The realist novel and the modern criminal trial both came to fruition in the nineteenth century. Each places a premium on the author’s or trial lawyer’s ability to reconstruct reality, reflecting modernity’s preoccupation with firsthand experience as the basis of epistemological authority. But by the early twentieth century experience had, as Walter Benjamin put it, ‘fallen in value’. The modernist novel and the criminal trial of the period began taking cues from a kind of non-experience – one that nullifies identity, subverts repetition and supplants presence with absence. Rex Ferguson examines how such non-experience colours the overlapping relationship between law and literary modernism. Chapters on E. M. Forster’s A Passage to India, Ford Madox Ford’s The Good Soldier and Marcel Proust’s In Search of Lost Time detail the development of a uniquely modern subjectivity, offering new critical insight to scholars and students of twentieth-century literature, cultural studies and the history of law and philosophy.

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Criminal Law and the Modernist Novel

Experience on Trial

Rex Ferguson

University of Birmingham
For Dyan
Contents

Acknowledgements  ix

Introduction  1

1 The Trials of Experience: From Enlightened Subjectivity to Woolfian Moments of Being  9

2 Mysteries and Muddles in A Passage to India  51

3 The Good Soldier and the Good Reader  83

4 The Repeated Appeal of Proust and Dreyfus  110

Conclusion: Experiencing the Hyperreal  147

Notes  163
Bibliography  195
Index  209
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