

CHAPTER 3- EPISTEMOLOGY IN THE GOOD SOLDIER

3.1. INTRODUCTION

This study contends that The Good Soldier exhibits traces of what could plausibly be considered a Postmodern epistemology. This implies that the novel addresses the issue of epistemology in a way characteristic of Postmodernist theories on knowledge. In order to investigate this contention, the following section (Section 3.2) will consider the narrator's comments on epistemology and compare these to the characteristics of Modernist and Postmodernist epistemologies introduced in the preceding chapter. Section 3.3 aims to discuss other characteristics or themes in the novel that relate to its epistemology in order to discover whether the epistemology in The Good Soldier can credibly be considered as bearing traces of what would later in literary periodization be labeled as Postmodernism.

Demonstrating that the epistemology of The Good Soldier reveals certain congruencies with elements of Postmodern theories on knowledge, challenges the accepted notion of literary periodization in which texts are said to belong to a certain movement based on their year of publication and not specifically on the characteristics of the text. These literary periods are relatively watertight, as texts within the movement are compared to each other and grouped together at the exclusion of texts from other chronological periods.

Successfully elucidating the Postmodern aspects of epistemology in The Good Soldier therefore indicates that Postmodernism is not a clearly demarcated sequential literary movement, but that traces of this movement's epistemology are evident in a text published during the Modernist movement. This indicates that a chronological division of literary texts may not be the only way of successfully interpreting or studying fictional texts. Clayton acknowledges such a possibility in his consideration of Postmodernism in the texts of Charles Dickens. Commenting on chronology and the role of period concepts, Clayton states: "Regarded as natural entities, however, these boundaries restrict the range of meanings we are likely to find." (Clayton, 1991:183.) From this comment it is evident that a successful elucidation of the Postmodern aspects of The Good Soldier would present an alternative and additional range of meanings to the understanding of the text.

It is now appropriate to commence the investigation into the Postmodern aspects of the epistemology in The Good Soldier by considering the narrator's comments on knowledge.

3.2. NARRATOR'S COMMENTS ON EPISTEMOLOGY

This section aims to consider comments made by the narrator, who is also one of the main characters in the novel, John Dowell. Dowell makes direct comments on knowledge as revealed in the succeeding paragraphs, such as "I know nothing" (Ford, 1988:14) and "It's a darkness" (Ford, 1988: 18). It is through these statements that it is possible to consider the epistemology in the novel as Postmodern. His comments reveal that he acknowledges his epistemological limitations (Section 3.2.1) and that he also accepts this indeterminacy (Section 3.2.2), while still being able to live with this lack of knowledge and find pleasures in life (Section 3.2.3).

3.2.1.ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF EPISTEMOLOGICAL INDETERMINACY

We know so much, we know so many little things that we are beginning to realize how much there is in the world to know, and how little of all there is, is the much that we know- Ford (in Levenson, 1992:53-54).

Dowell acknowledges that his understanding and knowledge of the world around him is limited and decidedly minimal. This section aims to consider the comments Dowell makes in this regard in order to compare them with comments and attitudes within Postmodernism regarding epistemological indeterminacy.

Throughout The Good Soldier John Dowell shares with the reader that he, as narrator and character, lives in epistemological darkness. Dowell's related comments of "I don't know" (Ford, 1988:11, 14,16,18, 20, 34, 68, 101, 218, 220), "It's a darkness" (Ford, 1981:18, 151) and "It is queer" (Ford, 1988:146, 218, 222, 228) pervade the novel. The world is "a little inscrutable" (Ford, 1988:169) to Dowell; his wife and best friends, the Ashburnhams, remain "incomprehensible" (Ford, 1988:164) and even of himself he has little definite knowledge.

He makes many comments relating to his knowledge of the world, others and himself. A typical example of Dowell's epistemological comments is as follows: "After forty-five years of mixing with one's kind, one ought to have acquired the habit of being able to know

something about one's fellow beings. But one doesn't." (Ford, 1988:39.) And after nine years of friendship with the Ashburnhams Dowell says: "And, as for experience, as for knowledge of one's fellow beings - nothing either." (Ford, 1988:39.) From his limited perspective Dowell states: "But there are many things that I cannot well make out, about which I cannot well question Leonora, or about which Edward did not tell me." (Ford, 1988:130.)

Dowell makes it impossible for the reader to overlook his acknowledgement of epistemological indeterminacy. The following comments are direct references to his ignorance and lack of knowledge: "I know nothing - nothing in the world - about the hearts of men" (Ford, 1988:14); "Did the girl love Edward, or didn't she? I don't know" (Ford, 1988:218). After being enlightened about his wife's adulteries all Dowell can say is: "You ask how it feels to be a deceived husband. Just Heavens, I do not know." (Ford, 1988:68.) About the tragic end between Edward and Leonora, Dowell says: "And why? For what purpose? To point what lesson? It is all a darkness." (Ford, 1988:151.) Dowell is in darkness as to the reasons and motivations of the course of events that he is narrating. All he can say about his tale is: "I don't know. And there is nothing to guide us." (Ford, 1988:18.)

Dowell further emphasizes his own lack of knowledge, by his open-ended and rhetorical questions. On his ignorance about the relations between a man and a woman Dowell states: "And if one doesn't know as much as that about the first thing in the world, what does one know and why is one here?" (Ford, 1988:17.) Or, "Who in this world knows anything of any other heart - or of his own?" (Ford, 1988:144.) Approaching the end of his story Dowell says: "It is a queer and fantastic world. Why can't people have what they want?... Who the devil knows?" (Ford, 1988:213.) These questions can only remain unanswered in a narrative that foregrounds man's epistemological darkness.

The Good Soldier is permeated by statements concerning Dowell's acknowledgement that he lacks knowledge and understanding, not only about the people around him, but about the world. As Hynes states "again and again he raises questions of knowledge, only to leave them unanswered" (Hynes, 1987:51). Green states that "Dowell's agnostic phrase, 'It is all a darkness' reverberates throughout the novel" (Green, 1981:89). Dowell's declaration of his lack of knowledge is like a persistent echo through the pages of the text.

Dowell's continual acknowledgement of his epistemological darkness is congruent with Postmodern thought, as demonstrated by Bertens in the following statement. Commenting on the different strands in Postmodernism, Bertens states that all "share at least one central characteristic: a radical epistemological and ontological doubt" (Bertens, 1986:35). This radical doubt "moves into the centre of Postmodernism and it has occupied that central place ever since" (Bertens, 1986:35). From the above examples of Dowell's references to his epistemological state, it is evident that in their sheer number and repetitiveness they can be seen as a radicalization of the idea that man lives in epistemological darkness. Dowell does not let the reader overlook his "resigned admissions of the limits of human knowledge" (Hynes, 1987:56).

Howe states that "modern novelists tended to assume that the social relations of men in the world of capitalism were established, familiar, *knowable*" (Howe, 1959:423, emphasis added). This implies that within Modernism, there was a lack of acceptance of man's knowledge as limited and the world as a mysterious and unfathomable place. Where Postmodernism tends to foreground unknowability, Modernism still sought to convey the idea that ultimate knowledge was possible. As Bertens states, Postmodernism is seen as the "radicalization of the doubts that beset Modernism, but were largely kept under control by the Modernist writers" (Bertens, 1986:20). Dowell's pervasive references to his lack of knowledge clearly foregrounds the fact that he acknowledges his epistemological limitations and does not attempt a Modernist concealment of epistemological indeterminacy.

The Modernists, as described by Murdoch, were still confident that in the struggle for knowledge and answers, man would overcome the universe's resistance and gain access to the unfathomable mysteries of the world, the other and the self. She states: "We picture man as a brave naked will surrounded by an easily comprehended empirical world." (Murdoch, 1977:26.) This is an Enlightenment and Modernist conception that still thought of man as brave, heroic and able at least to attempt to conquer the world.

It is also evident that Modernist writers and authors still sought to fight and conquer indeterminacy. Brooker comments that "the texts of high modernism employed myth and musical form, for example, in a struggle to incorporate and so order the material of 'chaos'" (Brooker, 1992:27). This chaos is the Modernist realization that the world is not as complacent and acquiescent as man thought it was, but nevertheless incorporates an attempt

to order, control and in some sense gain knowledge of that which is incomprehensible and mysterious.

From these comments it is evident that in Postmodernism there are no 'brave, heroic souls' who try to 'order the chaos' because it is acknowledged that man's epistemological limitations cannot be overcome, and as such, a brave battle against ignorance and indeterminacy is not even engaged in. Dowell is neither brave, nor heroic and does not succeed in controlling the chaos of an unfathomable universe. All he is able to utter till the end is his repeated proclamation of "I don't know" (Ford, 1988: 16) and this recital harmonizes with the Postmodern acknowledgement of the limits of human knowledge.

As a result of this Postmodernist acknowledgement of epistemological indeterminacy, Docherty recognizes that the "attack upon the philosophy of Identity ('Know Thyself') (Docherty, 1993:17) has been replaced with "a philosophy of alterity ('*Acknowledge* the unknowability of the Other') (Docherty, 1993:17, emphasis added). This is an interesting and significant shift as it demonstrates that epistemological doubt is brought into the open and it is acknowledged that man cannot know himself any more than he can know another. The confident cry of 'Know Thyself' is replaced with a humbled acknowledgement that the self is just as unfathomable as anything else in the world. Dowell shares this Postmodern acknowledgement when he confesses, "for I had never had the slightest conscious idea of marrying the girl; I never had the slightest idea even of caring for her"(Ford, 1988:99) in response to the news that he had exclaimed after his wife's death: "Now I can marry the girl." (Ford, 1988:103.) Dowell is a mystery to himself as much as any of the other characters are to him.

Another example in which Dowell acknowledges his lack of understanding about himself, concerns his feelings towards Leonora near the end of his narrative. Dowell states: "I cannot conceal from myself the fact that I now dislike Leonora. Without doubt I am jealous of Rodney Bayham. But I don't know whether it is merely a jealousy arising from the fact that I desired myself to possess Leonora or whether it is because to her were sacrificed the only two persons that I ever really loved - Edward Ashburnham and Nancy Rufford." (Ford, 1988:226.) Dowell realizes that he is jealous, but he does not know the cause of his feelings of jealousy. The two issues he considers as reasons for his jealousy are far apart from each other. The one reason implies that he secretly wishes to have married Leonora and the other reason

foregrounds the fact that Leonora has taken from him all he ever cared about. Dowell both detests Leonora and is jealous of Rodney who is married to her. This is a confusing state to be in and one that foregrounds Dowell's lack of understanding about himself, as well as the unfathomable mysteries of the self.

By the end of his narrative, Dowell does not come to any final, absolute and comprehensive truths. As Kirk states, "in Postmodernism 'total knowledge' becomes an oxymoron" (Kirk, 1993:105). Dowell can only be satisfied with the slight knowledge that is available to him. In the end he still does not understand the motivations behind actions committed by the other characters, for example: "Now I wonder what passed through Florence's mind during the two hours she had kept me waiting at the foot of the ladder. I would give not a little to know." (Ford, 1988:81.) Nor does he understand the reasons for his own position: "I don't know why I should always be selected to be serviceable. I don't resent it- but I have never been the least good." (Ford, 1988:211.) He has many questions, but receives few answers and in the end has a limited and incomplete knowledge.

Dowell is aware that knowledge is evasive and elusive. Like Derrida who answers his own question of "What can I know?" with "Nothing for certain" (Appleby *et al.*, 1996:18), Dowell accedes to the evanescence of the knowledge he does have. Even the restricted and minimal knowledge he has is not unquestioningly stable and true. Dowell thought he had a fairly reliable and correct knowledge of Florence, but this knowledge was not to last. He learns that he is "a deceived husband" (Ford, 1988: 68) and in the end knows 'nothing for certain' about his wife. Dowell is like Bertens' definition of Wilde's midfictionist who "seeks positive knowledge...without ever losing sight of the fact that knowledge in any absolute sense...is completely out of reach" (Bertens, 1986:44).

Dowell's realization that all knowledge is transient and unstable is evident in the following example. Four pages into the first chapter Dowell states:

And yet I swear by the sacred name of my creator that it was true. It was true sunshine; the true music; the true splash of the fountains from the mouth of stone dolphins. For, if for me we were four people with the same tastes, with the same desires, acting - or, no, not acting - sitting here and there unanimously, isn't that the truth? If for nine years I have possessed a goodly apple that is rotten at the core and discover its rottenness only in nine years and six months less four days, isn't it true to say that for nine years I possessed a goodly apple? (Ford, 1988:14.)

Dowell's comment is significant in the light of his acknowledgement of the indeterminacy of knowledge. In this example Dowell demonstrates that his knowledge for those nine years was faulty. He thought that he had a healthy marriage and mutually open friendship with Edward and Leonora, but this conception is shattered with the news that Florence was Edward's mistress for the duration of those nine years. From his retrospective position he is able to acknowledge the instability and fleeting nature of knowledge.

Dowell's final question in the above quote is interesting in that either a positive or negative answer points to an acknowledgement of the indeterminacy of knowledge. Answering Dowell's question in the affirmative by saying that he did possess a goodly apple for those nine years acknowledges the relativity of knowledge and the fact that no knowledge can claim to be absolute, stable or definite. If his limited and faulty knowledge about those nine years is taken as true, it illustrates the relativity and partiality of all knowledge and that "knowledge in any absolute sense... is completely out of reach" (Bertens above). Man has to be satisfied with partial and relative knowledge that can be proven faulty after nine years less four days because there is no total or overriding knowledge, only many partial and faulty knowledges. Answering Dowell's question in the negative, by stating that his knowledge was not true, is again an acknowledgment that Dowell does not know. It is another message that all he can know is "nothing for certain" (Appleby *et al.* above), as Derrida succinctly points out.

It is significant that Dowell describes his wife as a bright beam of light, as this illustrates the evanescence of his knowledge about her. Of Florence he states: "Well, she was bright; and she danced. She seemed to dance over the floors of castles and over seas and over and over and over the salons of modistes and over the *plages* of the Rivera - like a gay tremulous beam, reflected from water upon a ceiling. And my function in life was to keep that bright thing in existence. And it was almost as difficult as trying to catch with your hand that dancing reflection. And the task lasted for years." (Ford, 1988:21.) Dowell's knowledge of Florence, as of the other characters, is as transitory, fleeting and superficial as a reflection or a beam of light. It cannot be accepted as stable and unchanging, because it soon fades and disappears. Permanent and conclusive knowledge is as impossible as trying to grasp a reflection in your hand. This is a fitting description of the Postmodern declaration of knowledge as indeterminate, fleeting, and uncertain, of the world as unfathomable and mysterious (Kirk, 1993:132).

The only complete and unquestionable knowledge Dowell gains is that he does *not* know; the only true knowledge he has is negative knowledge. This is the only kind of knowledge possible in the Postmodern world. Ibsch states that “the certainty of negative knowledge is a Popperian legacy which the Postmodernists have eagerly assimilated” (Ibsch, 1986:127). He goes on to state that: “In Postmodernism the epistemological doubt results in a clear demarcation of the things that can be known, or rather can *not* be known.” (Ibsch, 1986:132.) Dowell knows that he does not know, he states: “I am only an ageing American with little knowledge of life” (Ford, 1988:219) and that his attempts to understand and know “may be right, they may be wrong” (Ford, 1988:219). He acknowledges the uncertainty and indeterminacy of any positive knowledge and accepts the inevitability and stability of negative knowledge. As Hynes states about Dowell: “To know what you can’t know is nevertheless a kind of knowledge” (Hynes, 1987:56) and “beyond that, it is all a darkness, as it was” (Hynes, 1987:56).

In the Postmodern acknowledgement of epistemological limitation and indeterminacy there is no room for comforting fictions that allow for some type of knowledge, understanding or insight. Dowell is not allowed some final and comforting absolute truth or knowledge. He remains in darkness. As McHale states of McElroy’s Men and Women, in The Good Soldier one is “left with a permanently suspended resolution, and an insoluble epistemological crux” (McHale, 1992:198).

Postmodernists, such as Kernan, acknowledge that “The idea that the Truth is One - unambiguous, self-consistent, and knowable [is one of] the murderous fictions of our history” (Kernan, 1990:208). As a result, in Postmodernism this acknowledgement requires radical emphasis and stress in order to do away with the Modernist belief in, desire and battle for absolute knowledge and understanding.

From these comments it is evident that in The Good Soldier Dowell acknowledges his epistemological indeterminacy and does not provide a comforting notion that things are still knowable in the world. This is clearly contrary to Modernist thought, as revealed by the comments of Murdoch and Howe, as the Modernists still considered the world as comprehensible, even if not completely knowable. Dowell’s departure from characteristically Modernist thought is significant as it challenges the accepted notion of literary periodization. Foregrounding the fact that a character in Modernist fiction exhibits a Postmodern attitude to

epistemological indeterminacy demonstrates that Postmodernism as a movement is not a watertight compartment and that traces of this latter movement are evident in a chronologically demarcated Modernist text.

In conclusion it is possible to state that The Good Soldier acknowledges the world as incomprehensible and knowledge as transient and elusive. Through the course of this section it was ascertained that various strands within Postmodernism also demonstrate such an acceptance of epistemological indeterminacy. This recognition challenges the notion of Postmodernism as a literary movement chronologically confined to the latter half of the twentieth century.

The following section aims to discuss how Dowell accepts this epistemological indeterminacy and does not pine for ungraspable knowledge. Throughout the course of this discussion, reference will be made to Postmodern commentators in order to identify any similarities between the epistemology within The Good Soldier and of that within Postmodernism.

3.2.2. ACCEPTANCE OF EPISTEMOLOGICAL INDETERMINACY

We won't know until we move into the unknown future, accepting its unknowability
(Appleby, et al., 1996:19).

The Good Soldier reveals not only an acknowledgement of epistemological uncertainty through the narrator, but also an acceptance of this state and this section aims to discuss whether this epistemological acceptance is evident within Postmodern thought. The identification of such a congruency between Postmodernism and The Good Soldier would challenge the notion of Postmodernism as a clearly demarcated literary movement, commencing in the late 1950's, by demonstrating the existence of a Postmodern acceptance of epistemological indeterminacy in a text published in 1915.

Near the end of the novel Dowell states: "I don't attach any importance to these generalizations of mine. They may be right, they may be wrong; I am only an ageing American with very little knowledge of life. You may take my generalizations or leave them." (Ford, 1988:219.) This comment is indicative of a resignation and acceptance of the limits of human knowledge. Dowell realizes that his thoughts are only generalizations and that his narrative is not a claim to absolute knowledge. He accedes to the fact that his generalizations

may not be accurate and may even be erroneous. He acknowledges and accepts the indeterminacy of the world around him and his own epistemological limitation in that world.

Wilde states that Isherwood and Compton-Burnett's writing intimates the suspensiveness of Postmodern irony through their "acceptance of life as it is" (Wilde, 1981:119). This Postmodern acceptance of the world as chaotic and unfathomable enables the Postmodernist to state: "People suffer and cause suffering, but there is, after all, not much to be done." (Wilde, 1981:119.) This tone is similar to Dowell who has "accepted the situation" (Ford, 1988:66) and, knowing that Edward is going to commit suicide, states, "Why should I hinder him?" and with that he "trotted off with the telegram to Leonora. She was quite pleased with it" (Ford, 1988:229). Dowell has accepted the limits of his knowledge in this incomprehensible world and no longer tries to fight for insight into the soul of another, even someone as close to him as Edward. He knows that he can do little, or nothing to change things in this world. Dowell concludes, "It's not my business to think about it" (Ford, 1988:68), and as such, he no longer does.

Bertens states that Postmodernism reveals a "tolerance of uncertainty" (Bertens, 1986:42) and that it "has given up Modernist attempts to restore wholeness to a fragmented world and has accepted the contingency of experience" (Bertens, 1986:42). From the above examples, it is evident that Dowell demonstrates such a tolerance and does not try to restore wholeness, as all the unanswered questions and references to his epistemological darkness reveal. This is in contrast to Modernism, which still lamented the idea of man's limited knowledge. Such a declaration remained an anathema to rational and positivistic thought (Section 2.2.1.2).

Vattimo and other Italian Postmodernists characterize Postmodernism by what they call 'weak thought'. Weak thought is in opposition to metaphysics and is connected to *Verwindung* - which translated implies "distortion, healing, convalescence, resignation, *acceptance*" (Rosso, 1987:83; Calinescu, 1987:272, emphasis added). Weak thought does not purport to have knowledge on issues of metaphysics and is characterized by acceptance and resignation, rather than heroic and brave Modernist struggles for knowledge. The Postmodern concept of 'weak thought' is further evidence of the Postmodernist acceptance of the epistemological indeterminacy of the world.

Ibsch states that in Postmodernism there is a “mutation of the explicit reflection on the limits of possible knowledge into an apparent disregard of the issue” (Ibsch, 1986:131) and that in Modernism there is a “continuous reflection on the limits of consciousness” while in Postmodernism “such reflection is not only lacking...but is also explicitly rejected” (Ibsch, 1986:131). Dowell comes to the point of no longer reflecting on the limits of his knowledge. He comes to the place of saying to his silent listener “I leave it to you” (Ford, 1988:191, 220). In this Dowell reveals a Postmodernist acceptance of his epistemological state and an apparent lack of interest in this issue. He permeates the narrative with his epistemological problems, but then abandons them without an effort to understand or resolve them. His repeated claim of ‘I leave it to you’ reveals that he is no longer interested in thinking about his lack of knowledge and that he rather accepts his limitations.

Dowell accepts that one must live with epistemological darkness and never be able to offer more than: “It is a queer and fantastic world. Why can’t people have what they want?” (Ford, 1988:213.) He knows he cannot answer this question, so he concludes: “Perhaps you can make head or tail of it; it is beyond me.” (Ford, 1988:213.) He accepts his epistemological uncertainty and rejects further pondering on this issue, knowing that answers or insights will not be forthcoming.

As a result, when faced with the task of judging between Leonora and Edward, Dowell decides to leave this decision to the reader. Leonora thinks that Edward is selfish “in desiring that the girl should go five thousand miles away and yet continue to love him” (Ford, 1988:220), while Edward says that “supposing that the girl’s love was a necessity to his existence, and, if he did nothing by word or by action to keep Nancy’s love alive, he couldn’t be called selfish” (Ford, 1988:220). Dowell knows that the answer is not available to him so he states: “I can’t make out which of them was right. I leave it to you.” (Ford, 1988:220.) Dowell has reached the point of accepting his lack of knowledge and realizes the futility of trying to solve the great riddles in his narrative.

As a character in Coover’s Pricksongs and Descants states: “Finally, he simply gave in to it, dumped it in with the rest of life’s inscrutable absurdities, and from that time on began to improve almost daily.” (Coover, 1970:117.) This comment applies to Dowell, who found all his epistemological issues “a little inscrutable” (Ford, 1988:169). He decides to leave all his

thinking and quests for knowledge to the reader and with his “I leave it to you” (Ford, 1988:200), he moves on and goes to collect his American mail (Ford, 1988:227).

Acceptance implies the lack of a desire to change or oppose a situation and the ability to accede to that condition. Dowell's acceptance of his epistemological limitation is foregrounded in The Good Soldier by the absence of a desire on his part to change his situation or lament his lack of knowledge.

In the following example Dowell demonstrates a tolerance towards his epistemological indeterminacy and an acceptance of his situation through his response to the news that he has been cuckolded. He states: “You ask how it feels to be a deceived husband. Just Heavens, I do not know. It feels just nothing at all. It is not Hell and it is certainly not necessarily Heaven. So I suppose it is the intermediate stage. What do they call it? Limbo. No, I feel nothing at all about that.” (Ford, 1988:68.) This statement is strikingly similar to Barth's postmodern character who states: “Need I tell you that I felt no sense of either relief or disappointment?...I merely took note of the fact that despite my intentions six hundred and ninety-nine of my townspeople and myself were still alive.” (Kirk, 1993: 73.) In these examples the characters are struck with unexpected information. In response, they neither ask how or why, nor do they lament their ignorance. They simply accept their situation, as revealed by their submission and tolerance towards the epistemological indeterminacy of the world.

In Postmodernism the “pathos of the modernist hunger for order has been attenuated, ‘turned down’ to a less anxious *acceptance* of the world as ‘manageably chaotic’ and where the new literary emotions are low-key understated ones” (McHale, 1992:22, emphasis added). Acceptance implies an acquiescence of epistemological indeterminacy and darkness. This was an unthinkable position in Modernist thought which still sought to order and understand the dark recesses of the world.

It is significant at this point to state that the congruency between Postmodern thought and Dowell's acceptance of epistemological indeterminacy in The Good Soldier is evidence of Postmodernism in a chronologically Modernist text. Demonstrating that The Good Soldier shares Postmodernism's acceptance of epistemological uncertainty indicates that The Good Soldier contains Postmodern elements of epistemology and that Postmodernism is not a

closed literary period, necessarily including solely those texts with the 1950's onwards as their date of first publication.

Commenting on Brink's postmodern reading of *Jacques le Fataliste et son maître* and Rabinowitz's study of Postmodern elements in Wordsworth's 'Immortality Ode', Gräbe states that if these readings are convincing, they "bear witness to the fact that so-called postmodernist strategies are by no means restricted to what would appear to be the latest trend in fiction, but that they may indeed also be discerned in such 18th century or Romantic texts as a novel by Diderot or an ode by Wordsworth" (Gräbe, 1988:362). It may also be stated that if this study is successful in demonstrating traces of Postmodernist strategies in *The Good Soldier*, it indicates that Postmodernism is not restricted to contemporary fiction, but may be traced to a Modernist novel published in 1915.

Wilde states that in Postmodernism: "The world, in short, is accepted as a given and *in its essentials* as beyond change or understanding. But that recognition is not meant to imply either stoic resignation or suicidal despair." (Wilde, 1981:148.) Dowell demonstrates such an acceptance and it is now appropriate to consider what effect such Postmodern acknowledgement and acceptance of epistemological indeterminacy has on Dowell, if not stoic resignation or suicidal despair.

3.2.3. DISREGARD OF EPISTEMOLOGICAL INDETERMINACY

I am very tired- Dowell (Ford, 1988:220)

It is now appropriate to consider what succeeds Dowell's acceptance and acknowledgement of epistemological uncertainty and limitation. It is specifically Dowell's eventual lack of interest in epistemological issues that deserves further attention in this regard. This section will commence with a brief discussion that places Dowell in the Postmodernist position of absolute epistemological limitation before considering his response to this situation.

Baudrillard states that: "Right now one can stumble into total hopelessness - all the definitions, everything, it's all been done. What can one do? What can one become? And post-modernity is the attempt - perhaps it's desperate, I don't know- to reach a point where one can live with what is left. It is more survival among the remnants than anything else."

(Kellner, 1988:248.) Baudrillard's statement is significant in a discussion on Dowell's epistemological position and his conduct in this situation. Dowell's catch phrase "I don't know" is echoed here as well as his characteristic practice of leaving epistemological questions unanswered. The phrases: "What can one do? What can one become?" are reminiscent of Dowell's: "What does one know and why is one here?" (Ford, 1988:17).

In Baudrillard's postmodern world, man is left with the remains of failed epistemologies. All the definitions and theories on how to gain knowledge - empiricism, rationalism, positivism and science - have been proven false. As a result, the confidence within Modernism that man can know, has been shattered. Part of his survival among the remnants entails a Postmodernist, such as Baudrillard, to live with the fact that no claims to truth are absolute and all such claims from the past lie demolished at his feet. These remnants cannot provide insights and ways of accessing the secrets of the universe.

Dowell finds himself in a similar position. He is a survivor among the remnants of his epistemology. The knowledge he once had has been destroyed and he is left with the knowledge that he cannot know anything for certain. Dowell thought he knew Edward, for example, but now finds himself living with the fragments of his knowledge on Edward. Dowell thought Edward was a faithful and loving husband (Ford, 1988:92), a good soldier, an industrious magistrate (Ford, 1988:89), but this knowledge was not totally accurate. Edward was an unfaithful husband and a dishonest friend. Dowell, like the Postmodernist, realizes that man's knowledge is not absolute or invariable, but rather limited and volatile. As a result, Dowell lives with the rubble of his demolished knowledge.

Dowell states in the course of his narrative that: "I am very tired." (Ford, 1988:220.) He is tired of wandering through the remnants of his shattered knowledge and wants respite from this exercise. He reaches a point of saturation with epistemological issues and is fatigued by all his thinking and sorting through these epistemological shreds, partially because he knows that no insights will be gained through this attempt. It is time for Dowell to continue to *live* with the fragments and to leave epistemological issues behind him.

Wilde distinguishes between Modernism and Postmodernism by stating that in Postmodernism "a world in need of mending is superseded by one beyond repair" (Wilde, 1981:131). In other words, the Modernist attempt to repair is replaced by the Postmodernist

abandonment of this futile exercise. Wilde's postmodernist has tired of Modernist attempts to order, control, understand and explain the universe. These are all epistemological issues and like the Postmodernist, Dowell is tired of these endeavours, knowing that they are futile because knowledge is contingent, elusive and changing.

It now remains to be discovered how Dowell lives among the remnants of a worn out epistemology and a world that is demolished beyond repair.

Part of an acceptance of epistemological limitation is the realization that life is to be lived and that there are pleasures in life to be experienced. This involves, as Wilde states, the Postmodern enjoyment of "the smaller pleasures" (Wilde, 1981:10) or, as Hynes (1987:53) states "the small and tentative achievements" which are still possible in this life. Green states that The Good Soldier comments on the "futility of trying to change a world that can't be understood" (Green, 1981:102), and that the novel is not nihilistic about this, but is rather "proof of his [Ford's] willingness to look beyond despair" (Green, 1981:109). If the world cannot be understood, one might as well abandon efforts at understanding and enjoy the pleasures life has to offer.

Dowell knows that he cannot know (Ford, 1988:39) and as such abandons contemplation to rather enjoy the small and visceral things in life. As Fokkema states: "One may as well decide to continue to live, to forget about epistemological and moral doubt...To disregard the impossibility of narrating a convincing story and just tell any story." (Fokkema, 1997:22.)

For Dowell, such small pleasures are found in his trip to Philadelphia: "For my experiences there were vivid and amusing" (Ford, 1988:142), in laughing and joking with the beautiful Nancy, "that vivid white thing, that saintly and swan-like being" (Ford, 1988:120). Or in a cart ride: "I shall never forget the polished cob that Edward, beside me, drove; the animal's action, it's high stepping, its skin that was like satin. And the peace! And the red cheeks! And the beautiful, beautiful old house." (Ford, 1988:25.) These are everyday circumstances that Dowell is able to appreciate as beautiful and pleasurable. He is able to accept and enjoy the visual and tactile pleasures of these experiences without thinking about them too much.

Zurbrugg quotes Cage who speaks of "purposeful purposelessness" or "purposeless play" (Zurbrugg, 1993:47). According to Cage: "This play, however, is an affirmation of life - not

an attempt to bring order out of chaos or to suggest improvements in creation, but simply a way of waking up to the very life we're living, which is so excellent once one gets one's mind and one's desires out of the way and lets it act of its own accord." (Zurbrugg, 1993:47.) Dowell seems to share Cage's attitude as the following example reveals.

About his trip to the town of M- Dowell states: "I must say that, until the astonishment came, I got nothing but pleasure out of the little expedition." (Ford, 1988:44.) He goes on to comment:

I was out for enjoyment. And I just enjoyed myself. It is so pleasant to be drawn along in front of the spectacular towns with the peaked castles and the many double spires. In the sunlight gleams come from the city - gleams from the glass of windows; from the gilt signs of apothecaries; from the ensigns from the student corpse high up in the mountains; from the helmets of the funny little soldiers moving their stiff little legs in white linen trousers. And it was pleasant to get out in the great big spectacular Prussian station with the hammered bronze ornaments and the paintings of peasants and flowers and cows" (Ford, 1988:45).

This is a description of the pleasure that can be extracted from such a common thing as a train-ride through the country. In a world that is indeterminate and incomprehensible, Dowell embraces the pleasures that are available from the simple and uncomplicated things in life.

Baudrillard states: "I have the impression with post-modernism that there is an attempt to rediscover a certain pleasure in the irony of things, in the game of things." (Kellner, 1988:248.) This implies an acceptance of 'life as it is' an acceptance of the idiosyncrasies and unfathomable things life has to offer. Dowell accepts the irony in life and for him "the great desideratum of life" (Ford, 1988:228) is not to scale the heights of epistemological knowledge, but quite simply, to acquire clothes that fit first time. He envies Leonora's second husband who "is quite an economical person of so normal a figure that he can get quite a large proportion of his clothes ready-made. That is the great desideratum of life, and that is the end of my story" (Ford, 1988:228). This comment reveals that Dowell has turned his attention away from epistemology to concentrate on the ironies and games in everyday life, such as fashion and clothes.

Kvale's comment on the Postmodern world is appropriate in describing Dowell's stance of acceptance. He states that: "What is left is a liberating nihilism, a living with the here and now, a weariness and a playful irony." (Kvale, 1996:25.) Dowell shares that weariness as his,

'I am tired' (Ford, 1988:220) illustrates; yet he exhibits a playful irony in his comments about society and the ending of his story. He states ironically that it is a "happy ending with wedding bells and all" (Ford, 1988:225) because Edward and Nancy, as the "villains" (Ford, 1988:225) have been punished while Leonora, the "slightly deceitful heroine" (Ford, 1988:225) is allowed to prosper and even have a baby. At this point Dowell is able to live with the present and engages with the world and his past ironically rather than epistemologically.

The discussion thus far has focused on Dowell's disregard of epistemological issues and his enjoyment of the smaller pleasures life has to offer, but for the sake of a faithful rendering of the text, it is necessary to acknowledge that Dowell does have moments in which the world is not appealing and in which he abandons his playful irony in order to lament his condition in the world. Consider the following example: "I am that absurd figure, an American millionaire, I sit here, in Edward's gun-room, all day and all day in a house that is absolutely quiet. No one visits me, for I visit no one. No one is interested in me for I have no interests... So life peters out." (Ford, 1988:227.) Here Dowell seems weary, but without the playful irony or content acceptance of the world and his lot in life, which it is evident in the above examples. This example acknowledges that living with the remnants of failed epistemologies is not always easily accepted and simple to shrug off.

This section has aimed to discuss Dowell's response to his limited epistemological position. It was ascertained that Dowell accepts his epistemological darkness and no longer desires epistemological enlightenment. He has learnt to find pleasures in life despite his lack of knowledge and he learns to look at the world ironically⁴, knowing that things are not always as they appear, nor are they always understandable or fathomable.

⁴ Wilde comments on John Dowell and states that Dowell's irony is 'absolute' (Wilde, 1981:32). According to Wilde absolute irony is based on the Modernist desire for control and closure (Wilde, 1981:10) and by implication Dowell desires to control his past through irony and cannot "concede the passing of the 'true sunshine; the true music'" (Wilde, 1988:44). This section contradicts Wilde's statement by demonstrating that Dowell exhibits Postmodernism's 'suspensive irony' (see Section 2.2.2.2 for definition), which involves a willingness to live with uncertainty, an acceptance of the impossibility of making sense of the world and the ability to enjoy the smaller pleasures (Wilde, 1981:44).

It was also determined that Postmodernism shares this disregard of epistemological matters and an enjoyment of the smaller pleasures in life. Demonstrating that the epistemology in The Good Soldier bears traces of a Postmodernist epistemology is significant as it challenges the accepted notion of literary periodization in which The Good Soldier could not possibly be regarded as Postmodern due to its publication in a movement chronologically preceding Postmodernism. Discussing evidence of a Postmodern epistemology in The Good Soldier therefore presents an alternative view of literature that is not confined to periods and years, but is open rather to an investigation of the content of the novel and an interpretation that incorporates the most relevant terms. Such a point of departure acknowledges the Postmodern elements in The Good Soldier and pursues them without fear of creating an anachronism.

Section 3.2 has aimed to discuss the narrator's comments on epistemology in The Good Soldier in order to reveal why his epistemology can be considered Postmodern. In Dowell's acknowledgement and acceptance of epistemological indeterminacy (I don't know) and lack of concern about epistemological closure or resolution (I leave it to you), and enjoyment of the smaller pleasures, Dowell is clearly not Modern, but Postmodern. Dowell, in writing his story reveals the Postmodernist acceptance of epistemological indeterminacy and a rejection of the Modernist confidence in knowing as well as a final disregard for epistemological issues. Discussing the congruencies between Dowell's epistemology and Postmodern theories of knowledge challenges the notion of Postmodernism as a closed literary period and the acceptance of periodization as the only means of dividing literary texts.

It is now appropriate to consider what other epistemological issues arise in the novel, as this is appropriate in a discussion which aims to scrutinize the epistemology of The Good Soldier and acknowledge any congruencies the novel demonstrates with Postmodern theories of knowledge. Such findings will further challenge the accepted notion of literary periodization.

3.3 EPISTEMOLOGICAL ISSUES IN THE GOOD SOLDIER

The Good Soldier demonstrates its theory of knowledge not only through the narrator, but also through the various issues and themes that emerge through the course of reading the novel. The following section aims to discuss these epistemological themes and their possible Postmodern relevance.

The following sections are interrelated in their conviction that absolute and comprehensive knowledge is not possible. As the previous section has stated, knowledge in The Good Soldier is limited and indeterminate and the following discussion aims to expound this argument further. The issues concerning the contingency of knowledge in The Good Soldier are best encapsulated through the following terms and are best arranged in the following sequence in order to achieve a smooth transition between sections, with one section logically leading into another. The issues to be elucidated are: surfaces (section 3.3.1), simulation (3.3.2), perception (3.3.3), epiphany (3.3.4), history (3.3.5), language (3.3.6) and re-enchantment (3.3.7). The fact that these terms are also used in discussions on Postmodernism (as will be discovered shortly) is significant in a consideration of the possible correlation between the epistemology of The Good Soldier and elements of Postmodernist thoughts on knowledge. Such a discovery also challenges the notion of literary chronology in which Postmodernism is conveyed as a watertight literary compartment.

3.3.1. THE SURFACE

A commitment to the surface and to the superficial in all senses of the word- Kirk (1993:1)

The first issue that emerges in the novel is the emphasis on appearances and surfaces. The Good Soldier foregrounds Dowell's interest in appearances as well as the truth-value of knowledge gained from the surface. This section aims to discuss this issue while relating it to Postmodern notions of the surface in order to discover whether there are any possible congruencies between the epistemology in The Good Soldier and Postmodern theories of knowledge.

To engage in a discussion of the surface is to focus on a preference for appearances and images. An emphasis on surface involves a rejection of depths and signifieds in order to engage in the ever-changing signifier and that which is perceived and accepted without further qualification. To live on the surface is to accept the visible and superficial without a desire to dig for depth or an underlying reality. The surface *is* reality and is accepted unconditionally as true.

Dowell's attention to surfaces is explicitly revealed in the lengthy descriptions on the appearances of the other characters. In these descriptions Dowell's enjoyment of surface,

colour and movement is revealed. Consider his description of Florence in a simple blue figured silk dress “- a Chinese pattern- very full in the skirts and broadening out over the shoulders. And her hair was copper-coloured, and the heels of her shoes were exceedingly high, so that she tripped upon the points of her toes. And when she came to the door of the bathing place, and when it opened to receive her, she would look back at me with a little coquettish smile, so that her cheek appeared to be caressing her shoulder” (Ford, 1988:28).

In a similar way he describes Edward Ashburnham: “His hair was fair, extraordinarily ordered in a wave, running from the left temple to the right; his face was of a light brick-red, perfectly uniform in tint up to the roots of the hair itself; his yellow moustache was as stiff as a toothbrush and I verily believe that he had his black smoking jacket thickened a little over the shoulder-blades so as to give himself the air of the slightest possible stoop.” (Ford, 1988:30.) These descriptions are comprehensive and reveal Dowell’s attention to, and enjoyment of, the sensory detail in the appearance of others.

Dowell not only derives pleasure from the visibility and availability of the surface, but also uses it as his source of knowledge. He comments: “And, even in my short incursion into American business life...I found that to rely upon first impressions was the best thing I could do. I found myself automatically docketing and labeling each man as he was introduced to me, by the run of his features and the first words that he spoke.” (Ford, 1988:141.) Dowell relies on the knowledge the surface offers in his dealings with others. As his source of understanding and knowledge of others, he looks no deeper than their appearance and the first impression he forms of them.

In this regard Dowell says: “You meet a man or a woman and, from tiny and intimate sounds, from the slightest of movements, you know at once whether you are concerned with good people or with those who won’t do.” (Ford, 1988:40.) He mentions his twice-removed second-nephew, Carter, and states, “he was handsome and dark and gentle and tall and modest” (Ford, 1988:143) and goes on to state that: “I discovered from his employers that he was just all that he appeared, honest, industrious, high-spirited, friendly and ready to do anyone a good turn.” (Ford, 1988:143.) Dowell bases his knowledge of others on their surface appearance and their first words or gestures.

For Dowell surfaces and appearances are reality. His knowledge about the world and others is based on his impressions of others. He uses appearances to form judgements and conclusions about those around him, so creating his own reality. In his reliance on first impressions and appearances to create reality Dowell demonstrates a Postmodernist position. Muriel Spark's character states: "Appearances *are* reality" (Wilde, 1981:122, emphasis not added) and this echoes Dowell's comment that "to rely on first impressions was the best thing I could do" (Ford, 1988:141).

Like Spark's postmodern character, Dowell has a superficial knowledge that is based on appearances and impressions, but which is nevertheless accepted as sufficient. This is in contrast to Lyotard's conception of Modernism which "emphasized experimentation and the aim of finding an inner truth behind surface appearance" (Sarup, 1993:131). From Lyotard's notion of Modernism it is obvious that the Modernist would not simply accept appearances as true and would rather seek a deeper truth that was not visible on the surface.

Section 3.2. revealed how, from a Postmodern perspective, knowledge is accepted as contingent, changeable and uncertain, consequently, it is fitting to keep to the surface because depth is just a Modernist illusion of absolute and stable knowledge. As Bertens states: "Post-modern art presents itself as surface, Modernist art claims depth behind that surface." (Bertens, 1986:15.) Dowell does not seek such depths of knowledge because he knows that they cannot be found. He asks: "Who in this world knows anything of any other heart - or of his own?" (Ford, 1988:144.) Dowell's statement implies that if one cannot know oneself or another in any deep or comprehensible way, then one might as well keep to the surface, where appearances and impressions are one's source of information about the world.

Conner states that Hassan "finds in postmodernist literature a mistrust of the idea of depth, the idea that the inconstant spray of phenomena conceals secret and universal principles of truth" (Conner, 1990:116). Hassan's postmodernism therefore rejects the notion of being able to delve the depths for the answers to the mysteries of the world. Man has no access to truths and secrets because no such knowledge is available to him. For the Postmodernist Hassan refers to, no universal principles of truth can be found, whether from the depths or the surface. No theory on knowledge, whether superficial or penetrating, can supply ways of delving the deep mysteries of the world, or of deriving any absolute knowledge. All knowledge is contingent.

Even though Dowell derives his knowledge from the surface, he acknowledges the uncertainty of knowledge gained in this way and addresses the limitations of his knowledge in the following comment:

That question of first impressions has always bothered me a good deal - but quite academically. I mean that, from time to time I have wondered whether it were or were not best to trust to one's first impressions in dealing with people. But I have never had anyone to deal with except waiters and chambermaids and the Ashburnhams, with whom I didn't know that I was having any dealings. And, as far as waiters and chambermaids were concerned, I have generally found that my first impressions were correct enough. If my first idea of a man was that he was civil, obliging and attentive, he generally seemed to go on being all of these things. Once, however, at our Paris flat we had a maid who appeared to be charming, and transparently honest. She stole, nevertheless, one of Florence's diamond rings. She did it, however, to save her young man from going to prison. So here, as somebody says somewhere, was a special case." (Ford, 1988:141.)

Appearances and first impressions are a source of knowledge for Dowell even though he is aware of the unreliability and volatility of this epistemological exercise. An acknowledgement of epistemological indeterminacy results in abandonment of knowledge quests and an acceptance of the knowledge the surface has to offer, knowing that deep and absolute knowledge is unavailable. Neither depth nor surface can offer absolute knowledge and as such in Postmodernism, the "assumed distinction between ideological surface and truthful depth (signifier, signified, text and world) we are told has deserted us" (Brooker, 1992:23).

Dowell accepts the surface truth of Florence, for example, with her golden hair and beautiful dresses and does not seek to know the Florence that lies behind the outer costume. In this Dowell reflects Postmodern tendencies because in Postmodernism it is revealed that the "hermeneutics of 'unmasking' turns out to be based on foundationalist assumption, since it looks for ultimate truth behind appearances" (Rosso, 1987:82). Dowell does not seek to unmask Florence because he does not believe that there is absolute and ultimate knowledge or truth available to him behind the surface.

According to Dowell, Florence is "a personality of paper" (Ford, 1988:114), who "just went completely out of existence, like yesterday's newspaper" (Ford, 1988:113) when she died. He states that Florence "represented a real human being with a heart, with feelings, with sympathies and with emotions only as a bank-note represents a certain quantity of gold" (Ford, 1988:114). Dowell regards Florence as a surface, behind which there are no hidden

depths. She is as insubstantial and superficial as a piece of paper, which is nothing but surface and on which nothing but superficial ink is printed. From Dowell's perspective, Florence is only a superficial representation of a real person and lacks the qualities of depth such as a heart, feelings, sympathies and emotions. Dowell engages with Florence as surface because that is all he believes her to be.

Dowell regards Florence as superficial because she lacks depth, but Dowell is also superficial in the sense that he exists on the surface and lacks depth of understanding. At the commencement of his narrative Dowell states: "I had never sounded the depths of an English heart. I had known the shallows." (Ford, 1988:11.) Dowell had remained on the surface because of his acceptance that knowledge is limited and changeable. He also realizes that the Modernist notion of depth is an illusion that cannot result in absolute knowledge of others, or even of him self.

Liebenburg states that a concomitant feature of Postmodernism is its "superficiality- its abandonment of the notion of truth or depth, replacing it with the surface play of textuality and multiplicity" (Liebenburg, 1988:273), while Bertens (1995:166) states, "Postmodernism then is depthlessness, it offers a new kind of superficiality in the most literal sense". The Postmodern world of Liebenburg and Bertens is superficial because it abandons the notion that depth has a claim to absolute truth. These Postmodernists realize that knowledge is evasive and unstable, and that the knowledge the surface offers is to be accepted as adequate.

Dowell's knowledge of Florence is superficial in that it involves the constant play of signifiers on the printed page and incorporates what Liebenburg (above) labels the 'surface play of textuality and multiplicity'. Florence is surface and in engaging with her Dowell engages with superficial signifiers which constantly defer meaning and which have no depth or presence in themselves. Florence constantly eludes the depth and stability associated with presence and is "a gay tremulous beam" (Ford, 1988:21), a "scrap of paper" (Ford, 1988:114) and Dowell finds it difficult to keep a grasp on something so frivolous and lightweight.

Florence is forever deferring presence through her constant role-playing and play-acting (Ford, 1988: 50, 54-55, 112). She is a multiplicity of signifiers and is characterized by a lack of depth. She presents herself both as "one of those great erotic women of whom history tells us" (Ford, 1988:112) and as "the heroine of a French comedy" (Ford, 1988:112). Florence is

heart patient and learned Poughkeepsie graduate (Ford, 1988:19); she is match-maker and adulterous (Ford, 1988:69); friend and deceiver.

Florence is like the character Lotaria – Corina – Gertrude – Ingrid – Alfonsina - Sheila in Calvino's If on a Winter's Night a Traveller (Calvino, 1998:211-218), who is a string of signifiers to which a string of roles are attached, such as tourist, police woman, programmer and comrade. Florence partakes in all her roles and basks in the surface play of the signifier, while Dowell no longer seeks any depth behind his wife's constant role revisions. He realizes that he does not know Florence and that there is nothing to be known behind the surface that is presented to him⁵.

The Good Soldier incorporates a Postmodernist attention to surfaces and abandonment of depths as part of their realization and acceptance of epistemological indeterminacy. The novel emphasizes that neither surfaces nor depths result in absolute knowledge, and that the contingent knowledge the surface does offer must be accepted as adequate. But it is acknowledged that the surface still contains pleasures that are to be enjoyed in the absence of epistemological certainty.

Even though Dowell lives on the surface and accepts the contingency of knowledge, it must be acknowledged that there are points at which he searches and yearns for depth and answers. At moments of intense confusion, Dowell admits to desiring absolute knowledge and guidance. At one point he states: "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 a darkness." (Ford, 1988:18.) Dowell's comment acknowledges the limits of man's knowledge, while also demonstrating a desire for answers and insight. These answers require depths and origins of meanings and demonstrate that Dowell is not always able to revel in his existence on the surface where answers and insights are not forthcoming. Significantly, in the light of the epistemological

⁵ It must be acknowledged that even though Dowell lives on the surface and is faced with depthless characters like Florence, he does sometimes have access to depths below the surface. One example of this is when Edward unburdens his soul to Dowell and tells him the truth about his feelings for Nancy (Ford, 1988:104). Here Dowell has access to truth that is not superficial or fake.

indeterminacy that pervades the text, Dowell's question and plea can only remain unanswered and all remains a darkness.

The congruency identified between the Postmodern notion of surface and the issue of surfaces in The Good Soldier yet again challenges the notion of literary periodization. Demonstrating that Dowell's attention to surfaces is paralleled by Postmodernism's engagement with the surface, foregrounds the traces of Postmodernism in a Modernist text and consequently emphasizes the drawback in confining a consideration of literary texts to the area of chronology.

Related to the matter of surfaces is the issue of simulation where something is imitated or reproduced to look like the original. In such a case knowledge will not be permanent or stable since what is taken as original or true is simply an imitation. The issue of simulation further foregrounds the contingency of knowledge through demonstrating that what is seen or presented on the surface is not necessarily true, but a simulation of something else.

3.3.2 SIMULATION

He painted the desk, and the chair in front of the desk, in the corner of the room directly opposite the real desk and chair... if someone had entered the room and decided to sit at one of the desks, that person could not possibly have distinguished the real desk from its reproduction- Raymond Federman (1989:246).

This section aims to discuss the issue of simulation in The Good Soldier. This issue is related to the above discussion on surfaces, as simulations occur on the surface and further undermine the truth and stability of knowledge gained from the surface. Various comments made within Postmodernism on the issue of simulations will also be considered in order to scrutinize the possible congruency between The Good Soldier and Postmodern views on epistemology.

Simulations populate the world of The Good Soldier. To simulate is to "imitate or reproduce the appearance, character or conditions of" (Pearsall, 1999:1338) and the world of the Dowells and Ashburnham's is filled with imitations and reproductions. Dowell and Florence listen to "a mocking bird *imitate* an old tomcat" (Ford, 1988:82, emphasis added) on their wedding night and Dowell states that he "cannot tell an *etching* from a *photographic reproduction*" (Ford, 1988:69, emphasis added). Florence "*represented* a real human being

with a heart, with feelings, with sympathies and with emotions only as a bank-note represents a certain quality of gold” (Ford, 1988:114, emphasis added).

Dowell realizes that he lives in a world scattered with simulations and he states that: “No smoking-room will ever be other than peopled with incalculable simulacra amidst smoke wreaths.” (Ford, 1988: 15.) Dowell perceives himself as surrounded by forms that present themselves as good, trustworthy and honest men. Dowell had believed in these forms, but through an episode with Edward, Dowell comes to realize that these forms are not true and that knowledge gained from these simulacra is faulty and fictional.

Dowell based his knowledge of Edward on the image that Edward presented, as “the cleanest looking sort of chap” (Ford, 1988:18), as “an excellent magistrate, a first rate soldier” (Ford, 1988:18). Dowell states that “you would have said that he was just exactly the sort of chap that you could have trusted your wife with. And I trusted mine and it was madness” (Ford, 1988:18). Edward was not the honest, trustworthy and faithful husband and friend that Dowell thought he was. Edward simply imitated these qualities and lied to his closest friend, Dowell who built up a faulty knowledge based on a simulacrum. Dowell’s knowledge of Edward was as transient, wispy and insignificant as the smoke wreaths in the men’s clubs he frequented with Edward.

Baudrillard recognizes the profusion of simulacra in the Postmodern world and states that: “The new postmodern universe tends to make everything a simulacrum.” (Sarup, 1993:164.) From Baudrillard’s perspective simulation is one of the constitutive features of Postmodernism, and in his essay entitled Simulations he mentions how, as Kellner phrases, “in the postmodern society ‘simulations’ come to dominate the social order as models precede ‘the real’ and come to constitute society as a ‘hyperreality’” (Kellner, 1988:243).

As in Baudrillard’s postmodernism, simulations dominate society in the world of The Good Soldier. Members of society are imitations and reproductions of desired models. In this world where appearances are all important, characters imitate the desired model of social life and life-style. This society held the model of “good people” (Ford, 1988:38, 65, 223) out for members of Dowell’s class to imitate. The Dowells and Ashburnham’s are involved in this imitation in which they seem to be cardboard copies of each other and of some original model. Commenting on Baudrillard’s Simulacra and Simulation, Hawk states that “homes,

relationships, fashion, art music, all become dictated by their ideal models presented through the media” (Hawk, 2000). As in Baudrillard’s simulation world, the characters in The Good Soldier have their lifestyles and consumer choices determined by ideal models, which instigate their imitation.

Dowell states: “Indeed, you may take it that what characterized our relationship was an atmosphere of taking everything for granted. The given proposition was, that we were all ‘good people.’ We took for granted that we all liked beef underdone but not too underdone; that both men preferred a good liqueur brandy after lunch; that both women drank a very light Rhine wine qualified with Fachingen water- that sort of thing.” (Ford, 1988:37-38.) The Dowells and Ashburnham’s are following the model of “good people”; young upper class couples who frequent certain resorts, wear certain fashions and eat certain foods.

Dowell acknowledges the artificial and simulational nature of his world in the following comment on their retreat to Naheim: “I stood upon the carefully swept steps of the Englischer Hof, looking at the carefully arranged trees in tubs upon the carefully arranged gravel whilst carefully arranged people walked past in carefully calculated gaiety, at the carefully calculated hour.” (Ford, 1988:27.) Dowell is aware that the world and society he inhabits is not spontaneous and real, but rather clipped and shaped to reach a desired and ideal model, like a topiary tree in one of the tubs at Englischer Hof. There is an obsession to be successful at imitating an ideal that society has purported as desirable and necessary.

The above comments highlight the presence of performance and imitation in the world of Florence, Edward, Dowell and Leonora. In the following comment Dowell acknowledges his own role in imitating the ideal. His comment reveals that the ‘Dowell’ known to the other characters is not the ‘real’ Dowell. He states that:

Mind, I am not saying that this is not the most desirable type of life in the world; that it is not an almost unreasonably high standard. For it is really nauseating, when you detest it, to have to eat every day several slices of thin, tepid, pink india rubber, and it is disagreeable to have to drink brandy when you would prefer to be cheered up by warm, sweet Kummel. And it is a nasty thing to have to take a cold bath in the morning when what you want is really a hot one at night. And it stirs a little of the faith of your fathers that is deep down within you to have to have it taken for granted that you are an Episcopalian when really you are an old-fashioned Philadelphia Quaker...But the inconvenient - well, hang it all, I will say it - the damnable nuisance of the whole thing is, that with all the taking for granted, you never really get an inch deeper than the things I have catalogued.” (Ford, 1988:39-40.)

Dowell's comment illustrates that in a world of simulation there is no place for the real. Simulation becomes reality for the members of this society. The reality that Dowell, Florence, Edward and Leonora derive from their world is not true at all. Dowell does *not* enjoy cold showers or whisky and the knowledge any character derives from Dowell's external behaviour will be faulty. Dowell is simply imitating the ideal model and presenting an *image* that is to be perceived and accepted as real. His imitation is just one among many in a world of simulation.

Carroll states that in Postmodernism: "Simulation is what we deal with instead of reality. Reality withers away under the postmodernist dispensation. Experiences of simulations replace experiences of reality, and all we ever know, or, maybe, care to know are simulacra." (Carroll, 1997:97.) It is evident that in the world of The Good Soldier no-one cares that Dowell is really a Quaker or that he detests india rubber. Success at simulation and reproduction is all that matters and accepting a person's imitations as real is part of this world.

Dowell states how he never "gets an inch deeper" (Ford, 1988:40) than the things he has catalogued and this is one of the outcomes of a simulational society. If all is about imitation and reproduction, then there is no room for authenticity. This is a world of the surface where depth does not exist. Bertens states how Jameson perceives in Postmodernism "a new depthlessness which finds its prolongation...in a whole new culture of the image or the simulacrum" (Bertens, 1995:165). Simulacra belong on the surface and in the world of The Good Soldier, as within Postmodernism, the surface only offers limited and contingent knowledge.

This section has aimed to discuss the issue of simulation in The Good Soldier. It was discovered that the novel foregrounds simulation as another source of epistemological indeterminacy. Simulations abound in this world, but cannot be accepted as true and lasting. Various comments on simulation from a Postmodern perspective were also considered and similarities between the issue of simulation within the novel and within Postmodernism were identified.

The issue of simulation is specifically foregrounded in Postmodernism through the work of commentators such as Baudrillard. Being able to use a characteristically Postmodern concept in a discussion of a chronologically Modernist text challenges the notion that literary texts are

confined to the movements to which they sequentially belong. Discovering traces of Postmodernism in The Good Soldier regarding notions of simulation, reveals that literary Postmodernism is not confined to a chronologically demarcated period. Clayton, in his discussion on the Postmodern aspects of Dickens' fiction, states that when qualities of one movement are discussed in a text of a preceding or succeeding movement, the "tendency to construct overtly neat historical schemes" (Clayton, 1991:183) is changed. This same change in the tendency to view texts as belonging to clearly defined literary periods is proposed in this study by elucidating the elements of Postmodernism that are identifiable in The Good Soldier.

It is necessary to acknowledge that the issue of simulation in The Good Soldier is not congruent in all respects with Baudrillard's notion of simulation. The above discussion has pointed out the similarities between Baudrillard's notion of simulation and the issue of simulation in The Good Soldier. Baudrillard however expands on this concept and focuses on the issue of consumer society in the context of Postmodern production, consumption and the rule of the image. These issues depart from the notion of simulation in The Good Soldier as they concern issues that characterize Postmodern society and technology, such as the explosion of the media; the absence of the real and its replacement with the hyperreal and the rise of cybernetics (Kellner, 1988:242-243). Baudrillard's notion of simulation therefore involves issues characteristic of Postmodern society in the late twentieth century and therefore cannot be applied in its entirety to a text published in 1915. For the purposes of this discussion only the similarities between Baudrillard's notion of simulation and the issue of simulation in The Good Soldier have been considered.

If one is living on the surface, where appearances are reality and simulations abound, then it is appropriate to investigate the equipment of the surface, that is, one's senses and perceptions in attempts to gain knowledge of the world. The following section aims to discuss the issue of perception in The Good Soldier in order to discover any similarities between the text and Postmodern thoughts on perception.

3.3.3 PERCEPTION

The whole world for me is like spots of colour on an immense canvas- John Dowell
(Ford, 1988:20)

In the light of the above discussion on the limited nature of knowledge derived from the surface and from simulations, it is appropriate to consider how the characters' use of their perceptions influences their knowledge. The Good Soldier foregrounds the issue of using one's perceptions as a source of knowledge and it is appropriate to consider the possible correlation this view shares with Postmodernist thoughts on perception. This section will first discuss the sensory nature of perceptions (Section 3.3.3.1) as demonstrated in The Good Soldier before discussing the quality of knowledge that is gained through perception (Section 3.3.3.2) by the characters of The Good Soldier.

3.3.3.1 SENSORY NATURE OF PERCEPTIONS

This section aims to discuss the immediate and sensational nature of perceptions in The Good Soldier and the congruencies such an emphasis demonstrates with Postmodern thought.

The Good Soldier foregrounds the sensory nature of perceptions through the pleasure Dowell derives from the stimulation of his senses, as the following examples demonstrate. Perception in this context refers to "the ability to see, hear, or become aware of something through the senses" (Pearsall, 1999: 1059). Due to Dowell's abandonment of depths for a commitment to the surface, it is appropriate that he use his senses in an engagement with the surface because the surface is so visible, tactile and available that it appeals to his sense of sight, touch and hearing.

As an orientation to the nature of perception, its rawness, immediacy and tangibility it is appropriate to discuss Dowell's cataleptic episode in The Good Soldier. It is significantly through Dowell's inability to perceive and sense that the issue of perception, its physicality, is best demonstrated. Dowell suffers from catalepsy after Florence dies: "I was in a state just simply cataleptic. They put me to bed and I stayed there; they brought me my clothes and I dressed; they led me to an open grave and I stood beside it. If they had taken me to the edge of a river, or if they had flung me beneath a railway train, I should have been drowned or mangled in the same spirit. I was the walking dead." (Ford, 1988:103-104.) In his state of

catalepsy, Dowell is not able to see, hear or feel anything. This is the opposite of a tactile awareness and openness, a responsiveness to sensations and perceptions that Dowell demonstrates through the rest of the novel. It is significant that a cataleptic episode should befall a character so stimulated by his senses. The novel emphasizes the issue of sensory perception, both through its presence and its marked absence in this scene.

Fokkema state that “sensory perception, combined with an emphasis on concreteness and surface appearance” is a prominent theme in Postmodern texts (Fokkema, 1997:37; Fokkema, 1986:88) and Dowell seems to share this theme due to the emphasis he places on his perceptions and his ability to accept the sensory detail of the surface without having to reflect and conclude on it. He simply enjoys the experience of receiving stimuli through his senses. One can picture his enjoyment at seeing the green fields and feeling the warmth of the sun through the train windows in the following example: “I like catching the two-forty; I like the slow, smooth roll of the great big trains - and they are the best trains in the world! I like being drawn through the green country and looking at it through the clear glass of the great windows.” (Ford, 1988:44.) Here he evokes hearing, touch and sight through his description of the train’s rhythmic movement and sound and his view of the green countryside through the clear window. Dowell enjoys sensory experience and shares this with Postmodern narrators and characters, who “recognize that their worlds contain pleasures as well as pains, and therefore choose not to distance themselves, in the manner of their predecessors, from the *phenomenal* world” (Chabot, 1988:6, emphasis added). Dowell embraces immediate experience and gains pleasure from the stimulation of his senses by the surface.

From a Postmodernist perspective Sontag (1993:55) states “What is important now is to recover our senses, we must learn to *see* more, to *hear* more, to *feel* more” and in The Good Soldier Dowell engages in exactly this activity. He describes the evening when he first met the Ashburnhams:

I have forgotten the aspect of many things, but I shall never forget the aspect of the dinning-room of the Hotel Excelsior on that evening...that white room, festooned with papier-mache fruits and flowers; the tall windows; the many tables; the black screen round the door with the three golden cranes flying upward on each panel; the palm-tree in the centre of the room; the swish of the waiter’s feet; the cold expensive elegance; the mien of the diners as they came in every evening...those things I shall not easily forget. (Ford, 1988:29.)

The sensory nature of this scene is evident through Dowell's use of words like *white*, *black*, *golden*, *swish*, *cold* (Ford above). He pays attention to the surface detail of this scene and his perceptions are composed of these aspects.

Dowell's enjoyment of, and immersion in, his senses, emphasizes the tangibility and immediacy of perception, rather than the intellectual and rational processing of sensory stimuli. The Good Soldier emphasizes the act of perceiving rather than the resulting contemplation and storing of these perceptions. As such, elements of The Good Soldier differ from certain purposes within Modernism which combined perceiving "with intellectual reflection and in-depth analysis" (Fokkema, 1997: 38). The novel corresponds rather to the Postmodernist feature which offers "sensory perception and movement" as "the polemical answers to the intellectualistic processing of impressions and the detachment of the Modernists" (Fokkema, 1986:89).

In his cart-ride with Edward (Ford, 1988:25), Dowell enjoys the sense of speed and movement as the cart travels along, and the sight, sound and feel of the horses, which pull them. Dowell's involvement in these sensory perceptions and movements foregrounds his lack of detachment and emphasizes the immediate physical stimulation he derives in this scene in the absence of contemplation, rationalization and reflection.

It is evident that The Good Soldier shares elements of Postmodernism's attention to and enjoyment of sensory perceptions. The novel foregrounds the appeal and immediacy of sensory perception, which is promoted in Postmodernism. Dowell's engagement with sensory perception and Postmodernism's celebration of the senses demonstrates a congruency between text and movement that would not be recognized from a purely chronological point of departure. Viewing Postmodernism as a watertight movement and The Good Soldier as a chronologically Modernist text does not allow for the recognition of similarities between text and movement or the satisfying elucidation of the text that results.

It is now appropriate to consider the quality of knowledge that is gained through these perceptions in The Good Soldier and any correlation this view demonstrates with Postmodern thoughts on perception as a knowledge source.

3.3.3.2 PERCEPTION AS KNOWLEDGE SOURCE

The Good Soldier demonstrates Dowell's enjoyment of sensory stimulation, but more importantly foregrounds the issue of utilizing perceptions as a knowledge source. This section aims to consider how The Good Soldier's portrayal of an epistemology based on perceptions corresponds to a Postmodern theory on the validity of sensory perception as a knowledge source, as advocated by Slethaug, McCaffery and Green.

Through the course of his narrative, Dowell demonstrates how his perceptions determine his understanding of a situation. Seeing Florence run past him to her room "with a face whiter than paper and her hand on the black stuff over her heart" (Ford, 1988:96), results in Dowell's perception that Florence is suffering from pains in her chest and needs her medicine for angina pectoris. When he sees Florence's body arranged neatly on her bed, with her phial in her hand, he assumes that she has died of a heart attack (Ford, 1988:97). In this case, Dowell's perceptions of the situation form his knowledge about the events that had transpired.

Dowell's use of perceptions as his source of knowledge recalls Section 3.3.1's emphasis on surfaces and appearances and their epistemological relevance. It has been discovered that The Good Soldier reveals how knowledge gained from the surface is contingent and often faulty. This issue is also emphasized through reference to Dowell's perceptions. Just as Dowell's knowledge derived from the surface is contingent, so is the knowledge derived from his perceptions. Both sources are revealed as being unstable and limited. Neither surfaces nor perceptions can result in any absolute or stable knowledge for Dowell.

The Good Soldier foregrounds how perceptions are merely another source of limited and uncertain knowledge. Take for instance Dowell's perception of Florence as a sickly and frail woman that must have her door locked at night for fear that an unexpected entry might cause "her poor little heart" to "flutter away to its doom" (Ford, 1988:84). Dowell's perception of Florence is erroneous as she reveals herself to be a very healthy, strong and deceptive woman. The truth behind her running with her hand on her heart was that she had just witnessed Edward declaring his love for Nancy, and as his mistress, Florence was understandably distressed. In shock and grief she ran up to her room and committed suicide by drinking poison from the phial. This event demonstrates the unpredictability and uncertainty that is connected with using perceptions as a source of absolute knowledge. In an ironic twist, Florence's perception that Edward and Nancy were lovers is revealed as faulty and as such the

error at taking perceptions as an absolute source of knowledge is poignantly demonstrated through Florence's unnecessary suicide.

The Good Soldier rejects the premise that seeing is equivalent to knowing, as was the case in Balzac's fiction (Rignall, 1992:115), where "to observe acutely is to penetrate to the truth" (Rignall, 1992:116). The novel demonstrates that such a positive penetration of the truth is not possible since knowledge is contingent and elusive. The Good Soldier demonstrates how Dowell uses his perceptions as a source of knowledge and ends up with an erroneous view of his marriage, himself and his friendship with the Ashburnhams. After years of using perceptions as a knowledge source, Dowell learns several facts he had not known:

That the Ashburnhams had not spoken together in private for years; that Florence had carried on her affair with Jimmy after her marriage; that Ashburnham had put a stop to it and taken Florence as his own mistress; that Ashburnham's past affairs had brought him and Leonora to the verge of bankruptcy and had made it necessary for them to live in India and on the continent while they rented out their estate; that Leonora had procured Maisie Maiden from her husband for Ashburnham; that Maisie had died after overhearing Ashburnham tell Florence that she, Maisie, was "a poor little rat;"...and that Florence had committed suicide after overhearing Ashburnham tell Nancy that he loved her. (Coetzee, 1963:5.10.)

These facts were the truth of Dowell's twelve years of marriage and nine years of friendship. He had trusted his perceptions as his knowledge source and the error in this is demonstrated in the complete ignoramus that Dowell finds himself to be. Dowell discovers that there is an inconsistency between his perception of reality and the actual reality of what transpired in his past.

The Good Soldier's distrust of an epistemology where perceptions are a reliable and stable source of knowledge is summed up in Jardine's statement that: "The ancient problem of the relationship between what in everyday language we call 'experience' of 'reality' and what we then decide to call 'knowledge' about it (let alone knowing the 'truth' about it) has resurfaced with a vengeance in the twentieth century." (Jardine, 1993:433.) This statement coincides with the issue of perception in The Good Soldier, where the congruency between perception and knowledge of reality is questioned.

The Good Soldier's challenge to a theory of knowledge that depends on sensations echoes a Postmodern concern with perception and experience. Slethaug, commenting on Nabokov and

Pynchon, states that these Postmodern authors “play with texts and decenter them in part to explore the question of how *experience itself differs from perceptions of experience*” (Slethaug, 1993:53, emphasis added). He goes on to state how Nabokov, in Despair, “leads his readers to understand that resemblances and signifying associations are not inherent in the objects themselves but lie in the perceptions, deliberate and intentional misconceptions, metaphorical linkings, and acts of the viewer” (Slethaug, 1993:189). McCaffery identifies this same Postmodernist interest and states that the Postmodern position is that “reality and our experience of reality need not necessarily be continuous” (McCaffery, 1986:xxiii). From these comments it is evident that Postmodernism rejects the view that knowledge gained through the senses is in any way comprehensive and stable because it is acknowledged that perception might differ from reality and experience.

The following example demonstrates how the knowledge Dowell gains from his perceptions is not congruent with reality and, as such, how The Good Soldier shares the Postmodern view on perceptions mentioned by McCaffery and Slethaug. Here Dowell interprets his experience wrongly when he tells Florence’s aunts that he intends to marry her:

And at that Miss Emily wailed and fainted. But Miss Florence, in spite of the state of her sister, threw herself on my neck and cried out: ‘Don’t do it, John. Don’t do it. You’re a good young man’ and she added, whilst I was getting out of the room to send Florence to her aunt’s rescue: ‘We ought to tell you more. But she is our dear sister’s child.’ Florence, I remember, received me with a chalk-pale face and the exclamation: ‘Have those old cats been saying anything against me?’ But I assured her that they had not and hurried her into the room of her strangely afflicted relatives. I had really forgotten all about that exclamation of Florence’s until this moment. She treated me so very well - with such tact - that, if I ever thought of it afterwards *I put it down to her deep affection for me.*” (Ford, 1988:79, emphasis added.)

In this example Dowell’s experience and his perception of his experience are incongruent. Reality for Dowell is that Florence loves him and has a deep affection for him and that Florence’s aunts are strange old ladies who over react and do not seem to want the sweet Florence to marry him. The truth is that Florence does not love Dowell and that she is using him to acquire her dream of a “European establishment” (Ford, 1988:77). Florence’s aunts are aware of their niece’s vices and want to warn the innocent Dowell about the vixen he is about to marry, who at that moment was still involved with Jimmy.

That same evening Dowell goes to fetch Florence at her uncle’s: “The old man received me with a stony, husky face. I was not to see Florence; she was ill; she was keeping her room.

And, from something that he let drop - an odd Biblical phrase that I have forgotten - I gathered that all that family simply did not intend her to marry ever in her life." (Ford, 1988:79-80.) Here again Dowell is mistaken. His perception is that Florence's family are irrational in their desire that Florence never marry, while in fact they are trying to spare him from the tainted and deceptive woman they know Florence to be.

Green mentions the "ambiguities of perception that occur within what we identify as typical or ordinary reality" (Green, 1986:42) and commenting on Thomas Berger's Neighbors (1980), he states that "the senses are not reliable because the world eludes our ability to understand" (Green, 1986:42). Green's comment is relevant in a discussion on the truth-value of perceptions in that it distinguishes between perception and reality as well as the error with an epistemology based on perceptions. His comment on Berger's postmodern novel is relevant to the world of The Good Soldier, which eludes Dowell's ability to understand it, as his constant misperceptions and lack of knowledge illustrate.

An appropriate example in this regard is where Dowell misperceives Edward's behaviour in the smoking-room where men tell the most exaggerated stories about their conquests with women. Of Edward he states: "He didn't even like hearing them; he would fidget and get up and go out to buy a cigar or something of that sort." (Ford, 1988:18.) Dowell puts Edward's behaviour down to his good character, while the truth is that Edward felt very uncomfortable at hearing these stories because of his guilt in this area. Where some men might be boasting or lying about this issue, Edward feels guilty for his affairs, especially his current affair with the wife of the man he is sitting with - John Dowell. Dowell's perception of Edward at that stage was: "You would have said that he was just exactly the sort of chap you could have trusted your wife with." (Ford, 1988:18.) But now that he knows the truth he says: "And I trusted mine and it was madness." (Ford, 1988:18.) Here Dowell's perceptions differ from reality and as a result, the knowledge he derives from his perceptions is faulty.

Dowell's misconceptions seem vast in magnitude. Throughout the novel he lives a reality totally at odds with what was really happening. In the issue of his marriage and friendships, Dowell is as blatantly mistaken and his perceptions as fictive as the Postmodern character Earl Keese, in Neighbors: "Were Keese to accept the literal witness of his eyes, his life would have been of quite another character...Perhaps a half-dozen times a year he thought he saw such phenomena as...a nun amok in the middle of an intersection (policeman directing

traffic), a rat of record proportions (an abandoned football), or a brazen pervert blowing him a kiss from the rear window of a bus (side of sleeping workman's face, propped on one hand).” (Green, 1986:4.) Dowell may not share Keese's almost hallucinatory misperceptions (although his vision of faces as floating globes (Ford, 1988:102) may come close), but in the scope and effect of his faulty perceptions, Dowell is just as mistaken and removed from reality as Keese.

It is evident that The Good Soldier shares that aspect of Postmodernism which demonstrates a lack of faith in perceptions as a comprehensive and stable knowledge source. The discussion on Dowell's perceptions and their departure from reality is comparable with the view enacted in Postmodernism that there is incompatibility between one's experience and one's perception of experience.

In the interests of an accurate and balanced study, it is necessary to acknowledge that attention to the issue of perceptions is not confined to the Postmodern period, as Modernism, specifically within literary impressionism, already demonstrated an interest in this issue. Significantly, The Good Soldier has been labeled an impressionist novel (Levenson, 1984:381) and Ford has called himself a literary impressionist (Levenson, 1992:49). It is therefore evident that substantial links have been made between The Good Soldier and Modernist notions of perception.

Despite this acknowledgement, a study that seeks to discuss perception in The Good Soldier from the perspective of Postmodern views, is still significant for the additional insights it enables. A purely Modernist or literary impressionist study of perception in The Good Soldier would overlook the subtleties of Dowell's acceptance of his epistemological indeterminacy and his enjoyment of sensory perceptions for their own sake. Modernism still lamented the limits of man's knowledge and would have seen in The Good Soldier a sad tale of epistemological limitation, while still seeking traces of any positive knowledge that Dowell could possibly have gleaned. A study that overlooks the author and his intentions, as well as historical context is especially sensitive to the subtler messages that are present in the text.

Identifying similarities between The Good Soldier and Postmodern views on perception, allows for a fruitful discussion which would not have been possible if the text were considered as purely Modernist due to its place in literary chronology. Acknowledging the

traces of Postmodernism in The Good Soldier leads to a satisfying discussion while at the same time challenging the regimental nature of literary periodization.

The novel further demonstrates the contingency and elusiveness of knowledge through Dowell's marked lack of any epiphanic experiences. The following section aims to discuss this issue and identify any similarities such a view might demonstrate with views within Postmodernism.

3.3.4 EPIPHANY

This section aims to discuss the role of the epiphany in The Good Soldier, as the epiphany is a prominent device in Modernist fiction, while not as pervasive in Postmodernist fiction. This discovery is significant in a study that aims to consider Postmodern elements in a Modernist work such as The Good Soldier.

The occurrence of any moments of vision and understanding in The Good Soldier and the implications this has on the novel's epistemology will be investigated in the following section (Section 3.3.4.1). Section 3.3.4.2 will discuss the implications of a work of art as conducive to creating moments of vision for the artist. This involves a discussion on the implications of Dowell's writing as a work of art and the effect this has on his knowledge.

3.3.4.1 EPIPHANY IN THE GOOD SOLDIER

... matches struck unexpectedly in the dark- (Woolf, 1977:175)

This section aims to address the issue of the epiphany in connection with a discussion on the epistemology of The Good Soldier. Section 2.2.2.1 and Section 2.2.2.2 introduced the role of the epiphany in Modern and Postmodern fiction respectively. It now remains to be investigated whether The Good Soldier demonstrates a Modernist or Postmodernist view of the role of the epiphany in fiction, which will subsequently offer insight into the epistemology of the text.

From Section 2.2.2.1 it is possible to recall that "the epiphanic illumination" is "the most conventionalized, imitated, standardized feature of modernist fiction" (Stevick, 1977:199).

The epiphany was not only used by a large number of Modernist writers, such as Joyce, Woolf, Faulkner and Conrad, but also figured pervasively within the works of various authors. Beja comments on the moments of vision in James and states that: “The subtle and intuitive insights achieved by people within James’s fiction are innumerable.” (Beja, 1971:52.) It is therefore evident that in Modernist fiction, the epiphany was a prominent and pervasive presence both among various writers as well as within the individual author’s work.

In contrast to the pervasiveness of the epiphany as a literary device and theme in Modernist fiction, Section 2.2.2.2 demonstrated that Postmodern fiction is marked by its lack of moments of vision and illumination. The contrast between Modernism’s use and Postmodernism’s abandonment or modification of the epiphany is a result of a difference in epistemology. As has been documented in Section 2.2.1.2, Modernism still thought that absolute and comprehensive knowledge was possible, while Postmodernism 2.2.1.3 believed that “genuine knowledge is enlightened wonder rather than any clear and distinct vision of final truths” (Kirk, 1993:91). The implications of the epiphany as a literary device were too epistemologically certain and confident for the Postmodernist realization and acceptance of epistemological indeterminacy.

It is now appropriate to apply the concept of the epiphany to a consideration of the epistemology within The Good Soldier. The novel is permeated with Dowell’s confessions that his knowledge is very limited. He states: “I don’t know. And there is nothing to guide us” (Ford, 1988:18); “Who in this world knows anything of any other heart - or of his own?” (Ford, 1988:144) and “as for experience, as for knowledge of one’s fellow beings - nothing either” (Ford, 1988:39). These comments result in a pervasive and permeating mood of epistemological darkness and haziness that spans the narrative. It is appropriate to investigate whether this darkness is punctuated by sudden and intense “moments of vision” (Conrad, 1994:111) where Dowell gains true and lasting knowledge of some kind.

The Good Soldier does not contain epiphanies of the kind in Modernist novels such as Lord Jim. Consider the statement made by Marlow in Conrad’s novel: “Nothing could have been more commonplace than this remark; but its utterance coincided for me with a moment of vision. It’s extraordinary how we go through life with eyes half-shut, with dull ears, with dormant thoughts... Nevertheless, there can be few of us who had never known one of these

rare moments of awakening when we see, hear, understand ever so much - everything in a flash - before we fall back again into our agreeable somnolence.” (Conrad, 1994:111.) A reading of The Good Soldier demonstrates that Dowell is not privileged to these rare moments of awakening, but remains in a haze of epistemological indeterminacy and uncertainty.

An epiphany is “a sudden spiritual manifestation” (quoted by Beja, 1971:14) in which, in a “rare moment of awakening” (Conrad, 1994:111) we “understand ever so much” (Conrad, 1994:111). According to Conrad and Joyce’s comments it is evident that in Modernist fiction the epiphany was a source of lasting and true knowledge. Through an epiphany characters in Modernist fiction experienced a life-changing revelation of truth and understanding. From this it is clear that the epiphany in Modernist fiction presupposes the ability of man to gain absolute and higher knowledge and understanding. As has been discussed at various points already, this was a notion acceptable to Modernist thought where knowledge was desirable and considered attainable.

In contrast to Modernist thought, such as in Conrad and Joyce, The Good Soldier is a novel that foregrounds the uncertainty and indeterminacy of knowledge and the failure of man’s attempts to gain total and certain knowledge. As such, the epiphany is considered a faulty and fictive notion in a novel that foregrounds the evasiveness and fragility of knowledge. The Good Soldier contains a narrator who constantly acknowledges his lack of conclusive knowledge and who can only state near the end of his narrative: “It is this part of the story that makes me saddest of all. For I ask myself unceasingly, my mind going round and round in a weary, baffled space of pain - what should these people have done? What in the name of God, should they have done?” (Ford, 1988:39.) Dowell’s narrative lacks epiphanic illuminations and is unlike Marlow in Lord Jim who narrates his initiation into insight and understanding.

An epiphany implies the acquisition of new, valuable and complete knowledge. In contrast, Dowell does not gain new knowledge, but only experiences the negation of knowledge he held as true. This foregrounds the contingency and instability of knowledge, rather than the enlightening and constructive nature of knowledge acquired through an epiphany, which is constant and unchanging.

In the following example Dowell experiences the negation of his knowledge and its replacement with a new and contrasting knowledge. Consider Dowell’s response to the news

that Florence and Edward were lovers: “No, I remember no emotion of any sort, but just the clear feeling that one has from time to time when one hears that some Mrs So-and So is *au mieux* with a certain gentleman. It made things plainer, suddenly, to my curiosity. It was as if I thought, at that moment, of a windy November evening, that when I came to think it over afterwards, a dozen unexplained things would fit themselves into place. But I wasn’t thinking things over then.” (Ford, 1988:100.) Dowell’s response is unemotional and he seems unsurprised at the news he has just received. Dowell seems to accept the fact that his knowledge on his wife was erroneous and that his previous perceptions of his marriage have been shattered. Dowell accepts that his knowledge was wrong and he realizes what it is that he did *not* know.

The effect of Dowell’s response is to highlight the contingency and uncertainty of knowledge. Dowell has resigned himself to the limits of his knowledge, as he knows that his knowledge is relative, unstable and restricted. He responds as one who has been waiting for his knowledge to be rescinded and proven fictive. This is in direct contrast to a novel that incorporates the epiphany, as this advocates certain, absolute and unshakable knowledge. The Good Soldier contradicts the Modernist notion of epiphanic knowledge and illumination by foregrounding the relativity and uncertainty of knowledge.

The Good Soldier’s epistemology of contingency and elusiveness, which excludes epiphanic illumination, is congruent with Slethaug’s view of Postmodernism. Slethaug states that: “Postmodern authors tend to expose the arbitrary nature of human conceptions of self, reality, and language. They undercut conventional fictional epiphanies in which the central figure advances from incompleteness to wholeness, from ignorance to self-discovery and knowledge.” (Slethaug, 1993:32.) Slethaug’s statement applies to Dowell in The Good Soldier as he remains in his position of ignorance and does not progress or move towards a complete enlightenment or knowledge of himself, others or the world. He remains, as he states of himself, “an ignorant fool” (Ford, 1988:88).

An interesting example in the novel is where Dowell *almost* has an epiphany. In their visit to the castle where Luther apparently drew up the Protest, Florence lays “one finger upon Captain Ashburnham’s wrist” (Ford, 1988:46) after which Dowell states:

I was aware of something treacherous, something frightful, something evil in the day. I can't define it...It was as if we were going to run and cry out; all four of us in separate directions, averting our heads. In Ashburnham's face I know that there was absolute panic. I was horribly frightened and then I discovered that the pain in my left wrist was caused by Leonora clutching it...It came to me for a moment, though I hadn't time to think it, that she must be a madly jealous woman - jealous of Florence and Captain Ashburnham, of all the people in the world!" (Ford, 1988:46-47.)

This scene builds in climax starting with the image of Florence's finger on Edward's wrist. Dowell then has an intuition that something terrible is going to happen after which he feels frightened and realizes that the pain in his wrist is from Leonora's grip.

There is suspense and intensity in this scene that provides an atmosphere appropriate for a sudden and intense moment of vision in which Dowell might come to understand that his wife is in love with Edward. Dowell commences the final sentence with "It came to me for a moment, though I hadn't time to think it..." (Ford, 1988:47), here the climax is at its point and it is expected that Dowell has had a vision of truth, an epiphany in which he sees Edward and Florence as lovers. But, instead, the whole intensity of the scene deflates with Dowell's statement that he suddenly realizes that Leonora "must be a madly jealous woman- jealous of Florence and Captain Ashburnham, of all the people in the world!" (Ford, 1988:47). This is an almost absurd anti-climax with Dowell totally misunderstanding his own intuitions and perceptions. Dowell does not have an epiphany, but makes a very faulty and seemingly ludicrous judgement that makes this scene seem almost like a parody of an epiphany of the kind in Joyce and Woolf.

Dowell does not pay much attention to his intuitions and this places him in stark contrast to Stephen Dedalus in Portrait of An Artist as a Young Man, whose "thinking was a dusk of doubt and mistrust, lit up at moments by the lightnings of intuition, but lightnings of so clear a splendour that in those moments the world perished about his feet as if it had been fire-consumed" (Joyce, 1996:200). For Stephen such intuitions change his life and leave him enlightened, but for Dowell intuitions are just another source of information that can be wrongly interpreted.

McCarthy recognizes that in the ending of The Good Soldier "nothing is resolved, clarified or placed in perspective" (McCarthy, 1997:133) and that this "gives us a situation directly opposed to the one at the end of Proust's Remembrance of Things Past, "where a chance

triggering of Marcel's buried memories spontaneously revives the past, enabling him to see his whole life clearly and coherently and to begin writing the seven-volume novel that we have almost finished reading" (McCarthy, 1997: 134). He goes on to conclude that: "Ford's readers look in vain for a moment of Proustian vision in which all falls into place, finding only what Alan Wilde calls Dowell's 'flat, discrete and fragmentary perceptions [that] stubbornly refuse to cohere'- in short 'his habitual sense of disconnection.'" (McCarthy, 1997:134.)

McCarthy's statement is evidence of the fact that Dowell does not experience any epiphanies and that he remains surrounded by an epistemological darkness that is unpermeated by any light and illuminating moments of vision. All he is able to utter is "And why? For what purpose? To point what lesson? It is all a darkness." (Ford, 1988:151.) For Dowell there are no "illuminations, matches struck unexpectedly in the dark" (Woolf, 1977:175) that can lessen his epistemological darkness and provide him with absolute and certain knowledge. He muddles through his narrative wondering why and how things took the course they did.

It is significant to note that considering traces of Postmodernism in The Good Soldier allows for a comprehensive elucidation and explanation of the lack of epiphany in the text. Viewed solely as a Modernist text, the absence of epiphany in The Good Soldier would be regarded as a lack and would not allow for a satisfying discussion, as the text would simply be viewed as lacking a popular Modernist device. Only in the context of Postmodern epistemology and views on epiphany is the lack of 'moments of vision' in The Good Soldier comprehensively accounted for and explained. In this context the text's lack of epiphany supports its Postmodern epistemology, which regards knowledge as indeterminate and elusive. It is therefore evident that a purely chronological view of literary texts would not allow for such a reading, which accounts for an apparent lack or deviation in the text by explaining it in the context of a Postmodern epistemology.

This section has demonstrated that The Good Soldier shows evidence of a Postmodern fictionist's suspicion of 'moments of vision' that it is contrast to Modernism's use of the epiphany as a source for insight, enlightenment and absolute knowledge. The following section aims to discuss the epiphanic potential of The Good Soldier as a work of art by considering what the text states in this regard and by comparing it to Modern and Postmodern views on aesthetics.

3.3.4.2 THE GOOD SOLDIER AS EPIPHANY

It is now appropriate to discuss the Modernist view, stated by Conrad below, that a work of art has the potential to provide the artist, on its completion with an epiphanic experience. It will be investigated whether The Good Soldier shares any similarities with a Modernist view on aesthetics or whether the comments made on art in the novel are best explained by a Postmodern perspective. The implications of a Modernist or Postmodernist aesthetic on the epistemology of The Good Soldier will also be considered.

The following comment by Joseph Conrad indicates the Modernist belief in the power of art to provide the artist with knowledge through an epiphanic 'moment of vision'. Speaking of the task of the novelist, Conrad (1975:8) states: "But sometimes, by the deserving and the fortunate, even that task is accomplished. And when it is accomplished - behold! - all the truth of life is there: a moment of vision, a sigh, a smile - and the return to an eternal rest." This comment reveals a confident belief in the ability of a writer or artist to gain knowledge through his act of creating. In this case the work of art is seen to contain epiphanic potential.

In comparison to Conrad's positive and confident statement on the outcome of creating a work of art for the novelist, Dowell's statement near the end of his narrative stands in stark contrast. He states: "I don't attach any particular importance to these generalizations of mine. They may be right, they may be wrong; I am only an ageing American with little knowledge of life. You can take my generalization or leave them." (Ford, 1988:219.) Together with his "I don't know. I know nothing. I am tired" (Ford, 1988:220) these statements indicate an acknowledgement and acceptance of epistemological limitation and uncertainty. He regards his knowledge as generalizations and he is aware that they are contingent and are not claims to absolute truth. In the end Dowell is left with the same unanswered and unenlightened questions as he began with: "But there are many things that I cannot well make out, about which I cannot well question Leonora, or about which Edward did not tell me" (Ford, 1988: 130), "Did the girl love Edward, or didn't she? I don't know." (Ford, 1988:218.) Dowell's work of art, his long and time-consuming narrative, contains no final and sudden illumination into his dark and dusky knowledge.

In this connection McCarthy states that "the novel shows that his [Dowell's] aesthetic practice is more a means of escape than of understanding" (McCarthy, 1999:323). McCarthy acknowledges Dowell's lack of an ultimate and comprehensive vision where he can finally

say that he understands, he has seen and he knows something for sure. For Dowell, the novel does not provide any such comforting and final truths. Near the conclusion of his narrative all Dowell is able to say is: "Perhaps you can make head or tail of it; it is beyond me." (Ford, 1988:213.) Dowell is left in the same epistemological state after the completion of his story as he was at its commencement.

This is unlike Lily Briscoe in Woolf's To The Lighthouse who experiences an epiphany at the completion of her painting. The novel ends as follows: " With a sudden intensity, as if she saw it clear for a second, she drew a line, in the centre. It was done; it was finished. Yes, she thought, laying down her brush in extreme fatigue, I have had my vision." (Woolf, 1977:224.) Lily comes through her act of creating with a new and certain knowledge, a truth that is as permanent and definitive as that final brush stroke on her canvas. This is a vision possible in Conrad, James and Woolf's modernist society where knowledge was still sought and where enlightenment was considered a possible and desirable end.

At the conclusion of The Good Soldier "nothing is resolved, clarified or placed in perspective" (McCarthy, 1997:133). There is only the same epistemological haze that hangs over the entire novel like a persistent and immovable fog. In Dowell's final lack of vision, the novel demonstrates a closer affinity with Russell's postmodern fictionists than with previous comments on Modernist authors. Russell states "Writing self-consciously from within the social context...the contemporary writer can offer no modernist or avant-garde privileged and idealist perspective" (Russell, 1985:269) and this describes Dowell's position as a writer "with little knowledge of life" (Ford, 1988:219), who lacks a final vision of distinct knowledge.

The inability of Dowell's humble work of art to help him understand and gain knowledge distances his work from the "elitist arrogance and self-confidence of Modernist art" (Bertens, 1997:10), while drawing him closer to a Postmodernist understanding of art like Nabokov's. For Nabokov "literature revealed no mediate or ultimate truth, no higher form of cognition or 'theurgy', capable of bridging the gap between empirical reality and the 'Unknown'" (Slethaug, 1993:33). This view of literature as epistemologically limited and handicapped is in keeping with the message in The Good Soldier that art cannot provide sudden and intense knowledge because such knowledge is not possible in a indeterminate and contingent world.

The Good Soldier demonstrates that a work of art cannot make known what is unknown to the narrator anymore than Nabokov believed his fiction could provide ultimate truths.

Dowell realizes that his narrative concerns “the queer shifty thing that is human nature” (Ford, 1988: 222) and as such does not expect that by the end of his narrative he would have a distinct and final vision in which he suddenly understands the working of Edward, Florence, Leonora and Nancy’s minds. For Dowell, Nancy in the end is “a picture without meaning” (Ford, 1988:228), she remains as puzzling and incomprehensible as she did before Dowell started his narrative. Just as the painting in Dowell’s metaphor of Nancy does not result in an epiphany or moment of understanding, neither does Dowell’s artistic endeavour of writing his story.

At the conclusion of The Good Soldier it is evident that the novel foregrounds and accepts the “fundamental uncertainty about the relations of things in the world and in the universe” (Wilde, 1981: 132) that characterizes Wilde’s postmodern world. In such a world the occurrence of sudden and intense enlightening visions is but a comforting illusion.

It has been demonstrated that the inability of The Good Soldier, as a work of art, to serve as an epiphany for either the writer or the reader is best accounted for and explained in the light of the realization that the text incorporates a Postmodern epistemology. Regarding the text as Modernist, due to its year of publication, would not account for the text’s lack of epiphany as adequately as when it is considered as bearing traces of a Postmodern epistemology. Demonstrating that the issue of epiphany, or its lack, in The Good Soldier is best explained using Postmodern views, challenges the notion of literary periodization which regards texts as belonging to chronological literary periods that supposedly exist as neatly demarcated movements.

In conclusion, this discussion on the epiphany in the context of The Good Soldier has revealed that the epiphany is not incorporated in the novel. This is in contrast to the novels that were published in the same period as The Good Soldier in which the epiphany figured pervasively (as in James’ ‘innumerable intuitive insights’). It has also been revealed that the novel does not exhibit a Modernist notion (as in Conrad) that a work of art had epiphanic potential, but rather a Postmodern view of art as humble and limited. By its lack of moments

of vision, The Good Soldier further foregrounds the indeterminacy and uncertainty of knowledge.

In the light of the above discussion on Dowell's limited knowledge and lack of epiphany, it is now appropriate to consider the quality and validity of Dowell's narrative as a historical reference. Views within Postmodernism on history and historical knowledge will also be considered in this regard.

3.3.5 HISTORY AS KNOWLEDGE SOURCE

You do not even think of your own past as quite real; you dress it up, you gild it or blacken it, censor it, tinker with it... fictionalize it, in a word, and put it away on a shelf- your book, your romanced autobiography – Fowles (1987:87)

This section aims to discuss The Good Soldier's comments on history as they relate to the epistemology of the novel. It will therefore be investigated whether the novel's views on history contribute to foregrounding the indeterminacy and contingency of knowledge. Postmodern notions on history and historicity will also be considered, as they are relevant to the view of history revealed in The Good Soldier.

In the first chapter of The Good Soldier Dowell states: "You may well ask why I write. And yet my reasons are quite many. For it is not unusual in human beings who have witnessed the sack of a city or the falling to pieces of a people to desire to set down what they have witnessed for the benefit of unknown heirs or of generations infinitely remote; or, if you please, just to get the sight out of their heads." (Ford, 1988:13.) Dowell writes with the idea that his narrative can provide future generations with knowledge on the past. He perceives of his narrative as a record of the history of the Dowells, Ashburnhams and Ruffords and the tragic end that befell these families. Dowell's notion may seem ludicrous in the light of his lack of knowledge, contradictions and unchronological narrative. It seems preposterous that he could supply a historical record, as he is hardly able to piece his own past together and "puzzle out" (Ford, 1988:11) what happened.

Dowell's comment serves to foreground history as another area in which man's knowledge is contingent, uncertain and inconclusive. Not only is Dowell's knowledge of the past problematic, but so too is that of future generations who accept his record as fact. Dowell

battles to understand the course of events leading to his present situation and for him the past is elusive and opaque. His narrative is subjective and prejudiced because of the emotional quality of his subject matter. The knowledge of 'generations infinitely remote' will be equally faulty, limited and contingent, as their knowledge is based on a biased and one-sided account.

The notion of Dowell's narrative being accepted as a true historical account undermines the conviction that history is accurate, factual, neutral and believable. From a Modern and pre-modern perspective: "History in each of its manifestations, was the single, unified, unproblematic, extra-textual, extra-discursive real that guaranteed our readings of the texts which constituted its cultural expression. But such notions of expressive realism - of truth as revealed in the fullness of time through an act of omniscient retrospective grasp - have their place only in a history of thought that runs from Hegel to various forms of laterday Hegelian *Kulturgeschichte*." (Norris, 1993:303.) *The Good Soldier* departs from such a view of history with its limited narrator who does not provide or grasp any truths through his retrospective narrative and whose story provides a very problematic, relative and fragmented record of the past.

Through Dowell's comment on his narrative being accepted as a historical record, the novel foregrounds the possibility realized in Postmodernism by commentators such as Foucault (Waugh & Pearce, 1992:5), Lyotard and White that the historical record is not necessarily accurate and factual, but that it is biased and excludes certain voices (Waugh, 1993:5-6 and Hutcheon, 1990:64, 73-74). In contrast to a Modern and pre-modern faith in history, Postmodernism "relegates history to the dustbin of an obsolete episteme" (Huyssen, 1986:172). From Huyssen's comment it can be deduced that Postmodernism considers the past as unknowable and the historical record as a human attempt to categorize and know the past. From Huyssen's statement it seems that Postmodernists realize that history is another area, like science, that sought to control and order the world, still believing in man's ability to know and understand everything. Accounts of history cannot be accepted as true and accurate when the subjectivity of man's attempts at recording history are taken into account as well as the elusiveness of history as a source of knowledge.

Instead of considering the past as an excavation ground that freely and willingly offers treasures of knowledge in all completion and comprehensibility, the above comments demonstrate that Postmodernism seems to acknowledge the past as an epistemologically dark

and dusky labyrinth. As Frye states: "The past...is enigmatic and rendered mysterious by a multiplicity of epistemological assumptions." (Frye, 1998:153.) History is unpredictable and man is part of an elusive and unknowable past that is impenetrable and enigmatic.

The Good Soldier foregrounds the elusiveness and mysteriousness of history through Dowell's inability to know and understand the past. The text documents Dowell's attempt to observe and record the past from his retrospective position, while also acknowledging his position within the history he is trying to narrate. In his historical narrative Dowell is highlighted as both observer and participant. As in The Good Soldier, voices within Postmodernism acknowledge man's position within and out side of history. Hutcheon demonstrates this when she states that "we are epistemologically limited in our ability to know the past, since we are both spectators of and actors in the historical process" (Hutcheon, 1988:122). Dowell battles to know the past due to his position as character in the past he is trying to narrate, as well as his position as recorder of a puzzling and enigmatic history.

At no point does Dowell hold the hope of gaining a transcendent perspective or of looking back over events from a position of higher knowledge with the wisdom that the present may have over the past. No such epistemological certainty is possible for the characters of The Good Soldier any more than for the Postmodern characters in Thomas's The White Hotel and Swift's Waterland, in neither of which "do we find a subject confident of his/her ability to know the past with any certainty" (Hutcheon, 1988:117). There are events and occurrences that remain unexplained and that Dowell acknowledges his ignorance about. He wonders, for example, what happened to Jimmy. Dowell states, "I never quite knew, either, how she [Florence] and Edward got rid of Jimmy. I fancy that fat and disreputable raven must have had his six golden front teeth knocked down his throat by Edward one morning whilst I had gone out to buy some flowers" (Ford, 1988:86). Dowell can only contemplate the fate that met Jimmy, as his knowledge is contingent and the person of Jimmy as a source of knowledge is unavailable.

Dowell is not confident about his ability to know the past and the novel foregrounds his lack of comprehensive historical knowledge. From his limited position in the present Dowell can only admit: "But there are many things that I cannot well make out, about which I cannot well question Leonora, or about which Edward did not tell me." (Ford, 1988:130.) Edward is dead and Leonora is not able to fill the gaps in Dowell's knowledge. In the context of Dowell's

narrative as a record of the past, his scattered questions ("Did the girl love Edward, or didn't she?"- Ford, 1988:218) and reminders of his epistemological limitation ("I don't know"-Ford, 1988:11) foreground the epistemological impenetrability of the past.

Bernard's comment on Waterland and London Fields is applicable in a discussion on the limitation of Dowell's historical knowledge. She states: "Although 'why' is the central question of Waterland... that question is condemned to remain open since history is that impossible thing: the attempt to give an account, with incomplete knowledge, of actions themselves undertaken with incomplete knowledge." (Bernard, 1993:132.) Bernard's comment is applicable to The Good Soldier due to Dowell's repeated questions and acknowledgement of his epistemological limitations. Dowell lived through the past he is trying to narrate with a faulty knowledge of what was taking place. Now from his position in the present he is trying to give an account of his past with a vague and uncertain knowledge. The impossibility that this exercise could result in epistemological enlightenment is evident in the novel, as it is in Bernard's comment.

In the end Dowell is like Tom and Sam (in Swift's Waterland and London Fields) who "eventually acknowledge their inability to go back to origins or to master the course of events leading to death" (Bernard, 1993:132). Dowell is not able to conclude his account of the past with sure and certain knowledge. He remains unsure about the motivations of some of the characters' actions and can only comment of Edward's suicide by stating: "She threatened to take his banking account away from him again. I *guess* that made him cut his throat." (Ford, 1988:177, emphasis added.) Dowell can come to no comprehensive and definite conclusion about the motivations and forces that drove Edward through his life and to his self-annihilation.

The Good Soldier foregrounds the issue of the contingency of the present generation's knowledge on the past in the following example. Dowell states that he is not a historian (Ford, 1988: 44) and his shifty knowledge of the past is revealed in his confession that he is not sure who signed the Protest. He quotes Florence who stated, "You can see the signatures of Martin Luther, and Martin Bucer, and Zwingli, and Ludwig the Courageous..." (Ford, 1988:46). Dowell then states: "I may have got some of the names wrong, but I know that Luther and Bucer were there." (Ford, 1988:46.) Dowell does not purport to know historical facts and seems to emphasize his ignorance when he comments on how Florence "was talking about

Ludwig the Courageous (I think it was Ludwig the Courageous but I am not an historian) about Ludwig the Courageous of Hessen who wanted to have three wives at once and patronized Luther - something like that!” (Ford, 1988:44). Dowell’s comments emphasize the haziness and uncertainty of his knowledge on the past. The past is an elusive and secretive entity that remains hidden and unknown to Dowell.

Dowell acknowledges the limitations of his knowledge on the past as well as the possibility of misinterpreting history in the following example. In the museum at the town of M- Dowell comments how Florence “explained that this was Luther’s bedroom and that just where the sunlight fell had stood his bed. As a matter of fact I believe that she was wrong and that Luther only stopped, as it were, for lunch, in order to evade pursuit. But, no doubt, it *would have* been his bedroom *if* he could have been persuaded to stop the night” (Ford, 1988:46, emphasis added). This episode highlights the uncertainty and haziness of Dowell and Florence’s knowledge of the past and the uncertainty of the historical record. Florence and Dowell have differing information on Luther and there is no certainty as to which is true. In the light of an absence of absolutes and the impossibility of a return to origins, Florence’s knowledge on Luther is just as probable as Dowell’s, as no certainty and conclusiveness is available or possible.

The novel is filled with references to traces of the past in the present world of the Dowells and Ashburnham’s. Edward has relics of Charles I (Ford, 1988:62) and portraits of deceased Ashburnhams by Zoffany and Zuccherò (Ford, 1988:185). The old Miss Hilbirds have a painting of General Braddock (Ford, 1988: 78) and Edward loves his Vandykes (Ford, 1988:154). It is through these historical objects and traces that the past is known. As Hutcheon states, “we can only know it [the past] through its traces, its relics” (Hutcheon, 1988:119) and “the epistemological question of *how we know the past* joins the ontological one of the status of the traces of that past” (Hutcheon, 1988:122, emphasis added).

In the world of The Good Soldier the past exists in the present through these relics and historical objects. These historical paintings and relics are as much in existence as contemporary objects such as the carts, newspapers and Fachingen water in Dowell’s world. That these relics can be misinterpreted is evident from the above example of Florence at the reading of the Protest in Luther’s (possible) bedroom. It is evident that history in The Good Soldier is another epistemological area where it is impossible ‘to go back to origins’ (Bernard

quoted above), as it was for Tom and Sam (above). As a result, knowledge on the past is relative and inconclusive.

In Dowell's problematic understanding of the past, The Good Soldier further foregrounds the contingency and indeterminacy of this character's knowledge. Dowell's comments on his lack of knowledge about past events and actions serves to demonstrate the mysteriousness of the past and the inability to gain certain and absolute historical knowledge. In this regard the novel is similar to views within Postmodernism which, as Bertens (1986:21) states, are "committed to truthfulness, to disclosing the historicity of man and the contingency of history".

In conclusion, this section has discussed Dowell's knowledge on the past as uncertain and limited and history as another source of contingent and indeterminate knowledge. The foregrounding of this issue in The Good Soldier is congruent with views within Postmodernism which highlight the contingency of history and the fault with accepting the historical record as factual and true.

An acknowledgement of the congruencies between the view of history and historical knowledge in The Good Soldier and within Postmodern thought would not be possible if a purely chronological point of departure were maintained. A satisfactory elucidation is possible when the confines of literary periodization are overlooked and the Postmodern elements of the text's view of historical knowledge are considered. This challenges the accepted notion of literary periodization while at the same time providing an additional interpretation of an accepted Modernist novel.

The following section aims to continue an investigation into the elements of a Postmodernist epistemology that are evident in The Good Soldier by discussing the issue of language and its relation to knowledge in The Good Soldier.

3.3.6 LANGUAGE AND KNOWLEDGE IN THE GOOD SOLDIER

Language is error and cannot be purified- Hartman (quoted by Atkins, 1983:60)

This section aims to discuss the relationship between language and knowledge as demonstrated in The Good Soldier. Poststructuralist comments on this relationship will also be considered in order to identify any similarities between views advocated in the novel and within poststructuralism.

The Good Soldier demonstrates the problematic relationship that exists between language and knowledge. The characters do not seem to come to any conclusive and correct knowledge through their engagement with language. The most poignant example of this is in the scene at the town of M- where Leonora rushes out after the exchange of words between herself, Florence and Edward. Leonora then cries to Dowell "Don't you see what is going on?" (Ford, 1988:47), to which Dowell replies "No! What's the matter? Whatever's the matter?" (Ford, 1988:47). From the ensuing conversation between them, it is evident that Dowell does not understand what is happening and does not grasp what Leonora is trying to tell him.

In a dialogue of double meanings, Dowell says "Do accept the situation...." (Ford, 1988:66) to which Leonora at last replies "Oh, I accept the situation...if you can" (Ford, 1988:66). Dowell then states: "I remember laughing at the phrase 'accept the situation' which she seemed to repeat with a gravity too intense." (Ford, 1988:67.) Dowell then states that it was as if Leonora was sending a message to Florence through him that said:

'You may outrage me as you will, you may take all that I personally possess, but do not you care to say one single thing in view of the situation that that will set up - against the faith that makes me a doormat for your feet.' But obviously as I saw it, that could not be her meaning. Good people, be they ever so diverse in creed, do not threaten each other. *So that I read Leonora's words to mean just no more than:* 'It would be better if Florence said nothing at all against my co-religionists, because it is a point I am touchy about.' (Ford, 1988:67, emphasis added.)

Dowell totally misinterprets Leonora's words and comes to a faulty understanding of what happened that day as well as a faulty knowledge of Leonora's character. He perceives of her as overreacting and as jealous of Florence and Edward "of all the people in the world" (Ford, 1988:47). In reality Leonora was speaking about the impending affair between Florence and Edward and was not at all talking about Florence's attacks on her religion. In this case language has not resulted in clarity for Dowell, but rather a misconception about Leonora.

Leonora interprets Dowell's comment that she accept the situation as a request for her to accept the adulterous affair between their spouses. Leonora misinterprets Dowell's words and she is under the impression that Dowell knows about the affair and accepts it. For this reason when she later frankly and directly states, "And isn't it odd to think that if your wife hadn't been my husband's mistress, you would probably never have been here at all?" (Ford, 1988:100) it is under the presumption that Dowell knows about the affair. In this case language has distorted both Leonora and Dowell's meanings and provided an array of false impressions.

The Good Soldier illustrates that language does not clarify and demystify the murky depths of epistemological indeterminacy, but rather confounds or problematizes the knowledge that can be derived through communication. This notion is present in poststructuralist thought which states that "knowledge is always distorted by language" (Bertens, 1995:6).

Commenting on poststructuralism, Currie states that "language is a shared system we use to make sense of the world, but which we assume to be a reliable and transparent index, or reflection, of a pre-existing world. This is one of the most influential propositions of the century: that our knowledge of the world is given its shape and structure by language, which we then assume, is the objective shape and structure of the world. Its influence on poststructuralist thought is profound. It places us in what Fredric Jameson called a kind of prison-house of language" (Currie, 1996:545).

Currie's comment reveals that poststructuralism realizes that language is not objective or a simple reflector and that as a result, the knowledge to be derived through language will be inaccurate and faulty. If language is ambiguous, opaque and unreliable, so will be the knowledge derived through these words. As Bertens states "postmodernism gives up on language's representational function and follows poststructuralism in the idea that language constitutes, rather than reflects, the world, and that knowledge is therefore always distorted by language, that is, by the historical circumstances and the specific environment in which it arises" (Bertens, 1995:6).

Another example where language is not a clear reflector of meaning is when Florence overhears Edward speaking to Nancy in the park. Florence interprets the words as those of a man to his lover, while Nancy is ignorant as to the meaning of Edward's words and Edward

himself is only beginning to become aware of what his words mean. Through Edward's words, Florence comes to the conclusion that Nancy and Edward are involved in a romantic affair that will displace her from her position as Edward's lover and mistress. She is not aware that nothing had happened and that nothing would happen between Nancy and Edward.

Nancy interprets Edward's words as the praise of a father to a daughter, as Dowell explains: "Because, of course, if you come to figure it out, a sudden pouring forth of passion from a man whom you regard as a cross between a pastor and a father, might, to a woman, have the aspect of mere praise for good conduct. It wouldn't, I mean, appear at all in the light of an attempt to gain possession." (Ford, 1988: 107.) At this point Nancy does not understand the motives and meanings that lie behind her uncle's words.

Eagleton states that: "The work of Derrida and others had cast grave doubt on classical notions of truth, reality, meaning and knowledge, all of which could be exposed as resting on a naively representational theory of language." (Eagleton, 1988:143.) In The Good Soldier language distorts meanings and interpretations and the novel casts doubt on the knowledge that is derived from such language.

It is not only within the novel that the relationship between language and knowledge is questioned, but also on the level of the narrative. The question arises as to what knowledge, if any, Dowell gains from writing his narrative of the past. Perhaps a slight indication as to the answer to this question lies in the following comment. Dowell's states: "I don't attach any particular importance to these generalizations of mine. They may be right, they may be wrong; I am only an ageing American with very little knowledge of life. You may take my generalizations or leave them." (Ford, 1988:219.)

Dowell makes this comment ten pages from the end of the novel and it is clear that his knowledge is as limited as it was at the start of his narrative. He regards what he knows as generalization rather than fact and he states that he has very little knowledge of life. He is weary at this point and this weariness comes perhaps from the realization that his engagement with language in the form of writing has not resulted in clear and bright knowledge. The novel acknowledges what De Man calls "the failure of language to attain that wished-for condition of immediate, transcendent, self-authorized truth" (Norris, 1993:272).

Dowell's inability to come to knowledge through his act of writing is also evident in various instances where, after narrating a scene, he is still not sure about the object he is trying to know. An example is: "Did the girl love Edward, or didn't she? I don't know." (Ford, 1988:218.) Hutcheon comments on Lyotard, for whom "language does not articulate the meaning of the world; it constantly excludes what it is trying to grasp" (Hutcheon, 1988:150) and for Dowell language does not at all articulate meaning or knowledge.

In Section 2.1 it was discovered that Dowell did not write with the intention of gaining epistemological clarity, as he knew this was not possible. For Russell writing is just a response to "an essentially inaccessible world" (quoted by Bertens, 1986:40) and this comment quite aptly describes Dowell's approach to writing his story. He writes to get the sight out of his head (Ford, 1988:13) and even though he tries to "figure her [Florence] out" (Ford, 1988:113), he still regards what little understanding he has as generalizations.

That Dowell is faced by a difficult and epistemologically inaccessible world is evident in the following example where he presents two views, but cannot decide the truth of the statements. He states:

There is another point that worries me a good deal in the aspects of this sad affair. Leonora says that, in desiring that the girl should go five thousand miles away and yet continue to love him, Edward was a monster of selfishness. He was desiring the ruin of a young life. Edward on the other hand put it to me that, supposing that the girl's love was a necessity to his existence, and, if he did nothing by word or by action to keep Nancy's love alive, he couldn't be called selfish. Leonora replied that showed he had an abominably selfish nature even though his actions might be perfectly correct. I can't make out which of them was right. I leave it to you. (Ford, 1988:220.)

In this example Dowell is dealing with "the queer shifty thing that is human nature" (Ford, 1988:222) and as a result it is a difficult and irresolvable issue. Dowell does not have the wisdom or knowledge to transcend this battle of views and derive the truth of which view is more correct or noble. For him no conclusion is possible and he is left wavering indecisively between these two strong and opposing views. His is an epistemologically unattainable world that cannot be reached or accessed through language. In writing the story of the past, Dowell is surrounded by words, yet comes to no understanding or wisdom.

Fredrick states that: "Dowell's scribblings describe a kind of epistemological circle, symbol of zero, 'Signifying Nothing.'" (Fredrich, 1986:3345.) This comment is similar to Kernan's

comment on language which “ is always breaking down, crumbling into nothingness, revealing traces, holes, contradictions, conventionality, infinite regress, tautology, nothing outside the text, indeterminacy, logocentrism, difference, the need for supplementation, and numerous other logical weaknesses” (Kernan, 1990:187). The Good Soldier reveals that language is ambiguous, contradictory and empty and that it cannot result in knowledge for those who engage in it for epistemological enlightenment.

Norris (1993:184) states that “the most naïve of illusory (undeconstructed) beliefs” is “the idea that language can indeed give us knowledge of the world, as opposed to a knowledge of its own problematical workings as revealed through the close-reading of particular texts” (Norris, 1993:184). Instead of advocating epistemological clarity, Dowell’s scribblings reveal the problematic and difficult workings of language.

This section has aimed to discuss the relationship between knowledge and language as demonstrated in The Good Soldier and has come to the conclusion that language is not a source of knowledge or a medium to be used to gain knowledge. This view shares similarities with poststructuralist thought, which states that language distorts knowledge and is not conducive to epistemological endeavours.

It is significant that poststructuralism provides the terms and notions that satisfactorily elucidate the relationship between epistemology and language in The Good Soldier, as such a partnership combines a Modernist novel with a Postmodern viewpoint. Demonstrating that The Good Soldier reveals congruencies with poststructuralist thought regarding language again foregrounds the traces of Postmodernism in a chronologically Modernist text and highlights the problem with regarding Postmodernism as a watertight literary period.

In the light of the entire discussion thus far, it is now appropriate to discover whether The Good Soldier emphasizes the tragedy and grief surrounding the indeterminacy of knowledge, or whether there is an emphasis on the pleasure and joy to be derived from such indeterminacy. The answer to this question lies in the concept of re-enchantment.

3.3.7 RE-ENCHANTMENT

It was exactly as if I had come out a museum into a riotous fancy-dress ball. –Dowell
(Ford, 1988:142)

This section aims to consider The Good Soldier's response to the random, unpredictable and uncertain world, which has been foregrounded in the above sections. The novel does not lament the limits of its characters' knowledge, but instead acknowledges and accepts that the world is a mysterious place, filled with things beyond man's comprehension. The correspondence between The Good Soldier's view of the world and that of views within Postmodernism will also be considered.

Bauman, Weber and Calinescu's comments on the difference between views within Modernism and Postmodernism concur on the point that Modernism is characterized by a disenchantment of the world, while Postmodernism exhibits a re-enchantment of the universe. Bauman states that: "All in all, postmodernity can be seen as restoring to the world what modernity, presumptuously, had taken away; as a *re-enchantment* of the world that modernity tried hard to *dis-enchant*." (Bauman, 1994:x.) The distinction between Modernist disenchantment and Postmodern re-enchantment is supported by Tester who says that the modern situation is "synonymous with the disenchantment of the world (an argument that has been a commonplace of sociology since Weber at least)" (Tester, 1993:128).

About Modern science, Max Weber states: "The fate of our time is characterized by rationalization and intellectualization, and, above all, by the 'disenchantment of the world.' Precisely the ultimate and most sublime values have retracted from public life." (quoted by Cascardi, 1994:16.) According to Weber, Modern science thought the world could be known by rationalizing it and subjecting its processes to man's intellectual thinking. The result of this for Weber was a disenchantment of the world where all the mysteries of the universe were subjugated to man's epistemological endeavours.

Griffin echoes Weber's sentiment when he states that science has disenchanted nature and that "science and disenchantment go hand in hand" (Griffin, 1996:671), with disenchantment meaning "the denial to nature of all subjectivity, all experience, all feeling" (Griffin, 1996:665). Griffin acknowledges Weber's view and documents that: "Weber's term for disenchantment was *Entzauberung*, which literally means 'taking the magic out.'" (Griffin, 1996:666.) From Weber and Griffin's view, it can be deduced that Modernism is

characterized by a scientific, rationalist and objective approach in which all the mystery, subjectivity and elusiveness of the world is eliminated for the sake of acquiring accurate and universal knowledge.

Commentators on Postmodernism, such as Covino and Calinescu state that Postmodernism proposes a re-enchantment of the world where subjectivity, imagination and unpredictability are re-introduced.

Commenting on the author's of Order out of Chaos, Calinescu states: "But now is the time, Prigogine and Stengers believe, to reverse this situation. The new science reappraises the role of irreversibility and chance and promises a full 'reenchantment' of the world." (Calinescu, 1987:270-271.) This re-enchantment requires an acknowledgement of the contingency and uncertainty of the world as well as the subjective nature of man's experience. Calinescu states that "Postmodernism breathes contempt for rationality" (Calinescu, 1987:138) which eliminates all evidence of intuition, imagination and emotions. Poststructuralism challenged rationalism and the "claims of Reason and enlightened progress" (Brooker, 1992:21) which had confidence in man's ability to discover and know. Brooker's view of poststructuralism realized that previous epistemological confidence was ill-founded and not possible in a world as mysterious and contingent as the Postmodern world.

The Good Soldier documents a re-enchantment of the world in the sense that Dowell acknowledges and embraces the irrational and subjective in himself and the world around him. Zurbrugg states that the positive strain of Postmodernism "defends the mind's capacity to apprehend *Wonder* by looking beyond 'logic mills' grinding out 'true causes and effects'" (Zurbrugg, 1993:167) and this is demonstrated in The Good Soldier by Dowell's attention to the wonder and strangeness in the world, without attempting to understand and rationalize his experiences. Consider the following example:

Why, I remember on that afternoon I saw a brown cow hitch its horns under the stomach of a black and white animal and the black and white one was thrown right into the middle of a narrow stream. I burst out laughing...the incident of the cow was a real joy to me. I chuckled over it from time to time for the whole rest of the day. Because it does look very funny, you know, to see a black and white cow land on its back in the middle of a stream. It is so just exactly what one doesn't expect of a cow. (Ford, 1988: 44-45.)

Dowell's enjoyment and enchantment with the antics of the cows in the field reveals his acceptance of the mysteriousness of the world as well as his own lack of desire to know the reasons and causes of the cow's actions. After accepting the limits of his knowledge, Dowell is able to place epistemological issues aside and experience viscerally what he cannot, and may not want to understand intellectually.

Paul Auster states: "Chance? Destiny? Or simple mathematics...Life is full of such events...My job is to keep myself open to these collisions, to watch for all these *mysterious goings-on in the world*." (Alsen, 1996:253, emphasis added.) This comment applies to Dowell as he observes the strange behaviour of Florence at the baths, when she used to smile "coquettishly" (Ford, 1988:27) at him from the door of the bathing place. He states: "And, what the devil! For whose benefit did she do it? For that of the bath attendant? Or the passers-by? I don't know...Ah, she was a riddle; but then, all other women are riddles." (Ford, 1988:28.) Dowell finds Florence's behaviour strange and he never quite understands what she meant by her actions at the baths. All Dowell is able to do is watch and acknowledge the mysterious goings-on in the world around him. He states that "It is a queer and fantastic world" (Ford, 1988:213) and this is an acknowledgement of the wonder, irrationality and inexplicability of the world.

One striking example of Dowell's immersion in the subjective and mysterious world is his reaction to the news of Florence's death. He states that his recollection of that night is only the sort of pinkish effulgence from the electric lamps in the hotel lounge:

There seemed to bob into my consciousness, like floating globes, the faces of those three. Now it would be the bearded, monarchical, benevolent head of the Grand Duke; then the sharp-featured, brown, cavalry-moustached feature of the chief of police; then the globular, polished and high-collared vacuousness that represented Monsieur Schontz, the proprietor of the hotel. At times one head would be there alone, at another the spiked helmet of the official would be close to the healthy baldness of the prince; then M. Schontz's oiled locks would push in between the two. The sovereign's soft, exquisitely trained voice would say, 'Ja, ja, ja!' each word dropping out like so many soft pellets of suet; the subdued rasp of the official would come: 'Zum Befehl Durchlaucht,' like five revolver shots; the voice of M. Schontz would go on under its breath like that of an unclean priest reciting from his breviary in the corner of a railway carriage. That was how it presented itself to me. (Ford, 1988:102-103.)

In this example Dowell gives himself over to his visceral and subjective perceptions. The ephemeral and dream-like quality of Dowell's vision foregrounds the enchanting nature of his

experiences. In this scene Dowell allows himself the pleasure of experiencing things emotionally rather than intellectually and irrationally rather than rationally. Dowell acknowledges the subjectivity of his own perceptions when he states: "That was how it presented itself to me." (Ford, 1988:103.) In Griffin's account of Modern science as "the denial to nature of all subjectivity, all experience, all feeling" (Griffin, 1996: 665), such subjectivity would be totally ridiculed and rejected.

From a Postmodern perspective, Kirk comments that: "The 'truth' which was discovered by 'objective' science was necessarily flat, spare and bleak...But in the age of relativity, quantum dynamics and chaos theory, the sharp, clear dimensions of the past have given way to a bewildering array of lovely new forms which steadfastly and modestly, refuse to reveal themselves fully to us." (Kirk, 1993:132.) Kirk's comment applies to the above description of Dowell's vision in which the heads of the three men bewilder Dowell as they fade in and out of existence, like Kirk's lovely array of forms. For Kirk, such bewilderment is more favourable than the objectivity of previous Modern and Enlightenment views on science.

Kirk's statement is significant in a discussion on The Good Soldier due to the comment it makes on knowledge. In Kirk's view, Postmodernism is filled with the mystery of unknown forms that elusively and purposefully leave man's desire for knowledge unfulfilled. This is similar to Dowell's world which is "incomprehensible" (Ford, 1988:164) and "a little inscrutable" (Ford, 1988:169). But Kirk prefers the indeterminacy and evanescence of his Postmodern knowledge to the "flat, spare and bleak" (Kirk, 1993:132) 'truths' offered by Modern science, as his use of adjectives reveal. Kirk's postmodernism realizes that truth is elusive and unavailable, but that this is more enchanting than the 'truth' offered by rational science. This is not unlike Dowell who immerses himself in the elusiveness of the world around him and acknowledges the limits of what he knows and understands about the goings on of the forms and shapes that surround him.

Discussing evidence of Dowell's acceptance of his epistemological indeterminacy and his discovery that the world is enchanting introduces the danger of presenting a slightly one-sided view of Dowell. It is necessary to acknowledge that Dowell does not always revel in his lack of knowledge and find the world simply enchanting. At points his lack of apprehension and insight depress him and he wishes he understood the reasons for the incomprehensible events that have happened in the past. At one point he cries: "Is there any terrestrial paradise where,

amidst the whispering of the olive-leaves, people can be with whom they like and have what they like and take their ease in shadows and in coolness? Or are all men's lives like the lives of us good people - like the lives of the Ashburnhams, of the Dowells, of the Ruffords - broken, tumultuous, agonized, and unromantic lives, periods punctuated by screams, by imbecilities, by deaths, by agonies? Who the devil knows?" (Ford, 1988: 213.)

This description contains a view of the world possibly more dramatic and emotional than reasonable and accurate, but the quality of incomprehension and questioning is evident. Dowell is upset and genuinely baffled and wishes for an answer, a gleam of understanding that may comfort him at this point, but such a comfort cannot be forthcoming in an epistemologically indeterminate world. The realization that man's knowledge is limited, that the world is beyond man's ability to grasp and that even the self is difficult to understand, is a realization that cannot always be accepted spontaneously and gleefully.

Part of a re-enchantment of the world involves a reawakening of the imagination which, according to Con Davis, was stifled during the Modernist movement. He states that Eliot and Hulme's Modernism "calls for 'rationality' in form" and a "movement away from romantic irrationality, from... imagination" (Con Davis, 1986:12). Con Davis states that the Modernists chose fancy over imagination for epistemological reasons, particularly their belief that superior art comes out of the knowledge born of reasoned discriminations and a rational perspective (Con Davis, 1986:12). Fancy, as defined by Coleridge, is the "human capacity to reason and to make demonstrable (in this sense, 'critical') connections within and among experiences" (Con Davis, 1986:12).

From these statements it is evident that to Modernism the imagination was inferior and irrational and had no place in objective art or poetry. Con Davis's modernists chose fancy over imagination as a means of improving their knowledge as they believed in the rationality and reasonability associated with fancy, which the imagination apparently lacked. The movement away from imagination towards fancy demonstrates the confidence Con Davis's modernists had in man's reasoning abilities and the ability of man to gain knowledge and understanding.

The Good Soldier departs from Con Davis's modernism in the novel's incorporation of acts of the imagination and in foregrounding the irrationality and illogically associated with the

imagination. By highlighting the imagination, The Good Soldier includes another area that cannot be controlled, explained and understood by man's epistemological and scientific attempts. The imagination is a mysterious and unexplainable phenomenon that foregrounds the elusiveness of the world and the vainness of man's attempts to know it. Consider the following example from the text:

She had not cared to look around Maisie's rooms at first. Now, as soon as she came in, she perceived, sticking out beyond the bed, a small pair of feet in high-heeled shoes. Maisie had died in the effort to strap up a great portmanteau. She had died so grotesquely that her little body had fallen forward into the trunk, and it had closed upon her, like the jaws of a gigantic alligator. The key was in her hand. Her dark hair, like the hair of a Japanese, had come down and covered her body and her face. Leonora lifted her up - she was the merest featherweight - and laid her on the bed with her hair about her. She was smiling, as if she had just scored a goal in a hockey match. You understand she had not committed suicide. Her heart had just stopped. I saw her with the long lashes on the cheeks, with the smile about her lips, with the flowers all about her. The stem of a white lily rested in her hand so that the spike of flowers was upon her shoulder. She looked like a bride in the sunlight of the mortuary candles that were all about her, and the white coifs of the two nuns that knelt at her feet with their faces hidden might have been two swans that were to bear her away to kissing-kindness land, or wherever it is. (Ford, 1988:73-74.)

In this description Dowell lets his imagination contribute to his narration of the scene. The passage starts objectively enough, with the image of Maisie's small body in the jaws of an alligator, a gigantic alligator, calling attention to the presence of a perhaps slightly rich imagination. The notion of Maisie smiling in death as if she had just scored a goal in a hockey match serves to draw further attention to the presence of Dowell's fertile imagination. But the fecundity of Dowell's imagination is most obviously demonstrated in his vision of the deceased Maisie as a bride in the sunlight, surrounded by two swans that are to bear her away to an enchanted and fairy-tale land.

The scene demonstrates the fertility and emotionality of Dowell's imagination and its contribution to his narrative. The imaginative similes provide a rather comic and absurd tone to Maisie's death scene with the undignified image of her feet sticking out the trunk (or alligator jaws) and her smile of victory and exhilaration in death. It is not possible to explain or control the imagination and Dowell's colourful portrayal of this scene foregrounds the irrationality of the imagination while at the same time calling attention to its existence and abundance in Dowell's life.

Dowell acknowledges the use of his imagination in the following example where he admits that things are not really as colourful as he perceives them to be. About his train ride to M-Dowell says:

I like being drawn through the green country and looking at it through the clear glass of the great windows. *Though, of course, the country isn't really that green.* The sun shines, the earth is blood red and purple and red and green and red. And the oxen in the ploughlands are bright varnished brown and black and blackish purple; and the peasants are dressed in the black and white of magpies; and there are great flocks of magpies too. Or the peasants' dresses in another field where there are little mounds of hay that will be grey-green on the sunny side and purple in the shadows - the peasants dresses are vermilion with emerald green ribbons and purple skirts and white shirts and black velvet stomachers. (Ford, 1988:44, emphasis added.)

The role of Dowell's imagination in this scene is revealed in his description of the colours that seem too vivid and unnatural to be true. Emerald, purple, vermilion, black and white are not common colours to be spotted from a train ride through the fields. Neither is a cow that is 'bright *varnished* brown'. The scene may be influenced by Dowell's imagination, but it remains enchanting with its colours and sunshine, animals and magpies.

Dowell's acknowledgement that 'the country isn't really that green' foregrounds that he is using his imagination and that the imagination is subjective rather than objective and does not conform to rationalist and realist principles. In this example Dowell simply enjoys the train-ride and the play of his imagination without trying to intellectualize his emotional and perceptual experiences.

This section has aimed to discuss The Good Soldier's response to a world that is epistemologically indeterminate and uncertain. It has been demonstrated that the novel accepts epistemological limitation and experiences the world as enchanting and mysterious. This is similar to views within Postmodernism that acknowledge and appreciate that irrational, imaginative and unexplainable occurrences in the world instead of trying to control and understand the irreducible.

Gräbe comments on Brink's postmodern reading of Diderot's Jacques le Fataliste et son maître and states that "through his exploration of an 18th century novel...Brink seeks to explain how poststructuralist strategies of reading (in this instance what could be characterized as a deconstructive technique) may re-open a familiar text in an exciting reading

adventure” (Gräbe, 1988:361). This comment is significant in the context of a study that seeks to scrutinize the Postmodern elements of a Modernist text such as The Good Soldier. The study aims to achieve a similar effect of presenting the reader with an unconventional and interesting interpretation of The Good Soldier in the same way that Brink’s application of poststructuralist reading strategies to Diderot’s novel resulted in ‘an exciting reading adventure’. This study aims to demonstrate how overlooking the constraints of literary periodization can instigate a new and worthwhile interpretation of an accepted Modernist text.

Relating the Postmodern theme of re-enchantment to The Good Soldier enables Dowell’s pleasure in his world to be adequately elucidated. Explanations that only take the Modernist elements of the text into account would not achieve the same result, as the notion of re-enchantment depends on an understanding of a Postmodern point of departure and its relation to The Good Soldier. Such an explanation overlooks periodization and considers the text for its outstanding themes and then discovers the best means for explaining these themes. In the case of this study, such an explanation is found by utilizing Postmodern themes and views. The result of this is to question the existing categorization of texts based on chronology and the notion that Postmodernism is a closed literary movement due to its position as a latter literary period.

3.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter has aimed to consider the epistemology of The Good Soldier. It was determined that the novel foregrounds the indeterminacy, uncertainty and limitations of knowledge. It achieves this emphasis through the narrator’s direct comments as well as through the various themes that arise in the novel.

It was ascertained that the narrator, through his comments on epistemology revealed an acknowledgement of his epistemological indeterminacy (Section 3.2.1), an acceptance of the limits of his knowledge (Section 3.2.2) and a total disregard of the issue (Section 3.3.3). The discussion also identified similarities between this view and certain notions within Postmodern thought, thereby demonstrating that The Good Soldier incorporates an epistemology that can plausibly be considered Postmodern.

Section 3.3 established that the various issues that arose in the novel were all linked to the epistemology of the novel. It was recognized that the issue of the surface (Section 3.3.1), simulation (Section 3.3.2), perception (Section 3.3.3), epiphany (Section 3.3.4), history (Section 3.3.5), language (Section 3.3.6) and re-enchantment (Section 3.3.7) all foreground the contingency and uncertainty of man's knowledge in the world. It was demonstrated that such a view was compatible with certain notions within Postmodern thought and for each of the issues in Section 3.3 Postmodern authors and commentators were identified whose thoughts and views on epistemology were in agreement with those expressed within The Good Soldier.

In conclusion, it is possible to state that The Good Soldier incorporates a Postmodern epistemology. It is evident that by using Postmodernist terminology and concepts it is feasible to address and elucidate various issues regarding knowledge in the text in a comprehensive and fruitful manner.

Literary texts are divided into movements on the basis of periodization. These periods come to be accepted as neat and accurate demarcations that establish boundaries between the texts of one movement and those of another. A study that demonstrates elements of Postmodernism in a Modernist text challenges this notion of periodization and indicates that these literary periods and clear-cut demarcations are not necessarily the only way of understanding texts and that these boundaries prevent other readings and interpretations of texts. This study engages in an alternative reading by overlooking the confines of literary periodization and pursuing the notion that the text under discussion demonstrates elements and traits that are satisfactorily elucidated using Postmodern terms and ideas.

Demonstrating that The Good Soldier can be discussed as containing Postmodern elements highlights the fact that Postmodernism as a movement is anti-chronological, as traces of it are evident in a Modernist text. As with Clayton's identification of Postmodernism in the fiction of Charles Dickens, this study reveals that Postmodernism does not reside in the movement of the 1950's to 1980's, but is evident long before in a variety of texts from numerous periods.