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FORD MADOX FORD'S GOOD SOLDIER IN A MODERN WORLD

by

CONSTANCE HINDS

Under the Direction of Randy Malamud Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

Ford often wrote about virtuous gentlemen ruined by the modern society he saw developing around him. While Ford Madox Ford was writing *The Good Soldier*, there was a sense of displacement in England and the class system was starting to crumble. Edward Ashburnham, one of the two male protagonists in *The Good Soldier*, is described as a Chevalier Bayard and there are definitely some similarities between Ashburnham and Bayard. For instance, both men lived during periods of great societal change and both faithfully served their countries. However, the feudal lifestyle that was appropriate for Bayard in the fifteenth-century is unavailable to Ashburnham in the twentieth-century. In *The Good Soldier*, Ford used the old ideals of chivalry and courtly love codes to produce a character, Edward Ashburnham, who represents the loss of traditional values in a modern society.

INDEX WORDS: Ford Madox Ford, *The Good Soldier*, Chivalry, Courtly love, Modernism, Chevalier Bayard, Troubadours, Peire Vidal, *Flamenca*

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CONSTANCE HINDS

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Master of Arts

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Georgia State University

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2010

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I. INTRODUCTION

Although he was once called a "patient but extremely stupid donkey" by his father, Ford Madox Ford eventually wrote eighty-one books and over four hundred articles on a variety of subjects including a biography of his grandfather and a study of the Pre-Raphaelite movement (Moser 8). Each of Ford's novels is a variation on a central theme, "the problem of getting the modern world into focus, of acquiring historical perspective in a quickly changing world" (qtd. in Green 219).

Today, fans of Ford Madox Ford "probably think of him first as one of the creators of the modern novel" (Kermode xiv). Modernism is a term used to describe a "radical break with some of the traditional bases not only of Western art, but of Western culture in general" (Abrams 119). In England, there was a "general sense of displacement and fragmentation that came hand in hand with the onset of modernism: Victorian values were discarded, the class system began to crumble – and people began to cast around for new ideals" (Berberich 206). As a novel in the modernist style, *The Good Soldier* reflects modernism's "radical break" by examining the "increasing instability of the gentry system" in England and Edward Ashburnham's inability to adapt to societal changes (Hoffman 32).

Ford often wrote about virtuous gentlemen ruined by modern society. Some critics believe that *Parade's End* is his most convincing work about this subject. However, Ford also explored this theme in *The Good Soldier*. Robert Green, in his article "The 'Exploded Traditions' of Ford Madox Ford" suggests *The Good Soldier* and *Parade's End* are successful because Ford "found a way of expressing through them the tensions of his own life and times" (222).

Ford expressed this tension by using the old ideals of chivalry and courtly love codes to produce a character, Edward Ashburnham, who represents the loss of traditional values in a modern society. In his narrative, John Dowell describes Edward Ashburnham as a "splendid fellow." Despite Ashburnham's affair with Dowell's wife, Dowell considers Edward a fine soldier, kind, upright, honest and fair dealing. By creating a discrepancy between Dowell's description of Edward as a Lohengrin or Chevalier Bayard and Ashburnham's actions, Ford Madox Ford produced a character who represents the loss of traditional values in a modern society. Ford was quite familiar with the loss of traditional values. Just as Edward Ashburnham wanted to live the life of a feudal lord, Ford dreamed of the traditional life of an upper class British landowner. Both Edward and Ford wanted to serve their country and help the people around them.

II. FORD MADOX FORD

Like many of his contemporary writers, Ford was part of an immigrant family. His father, Dr. Franz Hüffer (later Francis Hueffer), left Germany in 1869 and settled in England where he married Catherine Madox Brown, the daughter of Pre-Raphaelite painter Ford Madox Brown and sister-in-law to William Michael and Dante Gabriel Rossetti. The new couple managed to produce two sons and one daughter. Named Ford Hermann Hueffer at birth, Ford was the elder of the two sons. However, as a child, Ford always felt that Oliver, his younger brother, was their parents' favorite child. In fact, one of Ford's early childhood memories concerns being forced to give Oliver his pet rabbit after Oliver stepped on and killed his own rabbit (Goldring 23). This early feeling of inadequacy when compared to his more attractive younger brother may be one source of Ford's sensitivity and insecurity as an adult. According to Mizener, "Ford was extraordinarily thin-skinned and easily hurt" (6).

Another source of Ford's insecurity came from Dr. Hueffer's attitude about the great artists of the nineteenth century. Ford's father "had a great respect for the attainments of the distinguished" and told Ford that if he couldn't attain the artistic heights of a Browning or Carlyle, that he "just as well not cumber the earth" (Goldring 24). His father's words must have made an impression on Ford because his "attitude towards the great Victorians was always ambivalent, for, although they discomforted him, he never lost an acute sense that it was to the nineteenth century that he truly belonged" (Green 219).

In 1889, Ford's father died and the family moved from Surrey to London to live with Ford's maternal grandfather. Ford greatly admired and loved his grandfather and remembered the years in his grandfather's home as full of "warmth and lightness and safety" (qtd. in Mizener 7). However, despite the love in his grandfather's house, Ford also learned the Pre-Raphaelite "conviction that to speak to any one who made money by commercial pursuits was almost not to speak to a man at all" (qtd. in Mizener 7). This was a common belief among the artists of the time period. In fact, when Ford considered going into civil service, his grandfather's response was "God damn and blast my soul! . . . I will turn you straight out of my house if you go in for any kind of commercial life" (qtd. in Mizener 8).

Even though Ford was born in England, as the son of a European immigrant and a cousin of the worldly Rossetti family Ford received a cosmopolitan upbringing that "ensured that he was raised a European rather than an Englishman" (Green 224). While Ford's contemporaries – James, Conrad, Eliot, and Joyce – could look to their homelands for "traditions with which to counter the social erosion they perceived in England," Ford didn't have this luxury (Green 224). Ford disliked Germany, his ancestral homeland, and felt the country offered an even more advanced example of dissolution than England.

Without a solid foundation of social traditions, Ford set out to create his own mythical world. While his myth-making was often inconsistent, "its central element lay in Ford's desire to be viewed as a member of the English establishment, the product of public-school and university" (Green 225). In fact, Ford gave Edward Ashburnham, one of the two, male protagonists in *The Good Soldier*, exactly the sort of background that Ford desired for himself: a country estate, membership among the landed gentry, a well known family, a chance to serve his country and his people, and more than adequate financial resources. A life that involved serving his country and taking care of his tenants was "the finest idea of a life Ford could conceive, sentimental not simply in the sense that it was impossibly idealistic but also in the sense that it was based on the finest sentiments" (Mizener xiv).

Ford expressed his desire to live the life of a country gentleman in a magazine article written just a year before the publication of *The Good Soldier*. Ford's words eerily reflect the desires of his well-known, fictional character, Ashburnham:

> I am a very unfortunate man. For I came into, and took very seriously, English public-school life at a time when English public-school spirit – in many ways the finest product of a civilization – was already on the wane. I took its public traditions with extraordinary seriousness – the traditions of responsibilities, duties, privileges, and no right . . . . It is still engrained in my bones – the idea that I must give unceasingly all that I have to the world, and that in return some day, with luck, some one will spoil me a little . . . That luck has not much come my way yet. (qtd. in Green 225)

Ford wanted to be a gentleman from an older era and, according to Stella Bowen, one of the many women in Ford's life, "when Ford wanted anything, he filled the sky with an immense

ache that had the awful simplicity of a child's grief" (qtd. in Mizener xiv). While Ford dreamed of life as a "Tory gentleman and gifted poet," the practical side of his divided nature "was the skeptical observer who was reduced to hopeless inaction by his common-sense recognition" that the life he wanted was hopelessly outdated and out of reach (Mizener xv).

Considering the myriad challenges and hardships of his life, it is no wonder that Ford resorted to creating a life out of fantasy and this fantasy overlapped into his work. Green notes that the "centrality of self in all Ford's work, irrespective of subject matter – that is our inability ever quite to forget the presence of Ford the individual – marks him off from Conrad or James" (219). This is particularly true in *The Good Soldier* where Edward's life reflects the events of Ford's own life and the life Ford wanted. Like Edward Ashburnham, Ford's life consisted of drifting from one romantic liaison to another and from one home to the next.

One of these moves to a new home came about because of Ford's marriage. In 1894, the year following the death of his beloved grandfather, Ford eloped with his classmate Elsie Martindale. The young couple temporarily settled in Kent and produced two daughters, Christina and Katherine. In 1901, Elsie's father took pity on the young family and bought them a home in Winchelsea. The Bungalow was a much nicer residence and the young family enjoyed settling into their new home. Unfortunately, instead of appreciating his father-in-law's generosity, Ford started conducting an affair with his sister-in-law, Mary Martindale.

His relationship with Mary wasn't Ford's last marital transgression. In 1909, Ford started a long-term romantic bond with Violet Hunt, a well-known author eleven years his senior and infected with venereal disease. During this liaison, Ford befriended Gertrud Schlabowsky, a German girl Ford biographer, Alan Judd, speculates was a prostitute. By this time Ford was living separately from his family and Ford allowed Gertrud to live in his home, called her his

secretary, and introduced her to his social circle. Violet finally got rid of Gertrud by paying her passage to New South Wales.

While indulging in these two liaisons, Ford was still married to Elsie. After Elsie refused to grant Ford a divorce, he and Violet moved to Germany where Ford intended to claim German citizenship and obtain a German divorce. While Ford never managed to give up his English citizenship and become officially German, he and Violet did participate in a religious ceremony while in Germany that Violet described as their marriage. "The power of mutual illusion must have been very great since it enabled them to overlook Ford's never having appeared before a divorce court, his having no evidence of German nationality and the absence of a marriage certificate" (Judd 204). Since Ford was still married to Elsie Martindale, if the pair did participate in a marriage ceremony, then Ford was officially a bigamist. After Ford and Violet returned to England, Violet started using Ford's last name and Elsie threatened to sue several newspapers for referring to Violet as Mrs. Hueffer. In fact, the *Daily Mirror* had to print an apology and retraction and the courts forced the *Throne* to pay Elsie £300 in restitution, "which put the already shaky *Throne* out of business" (Judd 207).

Elsie continued to insist she was the true Mrs. Hueffer for years after Ford legally changed his name and continued to refuse to grant Ford a divorce. While Elsie wasn't a Catholic, her daughters were and she claimed she didn't want to hurt them by allowing Ford to dissolve their marriage. In addition, Ford's Catholic relations convinced her that a divorce wasn't in the best interest of her two girls. "It is typical of much in Ford's life that he, a Catholic who wanted to divorce and re-marry, was prevented by his Anglican wife who was widely believed to oppose it because she was Catholic" (Judd 208).

Even after the affair with Violet ended, Ford and Elsie didn't repair their relationship and live as man and wife. Instead, Ford started a new liaison with Stella Bowen, an Australian born painter. After his death, Stella wrote that Ford "revealed himself as a lonely and very tired person who wanted to dig potatoes and raise pigs and never write another book. Wanted to start a new home. Wanted a child" (qtd. in Judd 315). With Stella, Ford fulfilled most of these wants. The two enjoyed a simple life on a farm in Sussex until they moved to Paris and the union eventually produced a daughter, Esther Julia. However, despite his good fortune in finding Stella and starting a new family, Ford found it difficult to remain faithful. While still involved with Stella, Ford had an affair with Jean Rhys, a British writer. Stella and Ford eventually separated and in 1930 Ford met Janice Biala, a painter. Janice was Ford's last affair of the heart and she was with him when he died.

It is clear that Ford borrowed from his own romantic experiences when he created Edward Ashburnham and *The Good Soldier*. Ford and Edward both conduct multiple love affairs while still married to wives who do not fulfill their needs. In *The Good Soldier*, when Edward develops an interest in Maisie Maidan, while still writing to Mrs. Basil, he fears that he is "inconstant" (Ford 114). "No doubt the Edward Ashburnham in Ford occasionally suspected the same thing; no doubt the Dowell in him sometimes made his voice heard. But most of the time Ford, like Edward, felt that in even his most casual affairs he was exploring the horizon, was driven by his passion to find an ultimately satisfying woman" (Mizener 178).

The search for the "ultimately satisfying woman" isn't the only similarity between the writer and the character. A Ford biographer, Arthur Mizener, describes Ford as "unreasonably generous" and writes that Ford "loved generous gestures as much as Edward Ashburnham" (159). Their generous gestures caused trouble for both men. Ford didn't hesitate to lend money

to any writer who needed help, including Joseph Conrad, and was often broke as a result. Edward could afford to be generous, but often created marital discord with his gifts. In addition, both men suffered psychological problems as a result of their romantic liaisons. While suffering from the public scandal and humiliation caused by his relationship with Violet Hunt, Ford experienced a bout of mental illness that lasted for nearly three years and forced him to consider suicide. After losing Nancy, Edward experiences a similar state of despair and does commit suicide. Perhaps Edward's demise allowed Ford to experience the results of such a radical act without actually committing suicide.

Ford's relationship with Violet was definitely an uneasy one. In addition to his inability to divorce Elsie and make an honest woman of Violet, Ford had continual financial problems. Both of these problems put a strain on their relationship and World War I broke out during a rough point in their affair. Ford believed either Violet or some of her friends claimed to the British police that he was a German agent. According to Ford's biographer, Douglas Goldring, "the rumour current at the time was that Ford had been interrogated on the golf course, in the presence of his friends, by a couple of detectives" (175). Though the two continued their relationship, Ford's belief that Violet was behind this public embarrassment was the beginning of the end of their romantic union.

Just before he left to fight in the war, Ford changed his name to Ford Madox Hueffer. After the war, Ford changed his name one more time from Ford Madox Hueffer to the non-German sounding Ford Madox Ford. It is possible that the golf course incident caused Ford to make this drastic change to his name. However, it is equally possible that Ford felt closer to his grandfather, Ford Madox Brown, than to his father and so changed his name to honor his grandfather. Or the new name may have played into Ford's fantasy world. Ford Madox Ford

was more likely to belong to the English landed gentry than Ford Hermann Hueffer. However, according to a letter he wrote to his friend Masterman, he changed his name to Ford because there was "no longer any reason to continue to put up with the inconvenience that a Teutonic patronymic causes in the rather humble sphere of life that I now adorn" (qtd. in Judd 324). His humble sphere consisted of living in a laborer's cottage with Stella Bowen, living off the fruits of his garden, and trying to raise pigs.

III. The Good Soldier

The working title for Ford's manuscript was *The Saddest Story*. In his Dedicatory Letter to Stella Ford (Bowen), which was included in a later edition of *The Good Soldier*, Ford related the story behind the name change:

> This book was originally called by me *The Saddest Story* but since it did not appear till the darkest days of the war were upon us, Mr. Lane importuned me with letters and telegrams – I was by that time engaged in other pursuits! – to change the title which he said would at that date render the book unsaleable. One day, when I was on parade, I received a final wire of appeal from Mr. Lane, and the telegraph being reply-paid I seized the reply-form and wrote in hasty irony: "Dear Lane, Why not The Good Soldier?". . . To my horror six months later the book appeared under that title. (5)

Ford sat down to write the novel on this fortieth birthday. It was his first attempt to really challenge himself through his writing and *The Good Soldier* was the result of his efforts. "His ambition was to do for the English novel what, in *Fort Comme La Mort*, Maupassant had done for the French" (qtd. in Goldring 174).

Published in 1915, while Ford was still using his birth name of Hueffer, *The Good Soldier: A Tale of Passion* is set mainly in Europe during the years just before the Great War. At first, the reviews of the book were mixed. One critic applauded the novel's "extreme beauty and wisdom," while another found it "of more use to the pathologist than to the decent British reader in search of an account of the joys and sorrows of normal human life" (Stannard ix). Still other critics found that the book had a "sordid theme" (qtd. in Mizener 278). However, one critic, Rebecca West, "recognized the book's quality" (Mizener 278). "It was perhaps the unevenness of Ford's private life" that affected the critic's reception of his work (Green 217). However, in the years since Ford's death, "critical opinion has shifted radically to establish the book not only as Ford's masterpiece but also as a masterpiece of modernism" (Stannard ix). Green suggests "at the heart of Ford's work is a struggle between retrospective idealism and the gritty unsympathetic materialism he saw around him" (223). He goes on to say *The Good Soldier* "succeeds because the embattled mental conditions there presented were found to epitomize certain sectional or national neuroses of the time. It was, in other words, not an accident that *The Good Soldier* coincided with a period of acute pre-war crisis for a particular class" (227).

Modern critics have called the book a "comedy of humour," a "tragedy," and a "comi-tragedy." In a letter to his publisher, Ford described *The Good Soldier* "as a serious analysis of the polygamous desires that underlie all men" (qtd. in Stannard x-xi)). However, while working on the manuscript, Ford said his goal was "to record my own time, my own world, as I see it," to aim at a style "so unobtrusive and so quiet . . . that the reader shall not know he is reading, and be conscious only that he is living in a book" (qtd. in Stannard). Ford's later comment about polygamy may have come from the conflicts in his personal life. Martin Stannard believes

Ford's masterpiece "grew out of a period of deep depression resulting in part from a scandal which had ruined his social reputation" (xii). Stannard is referring to Ford's estrangement from his wife Elsie Martindale and Violet Hunt's use of Ford's surname.

A version of Hunt and Ford's controversial relationship is present in the novel. The two traveled as a "married" couple to Nauheim and "it was during this visit that Ford collected the impressions of the place he used to such good effect in *The Good Soldier*" (Mizener 201). The two also visited Marburg and the castle to see Luther's Protest. It was this visit "out of which Ford was to make the climactic scene of *The Good Soldier*, when Florence lectures on the glories of the Protest with her hand on Edward Ashburnham's arm and her eyes on his" (Mizener 203).

Ford called his novel "my great auk's egg" and was clearly proud of his work. In his letter to Stella, he mentioned that while translating the book into French, he was forced to really pay close attention to the details of the writing and "was astounded at the work I must have put into the construction of the book, at the intricate tangle of references and cross-references" (5). Ford also took this opportunity to tell Stella "that the story was very familiar to him ('the story is a true story . . . I had it from Edward Ashburnham himself')" (Mizener 253). However, while *The Good Soldier* may be based on a true story, it is also possible that Nancy Rufford is at least partially based on Violet's niece Rosamond. While Violet and Ford were together, Rosamond developed an intense crush on Ford. While there isn't any evidence that anything improper occurred between the two, Rosamond's mother did find it necessary to keep Ford and the girl apart by refusing to let her visit Violet.

While Ford's life was complicated, *The Good Soldier* is about the even more complicated lives, loves, and marriages of John and Florence Dowell and Edward and Leonora Ashburnham, a group Dowell refers to as "our little four-square coterie" (Ford 11). According to a timeline

developed by Vincent Cheng, the two couples first meet in Nauheim, Germany in 1904 where Florence and Edward both receive care for their "weak hearts." They continue their acquaintance as they travel around the elegant spas and cities of Europe. Dowell, a wealthy American, narrates the story that revolves around Edward's inability to remain faithful to one woman and his refusal to give up his idealized dream of living as a feudal lord even though he lives in the twentieth century. During the course of the story, Edward is in turn attracted to a Duke's mistress, Mrs. Basil, Maisie Maiden, Florence Dowell, and Nancy Rufford. Like his creator, Edward has liaisons with all of these women while still married to Leonora. Despite the machinations of Leonora, the girl's guardian, convent-raised Nancy Rufford manages to retain her chastity, although her attachment to Ashburnham is so strong that, upon hearing of his suicide, she goes mad. At the novel's end, Dowell buys the Ashburnham family estate and manor house where he lives a solitary existence and cares for the terminally insane Nancy. This situation repeats the role he played as Florence's husband. Meanwhile, Leonora enjoys matrimony and motherhood elsewhere in the county.

Charles Hoffman, in his book, *Ford Madox Ford, Updated Edition*, describes the two couples in this way:

> The Ashburnhams (and the Dowells) are "what in England it is the custom to call quite good people." This categorization is a recurring statement throughout the novel and is essential to our understanding of the relationship of the microcosm of the novel's affair to the macrocosm of the world at large. With 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 represent the best that civilization has to offer. Thus, the rottenness at the

> core of their lives is the rottenness of Anglo-American civilization, and the end of that four-square coterie is the end of that civilization itself. (56)

This "rottenness" relates back to the "displacement and fragmentation that came hand in hand with the onset of modernism." If the two couples represent the best of English and American civilization, and if their behavior reflects the "new ideals," then the moral core of their civilization must be dead.

Dowell describes Edward as a "simple soul" (Ford 98). The world that Edward Ashburnham wants to inhabit – a world where the lord of the manor takes care of his dependents and the dependents trust and work hard for their lord – is quickly disappearing. Edward not only lacks the feudal life he wants, he is also missing the trusting and co-operative wife he needs to support his view of the world. And lacking these two elements, Edward is bound to destroy himself and those around him.

IV. Edward Ashburnham

Stella Bowen, who lived with Ford for many years, described him as "completely unmercenary and just as completely unable to plan or manage what money he had" (qtd. in Goldring 212). The financially immature author created a character who was equally unable to manage his finances. In his 1967 article, Barry Bort calls Edward's generous impulses both "ludicrous" and "comic" (197), while Mary Cohen feels that "Ford complicates our response to Edward by opposing his good intentions with his irresponsible generosity" (288). Edward worries Leonora because he is generous to the point of endangering their income and estate:

> But his really trying liabilities were mostly in the nature of generosities proper to his station. He was, according to Leonora, always remitting his tenants' rents and giving the tenants to understand that the reduction would be permanent; he was

> always redeeming drunkards who came before his magisterial bench; he was always trying to put prostitutes into respectable places – and he was a perfect maniac about children. . . . All these things, and the continuance of them, seemed to him to be his duty – along with impossible subscriptions to hospitals and boy scouts and to provide prizes at cattle shows and antivivisection societies. (Ford 46)

Edward Ashburnham is very conscious of his responsibility to his dependents. As a feudal gentleman, he feels it is his duty to help those who are less fortunate. He insists, "salvation can only be found in true love and the feudal system" (Ford 107). Unfortunately, his true love is his ward and therefore out of bounds, and the feudal age is over. As Bort writes, "Ashburnham, in the permissive world of the eighteenth century, blessed with a secure estate and an understanding wife, would have made a success of his life" (195).

Ashburnham wants to follow the chivalric codes of a bygone era. The three roles available to a medieval gentleman were those of good soldier, lord, and lover. While Edward enjoys the role of soldier, his performance is indifferent. The army doesn't offer the "man-to-man devotion of chivalric comrades" that Edward is looking for (Cohen 288). Of course, Edward is less than honorable when he has an affair with a fellow officer's wife. When the husband blackmails him instead of openly confronting Edward, things become even more sordid.

In order to be lord of the manor, the lord requires an estate. In a sense, Leonora emasculates Edward by taking away the estate that provides his self-image as a feudal lord. Leonora and her attorney become the trustees of all Edward's property "and there was an end of Edward as the good landlord and father of his people. He went out" (Ford 111). The only role left to Edward is that of lover. It is important to Edward to have the society and support of a

good woman. Since Leonora is unable to support his ideals, he finds several other women in their circle "who were capable of agreeing with this handsome and fine fellow that the duties of a feudal gentleman were feudal" (Ford 105). As Cohen writes, "he was driven by the mad passion to find an ultimately satisfying woman" (291). But Edward isn't a successful lover any more than he was a successful soldier. Just as Ford felt guilt over his inconstancy, Edward feels guilt over his infidelities. Florence pressures him to leave Leonora to the point that he considers bigamy and the Duke's mistress is interested only in money. Nancy, the one woman who may have fulfilled his needs, is denied him.

V. Modern Marriage

According to Davida Pines, "in modernism marriage is represented as inherently flawed or incomplete" and that is the way Ford chose to portray the Ashburnham marriage (73). In a way, Leonora is the embodiment of the modern age. While Edward's traditions are "entirely collective," Leonora is a "sheer individualist." Edward's theory – the "feudal theory of an overlord doing his best by his dependents, the dependents meanwhile doing their best for the overlord – this theory is entirely foreign to Leonora's nature" (Ford 98). Because Edward sentimentally wants to remain in the past, Leonora keeps trying to get him to see the reality of the modern world. This, along with his affairs, creates a constant tension in the marriage. Leonora feels that she always has to watch Edward, both financially and romantically. She couldn't even let him go off to Africa – out of sight of her ever-watchful eyes. When Edward almost ruins them financially, it is Leonora, not Edward, who in a show of female empowerment, takes over the management of the estate and only allows Edward five hundred pounds a year for his expenses. In a move that mirrors the change from Victorian to Modern, Leonora insists that the tenants take care of themselves instead of relying on Edward.

The Ashburnham marriage wasn't conceived as a modern union. In a very old fashioned way, it was entirely arranged by their parents. Colonel Powys, Leonora's father, was in financial trouble and desperate to start marrying off his seven daughters. Following a medieval tradition, the Powys parents arranged to trade their daughter like chattel. Mrs. Ashburnham didn't need money, but she did want a virtuous wife for her beloved son. And so, the parents arranged the marriage and sent the young couple out into the modern world. It is possible to look at this arranged marriage as the social mores of an older era trying to survive in the modern age. Just as the old fashioned marriage couldn't survive, people and social mores have to adapt in order to survive modern civilization.

Some scholars believe that the Ashburnham marriage is a reflection of Ford's own marriage. Ford and Edward certainly viewed women and marriage in the same way. Ford, "like all men of his romantic temper, he was highly susceptible to women, especially to the promise of unknown women. To this kind of appeal [Ford] was most susceptible when he was unhappy. He found the excitement of sexual exploration irresistible; he found the sympathy of an attractive woman necessary to the dramatization of himself as the unjustly suffering man" (Mizener 177). Like Ashburnham, Ford was constantly sure that the last woman who had attracted him was the ideal woman who would fulfill his need for a sympathetic audience.

Just as Ford and Edward share similar views about marriage, their wives share the same attitude about marriage and husbands. Both women hope their errant husbands will return to them. Elsie refused to divorce Ford because of the effect it would have on her Catholic children and even went to court to obtain a restitution of conjugal rights. Leonora stays with Edward through all of his affairs and continues to hope for his love. As a devout Catholic, Leonora is determined to show "an unfaithful world" that a Catholic woman can retain "the fidelity of her

husband" (Ford 122). While Elsie didn't want to hurt her Catholic children, Leonora is afraid to have the children she desperately wants because Ashburnham refuses to raise any sons in the Catholic Church. There are also some similarities between Florence and Violet, the women with whom Ashburnham and Ford indulged in long-term affairs. Both women were intent on appropriating another woman's husband and refused to let go. According to Mizener, Ford was afraid that people would recognize Florence as Violet. Ford even changed and deleted some passages to keep this from happening. However, "there is really no concealing the fact that Florence is based on Violet" (253). By the time Ford wrote *The Good Soldier*, his relationship with Violet was so strained that "Florence's inhuman, Vassarish learning and her complacent, amoral moralizing are based on Ford's vision of Violet" (Mizener 253). Just as Florence couldn't qualify for the ennobling side of the courtly love code, Violet didn't possess the necessary chaste virtues to ennoble Ford. Both the Ford and Ashburnham marriages were "inherently flawed or incomplete" (Pines 73).

VI. Chivalry and Courtly Love Codes

In Part III of *The Good Soldier*, a young Ashburnham is described as passing hours "reading one of Scott's novels or the *Chronicles of Froissart*" (Ford 93). Froissart wrote extensively about the 100 years War, but he also wrote about 14th century chivalry in France, England, and Spain. Medieval chivalry and courtly love are important themes in *The Good Soldier* and these concepts provide insight into the character of Edward Ashburnham.

The idea of courtly love, also known as *Amour Honestus, Fin Amor*, and *Amour Courtois*, dates back to the ducal and princely courts of medieval Europe. The idea particularly flourished in eleventh-century southern France. According to the lore of courtly love, a man and his ladylove engaged in a relationship that was as morally elevating as it was illicit. Courtly love

was ennobling and involved both erotic desire and spiritual attainment. The man was expected to serve and honor the lady of his affections and the lady must be saintly and virtuous. The idea of knightly chivalry developed during feudal times. A chivalrous knight was expected to behave gallantly and with honor – to be a good soldier, lord, and lover.

The earliest orders of chivalry, the Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem and the Order of the Poor Knights of Christ and the Temple of Solomon, developed during the Crusades when the knights protected pilgrims to the Holy Land. While protecting pilgrims and fighting the infidels, French knights were exposed to the Arab concepts of love. In Europe, this eventually evolved into the concept of courtly love. In addition to Arab influences, the Roman poet Ovid and his poem, *Ars Amatoria*, influenced this view of love. Some scholars believe that Cicero's *De Amicitia* influenced Heloise and her view of her relationship with Abelard as a "selfless gift of a loving friendship" (Swabey 81).

Through her marriages, Eleanor of Aquitaine, the granddaughter of a troubadour, was instrumental in spreading the idea of courtly love to the courts of Louis VII of France and Henry II of England. The courtly lover existed to serve his lady and ultimately saw himself as serving the all-powerful god of love and worshipping his lady-saint. His love was invariably adulterous, marriage at that time being usually the result of business interests or the seal of a power alliance. During the middle ages, "women were treated like chattels, objects to be possessed, rather than individuals in their own right" (Swabey 81). Love wasn't part of the marriage contract. Scholars disagree about whether or not adulterous relationships were really condoned by medieval society, but the idea of allowing adulterous relationships was a radical departure from the teachings of the church.

> If courtly love is interpreted as celebrating adulterous relationships, then it was revolutionary and completely incompatible with Christianity and the feudal ethic. A vassal's oath of loyalty and obedience to his overlord meant that an adulterous relationship with his lord's wife would be treason as well as a sin, and would exile the vassal from the society of his fellow men. If, however, it is seen as an expression of service, selfless devotion, and submission to an unobtainable lady, who in reality was generally powerless and considered inferior to men, then it was equally innovative and a complete reversal of accepted contemporary practice. (Swabey 81)

It is revealing to compare the practice of courtly love to the behavior of Edward Ashburnham after he married Leonora. The young couple become engaged after Edward and his parents visit the Powys' home. This is their first meeting and the visit isn't long enough for the two young people to really talk and get acquainted. Despite Mrs. Ashburnham's insistence that "nothing but a love-match was to be thought of in her Edward's case," the couple's union is virtually an arranged marriage. Edward isn't enthusiastic about the idea of marriage, but after meeting the practically cloistered Powys' girls, Mrs. Ashburnham "had with her boy one of those conversations that English mothers have with English sons" (Ford 94). As a result of this conversation, the next morning Colonel Ashburnham asks Colonel Powys for the hand of Leonora for his son, Edward. Therefore, just as in the Middle Ages, the couple is brought together for family reasons rather than true affection.

Edward's greatest ambition is to serve. He served his country in the military, he served his workers on the estate, and he wants to serve his ladylove. However, Leonora doesn't really need or want Edward to serve her. She is fully capable of running their home, the estate, and

taking care of their finances. When Edward wants to help and serve his tenants, Leonora protests about the cost and loss of income "and Edward begins to perceive a hardness and determination in his wife's character" (Ford 98). While Edward "imagines that no man can satisfactorily accomplish his life's work without the loyal and whole-hearted co-operation of the woman he lives with," Leonora feels that many of Edward's plans were foolish and she starts "worrying about his managing of the estates" (Ford 98). As if this isn't enough strain on the marriage, Dowell notes that Leonora isn't mournful and what Edward really needs to make him happy is "to comfort somebody who would be darkly and mysteriously mournful" (Ford 95).

So, like the knights of old, Edward goes looking for a woman to idolize and serve. When he meets a servant girl crying on a train, "he immediately felt that he had got to do something to comfort her" (Ford 101). And when Maisie Maiden accompanies the Ashburnhams on their ocean voyage, Edward is "radiantly happy" when he is able to serve Maisie by bringing cups of bouillon to where she sits on the deck (Ford 117).

About *The Good Soldier* and courtly love codes, James Trammell Cox writes:

> The central concept of ennoblement through love, with its correlative exclusion of such ennoblement from the marriage relationship informs almost the entire story, serving both to explain and to render pathetically comic Edward's inability to love his wife, despite his awareness of her good qualities and achievements. And Edward is indeed a devotee to the doctrine of ennoblement through love: "He would say how much the society of a good woman could do towards redeeming you" (25). But of course the "good" woman cannot be his wife. For Leonora as "a patient medieval virgin . . . [who] had been taught all her life that the first duty

> of a woman is to obey," was his servant and could not therefore provide this ennoblement (140). (386)

To qualify for courtly love, the knight must serve his lady. While Leonora does not obey Edward, she also doesn't allow him to serve her. When he wants to make a grand gesture and honor Leonora by building a Catholic chapel on the estate, she is far too practical and worried about money to agree to the expenditure. Leonora can't see past the monetary cost to the true value of his gesture and she denies him the ennoblement he is seeking. Instead, Leonora takes over the management of his estates and only allows Edward a small allowance.

In his novel, Ford never managed to master the art of "authorial withdrawal" and Ford's own life is very evident in the life of Edward Ashburnham (Green 220). Like Ford, Edward is unsuccessful in finding happiness through marriage and conducts numerous affairs while married in an attempt to find that elusive ennoblement promised by the courtly love codes. Both men would have been happier in an earlier century. Ashburnham longed to live the life of a feudal lord and Ford saw himself as the "sole survivor of a race now extinct, the only Englishman faithful to the exploded traditions of an earlier age" (Green 226). After all, Ford "never lost an acute sense that it was to the nineteenth century that he truly belonged" (Green 219).

VII. Troubadours

While Ford was passionate about the "traditions of an earlier age," Ford's father, Francis Hueffer, was passionate about Provence. Dr. Hueffer wrote and published a book about Provençal poets and culture in 1878. Published under the title, *The Troubadours: A History of Provençal Life and Literature in the Middle Ages*, the book relates the stories of the most famous of the troubadours as well as the verse novel, *Flamenca*. Even though his father wrote many books about music, Ford most admired this book about Provençal troubadours and considered it

"the first continuous and at all adequate account in the English language" of that subject (qtd. in Stang 13). Hueffer was "elected a member of the Felibrige, the Provence Academy for the promulgation of the langue d' oc," for his efforts (Cox 397). Ford wasn't alone in his praise. According to Ford biographer, Sondra Stang, Hueffer's book reawakened interest in the troubadours and many scholars, including Ezra Pound, started publishing studies about these early poets. Despite the renewed interest, Ford considered his father "the greatest authority upon the troubadours and the Romance Languages" (qtd. in Stang 14).

Hueffer's German family originally came from South Germany. Ford once pointed out "there is no race barrier and no barrier of creed between the peoples of South Germany and the peoples of France. Racially and historically these people are Franks, and it is only for a century or so that they have been united with Germany or represented by Prussia" (qtd. in Goldring 178). This viewpoint may be why both Ford and his father felt a special bond with Provence and why Hueffer chose to write about the troubadours of the area.

Troubadours were the early poets of Europe and they flourished from the 11th to the late 13th century. According to Thomas G. Bergin, the language of the troubadours is a descendent of Latin and is, "called variously either Old Provençal or – with more technical accuracy – Occitanian, may be described as a literary language based on the speech of the provinces in the southwest of mediaeval France" (xix). Although Hueffer concentrated on Provençal troubadours, these traveling poets were also found in northern Spain and northern Italy. However, Occitanian was still the accepted language of the non-French troubadours from other parts of Europe. The troubadour's freedom of speech gave them great social and political influence at court and their poetry was known for creating an aura of cultivation around the ladies of the court. The original poems were often set to existing melodies, but many

troubadours were also accomplished musicians and wrote the music that accompanied their poetry. Some troubadours were accomplished enough to sing the songs or poetry they composed, but others "entrusted the singing to their jongleurs" (Bergin xxiv). During this time period, there were some rudimentary musical instruments available to help a troubadour with his music. These instruments included early forms of the violin and lute and an implement similar to an Irish harp. These early poets were careful to claim their original work and manuscripts with about 250 melodies still exist today (Bergin xxiv).

The subject of the troubadour's poetry was often chivalry and courtly love, which are important themes in *The Good Soldier*. It isn't surprising that Ford decided to include references to a troubadour, Peire Vidal, in his novel because "the *tenso* songs of the troubadours sometimes addressed dilemmas in relationships and were occasionally sung by a man and a woman or two women with a third giving the final verdict" (Swabey 71). In 1978, George Economou wrote that courtly love is "the great controversial aspect of the poetry, [it] continues to provide matter for debate – over its origins, over its exact definition, over whether or not *amour courtois* ever existed" (xiv). However, Ford was obviously intrigued by the concept and sent his protagonist, on a lifelong search for a love he could protect and serve, a love that would fulfill and ennoble him.

In his 1883 book, *Italian and Other Studies*, Hueffer defines a troubadour as:

> A representative of art, or if the reader prefers it, artificiality, in its strictest and most highly developed sense. The metres invented and used with consummate skill by the poets of medieval Provence remain a marvel of symmetry and technical perfection in the history of literature, unequalled by the poets of other nations. (qtd. in Stang 14)

According to Stang, his father's statement about the troubadours of Provence defined what Ford "would try to achieve in the novel. Ford's real (and perhaps his only) ambition was to write the kind of novel a troubadour poet might have written, in which the pleasure to be derived from the writing lay in the most refined perception of the uses of pattern" (Stang 14). Ford spent a lot of time in Provence and, as he recorded in his personal memoirs, felt that Provence inspired his writing: "If I write a sentence [in London] it comes out as backboneless as a water hose . . . When I get back to Provence . . . I shall write little crisp sentences like silver fish jumping out of streams" (qtd. in Stang 64). For Ford, Provence was an example of what civilization should be and the embodiment of "an idea of perfection in art and in life" (Stang 64). The quiet, dreamy, devoted to art life of Provence was far away from the "monolithic, technological, militaristic world Ford was contemplating in the 1930s" (Stang 65).

Part of Ford's preference for a simpler time involved the "conventions of courtly love tradition." In fact, the full title of Ford's novel, *The Good Soldier: A Tale of Passion*, suggests a "fictional exploration of romantic love" (Cox 383). Like any good title, *The Good Soldier: A Tale of Passion* "points to the heart of the matter, which is romantic love, as it has evolved from the traditions established in the Provençal Courts of Love" (Cox 383-384).

VIII. Flamenca

Mary Cohen agrees with Cox's viewpoint that the story of *The Good Soldier* is influenced by the tradition of courtly love. According to Cohen, "Critics have recognized the importance of both the chivalric and courtly love codes to *The Good Soldier*, yet the relevance of a thirteenth-century Provençal romance, outlined in Ford's father's study of Provençal poets [troubadours], seems to have escaped the attention of Ford scholars" (284). The name of this

romantic verse novel is *Flamenca*. According to Hueffer, *Flamenca* is an artistic epic written in octosyllabic couplets (15). In her paper, "*The Good Soldier*: Outworn Codes," Cohen compares *The Good Soldier* to the earlier verse novel, *Flamenca*, and notes:

> By holding *The Good Soldier* up to the earlier story one can see the perversion o chivalric and courtly love codes in contemporary English society. Thus, Ford was able to expose the moral dissolution taking place in English life on the eve of World War I. (284)

As Cohen writes, there are definitely some similarities between the poem reviewed by Ford's father and Ford's own novel. Flamenca's husband, Archambaud of Bourbon, is so jealous of his beautiful wife that he keeps her locked in her room. Hearing of her plight, William Nevers comes to her rescue. Of course, William and Flamenca fall in love and manage, through creative trickery, to consummate their love despite her husband. In *The Good Soldier*, Florence also tricks her husband to indulge in affairs with Jimmy and Ashburnham. In both the earlier verse novel and *The Good Soldier*, feigned illness is used to fool the unknowing husbands. In *Flamenca*, Archambaud uses an axe to guard her door against intruders while Flamenca and William enjoy their mutual love. Ford modified this part of the story in *The Good Soldier*; Florence merely locks her bedroom door and claims a weak heart to keep Dowell away while she spends her nights with Jimmy. While there isn't any question of intruders, Dowell is provided with an axe to break down her door in case of fire.

Even though she is married, Flamenca and William are not chastised for their relationship because *Flamenca* reflects the courtly love code, a "medieval outlook which did in fact condone an adulterous relationship between a man and a woman in love" (Cohen 285). And while Flamenca is treated unfairly by her husband, Florence treats her husband unfairly. As Cohen

notes, "Ford seems purposely to have altered details in his story to taint the innocence of his characters and their view of the world" (Cohen 285). In *The Good Soldier*, the various affairs of both Florence and Edward have a sordid quality that is missing in *Flamenca*. Part of the problem is that while "Flamenca was a virtuous and wronged lady, worthy of rescue; Florence, her counterpart in *The Good Soldier*, is a scheming, sensual woman bent on seeking her own pleasure" (Cohen 286). In order to qualify for the ennoblement of courtly love, the lady in question must truly be a lady. Florence's selfish disregard for the feeling and rights of those around her disqualifies her from a title that signifies refinement and gentle manners. In addition, William exemplifies "the finest chivalric virtues," but Edward Ashburnham is a "hollow image of that ideal figure" (Cohen 286). Despite Edward's desire to be the protective keeper of the traditions of a former era, he fails to embody the chivalric ideal. "It is Ford's trick that the ardent knight, true to his lady, is transformed into Edward Ashburnham, who, even while he longs to be that perfect knight, must himself doubt his constancy" (Cohen 286).

IX. Peire Vidal

In addition to *Flamenca*, Hueffer's book about troubadours includes the story of the Provençal troubadour, Peire Vidal and Ford borrowed from this story, along with *Flamenca*, for *The Good Soldier*.

While Cohen sees Ashburnham as a "hollow image of that ideal figure," James Trammell Cox, in his article, "Passion for Provence," reads Edward Ashburnham as a "tragic-comic courtly lover" and *The Good Soldier* as a story of romantic love "as it has evolved from the traditions

established in the Provençal Courts of Love" (383-384). According to Cox, while Dowell is writing his account of what happened between the Ashburnhams and the Dowells, he realizes that:

> Edward Ashburnham and the mad troubadour, Peire Vidal, are one and the same, that the worship of woman in an adulterous relationship, as sanctioned in the courtly love tradition and preserved in romantic literature, results in a confusion of values that must inevitably end in tragedy, absurd tragedy, in the twentieth century. (384)

The courtly love tradition that allowed and glorified adulterous liaisons in the time of *Flamenca* doesn't apply in modern England. While Ashburnham's affairs with Mrs. Basil and Maisie Maiden have a touch of the romantic, his affairs with immoral Florence and a prostitute are considered scandalous in modern England.

Peire Vidal was born in Toulouse in 1175 and lived an active, colorful life until 1205. Paul Blackburn collected stories about and poems written by Vidal and included them in his book, *Proensa: An Anthology of Troubadour Poetry*. One of the stories claims that Vidal's singing voice was the most beautiful in the world and that "he was one of the maddest fellows who ever lived, for he believed as truth whatever he wanted or whatever happened to please him. And he succeeded in making his songs lighter than anyone else's and made richer tunes and greater follies of arms and love" (99). Earnest Hoepffner also researched and wrote about Vidal's life. According to Hoepffner, Vidal traveled between Toulouse, Provence, and the courts of Spain. He also visited the Holy Land and was a guest of many of the princes of Northern Italy. In addition, Vidal spent time at the Hungarian court and it is believed that he wrote his last song in Malta. "The romantic tales that cluster around Peire's name indicate the effect of his

exuberant personality and poetic originality on his contemporaries. His style is characterized by vigor, sensitivity and irony" (qtd. in Bergin 119).

Vidal indulged in romantic liaisons with many court ladies. One story relates how when he came upon the sleeping form of his ladylove, Viscountess Azalais, he "knelt down before her couch and kissed the lips of his slumbering love" (Hueffer 173). Unfortunately, she didn't return his passion and demanded her husband punish the troubadour. However, "Count Barral, in accordance with the opinion of his time, did not consider the offense an unpardonable one, and reproved the lady for having made so much of a fool's oddities" (Hueffer 173). Another story is about the admiration Vidal had for "Loba de Peinautier, who lived in Carcassonne. Her name Loba (she-wolf) became the motive of one of Peire Vidal's most fantastic exploits" (Hueffer 176). To honor his lady, the troubadour donned the skins of a wolf and ordered the shepherds to hunt him with their dogs. The dogs attacked him and he was brought to the home of de Peinautier more dead than alive.

Cox compares the flaying Vidal received from the dogs to the treatment Ashburnham receives from Nancy and Leonora when they are "pictured as 'beasts about to spring' upon the suffering Edward and that 'they flayed the skin off him as if they had done it with whips,' or that Leonora is a 'hungry dog trying to spring up at a lamb'" (388). While this comparison may stretch the imagination, Ford was certainly aware of the story of Peire Vidal because the troubadour is mentioned by name in Chapter II of Part I of The Good Soldier. Perhaps a better comparison to Vidal's wolf story is the relationship between Leonora, Florence, and Edward. Leonora is determined to remain married but Florence wants her husband. Between them the two women make his life miserable. Leonora insists Dowell not find out about the affair and Florence insists Edward be at her beck and call. The fight between Leonora and Florence over

possession of Edward is reminiscent of two female wolves fighting over fresh prey. Another comparison can be made between Violet and Elsie. For years the two fought over Ford. While they may not have physically attacked him, the emotional damage was severe. While Ford endured the conflict and the social outcry, he may have thought back to Vidal's story and wished for a time when a married man was allowed to find love outside of marriage. The emotional strain from his infidelities strengthened Ford's belief that "life is an inexplicable horror, all a darkness" (Mizener 253).

In addition to the wolf image, there is a definite resemblance between Vidal's love affairs while he was married and Ashburnham and Ford's behavior while married to their wives. Not finding happiness in his arranged marriage to Leonora, Ashburnham keeps looking for a courtly love to ennoble and save him. He wants to find a virtuous lady to protect and save. This echoes the emotional entanglements of Ford's own life. He ruined his marriage and lost his two oldest daughters by having affairs with his sister-in-law and Violet Hunt. He certainly was incapable of protecting, saving, or serving the various women in his life in the manner of courtly love.

X. Comparison of the Chevalier Bayard and Edward Ashburnham

While there are some parallels between William of Nevers and Edward Ashburnham and additional parallels between Archambaud and John Dowell, *Flamenca* is a fictional story. And while there is some resemblance between it and *The Good Soldier*, there is another chronicle, this one true, which more closely mimics Edward Ashburnham's story. In *The Good Soldier*, Ashburnham is described at various times by Nancy Rufford and John Dowell, as a benevolent and caring landlord, a Lohengrin, and a Chevalier Bayard. Lohengrin is a Knight of the Holy Grail in German Arthurian literature. Richard Wagner, who based many of his works on Northern European mythology, used this myth for one of his operas, making it difficult to

determine where the legend ends and the opera begins. According to the legend, Lohengrin marries Princess Elsa of Brabant to save the kingdom after her father dies. In another version, Lohengrin defends Elsa when she is accused of killing her younger brother. In either case, the brave knight saves a virtuous maiden who is in trouble. Just as Edward pictures himself as a man a woman can rely on for help and comfort, Lohengrin manages to help and save Elsa. Edward often tries to be a brave knight. Whether it is jumping into the Red Sea to save a private, saving a young mother from prison, or giving a horse to the son of an impoverished neighbor, Edward considers it his duty to take care of the people around him. But it is the story of the Chevalier Bayard that contains some thought provoking similarities to Edward Ashburnham's story. Bayard is an actual historical figure rather than a myth, legend, or operatic character. He was a sixteenth-century French knight who was known for his valor in battle. The king made him a knight of the order of St. Michael when he saved central France from an invading army.

While the Chevalier Bayard is an actual person, it is difficult to differentiate between true events and historical exaggeration. In Paris in 1527, Jacques de Mailles, a comrade of Pierre Terrail, Seigneur de Bayard and friend of the Terrail family, published his account of the life of the Chevalier Bayard. He wrote the volume three years after Bayard's death and gave his book the rather grand title of: *The right joyous, merry, and entertaining history, composed by the Loyal Servant, of the acts, deeds, achievements, and prowesses of the good knight without fear and without reproach, the Gentle Seigneur de Bayart of whom the praise is spread throughout Christendom: and of other good, valiant, and virtuous captains of his times. Together with the wars, battles, encounters, and assaults, which took place during his life in France, Spain, and Italy.* For many years this book was considered a true account of Bayard's life, but modern research has discovered some discrepancies, particularly in de Mailles' account of Bayard's

childhood, and a more accurate description of the book is probably "idealistic portraiture" (Shellabarger 6).

Nonetheless, there are enough references to Bayard in historical documents to substantiate his existence, character, and feats in the battlefield. Alfred de Terrebasse published a scholarly account of his life in 1828. More recently, in 1928 Samuel Shellabarger published *The Chevalier Bayard: A Study in Fading Chivalry*. Ford obviously didn't have access to Shellabarger's book when he wrote *The Good Soldier* in 1915. Since Ford mentions Bayard in his book, it is evident that he was aware of the stories surrounding the knight, but it is impossible to know if he relied on de Mailles' somewhat fictionalized book or de Terebasse's scholarly effort. However, in *The Saddest Story: A Biography of Ford Madox Ford*, Arthur Mizener reveals that by "the end of 1890 Ford had left school for good. For a while he drifted around London often ending up for tea at the British Museum, where the Garnetts had moved when Dr. Garnett became the Keeper of Printed Books" (16). The departments of books and manuscripts were transferred to the care of the British Library in 1973, but the library still has the old General Catalogue of Printed Books from the British Museum. In the volume for 1886, there are twenty-four entries for the Chevalier Bayard. Many are copies of de Mailles' account of the Chevalier's life, none mention de Terebasse's 1828 effort, and one entry is for *The Life of the Chevalier Bayard* written by William Gilmore Simms, an American writer. Many of the books listed are in French, but this wouldn't pose a problem for Ford who was fluent in the language. It is entirely possible that Dr. Garnett allowed Ford access to the collections. Also, in 1868, the museum acquired a seventeenth-century engraving of Bayard. Perhaps Ford saw the engraving in the museum and the likeness piqued his interest enough to inspire him to do further research on the Chevalier. Of course, it is also possible that one of the children's editions of the Chevalier story

was on the nursery bookshelf of his childhood home. However Ford became aware of the historical knight, it is worth comparing the real Bayard to the fictional Ashburnham.

Both Edward and Bayard grew up as part of the landed gentry. However, Edward Ashburnham lived in a time of transformation as the class system collapsed and England moved into the modern age. The Chevalier Bayard also lived in "an era of rapid change. The Age of Chivalry, of steel to steel, of aristocratic war, was fast giving way to plebeian infantry and scientific firearms" (Shellabarger 19). In Italy, "former creeds and codes, the medieval faith with its dream of chivalry, became ancestral legend, discredited, if still poetically indulged" (Shellabarger 22). The north took longer to change, but finally the cities, areas of trade, and royal courts absorbed the new beliefs and technology of the south. However, in the French countryside, where Bayard was born, traditions were slow to change:

> Progress, the modern master-word, had here no meaning, innovation no charm. As the oak grows, so, insensibly, had grown their age and attitude, moulded by experience, deep-rooted in the past. Ancestral practice determined their beliefs, ethics, and manners. (Shellabarger 23)

Bayard grew up with the Chivalric tradition in a devoutly Catholic family. Two of his brothers became priests and two sisters entered a convent. According to Shellabarger, as a child, he listened to his war-crippled father extol the virtues of family members "dead in war, left on the field of honor as coveted, ultimate prize of valor, man after man, the roll-call of Terrail" (25). It was impressed on the child "the necessity incumbent upon the sons of noblemen and of soldiers to safeguard inherited glory by an equal valor, the privilege and discipline of an aristocratic sword" (27). Once Bayard became a soldier, his ideals were "few, clear, and archaic: duty, the service of honor, the responsibility of noblesse" (26). Edward also believed in

responsibility toward those in need and in his duty to serve his country. But while Medieval France still accepted the chivalric code, in twentieth century England the code was outmoded.

In *The Good Soldier*, Ford created a character, Edward Ashburnham, who still believes in the chivalric code. For Edward, "his responsibilities, his career, his tradition" are extremely important (Ford 105). Since Leonora is unable to support his dedication to a feudal lifestyle, Edward seeks out women "who would give him the moral support that he needed. He wanted to be looked upon as a sort of Lohengrin" (Ford 105). Unfortunately, Edward's desire to be viewed as a medieval knight only brings him trouble and anguish. When he attempts to comfort a servant girl on a train, he winds up in court accused of improper behavior. When Edward tries to help his tenants through a difficult agricultural period, Leonora distrusts his generosity and their disagreement further strains an already shaky marriage. While Edward takes his responsibilities very seriously, Leonora feels it is "a sort of madness in him that he should try to take upon his own shoulders the burden of his troop, of his regiment, of his estate and of half of his county" (Ford 100). So, Edward's insistence on living according to the Chevalier Bayard's outmoded code of behavior causes him both personal and public problems.

Ford also explored the benefits of chivalric behavior in *Ladies Whose Bright Eyes*. In this story, Ford sends one character, Mr. Sorrell, back to the middle ages to discover "that the fourteenth century was better than the twentieth" (Mizener 214). The characters in the novel are ordinary people and their lives are not easy, but "its superiority consists in the values by which even the worst of its people are conditioned. The best of them such as the Knight of Coucy (Ford's vision of himself as a medieval knight) and the old knight, Sir Ygorac de Fordingbridge, with his delight in the art of knightly conduct, show us how much better life can be when people have the benefit of a fine culture" (Mizener 215).

Ford often wrote about men ruined by the modern age. He imbued Ashburnham with his own desire for a life dedicated to the service of his country and others. However, the world and the social mores of the Victorian era, with its imbalance of wealth and political power, were changing. Agricultural workers were leaving the farms for factory work and the era of the fatherly landowner/employer was ending. Nevertheless, this lifestyle was still available during Bayard's lifetime.

As a soldier, Bayard followed Charles VIII and Louis XII into Italy:

> But almost infallibly upon a period of national consolidation and military preparedness, there follows the temptation toward expansion. However much personal characteristics of the king or ambition of Italian princes may have hastened the movement, Charles VIII remains still the figurehead of an actually inevitable imperialism. (Shellabarger 80).

As a soldier in India during the British Raj, Edward also fought for an imperialist country. Ford wrote *The Good Soldier* during a time of "raging debate on nationality and empire." Ford and his friends were "actively involved in puncturing the balloons of national and imperial rhetoric." Ford was one of many Englishmen who argued against the "scoundrels" in Africa and "welcomed the idea of a nation without an empire" (Patey 88). Undoubtedly, the breakdown of the Ashburnham marriage reflects the political turmoil of the period.

Chevalier Bayard served the king well and rose through the ranks to a position of authority. Bayard, to all appearances, enjoyed war and the life of a soldier. It gave him a purpose in life:

> Moreover, it maintained temporarily the romantic notion of war as adventure, a knight-errantry, a splendid diversion. Thus, while facilitating the advent of

> modernism, it gave to chivalry a last encouragement and pattern. And from this angle, it seems, the expedition primarily affected Bayard. Already a traditionalist by temperament and training, it confirmed the tendency to consider life in archaic terms. (Shellabarger 79)

Bayard was instrumental in the capture of San Giovanni and San Germano, which led to the abdication of the King of Naples. At one point, he saved his former commander from defeat and possible death. D' Ars was surrounded by Spanish troops when Bayard rushed to his aid. "The enemy was routed, the castle taken, and Bisceglie passed into French hands" (Shellabarger 137).

In *The Good Soldier*, Ashburnham is also a military soldier and committed to the army. But his service isn't as glorious as Bayard's years in the army. Nancy Rufford and John Dowell view Edward as Bayard's courageous equal. However, though Edward serves in India, he doesn't participate in the Boer War. Ashburnham's greatest act of heroism consists of jumping into the Red Sea several times to rescue some private soldiers. As Dowell notes, "Edward ought, I suppose, to have gone to the Transvaal. It would have done him a great deal of good to get killed" (Ford 113). Instead of storming castles, Edward is left to "while away his time with drilling and polo" (Cohen 288). Of course, even if Edward wanted to go to war, Leonora wouldn't let him, "she had heard awful stories of the extravagance of the Hussar regiment in war time – how they left hundred-bottle cases of champagne, at five guineas a bottle, on the veldt and so on" (Ford 113). Ever mindful of the bottom line, Leonora wasn't going to let Edward head off to Africa where she couldn't monitor how he spent his money. This is another strike by Ford against imperialism. Rather unusually for his time, Ford thought "that neither British nor Boer had any business in South Africa and that Africa should be left to the Africans" (Judd 90).

Shellabarger writes that the Chevalier "wanted no wife, no anchorage, no disturbing shadow across his profession" (108). Unlike Edward, Bayard was wed to his sword. He belonged to a "generation of men whom the sport of war so thoroughly absorbed as to exclude other interests" (108). Not that the Chevalier was without interest in women. A story is told about him that demonstrates his "passionate, fierce pity" for those in need of help and succor (Shellabarger 92). After proving himself a brave and capable soldier, Bayard returned to the home of his uncle in Grenoble for a period of peace. While there, he asked his servant to find a girl for his amusement. The servant found a young girl, the daughter of an impoverished gentlewoman, and bought the girl from her mother. When Bayard returned from dinner that evening he found the girl "shrunk back into a corner, numb with fear" (Shellabarger 120). It was a brutal age – Bayard could easily have overpowered the girl. No one in his uncle's household would have rushed to her assistance. However, the Chevalier was honorable and tried to do the right thing. He not only returned the girl to her mother, he provided enough money for a dowry plus another hundred crowns for the gentlewoman.

While it is possible to argue Edward's treatment of Nancy wasn't entirely honorable, he did restrain from acting on his feelings for the girl. With Leonora's help he provided a home for Nancy away from her abusive parents. When Edward develops an unholy passion for Nancy, he arranges to remove her from his home and still keep her away from her mother. While it is impossible to hold Edward completely blameless for Nancy's downfall, he did remain honorable enough not to physically take advantage of the inexperienced girl. Even though Leonora "forces Nancy on Ashburnham, an action which is a true measure of her misunderstanding of his sense of moral honor," Edward draws the line and refuses (Cassell 155). His restraint almost kills him. "He appeared, indeed, to be very ill; his shoulders began to be bowed; there were pockets under

his eyes; he had extraordinary moments of inattention" (Ford 89). However, he perseveres and, like Bayard, finds a way to remove Nancy from his home. Edward manages to "meet a test of moral courage, he refuses to let passion overthrow social order and remains a sentimentalist and a gentleman" (Cassell 201). Unfortunately, Edward's honorable actions come too late. Her unhappy childhood, the tension between Leonora and Edward, and finally Edward's suicide all combine to drive Nancy to madness.

While on the subject of women, it is important to realize that Edward wasn't just concerned with his own needs. "Such was his honorable nature that for him, to enjoy a woman's favors, made him feel that she had a bond on him for life" (Cohen 291). Bayard was a little luckier in love. His daughter, Jeanne of Bayard, was the product of a liaison with Barbara dei Trechi, a married lady. Apparently, the "medieval outlook which did in fact condone an adulterous relationship between a man and a woman in love" applied here because there isn't any mention in the historical record of the blackmail that Edward faced or even a duel (Cohen 285).

Both Chevalier and Ashburnham were generous men. During the winter of 1502, Bayard was in charge of the garrison at Minervino. After hearing that a Spanish paymaster would pass nearby on his way to Barletta, Bayard sent out one group of soldiers under the command of Tardieu. Bayard took out another group and managed to capture the paymaster and 15,000 ducats. As master of the garrison, Bayard could have kept the entire treasure for himself. However, he chose to give half to Tardieu and divided the remaining 7,500 among the soldiers. He kept nothing for himself. This gesture is reminiscent of Edward's giving away a horse to a needy neighbor, helping a waiter retrieve his child, and defending a girl charged with murdering her baby.

Even chivalrous knights eventually face death and this happened for Bayard during a battle in the glades of Roazenda:

> Something more than the retreat of a broken army seems to be enacted in the glades of Roazenda. It is the retreat of a spiritual force, of an ideal, which for centuries had preoccupied Europe. Thirty years earlier, still splendid, still effective, the medieval wave burst over Italy, surging against inevitable change. Its strength had been long since spent; the South had prevailed. These were the final relics of an older tide ebbing north before the triumphant present. (Shellabarger 341-342)

The Chevalier Bayard, the medieval knight fighting on horseback with a lance and sword, was mortally wounded when a modern bullet pierced his armor and lodged in his spine. Bayard was so well known, respected and beloved, that his enemy, the Spaniards, laid him on a camp bed under a pavilion to wait for death. Even though he committed suicide, Edward was as much a victim of the modern age as the Chevalier was of his own time. Unable to adjust to changing times, Edward preferred to bow out. Once her husband was dead, it didn't take Leonora long to find a nice Catholic man to serve as her second husband and start a family. While the world mourned for Bayard, the world soon forgot Edward Ashburnham.

XI. Adapting to the Modern Age

The modern world and the end of the civilization of his childhood dismayed Ford Madox Ford and in *The Good Soldier* he explored the effect of these changes on modern man. Ford published *Between St. Dennis and St. George* in 1915 and he was already in the army when this book and *The Good Soldier* appeared in print. The concluding sentences of *Between St. Dennis*

and St. George are an excellent indication of the author's feelings about Provence, war, and the modern world:

> So, if in the world from now on there is to be any of the pleasantness that we loved, any of the virtues that we have held made men and women gracious, the cause of France, which is our cause, must prevail. If it do not, there may well be in the world many more machines, many more gilded hotels – but assuredly there will be none of that civilization of altruism and chivalry which, beginning in that triangle of Provence, has spread pleasantness and light upon the minds of men to the furthest confines of the earth. (qtd. in Goldring 179)

Ford continued this thought in *The Good Soldier*, "Some one has said that the death of a mouse from cancer is the whole sack of Rome by the Goths, and I swear to you that the breaking up of our little four-square coterie was such another unthinkable event" (Ford 11). With this declaration, Ford is trying to express that "it was an event that for all its smallness reflected the disaster of the greater world – for example, the end of a civilization announced by the declaration of the war that, in the opinion of many, sealed its fate" (Kermode xix). The problems of the Ashburnhams might "to more acute sensibilities, be intelligible as reflections of an immense historical plot." Ford wasn't alone in suspecting history of such a plot. Henry James caught the mood of the moment in a letter he wrote on August 4, 1914:

> The plunge of civilization into this abyss of blood and darkness by the wanton fear of those two infamous aristocrats is a thing that so gives away the whole long age during which we have supposed the world to be, with whatever abatement, gradually bettering, that to have to take it all now for the treacherous years were

> all the while really making for and meaning is too tragic for any words. (qtd. in Kermode xx)

Some of the changes experienced in England weren't related to the war. In the late nineteenth century, England experienced an agricultural depression and reduced land values. Some of the gentry adapted to change by turning to business and banking for income, thereby giving up the old tradition of living off the revenue from their land. Edward was determined to follow the old ways and live the life of a feudal lord taking care of his dependents. But what if he had managed to adapt? When Edward left the army and returned to Branshaw Manor, he started working on a patent for a new stirrup. During the story, Edward develops the stirrup and presents the design to the War Office. According to John Dowell "it was a remarkably good stirrup" (Ford 126). A stirrup may be an unlikely instrument of salvation, but Edward had an opportunity to be saved by this small leather implement. His invention was Edward's bridge to the modern world. If he had kept the design and manufactured the stirrup, he would have made enough money to satisfy Leonora and commercial success would have soothed his ruffled male pride. Perhaps he could have turned the business his own personal little fiefdom. However, Edward chose the only action conceivable to him, he gave the design to his country. Ford may have chosen this action for Edward because during World War I it became "chic" for civilians to refuse "to benefit by the war" (Goldring 176). Edward's design was the result of his military service, so Ford refused to let his male protagonist profit from his invention.

Edward would have found life easier if he had given up his feudal dreams and followed his contemporaries into business. It is possible that with a project to fulfill him and hold his interest he wouldn't have developed an inappropriate passion for Nancy. Unfortunately for Edward, Leonora was "really enraged" at the expense of developing the new stirrup and the fact

that he just gave it away (Ford 126). Leonora was further enraged when, around this same time, Edward spent two hundred pounds to help the gardener's daughter escape a murder charge. Watchful Leonora "made him a terrible scene about this expenditure of time and trouble" (Ford 126). Because of the court case and the generous stirrup gift, Leonora threatened to take his estate and bank account away for the second time. At the thought of losing control of his estate once again, of losing his ability to be of public service, Edward crumbled. Unable to bear a life without Nancy and without his vision of feudalism, Edward committed suicide.

Ford Madox Ford didn't care for the modern world. He was uncomfortable in the twentieth-century and longed for the traditions and social mores of an earlier age. His dream existence was a life as an artist and gentleman farmer taking care of his tenants and serving his country. Ford's feelings about the modern age imbue his novels. In *The Good Soldier*, Ford couldn't allow Ashburnham to adapt to the modern age because Ford felt that modern civilization was corrupting many fine men. Instead, Ford had Ashburnham give away the stirrup that was his ticket to a complete and well-adjusted life in modern England. Ford believed in a public-school life with its traditions of duty, privileges, and responsibility to give unceasingly to the world. He gave Ashburnham the same beliefs and because of these beliefs it was absolutely necessary for Edward Ashburnham to give the stirrup to his country.

XII. Conclusion

Ford Madox Ford borrowed the story of Peire Vidal and *Flamenca* from his father and used his knowledge of the ancient codes of chivalry and courtly love to write a novel about the destruction of men in the modern age. Mary Cohen compares *The Good Soldier* to *Flamenca*, a thirteenth-century Provençal verse novel, and there are some definite similarities between the two stories. However, while William of Nevers and Flamenca are portrayed as honorable lovers

in the thirteenth-century story, twentieth-century Edward is seen as dishonorable for having an affair with Florence, the wife of a man he considers a friend. At the same time, Florence is seen "as a scheming, sensual woman bent on seeking her own pleasure" (Cohen 286).

Another comparison is made between Edward and the Chevalier Bayard by Nancy Rufford and John Dowell. A close examination of Bayard's story does reveal both similarities and differences between the two men. As a medieval knight Bayard is the more successful of the two. He enjoys army life and the challenge of war. Instead of marrying, Bayard chooses to remain focused on his career. Following the ancient chivalric code, Bayard appears a happy man and dies with honor on the battlefield amidst the admiring fanfare of his comrades and enemies. Edward is an eighteenth-century man caught in twentieth-century England. He longs for the simplicity of the feudal way and wants a supportive, loving wife who agrees with his ideals. In the absence of this supportive wife, Edward indulges in a series of destructive affairs. However, he does retain some decency and refuses to indulge in a liaison with his ward. By creating a discrepancy between Dowell's description of Edward as a Chevalier Bayard and Edward's actions, Ford produced a character who represents the loss of traditional values in a modern society. Edward has an opportunity to adapt to the modern age, but instead he chooses to cling to the old ways and eventually commits suicide and is soon forgotten by friends and family.

Just like Edward, Ford Madox Ford longed for a simpler era. Also, like Edward, Ford conducted many affairs while still married to Elsie. Neither man was ever able to find a woman who could provide the support and sympathy he needed. Ford wanted to live in a time when a man gave unceasingly to the world and civilization. Unfortunately, Ford lived during the twentieth-century during a time when the traditional values of civilization were changing. Ford found it difficult to adapt and drifted from England to Europe and America looking for happiness

and a chance to write in peace. When he died of heart failure, Janice Biala, his last love, was with him but he was still estranged from his two oldest daughters, Katherine and Christina. Ford last saw them in 1916 before he left for France. He did manage to return to France before he died, but is buried in Deauville many miles from his beloved Provence.

Since Edward's suicide was directly the result of Leonora's badgering and machinations, it could be said that modern weapons killed both Edward and Bayard. Leonora, the embodiment of the modern age, took Edward's life and a modern bullet took Bayard's. While modernism may not have killed Ford, it did leave him unsatisfied and continually searching for a better life.

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