

**A SCRUTINY OF POSTMODERN THEMES AND  
NARRATOLOGICAL DEVICES IN THE GOOD  
SOLDIER BY FORD MADDOX FORD**

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. STATEMENT OF PROBLEM, AIMS AND HYPOTHESIS.....	1
1.1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT.....	1
1.3 AIMS.....	3
1.4 THESIS STATEMENT.....	4
1.5 METHOD.....	4
1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY.....	5
1.7 CONCLUSION.....	7
2. INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER.....	8
2.1 INTRODUCTION.....	8
2.2 ORIENTATION TO EPISTEMOLOGY.....	8
2.2.1 EPISTEMOLOGY IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT.....	8
2.2.1.1 ENLIGHTENMENT EPISTEMOLOGY.....	10
2.2.1.2 MODERN EPISTEMOLOGY.....	12
2.2.1.3 POSTMODERN EPISTEMOLOGY.....	15
2.2.2 EPISTEMOLOGY IN LITERATURE.....	20
2.2.2.1 EPISTEMOLOGY IN MODERN LITERATURE.....	21
2.2.2.2 EPISTEMOLOGY IN POSTMODERN LITERATURE.....	26
2.3 ORIENTATION TO NARRATOLOGICAL DEVICES.....	32
2.3.1 NARRATOLOGY.....	32
2.3.2 NARRATOLOGICAL DEVICES IN MODERN FICTION.....	33
2.3.3 NARRATOLOGICAL DEVICES IN POSTMODERN FICTION.....	36
2.4 CONCLUSION.....	43
3. EPISTEMOLOGY IN <u>THE GOOD SOLDIER</u> .....	45
3.1 INTRODUCTION.....	45
3.2 NARRATOR'S COMMENTS ON EPISTEMOLOGY.....	46
3.2.1 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF EPISTEMOLOGICAL INDETERMINACY.....	46
3.2.2 ACCEPTANCE OF EPISTEMOLOGICAL INDETERMINACY.....	53
3.2.3 DISREGARD OF EPISTEMOLOGICAL INDETERMINACY.....	57

3.3 EPISTEMOLOGICAL ISSUES IN <u>THE GOOD SOLDIER</u> .....	62
3.3.1 THE SURFACE.....	63
3.3.2 SIMULATION.....	69
3.3.3 PERCEPTION .....	74
3.3.3.1 SENSORY NATURE OF PERCEPTION.....	74
3.3.3.2 PERCEPTION AS KNOWLEDGE SOURCE.....	77
3.3.4 EPIPHANY.....	82
3.3.4.1 EPIPHANY IN <u>THE GOOD SOLDIER</u> .....	82
3.3.4.2 <u>THE GOOD SOLDIER</u> AS EPIPHANY .....	88
3.3.5 HISTORY AS KNOWLEDGE SOURCE.....	91
3.3.6 LANGUAGE AND KNOWLEDGE.....	97
3.3.7 RE-ENCHANTMENT .....	102
3.4 CONCLUSION.....	109
4. NARRATOLOGICAL DEVICES IN <u>THE GOOD SOLDIER</u> .....	111
4.1 INTRODUCTION .....	111
4.2 <u>THE GOOD SOLDIER</u> AS TEXT.....	111
4.3 NARRATOR AS NARRATOLOGICAL DEVICE IN <u>THE GOOD SOLDIER</u> .....	120
4.3.1 NARRATOLOGICAL SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS IN <u>THE GOOD SOLDIER</u> ....	120
4.3.2 NARRATOLOGICAL INVENTIVENESS IN <u>THE GOOD SOLDIER</u> .....	127
4.4 CHARACTER AS NARRATOLOGICAL DEVICE IN <u>THE GOOD SOLDIER</u> .....	130
4.5 CHRONOLOGICAL SEQUENCING IN <u>THE GOOD SOLDIER</u> .....	142
4.6 CONCLUSION.....	153
5. CONCLUSION.....	155
6. BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	159

## ABSTRACT

The dissertation emerged from a growing realization that various of the distinctive traits in The Good Soldier could be considered as bearing traces of certain characteristics of Postmodern fiction. The study sets out to scrutinize The Good Soldier for further evidence to support this possibility. The areas that present themselves as specifically promising in this regard concern the issue of epistemology in the novel as well as the use of narratological devices in The Good Soldier. These two issues serve as the main area of focus for the study and are considered for the possible congruencies they demonstrate with Postmodern thought and fictional characteristics.

After providing an orientation to the issues of epistemology and narratological devices in the context of Modernism and Postmodernism, the study proceeds to discuss the issue of epistemology in The Good Soldier and its relationship to Postmodern fiction. This involves a discussion of surfaces, simulations, perception, epiphany, history, language and re-enchantment and how these issues are conducive to demonstrating that The Good Soldier bears traces of Postmodern thoughts on knowledge.

The use of narratological devices in The Good Soldier are also considered for possible congruencies with Postmodern fiction, specifically regarding the use of narrator, character and chronological sequencing. In this regard the issue of text and intertextuality are discussed and it is discovered that The Good Soldier foregrounds its own status as text through its references to a number of other texts.

It is concluded that The Good Soldier does indeed bear traces of a Postmodern epistemology and employs narratological devices plausibly identifiable as Postmodern. The comments on knowledge in The Good Soldier, as well as the use of narrator, character and chronological sequencing are comprehensively elucidated and accounted for in the context of Postmodern epistemology and narratological devices.

The Good Soldier is an accepted and well-loved Modernist novel. A study that seeks to scrutinize the text for elements of Postmodernism questions and foregrounds the issue of literary periodization and the division of literary texts on the basis of year of publication and

authorship. Demonstrating that The Good Soldier bears traces of Postmodernism through its epistemology and use of narratological devices therefore provides evidence that literary movements are not mutually exclusive and that the traits of one literary period may be beneficial in an elucidation and elaboration of a text belonging to another literary movement.

**Key Words:** The Good Soldier, Postmodernism, Modernism, epistemology, narratological devices.

## OPSOMMING

Die verhandeling ontstaan uit 'n groeiende besef dat verskeie van die kenmerkende einskappe in The Good Soldier moontlik sekere karaktertrekke van Postmoderne fiksie kan besit. Die studie bestudeer The Good Soldier vir verdere bewysstukke om hierdie moontlikheid te ondersteun. Die gebiede wat hulself voorstel as spesifiek belowend in hierdie verband, betrek die kwessie van epistemologie in die roman sowel as die gebruik van verhalende tegnieke in The Good Soldier. Hierdie twee kwessies dien as die hoofarea van fokus vir die studie, en word beskou vir die moontlike kongruensies wat hulle met Postmoderne denke en fiksionele karaktertrekke het.

Ná die oriëntering van die uitgangspunte ten opsigte van epistemologie en verhalende tegnieke in die konteks van Modernisme en Postmodernisme, gaan die studie voort tot die beskrywing van die vraagpunt van epistemologie in The Good Soldier en die verhouding met Postmodernise fiksie. Dit sluit in 'n beskrywing van vlakke, simulaties, persepsie, gewaarwording, geskiedenis, taal en herbekoring, asook hoe hierdie kwessies bevordelik is om te demonstree dat The Good Soldier Postmoderne denke oor kennis besik.

Die gebruik van verhalende tegnieke in The Good Soldier word ook oorweeg vir moontlike ooreenstemmings met Postmoderne fiksie, spesifiek ten opsigte van die gebruik van verteller, karakter en kronologiese opeenvolgings. In hierdie verband word die kwessie van teks en intertekstualiteit bespreek en dit is aan die lig gebring dat The Good Soldier sy eie status as teks deur sy verwysings na verskeie ander tekste beklemtoon.

'n Gevolgtrekking is bereik dat The Good Soldier wel 'n natrek van 'n Postmoderne epistemologie besit, en dat die gebruik van verhalende tegnieke aanneemlik identifiseerbaar is as Postmodern. Die aanmerkings oor kennis in The Good Soldier, asook die gebruik van verteller, karakter en kronologiese opeenvolging word volledig opgehelder en verklaar in die konteks van Postmoderne epistemologie en verhalende tegnieke.

The Good Soldier is 'n aanvaarde en gewilde Moderne roman. 'n Studie wat streef na die bestudering van die teks vir elemente van Postmodernisme, ondervra en beklemtoon die saak van literêre periodisasie en die opdeling van literêre teks ten opsigte van die jaar van uitgawe

en outeurskap. Die verhandeling bewys dat The Good Soldier elemente van Postmodernisme besit, en deur die gebruik van epistemologie en verhalende tegnieke, word bewyse voorsien dat literêre periodes nie wederkeurig eksklusief is nie, en dat die eienskappe van een literêre periode voordelig mag wees in die verklaring en uitbreiding van 'n teks wat aan 'n ander literêre beweging behoort.

**Trefwoorde:** The Good Soldier, Postmodernisme, Modernisme, epistemologie, verhalende tegnieke.

## **CHAPTER ONE-STATEMENT OF PROBLEM, AIMS AND HYPOTHESIS**

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter aims to discuss the nature of the research problem, the aims and thesis statement of this study as well as the significance of the study and the method of conducting this investigation. Such an orientation to the nature of the study and the reasons for conducting this research is necessary before the discussion can proceed any further, as it establishes clarity as to the intent and purpose of the research.

### **1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

The Good Soldier is Ford Madox Ford's most successful and well-read novel and is one of the major works of Modernism (Bradbury, 1993:91). Many articles and commentaries have been published on The Good Soldier since its first publication in 1915. After reading the novel the two issues that stand out most for the purposes of this study are the pervasive comments regarding epistemological indeterminacy and the characteristic use of narratological devices, especially regarding the traits of the narrator, John Dowell.

It is specifically with regard to Dowell's epistemological indeterminacy that it becomes apparent that The Good Soldier deviates from a purely Modernist viewpoint. Dowell's reminders of his epistemological uncertainty (Ford, 1988:14, 34, 36, 213, 218, 220) and darkness (Ford, 1988:18) permeate the novel and his final lack of knowledge and the pervading sense of epistemological inconclusiveness distinguish it from Modernist novels that still sought to know and gain understanding, despite the limitations of knowledge. In this regard Dowell's repeated "I don't know" (Ford, 1988:218) is far removed from Iris Murdoch's comment that "we picture man as a brave naked will surrounded by an easily comprehended empirical world" (Murdoch, 1977:26). From Murdoch's statement it is evident that the Modernists still held the belief that the world could be understood and known.

In The Good Soldier it becomes apparent that the confident Modernist belief that epistemological doubt could be overcome is abandoned. In the end, Dowell is left in a state of doubt as to what had really happened in the story of his life. He still does not understand how

and why his friends and spouse acted as they did. He is left in state of indeterminacy, but there is a tone of complacent acceptance in the end, with his final comment being that Leonora's husband "is of so a normal 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 reveals a tolerance of the meaninglessness and irony of life and the ability to overlook the unknowable world that surrounds him.

An investigation into Dowell's pervasive acknowledgement and acceptance of epistemological indeterminacy, results in the realization that The Good Soldier could possibly demonstrate a view of knowledge that has more in common with Postmodern views on knowledge than with a Modernist epistemology. Postmodernists abandon the Modernist confidence and rather accept the indeterminacy around them and accept that man can only live in epistemological dimness (Bertens, 1986:19). There is a complacent and content acceptance of this fact that is contrary to the Modernist seriousness and concern about not knowing and understanding (Conner, 1990:115).

It is from the dawning realization that the epistemology in The Good Soldier could possibly bear traces of Postmodernism that the need for a study to investigate the possible link between The Good Soldier and Postmodernism as a literary movement becomes apparent. This need is further demonstrated when the possible congruencies between the use of narrator as a narratological device in both The Good Soldier and in Postmodern fiction is realized.

There is general agreement among various commentators that the distinguishing fact about The Good Soldier is its idiosyncratic narrator, John Dowell. Grover Smith comments on Dowell's "unreliability" (Smith, 1972:30) and calls him an "untrustworthy dupe" and a "mystagogue" (Smith, 1972:27). Kenneth Young states that the reader learns to "distrust the narrator" (Young, 1956:26) and this comment echoes Schorer's question, "How can we believe *him*?" (Schorer, 1987:45). The notoriety of Ford's narrator started in 1915 with the initial reviewer of the novel, Theodore Dreiser, who found Dowell "an irritating difficulty" (Dreiser, 1987:42) who was "as blind as a bat and as dull as a mallet" (Dreiser, 1987:42). The novel's other initial critic, Rebecca West, however, found the novel "a beautiful and moving story" (West, 1987:40).

Whatever attitude the various writers have to Ford's narrator, they all try to provide an explanation for his various idiosyncrasies. Many explanations have been provided, ranging from Levenson's notion that Dowell is Impressionist, (Levenson, 1984:381) (in response to his question, "What ails Dowell?") to Miriam Bailin who focuses on Dowell's psychology and states that he "employs these aesthetic principles in order to control and to evade the disruptive nature of the experience he recounts" (Bailin, 1984:622). Roger Poole (1990) even explains the novel's peculiar narrator and narrative style by stating that Dowell is trying to cover up the fact that he and Leonora murdered Florence, Edward and Maisie Moidan. All these explanations are fruitful in attempts to account for Dowell as narrator with his limitations, ramblings, misunderstanding and comments to his silent listener.

After reading The Good Soldier it is possible to appreciate the value of all these different interpretations of the text. Despite the merit of these readings, it is necessary to pursue and test the tentative realization that there may be a connection between the narratological usage of narrator in The Good Soldier and within Postmodernism.

It is therefore evident that pursuing the initial realization that The Good Soldier could possibly contain elements of a Postmodern epistemology and traits of Postmodern narratological usage, would be beneficial as an alternative reading of the text. Such an investigation can be considered as a possible means of gaining a new understanding of, and accounting for, the characteristic traits of the text.

It is of course necessary to acknowledge that The Good Soldier is an established Modernist text and that a study which discusses elements of Postmodernism in this well-loved and accepted Modernist text is in danger of being criticized for enforcing an alien interpretation onto a well-known and familiar text. In order to counter this criticism it is necessary to state that the motivation for considering Postmodern elements in The Good Soldier did not emerge from a desire to apply foreign theory and concepts to an unsuspecting text. The motivation for the study came from a realization that Dowell's pervasive reminder of his lack of knowledge ("I don't know"- Ford, 1988:14) and his self-conscious comments as narrator ("Is all this digression, or isn't it digression?"- Ford, 1988:20) tentatively pointed to the possibility that the epistemology and narratological devices in The Good Soldier could possibly be considered for their Postmodern characteristics.

The study therefore aims to pursue the possibility that The Good Soldier incorporates a Postmodern epistemology and Postmodern narratological devices by investigating and elaborating the traces that tentatively revealed themselves in an initial reading of the text. The study does not therefore begin with the intention of emphatically proving that The Good Soldier is a Postmodern text, nor that a Postmodern reading is the best and only approach to the text. The study simply aims to pursue the realization that by using Postmodern concepts, some issues in the text could be satisfactorily and comprehensively elucidated in a way that provides an additional and alternative reading of the text.

### **1.3 AIMS**

This study aims to firstly provide a comprehensive orientation to the issues of epistemology and narratological devices in Modernism and Postmodernism in order to establish an understanding of the terms for the remainder of the study. The study then aims to scrutinize the epistemology in The Good Soldier and discuss any aspects of the epistemology that could conceivably be considered as Postmodern. The study then aims to focus on the narratological devices in The Good Soldier and discuss any congruencies the text demonstrates with tendencies within Postmodernism in this regard. Finally, the study aims to conclude on these findings and discuss to what extent the elements of epistemology and narratological devices in the text enable The Good Soldier to be identified with Postmodern fiction.

### **1.4 THESIS STATEMENT**

The Good Soldier incorporates elements of a Postmodern epistemology and Postmodern narratological devices.

### **1.5 METHOD**

It is firstly necessary to provide the reader with an understanding of the issues related to the study. Epistemology is a broad term and it is necessary to form a comprehensive understanding of the term in the context of its application to a study on The Good Soldier. Narratological terms appear throughout the discussion and for this reason the relevant concepts will be explained. This comprehensive elucidation forms the orientation chapter, which is essential before the text can be approached.

The study will then focus exclusively on The Good Soldier as the text under discussion, which firstly involves elaborating on the epistemology of The Good Soldier and its Postmodern congruencies before considering the narratological devices in The Good Soldier for their Postmodern traits. The study will then conclude the investigation into the Postmodern elements in The Good Soldier by commenting on the findings of the study.

It is necessary to state that Ford Madox Ford is not an immensely well researched author and The Good Soldier is not an extremely well-known novel. Most of the commentary on The Good Soldier was published in the 1950's to 1980's, with the 1990's demonstrating a renewed interest in this novel. It is therefore necessary to include the sources that will support the argument and that are relevant to the study. This implies using sources on The Good Soldier that are recent publications, as well as including relatively older publications. The research aims to use the most contemporary sources throughout the study, but older sources will be quoted when they contain the information relevant to the study.

#### **1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

Successfully demonstrating that The Good Soldier contains certain themes and narratological devices that are characteristically Postmodern, signifies an inconsistency in the accepted notion of literary periodization. To state that a text published in early Modernism contains an epistemology and devices of narrative that are characteristic of Postmodernism, is to challenge the existing divisions of literary chronology.

Many commentators demarcate the late 1950's and 1960's as the commencement of the Postmodern movement (Bertens, 1986:9; McCaffery, 1986:xix; Calinescu, 1987:6). It is therefore evident that a study which demonstrates qualities of Postmodernism in a Modernist text, challenges this chronological and linear view of literary history. Such a study demonstrates that the characteristics of Postmodernism are not confined to the movement like a watertight compartment, but that these qualities can be traced in texts not sequentially belonging to the movement. This study is therefore significant as it foregrounds the problems of such a chronology by firmly pointing out the characteristics of Postmodernism in a text first published in 1915.

This study aims to strengthen a realization in Postmodern thought that Postmodernism, as a movement is not simply a chronological category. Eco states that Postmodernism “is not a trend to be chronologically defined, but, rather, an ideal category” or a “mode of operating” (quoted by Calinescu, 1987:4), while Smyth states that Postmodernism is a “construction of reading” rather than “a self-contained literary period” (Smyth, 1991:11). Ryan states that “it is worth noting that those literary critics who describe the emergence of postmodernism in terms of linear progression of thought are relying on a version of history quite at odds with postmodernist attitudes to versions of the past” (Ryan, 1988:247). These comments question the notion that Postmodernism is a chronologically impenetrable barrier and recognize that various texts that do not sequentially belong to the movement can be considered Postmodern.

The following comment demonstrates the problematic nature of periodization, due to the uncertainty surrounding which texts are to be included in the Postmodern canon. Bertens states: “Then there is the obvious problems of canonization and periodization...Does it include the literature and theater of the absurd (Spanos, Durand)...Does Postmodernism go back to de Sade and other pre-modern anti-establishment, underground figures (Hassan), does it begin with Borges (Graff and others), with Beckett (Lodge), with the existentialism of Heidegger and Sartre (Spanos), with Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake* (the later Hassan), or is it strictly a post-war phenomenon (Wilde, Stevick, and others)?” (Bertens, 1986:45.) Such a comment is unavoidable due to the Postmodern qualities of many texts that fall outside the sequential time barriers of the Postmodern movement. Because periodization sets up such a confining and firmly demarcated boundary, an anomaly surrounds those texts that do not sequentially belong, yet contain Postmodern characteristics.

Among these texts are Gargantua (1534) Don Quixote (1605) and Tristram Shandy (1759) (Smyth, 1991:11) which all contain Postmodern characteristics although they were written many decades before Postmodernism as a movement was demarcated. This study therefore aims to add The Good Soldier to the list of texts that are not Postmodern in relation to time, but can possibly be considered as containing Postmodern traits due to the various distinctions in their form and content.

This study therefore aims to focus on the epistemology and narratological devices of The Good Soldier which, if found to exhibit congruencies with Postmodern fiction, will allow for an interesting and satisfying elucidation using Postmodernist terminology and references. The

significance of this study is that it looks beyond chronology and sequential time to the text itself and discovers there a variety of traces and indices of Postmodern traits and characteristics. This in turn questions existing periodizations and demonstrates the unsequential and anti-chronological nature of literary Postmodernism.

## **1.7 CONCLUSION**

This chapter has aimed to introduce the reader to the rationale behind, and purpose of this study. This is a necessary foundation for the remainder of the discussion. This chapter has discussed the problem statement as well as the aims of this study before elucidating the significance of such a study. It is now appropriate to orient the reader to the relevant terms in the study before scrutinizing The Good Soldier for evidence of its epistemology and narratological devices.

## **CHAPTER 2- INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER**

### **2.1. INTRODUCTION**

This chapter aims to provide a brief, yet comprehensive overview of the main concepts related to the study. This is necessary in order to gain clarity on what is implied by the use of terms, specifically those relating to epistemology and narratology, as these are the major areas of focus in this study. For this reason the relevant issues in epistemology, as they have bearing on an investigation of The Good Soldier's themes will be elaborated in Section 2.2. Similarly, the relevant narratological terms that are appropriate in a discussion of The Good Soldier's formal devices will be defined in Section 2.3. Such an orientation provides a necessary foundation for the remainder of the study, which seeks to compare the epistemology and narratological devices in The Good Soldier with those within Postmodernism.

### **2.2 ORIENTATION TO EPISTEMOLOGY**

This section aims to discuss the concept of epistemology as a philosophical and literary concern. After discussing the change in epistemology from the Enlightenment to Modernism through to Postmodernism, it will be possible to study The Good Soldier and consider the characteristics of its epistemology in the light of the historical trajectory of theories on knowledge. It will then be feasible to discuss the extent to which the epistemology in The Good Soldier can plausibly be considered as containing elements that are identifiable with a Postmodern epistemology.

#### **2.2.1. EPISTEMOLOGY IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

After a brief discussion on the meaning and implications of the term 'epistemology', an overview of the development of epistemology through the Enlightenment, Modern and Postmodern periods will be provided. The purpose of this elucidation is to introduce the reader to the development of epistemology through from the Enlightenment to the Postmodern eras, as this will form a foundation for an understanding of epistemology for the remainder of the study.

The inclusion of the Enlightenment in a discussion on epistemology is due to the fact that Modernism had not as yet totally departed from or rejected the Enlightenment epistemology

and the influence of this epistemology was still strongly felt in Modernism (McFarlane, 1985:82). It is also necessary to have an understanding of the Enlightenment epistemology for the reason that Postmodernism most strongly objected to and rejected the Enlightenment epistemology (Bertens, 1995:20). It is therefore necessary to provide a brief description of the Enlightenment theories of knowledge in order to understand what the Postmodern movement was reacting against. A brief, yet comprehensive introduction to these epistemologies will make it possible to identify any possible traces of Postmodern<sup>1</sup> epistemology in The Good Soldier, as well as identify the ways in which The Good Soldier departs from a purely Modernist epistemology.

Epistemology relates to theories of knowledge and is “concerned with problems of the nature, limits and validity of knowledge and belief” (Woozley, 1973:650). An empiricist epistemology, for example, considers knowledge as gained through the senses, and a rationalist epistemology sees man’s reasoning as the source of knowledge, while in idealism “all knowledge is, in the final instance, reduced to ideas in man’s mind” (Van der Walt, 1997:25). Epistemology is a philosophical discipline, but all theories and ideologies have their own epistemology, whether explicit or implicit. As Van der Walt points out: “Although it is epistemology, in particular, which is concerned with the theory of knowledge, we find certain views (mostly implicit) in each scientific theory, regarding the manner in which man obtains knowledge. Every school of thought in the social sciences accommodates one or other form of epistemological suppositions in itself.” (Van der Walt, 1997:24.)

All sciences attempt to order and understand man and the world and therefore incorporate epistemologies. For this reason, when discussing the epistemology of a period, it is necessary to look at what scientific and social developments were taking place during that period in order to gain insight into what ideas on knowledge were accepted. The Enlightenment theories on knowledge will now be considered in the light of the period’s social and scientific developments.

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this study and for the sake of uniformity, the terms ‘Postmodernism’, ‘Modernism’ and ‘Enlightenment’ will be capitalized, while the terms ‘poststructuralism’, ‘futurism’, ‘literary impressionism’ and ‘imagism,’ among others, will be printed in the lower case. The reason for this distinction is that the former terms stand for distinct periods in history and contain the terms demarcated by the lower case. In this way poststructuralism is contained within the umbrella term of Postmodernism and the distinction in capitalization acknowledges the difference between terms.

### 2.2.1.1. ENLIGHTENMENT EPISTEMOLOGY

It is appropriate to consider what epistemological developments occurred during the Enlightenment, due to the fact that some of these theories on knowledge were inherited by Modernism, and these same theories serve as a point of contention in Postmodern critiques of epistemology.

The following comments by Grassie and McFarlane indicate that the Enlightenment worldview was based on a firm belief that the world was capable of interpretation and understanding. This was specifically as a result of developments in science, which was an extremely strong power during the Enlightenment. Man was confident that all could be fathomed with scientific processes. The practice of science depended on rationality, objectivity and logic. Science was opposed to that which was subjective, imaginative and irrational. Grassie comments on the faith in man's intelligence and power through science by stating that: "Human reason, as exemplified in the deductive thought of mathematics and physics, would come to replace the superstitious worldviews of religion and other forms of irrationality. Reason, science, technology and bureaucratic management would improve our knowledge, wealth and well-being through the rational control of nature and society." (Grassie, 1997: 84.) It is such views that resulted in man's confidence in his abilities to order and control himself and nature during the Enlightenment.

According to Van der Walt (1997:32), science was also seen as a panacea, a universal cure for all the wrongs in society, such as crime, poverty and unemployment. He states how Enlightenment thinkers believed that "the ultimate weapon against social problems, such as poverty, exploitation, pollution and hunger, is to be found in science. Without realizing the limitations of science, it is accepted as the way to the perfect society" (Van der Walt, 1997:32).

In the area of scientific exploration and experiment, the Enlightenment facilitated:

The continuing success of a method of inquiry that placed its faith firmly in precise and detailed observation, in the painstaking collection and collation of data, in the rational basis of causality, and in the reduction of the particular and the various to some form of comprehensive generality...the conviction that behavioural phenomena were reducible to the same kind of general laws as were seen to apply in the physical world, using similar methods of observation and verification, became deeply rooted in nineteenth-century social thought. (McFarlane, 1985:73-74.)

From McFarlane's comment it is evident that the Enlightenment had a strong faith in science and man's ability to reason. These thinkers held the confident opinion that anything that was not initially understandable was reducible to concepts that would make understanding and enlightenment possible. This is a positive and confident view that illustrates the Enlightenment mindset.

Appleby, Covington, Hoyt, Latham and Sneider describe this scientific era as a "cascade of theories ricocheting from the physical to the social world: the formidable *isms* and *tions* - positivism, functionalism, behaviourism, dialectical materialism, evolution and finally modernization itself, all of them totalizing descriptions of the human enterprise rendered as *inexorable processes*" (Appleby *et al.*, 1996:10). According to Appleby *et al.* all the developments in science during the Enlightenment were considered as evidence of man's capabilities and pointed to the impossibility of impeding man's progress and knowledge acquisition. This era was adamant that the world's mysteries could be fathomed and that man's knowledge and power over the world could increase. This Enlightenment attitude is unrelenting and inflexible because it is based on the optimistic and confident idea that man is powerful and that the world is congruent with man's endeavors at knowledge acquisition. As Waugh and Pearce (1992:67) state: "Enlightenment is the state of believing that human beings are collectively engaged in a progressive movement towards moral and intellectual self-realization through the application to their situation of a *universal rational faculty*."

From the above comments it is evident that the Enlightenment had great faith in man and his intellect. Reason and perception could result in true knowledge and nothing could inhibit man in his quest for answers about the world. His knowledge was great and could only increase. A character from H.G. Wells' Tono Bungay acts as a spokesman for these Enlightenment ideas when he says: "I decided that in power and knowledge lay the salvation of my life, the secret that would fill my need; that to these things I would give myself." (Schorer, 1952:73.) In an age when religion was considered subjective, imaginative and irrational, science proved to be a new figure worthy of praise and adoration.

The Enlightenment was therefore a time of confidence in science, man and the comprehensibility of the world. This world-view was inherited by Modernism and the following section aims to elucidate these views while at the same time acknowledge the doubt that was beginning to arise over some of these Enlightenment thoughts and attitudes.

### 2.2.1.2 MODERN EPISTEMOLOGY

This section aims to document the characteristics of the Modernist movement as they pertain to the epistemological questions of this period. An understanding of Modernist theories of knowledge is necessary in a study that aims to scrutinize the epistemology of a Modernist novel, such as The Good Soldier for traces of a Postmodern epistemology.

Appleby *et al.* (1996:259) state that “during the first half of the twentieth century many individuals began to question seriously the assumptions about human nature that had underlain the Enlightenment project and to explore the disjuncture between the modern faith in progress and the reality of modern life”. Bradbury describes the Modernist period as “ a crisis in the history of Western humanism, and a deep attempt to understand and apprehend the nature of modern existence” (Bradbury, 1989:5).

Appleby *et al.* and Bradbury’s comments make it evident that the Enlightenment faith in man, progress and knowledge was not interminable. Society eventually came to realize that science could not solve social problems and that man could not control, or even fathom, the world in all its complexity. This was a stage marked by epistemological doubt as accepted and trusted theories on knowledge were questioned and suspected. Fokkema identifies the “issues of epistemological doubt and metalingual comment” (Fokkema, 1984:19) as that which so “strikingly set Modernism off from Realism as well as Symbolism” (Fokkema, 1984:19). He goes on to state that this epistemological doubt concerns “the possibility of representing and explaining reality” (Fokkema, 1984:19). From Fokkema’s comment it is evident that the Modernists were beginning to realize that perhaps the world could not be understood as easily as their Enlightenment fathers had postulated and that reality was not necessarily easy to comprehend.

During the Modernist era many social and scientific changes occurred which resulted in an epistemological crises. McFarlane, commenting on Modern science, states: “The physicist found himself having to acknowledge the existence of new and disturbingly different laws, in which conventional logic and common sense played a greatly diminished role...new ‘unscientific’ concepts like a-logicality and a-causality demanded formal recognition, even experimental verification; the uncertainties of probability usurped the sovereignty of precise knowledge, of confident predictability.” (McFarlane, 1985:84.) McFarlane makes it evident that during Modernism the Enlightenment notions of rationalism, empiricism and positivism

were being scrutinized and new theories were superceding old ones. This caused an epistemological crisis in scientific practices during the Modernist movement.

Another cause of epistemological doubt and societal depression during Modernism concerned the findings and teachings of Fredrich Nietzsche. Ibsch states that Nietzsche "laid the foundation for the epistemological doubt prevalent in the twentieth century, which manifests itself, among other things, in the essayistic structure of the Modernist novel" (Ibsch, 1986:120). According to McFarlane, Nietzsche had a "uniquely influential role in the Modernist period" (McFarlane, 1985:79) with his "apocalyptic" view of the world and the future (McFarlane, 1985:79). By deducing that Modern men were for example, "the children of a fragmented, pluralistic, sick, weird period" (Bradbury, 1989:7), Nietzsche succeeded in feeding the seeds of epistemological indeterminacy that would characterize the Modernist movement.

Despite these new findings and the realization that the world was not as simple and comprehensible as previously believed, the following comment demonstrates that the Modernists were still relatively confident in man's ability to understand the world using his intellect and reasoning abilities. According to Waugh and Pearce, Lyotard has defined Modernism as "the articulation of a belief in grand narratives arising out of the conviction that rational procedures can establish foundational truth" (Waugh & Pearce, 1992:147). This comment indicates that even though the Modernist period was marked by its epistemological doubt and a range of discoveries that caused man to feel disillusioned and alienated in this now unfathomable world, attempts were still being made to deal with this epistemological crisis and find some order and foundational truth in this chaos. The Modernists still believed in the existence of truth and had faith in the constructive power of man's reason.

Ibsch comments on the Modernist attempt to come to some type of knowledge and certainty despite epistemological chaos and he notes the change of 'isms' that took place during Modernism. Ibsch states that "in the first decades of this century the theory of knowledge entered a new stage, which was reflected in the literary work of Modernists such as Gide, Proust, Joyce, Musil and Thomas Mann. Idealism and positivism were replaced by functionalism" (Ibsch, 1986:119). The change in 'isms' was the result of a renewed desire to make sense of the incomprehensible world. Where positivism and idealism had disappointed

epistemological endeavours, Modern man was confident that new theories and points of departure would pave the way for a better understanding and deeper knowledge of the world.

Commenting on scientific practice during Modernism, McFarlane (1985:82) states “it is revealing that”, despite epistemological doubt, “the practices of science and of the scientific method were still deeply respected: careful observation, precise recording and close attention to detail. An unspoken loyalty to traditional notions of causality, even determinism, still persisted, though the mechanics of it were no longer positivistic” (McFarlane, 1985:82). McFarlane’s comment illustrates that despite man’s realization that the Enlightenment notion of conquering the world through knowledge was naïve and impossible, Modern man still sought to know and had confidence that science would pave the way for increased, if not absolute knowledge.

From the above comments by Lyotard (in Waugh and Pearce), Ibsch and McFarlane, it is evident that the Modernists could not simply surrender the Enlightenment concern with knowledge because of the realization that the world was unfathomable. The Enlightenment ideals were not dead in Modernism and attempts to salvage Enlightenment notions of rationality and epistemology were still attempted. This is unlike Postmodernist thought, where “any interpretation relying on some sort of knowledge of the world, on common sense logic and testability is superfluous, if not plainly wrong” (Fokkema, 1984:48). Unlike Postmodernism, Modernism still made attempts to order and interpret the world with the aim of establishing truth, meaning and knowledge.

It is therefore evident that Modernism is marked by a tension between a faith in man’s ability to know and a growing suspicion that the world is not completely knowable. This tension originates from the incongruities between the theories of knowledge inherited from the Enlightenment and new theories discovered during the Modernist movement. Bradbury comments on this tension and states that “a double vision ran through the modern arts - a distrust of the modern world and its direction, a commitment to modernity and Modernism” (Bradbury, 1989:7). This statement points to the Modernist position in which previous held beliefs were being challenged and new discoveries were replacing old ones, while the confidence in man’s ability to conquer the unknown still persisted.

Waugh and Pearce corroborate this view by stating that “one can still see in the various cultural expressions of late modernity (including modernist literature), a tension between the new sense of contingency and provisionality and a desire to find some way to retain the notion of universal categories” (Waugh & Pearce, 1992:76). This comment points to the Modernist realization that the world is not predictable and simply acquiescent to man’s attempts at control, while at the same time acknowledging the Modern desire for absolutes and universal principles.

This section has revealed that even though Modernism suspected the Enlightenment theories of science and knowledge, it did not reject them completely. This was the following step in the progression of epistemology and was to be taken by Postmodernism.

### 2.2.1.3. POSTMODERN EPISTEMOLOGY

It is now appropriate to elucidate the change in epistemology during Postmodernism<sup>2</sup> and consider how this movement signifies a “ radical break” (Waugh & Pearce, 1992:66) with previous theories on knowledge, specifically those of the Enlightenment. Such an elucidation is a necessary foundation in a study that seeks to scrutinize the elements of a Postmodern epistemology in a Modernist novel, namely The Good Soldier.

As periods progress, theories of knowledge change and adapt. Previously held epistemologies are studied and their flaws revealed and in their place new theories on knowledge arise. As Appleby *et al.* illustrate: “If the Enlightenment thinkers first queried ‘what is knowledge?’, nineteenth century social theorists added ‘what is knowledge good for?’ Poststructuralists such as Foucault reformulated such generic questions, asking ‘how does knowledge work?’ Derrida goes one step further, searching for what is beyond knowledge and meaning. He asks the radical question ‘do knowledge and its supposed corollary, meaning, truly exist?’” (Appleby *et al.*, 1996:390.)

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<sup>2</sup> This study acknowledges that Postmodernism is an extremely wide term that incorporates sometimes contradictory views and practices (Bertens, 1986:10, Zurbrugg, 1993:162-163). For this reason it is necessary to state that this section will consider various views within Postmodernism that are characteristically Postmodern, but that are not conclusive of the movement as a whole. The same applies to Modernism as a movement, which is also composed of many views and groups (Zurbrugg, 1993:162), although not as contradictory as some of those within Postmodernism.

The editors of Knowledge and Postmodernism in Historical Perspective state: "In recent decades, however, those who study society have grown less certain of the mind's ability to mirror the objective world. They have even raised questions about the capacity of language to act as a neutral conveyor of information. Acting on these doubts, they have put the whole Enlightenment project on trial, giving to our era a name- postmodernism- that advertises the distance we have travelled since Bacon framed his ambitious program around the curious investigator." (Appleby *et al.*, 1996:16.)

Bertens corroborates this view by commenting on the "identification of postmodernism with a set of polemical anti-Enlightenment positions that are still with us" (Bertens, 1995:20) and later defines the Modernism Fiedler attacks as "an unwholesome combination of a specific, narrow and self-satisfied rationalism and an equally narrow and imperious liberal humanism" (Bertens, 1995:30). In contrast to this Bertens states that Fiedler upholds the "apocalyptic, anti-rational, blatantly romantic and sentimental age" (Bertens, 1995:30) that is the Postmodern age.

Further epistemological crises and a more serious undermining of Enlightenment thought marked the Postmodern period. One of the crises that occurred during the 1960's was, according to Van der Walt, the absolving of scientism. It can be recalled that science was a very powerful influence during the Enlightenment and Modernism. It was seen as an authority on knowledge and even as a solution to social problems, but Postmodernists finally rejected the power and seeming truth and objectivity of science. Van der Walt states that "despite material prosperity, a crisis had emerged such as increasing crime, civil violence, political unrest and all forms of counter-culture" (Van der Walt, 1997:31). He states that there was "an increasing realization of the fact that positivistic scientism's claims to a better society are false; science is unmasked as an accessory to the powers/forces of oppression" (Van der Walt, 1997:33).

Further epistemological crisis was initiated with the findings of Thomas Kuhn, who questioned many Enlightenment ideas. Van der Walt states that Kuhn's work The Structure of Scientific Revolutions "had a remarkable influence on the turning point in the theory of science/ epistemology. His work became one of the most important means of undermining logical positivism"(Van der Walt, 1997:36). Appleby *et al.* state that Kuhn's work was "destined to forever change our thinking about disciplinary knowledge" (Appleby *et al.*,

1996:263). They go on to explain how “before Kuhn, the popular perception of scientific practice was rooted in Enlightenment rationalism” and how Kuhn “shattered this understanding of science” (Appleby *et al.*, 1996:338). This was in 1962 and it is evident that the change in epistemology occurring during these decades was unprecedented. This was an epoch where Enlightenment thought was challenged and rejected.

According to Appleby *et al.*, along with Kuhn, the work of “Clifford Geertz and Claude Levi-Strauss, among others, challenged the modern supposition that the accumulation of knowledge through scientific practice necessarily bettered the human condition” (Appleby *et al.*, 1996:259). From these comments it is evident that the Postmodern period seriously questioned and unequivocally rejected the Enlightenment and Modernist faith in science and the confidence that man’s rational and intellectual scientific work would improve society and conquer the world.

It is appropriate to elucidate the aspects of Enlightenment thought that have been put on trial during the Postmodern period and Flax (quoted by Faigley) offers a list of Enlightenment beliefs that have been cast into doubt by Postmodernism. Among these beliefs are:

Reason and its ‘science’- philosophy - can provide an objective, reliable and universal foundation for knowledge; the knowledge acquired from the right use of reason will be ‘true’- for example, such knowledge will represent something real and unchanging (universal) about our minds and the structure of the natural world; by grounding claims in the authority of reason, the conflicts between truth, knowledge and power can be overcome; truth can serve power without distortion, in turn by utilizing knowledge in the service of power, both freedom and progress will be assured; knowledge can be neutral; language is in some sense transparent. (Faigley, 1992:8.)

These beliefs, which prevail throughout Modernity are isolated and discarded in the Postmodern movement. The Modern and Enlightenment confidence in man’s knowledge and the ability of this knowledge to be used for constructive and universal application is criticized and rejected in the Postmodern movement which overtly lacks confidence in science and man’s ability to gain knowledge.

In Modernism man is seen as a brave, heroic, rational being, and this view is rejected in Postmodernism, where, as Leonard B. Meyer realized in 1963:

Man is no longer to be the measure of all things, the center of the universe. He has been measured and found to be an undistinguished bit of matter different in no essential way from bacteria, stones, and trees. His goals and purposes; his egocentric notions of past, present and future, his faith in his power to predict and through prediction, to control his destiny - all these are called into question, considered irrelevant or deemed trivial. (quoted by Bertens, 1995:24-25.)

This may seem like a pessimistic and gloomy view of man, but Postmodernism is *not* characterized for its negativity and therefore Meyer does not see this decentering of man as something to lament, but instead sees possibilities in it: “It is to the naïve and primitive enjoyment of sensations and things for their own sakes that these artists seek to return. We must rediscover the reality and excitement of a sound as such, a color as such, and existence itself as such.” (quoted by Bertens, 1995:25.) This reveals a positive and constructive attitude to the news that man’s existence is aimless, powerless and meaningless.

From the above comments it is evident that Postmodernism has left no area of Enlightenment thought unchallenged. Not only science, politics and religion are addressed, but even man’s view of himself is investigated and identified as erroneous. According to Waugh and Pearce, there is a total undermining of the major discourses of society in Postmodernism, as all the dominant discourses of society are shown to be faulty and are even revealed to be a means of control by those in power. They state that in Postmodernism there is “a perceived breakdown in the universalizing and rationalist metanarratives of the Enlightenment: those grand theories which have grounded modern Western politics, knowledge, art and ethics, for the last two hundred and fifty years” (Waugh & Pearce, 1992:66). The work of Foucault, Lyotard and Derrida voice this Postmodern “incredulity towards metanarratives” (Lyotard, 1996:482) and their supposed access to the truth.

An interesting and enlightening discussion on the differences between the Modernist and Postmodernist view of man and epistemology can be found in Murdoch’s essay, Against Dryness (1961). Here she looks at the Modernist ideas of man and the world from the perspective of dawning Postmodernism. She identifies the rationalistic and scientific attitude of the time and is specifically interested in the view of the human personality and human position in the world, which had been shaped by existentialism and behaviourism, along with Enlightenment ideas of rationalism and science. Writing after the Second World War, Murdoch comments: “We live in a scientific and anti-metaphysical age in which the dogmas, images and precepts of religion have lost much of their power. We have not recovered from

two wars and the experience of Hitler. We are also heirs of the Enlightenment, Romanticism and the Liberal tradition.” (Murdoch, 1977:23.) She also states: “For political purposes we have been encouraged to think of ourselves as totally free and responsible, knowing everything we need to know for the purposes of life.” (Murdoch, 1977:29.)

Murdoch describes the Modernist view of man that is abandoned in Postmodernism. She states:

We meet, for instance, a refined picture of this man in Stuart Hampshire’s book *Thought and Action*. He is rational and totally free except in so far as...his degree of self-awareness may vary. He is, morally speaking, monarch of all he surveys and totally responsible for his actions. Nothing transcends him...his inner life is resolved into acts and choices, and his beliefs, which are also acts, since a belief can only be identified through its expression. His moral arguments are references to empirical facts backed up by decisions...His rationality expresses itself in awareness of the facts, whether about the world or about himself. (Murdoch, 1977:24-25.)

This Modernist view of man clearly differs from the above comment by Meyer (quoted by Bertens above) where Postmodern man is described as irrelevant, limited in his abilities and unimportant in the greater scheme of the universe. Murdoch’s modern man by contrast is free, moral and transcendent. He is rational and empirical and depends on true and reliable scientific facts.

In Postmodern hindsight, Murdoch makes a statement that incorporates a Postmodern view of the world together with a realization of the limits of a Modernist epistemology. She states that “a simple-minded faith in science, together with the assumption that we are all rational and totally free, engenders a dangerous lack of curiosity about the real world, a failure to appreciate the difficulties in knowing it” (Murdoch, 1977:29). Murdoch points out the shortcomings of the Modern view of man and the problem with a theory of knowledge that purports to know and understand everything in the world and that does not acknowledge the mysteriousness and indeterminacy that surrounds even the scientist.

Murdoch realizes the shortcomings of the Enlightenment worldview and comments on what has been lost in this process and what needs to be regained- “a renewed sense of the difficulty and complexity of the moral life and the opacity of persons” (Murdoch, 1977:30). This comment echoes Kirk who comments on Modernism by stating that the “‘truth’ which was discovered by ‘objective’ science was necessarily flat, sphere and bleak. But in the

(Postmodern) 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). These forms and figures are opaque, but instead of fearing the great unknown, as the Modernists did, the Postmodernists celebrate the opacity and incomprehensibility of the world.

Knowledge on the history of epistemology makes it possible to approach The Good Soldier and determine whether it shares an Enlightenment optimism in man’s ability to know; or a Modernist depression about the limits of man’s knowledge, or a Postmodern acquiescence of the fact that man cannot know everything, but that life is still worth living and that one can find contentment all the same.

The epistemology of a period is revealed in both the philosophy and literature of the period and it is now appropriate to consider the difference between Modern and Postmodern theories of knowledge as revealed in the literature of these movements.

### **2.2.2. EPISTEMOLOGY IN LITERATURE**

Insight into the literature of the Modernist and Postmodernist movement enables an identification of the relevant epistemic ideas circulating during these movements and also facilitates an investigation and discussion into the epistemology of The Good Soldier. Discovering the ways in which literature manages changes in the theories of knowledge and popular ideas on man’s knowledge is necessary in a study which aims to discuss the elements of a Postmodern epistemology in a novel belonging to the Modernist movement. It then becomes possible to discuss to what extent the epistemology of The Good Soldier bears traces of a Postmodern epistemology and to what extent the epistemology of this Modernist novel coheres with Postmodern novels. It also becomes possible to discover to what extent The Good Soldier may differ from a Modernist epistemology and depart from the characteristics demonstrated in the literature of that period.

### 2.2.2.1. EPISTEMOLOGY IN MODERN LITERATURE

*Artistic change is not simply an aesthetic event. It arises from social and ideological change, the change of systems, beliefs and ways of life. (Bradbury, 1989:9.)*

The changes in epistemology that were taking place during the Modernist and Postmodernist movements are reflected in the literature of the time. The epistemological doubt of Modernism was evident in Modernist literature as well as the attempts to still understand, find meaning and interpret the world.

The following statement illustrates the atmosphere of epistemological doubt that was prevalent during Modernism:

This leads us towards another account of why Modernism is our art; it is the one art that responds to the scenario of our chaos. It is the art consequent on Heisenburg's 'Uncertainty Principle', of destruction of civilization and the reason for the First World War, of the world changed and reinterpreted by Marx, Freud and Darwin, of capitalism and constant industrial acceleration, of existential exposure to meaninglessness or absurdity...It is the art consequent on the dis-establishing of communal reality and conventional notions of causality, on the destruction of traditional notions of the wholeness of individual character (Bradbury & McFarlane, 1985:27).

This comment illustrates the societal and scientific influences that were undermining the Enlightenment theories of knowledge and causing writers and artists to question the limits of knowledge and man's ability to understand and fathom the world around them.

Despite the doubt sowed by the above conditions, the Modern artist still sought to know and make sense of the incomprehensible universe. This is evident through the many movements that offered ideas on man and the world and what was known or knowable. Movements like imagism, futurism, vorticism, expressionism and impressionism in literature offered theories on how things come to be known and understood and how the world could be made comprehensible. Where futurism called for speed, blasts and war (Bradbury, 1989:15), imagism called for the concentration on a moment in time and for direct and objective description (Pound, 1986:58-59). Van Gunsteren states that "in his attempt to create order, the Literary Impressionist intuitively selects and interprets reality" (Van Gunsteren, 1990:64). The literary impressionist regarded perceptions as a source of knowledge and means through which reality could be interpreted and understood. All these movements within Modernism offered ideas on what was to be known and how one could know, understand and represent the world.

Section 2.2.1.2 demonstrated that Modernism is characterized by its pervasive epistemological concerns and that on the one hand the Modernist realized the limits of knowledge, but on the other hand, due to its Enlightenment ancestry, still desired and sought after positive knowledge. This is an ambivalent position and one that was quite distressing for the Modernist. The following statement touches on the precarious position the Modern writer finds himself in. Commenting about Thomas Mann's Death in Venice Bradbury states how Mann "reflects on the artist's need for dangerous knowledge" (Bradbury, 1989:4) and quotes Mann who states that "knowledge is all- knowing, understanding, forgiving...It has compassion with the abyss - it is the abyss" (Bradbury, 1989:4). The notion that knowledge is acquainted with the abyss, but is still pursued due to a desperate *need* for it dramatically sums up the ambivalent relationship the Modernists had with knowledge. For the Modernist knowledge is difficult and painful, but there is still a strong desire to pursue knowledge despite the cost involved.

The following comment on literary impressionism applies to the plight of the Modernist movement in general and sums up the actual crux of the epistemological problem they faced:

The Impressionist character seems to be caught in the moment of transition between a passionate desire for a transcendental glimpse into the 'truth' of human consciousness, and the realization that there is no 'truth': there is only perceived fragments of a highly ambiguous sensory stimuli. Between the irresolution of these two paradoxes the Literary Impressionist presents one of his major themes: the struggle for identity in a constantly shifting balance of perception and knowledge - the disparity between subjective and objective 'truth', between illusion and reality. (Van Gunsteren, 1990:65.)

Van Gunsteren's comment acknowledges the Modern knowledge crisis, but also highlights the Modernist's desire to somehow explain and understand that which was incomprehensible to him. Even though knowledge was considered elusive and difficult, Van Gunsteren's comment demonstrates the Modernist desire to still understand, control, represent and overcome the void in man's knowledge of the world and of himself.

That the Modernists still sought truth and order in the world and in their work is revealed in the following comments on Modern novelists. Commenting on Joyce's use of myth, T.S. Eliot demonstrates a characteristically Modernist sentiment, "Instead of a narrative method, we may now use the mythical method. It is, I believe, a step toward making the modern world *possible for art*, toward...*order and form*" (Eliot, 1952:426, emphasis added). Eliot's

comment acknowledges the lack of order and form that Modernist writers identified in their world and the confidence they held that they could again find order, and in a way control and understand the world, through art.

Chattopadhyaya's comment on James Joyce reveals a similar Modernist concern with ordering, controlling and understanding the world and life. He states that Joyce "not only succeeded in controlling and mastering the solid, unwieldy material of life, but also succeeded in evolving a method which enabled him to impose a pattern on the chaos of life. Life is a continuous movement. It is in a flux. But beneath this flux there is a deeper meaning" (Chattopadhyaya, 1971:9). This is a truly Modernist sentiment, as truth and meaning are still possible conclusions to an epistemological search. The inclusion of the words *controlling*, *mastering*, *unwieldy* and *chaos* also echo the Modernist confidence in man's ability to conquer that which is indefinable and unaccommodating in man's attempts at knowledge acquisition.

Charles Russell makes an interesting comment that refers to the Modernists' "rage for order" (Wilde, 1981:123). He includes the absurdist writers such as Ionesco and Beckett and existential writers such as Sartre and Camus as writers who all attempt to understand and order the world. He states that "the point of departure of both absurdism and committed literature was the existentially isolated individual who attempted - as did the modernists - *to assert a coherent system of value or meaning in an essentially meaningless world*" (Russell, 1985:243, emphasis added). He states that both "the bathos of Beckett's creatures and the heroism of Camus's rebels were expressions of the last gasp of a modernist defensive humanism" (Russell, 1985:244). This statement reveals the Modern writer's desire and efforts to gain knowledge and control over the world and the self, faced with the threat of meaninglessness and hopelessness in the world.

According to Joseph Conrad the job of the novelist is "to render life accurately and realistically and to exclude all comments" (Chattopadhyaya, 1971:7). This is a very confident statement and reveals the Modernist concern with representing reality by ordering it realistically and accurately, almost scientifically. This statement also reveals the realist influence in Modernism, even though the Modern writers were not realists in the sense of their predecessors, such as Dickens, Proust and Tolstoy. Chattopadhyaya labels the Modernists 'neo-realists' as they were still intent on representing reality, but were not content with the external photographic representation of the realists. As he states: "I have called Henry James,

Joseph Conrad, Dorothy Richardson, James Joyce and Virginia Woolf neo-realists, as I feel these novelists were determined to reconstruct in a new manner human consciousness itself and not to remain satisfied with a mere second-hand representation of it.” (Chattopadyaya, 1971: 5.) The Modernists were concerned with understanding and representing the workings of the human psyche and were not content with a simple realistic representation of the external world. They sought to portray the workings of the inner world of the individual in a realistic and believable way.

The Modern writer’s attempt to understand and represent the mysteries of the internal psyche is revealed in the use of the stream-of-consciousness technique. Chattopdyaya states: “The stream-of-consciousness technique is used to capture for us and to render to us the very sources of human behaviour - chaotic and unorganized.” (Chattopadyaya, 1971:131.) The stream-of-consciousness technique therefore aimed to be a realistic representation of the workings of the human mind. The Modern novelist wanted to address the unpredictable in human consciousness in order to overcome its mysteries and get at some sense of truth about human behaviour. As Chattopadyaya states: “They considered the novel as an exacting fine art, which must endeavour above everything else the reproduction of the human personality with all its complexities of behaviour. A mere photograph of the externals of man however objective, was not reality’ - the whole truth. The essential, the inner truth, has to be found out and rendered and recorded.” (Chattopadyaya, 1971:65.) This comment illustrates the Modernist pre-occupation with epistemology and their attempts to understand the human in all his complexity and secrecy. The Modernist could not accept the indeterminacy in the world and in himself and the stream-of-consciousness technique is evidence of an effort to delve the depths of the human psyche and represent these issues realistically in fiction.

Another characteristic of Modernist literature that stems from epistemological concerns is the epiphany. This device was used throughout Modernism by authors such as Virginia Woolf, Henry James and James Joyce. It is characteristic of Modernist concerns with epistemology and knowledge acquisition. Joyce articulates his thoughts on the epiphany through the character of Stephen in Stephen Hero. By epiphany Stephen meant:

a sudden spiritual manifestation, whether in the vulgarity of speech or of gesture or in a memorable phrase of the mind itself. He believed it was for the man of letters to record these epiphanies with extreme care, seeing that they themselves are the most delicate and evanescent of moments (in Beja, 1971:14).

The epiphany is a 'coming to knowledge' a sudden and intense awareness of something. The use of the epiphany and its positive connotation with knowledge, awareness and spirituality reveals the Modernist pre-occupation with epistemological concerns. For Modernists such as Woolf and Joyce knowledge is something to be grasped, appreciated and treasured because it is delicate and evanescent, it is hard to grasp and keep hold of, but worth the individual's efforts at acquisition.

Chattopdyaya defines an epiphany as "a definite insight into and showing forth... meant to be a fragmentary clue to the real meaning of life taken as a whole" (Chattopadyaya, 1971:110-111). This comment reveals the Modernists' longing for insight into the meaning of life and their disillusionment with the world due to pervasive idea that the world is meaningless and purposeless. The use of the epiphany as a literary device is evidence of the Modernist desire for knowledge, meaning and certainty in an incomprehensible world. The epiphany implies the existence of a stable truth, a centre, or an origin, which is a strong Modernist desire and which is also a point of attack in Postmodernism (Waugh, 1993:5-6).

The Modernist found himself in the position between an Enlightenment epistemology and a Postmodern abandonment of epistemological concern or acceptance of epistemological indeterminacy. He realized that knowledge is problematic, but still desired to control and understand the world. He lamented the lack of epistemological certainty and also endeavoured to address this uncertainty through devices such as the epiphany and the stream-of-consciousness technique.

These devices reveal a desire for certainty, for knowledge, for depth and origins. The Modernist still sought a centre, a core of meaning and certainty. Wilde speaks of the Modernist "epistemology of the hidden" (Wilde, 1981:107) which implies the presence of a hidden centre of meaning and knowledge. It does not matter how deep one has to search for the centre, as long as one finds it. In Modern novels "the faith in some central core of being not only persists, it is deepened by the mystery of that core's recessive presence... translated into an almost obsessive concern with depth, is validated by just that underlying belief that, at some level, character remains intact" (Wilde, 1981:107-108). Modernism therefore reveals a preference for depth and it remains to be seen whether Postmodern novelists share this preference.

It is now appropriate to focus on Postmodern literature in order to gain insight into this movement's epistemological attitudes and practices. Such an investigation will demonstrate how this movement's epistemology differs from that of Modernism and also how later in the study, The Good Soldier's epistemology compares to that of Postmodern novels.

#### **2.2.2.2. EPISTEMOLOGY IN POSTMODERN LITERATURE**

*The fact is that modern writers sin when they suppose they know, as they conceive that physics knows or that history knows. The subject of the novelist is not knowable in any such way. The mystery increases, it does not grow less as types of literature wear out.*  
(Bellow, 1977:69.)

This section aims to discuss epistemology in the context of Postmodern literature. Where Modernism reveals a serious concern with epistemological issues, a deep despair at the limits of knowledge and attempts to still understand and know something, Postmodernism abandons all seriousness, despair and concern about epistemological indeterminacy and no longer concerns itself with epistemological issues. The Postmodern novelist accepts the limits of man's knowledge and the fact that the world is epistemologically hazy and opaque. In order to elucidate Postmodern epistemology in literature, the discussion will focus on a number of different commentators on the subject.

David Lodge comments on the difference between Modern and Postmodern literature and the following statement includes reference to the difference between a Modern and Postmodern epistemology. Lodge states that "the general idea of the world resisting the compulsive attempts of the human consciousness to interpret it, of the human predicament being in some sense 'absurd', does underlie a good deal of postmodernist writing" (Lodge, 1977:225-226). This may seem like the Modernist plight, but Lodge goes on to state: "The falsity of the patterns imposed upon experience in the traditional realistic novel is common ground between the modernists and the postmodernists, but to the latter it seems that the modernists too, for all their experimentation, obliquity and complexity, oversimplified the world and held out a false hope of somehow making it at home in the human mind." (Lodge, 1977:226.) The Modern author's attempts to understand and represent reality are abandoned in Postmodernism, which no longer engages in the struggle for knowledge and understanding.

Postmodern literature reveals a move away from a concern with meaning, explanation and understanding. Where Modernist authors attempted to explain and achieve some kind of knowledge, Postmodernist authors are no longer concerned with these epistemological issues. Lodge recognizes the Postmodern denial of meaning and states that in Postmodern writing “uncertainty” becomes “endemic” (Lodge, 1977:226). He identifies six devices in Postmodern literature, which illustrate the effect of this uncertainty: contradiction, permutation, discontinuity, randomness, excess and short circuit (Lodge, 1977:229-245). These devices succeed in drawing attention to the fact that the world is difficult to understand and resists man’s attempts at ordering and knowing.

These devices distinguish Modern fiction from Postmodern fiction, as Modernist authors still tried to portray even the difficult and uncertain areas of the human psyche in a realistic and acceptable way by utilizing the stream-of-consciousness technique. Woolf’s To The Lighthouse, for example, uses the stream-of-consciousness technique to portray and understand the conscious and semi-conscious thoughts of the main characters. The reader finds this portrayal believable and accurate.

Postmodernists, however, are no longer interested in such representation and in creating such an illusion of reality. Section 2.2.1.3 discussed how the Postmodernists recognized the limits of human knowledge and the existence of things that cannot be understood and explained. They acknowledge the incomprehensibility of the world and instead of the Modernists’ endeavours to come to some sense of resolution, the Postmodernists ‘re-enchant’ the world by letting its mysteries exist and by not trying to scrutinize, interrogate and categorize the world and the self.

Necessarily, such a refutation of Modernism’s epistemological goals requires a change in literary practice. One of the things that Postmodernism abandons is the realistic mode of its predecessors. As Waugh and Pearce state, “Postmodernism in literature can be, and has been, understood as a refutation of the epistemological grounds of Realism” (Waugh & Pearce, 1992:58) and that “much Postmodern fiction explores the limits of realist convention” (Waugh & Pearce, 1992:58). If the Postmodern world cannot be understood and if its artists accept its indeterminacy, then a realistic, representational and knowledge-creating literature is not appropriate.

If the Postmodern world questions and rejects attempts at portraying reality, it follows that the discourses and accepted methods of acquiring knowledge and meaning will also be questioned. As Waugh and Pearce state, "Postmodern literary, as theoretical, discourse is 'grounded', in effect, in the epistemological problematisation of grounding itself, of the idea of identity as absolute or truth as essential. Fictionality is central to both. Just as theorists like Lyotard refer to knowledge as 'just gaming', so writers like John Barth and Robert Coover foreground epistemological and ontological questions about the construction of the 'real' or the 'self'" (Waugh & Pearce, 1992:51-52). Any discourses on absolute truth, identity, meaning and knowledge are rejected in Postmodernist literature. In Postmodernism the foundations of Enlightenment and Modernist epistemologies are tested and found to be unstable.

McHale acknowledges Postmodernism's lack of enthusiasm to partake in Modernism's epistemological fact-finding quests and the Postmodernist's laid-back complacency in the face of epistemological indeterminacy. He states that Postmodernism departs from Modernist epistemological issues in order to embrace ontological issues. Included in the Modernist concern with epistemological issues are the themes of "the accessibility and circulation of knowledge, the different structuring imposed on the 'same' knowledge by different minds, and the problem of 'unknowability' or the limits of knowledge" (McHale, 1987:9). McHale goes on to state how these themes are revealed in Modernist literature through: "the multiplication and juxtaposition of perspectives, the focalization of all the evidence through a single 'centre of consciousness', virtuoso variants on interior monologue" (McHale, 1987:9).

According to McHale Postmodernism reveals a concern with ontological issues rather than epistemological issues. Postmodern fiction therefore addresses questions such as: "Which world is this? What is to be done in it? Which of my selves is to do it?" (McHale, 1987:10) instead of epistemological questions such as: "What is to be known? Who knows it? How do they know it, and with what degree of certainty?" (McHale, 1987:9.) Epistemology gives way to ontology in Postmodern fiction. McHale adds that epistemological issues are not excluded in Postmodernism, they are just not as dominant as ontological issues, which are foregrounded in the latter movement.

By focusing on ontology, the Postmodern author not only draws attention to the nature of man's existence, but also to the nature of the fictional world of the text. The Postmodern

author intentionally reminds the reader that the novel he or she is reading is not part of the 'real' world, but is a fictional construct of the author's imagination. All the devices Modernism used to hide the fact that the novel was not 'real', are foregrounded in Postmodernism and the reading experience is rather jarring. McHale identifies this Postmodern tendency and in Postmodern Fiction he sets out "to describe the repertoire of strategies upon which postmodernist fiction draws in order to foreground the ontological structure of text and world" (McHale, 1987:39). The 'repertoire of devices' he discovers echo the Postmodern suspicion of the author's ability to portray reality in fiction and the rejection of attempts at providing any sense of certainty or absoluteness about the world.

Where Modernism and the Enlightenment still had confidence in man's ability to represent reality and to have some sense of epistemological certainty, Postmodernism abandons all confidence in man's ability to claim any absolute knowledge and no longer pursues this quest. Russell comments on Postmodernist writing and states that "the writer's analytical stance still fosters a critical response to culture, but there is clearly less faith in one's assumptions of self-knowledge and mastery, in one's perception and knowledge of the external world, and even more importantly, in the writer's very means of expression" (Russell, 1985:245). The Postmodern writer accepts the limits of knowledge and no longer desires epistemological certainty. He acknowledges to the reader that both he and his characters have no illuminating insights into the mysteries of the world and that even the language he uses to create his characters is difficult and unwieldy.

In this connection it is possible to recall the comments on the epiphany in Modernist fiction discussed in Section 2.2.2.1. The epiphany in Modernism was borne out of a desire to gain insight, to know the world and the self. Such a state was sought after and still deemed possible in Modernism. In Postmodernism such a state is considered impossible and is no longer even desired. Postmodern literature therefore abandons both the theme of an epiphanic coming to knowledge and the use of the epiphany as a literary device. The following comment by Stevick reveals the Postmodern abandonment of the epiphany and the epistemological enlightenment associated with it:

It takes only a sentence or two of Barthelme, Brautigan and Coover to recognize how far they are from epiphanic form...None of the three writers seems to have much interest in such intuitive insights, perhaps not even much belief that they exist. And thus we do not need to read to the ends of the three fictions to know that their structures are

antithetical to what is the most conventionalized, imitated, standardized feature of modernist fiction...the epiphanic illumination. (Stevick, 1977:199.)

Alan Wilde distinguishes between Modernist and Postmodernist literature on the basis of irony. He states that Modernist literature deploys 'disjunctive' irony, while Postmodernism uses 'suspensive' irony. He defines Modernism's irony as follows:

disjunctive irony...strives, however reluctantly, toward a condition of paradox. The ironist...confronts a world that appears inherently disconnected and fragmented. At its extreme or 'absolute' point...disjunctive irony both recognizes the disconnections and seeks to control them (control being...one of the chief imperatives of the modernist imagination); and so the confusions of the world are shaped into an equal poise of opposites: the form of an unresolvable paradox...Inevitably, works of disjunctive irony achieve not resolution, but closure - an aesthetic closure that substitutes for the notion of paradise regained an image...of a paradise fashioned by man himself (Wilde, 1981: 10).

This statement coincides with the above notions of Modernism's desire for order, control, knowledge and certainty. The Modernist identified the fragmentation and disconnection around him and yet still attempted to know, order and control the world and fashion for himself a man-made paradise of resolution and closure.

In contrast to this Modernist paradise, Postmodernism deploys suspensive irony, which Wilde identifies with Postmodernism's "yet more radical vision of multiplicity, randomness, contingency, and even absurdity, [which] abandons the quest for paradise all together - the world in all its disorder is simply (or not so simply) accepted. 'With a true sense of the randomness of life's moments' to quote Jerzy Kosinski, 'man is at peace with himself - and that peace is happiness'"(Wilde, 1981:10). This comment reveals the Postmodern abandonment of knowledge quests and hunt for any sort of epistemological paradise.

The Postmodernist accepts the limits of knowledge and focuses his attention elsewhere. As Wilde states: "The modernist nostalgia over origins is replaced by a dismissal of them; the frustration of being unable to resolve a dilemma gives way to an acceptance of the impossibility of making any sense whatever of the world as a whole. Acceptance is the key word here." (Wilde, 1981:44.) The Postmodernist accepts the limits of man's knowledge and ability to control and order the world.

The Postmodern dismissal of meaning, truth and origins is accompanied by a disinterest in depth and an enchantment with surfaces. If there is no core or centre to be discovered, then why search for hidden depths? A fascination with surfaces is more rewarding and less epistemologically disappointing. In this connection Wilde comments on Postmodern ironists “who, while accepting the primacy of surface, nevertheless find in it (sometimes at least) the possibility of genuine if limited affirmation” (Wilde, 1981:123).

The Postmodern novel therefore has a particular approach to epistemological issues. It acknowledges and accepts the limitations of knowledge and does not pursue epistemological certainties. Characters therefore do not experience epiphanies, nor do they discover hidden truths or meanings. The Postmodern character instead accepts his or her world and sets out to live with the ambiguity and chaos that characterizes the world. This is not a depressed resignation, but an acquiescence in the face of the incomprehensible.

In conclusion, this section has aimed to discuss the traits of epistemology in Postmodernist literature, as they will have bearing on a discussion of The Good Soldier. From this orientation into Postmodern theories on knowledge it will be possible to compare and contrast The Good Soldier with Postmodern fiction in order to investigate and conclude whether the epistemology in The Good Soldier contains elements of a Postmodern epistemology.

The discussion thus far has focused exclusively on the issue of epistemology. This issue was discussed in both a historical and literary context. The progression of epistemological thought was documented and the differences between Modern and Postmodern epistemologies was elucidated. This orientation is relevant in a study that aims to discuss epistemology as one of the major themes in The Good Soldier and aims to identify any similarities between The Good Soldier and Postmodern theories of knowledge.

The introductory chapter now aims to provide an orientation to narratology. This is necessary as the narratological devices of The Good Soldier are to be compared with Postmodern devices of narrative in order to discover any possible congruencies between them. In order to engage in such an investigation it is first necessary to acquire a brief yet comprehensive understanding of the difference between Modern and Postmodern fiction’s employment of narratological devices.

Where a discussion of epistemology entails a discussion of theme in The Good Soldier, a discussion of narratological techniques incorporates a discussion of the formal devices in the novel. As such this study aims to investigate both the form and content in The Good Soldier in order to investigate any congruencies between the novel and various views within Postmodern thought.

### **2.3. ORIENTATION TO NARRATOLOGICAL DEVICES**

This section aims to introduce the notion of narratology before elucidating the use of narratological devices in Modernist and Postmodernist fiction. The purpose of this section is to provide an orientation to the concepts related to narratology that will have a bearing on the remainder of the study.

#### **2.3.1 NARRATOLOGY**

This section aims to introduce the concept of narratology and briefly elucidate various of the elements of narrative as this will provide an understanding that is necessary for the discussion of narratological devices in The Good Soldier in Chapter 4 of this study.

The following statements by Prince, Onega and Garcia Landa introduce the notion of narratology as well as various of the elements which are identifiable in narrative and which are associated with the study of narrative. Prince states that “narratology is the study of the form and functioning of narrative” (Prince, 1987:4) and he proceeds to discuss the characteristics of narrative, such as: the narrator (P:7<sup>3</sup>); the narratee (P:16); the narration (P:26); the presentation of the narrated; events (P:64) and organization (P:64). Included in these categories are issues such as multiple narrations (P:34); modes of discourse (P:47); order, point of view and speed (P:48-54); temporal and spatial relations (P:64); character (P:71) and setting and theme (P:74-75). These are the elements of which a narrative is composed and that can be altered and varied in different narratives to achieve different effects.

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<sup>3</sup> P refers to Prince, 1987 followed by page number.

In the introductory chapter to Narratology, Onega and Garcia Landa define narratology as “the science of narrative” (Onega & Garcia Landa, 1996:1). These editors mention certain central narratological concepts that have been coined or developed by various theorists, such as Henry James (restricted point of view), Booth (reliable and unreliable narrators), Genette (focalization, narrative levels, anachronies, homodiegetic and heterodiegetic narrators, the naratee) and Cohn (stream of consciousness) (Onega & Garcia Landa, 1996:29). Onega and Garcia Landa state that narratology is concerned with, among other things, analyzing time structures in stories (order of events and temporal distortions such as flashbacks or flashforwards) as well as point of view, for example, which includes a study of focalization, dramatic irony, suspense and omniscience (Onega & Garcia Landa, 1996:28). These are narratological concepts and are of particular interest in studies on narrative.

From the above quotes by Prince, Onega and Garcia Landa it is evident that narratology involves the study of narrative and its constitutive elements such as narrator, point of view, naratee and narrative levels. In this study it is particularly narrator, character and chronology that are the elements of narrative to be scrutinized in The Good Soldier. For the purposes of this study these elements and their employment in fiction will be designated by the term narratological devices. In this context, character, narrator and chronological sequencing are devices that are used in Modern and Postmodern fiction in characteristic ways. The implication of *device* involves utilizing the elements of narrative to achieve desirable ends.

The following section aims to discuss the Modernist use of narratological devices to achieve the desired effect of realistic representation (Chattopadhyaya below) in fiction and the Postmodern use of narratological devices to foreground fictionality (McCaffery, 1986:xxi) in an anti-representational stance.

### **2.3.2 NARRATOLOGICAL DEVICES IN MODERNIST FICTION**

This section aims to discuss the use of narratological devices in Modernist fiction. This involves elucidating the characteristic means in which Modern writers utilize character, narrator and time-scheme, among other devices, to achieve the desired result of realistic representation in narrative fiction. This elucidation will make it possible to discover whether The Good Soldier adheres to a typically Modernist employment of narratological devices, or whether the novel departs from a Modernist use of character, narrator and chronology.

Modern fiction writers were, as Chattopdyaya states of Woolf, concerned with the “problem of rendering reality” (Chattopdyaya, 1971:170) and writers such as Conrad considered that the job of the novelist was to “render life accurately and realistically” (Chattopdyaya, 1971:102). For this reason all the devices of narrative were used to represent reality in Modern fiction. This means that character, narrator, focalization and time-scheme for example, are used in Modernist fiction in a way that represents reality and attempts to be a mirror reflecting the real world in the most accurate way. Modern writers such as Conrad, Joyce and Woolf wanted “to keep the novel closer to reality” (Chattopdyaya, 1971:219) and their point of departure was that life doesn’t fall into a pattern, it is incomplete and confusing, so the novel cannot be logical, well-knit and ordered if it represents life (Chattopdyaya, 1971:25). From this comment it is evident that the Modern writers wished the novel to represent reality and as such the novel had to reflect reality through its structure and style.

The Modernists were especially concerned with representing the internal workings of the individual and his consciousness in a realistic and accurate manner. Chattopdyaya states that in 1912 Proust, Joyce and Richardson all came out with novels that turned fiction away from external to internal reality. With this move: “The great journey inward had begun - a journey of exploration into the realms of feelings and sensations.” (Chattopdyaya, 1971:4.) Stevenson states that “the human subject with all his or her complex thought-processes and emotions” (Stevenson, 1987:12) became the subject matter of Modernist fiction.

This distinct change in subject matter from the Victorian novels of Dickens and Galsworthy with their caricature figures, to Modernism’s delving into the psychological depths of character, had a marked effect on the form of the novel. Randall Stevenson states that “this new modernist concentration on the mind and inner life was accompanied by related changes in the structure of the novel” (Stevenson, 1996:443).

In their new focus on the internal workings of the mind of the individual, the Modernists firstly discarded traditional story. Chattopdyaya states: “A story involved a certain amount of conscious or unconscious falsification of man’s experience of life. It tortured reality out of shape. It was artificial and a made up thing. It should therefore go and they annihilated it.” (Chattopdyaya, 1971:4.) In place of traditional story the Modernists implemented the stream-of-consciousness technique in which dreams and memories shape the narrative. Chattopdyaya states that the Modernists used dream as a mechanism to render human experience in its raw

state (Chattopdyaya, 1971:133). The use of the stream-of-consciousness technique allowed for a realistic portrayal of the internal workings of the individual's mind.

The use of dreams and memories to record the inner workings of the mind also challenged the accepted Victorian notion of time and space in which the character's setting was adequately described and the story proceeded sequentially and orderly. Stevenson states that: "As the novel increasingly reflects 'the mind within', so it comes to rely on what Woolf calls 'time in the mind' rather than 'time on the clock': on characters' memories and recollections, returning to and associating with the present moment events long distant from it in time, stitching past experience into present consciousness." (Stevenson, 1996:443.) The focus on 'time on the mind' resulted in traditional chronology being discarded and this resulted in a change in the structure of the novel. Stevenson notes Modern fiction's "rejection of the serial chronology conventional to Victorian or Edwardian fiction in favour of more fluid approaches to structure" (Stevenson, 1996:444), which consequently resulted in "the absence of a conventional beginning, middle and end" (Stevenson, 1996:444) in these novels.

It was not only in the area of chronology that the Modernists changed the traditional use of narratological devices, but also in the area of character and narrator. Chattopdyaya states that: "James revolutionized the technique of narration and characterization. His contribution to the technique of the proper rendition of experience by putting the reader in direct communication with the minds of *characters* was immense in its scope and consequence." (Chattopadyaya, 1971:4.) James and other Modernist writers utilized the devices of character and narrator in order to present a realistic portrayal of the inner workings of the characters' minds. In this regard character was no longer portrayed as a cardboard figure whose external appearance and setting were described in great length, but rather as a consciousness whose inner workings were described at the expense of external descriptions of surroundings and physical appearance.

Chattopdyaya comments on Woolf's fiction and states that in characterization, she felt it no longer necessary to describe her characters. Characters must not be sharply defined, as this was not for her the proper rendering of life and reality (Chattopdyaya, 1971:10-11). Commenting on Woolf's criticism of Arnold Bennett, Stevenson states: "Through over-exclusive attention to observable, objective aspects- the facts about Mrs. Brown's appearance, dress, background, material circumstances, and so on- the soul or inner nature of her character

is ignored, and she fails to come to life.” (Stevenson, 1987:13.) It was important for the Modernists to have character ‘come to life’ and for them this was achieved through recording the inner workings of the mind rather than external descriptions of appearance.

The first-person invasive narrator in Victorian fiction, who addresses the reader and makes comments throughout his narrative, is abandoned in Modernism for a distant narrator who sees into minds of characters and who does not make comments; who shows rather than tells (Chattopdyaya, 1971:30). Woolf and James rejected the first-person narrator, as they were of the opinion that: “The narrator must speak directly, but never in the first-person. The reader is always in the grip of an illusion that he has entered into the consciousness of a character.” (Chattopdyaya, 1971:11.) James detested the use of the first-person narrator as it shattered the illusion of reality that novelists were trying to create. He disliked the way in which in Thackery “had perpetually broken down the illusion they were trying to create by addressing the reader direct” (Fraser, 1970:27).

From this brief discussion it is evident that Modern fiction is characterized by its experiment with narratological devices and its use of character, narrator and chronology in a way that best reflects reality and the realistic portrayal of the internal workings of the individual’s consciousness. It is now appropriate to discuss the Postmodern use of narratological devices, which were implemented to foreground the fictionality and unreality of the narrative text.

### **2.3.3 NARRATOLOGICAL DEVICES IN POSTMODERN FICTION**

This section aims to discuss the use of narratological devices in Postmodern fiction. This involves discussing the devices of narrator and character, for example, in order to discover how the use of narratological devices in Postmodern fiction differs from Modernist fiction. This is necessary for an understanding of narratological devices and also as an introduction to the differences between Modern and Postmodern fiction.

In Postmodern fiction the various narratological devices are used to foreground the created and unrealistic nature of the text. Postmodern fiction is aware of its own status as fiction and does not allow itself to be accepted as a representation of reality. Stevenson states that Postmodern texts are self-reflexive and concerned with their “own means of representation” (Stevenson, 1996:473), while Hutcheon states that “postmodern novels problematize narrative

representation, even as they invoke it” (Hutcheon, 1988:40). Gräbe states that “in postmodernist fiction narrativity is exploited...in that these texts reject the traditional conception of a story as a ‘representation’ of reality and expressly stress the artificial or ‘fabricated’ character of the process of writing” (Gräbe, 1989:148). In order to achieve the effect of shattering the illusion that the fictional world is a reflection of the real world, the devices of narrative need to be used in such a way as to foreground fictionality and the created nature of the world of the text.

The following comments demonstrate that Postmodern fiction is anti-representational in its use of narratological devices, such as narrator and character. Bernard states that: “At the focal point of the novels [Waterland, Money and London Fields] stand narrators whose unreliable voices and ambiguous identities should be seen as structural clues to the ontological precariousness of discourse....their function is clearly from the start to problematize the uncertain relations between the world and representation, be it visual or linguistic.” (Bernard, 1993:124.) Bernard proceeds to state that the presence of such narrators “blurs the limits between reality and fiction...and invariably reveals some anxiety about the ethical and epistemological nature of fictional discourse and its relationship to the world” (Bernard, 1993:124). From Bernard’s observations it is possible to state that Postmodern fiction uses narrator as a device of narrative to foreground the fictionality of the text and its separation from the world of the reader. The traits of these narrators make it impossible for the reader to suspend disbelief and accept the novel as a reflection of his or her world.

Postmodern fiction abandons the third-person omniscient narrator who can see into the minds of characters and record their thoughts and dreams as in the stream-of-consciousness novels in Modernism. Sciolino states that “Postmodern aesthetics is intimately connected with the view that reality is no longer a given that can be apprehended and defined by a single perspective. Within these works, we may observe the negation of omniscience- a negation that has concrete effects on the novel form. Readers became accustomed to the all-knowing, all-seeing narrator as the novel evolved in the last century” (Sciolino, 1986:146).

Postmodern narrators are too limited and unconfident to be omniscient and trustworthy. As Bernard states: “Far from meeting the requirements of the function ascribed to them, these narrators are dispossessed of their authority over their own work and are gradually deprived of any hard-edged identity.” (Bernard, 1993:124.) These narrators are powerless and unsure

and prevent the reader from accepting the world of the text as a representation on reality. The narrators in Postmodern fiction, like those of Swift and Amis, cannot cover their “frailty, their narrative uncertainty, their ingrained and programmatic unreliability” (Bernard, 1993:126).

According to D’haen, the narrators of Postmodern fiction are not realistic and believable. He states: “Narrators and characters of Postmodern novels resist understanding in terms of psychology, or in terms of unity, wholeness or coherence.” (D’haen, 1987:146.) These narrators (and characters) do not represent reality and are the result of exposing and expanding the gaps in the narrative that foreground the fictional and artificial nature of the world of the text. In Modernist fiction these gaps are covered up in order to portray the illusion of reality and to prevent the unreality of the fictional world being exposed.

Postmodern fiction utilizes character as a narrative device to foreground the fictionality of the text. Where Modernism used characterization to present realistic characters whose inner workings were realistically portrayed, Postmodern fiction abandons the notion that characters represent human beings and rather foregrounds the created and fictional nature of these irrational beings.

In Postmodernism there is no longer a concern with understanding and portraying the depths of an individual psyche, as in Modernist fiction through stream-of-consciousness technique, which sought to represent the inner workings of the mind in the most realistic way. Postmodernism is not concerned with such depths and understandings and resides on the surface instead. Wilde documents this shift and states that there is a shift to the surface “and along with it, inevitably perhaps, a change in attitudes toward character and characterization” (Wilde, 1981:108). An engagement with the surface results in an abandonment of concerns about the representation of the inner and unconscious workings of an individual’s mind. Fokkema states that Postmodern texts “offer characters in which discourse has replaced the convention of psychological depth” (Fokkema, 1991:63). In Postmodern texts many characters do not have psychological depth and are either cardboard figures or, as Fokkema states, are made up of the discourses of which the narrative is composed.

Rimmon-Kenan makes the following statements that reveal the contemporary thoughts on character. Under a section entitled “The death of character?” (Rimmon-Kenan, 1994:29), Rimmon-Kenan states “In addition to pronouncements about the death of God, the death of

humanism, the death of tragedy, our century has also heard declarations concerning the death of character” (Rimmon-Kenan, 1994:29). She goes on to state that “various features which had been considered the hallmarks of character, modelled on a traditional view of man, were denied to both by many modern novelists. Thus Alain Robbe-Grillet rejected ‘the archaic myth of depth’ and with it the psychological conception of character” (Rimmon-Kenan, 1994:29). From Rimmon-Kenan’s statement it is evident that in Postmodern fiction, character is without depth and psychological motivation and traits. These characters are no longer reflections of human beings, with external and internal attributes and personalities, but are superficial and alien presences in the text.

Lubbock, author of The Craft of Fiction (1921) offers a typically Modernist and realist definition of character when he states that “the hero...can at any moment become impenetrable, a human being whose thought is sealed from us” (Lubbock, 1952:14). This comment is in direct contrast to Weinsheimer’s statement that “Emma Woodhouse is not a woman nor need to be described as *it* were” (Rimmon-Kenan, 1994:33). The contrast between character as a representation of a human being and as a non-entity in these two examples is striking, with Lubbock’s notion of the character as hero and Weinsheimer’s notion of character as ‘it’.

Wilde distinguishes between Modern and Postmodern characters in his comment about “the replacement of ‘well-made characters who carry with them a fixed identity, a stable set of social and psychological attributes - a name, a situation, a profession, a condition, etc’ by what Raymond Federman, speaking for one group of postmodern writers, calls ‘word-beings’ fictional creatures who ‘will be as changeable, as unstable, as illusory, as nameless, as unnamable, as fraudulent, as unpredictable as the discourse that makes them’” (Wilde, 1981:106). From Wilde’s description it is evident that Postmodern characters lose all the representational function that was assigned to them by Victorian and Modernist fiction. The characters in Postmodernist fiction cannot be believed and accepted as representational and as such foreground the fictionality of their world and their own existence as creatures of the narrative.

According to Wilde (above) Postmodern fiction foregrounds the textual nature of fiction and the existence of characters as word-beings. In this regard Rimmon-Kenan states that in Postmodernism, characters, “as segments of a closed text...at most are patterns of recurrence,

motifs which are continually recontextualized in other motifs. In semiotic criticism, characters dissolve” (Rimmon-Kenan, 1994:32). The difference between the traditional conception of character as almost human, and the Postmodernist view of character as a textual construct, is clearly evident from these quotes.

Fokkema states that from a Derridean perspective “character is enmeshed in a text that problematizes representation. Language, as an instrument of discourse, lays bear other layers of language in characters” (Fokkema, 1991:66). This statement indicates that the characters in Postmodern fiction are foregrounded as being composed of language and the result of this is to problematize the representational role of fiction, as these characters cannot be accepted as representations of real life figures. Fokkema also states that “postmodern texts often flaunt their textuality, foregrounding the fact that representational character is a mere convention” (Fokkema, 1991:60). She later refers to Lisa Erdman in The White Hotel as “a fictional construct, a fragmented sign constituted in intertexts” (Fokkema, 1991:122).

From Fokkema’s statement it is evident that in Postmodernism character as a narratological device is anti-representational due to the foregrounding of the character’s existence in and through the language of the text. In many Postmodern texts, character is nothing but words and as a result does not have existence or application outside the borders of the text.

It is relevant to note that not all Postmodern characters flaunt their textuality as many Postmodern characters, such as in Ackroyd (Chatterton, English Music) and Auster’s (Leviathan, Music of Chance) fiction, are realistic and believable. Neither does this study aim to scrutinize the characters in The Good Soldier for evidence of their existence as word-beings, but foregrounding the issue of the textuality of Postmodern characters in a comparison of Modern and Postmodern fiction illustrates the radical difference between traditionally Modern and overtly Postmodern fiction.

Chapter 4 aims to discuss the Postmodern characteristics of character in The Good Soldier and will focus on other characteristically Postmodern attributes of character such as ambiguity and centrelessness, but for this introductory chapter it is appropriate to foreground the vast difference between the Modern and Postmodern use of character as a narratological device in the context of Modernism’s inward turn and Postmodernism’s foregrounding of textuality. Where Modernism sought to focus on the theme of the psychology of characters and effaced

the author and the act of writing and creating, Postmodernism foregrounded self-referentiality and embraced it as its theme.

From the discussion on character it is evident that Postmodern and poststructuralist thought emphasizes the fictional work as *text*. Fokkema, Rimmon-Kenan and Wilde (see above) foreground the character's existence in and as text and it is appropriate to elucidate the poststructuralist and narratological notion of text for the purposes of this section's elucidation of relevant concepts. This elucidation is also necessary as the study refers to The Good Soldier as text, instead of work throughout the course of the discussion and specifically discusses The Good Soldier as text and intertext in Section 4.2.

In the context of narratology, Bal defines 'text' as a "finite, structured whole composed of language signs" (Bal, 1988:5). It is these linguistic signs which make up the narrative of which the text is composed. In a narratological sense the text is made up of narrative, which utilizes the devices of narrative, such as character, narrator, focalization and order. The text is therefore a necessary element of narratology as it contains the narrative and has a characteristic inclusion of narratological devices.

In contemporary thought and for the purposes of this study, text does not simply refer to the "linguistic artifact that we can buy and read" (Onega & Garcia Landa, 1996:6) but has a more dynamic application. Defining the terminology of contemporary literary theory, Hawthorne states that in recent years "*text* has become the preferred term for referring to a literary or other work (not necessarily linguistic or verbal) stripped of traditional preconceptions about autonomy, authorial control, artistic or aesthetic force" (Hawthorne, 1993:188). Hawthorne qualifies his statement by commenting that: "If the *work* is attached to the author as an uncut umbilical cord, the *text* in contrast assumes a sort of parthenogenic status, quite free of parental control." (Hawthorne, 1993:188, emphasis added.) From Hawthorne's comment it is evident that in the context of poststructuralism, text exists independent of its author's intent or of any other control over it, while the work is considered as the production of an author who is in control of the work, which contains only the meaning and interpretations that the author intended it to.

The implication of regarding text as an independent entity is that the text is free to be engaged in and interpreted in ways the text may encourage, but that are contrary to the author's

intentions. Such an engagement acknowledges meanings that were not identified by the author, but that allow for a coherent and additional understanding of the text through engaging with the language of the text. In this regard Caramello states: “Both Barthes and Derrida, moreover, agree that to posit an authorial presence or unity - whether sacred or secular, divine or human - as a discreet originator of meaning is to arrest the play of signifiers in order to recover a totality of the signified.” (Caramello, 1983:14.) It is evident that in poststructuralist thought the reader engages with the free-play of signifiers in the text and that the text is open to be interpreted in a variety of ways.

For the purposes of this study *text* refers to more than just the paperback copy of The Good Soldier by Ford Madox Ford. This study views text as a dynamic set of linguistic signs: signifiers that contain many meanings and allow for many possible interpretations. In this study The Good Soldier as text is considered to the exclusion of Ford the author. The text is interpreted without the author’s intentions, theories or opinions colouring an engagement with the text.

To consider the text as a dynamic and independent entity, free from authorial control is, in the context of this study, to also consider it independent of the literary period to which it belongs. Dynamically engaging with the text and elucidating the meanings that become evident involves not being confined to literary chronology or periods. The text is simply permitted to convey its meanings to the reader. This realization is necessary in a study that aims to scrutinize the epistemology and narratological devices of The Good Soldier for traces of Postmodernism. Such a study would not be possible if the text was considered as a work, shaped and controlled by its author and its historical context.

This section has aimed to discuss the issue of narratology and the use of narratological devices in both Modernist and Postmodernist fiction. It was discovered that Modern and Postmodern fiction is distinguishable specifically by the use of character and narrator. Where Modernism is identifiable by its realistic characters, some Postmodern fiction is characterized by the anti-representational nature of its characters. The narrators of Modern fiction are used to create the illusion of reality, while some of the narrators of Postmodern fiction are unreliable and unbelievable, thereby foregrounding the fictional nature of their world. Character and narrator are merely two of many narratological devices, but these two have been discussed, along with the Modernist abandonment of chronology as these are of

relevance to the study. This section has also elucidated the notion of text as it relates to narratology and poststructuralism for the purposes of this study.

It is necessary to point out that the above discussion on Postmodern and Modern fiction is not conclusive and is not representative of all Modern and Postmodern fiction. Only the characteristics and aspects relevant to the study have been elucidated. The above discussion is in no means indicative of Modern and Postmodern fiction in its entirety, but is simply a brief elucidation of a few aspects of narratology and fiction.

## **2.4 CONCLUSION**

Chapter 2 has aimed to provide an introduction to epistemology and narratology as these concepts will be investigated in great length in the context of The Good Soldier and an understanding of these concepts is necessary for a fruitful engagement with the remainder of the study.

Section 2.2.1 aimed to discuss epistemology and its development through Enlightenment, Modern and Postmodern thought. It was discovered that Modernism inherited many Enlightenment ideas on man's knowledge, while Postmodernism reacted strongly against the Modern and Enlightenment faith in man's ability to know.

The fiction of Modernism and Postmodernism was also considered for evidence of these movements' epistemologies and it was discovered that the presence of the epiphany and stream-of-consciousness technique in Modernist fiction provides evidence of the Modern desire to know. The absence of these devices in Postmodern fiction is consequently evidence that epistemological quests were no longer of importance or interest in Postmodern fiction. An awareness of the characteristics of epistemology in these movements is necessary in order to consider how The Good Soldier may possibly incorporate a Postmodern epistemology and depart from a purely Modernist approach to man's ability to know.

Section 2.2.2 provided an orientation to the issue of narratology. It was discovered that narratology involves the study of narrative and included in this study are elements of narrative such as narrator, character, events, setting and focalization. These elements are known as the

devices of narrative, as different narratives can employ these devices in various ways to achieve their own desired effect.

It was discovered that Modern and Postmodern fiction use the devices of narrative in characteristically different ways, with Postmodern fiction markedly departing from a Modernist use of narrator, character and chronology. All the narratological devices are employed in Postmodern fiction to foreground the fictionality and textuality of the narrative text and are anti-representational in attempts to remind the reader that the world of the text is alien to his or her own world. Modernist fiction in contrast aims to create the illusion of reality and employs the devices of narrator, character and chronology, among others, to achieve the effect of reflecting the real world of the reader.

Due to the orientational function of Chapter 2, it is now possible to engage in a discussion of The Good Soldier and its relation to Postmodern epistemology (Chapter 3) and Postmodern narratological devices (Chapter 4).