

From “The Saddest Story” to “A Tale of Passion”: Modernist Narrative Techniques and Themes in Ford Madox Ford's *The Good Soldier*

DR. TANER CAN*

Abstract

Modernist British fiction has been customarily associated with a small group of authors, including Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, D. H. Lawrence and Samuel Beckett, and their experimental works. This highly exclusive view of modernism largely overshadowed the place and legacy of Ford Madox Ford, along with some of his contemporaries, in the history of modernist British fiction. Despite this neglect in critical trajectory, Ford's works, in fact, anticipates the technical and thematic concerns of the modernist fiction in many ways. The aim of this paper is to explore Ford's affinities with major modernist writers through a comprehensive analysis of his 1915 novel *The Good Soldier: A Tale of Passion*. The subtitle of the novel “A Tale Passion” provides the necessary critical framework for literary analysis with its implications about Ford's theory of the novel. Accordingly, the first part of the article focuses on the narrative strategies inspired by the definition of ‘tale’ and explores how Ford's impressionistic writing style challenges the established conventions of the nineteenth century realism. The second part discusses the way Ford employs the theme of destructive passion to explore the overarching themes of shifting sense of morality and class as well as the political turmoil in the pre-war period.

Keywords: modernism, impressionism, Ford Madox Ford, *The Good Soldier*, unreliable narrator

“EN ACIKLI ÖYKÜ”DEN “BİR İHTİRAS HİKAYESİ”NE: FORD MADOX FORD'UN İYİ
ASKER ADLI ROMANINDA MODERNİST ANLATI TEKNİKLERİ VE TEMALAR

Öz

İngiliz edebiyatında modernist roman geleneği çoğunlukla Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, D. H. Lawrence ve Samuel Beckett isimleriyle ve bu isimlerin kaleme aldığı deneysel eserlerle özdeşleştirilir. Bu seçkin yaklaşım modernist romanın gelişimine önemli katkılar sağlayan Ford Madox Ford'un ve bazı çağdaşlarının İngiliz edebiyatı tarihindeki yerinin göz ardı edilmesine sebep olmuştur. Modernist edebiyat eleştirisindeki bu eksikliğe karşın, Ford Madox Ford'un eserleri hem anlatı teknikleri hem de tematik kurgusu bakımından modernist kurmaca ile yakın benzerlikler taşır. Bu çalışmanın amacı Ford'un 1915 yılında kaleme aldığı *The Good Soldier: A Tale of Passion* (İyi Asker: Bir İhtiras Hikayesi) başlıklı romanın anlatı tekniklerini ve tematik kurgusunu inceleyerek, yazarın başat modernist roman yazarları ile benzerliklerini ortaya koymaktır. Romanın alt başlığı, “Bir İhtiras Hikayesi,” Ford'un roman kuramına ışık tutacak bazı ipuçları taşır. Bu alt başlıktan yola çıkarak, çalışmanın birinci bölümünde ‘hikâye’ kavramının tanımı üzerinden Ford'un izlenimci anlatı tekniği ve bu tekniğin On Dokuzuncu Yüzyıl gerçekçilik anlayışından farklılıkları üzerinde durulur. Çalışmanın ikinci

* TED Üniversitesi, taner.can@tedu.edu.tr, orcid: 0000-0001-8869-4817

Gönderim tarihi: 13.05.2021

Kabul Tarihi: 14.06.2021

bölümünde ise Ford'un romandaki ana tema olan "ihtiras" kavramı üzerinden Birinci Dünya Savaşı öncesi Avrupası'nın politik karmaşasını ve bu dönemde değişmeye başlayan ahlak ve sınıf anlayışını yansıtma biçimleri incelenir.

Anahtar sözcükler: Modernizm, İzlenimcilik, Ford Madox Ford, *İyi Asker*, Güvenilmez Anlatıcı

INTRODUCTION

Almost all accounts of modernist British fiction point to a departure from 'realist' aesthetics of the nineteenth century and to a tendency toward a more experimental writing style. Despite the disparity of views as to when this departure took place, there seems to be a clear consensus among literary historians on the major representatives of this literary trend that emerged sometime at the turn of the twentieth century or in its early decades. The small and highly exclusive canon of modernist writers is usually comprised of Virginia Woolf, D. H. Lawrence, James Joyce and Samuel Beckett. Like many of his contemporaries, the place and legacy of Ford Madox Ford in the history of modernist British fiction has been largely overshadowed by these towering figures. Despite the neglect in critical trajectory, Ford's works, in fact, anticipates the technical and thematic concerns of the modernist fiction in many ways. Notable among his oeuvre is his 1915 novel *The Good Soldier: A Tale of Passion* with its experimental narrative strategies and innovative thematic structure. As he stated in the dedicatory letter to his wife Stella, Ford regarded *The Good Soldier* as his best work. Interestingly enough, Ford was denied the opportunity to entitle his self-proclaimed masterpiece, as he wanted. Originally, he wished to call it *The Saddest Story*. However, as the novel was set to be published just after the outbreak of the First World War, his publisher, John Lane, thought the title would be inappropriate, and asked for an alternative one. Ford suggested *The Good Soldier* as a joke in hasty irony. Yet, his joke was taken seriously and became the title of the novel with its accompanying subtitle *A Tale of Passion* (Ford, 1995, p. 32-33). This coincidental and seemingly trivial change in the title of the novel from "The Saddest Story" to "A Tale of Passion," in fact, carries crucial implications about Ford's innovative theory of fiction, and therefore, it can be used to trace Ford's decisive break with his predecessor's literary conventions for a more innovative and experimental style of writing. As the critical analysis in the following pages attempts to demonstrate, while the shift from "story" to "tale" helps elucidate Ford's impressionistic writing style in the novel, the shift from "sad" to "passionate" provides insights into the thematic structure of the novel. Accordingly, the aim of this paper is to explore Ford's affinities with major modernist writers by tracing the narrative and thematic strategies implicated in the subtitle of his *The Good Soldier: A Tale of Passion*.

IMPRESSIONISTIC NARRATIVE STYLE IN JOHN DOWELL'S 'TALE'

According to *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, "tale" is "[a] narrative, written (in prose or verse) or spoken. When in prose, barely distinguishable from a short story. If there is a difference, then a tale perhaps suggests something written in the tone of voice of someone speaking" (Cuddon, 1988, p. 899). The distinctive characteristic of 'tale' is, then, its

emulation of speech in writing. This definition immediately evokes an image of a narrator telling a tale in front of an audience, stressing certain parts, ignoring others and returning to curial moments when they feel necessary; sometimes forgetting the sequence of the events as they actually happened and asking for forgiveness for gaps and digressions. As such, 'tale' coincides with the key narrative strategies that came to define modernist fiction, such as unreliable narrator with limited and subjective point of view, distorted chronological order and fragmented plot structure. Indeed, the act of narration with its attending problems and complexities characterises Ford's innovative narrative style in *The Good Soldier* just like other major works of modernist British fiction. The novel revolves around the story of two couples: the Ashburnhams and the Dowells, who meet in Nauhiem, a health spa, in August 1904 and spend the next nine years together. As the novel opens, John Dowell, the narrator and one of the characters in the novel, states this is the saddest story that he has ever heard and starts telling the events of the previous nine years. In his retrospective narrative, he mostly focuses on Edward Ashburnham's idiosyncratic personality, and relates how he has eventually come to realise that Edward is in fact a morally degenerate man who has relationships with various women, including his own wife, Florence Dowell. Edward's extramarital relationships ruin many lives in the novel: Florence and Mrs. Maidan commit suicide and Nancy Rufford loses her sanity. In addition to Edward's turbulent private life, Dowell also talks about economic, religious and national controversies surrounding the two couples. The passionate tale of four characters ends with Edward's tragic suicide.

This simple and straightforward story with melodramatic overtones is narrated by an inconsistent and forgetful narrator, John Dowell, in a series of flashbacks. In other words, the plot structure does not follow the objective external reality governed by the laws of causality and chronology, but a psychic internal reality of a deceived husband's puzzled mind. Dowell knows that storytelling is a complex task with a number of challenges. For one thing, he has to be selective and piece together a tale from his numerous memories. For another, he has to arrange these memories and find the right tone to recount them in the best possible manner. Dowell grapples with all these questions throughout the novel, acting as the author's surrogate. It is at the beginning of the novel that Ford explains the nature of his innovative narrative style through Dowell's perspective:

I don't know how it is best to put this thing down—whether it would be better to try and tell the story from the beginning, as if it were a story; or whether to tell it from this distance of time, as it reached me from the lips of Leonora or from those of Edward himself. So I shall just imagine myself for a fortnight or so at one side of the fireplace of a country cottage, with a sympathetic soul opposite me. And I shall go on talking, in a low voice while the sea sounds in the distance and overhead the great black flood of wind polishes the bright stars. From time to time we shall get up and go to the door and look out at the great moon and say: "Why, it is nearly as bright as in Provence!" (Ford, 1990, p. 17)

By placing Dowell's act of narration at the centre of the novel, Ford indicates from the outset that the form will be at least as important as the content itself, if not more so. However, it would be

mistaken to suggest that Ford's innovative writing style in the novel can be attributed solely to the use of a first person narrator addressing an imaginary audience. In fact, Dowell and thus *The Good Soldier* was an outcome of the author's lasting friendship and collaboration with Joseph Conrad, whom he met in 1898 and formulated a theory of literary impressionism with. Hence, it would be helpful to highlight the function of the first person narrator as laid out by Ford in his critical writing. In "On Impressionism" Ford, for instance, states: "the Impressionist gives you, as a rule, the fruits of his own observations and the fruits of his own observations alone. He should be in this as severe and as solitary as any monk. It is what he is in the world for" (1995, p. 260). In the same essay, Ford calls Impressionism 'egotism': "this is called egotism; but, to tell the truth, I do not see how Impressionism can be anything else. Probably this school differs from other schools, principally, in that it recognizes, frankly, that all art must be the expression of an ego..." (1995, p. 258). This heightened sense of subjectivity, which Ford calls 'egotism' is in stark contrast with the aesthetic principles of the nineteenth century realism and naturalism, characterised by an uncompromising scientific principles of objectivity in its study of the material world and human condition. For instance, "I believe," Flaubert, a predecessor of naturalism, wrote, "that Great Art is scientific and impersonal" (1963, p. 95). Similarly, Emile Zola, one of the pioneering figures of naturalism, declared, "[what] it is necessary to emphasize above all the impersonal nature of the method" (1963, p. 188). In the novel, Ford's unreliable first-person narrator subverts the notion of scientific objectivity defended by naturalism through a narrative based on his personal observations, recollections and impressions. The result is a highly experimental narrative style that challenges many of the conventions of the nineteenth century realism.

First of all, Dowell calls into question the privileged position of the omniscient narrator – the all-knowing impersonal narrator that creates the illusion of detachment and objectivity in the act of narration. In stark contrast with the omniscient narrator's authority over the narrative totality, Dowell can only present us an incomplete recollection of what actually happened as he grapples with his failing memory. His retrospective narrative bespeaks the fallibility of our memories and the limits of human knowledge. We inevitably forget the intricate details of past events, or sometimes alter these details in our minds without even realising. The inevitable contingency of memories was also one of the central issues of literary modernism and particularly impressionism that prioritises the individual's perception of the external reality over the possibility of its objective representation. In "Modern Fiction," which would later be regarded as one of the key theoretical texts of modernist fiction, Woolf underscores the fragmented and discontinuous nature of human recollection, which reflects how the human mind works, incessantly lurking through flickering impressions backward and forward. For Woolf, it is the novelist's responsibility to convey this authentic experience with all its imperfections to readers, rather than striving to impose an artificial organisation on what is naturally disorganised and chaotic. Woolf writes:

Life is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged; life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end. Is it not the task of the novelist to convey this varying, this unknown and uncircumcised spirit, whatever aberration or complexity it may display, with as little mixture of the alien and external as possible? (1984, p. 60-61).

Ford echoes Woolf's views on the discontinuity of the human perception when he defines impressionism. He argues that impressionism is "the record of impression of a moment; it is not a sort of rounded, annotated record of a set of circumstances—it is the record of the recollection in your mind of a set of circumstances that happened ten years ago—or ten minutes. It might even be the impression of the moment—but it is the impression, not the correlated chronicle" (1995, p. 263). This is exactly what Dowell does in the novel. Instead of chronicling his memories in a certain sequential order, he constructs reality out of his impressions of people and events as he recollects them independent of any chronological restrictions. He can do this because reality, as impressionists put it, does not exist independent of us. It is contained in and defined by the way we view and construct it.

This highly subjective understanding of reality brings forth another major concern of modernist fiction: the problem of mediation in the mimetic function of narrative, or as more often referred to as the problem of unreliable narrator. Dowell himself doubts the validity of his version of the past, particularly when he tries to recount his impressions about others. He wonders, for instance, whether his portrayal of Edward Ashburnham does justice to his unique personality and circumstances in which he lived:

It is very difficult to give an all-round impression of any man. I wonder how far I have succeeded with Edward Ashburnham. I dare say I haven't succeeded at all. It is even very difficult to see how such things matter. Was it the important point about poor Edward that he was very well built, carried himself well, was moderate at the table and led a regular life—that he had, in fact, all the virtues that are usually accounted English? [...] And have I, I wonder, given the due impression of how his life was portioned and his time laid out? (Ford, 1990, p. 177)

Dowell's narrative is replete with such moments of assertions and doubts. He constantly re-evaluates what he tells and what his silent audience may understand. When the case is beyond any attempt of evaluation or correction, he simply fills the gaps in the narrative with pure speculations: "I don't know what Leonora put up as an excuse—something, I fancy, in the nature of a nightly orison that she made the girl and herself perform for the soul of Florence" (Ford, 1990, p. 75). Dowell's imperfect narrative style is further complicated by his social and cultural background. In his article "The Epistemology of *The Good Soldier*," Samuel Hynes argues, "Dowell seems peculiarly ill-equipped to tell this story, because he is ill-equipped to know a tale of passion. He is a kind of eunuch, a married virgin, a cuckold. He has apparently never felt passion. He is a stranger to human affairs... [H]e is an American, a stranger to the society in which his story takes place" (Hynes, 1961, p. 227). Dowell's main quandary is how to formulate and narrate his story most effectively, yet his constant negations and reformulations undermine the possibility of achieving objective truths and denies a meaningful closer to his narrative: "I wish I could put it down in diary form" (Ford, 1990, p. 141); "Who the devil knows?" (Ford, 1990, p. 151); "I can't make out which of them was right. I leave it to you" (Ford, 1990, p. 156). Consequently, his narrative reads like a testimony to the failure of production of meaning inflicted with uncertainties and doubts.

In addition to linear plot structure and omniscient narrator, modernist writers decisively rejected the concept of 'verisimilitude' or likeness to the truth, one of the key conventions of realism. In the 18th and 19th centuries, the success and popularity of the novel as a literary genre was mainly measured with regard to its likeness to truth or reality. To convey a sense of verisimilitude, the novelists strived to ensure that readers are emotionally immersed in and engaged with the text and the characters as if they were real. In stark contrast to their predecessors, modernist writers embraced and accentuated the artfulness of their works, drawing attention to the constructed nature of the narrative through self-conscious textual moments. "Modernist works," as Jeremy Hawthorn points out, "tend to be self-conscious in ways that vary according to the genre or art-form in question; they deliberately remind the reader or observer that they are art-works, rather than seeking to serve as 'windows on reality'" (Hawthorn, 1985, p. 80). *The Good Soldier* embodies several examples of self-conscious moments. Through his endless struggles to keep his narrative together, Dowell reveals the process of selection, arrangement and embellishment in the act of narration. For instance, at a critical moment in his tale, he apologetically concedes that his tale is replete with digressions: "Is all this digression or isn't it digression? Again *I do not know*. You, the listener, sit opposite me. But you are so silent. You don't tell me anything. I am, at any rate, *trying* to get you to see what sort of life it was I led with Florence and what Florence was like" (Ford, 1990, p. 19). His incompetence as a storyteller, coupled with his limited point of view and failing memory, causes Dowell to pause and reflect at certain points in the narrative. Commenting on the love affair between Edward and Nancy, Dowell pauses the narrative and excuses himself, saying: "I don't know. I don't know. I am very tired... I do not know. I leave it to you" (Ford, 1990, p. 282). Such moments of narrative disruption, in which Dowell offers explicit commentary on the narrative process, or pleads for the reader's assistance, seem to serve for a double narrative function. On the one hand, they self-consciously draw attention to Dowell's narrative as a constructed narrative – a text. On the other hand, they coerce the reader into an active participant of the story, or more accurately a complicit narrator who strives to reconstruct a meaningful narrative from Dowell's incoherent and inconsistent account of the past. Perhaps the most striking example of self-consciousness narrative moment in the novel come in the form of an authorial confession towards the end of the novel, which reads like a summary of all the innovative narrative strategies employed in the novel. Addressing his silent audience once again, Dowell states:

I have, I am aware, told this story in a very rambling way so that it may be difficult for anyone to find their path through what may be a sort of maze. I cannot help it. I have stuck to the idea of being in a country cottage with a silent listener, hearing between the gusts of the wind and the amidst the noises of the distant sea, the story as it comes. And, when one discusses an affair – a long sad affair- one goes back, and goes forward. One remembers points that one has forgotten and one explains them all the more minutely since one recognizes that one has forgotten to mention them in proper places and that one may have given, by omitting them, a false impression. I console myself with thinking that this is a real story and that, after all, real stories are probably told best in the way a person telling a story would tell them. They will then seem most real. (Ford, 1990, p. 213)

This key passage clearly demonstrates that Ford positions Dowell as a fictive autobiographer who shapes his narrative according to his whims and anxieties at the time of writing. Filtered through Dowell's subjective and limited point of view, *The Good Soldier* reflects the truth of life as we individually experience and perceive it. The novel looks deeply within the individual's consciousness, and employs this unique conscious to speak of the world as we experience and know it. The remainder of the article shall scrutinise the thematic structure in the novel to illustrate Ford's affinity with the canonical names of English literary modernism with reference to the second word in the subtitle of the novel: passion.

MODERN SENSIBILITIES AND THE THEME OF 'PASSION'

The modernist turn of the novel also marked a rupture with thematic concerns of the nineteenth century realism. With the increasing secularisation of Europe in the second half of the nineteenth century, novelists turned to previously neglected or avoided aspects of life. Sexuality, as a controversial and revolutionary topic, became a common theme in modernist fiction, allowing novelists to approach the genre from an innovative perspective. "Passion," Samuel Hynes argues, "is the necessary antagonist of convention, the protest of the individual against the rules. It is anarchic and destructive; it reveals the secrets of heart which convention exist to conceal and repress. It knows no rules except its own necessity" (1961, p. 233). Just like he utilises the formal qualities of tale to shape the narrative strategies of the novel, Ford uses 'passion/sexuality' as the central principle to organise the thematic structure of the novel. He taps into this basic human instinct to introduce a number of themes to propel the narrative forward. Evidently, it is adultery that urges Dowell to tell his story in the first place. When Dowell finds out that Edward Ashburnham has been having an affair with his wife, Florence, he resolves to narrate in a fortnight or so what he remembers in light of recent revelations. In other words, *The Good Soldier* can be read as a trauma narrative told by a husband in the wake of his wife and best friend's suicides, following the discovery of their affair and Nancy Rufford's – one of Edward's six mistresses and Florence's ward – descent into madness. Dowell expresses his exasperation in the form of two ethical questions at the beginning of the novel which will form the kernel of his narrative.

If for nine years I have possessed a goodly apple that is rotten at the core and discover its rottenness only in six months less four days, isn't it true that to say for nine years I possessed a goodly apple?... And if you come to think of it, isn't it a little odd that the physical rottenness of at least two pillars of our four-square house never presented itself to my mind as a menace to its security? (Ford, 1990, p. 12)

Also implicated in the passage above is Dowell's antiquated social and moral outlook. Here, he confesses that he has never suspected that people in his small circle can commit adultery. It is something inconvincible according to Dowell's moral standards, but as he comes to realise with bitter acceptance, the world, as he knows it, is disappearing with its certainties. Ford uses the theme of destructive passion to investigate the impact of the disintegration of Victorian social norms and values on individuals. Thus, the concept of adultery signifies more than infidelity or betrayal in the novel; it connotes the waning of the late Victorian social structure and cultural logic based on firm moral codes. In this context, Dowell can be seen as a fictional twin of the persona in

Matthew Arnold's famous poem "Dover Beach." Like Arnold's disillusioned persona, Dowell laments the impending transition from an age of certainty and stable identities into an era of the erosion of traditions and loss of faith.

Dowell's inability to come to terms with the shifting moral and social values first becomes evident when he almost instinctively claims that the Ashburnhams can be classified as people of good character according to English moral standards, and thus the title *The Good Soldier*:

When we all first met, Captain Ashburnham, home on sick leave from an India to which he was never to return, was thirty-three; Mrs Ashburnham Leonora—was thirty-one. I was thirty-six and poor Florence thirty. Thus today Florence would have been thirty-nine and Captain Ashburnham forty-two; whereas I am forty-five and Leonora forty. You will perceive, therefore, that our friendship has been a young-middle-aged affair, since we were all of us of quite quiet dispositions, the Ashburnhams being more particularly what in England it is the custom to call "quite good people." (Ford, 1990, p. 4)

Dowell's central moral position firmly rests on absolutes that allow him to categorise people into dichotomies like good and evil. Moreover, he has the illusion that it is still possible to sustain and operate on the Victorian social codes of class in which wealth and manners are suffice to show that you come from a good family. His moral judgement is completely based on the external indicators of class. As Charles Hoffman notes, "[w]ith all its implications of governing class, of Anglo-Saxon tradition, of refinement of manners and morals, and of cultural heritage and the comfortable material life, these good people [the Ashburnhams and the Dowells] represent the best that civilization has to offer" (Hoffmann, 1967, p. 56). Sexual politics also plays an important role in Dowell's conception of morality. To attest Edward Ashburnham's honest personality, he says, "[y]ou would have said that he was just exactly the sort of chap that you could have trusted your wife with" and he regretfully adds "And I trusted mine – and it was madness" (Ford, 1990, p. 16). Blinded by his firm belief in antiquated social and moral norms, Dowell cannot see or sense the betrayal continuing for nine years, although he is present in many of the scenes and incidents he narrates. With the revelation of his wife's betrayal, Dowell's moral compass is shattered; he feels lost and uses 'the morals of sex' to assign meaning to the chaos and to define morality. For Dowell, the morals of sex underpins all codes of morality in the society. He asserts that he does not know how to conduct his social affairs, for he lives in a corrupt society that has long lost the morals of sex. In Dowell's old-fashioned conception of morality, adultery does not only damage the family unit, it is detrimental to the social structure as a whole: "I don't know. And there is nothing to guide us. And if everything is so nebulous about a matter so elementary as the morals of sex, what is there to guide us in the more subtle morality of all other personal contacts, associations, and activities? Or are we meant to act on impulse alone? It is all darkness" (Ford, 1990, p. 16). Dowell's search for order and permanence in a world that is in the process of radical transformation, thus, ends in darkness. His failure signifies the dawn of a new era in which there is no place for the conventional notion of a single, objective and transcendental morality. Accordingly, the emerging modernist novelists presented the relativity of morality instead of artificially endorsing a moral code in their works. In this context, *The Good Soldier* clearly anticipates modernist approach to

morality with its tragic hero's failure to uphold his traditional values and mores in the face of amoral void.

In the early decades of the 20th century, political instability and uncertainty were prevailing over England, largely due to the approaching war with Germany as well as some domestic political issues, including Ireland's struggle for independence and women's fight for the right to vote. Ford employs the theme of passion/sexuality to convey the sense of national and international turmoil at the turn of the century (Bradbury, 1971, p. 41-44). By making August 4th, when Britain declared war on Germany central to the novel's chronology, Ford promotes an alternative way of reading and interpreting the novel from a historical perspective. Indeed, August 4th coincides with several significant events in the novel. Among many others events, it is the date on which Florence is born in 1874, has an affair with Jimmy in 1900, and marries Dowell in 1901. The date also marks the beginning of her affair with Edward in 1904 and her suicide in 1913. The Great War as a key reference point allows Ford to interweave the fate of the characters with the history of the world. "It is principally by this device of fateful date," Charles Hoffman argues, "that Ford links the microcosm of fictional characters with the macrocosm of a world at war, thereby enlarging the scope and the significance of the novel" (1967, p. 50). Viewed from this perspective, the Ashburhams and the Dowells come to represent the state of civilization in the pre-war period and thus, the tragic ending of the novel with suicides and insanity captures, to quote Hoffmann, "the causes of the breakdown of civilization, of a world gone suicidal and mad" (1967, p. 50). In the same vein, Dowell's inability to provide a meaningful and coherent evaluation of the people and events in his life can be interpreted as a reflection of the political disintegration of the larger world. All in all, Ford does not employ the theme of passion for its mere sensational value. He exploits this controversial theme to provide insight into the modern individual's struggle to come to terms with the shifting sense of morality and class as well as to depict the chaotic political atmosphere in the pre-war Britain.

CONCLUSION

As the foregoing critical analysis demonstrates, Ford's 1915 novel *The Good Soldier* encapsulates many of the defining characteristics of modernist fiction both in terms of the technical and thematic novelties. In the absence of an omniscient authorial voice that furthers the development of the plot, readers are completely restricted to Dowell's perceptions and recollections of the past events and therefore they have no choice but to accept the contradictions, digressions and uncertainties in the narrative. The narrator's retrospective account of the past events in the form of scattered and random fragments problematizes and challenges the three key conventions of the 19th century realism: the reliability and absolute authority of the narrator over their narrative, traditional linear plot with a chronological sequence of events and the concept of 'verisimilitude.' The first-person narrator allows Ford to create a narrative shaped by a process of continual revision, revealing the ambiguities and inaccuracies of interpretation inflicted on the human memory as it ages. Moreover, Dowell's highly subjective and fragmented narrative demands active participation from the reader in the production of both events and their

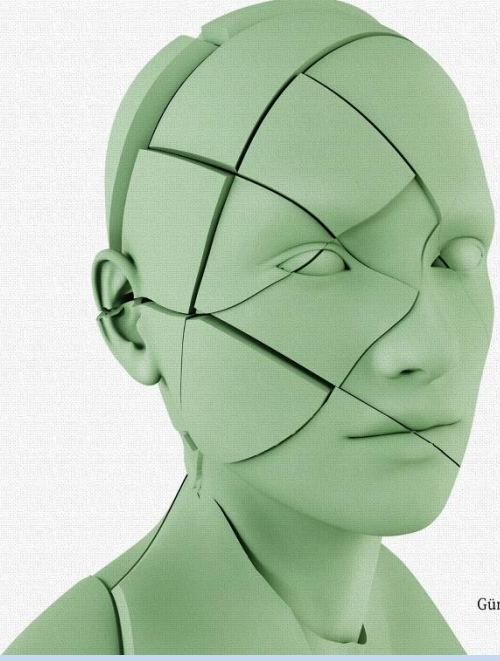
significance. Dowell addresses the reader in what can be interpreted as self-conscious narrative pauses, giving them the responsibility of making the necessary connections between fragmentary pieces of the narrative and filling the gaps with their assumptions about the characters. Similarly, Ford employs the theme of passion as a destabilising force to bring the implications of the social and political developments at the end of the century into sharp focus. Central to the thematic structure of the novel is the changing sense of morality and the political turmoil in the pre-war period. By interweaving the characters' lives and history, Ford promotes almost an allegorical reading of the novel in which the lives of the quartet of friends can be interpreted as a contextual extension of the pre-war period. Therefore, it can be concluded that *The Good Soldier* shares a number of significant similarities with the major works of modernist fiction in terms of experimental narrative style and innovative thematic structure.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Arnold, Matthew (1949). "Dover Beach." *The Portable Matthew Arnold*. Ed. Lionel Trilling. New York: Viking Press.
- Bradbury, Malcolm (1971). *The Social Context of Modern English Literature*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Cuddon, J. A (1998). *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*. London: Penguin.
- Flaubert, Gustav. (1963). "A Letter to George Sand" (16 December 1866). *Documents of Modern Literary Realism*. Ed. George J. Becker. Princeton: Princeton UP.
- Ford, Madox Ford (1990). *The Good Soldier: A Tale of Passion*. Oxford UP: Oxford.
- (1995). "On Impressionism." *The Good Soldier. The Norton Critical Edition*. Ed. Martin Stannard. New York: Norton.
- (1995). "Dedicatory Letter to Stella Ford" (1927). *The Good Soldier. The Norton Critical Edition*. Ed. Martin Stannard. New York: Norton.
- Hawthorn, Jeremy (1985). *Studying Modern Novel: An Introduction*. London: Arnold.
- Hoffmann, Charles (1967). *Ford Madox Ford*. Boston: Twayne.
- Hynes, Samuel (1961). "The Epistemology of The Good Soldier." *The Sewanee Review*, Vol. 69, No. 2, 1961, pp. 225-235. *JSTOR*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27540663>, 16-03-2021 19:17.
- Woolf, Virginia (1984). "Modern Fiction" (1925). *The Essays of Virginia Woolf Volume 4: 1925 to 1928*. London: The Hogarth Press. 157-165.
- Zola, Emile (1963). "The Experimental Novel." *Documents of Modern Literary Realism*. Ed. George J. Becker. Princeton: Princeton UP.

TÜRK BİLİMKURGU EDEBİYATI VE ARKETİPLER

DR. VELİ UĞUR



Günce Yayınları

Oktay Yivli

Öykü Nasıl Okunur

modern öykü ve yöntem



Günce Yayınları

MAKSUT YİĞİTBAŞ

Edebiyatın Ebemkuşağı

Halit Ziya Hikâyeciliğinde

Renklerin Dili

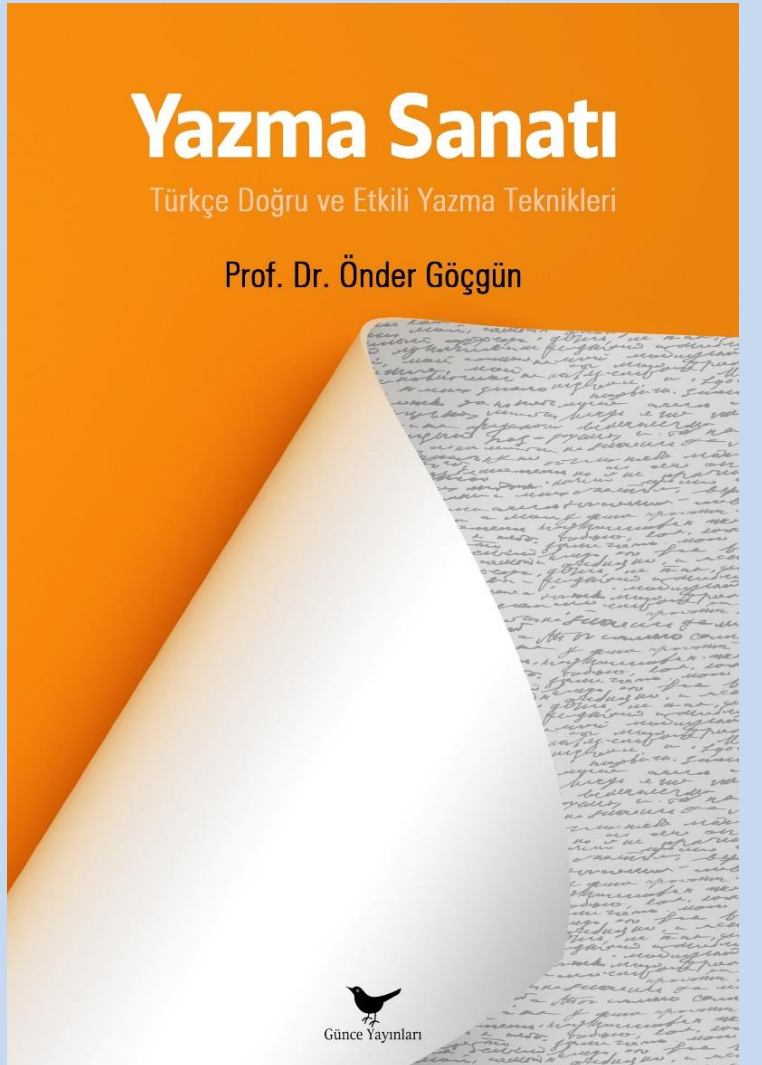


Günce Yayınları

Yazma Sanatı

Türkçe Doğru ve Etkili Yazma Teknikleri

Prof. Dr. Önder Göçgün



Günce Yayınları