a solipsistic process but rather one that participates in a conversation with the reader. Here it seems important to keep in mind Miller's claim that "in postmodern culture the writing autobiographical subject . . . always requires a partner in crime" (422). While "autobiography" seems to be just about the self and about "one," Miller writes that "it takes two to make an autobiography, to perform an autobiographical act," an act that takes into account the relationship between writer and reader (423).

1) This book was published, in the same year, in the United States as *Memories and Impressions* and in England as Ancient *Lights and Certain New Reflections: Being the Memories of a Young Man.*

Ford undertakes this ambitious project of providing a picture of his age in many works that span his long literary career. These works which defy generic classifications as history or fiction, fact or fabrication, can be loosely grouped as memoirs or "reminiscences." Titles such as *Memories and Impressions* (1911), *Thus to Revisit* (1921), *Return to Yesterday* (1931) and *It Was the Nightingale* (1933) are largely memoirs of Ford's life, his core set of reminiscences, and the texts I will discuss in this essay. *In Portraits from Life* (1937), Ford characterizes literary figures around him;[2] *Provence* (1935) and *Great Trade Route* (1937) are geographically-based travel narratives; and *The Soul of London* (1905), *The Heart of the Country* (1906), *The Spirit of the People* (1907) and *A Mirror to France* (1926) are works of sociological impressionism.[3] Many others of Ford's works hover on the borderline between genres: *Joseph Conrad, A Personal Remembrance* (1924), for instance, is foremost a biography but also Ford's reminiscence of a close personal relationship. The novel *No Enemy* (1929) is a thinly disguised autobiography of Ford's experience in World War I. The arbitrariness of the classification "reminiscence" is highlighted by the multiple other labels used by Ford himself to apply to these texts. In the dedicatory letter to *It Was the Nightingale*, Ford calls his work an "autobiography" but then claims that he has "employed every wile known to me as novelist" (6).

In their basic operating principle, these works are memoirs–the narrator reviews his past life and relates it to the reader in a narrative peppered with anecdotes, pedantic lessons and wistful nostalgia. Formally, these works follow the associational logic of memory; thematically, Ford reaches out for any subject personally available to him. He ranges from characterizations of major literary figures and artistic movements to the details of everyday life. Anecdotes of his childhood amongst great Victorian and pre-Raphaelite figures (the Rossettis, William Morris, Swinburne, Ford Madox Brown, Carlyle, Liszt) and stories from his days as a young liberal or as editor of the *transatlantic review* are all valid subjects. Ford is alternately humble and arrogant, distant and personal, straightforward and cryptic. He presents himself as naive child, unappreciated writer, humble gardener, literary star, and war veteran. He is self-deprecating about his writing; he gives pedantic advice to potential writers. In all these guises, Ford aims at providing a personal but wide-ranging picture of the literary, social, and political attributes of his period.

2) *Portraits from Life* was published in England in 1938 as *Mightier than the Sword.*

3) Sociological impressionism is David Dow Harvey's term (see Harvey xxi-xxiii).

On the level of form, Ford's apparent disorder is itself an artistic technique: he writes that "[t]he true artfulness of art is to appear as if in disordered habiliments. Life meanders, jumps back and forwards, draws netted patterns like those on the musk melon. It seems the most formless of things" (*Return to Yesterday* vii). Within this formlessness, Ford presents the history of his age by using two salient fictional constructs. The memoir requires, first of all, a first-person narrator, generally identifiable with but not identical to the author. Ford's various self-presentations—from wide-eyed child to social critic to war veteran—constitute multiple, distinct personae that represent diverse perspectives. Furthermore, the discursive narrative structure of the memoir pauses on emblematic lyric moments that recur and reverberate throughout the texts. The double motifs of multiple *personae* and illuminating emblems serve as fictional means of constructing a narrative "history" that transcends "fact" in providing a testament to collective experience.

The Personae

Ford's first-person narrator "I" exhibits a chameleon-like versatility in his guises and self-presentations. Adopting a variety of shifting, distinctly characteristic *personae*, the narrator resists coherence into a single personality but rather adopts diverse and shifting perspectives, attitudes, and self-characterizations.[4] Although the author and narrator are far from equivalent, I will refer to this narrator as "Ford," for convenience's sake.

Memories and Impressions is laced throughout with what may be called an "infantizing conceit": Ford insistently adopts the stance of a very little boy. Ford's childhood is admittedly the book's subject, but there is a reiterated emphasis on his small physical size and his naive, childlike qualities. At a concert where he encounters British royalty, he is "all alone and feeling very tiny and deserted," and describes himself as "the very small, lonely child with the long golden curls, underneath all those eyes and stupefied by the immense sounds of applause" (79-80). At another point he is "extremely young and extremely self-conscious" (160). He meets men "six foot six in height, or something like it, and I cannot have been more than two foot two

4) See Ohmann 64-9 for a variant interpretation that Ford's different *personae* all point to a fundamentally coherent personality.

at the most—a small child in a blue pinafore" (206-7). Adults appear as giants to this young Ford, he is always wide-eyed and impressionable, and he is in appearance a little pre-Raphaelite with "very long golden hair, a suit of greenish-yellow corduroy velveteen with gold buttons, and two stockings, of which the one was red and the other green" (78). Furthermore, the narrator even when cognizant of his status as an adult states that "to myself I never seemed to have grown up" (280). This infantizing conceit on some levels serves as the author's abdication of responsibility toward "fact"; the subject that experiences the events in *Memories and Impressions*—and to some extent the author of that text—is a young, ingenuous child with little experience and a limited perspective on the world who cannot be expected to be entirely reliable.

In a far remove from the infant *persona*, Ford in *Memories and Impressions* also adopts the stance of a seasoned Victorian prophet-sage. In the "Dedication," Ford expresses his grand purposes of a retrospective evaluation of his age:

> my impressions of the early and rather noteworthy persons among whom my childhood was passed . . . I have tried to compare them with my impressions of the world as it is at the present day. (xii-xiii)

Ford here suggests his position as a worldly-wise commentator on society, one able to comment on the child-persona. Near the end of his narrative, he reiterates this sage-like position by noting that "Upon reconsidering these pages I find that I have written a jeremiad" (318).

Throughout his texts, Ford posits himself as representative man, one whose experiences can be generalized to his fellow members in society. In *It Was the Nightingale*, the narrator reconciles himself to his lonely, misunderstood position after his release from military service by admitting that "[t]hat was the lot of man in those days" (17). Like other war veterans, he carries a prevalent sense of marginalization from an increasingly mechanized world and selfish society. Upon his postwar return to the literary world, "I must have been as a ghost," he writes (87). "Occasionally a man—presumably a writer—would address a word to me. They would even ask me if I hadn't once written something" (87). Meanwhile, at the same parties, "for the ladies I did not exist. Not one of them addressed a remark to me" (87). This Prufrockian account continues: "Occasionally they spoke one to the other. If I said anything they stopped talking as if a disagreeable sound were interrupting them. Then they went on

with their conversation" (87). Ford stands for the lone, isolated individual in a society of people incapable of reaching beyond their self-contained cocoons. Ford writes that "for myself I knew that my mind had had both its legs and arms smashed. . . . You may say that every one who had taken physical part in the war was then mad. No one could have come through that shattering experience and still view life and mankind with any normal vision" (63). This sense of alienation, while describing war veterans here, seems generalizable to the modern individual coping with a disorienting new world.

Ford as narrator thus adopts numerous guises and presents himself as infant, as sage, as everyman. Through these different roles, Ford multiplies the perspectives he is able to provide on his contemporary times, and the spectrum of viewer-angles coalesces into a composite portrait of contemporaneity. Furthermore, the *personae* are protective mechanisms that enable Ford to speak out in other voices while absolving him from responsibility for the text, as, for instance, in his use of the naive infant *persona*. Where, then, is the "real" Ford—the author—behind these *personae*? Ford Madox Ford, the creator of the reminiscences, does not emerge from behind the narratorial *personae*. As a result, Ford paradoxically writes an autobiography without a central subject. In the dedicatory letter to *Return to Yesterday*, Ford at once insists that his book is an autobiography and that he tries to keep himself hidden behind the text: in "setting down one's life on paper" he maintains that "I have tried to keep myself out of this work as much as I could" (vii-viii). As Sondra J. Stang notes in direct reference to *It Was the Nightingale*, "in spite of an increased amount of personal material, the novelistic treatment succeeds in distancing it, and the narrator's voice is more like that of a character in a novel than the voice of the author speaking directly to the reader" (48).

As the author disappears under his fictional *persona*, issues of fidelity to fact and the distinction between fact and fictionality diminish in prominence. To suggest that Ford the narrator is not identical with Ford the author and to assert that the narrator adopts a series of purely fictional masks is not to decry the *personae* as "untrue": it is simply to marginalize the relevance of "actual fact." Real-life correspondences of Ford's various self-characterizations are not at issue here: what is important is how convincing the *personae* are in themselves, and how they serve to illuminate the period that Ford desires to depict. The memoir genre shifts from autobiography to history to novel, but Ford's various *personae* make it clear that Ford's modernist

memoir is not a testament to an individual subjectivity but rather an invitation to participate in a collective historical collage.

The Parables

At certain moments within his memoirs, Ford pauses on a timeless, spatially insular moment or scene. The problems of society recede and the discursive sequence of events halts as a particular object or event occupies the narrator's—and necessarily the reader's—full attention. In *It Was the Nightingale*, Ford writes of a quiet afternoon on a mountain in South Corsica. After he commits the "unpardonable offence" of sprinkling salt on his food before tasting it while a guest in someone's house, he realizes that "One must *never* add condiments to hospitable dishes in France, Italy, or the Isles of the Mediterranean. It is to suggest that the lady of the house does not know how her meats should be prepared" (105). "To escape from the thunder-clouded atmosphere [of the house]," Ford goes "to take [his] siesta on a goat path of the mountain" (105). Alone in a secluded part of a mountain and with an entire afternoon before him, Ford "looked down and saw the dung-beetle" (105). This dung-beetle becomes the focus of attention for the next few pages:

> He was an obfusc, brownish, bullet-shaped mortal and he pushed before him up the mountain another bullet of obfusc, brownish matter—dung rolled and patted into form and pushed so far up. . . . Even as I looked at him . . . gripping his load of dung he rolled backwards and over and over until he was level with my foot. . . . Without . . . pause, . . . he was at his dung-bullet again. He pushed and strained and the bullet wavered and jolted upwards until he was on a level with my forehead. Then with the suddenness of catastrophe, so that one started, he slipped again and rolled and rolled till he was a foot below my shoes. And then . . . [original ellipses] at it again at once. (105-06)

"I watched that poor beast for the whole of a dreamy afternoon," Ford writes, "and at the end of my siesta and that afternoon that poor beast was not more than a foot above the level of my head" (106). This is a typical maneuver on Ford's part: he takes the reader on a journey away from the everyday life of human existence, and in the most prosaic of symbols—a dung-beetle, of all creatures—he finds a certain philosophy of life, that of life as a recurrence of ceaseless, little-availing effort.

Emblems or parables are, just as the *personae* were, Ford's means through which he masterfully but economically depicts his age. Using striking events and representative objects, Ford spins out well-told anecdotes and describes symbolic moments that illuminate salient features of his age. These emblems serve as signs of the times, as representative moments of his contemporary period: an individual, isolated incident comes to stand for the human condition. The emblems become representative by being abstracted from the concrete into the universal, from the literal into the metaphorical. These parables are means by which Ford attempts to arrive at a historical understanding, and a means by which individual experience leads to collective empathy.[5)]

The dung-beetle, for instance, becomes a recurring point of reference for the narrator whenever he feels at a low in his fortunes. In describing one lonely evening in a country hut, Ford writes: "I had never been so alone and with my heavy sack to represent his burden I was indeed the dung beetle. I had rolled clean down to the bottom of the hill" (110). At the end of the initial narrative about the dung-beetle, Ford explains that "[a] certain Puritanism . . . prevented my taking that beetle and setting him down some yards further up the hill. I fancy I have always had an instinctive dislike for playing Providence" (107). However, when reflecting back on this situation during a low in morale, Ford regrets his decision: "All the same . . . I wished that I had played providence to that beetle . . . I could not see how, without the intervention of an immense and august finger and thumb that should take me and transport me through the dark air—how, without that, I should ever reach the top" (108). The dung-beetle's behavior becomes a parable for the actions of a person who continually strives toward a hopeless goal, much like Ford the plebeian artist himself.

In contrast to the self-deprecating identification of the artist-self with a dung-beetle, Ford also posits the nightingale as an artist-figure. The dedicatory letter to *It Was the Nightingale* presents the image of nightingale as poet, a recurring trope throughout literature, as in Keats's nightingale in the "Ode," Robert Frost's "The Oven Bird," and Yeats's golden mechanical bird in "Sailing to Byzantium." Ford's

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5) Ford's use of emblematic parables to illustrate his times places him in close affinity with the Victorian social commentator Thomas Carlyle. Carlyle, especially in "jeremiads" such as *Past and Present*, frequently points out events or items that represent a larger condition. For instance, in *Past and Present*, a seven-foot advertising placard in the shape of a hat illustrates the exaggerated advertising—the emphasis on show over substance—of his times.

own conception of the nightingale is not an idealized one: the nightingale in the "Dedication" remains in the physical world, in potential conflict with a rat and rescued by a cat. If poets are nightingales, the rats are, "let us say, their bankers [or] . . . editor[s]" (7). At the same time, Ford is nostalgic for the Romantic bird's unmediated expression. "One should not hear the nightingale for the first time—only for the first time of the year! One should be born while a nightingale is singing and never know when one first realises that it is a nightingale. Then it is as if the bird's song was a part of oneself," Ford writes (247).

In another example, Ford's parable of the "funereal urn" that begins the narrative of *Memories and Impressions* is associated in his mind with the pre-Raphaelite movement centered around his artist grandfather, Ford Madox Brown (1). Ford writes:

> I can remember vividly, as a very small boy, shuddering, as I stood upon the doorstep, at the thought that the great stone urn, lichened, soot-stained, and decorated with a great ram's head . . . might fall upon me and crush me entirely out of existence. (2)

The urn recalls Ford's awe of the artists around whom he grew up—"I moved among somewhat distinguished people who all appeared to me to be morally and physically twenty-five feet high" (x)—and stands for the artistic demands placed on him from birth. As the grandson of the demanding Madox Brown and constantly compared with his Rossetti cousins (the children of Dante Gabriel Rossetti), Ford grew up amongst those who believed that "[t]he world divided itself . . . into those who were artists and those who were merely the stuff to fill graveyards" (*IWTN* 74). The urn with its ominous permanence and its threat to the self—perhaps the self-esteem—comes to represent for Ford this artistic burden. As Ford writes,

> These people [Carlyle, Ruskin, Browning, etc.] were perpetually held up to me as standing upon unattainable heights, and at the same time I was perpetually being told that if I could not attain these heights I might just as well not cumber the earth. (xiii)

It is the incubus of these childhood pressures that is physically embodied in the urn. The urn is recognized to be just such a threat by the adults, and yet its removal is doubtful: "Most of the Pre-Raphaelites dreaded [the urn]; they all of them talked about it as a possible danger, but never was any step taken for its removal. It was never even

really settled in their minds whose would be the responsibility for any accident" (16).[6]

These parables, as do the *personae*, serve as fictional constructs that help illuminate a historical period. Questions of factual veracity or accuracy are suspended: the emblems are symbolic gestures and are meaningful as long as they are internally consistent and valuable in helping the reader gain a renewed perspective. Whether or not Ford actually saw a dung-beetle, he uses it as an illustration about the age. Ford creates an artistic realm in which distinctions of fact and fictionality, of historical veracity and artistic fabrication, are erased: the very questions are suspended as they become irrelevant. These parables, rather, become timeless moments that expand from their particular locations to become universal lessons, or talismans, with which readers, past and present, can identify.

Historian of his own time

Ford in this way employs two fictional structures—both dictated by the conventions of the memoir form—to create a history of his age. According to Ford, "the Novelist . . . [is a] historian of his own time," (IWTN 199) and novelistic techniques are thus a perfectly acceptable, and perhaps even the best, means of writing a history. Through the use of multiple *personae*, Ford expands his perspective on his age as well as challenges the authority of a single narrative voice. Emblematic lyric moments echo throughout his texts as parables for aspects of society or types of persons. Both constructs of the *persona* and the emblem substitute vivid, concrete examples in expressing abstract classes of persons or forces; they both distill larger elements in the world into smaller, comprehensible units. In this sense, the memoirs work as synecdoche, with particular instances standing for universalized experience.

These fictional constructs only serve to fulfill Ford's purpose of representing his age via subjective impressions, as he himself asserts. In the "Dedication" to *Memories and Impressions*, Ford writes that the book "sums up the impressions that I have received in a quarter of a century" (xii). "This book," he continues, "is full of inaccuracies as to facts, but its accuracy as to impressions is absolute" (xviii). Facts are to Ford an inferior means of communicating reality: "the Public of today has to go to

6) See Moser 137-8 for further attention to Ford's encounter with this urn. Moser suggests that Ford's fear of the urn is linked to his agoraphobia.

imaginative writers for its knowledge of life—for its civilisation. For this, recorded facts are of no avail. Facts are of no importance, and dwelling on facts leads at best to death—at worst to barbarism" (*Thus to Revisit* 193). As he discounts the value of fidelity to fact, Ford is assiduous to deny any claims to that factuality, subscribing to Sir Philip Sidney's notion that a poet "nothing affirms, and therefore never lieth." By prefacing many of his claims in *Memories and Impressions* with the phrase "I remember," and repeating this phrase, he asserts his narrative's possible infidelities to fact (2, 3, 5). "The memory is probably inaccurate," he states simply (49).

In the process of employing fictional means to create a history of his age, Ford plays on the expectations and conventions of the memoir form. The memoirs, of course, remain based on some recognizable congruence to his society. Yet as he indicates when he calls *It Was the Nightingale* a novel, Ford perceives a real conflation between genres that strive to represent the age. Ford's fictional constructs—such as his personae and his emblems—must be taken on their own terms: he denies claims for their factuality, and admits the possibility of imaginative embellishments on them. As long as they are artistically commendable, internally consistent, and helpful in illuminating their age, the fictional renderings of history are true in Ford's world. Ford's memoirs turn outward at the same time as they turn inward: they are not just "autobiographies" of himself but rather narratives that attest to a universal, collectively shared history.

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[국문요약]

"소설가는 그 시대의 사학자이다": 모더니즘과 포드 매독스 포드의 회고록 쓰기

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20세기 초기 영국 작가인 포드 매독스 포드는 다양한 장르의 문학작품을 쓰면서도 장르간의 구분은 두지 않았다. 뿐만 아니라 "소설가는 그 시대의 사학자"라고 말한 그는 정확한 역사적 사실보다는 한 시대의 인상파적 분위기 잡기에 중점을 두었으며 개인의 경험을 그 개인이 속한 사회의 집합적인 "역사"로 보고 작품을 집필하였다. 이러한 특징들은 포드의 회고록을 이해하는 데 도움이 된다. 그가 쓴 작품 중 회고록으로 분류할 수 있는 작품은 10권 이상이다. 그 중 1910년에서 1930년 사이에 쓴 회고록을 통하여, 본 논문은 회고록의 장르적 특징 그리고 역사성을 고찰한다. 과연 회고록이라는 것이 무엇인가? 회고록은 자서전, 역사, 개인의 일기, 소설 등의 장르 사이에서 애매한 위치를 차지하고 있지만 독립된 하나의 장르로 구분할 수도 있다. 회

고록은 한 사람의 경험만을 서술하는 것인가, 아니면 어느 사회의 집합적인 이야기인가? 낸시 밀러는 회고록을 연구함에 있어 이를 읽는 독자도 같이 생각해야 한다고 주장하면서 회고록을 "공동 사회를 찾아가는 한 사람의 경험의 기록"이라고 정의한다. 본 논문에서는 포드의 회고록 중 『기억과 인상』(1911)과 『나이팅게일이었다』(1933)를 핵심적으로 검토하면서, 포드가 회고록 쓰기에 어떤 의미를 부여하였는가를 연구한다. 특히 자기 자신의 목소리를 내지 않고 다양한 타인의 가면(페르소나)을 이용하며, 우화나 표상을 통하여 하나의 작은 순간에서 인생의 교훈적인 철학을 찾아내는 등은 포드가 회고록에서 이용한 방법들이다. 필자는 또한 포드가 개인 경험과 개인 글쓰기를 통해 어떻게 시대적 역사를 밝혀내고, 일종의 인상파적 역사를 이루어내고 있는지를 주목한다.

[Abstract]

Narrative, History, and Memoir-Writing in Ford Madox Ford

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Ford Madox Ford, the early twentieth-century writer most famous for his novel *The Good Soldier*, perceived his "business in life [as an] . . . attempt to discover and to try to let you see where you stand." With this grand purpose in mind, Ford disregarded distinctions of genre in his prolific output of what we would consider novels, memoirs, literary criticism, travel writing, and history. Claiming that "the Novelist . . . [is a] historian of his own time," Ford sought his own version of the "truth," a truth that was more faithful to his own subjective impressions than to verifiable "fact." Among these works that depict his age are a series of "memoirs" or "reminiscences," works published from the 1910s to the 1930s which carry out his Impressionistic purpose. What lies behind these memoirs is Ford's view that his own individual history can be understood as his contemporary society's collective history. This article

explores Ford's experimentation with boundaries of fact and fiction, and history and narrative, as he employs and expands the memoir form. In particular, I focus on two works, *Memories and Impressions* (1911) and *It Was the Nightingale* (1933), and Ford's techniques in these memoirs, such as 1) the adoption of fictional *personae* from which to comment on his society at large and 2) the use of emblematic "parables" to encapsulate larger lessons of life within the minutiae of existence. Current theorists on the memoir form share interests in these questions of genre and of the social role of the memoir Nancy Miller, for instance, terms the memoir "the record of an experience in search of a community." This article engages these current discussions of the memoir genre by examining Ford's early twentieth-century examples as innovative experiments that play with the boundaries between fiction and history, and personal impressions and collective truth.