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“IT IS OUR DUTY TO SING”: A DEFENSE OF THE MYTHIC METHOD IN DAVID JONES’S *IN PARENTHESIS*

by

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This thesis was prepared under the direction of the candidate's thesis advisor, Dr. Hilary Edwards, and has been approved by the members of his supervisory committee. It was submitted to the faculty of the Honors College and was accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Arts and Sciences.

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Love always to my wife, Carrie Rae, who believes.

ABSTRACT

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Great War veteran David Jones's poem about the war, *In Parenthesis*, has been attacked by literary critics Paul Fussell and Evelyn Cobley on the grounds that the poem, usually read as an instance of "literature of protest" against the war, indicates Jones's ideological complicity *with* the war through its extensive allusions to heroic Celtic myth, British literature, and Catholic liturgy. This thesis argues that Jones's intricate allusive network represents a mythopoetic method of endurance, a way of making order amidst the chaos of the Western Front. Jones's mythopoetic method, which I call allusive "seeing," serves as both a psychological defense mechanism against the war's strangeness and horror and a protest against the perception that because of the industrial, unheroic nature of the Great War, the soldiers who fought and died in it cannot be considered heroes.

To my teachers

Of mead,
of the drinking-horn, of
the folk at Catraeth I,
Aneirin (yet not I:
Taliesin, whose poetry
is powerful, knows this),
sang the Gododdin
before the golden dawn.

Aneirin, *The Gododdin*, XLVIII

"Some o' these buggers what come out 'ere now 'ave never done anythin' they didn't want to do in their lives before, and now they're up against somethin' real nasty, they don't 'arf make a song about it. They think they're fuckin' 'eroes just because they're 'ere."

Private Martlow
Frederic Manning, *Her Privates We*

CONTENTS

Introduction

As I write the introduction to this thesis the United States of America has been at war in Afghanistan and Iraq for four years. A popular trend has been born in that time, and seems to be on the rise as support for our war efforts (and our war expenses) begins to flag in Congress. That trend takes the form of decals, die-cut in the shape of ribbons, usually colored bright yellow but also seen in the red, white, and blue colors of our national flag or the green and brown camouflage pattern of military jungle fatigues, most of them bearing this message:

SUPPORT OUR TROOPS

The decals are generally affixed to the bumpers or hatchback trunks of station wagons, the tailgates of pickup trucks, and the rear windshields of SUVs. Their obvious analogs are the yellow ribbons traditionally tied around American trees to symbolize loved ones under arms in some far-off theater of war, protecting the folks back home.

The decal, unlike the traditional yellow ribbon, demands that anyone who sees it **SUPPORT OUR TROOPS**. The all-caps, bold-black letters brook no argument. The decal reminds us that they are all "our troops." They put themselves in harm's way for us. It is imperative that we support them by attaching decals to our vehicles.

One might suspect, however, that some people who attach decals to their vehicles are not so much supporting the troops as they are supporting the decision of their country's government to conduct a war. Certainly these people "support" the troops, but only as an afterthought, a coincidence. In other words, the decal-bearer supports the decision to go to war; troops fight the war; therefore, the decal-bearer "supports" the troops. Soldiers in the field, even the soldiers of the most technologically advanced and well-supplied army on the face of the planet, are always in need of things. One way to

offer tangible support to troops in the field is to find out what they want and need, procure it for them, and send it to them.[1] In the current, highly-charged social and political climate of America, however, a yellow-ribbon decal on an automobile might be seen as a tacit signal of ideological support for the war itself rather than read at the face value of its ostensible statement of "support" for soldiers at war.

Looking at the decal in this way opens up an intriguing dilemma: one may not agree with the government's decision to make a war, but may still sympathize with the young men and women whose job it is to go fight. One might send supplies to Afghanistan or Iraq in packages marked "Any Service Member" while refusing (if one reads the decal-trend as more a statement of support for war rather than for soldiers) to attach a **SUPPORT OUR TROOPS** decal to one's tailgate. In other words, one can support the troops while opposing the war. This dilemma did not arise out of the United States' martial ventures in Afghanistan and Iraq. Many of the combatant writers of the Great War addressed it in their writings, protesting the grinding, meaningless carnage of the war while professing a deep and binding love for their comrades-in-arms.

One of those writers was David Jones, revered as a genius by some of the most prominent writers of his time. Jones had spent seven months in the Somme area of the Western Front (December 1915-July 1916) as a private in the Royal Welch Fusiliers. He was wounded in the battle of Mametz Wood, a battle in which a good many of his friends were killed or wounded. *In Parenthesis*, as Jones tells us in his Preface, "has to do with

[1] Sergeant Brian Horn of the U.S. Army's 173rd Infantry Brigade, formerly stationed in Afghanistan and Kirkuk, Iraq, started Any Soldier Inc. for just this purpose; see the website www.anysoldier.com.

some things [he] saw, felt, & was part of" during his time in the trenches, up to and including the abortive attack on the wood.[2] Jones tells us:

> I have only tried to make a shape in words, using as data the complex of sights, sounds, fears, hopes, apprehensions, smells, things exterior and interior, the landscape and paraphernalia of that singular time and of those particular men. (x)

It is clear that Jones has drawn on sensory input ("sights," "sounds," "smells"), psychological phenomena ("fears, hopes, apprehensions"), and remembered physical details ("landscape and paraphernalia") in crafting *In Parenthesis*. The deliberately vague phrase "things exterior and interior" most probably refers to the poem's dense network of allusions, connections between the strangeness and horror of modern warfare on the Western Front and the mythic, literary, and theological past of Britain.[3]

Critics of *In Parenthesis* have generally appreciated the rich allusive web that Jones constructs throughout the work. Two critics, however, have not. Paul Fussell attacked *In Parenthesis* in his award-winning 1975 study of Great War literature, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, noting that "[f]or all the criticism of modern war which it implies, *In Parenthesis* at the same time can't keep its allusions from suggesting that the war, if ghastly, is firmly 'in the tradition.' "[4] Fussell's strongest critique of *In Parenthesis* is that "[t]he poem is a deeply conservative work which uses the past not, as it often pretends to do, to shame the present, but really to ennoble it."[5] For Fussell, no matter how impressive Jones's poetic achievement, in the end the poem is a failure, an "honorable miscarriage," because it attempts to "rationalize and validate the war by

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[2] David Jones, *In Parenthesis*, 1937 (New York: New York Review of Books, 2003), ix. Further references are parenthetical.

[3] I refer to *In Parenthesis* as poetry here and throughout this thesis. There is a current critical debate, however, regarding the proper categorization of the work—it has been called, among other things, a poem, a novel, a prose-poem, and an epic. The debate is further explored in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

[4] Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), 146.

[5] Fussell, 147.

implying that it [the war] recovers many of the motifs and values of medieval chivalric romance."[6] Evelyn Cobley, writing almost two decades later, echoes and expands Fussell's attack on *In Parenthesis* in her monograph *Representing War: Form and Ideology in First World War Narratives*. The stated goal of Cobley's study is to expose the deeply imbedded ideological underpinnings of several Great War narratives (including Jones's) usually considered narratives of protest against the war in order to illustrate the degree to which they manifest "complicity with the war."[7]

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Chapter 1 of this thesis, "Otherworldly Strangeness and Unimaginable Horror: Ordering the Chaos of the Front through Allusive 'Seeing,' " explores the disturbing world of the Western Front and proposes that the allusiveness of *In Parenthesis* reflects a method of assimilation by which scenes of primal horror and incredible strangeness are associated with familiar, comforting imagery from well-known myth, folklore, literature, and liturgy. Chapter 2, "The Assault on *In Parenthesis*," objectively reviews the critiques of *In Parenthesis* offered by Paul Fussell and Evelyn Cobley, with a particular focus on methodology and attention paid to Jones's mythopoetic method. Chapter 3, "Countering the Contentious Critics," brings in critical responses to the arguments of Fussell and Cobley and shows why their objections to *In Parenthesis* are misguided.

As the title indicates, this thesis is a defense of the mythic method Jones employs throughout *In Parenthesis*. It is primarily a defense against Fussell's and Cobley's accusations of the poem's ideological complicity with the Great War. I read the intricate network of allusions in the poem as a mythopoetic method of ordering that Jones uses to

[6] Fussell, 147.
[7] Evelyn Cobley, *Representing War: Form and Ideology in First World War Narratives* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), frontispiece.

come to terms with the strangeness and horror of life on the Western Front by associating it with familiar, sense-making imagery. I argue that through what I will call his technique of allusive "seeing," Jones was able to psychologically endure the war's extremes (both in living through them the first time in 1915-1916 and in revisiting them while writing *In Parenthesis*). Finally, I argue that, contrary to the arguments of Fussell and Cobley, Jones is not interested (consciously or otherwise) in portraying the *war* as "in the tradition" or "heroic." Rather, he desires to rescue the *men* who fought and died in it from the growing perception that because they found themselves in a modern war, pitted against technology rather than other men in an absurd, senseless, wholesale slaughter, they cannot be remembered as heroes (a perception even more firmly entrenched now, in the era of postmodernism). The focus is on the men, "those particular men" of "that singular time" (x). I argue, therefore, that like our hypothetical person from the beginning of this Introduction who sends care packages but prefers not to display decals, Jones intends *In Parenthesis* to support the troops while opposing the war.

Chapter 1.

Otherworldly Strangeness and Unimaginable Horror: Ordering the Chaos of the Front through Allusive "Seeing"

The first chapter of this thesis has quite a bit of terrain to cover. To begin, it will emphasize the strangeness and horror of conditions on the Western Front in order to give the reader a sense of what soldiers in the trenches had to endure on a daily basis, for months—indeed, for years—on end. The chapter then moves into a gloss of *In Parenthesis* with a focus on allusion and its role in Jones's personal endurance of the war's extremes. In part, this section of the chapter draws attention to Jones's self-association with the sixth-century Welsh bard Aneirin, the author of the *Gododdin*, a Celtic elegy of major importance if one would understand the development of Jones's mythic method in *IP*.[1] Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion of the debate surrounding the temporal framework of the allusions in *IP*; in other words, whether the allusive visions are meant to be read as being experienced by the characters within the flow of the narrative, or are essentially a product of Jones's reflections on the events of twenty-two years prior. Integral to this chapter as a whole (and, I think, to understanding Jones's use of allusion in the poem) is the central claim that *IP* does not seek to insinuate the Great War into a tradition that romanticizes war, but rather objects to the claim that the soldiers who fought the war cannot be remembered as heroes.

Heroes were on everyone's minds during the opening struggles of the Great War in 1914, before the stalemate that began chewing up troops by the millions. Back then it was still possible for officers and men to harbor the illusion that this new war would be

[1] The first reference to *In Parenthesis* in each chapter of this thesis takes the form of the full title; subsequent references are abbreviated *IP*.

much like the traditional wars of dashing cavalry and valiant footmen for which they had trained and prepared. The illusion began to fade as the war ground on, however; historian Martin Gilbert writes that "for those who were at the Front, or even near the front as it moved swiftly forward, a new, harsh world was beginning to impinge upon the accepted conventions of armies at war."[2] Captain Edward Spears, attached in August 1914 to the French Fifth Army in Belgium as British liaison officer, recounts his personal revelation of this new, harsh world's dawning as he sat on a hill with a French officer, the two men overlooking the picturesque scene of the Sambre valley south of Charleroi:

> A dog was barking at some sheep. A girl was singing as she walked down the lane behind us. From a little farm away on the right came the voices and laughter of some soldiers cooking their evening meal. Darkness grew in the far distance as the light began to fail. Then, without a moment's warning, with a suddenness that made us start and strain our eyes to see what our minds could not realise, we saw the whole horizon burst into flame.

Gilbert explains that the fire on the horizon was the beginning of a German artillery bombardment along a wide front: "Outlined against the northern sky, innumerable fires were simultaneously burning." Spears's recollection continues:

> A chill of horror came over us. War seemed suddenly to have assumed a merciless, ruthless aspect that we had not realised till then. Hitherto it has been war as we had conceived it, hard blows, straight dealing, but now for the first time we felt as if some horrible Thing, utterly merciless, was advancing to grip us.[3]

As Gilbert goes on to note, Spears's darkling glimpse into the future "was to become true of all armies, on all fronts, in conditions that were to worsen beyond even what Spears could imagine at that terrifying moment [. . .]."[4]

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[2] Martin Gilbert, *The First World War: A Complete History* (New York: Henry Holt, 1994), 51.

[3] Major-General Sir Edward Spears, *Liaison 1914, A Narrative of the Great Retreat*, 1930 (London: Eyre and Spotiswoode, 1968), cited in Gilbert, 51-52 (Gilbert does not cite a page number in Spears's narrative).

[4] Gilbert, 52.

"Conditions that were to worsen" is certainly an understatement. The Sambre valley's pastoral quality, the bucolic quaintness appreciated by Spears and his French companion, would—like most of the rest of the territory situated along the Western Front—soon be transformed into a bleak and blasted wasteland, a quagmire of mud, shattered trees, the ruins of destroyed structures, and deep pits carved into the earth by the constant impact of high-explosive shells. According to Samuel Hynes, the memoirs of soldiers who fought on the Western Front tell us that "[t]he commonest response of the new soldiers to this world of war [. . .] was simply a sense of its *strangeness*."[5] Nothing could have prepared them for the reality that awaited their arrival in France. "The Western Front," Hynes notes, "when they reached it, was not like anything they knew or could imagine. [. . .] Where in their civilian lives could those young volunteers have found such a devastated, subhuman existence? Where could they even have found it in books? It was a new world."[6]

The utter strangeness of the war, writes Hynes, serves as the common element which all narratives that later emerged from it share. More than the other unexpected realities of the crucible into which these young, idealistic men had been thrust—"[t]he noise, the stench, the mud, the rats, and the lice"—it is, Hynes tells us, "the strange landscape that is not a landscape but an annihilation of what *landscape* means" that constitutes the dominant scene of their tales from the Western Front.[7] A passage from Max Plowman's *A Subaltern on the Somme* illustrates this annihilation of the very meaning of the word "landscape": the country is "a stricken waste," the trees which had

[5] Samuel Hynes, *The Soldiers' Tale: Bearing Witness to Modern War* (New York: Penguin, 1998), 52. Italics are Hynes's.
[6] Hynes, 52.
[7] Hynes, 52-53. Italics are Hynes's.

formerly lined an avenue are "torn and broken stumps," the earth is "churned up into a torn and crumbling mass [. . .] so tossed and scarred" as to make the front-line trench virtually indistinguishable from the land surrounding it, and "the general impression is of a wilderness without verdure or growth of any kind."[8] When we try to imagine what the Great War was like, writes Hynes, we do not see "men in action but a scene like this, in which everything that was natural has been defaced and destroyed, even the natural contours of the earth [. . .]. The war, we see, was unrecognizably strange, unlike anything we have ever known or imagined; it was life lived in conditions of terrible absolute *difference*."[9] When we try to envision the Western Front, we—like the soldiers who found themselves there—are confronted with the specter of a landscape so fascinatingly strange that in order to fully imagine it, we tend to displace the familiar (the multitudes of men who were also a part of the environment) so as to focus all of our concentration on the terrible nature of the land itself, on its absolute difference from our world.

If the stricken, torn, broken, churned, tossed, and scarred nature of the Western Front's anti-landscape was in and of itself strangely and terribly different, then the addition of another element—the presence everywhere, at all times, of multitudes of corpses—made it even more strange, terrible, and different than anything the soldiers had dreamed might be a part of their war experience. As Hynes points out, the dead "were an unimaginable part of war's strangeness, for which ordinary civilian life could not possibly be a preparation."[10] Here the German officer Ernst Jünger remembers his own violated expectations of the omnipresent dead:

[8] Mark Seven [Max Plowman], *A Subaltern on the Somme* (London: 1927), 41-42, cited in Hynes, 53.
[9] Hynes, 53.
[10] Hynes, 67.

> What does it look like when there are dead lying about? [. . .] [W]e never for a moment dreamed that in this war the dead would be left month after month to the mercy of wind and weather, as once the bodies on the gallows were.
>
> [. . .] Seeing and recognizing are matters, really, of habit. In the case of something quite unknown the eye alone can make nothing of it. So it was that we had to stare again and again at these things that we had never seen before, without being able to give them any meaning. It was too entirely unfamiliar. We looked at all these dead with dislocated limbs, distorted faces, and the hideous colors of decay, as though we walked in a dream through a garden of strange plants, and we could not realize at first what we had all round us.[11]

Jünger's question at the beginning of the quote is an *ur*-question, a curiosity shared by virtually every soldier from every nation that sent men to the front: what do the dead look like? The fixed, timeless persistence of the dead seems to have come as a shock to Jünger and his compatriots, who "never dreamed" that dead soldiers could share the same fate as common criminals hung from the gallows, their bodies strewn about and left to decay in the open air. Jünger does not indicate in the quoted passage what he had expected the dead to look like, but we can assume from his difficulty in grasping the realness and immediateness of the corpses with which he came into contact that their forms defied any preconceptions he may have had prior to arriving at the front. Any attempts he may have made to prepare himself for the sight of dead men were futile; the corpses at the front were "quite unknown," "without [. . .] meaning," "entirely unfamiliar." So surreal and strange were the dead that for Jünger, as undoubtedly was the case for many other men, walking among them was at first a dreamlike experience essentially divorced from reality.

Hynes notes that Siegfried Sassoon's description of his initial encounter with enemy dead in Mametz, during the Somme offensive, "makes the strangeness of death

[11] Ernst Jünger, *Storm of Steel* (London: 1929), 23, cited in Hynes, 67.

very clear."[12] Sassoon writes of one dead German who "looked like a ghastly doll, grotesque and undignified." Beside that corpse was "a scorched and mutilated figure whose contorted attitude revealed bristly cheeks, a grinning blood-smeared mouth and clenched teeth." Sassoon's disquiet is evident as he muses, "These dead were unlike our own; perhaps it was the strange uniform, perhaps their look of butchered hostility."[13] Hynes astutely points out that "the subject of the passage is not really the two corpses," but Sassoon's reaction to "what had been men, now robbed of dignity and reduced to 'butchered hostility.' " Hynes continues: "If these men were human, then humanity meant something different from what he had thought it meant."[14]

The ruination of landscape and living creatures, man and animal alike, combine in Valentine Fleming's account of the "absolutely indescribable ravages of modern artillery fire" that produce the following apocalyptic scene:

> Imagine a broad belt, ten miles or so in width, stretching from the Channel to the German frontier near Basle, which is positively littered with the bodies of men and scarified with their rude graves; in which farms, villages and cottages are shapeless heaps of blackened masonry; in which fields, roads and trees are pitted and torn and twisted by shells and disfigured by dead horses, cattle, sheep and goats, scattered in every attitude of repulsive distortion and dismemberment.[15]

While the corpses of men "scattered in every attitude of repulsive distortion and dismemberment" almost certainly accompany those of the livestock he places in the scene, it is as though Fleming cannot bring himself to write about things which were formerly men in such stark, uncompromising terms.

Stark, uncompromising terms, however, are often employed by Hynes, himself an experienced combat soldier who fought in the Second World War and who is acquainted

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[12] Hynes, 67.
[13] Siegfried Sassoon, *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer* (London: 1930), 81-82, cited in Hynes, 68.
[14] Hynes, 68.
[15] Valentine Fleming, letter to Winston Churchill, 1914, cited in Gilbert, 112.

with uncanny experiences in the aftermath of combat: "I entered a ruined bunker on Saipan and found a foot there—an unattached human foot, still wearing its split-toed sandal."[16] Not a pleasant sight, to be sure; but Hynes tells us the experience of the average man serving in the trenches was infinitely worse:

> Because the war on the Western Front was stationary most of the time, the dead were densely and continuously present on the front lines; troops lived in a world of corpses, walked over them in the trenches, watched them decompose on the barbed wire, [and] exhumed last year's dead when they dug this year's trench [. . .].[17]

Corpses were so plentiful, in fact, that in the midst of a bombardment, or when wood and stones were in short supply, they might be used as construction materials with which to build up the protective parapet at the lip of the trench. Hynes cites Frank Richards's description of a typical trench in an active sector of the line: "Some parts of the parapet had been built up with dead men, and here and there arms and legs were protruding. In one bay only the heads of two men could be seen; their teeth were showing so that they seemed to be grinning horribly down on us."[18] Each corpse threaded into the parapet, writes Hynes, served the purpose of a *memento mori*, a reminder of exponentially growing losses. They were also a reminder that life in the trenches tended to be ugly and brief, and that death, when it struck, often came in such forms as "a shrapnel fragment that left a corpse without a leg, or a face, or a head, or an exploding shell that dismembered and buried the men it killed."[19]

The fact was that death in the trenches usually came "not man-to-man, but out of the air, from a distance, random and anonymous. Death in war was no longer a fate you

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[16] Hynes, 19.
[17] Hynes, 68.
[18] Frank Richards, *Old Soldiers Never Die* (London: 1933), 199, cited in Hynes, 69.
[19] Hynes, 69.

chose, for your cause or your country, or because it was your job; it was something done to you, an accident, as impersonal as the plague."[20] One can imagine the constant psychological strain of being aware, as Hynes writes most soldiers were, that "[a]t any moment, in any sector of the front, a shell or a bullet might be in the air, on its way to kill you."[21] The possibility of one's own death and the ubiquitous presence of the dead were different types of psychological actors or triggers on the men in the trenches: death, never seen but always near; the dead, ever-present and unavoidable. Max Plowman wondered at the surreal possibility of being instantly annihilated on a clear, bright day: "In this sunshine, it seems impossible to believe that at any minute we in this trench, and they in that, may be blown to bits by shells fired from guns at invisible distances."[22] Edwin Campion Vaughan wrote that "terror and death coming from far away seemed much more ghastly than a hail of fire from people who we could see and with whom we could come to grips."[23] Fleming asked his friend Winston Churchill to imagine

> lines of men, in brown or grey or blue, coated with mud, unshaven hollow-eyed with the continual strain, unable to reply to the everlasting run of shells hurled at them from three, four, five or more miles away and positively welcoming an infantry attack from one side or the other as a chance of meeting and matching themselves against *human* assailants and not against invisible, irresistible machines [. . .].[24]

The common thread of these three soldiers' sentiments—an emphasis on the mental exhaustion caused by a constant awareness of the likelihood of one's being blown to pieces at any instant by long-distance shellfire—no doubt represented the feelings of many men at the front.

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[20] Hynes, 70.
[21] Hynes, 70.
[22] Seven [Plowman], 172, cited in Hynes, 70.
[23] Edwin Campion Vaughan, *Some Desperate Glory* (London: 1981), 199, cited in Hynes, 70.
[24] Fleming, cited in Gilbert, 112. Italics appear in Gilbert's text.

Amidst all this horror—the strangeness of the sundered landscape, the ever-present corpses, and the constant possibility of being vaporized or mutilated in the space of an instant—how did anyone endure? How *could* anyone endure? Certainly, not everyone did. Some men's psyches broke under the strain; they were sent, shell-shocked, to the rear. Others shot themselves with their own rifles: some fired rounds into their feet, while others sought a more immediate exit from the trenches. In his memoir *Good-bye to All That*, Robert Graves recalled that both the first and last dead men he saw in France had been suicides.[25] Many men, however, did find ways to endure the strangeness and the horror. Among them was David Jones, a young private with the Royal Welch Fusiliers.

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Now we will engage *In Parenthesis* in detail; this section of the chapter highlights the poem's status as a survivor narrative, draws explicit connections between David Jones and the ancient singing poet Aneirin, and gives specific instances of Jones's mythopoetic method of ordering within the poem. The titling of Part 1 of *In Parenthesis* with a line from Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*—"The Many Men So Beautiful"—and the almost immediate introduction of the supporting character Aneirin Lewis establish *IP* as a tale told by the survivor of some catastrophic incident.[26] We are told that Aneirin Lewis "had somewhere in his Welsh depths a remembrance of the nature of man," and that he

[25] Robert Graves, *Good-bye to All That*, 1929 (New York: Anchor, 1998), 243. In *The Soldiers' Tale*, Hynes recalls Guy Chapman's thoughts "on the case of a soldier who had shot himself in the foot: 'Perhaps those who call this man a coward will consider the desperation to which he was driven, to place his rifle against the foot, and drive through the bones and flesh the flames of the cordite and the smashing metal. Let me hope that the court-martial's sentence was light. Not that it mattered, for, in truth, the real sentence had been inflicted long ere it sat.' " (Guy Chapman, *A Passionate Prodigality: Fragments of Autobiography* (London: 1933), 122-123, cited in Hynes, 59.)

[26] See William Blissett, "To Make a Shape in Words," *Renascence: Essays on Values in Literature* 50:3-4 (1998 Spring-Summer), 285.

"brings in a manner, baptism, and metaphysical order to the bankruptcy of the occasion" (1-2). Lewis shares his first name with the sixth-century Welsh bard Aneirin, the singer of the *Gododdin*. *The Gododdin* is an elegy for Celtic warriors killed in the battle of Catraeth, in which 300 Celts fought 100,000 Saxons.[27] Aneirin was himself present at the battle, and he alone survived to tell the tale. (Robert Graves comments in *Good-bye to All That* on the quasi-legendary status of men who were the only known survivors of certain Great War battles.[28]) The obvious connections between *IP* and the *Gododdin* are Jones's employment of lines from Aneirin's long poem as epigraphs for each of *IP*'s seven parts. Jones's early introduction of Aneirin Lewis is another connection, one that, if we can recognize its significance, help us to grasp Jones's feelings about surviving the battle of Mametz Wood—his own personal Catraeth—and his beliefs regarding the role of poetry and poets as recorders and recounters of events. Steve Short, a translator of the *Gododdin*, writes that "Aneirin was a bard, a professional poet, employed by a prince or chieftain, and was expected to fill quite a specific function":

> The bard had a powerful position. He was a repository of historic and genealogical information [. . .] as well as being a skilled poet, deeply versed in traditional meters, images and forms. [. . .] The Celts revered great poetry as a supernatural phenomenon and thought that the bard had, through the medium of his craft, access to divine inspiration.[29]

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[27] From Aneirin's *Gododdin*, trans. Steve Short (Felinfach: Llanerch, 1994):

> Men who went to Catraeth at dawn,
> discussing peace daringly,
> were three hundred against
> one hundred thousand
> when they stained their spears with blood [. . .]. (X, 29)

Jones writes in his notes to *IP* that three men survived the battle of Catraeth, but Short, in his introduction, points out that "[o]n the evidence of the poem Aneirin was the only survivor" (Steve Short, "Introduction," *The Gododdin*, trans. Steve Short (Felinfach: Llanerch, 1994), 8). By the time he tells his story, Aneirin notes that the "two war-dogs" with whom he escaped death in the fighting are "now in earth," which would indeed make him the sole survivor (XXI, 43).

[28] See Graves, 98.

[29] Short, 7-8.

Aneirin the factual sixth-century Welsh poet and Aneirin the fictional twentieth-century Welsh private are both makers of order from chaos, and we are to understand by their association that their skill in that capacity is of timeless importance.

There is a definite sense of foreboding to Part 2 of *IP*. Within it we receive a description of the netting erected to camouflage an above-ground footpath from the eyes of enemy artillery spotters, delivered in language which evokes and foreshadows a field of corpses: "in its meshes painted bits of rag, bleached with rain and very torn, having all the desolation peculiar to things that functioned in the immediate past but which are now no longer serviceable, either by neglect or by some movement of events" (21). The epigraph from the *Gododdin*, "On Tuesday they put on their dark blue raiment; / On Wednesday they prepared their enamelled shields," is indicative of a slow, inexorable build-up to combat, a movement in stages toward a reckoning.[30] When one is aware of the lines which follow it in the source, however—"On Thursday their destruction was certain / On Friday they took slaughter"—the epigraph becomes much more ominous, a kind of mourning-in-advance.[31] The poem is already establishing itself as threnody, a lament for the soon-to-be-dead.

With the title's allusion to the *Ancient Mariner* and the introduction of Aneirin Lewis, we have already seen Jones implicitly emphasizing the importance of the survivor's ability to make poetic order from chaos in Part 1. In Part 2, Jones continues to foreground the making of order during a scene in which the battalion is temporarily billeted in abandoned stables. The "tarred door" of the stables bears an eerie record of the men who have sheltered within it prior to the coming of the Royal Welch, a record

[30] Aneirin, *Y Gododdin*, trans. Edward Anwyl, LXIX, cited in Jones, 11.
[31] Aneirin, LXIX, 92.

composed of "initials, numbers, monograms, signs, hasty, half-erased, of many regiments" (22). Many of the older scribblings serve as symbols of the men who left them: they have been erased, scratched out to make room for fresher ones, as the men who left them have been erased by the war to make room for more men. Although the battalion's officers decide, upon reaching the stables, to move the men along within only a few hours, Jones writes that even within that short time:

> The more contriving had already sought out nails and hooks on which to hang their gear for the night, and to arrange, as best they might, their allotted flooring.
>
> They would make order, for however brief a time, and in whatever wilderness. (22)

Jones seems to make the second statement from a distance—"*They* would make order"—and yet we assume that his analog, the character John Ball, is among the men in the stables.[32] Jones himself had almost certainly been in a similar situation at some point during his service on the Somme. But here Jones asserts his narrative authority by employing *they* instead of *we*, and adds another layer to what will eventually become his threefold identity within the work: already he is represented *by* a central character (the survivor, John Ball), *and* a secondary character (the bard, Aneirin Lewis), and *as* himself: a distant-but-empathetic narrator writing twenty-two years later.

As the narrative progresses and the battalion moves into the true wilderness of the trenches, Jones will begin to employ a technique of allusive "seeing," the association of chaotic scenes of pathos and slaughter with a vivid mythos drawn from the familiar (to him, that is, not always necessarily to the reader) realm of epic poetry, drama, Celtic lore,

[32] There is some critical debate as to whether or not John Ball is intended as an analog of Jones. Jones notes in his Preface to *IP*, however, that as a soldier, he was "not only amateur, but grotesquely incompetent, a knocker-over of piles, a parade's despair" (xv). This statement would seem to tie him implicitly to Ball, who arrives late and improperly dressed (his mess-tin cover is missing) to his battalion's assembly parade for the Channel crossing (1-2).

popular song, the Old Testament, and Arthurian legend. This mythopoetic method of association develops in a twofold manner and serves a dual purpose. It serves as a system of ordering, much like the way soldiers familiarize a strange environment by arranging their surroundings to suit their convenience and comfort (hanging their gear on nails and hooks, arranging planks or groundsheets to cover the earthen floor). In this sense it is a personal, psychological defensive mechanism, a way to endure the strangeness and horror of the war experience detailed throughout the beginning of this chapter. The mythopoetic method of allusive "seeing" also serves to construct a heroic legacy for the victims and veterans of the war by connecting the common soldier to heroic literary-historical personages such as Roland and Oliver of the *Chanson de Roland* and Launcelot of the *Morte d'Arthur*. While *IP* does not seek, as some critics have charged, to insinuate the modern, industrialized slaughter of the Great War into a tradition that glorifies and romanticizes war, it does object to the idea that these new soldiers in this new war are excluded from being remembered as "heroes" simply because they found themselves in a war of attrition, pitted primarily against technology rather than other men.

Some of the most arresting examples of Jones's mythopoetic method of making order from chaos appear in Part 3, "Starlight Order." William Blissett recalls that the title is from a poem by Gerard Manley Hopkins, "The Bugler's First Communion":

> Frowning and forefending angel-warder
> Squander the hell-rook ranks sally to molest him;
> March, kind comrade, abreast him;
> Dress his days to a dextrous and starlight order.[33]

[33] Gerard Manley Hopkins, *Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, eds. W. H. Gardner and N. H. Mackenzie (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 82, cited in Blissett, 287.

As Blissett notes, the stanza is "particularly rich in meaning, evoking the thought of an unnumbered throng and a heavenly host"; but it is balanced by our knowledge that there are no forefending angel-warders for these men.[34] For most, there will not even be sallying ranks to face, only the thundering monotony of steel and cordite. The title also probably refers to the illumination of Véry pistol-flares, colloquially called star-shells, which produce a light that fades away again rapidly to blackness as the flare falls to earth; much of the action in Part 3 takes place beneath the transitory brilliance of star-shells.

"Starlight Order" is primarily concerned with a nighttime trip up the line taken by Ball and a group of other men. The trek is long and arduous, the men exhausted. They briefly lose their way. They are shot at by riflemen and a machine-gunner. They see some horrible things. They come upon a burial party, "Lazarus figures, [. . .] blue-slime coated, ladling with wooden ladles; rising, bending, at their trench dredging. [. . .] They lift things, and a bundle-thing out; its shapelessness sags" (43). Their run-in with the "Lazarus figures" on corpse-removal detail represents Ball's first encounter with the dead in the form of "chemical-corrupted once-bodies" (43). At another point in the journey, Ball begins to panic as he realizes he has lost sight of the man in front of him; he chooses the middle of three ditches by the last dying light of a star-shell, rounds a bend, and sees "in another light's rising the jogging pack of Aneirin Lewis—and heard him singing, very low, as he went" (45). This episode is another indicator of the bard's ability to reintroduce order through his song.[35]

[34] Blissett, 287.

[35] The Welsh bard Aneirin was a poet in the oral tradition; he would have delivered a lament like the *Gododdin* in song. Indeed, the first line of the poem is "This is the Gododdin: Aneirin sang it" (Aneirin, 1, 17).

During Ball's nighttime stint on company guard which follows his journey to the front lines, Jones develops a particularly striking mythopoetic moment in which exhausted soldiers sleeping at the bottom of a trench are associated with the mythic barrow-sleepers of medieval Britain:

> his mess-mates sleeping like long-barrow sleepers, their
> dark arms at reach.
> Spell-sleepers, thrown about anyhow under the night.
> And this one's bright brow turned against your boot leather, tranquil as a fer sídhe sleeper, under fairy tumuli, fair as Mac Og sleeping. (51)

As Jones notes, Ball's comrades become one with "the persistent Celtic theme of armed sleepers under the mounds," a tradition which includes the *fer sídhe*, the Irish Mac Og, "Arthur sleeping in Craig-y-Ddinas," and other legendary sleeping-warden figures of British lore (198).[36] They sprawl about the trench like "[s]pell-sleepers, thrown about anyhow under the night"; then, in a characteristic technical twist, Jones shifts the perspective to second person, and the reader becomes a soldier whose boot provides a pillow for one of the "fair" sleepers. The image of the exhausted soldiers as long-barrow sleepers, the legendary enchanted men who slumbered beneath the soil of Britain, "their / dark arms at reach," ready to awaken, defend the land, and drive off invaders is a resonant, purpose-giving, sense-making structure under which to subsume the day's wild, senseless danger and chaos; and while the image of sleeping men may seem an unlikely trigger for an episode of allusive "seeing," one must consider that the sleeping and the dead look very much alike under battle conditions, especially in the blackness of night on the battlefield. Jones notes that the association between sleeping men and mythic spell-sleepers is one which comes easily to someone equally versed in British lore and life in

[36] "*Fer sídhe*" means "man of the elf mound" (Tom Peete Cross, review of *Miscellania Hibernica*, by Kuno Meyer, *Modern Philology* 16.4 (August 1918), 51).

the trenches: "It will be seen that the tumbled undulations and recesses, the static sentries, and the leaning arms that were the Forward Zone, called up easily this abiding myth of our people" (199).[37]

Part 7, "The Five Unmistakable Marks," concerns the actual assault on the wood, and it is in this culminating chapter that much of *IP*'s allusive "seeing" occurs.[38] A brief stanza during a lull in the battle is delivered with the sterile brevity of military dispatch-speak: "There are indications that the enemy maintains his positions north-east of the central-ride. At 21.35 hrs units concerned will move forward and clear this area of his personnel. There will be adequate artillery support" (179). The area described is the meeting place, the area where the fiercest battle will be joined, many men will die, and Ball will receive his wound.

In Part 3, the sleeping men over which Ball stands company guard are Celtic sleepers in the tradition of the *fer sídhe*, Mac Og, and Arthur; in Part 7, as the Fusiliers approach the foreboding wood beneath the thrumming thunder of artillery drum-fire, Jones shows us the sleepers again. Now, however, they have awakened:

> Every one of these, stood, separate, upright, above ground,
> blinkt to the broad light
> risen dry mouthed from the chalk
> vivified from the Nullah without commotion

[37] Bourne, the worldly protagonist of Frederic Manning's Great War novel *Her Privates We*, ruminates on the magical quality of night in the trenches experienced during company-guard duty: "Company guard [. . .] was a cushy guard, without formality; and he liked the solitude and emptiness of the night. One bathed one's soul in that silence, as in a deep, cold pool. Earth seemed to breathe, even if it were only with his own breathing, giving consciousness a kind of rhythm, which was neither of sound nor of motion, but might become either at any moment. The slagheaps, huge against the luminous sky, might have been watchtowers in Babylon, or pyramids in Egypt; night with its enchantments, changing even this flat and unlovely land into a place haunted by fantastic imaginings" (Frederic Manning, *Her Privates We*, 1930 (London: Serpent's Tail, 1999), 97).

[38] The chapter epigraph from the *Gododdin* reminds us that Jones is the poet and that *IP* is an elegy: "Gododdin I demand thy support. / It is our duty to sing; a meeting place has been found" (151). I chose a fragment of one of these lines from Aneirin's poem to serve in the title of this thesis because I think it rather concisely captures Jones's sense of both his own need and bardic duty, as a poet, to elegize the dead, while allusively tying him to Aneirin as a fellow Welsh poet, a bard-kinsman.

and to distinctly said words,
moved in open order and keeping admirable formation
and at the high-port position
walking in the morning on the flat roof of the world
and some walked delicately
sensible of their particular judgment. (162)

The sleepers, risen to defend Britain at the behest of "distinctly said words," the incantation that breaks their slumber of ages, blink in the harsh glare of a new, violent dawn. Tasting the chalk in their mouths, their dark arms held diagonally across their chests, they walk in formation over the roof of their world (for they are denizens of the underground, the trenches; sleepers beneath the hills). Some walk delicately, for they *know* they are going to die, but they walk, nonetheless, to the dark embrace of the wood. This is the strangeness and the horror; this is endurance; this is heroism.

Rushing through the dim of Mametz Wood with the attacking force, Ball is struck repeatedly by protruding tree limbs, gets tangled in shrubbery, and trips over stones in his path. All are connected to Garlon, the invisible knight who rides through *Le Morte d'Arthur* striking at will, because of their ability to "clout you suddenly, come on you softly, search to the liver, like Garlon's truncheon that struck invisible" (180). By the light of a flare he sees

many men's accoutrements medleyed and strewn up so down and service jackets
bearing below the shoulder-numerals the peculiar sign of their battalions.
And many of these shields he had seen knights bear beforehand.
And the severed head of '72 Morgan,
its visage grins like the Cheshire cat
and full grimly. (180)

The passage signals the triggering of an episode of allusive "seeing" that evokes Launcelot's experience at the Chapel Perilous, with Ball in the "seeing" role of Launcelot himself. The ground is strewn with articles of gear and, we can presume by the presence

of service jackets bearing many different insignia, the dead soldiers who had recently carried them. Men, however, are not mentioned, because they are not "seen," per se; for it was the sight of shields bearing familiar crests and patterns mounted "up-so-down" on the walls of Chapel Perilous that initially signaled danger to Launcelot. For Ball, the battalion insignia on the shoulder-patches become the patterns on the shields. Suddenly, a gruesome sight breaks into Ball's Malorian vision: the severed head of a soldier he recognizes, its face twisted into a rictus. Even this ghastly glimpse of death-by-dismemberment in the wood can be ordered through allusive "seeing," however, as Jones shows by associating it with a non-threatening image: Lewis Carroll's Cheshire cat.

The allusion to the Chapel Perilous scene from *Le Morte d'Arthur* continues as the soldiers around Ball begin to break ranks, retreating before what they think is a German counter-attack:

> Who's these thirty in black harness that you could see in the last flash,
> great limbed, and each helmed:
> [. . .]
> But which is front, which way's the way on and where's the corporal and what's this crush and all this shoving you along, and someone shouting rhetorically about remembering your nationality—
> and Jesus Christ—they're coming through the floor,
> endthwart and overlong:
> Jerry's through on the flank . . . and: Beat it!— (180)

Once again, the light of a flare reveals a disturbing scene: a mass of ominous moving figures (German soldiers advancing? British soldiers retreating?) which become the thirty knights "all armed in black harness with their shields and their swords drawn" that menaced Launcelot at the Chapel—but then scattered like smoke when he walked through their throng.[39] There is a general panic; the NCOs are dead, unit cohesion is lost; and the men fall back in confusion. Soon enough, however, an officer arrives "full of

[39] Thomas Malory, *Le Morte d'Arthur* (New York: Modern Library, 1999), VI, ch. 15.

familiar blasphemies" and restores order; although the Germans managed to occupy Strip Trench, they had not actually broken the Fusiliers' flank (181). Like the black-harnessed knights of the Chapel Perilous, the figures Ball had seen were phantasms composed of smoke, light and shadow, and Ball's imagination.

Several allusions spring out of Ball's wounding. He is not shot in the legs with a machine gun, but "mowed" with a "sickle" like John Barleycorn of the traditional English folk-song. Ball himself equates the sensation of being shot with being struck by a projectile fired from a ballista (a medieval siege weapon) and clouted with a swinging boom aboard the deck of a sailing ship (a late evocation of the *Ancient Mariner*) (183). The wounded Ball then struggles to carry his rifle, which he has been conditioned by his instructors never to leave, as he crawls along the forest floor. An extended allusion to the *Chanson de Roland* follows in which Ball's rifle assumes the import of the dying hero Roland's great sword Durendal. John H. Johnston writes:

> As he crawls painfully in the dark, Ball cannot decide whether or not to abandon his rifle. [. . .] In the Old French epic, Roland is similarly concerned about the fate of his sword Durendal; he attempts to shatter it upon a rock, when defeat and death are certain, because he does not wish the weapon to become the trophy of a Saracen. The sword, however, cannot be broken, and as a last resort Roland places it beneath his body before he dies. [. . .] In the epic narrative the weapons and armor of the hero are often described in great detail; the poet took special delight in dwelling upon supernatural origins and virtues, and he recounted the rich battle histories of sword and shield. [. . .] Despite the fact that his weapon is a standardized factory product, the relationship between the soldier and his rifle is as intimate as that between Roland and his Durendal.[40]

The intimacy of the relationship between Ball and his rifle is communicated by a passage of inner monologue as Ball reviews the identifying characteristics of his "standardized factory product":

> You would choose her from among many.

[40] John H. Johnston, "David Jones: The Heroic Vision," *The Review of Politics* 24.1 (Jan., 1962), 79.

> You know her by her bias, and by her exact error at 300, and by the deep scar at the small, by the fair flaw in the grain, above the lower sling-swivel [. . .]. (184)

Ball remembers the *Chanson* and recognizes his rifle as his own Durendal, for "[i]t is not to be broken on the brown stone under the gracious tree" (184). Neither is it "to be hidden under [Ball's] failing body" (184). Ultimately, when he can no longer bear it, Ball leaves his weapon under an oak tree and crawls toward the rear and the approaching stretcher-bearers.

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Critics of *IP* have differing opinions about the temporal frame of the poem's allusive structure. At issue is whether the allusions are occurring in the narrative present of the poem or whether they are the result of much postwar study and reflection by Jones. Some critics have asked how Ball, as young as he is, could possibly know so much about myth, folklore, literature, history, and the rituals of the Catholic Church. Thomas Dilworth addresses the problem in his study *The Shape of Meaning in the Poetry of David Jones*:

> The analogues occur within the fictional progression like flashbacks. Their content is the past. But the consciousness that mediates them sometimes passes from the events in the narrative present to a later, meditative present in which the poet attempts 'to appreciate some things, which, at the time of suffering, the flesh was too weak to appraise' (x). In some degree, then, the poem is a postwar meditation as well as a fictional narrative. The poet implies this in his preface when he declares that 'this writing is called "In Parenthesis" because I have written it in a kind of space between' (xv).[41]

After having proposed this temporal duality regarding the poem's allusions, the existence of both a narrative present and a meditative present in *IP*, Dilworth goes on to reassure us

[41] Thomas Dilworth, *The Shape of Meaning in the Poetry of David Jones* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 39.

that "Jones knew a lot about Welsh history and legend before the war." Here Dilworth writes:

> Jones admits that 'subsequent apprehensions' influenced the poem 'a good bit,' though, he insists, 'the general attitude was not distorted.'[42] 'True enough,' [Jones] writes, 'I not infrequently made explicit what had been implicit, but I was careful to have a foundation, maybe a chance word remembered or a lengthy conversation, or some attitude of mind detectable enough even if not verbally expressed. In fact those "subjective" data were, I should say, more easily remembered than the purely material or physical data.'[43]

Dilworth points out that by 1910, Jones had memorized passages of *Henry V* and had begun to read Malory; and "Malory, *Henry V*, and the Welsh past certainly belong, to some degree, to that remembered 'subjective' data."[44]

Judging by Jones's testimony, Dilworth's concept of the temporal duality of *IP*'s allusive structure seems correct. Some of the allusions present in the poem were, in fact, genuine instances of what I have been calling allusive "seeing"; Jones connected images from texts with which he was familiar and comfortable to scenes on the battlefield that were otherworldly in their inherent strangeness or were unimaginably and incomprehensibly horrific. Dilworth notes that Jones's prewar knowledge of literature, myth, and Welsh folklore "must have informed some of the prolonged daydreaming that occupied Private Jones during the long hours of inactivity [. . .]."[45] Other instances of allusion in the poem, those composed at some temporal distance from their corresponding moment in reality, may still be considered allusive "seeing" in that through writing the documentary monument that became *IP*, Jones was able to deal with memories that must have been psychologically stressful to put on paper; the most obvious example would be

[42] David Jones, letter to René Hague, 7 May 1960, cited in Dilworth, 41.
[43] David Jones, undated letter to Bernard Bergonzi, 1965, cited in Dilworth, 41.
[44] Dilworth, 41.
[45] Dilworth, 41.

the entire attack on Mametz Wood. In either case, both temporal instances of allusion, then and now, serve to elegize and elevate Jones's comrades and indeed all the men who served on the Western Front—even the enemy front-fighters—to a heroic status through Jones's mythopoetic method.

Chapter 2.

The Assault on *In Parenthesis*

In Parenthesis appeared in 1937, one of the last British works to be authored by a Great War combatant-writer (Elizabeth Ward notes that "only the later novels of Siegfried Sassoon post-dated it"[1]). It has been hailed as a masterwork by literary cognoscenti: Thomas Dilworth writes of W. B. Yeats "towering in the doorway, searching the room" of a London society tea-party as the assembled guests fall silent, until he spots David Jones, at which point Yeats strides over, bows from the waist, and "intones, 'I salute the author of *In Parenthesis*.' " Original publisher T. S. Eliot's consideration of the poem as "a work of genius" is oft-quoted.[2] By the late 1930s Jones enjoyed newfound success as a poet in addition to his existing reputation as an especially talented engraver, calligrapher, and watercolorist. He seemed to be the artist for all seasons, the quintessential creative Briton.

Rather than ascending on a wave of critical adoration to the legendary heights occupied by the works of such literary figures as Pound, Joyce, and Eliot, however—which no less an authority on genius than Eliot himself, in his Introduction to the 1961 edition of *IP*, predicted would occur "in time"—the poetry of David Jones has been largely ignored by academe. Critics such as John H. Johnston in the 1960s; David Blamires and John Silkin in the 1970s; and William Blissett, Thomas Dilworth, and Elizabeth Ward in the 1980s and 1990s have managed to keep Jones's work from being completely forgotten, if not in the public eye. In the process, some of the aforementioned critics have wondered on paper why it is, exactly, that more people don't even know who

[1] Elizabeth Ward, *David Jones: Mythmaker* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983), 77.
[2] Dilworth, 3. The Yeats anecdote and Eliot quotation are both repeated by W. S. Merwin in his Foreward to the 2003 New York Review of Books edition of *In Parenthesis*.

David Jones *is*, let alone read his work. Indeed, the driving question at the heart of Ward's book, *David Jones: Mythmaker*, is

> why a writer for whom such exalted claims [as Eliot's] have been made for over forty years should remain so obscure, especially since his work engages with the most urgent issues of modern life—war, the origins of the contemporary sense of crisis, the impact of industrialised urban existence on the imaginative life, and the compulsion to find or create alternative worlds of value in religion or pastoral or the primitive.[3]

Dilworth, after making the Eliot-esque prediction that his study, *The Shape of Meaning in the Poetry of David Jones*, will serve as "a prologue to critical assessment of the poetry of David Jones, which is of necessity a collective enterprise and will be the work of a generation of critics," notes, in reference to Jones being named "the greatest native English poet of the twentieth century" by Hugh MacDiarmid at a London poetry conference in 1974:[4]

> Few poets have been so highly praised, especially by fellow poets. And few poets who have been so highly praised have been so long neglected by the academic establishment.[5]

Jones's poetry has received high praise from poets and, albeit occasionally, critics as well. The subject of the present chapter, however, is a pair of critical works which are not especially laudatory of Jones's long, possibly epic poem of the war, but rather seek to undermine it and the attempted construction of a legitimate heroic legacy for the soldiers of the Great War it represents.[6] These works are the eleven-page section of Paul Fussell's *The Great War and Modern Memory* titled "The Honorable Miscarriage of *In Parenthesis*," the first and still the most famous piece of critical writing to mount a

[3] Ward, 1.
[4] Dilworth, ix.
[5] Dilworth, 4.
[6] Whether or not *IP* is an epic in itself, and whether or not the entire body of Jones's poetry—*IP*, *The Anathémata*, and *The Sleeping Lord and Other Fragments*—can be seen as a vast, incomplete epic, are subjects of unresolved critical debate. Even the status of *IP* as poetry is not always agreed upon, as I will demonstrate in my discussion of Cobley.

concerted attack on the poem; and Evelyn Cobley's *Representing War: Form and Ideology in First World War Narratives*, which devotes an entire chapter to *IP*. My goal in the present chapter, from this point on, is to objectively reconstruct the arguments of each.

Fussell begins his "Honorable Miscarriage" section with a brief biography of Jones, who is introduced as "that odd, unassignable modern genius, half-English, half-Welsh, at once painter, poet, essayist, and engraver, a prodigy of folklore and liturgy and an adept at myth, ritual, and romance, the turgid allusionist of *In Parenthesis* and *The Anathémata*."[7] Jones's early art training, enlistment in the Royal Welch Fusiliers, post-war return to art school, conversion to Roman Catholicism in 1921, subsequent association with Eric Gill and the art/religion-centered community at Ditchling, Sussex, entry into the Society of Wood Engravers, and career as an illustrator are all touched upon in brief. Fussell includes a curious and poignant anecdote regarding the war's psychological (which Fussell oddly reads as physical) effect on Jones:

> Even physically Jones never got over the war. Like Hemingway selecting his table in the corner of a restaurant to secure his flanks and rear, Jones said around 1943, speaking of the kind of painting he liked to do: "I always work from a window of a house if it is at all possible. I like looking out on the world from a reasonably sheltered position."[8]

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[7] Fussell, 144.

[8] David Blamires, *David Jones: Artist and Writer* (Toronto, 1972), 59, cited in Fussell, 144. Jones's friends were also in the habit of using military nomenclature in their writings about him. Kathleen Henderson Staudt quotes a William Blissett anecdote recounting Jones's reception of an unwanted visitor, a Yorkshireman: "The nurse brought the visitor a chair; tea began to cool. David dug himself in, lying doggo, did not initiate topics or volunteer information; the Yorkshireman moved a company of questions up the line to death" (William Blissett, *The Long Conversation: A Memoir of David Jones* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 97-98, cited in Kathleen Henderson Staudt, "Recent Criticism on David Jones," *Contemporary Literature* 27.3 (Autumn, 1986), 412). Incidentally, Hemingway and Jones are not alone among Great War veterans in this carrying-over of trench attitudes and impulses to postwar life. In *Good-bye to All That*, Robert Graves writes that upon returning to England from several consecutive tours of duty in France, he had difficulty adjusting to civilianhood: "I was still mentally and nervously organized for War. Shells used to come bursting on my bed at midnight, even though Nancy shared it with me [. . .]. When [. . .] revisit[ing] my favourite [place in the] country[side], I could not help seeing it as a prospective battlefield" (Graves, 287).

Fussell also makes a point of noting Jones's fondness for the writings of Malory and his fascination with the Arthurian legends. He mentions Jones's visit to the Holy Land in 1934, then lists in sequence Jones's poetic accomplishments from *IP* to *The Sleeping Lord and Other Fragments*. Of the poems as a collective, he has this to say:

> All these works are strenuously allusive—some think to the point of incoherence. All testify to Jones's serious, if perhaps Quixotic, desire to rescue and reinvigorate traditional pre-industrial religious and ethical connotations. [. . .] His method is that of association: he mines the "deposits" clustering around traditional meanings, anxious that not a one be lost.[9]

In Fussell's view, the myriad allusions and their "traditional pre-industrial religious and ethical connotations" present in *IP* pose a critical problem. He accuses the poem of "re-attaching traditional meanings to the unprecedented actualities of the war."[10] He objects to Jones's association of "the events of front-line fighting not only with Arthurian legend but with Welsh and English folklore, Old Testament history, Roman Catholic liturgy, Norse myth, Chaucer, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, the poems of G.M. Hopkins, and even the works of Lewis Carroll."[11] Such associations, which I discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis in terms of Jones's capacity to make sense of the chaotic world of the battlefield through allusive "seeing," are clearly the locus of Fussell's attack:

> [B]y placing the suffering of ordinary modern British soldiers in such contexts as these, Jones produces a document which is curiously ambiguous and indecisive. For all the criticism of modern war which it implies, *In Parenthesis* at the same time can't keep its allusions from suggesting that the war, if ghastly, is firmly "in the tradition." It even implies that, once conceived to be in the tradition, the war can be understood. [. . .] The poem is a deeply conservative work which uses the past not, as it often pretends to do, to shame the present, but really to ennoble it.

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[9] Fussell, 145.
[10] Fussell, 146.
[11] Fussell, 146. The list of allusive sources in *IP* includes Shakespeare's *I Henry IV*, which Fussell cites, and the *Chanson de Roland*, which he fails to connect with Jones's poem. However, at the end of the paragraph in which the list appears, Fussell recalls the "panoply of epigraphs from *The Song of Roland* " that John Masefield employs in *Gallipoli*, suggesting a patriotic and propagandistic kinship shared by Masefield's text and *IP*.

> The effect of the poem, for all its horrors, is to rationalize and even to validate the war by implying that it somehow recovers many of the motifs and values of medieval chivalric romance.

Fussell then condenses his argument regarding the allusive associations of *IP* into a blunt accusation that serves as an overarching claim: "the meddling intellect [. . .] has romanticized the war."[12] In doing so, Fussell intimates, Jones's meddling intellect produces a flawed, ultimately failed work; in short, an "honorable miscarriage."

Fussell goes on to examine *IP*'s seven parts in sequence, giving a synopsis of each while here and there noting references to liturgy, ritual, and the Church; "doctrinal and chivalric" metaphors; and instances of "lyric" (Fussell's quotation marks).[13] A few fragments of the "lyric" constituting "a history of wars and soldiers based on personal testimony through multiple incarnations" delivered by the character Dai Greatcoat prompt Fussell first to hypothesize that "[t]he reader comes away from [Dai's 'lyric'] persuaded that the state of the soldier is universal throughout history," and then to ask, "if soldiering is universal, what's wrong with it? And if there is nothing in the special conditions of the Great War to alter cases drastically, what's so terrible about it? Why the shock?"[14]

Fussell's next major adversarial engagement with the text occurs in his discussion of Part 7, when John Ball and his unit are ordered to attack Mametz Wood, the action in which Ball is wounded in the legs and the majority of his unit is killed. Fussell reflects, "[i]t is a disaster"; it is not clear whether he is describing the attack itself, or what he perceives as Jones's failure in writing it, or both. The ambiguity is probably intentional. Jones's attempt to equate the slaughtered soldiers in the wood with "dismembered

[12] Fussell, 146-147.
[13] Fussell, 148-150.
[14] Fussell, 150. Dai's encyclopedic "lyric" stretches over six pages of *IP*, from 79 to 84.

antique gods in sacred groves" is unsuccessful, says Fussell, because "now the poem doesn't work the way he wants it to." He continues:

> Despite Jones's well-intentioned urging, we refuse to see these victims as continuing the tradition of [. . .] heroes of romance, Renaissance epic, and sacred history [. . .]. It is too much for "literature" to bear. We feel that Jones's formula is wrong, all wrong [. . .].[15]

Regarding the elegiac "Queen of the Woods" passage, which depicts a Dryad-like female spirit bestowing garlands of flowers on the dead soldiers in the stillness after the battle, Fussell bemoans a lack of irony; he claims it is missing because, simply, Jones wants the passage to be true.[16]

In the conclusion to his critique of the poem, Fussell reminds us that "Jones has attempted in *In Parenthesis* to elevate the new Matter of Flanders and Picardy to the status of the old Matter of Britain," and claims that "it refuses to be so elevated, [. . .] it resists being subsumed into the heroic myth [. . .]." By Fussell's gauge,

> [w]hat keeps the poem from total success is Jones's excessively formal and doctrinal way of fleeing from the literal: the books and works of Malory, Frazer, and Eliot are too insistently there, sometimes at the expense of their spirit.

Finally, Fussell's problems with *IP* do not end with his perception of the poem's too-insistent, allusive ideology. As the section's penultimate paragraph continues, he tacks on a rapid-fire series of technical complaints, including one concerning lack of consistent dialogue attribution—"As readers, we don't always know who's speaking, and to whom"—which is followed by one regarding the poem's explanatory endnotes:

> The thirty-four pages of rather pedantic notes at the end bespeak the literary insecurity of the autodidact; they sometimes prop up the text where the author suspects the poetry has miscarried.

[15] Fussell, 152.
[16] Fussell, 153.

Fussell concludes by frowning upon Jones's expansive, inclusive style, as manifested both in his poetry and in his visual artwork:

> Some of the poem is badly overwritten, just as the frontispiece drawing by Jones is too crowded with everything he can recall as relevant: a dead body, wire-pickets, rats, barbed wire, a tunic, a steel helmet, an ammunition belt, sandbags, blasted trees, mules, carrying parties, bully-beef tins, shattered houses, chicken-wire netting, and an entrenching tool. Too much. It is the visual equivalent of diction like *millesimal*, *brumous*, *pernitric*, *inutile*.[17]

While Fussell simply rails against it as "badly overwritten" verbal clutter, Evelyn Cobley has a more diplomatically theoretical term for the use of diction like *millesimal*, *brumous*, *pernitric*, and *inutile*: she calls it "lexical ostentation," a method of foregrounding the textuality of a war narrative, thereby privileging the text over the event the narrative's author seeks to document. Regarding *IP*, Cobley tells us that "[b]y foregrounding textuality Jones suggests that the 'real' is inevitably *mediated* through words which carry with them social and cultural traces."[18] According to Cobley, lexical ostentation is not limited to the use of obscure descriptive words such as the four picked out by Fussell. The mingling of figurative language with descriptive details, the linear progression of items in lists of soldiers' equipment in the trenches or personal attributes of characters, and a generalized "appeal to specific codes of knowledge" of the Great War combat soldier—such as "a technical knowledge of equipment, a military knowledge of strategy, a geographic knowledge of locations, a social knowledge of class structures, [and] a psychological knowledge of men under stress"—also signal the lexically ostentatious. An indulgence in the power of words combines with the perceived verisimilitude supplied by concrete yet alien details to assert the authenticity and primacy of textuality

[17] Fussell, 153-154.
[18] Cobley, 61. Cobley's italics.

while forcing the war's reality into a subordinate position, subjugated to the text.[19] "If life at the front is always seen in a cultural context whose 'reality' reaches us only through texts," Cobley writes, "then the First World War becomes a text which is seen through texts and in turn generates more texts."[20]

Neither Cobley's discussion of lexical ostentation nor the scope of *Representing War* itself are limited to *IP*. Cobley's monograph examines five narratives of the Great War, four of which—Richard Aldington's *Death of a Hero*, Ralph H. Mottram's *The Spanish Farm Trilogy*, Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*, and John Dos Passos' *Three Soldiers*—can be described as novels written in the documentary realism mode, and one, namely *IP*, which Cobley categorizes as a novel written in the mode of modernist experimentation. In addition to the five works with which the core analysis of *Representing War* is concerned, Cobley cites brief examples from the prose writings of Edmund Blunden, Robert Graves, Frederic Manning, Siegfried Sassoon, Ernst Jünger, Erich Maria Remarque, and others. Poems and plays are excluded, as are the works of noncombatant writers. Regarding the former, Cobley explains that she has chosen "to eschew consideration of poetry and drama, concentrating instead on prose narratives which seek to reproduce the war experience as authentically as possible"[21]; regarding the latter, she notes, "[s]ince my emphasis is on problems of representation, I focus on texts written by actual combatants."[22]

Cobley's focus on representation in the narratives of Great War combatants is her attempt to "problematize the formal choices [present in the narratives] from an

[19] Cobley, 43.
[20] Cobley, 64.
[21] Cobley, 13.
[22] Cobley, 5n1, 235.

ideological perspective."[23] In a sense, *Representing War* is an extension of Fussell's critique of *IP*, expanded to include nearly every well-known narrative to emerge from the war and incorporating a wider range of those narratives' elements than, say, a mere focus on their incorporation of the medieval chivalric tradition. Here Cobley explains the impetus for the project:

> [*Representing War*] is [. . .] concerned with mapping out an ideological unconscious recognized neither by the authors of war narratives nor by their critics. In contrast to the traditional view of war narratives as a literature of protest, I came to understand that the critique this literature offers remains to a large extent complicit with the war it ostensibly opposes.[24]

Cobley's "problematization" of formal choices in the narratives she analyzes will repeatedly circle back to charging the soldier-author with ideological complicity in the war about which he writes.

Great War combatant writers, Cobley theorizes, had two main goals. The first was to tell the truth about the war, to set the record straight, because the writers suspected that the official accounts of the war were more or less distortions of what they had experienced and knew to have happened. The second was to commemorate the dead, to erect monuments of words for their fallen comrades while simultaneously decrying the waste of their lives in a senseless war. In attempting to fulfill these goals, however, combatant writers ran into a pair of paradoxes. Cobley writes that "[t]he impulse to 'set down what can be remembered' is complicated not only by the possible distortions of memory but even more seriously by the recognition that the horrors of mass slaughter were ultimately beyond words."[25] Several Great War writers, among them Blunden, Dos Passos, Sassoon, and Carl Zuckmayer, have commented on the fundamental impossibility

[23] Cobley, x.
[24] Cobley, ix.
[25] Cobley, 7.

of transforming the experience of the war into words; perhaps the most succinct is Blunden's frustrated conclusion that "to write 'is almost useless.' "[26] But if writing about the war as a way to set the record straight was almost useless, and if, as Cobley claims, writing about the war at all "often struck [the soldier-author] as a transgression, as a parasitic exploitation of human suffering," to *not* write about it, to keep silent, "would have implied an equally guilty indifference towards [in Mottram's words] 'all those dead comrades'[. . .]."[27]

No matter how great the soldier's personal need to tell what really happened, and no matter how great his skill as a writer, any attempt to do so was futile and possibly even exploitative; but to not make an attempt was tantamount to a betrayal of one's dead comrades. The resulting paradoxes helped produce narratives "[s]trongly motivated by both the impulse to remember and the impulse to forget."[28] Cobley claims that

> [i]n the war memoir, the writer expresses pity as well as resentment towards the dead he commemorates and towards himself as a survivor. The memoir thus functions as an apology and an excuse. The narrator feels ashamed that he has survived when so many perished. This sense of guilt [. . .] is complicated by the survivor's often subconscious subscription to the myth that honour requires soldiers to die on the battlefield. [. . .] Commemorating the dead is therefore an attempt to alleviate guilt through the act of confessing one's own part in the war.[29]

Cobley identifies two overarching modes by which combatant writers construct their confessional narratives: documentary realism and experimental modernism. Although she claims that the two modes "represent diametrically opposed tendencies," both serve as reactions against the dominant contemporary literary form, the nineteenth-century realist novel: "Reacting against the empiricism common to both history and literature in

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[26] Edmund Blunden, *Undertones of War*, 1928 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982), 7, cited in Cobley, 7.
[27] Ralph Hale Mottram, *The Spanish Farm Trilogy*, 1927 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979), 177, cited in Cobley, 7.
[28] Cobley, 9.
[29] Cobley, 9.

the nineteenth century, [Great War combatant writers] chose to be more realistic than the realists by resorting either to non-literary documentary norms (autobiographical modes) or to a symbolic transcendence of merely factual descriptions of reality (modernist modes)."[30]

Although Cobley occasionally references Jones's work throughout the body of *Representing War*, *IP* merits its own chapter in the second half of the book. Cobley notes that while "Aldington, Mottram, Dos Passos, and above all Hemingway are also considered to be part of the modernist movement, their formal experimentations lag far behind Jones's radical challenge to generic boundaries, narrative teleology, referential motivation, and logical coherence." Therefore, "since *In Parenthesis* represents an exemplary modernist text, it will serve as a test case for the ideological problematic raised by high modernism."[31] For Cobley, *IP* is a perfect candidate to serve as a modernist test case because Jones' deliberately oblique and intricate manipulation of language, which Cobley considers diametrically opposed to the phlegmatic forthrightness that characterizes the works of those combatant writers who would "tell it as it really was," allows her to base her critique of the poem on what she refers to as the foregrounding of textuality within it.

Cobley claims that the decentered narrative voice of *IP* makes finding a way into the work difficult for readers and forces them to consider the text as text. While *IP* is renowned for its attention to often obscure trench-minutiae—even Fussell, "the novel's severest critic," admits that "Jones's reading of physical details is accurate and

[30] Cobley, 10.
[31] Cobley, 182.

evocative"[32]—Cobley argues that "when passages focus specifically on physical sensations, the text's referential axis is [still] challenged through lexical ostentation, syntactical inversions, mannered rhythms, narrative fragmentation, references to ritual, and symbolic allusions."[33] Jones endeavors to keep the reader disoriented by "exploiting such conventionally used connotators of reality as the men's speech, military orders, and technical terms for mythopoeic purposes." Cobley notes that "[i]n addition, the novel foregrounds its textuality through references to, among others, Shakespeare, Malory, Chaucer, Coleridge, Milton, Welsh mythology, the *Chanson de Roland*, the Bible, folk-songs, and music-hall songs"; the presence of the manifold references is problematic because "[r]eaders expecting a realistic rendering of the war experience find this web of citations highly disruptive and defamiliarizing."[34]

Although Jones's liberal use of in-the-know war terminology and a dense network of intertextual connections presents a formidable challenge to his readers, Cobley grants that "[t]he achievement of *In Parenthesis* is precisely the combination of a conventional war narrative and an allusive spatial or 'mythic' method." She elaborates on Jones's technique, gleaned from T. S. Eliot, of "layering" connecting allusions (a technique first identified by Dilworth):

> The essentially linear narrative is broken up into fragments which are interspersed with cultural allusions, various moments in story-time being juxtaposed with one another and with events taken from history, literature, and myth. The horizontal or sequential movement of the plot thus coexists with the vertical or associative stratification of temporally discontinuous fragments. Dilworth speaks of Jones's technique in terms of a narrative 'surface' which is governed by 'allusive underlayers.'[35]

[32] Fussell, 154, cited in Cobley, 30.
[33] Cobley, 62.
[34] Cobley, 63.
[35] Dilworth, 28, cited in Cobley, 190.

Jones was the only writer of the five principally engaged by Cobley's study to employ this allusive vertical stratification—a "mythic" method—within a Great War combat narrative, and so for him she tailors the charge of ideological complicity in the war a bit differently. For her, Jones' complicity does not arise from the co-opting of a nineteenth-century commitment to empirical reportage, a desire to "out-realize-the-realists" by beating them at their own game, in order to tell some truth about the modern warfare which Enlightenment values and practices had failed to prevent. Jones chose an entirely different method for *IP*—experimental modernism, a rejection of outmoded Enlightenment-style "realism"—and would not merit the charge on those grounds. Cobley writes:

> Unlike other war accounts, which seek to provide access to a typical *individual* mind, *In Parenthesis* stresses the *cultural* matrix of experience. Once descriptive details are no longer presented as unmediated reflections of objects in the real world, they acknowledge being carriers of social and hence ideological messages."[36]

She charges Jones with complicity in the Great War primarily because of his text's multiple allusive layers; in other words, his employment of the mythic method.

According to Cobley, "since Jones's critique of modernity is mounted from a nostalgic investment in a chivalric tradition which the author implicitly praises for its authenticity, it is ideologically suspect for occupying a recessive position we now associate with totalitarian political experiments."[37] In Jones's "mythic apprehension of reality" she sees the artistically progressive mated with the politically regressive, a combination of attitudes often attributed to high modernists such as Eliot, Ezra Pound,

[36] Cobley, 65. Cobley's italics.
[37] Cobley, 25.

D. H. Lawrence, and Wyndham Lewis. Although *IP* "challenge[s] social modernity by laying bare its mediocrity, sterility, and inauthenticity," what she describes as Jones's recourse to this mediocre, sterile, and inauthentic modernity—an attempt at redemption of failed Enlightenment ideals through an act of artistic imagination—is problematic for Cobley because it assumes that

> unpleasant experiences like fragmentation and alienation could be transformed into pleasant ones when exploited for aesthetic effect. Even the pains of war could presumably be alleviated through a compensatory aesthetic practice. What this escape into art overlooks is that the formal strategies it privileges recreate on a different level the patterns this art is meant to contest. Far from calling for a break with the Enlightenment values the war exemplifies, Jones seems to suggest that art could point the way to their positive realization. [. . .] Jones is most reluctant to impugn Enlightenment ideals, calling instead for a reconstitution of their potency.[38]

Cobley sees damning evidence of *IP*'s ideological complicity with the Great War—"[t]hat the war is for Jones an aberration from a tradition which [nonetheless] deserves to be preserved"—in Jones's focalizing characters, "not just representative soldiers but archetypal figures." Ball and Jenkins stand in for Roland and Oliver of the *Chanson de Roland*; soldiers of the Royal Welch Fusiliers are linked with Llywelyn, the tragic redeemer figure of the *Gododdin*. By making these allusive intertextual moves, Cobley alleges, Jones avoids a good bit of the ideological spade-wielding:

> Through their knowledge of the French legend, readers supply the emotional intensity the 'objective' narrative surface can consequently dispense with.[39] [. . .] Jones is [therefore] able to suggest a redemptive interpretation of war without having to say so on the level of realistic depiction. [. . .] The decentered narrative reconstruction of the fighting on the Western front thus risks being recentered around a chivalric glorification of war.[40]

[38] Cobley, 113-114.
[39] Cobley claims that readers unfamiliar with *Y Gododdin* pick up Llywelyn's significance from the text and notes of *IP* (115).
[40] Cobley, 114-115.

The chivalric glorification of war—the product of the redemptive interpretation of war "suggested" by Jones, according to Cobley's theory—is at the heart of her critique of IP: "Once we acknowledge that a John Ball, a Bobby Saunders, or an Aneirin Lewis is metaphorically connected with mythic soldier-heroes," she writes, "it becomes impossible to ignore issues of male courage and hence love of war."[41]

In Parenthesis was initially hailed as a work of genius, but has not attracted the volume of popular and scholarly attention which some had predicted it would. While many critics of the poem have applauded its allusive structure, Paul Fussell and Evelyn Cobley have objected to what they see as the damning ideological implications of connecting events on the Western Front to a network of imagery based in myth, literature, and liturgy. Fussell and Cobley claim that Jones's "mythic method," which I have called allusive "seeing" in the first chapter of this thesis, is a political liability in that it seeks to subsume the Great War under a tradition that glorifies and romanticizes war. In the next and final chapter of this thesis I will offer some critical positions—a mixture of my own and those of a few other critical defenders of Jones's poem—that effectively answer those of Fussell and Cobley, thus concluding my defense of the mythic method within *In Parenthesis*.

[41] Cobley, 194.

Chapter 3.

Answering the Contentious Critics

In terms of staying power and the garnering of accolades, there can be no doubt that Fussell's *The Great War and Modern Memory* has been a successful venture into historical writing for the former Rutgers University and University of Pennsylvania English professor. The book has been continuously in print for over a quarter-century since its publication by Oxford University Press in 1975; a twenty-fifth anniversary edition was published in 2000. It is the recipient of the National Book Award and the National Book Critics Circle Award. The Modern Library numbered it among the one hundred best nonfiction books of the twentieth century. And, as historian Leonard V. Smith notes, "Oxford could have added [to the jacket of the twenty-fifth anniversary edition] that no book did more to reawaken historical interest in the conflict of 1914-1918, and to get historians thinking about the Great War as more than one long prelude to World War II."[1]

Methodologically, however, Fussell's study has been under critical fire since its appearance in 1975. Smith writes that "most of the [initial] reviews were positive, and all recognized the importance of the subject matter. But even favorable reviews contained elements of criticism, some substantial."[2] Although the historian Michael Howard, in a review for the *Times Literary Supplement*, offered praise, Smith notes that Howard also detected " 'traces of naivety, petulance, and ignorance' such as Fussell's assuredly glib assertion that eight million people died simply because of the assassination of Archduke

[1] Leonard V. Smith, "Paul Fussell's *The Great War and Modern Memory*: Twenty-Five Years Later," *History and Theory* 40.2 (May 2001), 241-242.
[2] Smith, 246.

Francis Ferdinand at Sarajevo."[3] Howard took Fussell to task for his "derision of religion, for equating faith with the self-righteous pigheadedness of Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, while [ignoring] the ways religion offered consolation to the 'rather simple men who really believed in God.' "[4] William Golding, in his review for the *Guardian Weekly*, admitted that Fussell "has amassed a store of anecdote and illustration and his book is wholly readable"; however, "for all his apparent amiability a note that can only be called patronising creeps in."[5] Smith points out that "Karl Miller, in a review of *The Great War and Modern Memory* as one of six books on Great War literature in the *New York Review of Books*, came to a conclusion opposite to that of Fussell, pointing to the resilience and adaptability of nineteenth-century romanticism even in describing the horrible new world created by the war."[6]

Although none of the three reviews Smith cites from 1975 specifically engage Fussell's treatment of Jones and *In Parenthesis*, Smith's paraphrase of Miller's conclusion comes close to the core assertion of my own thesis, upon which I elaborated in Chapter 1. Jones does not create an "honorable miscarriage" in his attempt (to use Fussell's words) to "re-[attach] traditional meanings to the unprecedented actualities of the war," an attempt which has the effect of "rationaliz[ing] and validat[ing] the war by implying that it somehow recovers many of the motifs and values of medieval chivalric romance."[7] Neither has Jones "romanticized the war." Rather, he has used the nexus of literary-historical-religious allusions in *IP* as a method of making order amidst the

[3] Michael Howard, "Armageddon and After," *Times Literary Supplement* (5 December 1975), cited in Smith, 246.
[4] Howard, cited in Smith, 246.
[5] William Golding, "Crabbed Youth and Age," *Guardian Weekly*, vol. 113 (30 November 1975), cited in Smith, 246.
[6] Smith, 246-247.
[7] Fussell, 146-147.

pandemonium of the battlefield, a "seeing" topos which associates the terrible destruction of modern industrial warfare with a system of sense-making imagery. In the process, he has created a mythic legacy for the soldiers of the Great War, and opened a place for them to stand amongst their martial predecessors. It is not the war itself, as Fussell claims, which *In Parenthesis* seeks to ground firmly "in the tradition." It is the men who fought the war—men largely outside of the British professional military caste, the middle-and-lower-class men of Kitchener's New Army—whom Jones knew deserved to be remembered as heroes.

Had he survived the war, fellow combatant-poet Wilfred Owen would probably have agreed with Jones. He wrote bitterly and exultantly to a blasé British public-at-large in 1917:

> Nevertheless, except you share
> With them in hell the sorrowful dark of hell,
> Whose world is but the trembling of a flare
> And heaven but as the highway for a shell,
>
> You shall not hear their mirth:
> You shall not come to think them well content
> By any jest of mine. These men are worth
> Your tears. You are not worth their merriment.[8]

Owen's indictment of British public apathy at the plight of the citizen-soldiers fighting in France seems to introduce a separation, a partitioning-off, of the soldiers from the civilians back home, and a suggestion of the common fighting man's elevation to some higher status.[9] The two groups, civilians and soldiers, share nothing; there is no common touchstone save the prospect of damnation. For the soldiers, not even the heavens

[8] Wilfred Owen, "Apologia Pro Poemate Meo," 1917, *The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry*, ed. Jon Silkin, 1979 (New York: Penguin, 1996), 198.

[9] Owen's suggestion that the soldiers stand apart from and somehow above their civilian contemporaries has since become an overarching theme of critics' interpretations of the war and its literature.

themselves can carry the comfort of salvation; all they know of the skies is that they bring death. Owen's refusal to portray British soldiers as stereotypical, jocular Tommies and his disdain for the wry humor of other combatant-writers, like Graves, indicates a refusal to give the British public what they prefer: war scenes framed with humor, which perhaps makes them somewhat more palatable.

Jon Silkin, author of *Out of Battle*, a critical study of Great War poetry, and editor of the *Penguin Book of First World War Poetry*, reviewed *The Great War and Modern Memory* in 1977 for *The Review of English Studies*. Silkin, unlike Fussell a qualified expert on the poetry of the Great War, approves of Fussell's handling of Blunden's pastoral, but he notes pithily that "Mr. Fussell underestimates the achievement of David Jones's *In Parenthesis*."[10] Silkin, writing on Jones in *Out of Battle*, addresses at length the question of whether heroism was even possible in a war of static, entrenched armies and technological mass death. By extension, Silkin also considers whether the network of mythic-heroic allusions in *IP* can be considered a poetic success or must be understood to be an abortive failure—an honorable miscarriage, as Fussell would write three years later. Silkin writes, "if we think of the meaning of *heroic*—large, individualistic feats nevertheless wrought on behalf of a particular group—these seem hardly to have been possible, or at least to much effect, in the context of modern war." He notes, however, that "Jones is careful, in his Preface, to make us aware of the discrepancy as he understood it between the war he fought in and the earlier wars"[11]:

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[10] Jon Silkin, review of *The Great War and Modern Memory*, by Paul Fussell, *The Review of English Studies*, New Series 28.110 (May 1977), 245. Smith notes that prior to writing *The Great War and Modern Memory*, Fussell's "area of expertise had been eighteenth-century English literature. He had written, for example, on prosody in eighteenth-century England, Augustan humanism, and Samuel Johnson. Certainly in terms of subject, turning to the literature of the Great War marked a dramatic departure" (255).

[11] Jon Silkin, *Out of Battle: The Poetry of the Great War* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), 319.

> Some of us ask ourselves if Mr. X adjusting his box-respirator can be equated with what the poet envisaged, in
>
> 'I saw young Harry with his beaver on.'
>
> We are in no doubt at all but what Bardolph's marching kiss for Pistol's 'quondam Quickly' is an experience substantially the same as you and I suffered on Victoria platform. For the old authors there appears to have been no such dilemma—for them the embrace of battle seemed one with the embrace of lovers. For us it is different. . . . I only wished to record that for me such a dilemma exists, and that I have been particularly conscious of it during the making of this writing. (xiv-xv, cited in Silkin, *Out of Battle*, 319)

"Honour for those killed in such a condition of reluctance is more ambiguous and complex than honour for the earlier 'heroic' man," Silkin writes, "and Jones's art is nothing if not complex."[12] The dilemma to which Jones refers, and to which Silkin refers as a "condition of reluctance," could take the form of domesticity versus heroism, or fear versus patriotism, or conscientious objection to killing versus the desire to help those victimized by the war; any number of emotions might coexist in polar opposition. Jones emphasizes that the majority of men called upon to go fight in France were in at least one respect fundamentally different than all of their culture's martial predecessors had been: they were not warriors. With the occasional exception of members of the professional officer caste—men such as Julian Grenfell, who was bred for war from birth and claimed to "adore" even the new, cavalry-less, modern form of war—most did not wholeheartedly embrace going to war; many were reluctant, conflicted, or ambivalent.[13] Silkin understands this, yet he refuses to rule out the possibility that the soldiers are heroic despite their condition of reluctance, and despite the circumstances of their deaths. Jones purposefully recorded his awareness of the "dilemma" and was careful to note that when he wrote *IP* it was never far from his mind.

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[12] Silkin, *Out of Battle*, 319.

[13] For a more extensive account of Julian Grenfell's feelings about war, see Hynes, 38-41 *passim*.

Fussell, on the other hand, treats a portion of the same passage from Jones's Preface quite differently; he uses the reference to *I Henry IV* as a springboard for his accusation that the poem is an attempt at "re-attaching traditional meanings to the unprecedented actualities of the war."[14] According to Fussell: "Jones believes such an equation can be made [. . .]. Actually, young Harry is not at all like Mr. X, but it is the ambition of *In Parenthesis* to obscure the distinction." The fact that (unlike Silkin's more even-handed approach) Fussell takes Jones's use of the line from *I Henry IV* out of its context in the Preface and fails even to mention Jones's "dilemma" is problematic. The closest he can come to an acknowledgement of it is this piece of faint praise in which is couched a subtle attack: "And yet, as Jones re-lives the experience of his actual characters, he is fully sympathetic with their daily painful predicament of isolation from home, from the past, and from values that could honestly be reported as heroic."[15]

Fussell's insistence, in *The Great War and Modern Memory*, on the fundamental incompatibility of denouncing the war while lauding the soldiers who fight it fits a pattern that Smith points out in a review of *Wartime*, Fussell's book on experience in World War II. Smith argues that *Wartime*

> suffered from what [Fussell] had described in *The Great War and Modern Memory* as "gross dichotomizing," the description of things in binary oppositions propped up desperately rather than allowed to collapse of their internal contradictions. No soldier in the book could both detest "chickenshit" and remain committed to winning the war as a struggle with imperfect but real ideological significance. And civilians could support the war—its deprivations, its demands

[14] Hilary Edwards has pointed out to me that Fussell's word-choice here is odd; for if the actualities of the war are truly unprecedented, one would have simply to attach, rather than re-attach (which implies an attachment, separation, then second attachment) traditional meanings to it. Fussell's construction implies that traditional meanings *had been* attached to the war and were somehow broken away, and that Jones's poem constituted an attempt to restore those meanings. The implication would in turn require documentation and analysis not offered by Fussell's study.

[15] Fussell, 146-147.

> in the work place, and most of all the sacrifice of their loved ones—only if they took gullibly and at face value what propaganda told them.[16]

For Fussell, soldiers cannot subject themselves to bureaucratic "chickenshit" *while* remaining committed to the significance of winning the war. Civilians cannot support the war *while* harboring even a slight suspicion about the presence of potentially misleading elements in the propaganda. By extension, it seems, neither can *IP* seek to shame the war *while* using myth to make sense of it and ennoble the men who fought it. While at first glance this parallel may seem tenuous because of its existence between experience and critical/theoretical claims about a work of literature, the strength of the similarity between the two justifies the link.

Perhaps the strongest critical reaction to Fussell's assessment of *IP* comes from Vincent B. Sherry, Jr., by way of a 1982 article titled "David Jones's *In Parenthesis*: New Measure" published in the journal *Twentieth Century Literature*. The article launches a focused attack on Fussell's concept of the "Honorable Miscarriage" from several fronts. Writes Sherry:

> [T]here are problems with Fussell's critical perspective, for, according to his own thesis, he is involved in an ongoing reaction to the Great War. Predictably, he sounds at moments like a contemporary of the soldier poets, writing with a polemical force to equal theirs, expecting all writers to hold the same assumptions and condemn the war in similar language.
>
> These assumptions belong, broadly speaking, to the whole modern convention of the anti-heroic. Impersonal technological warfare has certainly invalidated the old heroic codes of single combat. But do these conditions exclude the entire heroic tradition from a writer? Does a writer who alludes to heroic literature automatically glorify the military experience? Saying yes to

[16] Smith, 253. Smith defines Fussell's term "chickenshit" as "a grinding, low-grade torture [. . .], the capricious exercise of authority for its own sake," under which soldiers in World War II "spent most of their time in uniform" (252); here he quotes Fussell's explanation of the term's name: "chickenshit is so called—instead of horse- or bull- or elephant shit—because it is small-minded and ignoble and takes the trivial seriously. Chickenshit can be recognized instantly because it never has anything to do with winning the war" (Paul Fussell, *Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), ix, cited in Smith, 252.).

> these questions reveals the preconceptions of modern anti-heroic feeling, and even a sophisticated critic like Fussell displays these preconceptions.

Sherry claims that Fussell "compulsively associates heroic literature and false glorification," and indeed that he is "[s]uspicious of any literary imagination brought to bear on the war."[17] Then, Sherry chastises Fussell for not reading closely enough—"To know 'who's speaking, and to whom' in *In Parenthesis* takes the kind of care the lengthy notes suggest is required to understand the material"—and defends the validity of Jones's endnotes: "reading the material mentioned in the notes is better than rigging up some construct like 'heroic myth' on which to punish the writer."[18] Sherry goes on to correct Fussell's erroneous perception of Jones's message, an understanding of which, Sherry notes, "requires the kind of patient analysis Fussell has simply failed to perform"[19]; he explains that, by looking closely at the heroic allusions, "in fact, we can see Jones making a recondite and precise judgment on the unheroic nature of technological war, and conveying this judgment in a controlled, imaginative artistry."[20]

I agree with Sherry's assessment of Fussell's complaint about not always knowing who speaks to whom in *IP*; closer attention paid to the text may have repaid Fussell with some illumination. I share Sherry's irritation over Fussell's remarks on Jones's "thirty-four pages of rather pedantic notes at the end," which Fussell, seeming to suffer an attack of literary-critical amnesia as he forgets the notation in T. S. Eliot's *The*

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[17] Vincent B. Sherry, Jr., "David Jones's *In Parenthesis*: New Measure," *Twentieth Century Literature* 28.4 (Winter 1982), 375.

[18] Sherry, 376.

[19] Sherry, 377.

[20] Sherry, 376. See Sherry's discussion of the emphasis, in the heroic tradition, of the virtue of *mesure* ("restraint," "self-control") that "figures largely in the chivalric code of Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur*," 377. Sherry notes that the opposite of *mesure*, or *desmesure*, "occurs when Gawain slays the lady of Gaheris; he is said to act 'by misadventure' " (Sir Thomas Malory, *Le Morte d'Arthur*, 2 vols., introd. Sir John Rhys, *Everyman*, Nos. 45 and 46 (1906; rpt. London; Dent, 1922), I, 78, cited in Sherry, 377.). Jones's use of the term "misadventure" in his dedication, Sherry claims, ties *IP* to the heroic tradition by conveying "this heroic motif of restraint" (377).

Waste Land, claims "bespeak the literary insecurity of the autodidact." The potshot he takes at Jones's frontispiece sketch—a sketch intended, a sympathetic interpreter might suggest, as a concentration of the surreal nightmare elements of life in the trenches, a visual image to accompany the poem's collected horrors—is beneath him.

The overall pejorative quality of Fussell's language in writing about the poem (the traces of petulance and ignorance detected by Howard are there, as is the patronising note recognized by Golding) signal that Fussell's preferred tool for the task of literary analysis, at least in Jones's case, is a blunt instrument rather than a scalpel. Fussell's weapon in the "Honorable Miscarriage" section of *The Great War and Modern Memory* is the classic ad hominem attack, aimed at the subject rather than the subject's arguments. Finally, a personal observation with regards to Fussell's critique of *IP*; I find one of the more unfortunate aspects of it to be the double-edged praise he offers the poem in the final paragraph: "And yet for all these defects, *In Parenthesis* remains in many ways a masterpiece impervious to criticism."[21] Foregrounding "all these defects" has the effect of suggesting that one of the "many ways" in which the poem may be a "masterpiece" is a purely accidental one. In other words, the subtext of Fussell's "praise" is: Despite everything Jones gets wrong, he somehow manages to get a few critical things right.

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Having discussed Paul Fussell's attack on *IP*, we now move on to a consideration and rebuttal of Evelyn Cobley's arguments. In his review for the journal *Modernism/Modernity*, Bernd Hüppauf points out that Cobley's claim—that no previous attempts have been made "to problematize war narratives in relation to the ideologically specific ways in which modes of representation seek to make sense of the war

[21] Fussell, 154.

experience"[22]—is "an irritating misjudgment" which "leads to false identifications and creates blind spots that impair her argument." Chiding Cobley's overzealous application of the deconstructionist principles of Jacques Derrida, Jean-François Lyotard, Hayden White, and the postmodern school, Hüppauf reminds us that "[t]he literariness of the text and the world was not discovered in the 1960s; it has a tradition going back to Nietzsche and Romanticism."[23]

While Cobley supports her thesis "of an intrinsic contradiction in well-known texts on the war" by gathering "considerable evidence," writes Hüppauf, "no attempt is made to clarify the book's basic concept: war experience." He continues,

> World War I is frequently referred to [in Cobley's study] as a crisis of western civilization, as a "negation of civilization" (5), an "historical crisis of consciousness" (16). In the interpretation of some of the authors studied, World War I came to be precisely this. However, there are other wars. [. . .] Scenes of horror, sadism, and destruction can be read with pleasure, and the continuing popularity of war literature is not necessarily due to protest against the battlefield's horrors.[24]

Another problem Hüppauf cites is that "[t]he book's unifying approach excludes discussion of novels (and other materials) that do not fit into its homogeneous pattern."[25] Cobley's readiness to exclude texts that do not fit the prescribed pattern eventually becomes apparent; "my intention," she writes, "is not to offer readings of individual texts. The texts themselves come into play whenever they are needed to illustrate a theoretical point."[26] Her justification of her decision to exclude poetry (she conveniently categorizes *IP* as a modern experimental novel—more on that shortly) and drama from *Representing*

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[22] Cobley, 15, cited in Bernd Hüppauf, review of *Representing War: Form and Ideology in First World War Narratives*, by Evelyn Cobley, *Modernism/Modernity* 3.1 (1996), 153.

[23] Bernd Hüppauf, review of *Representing War: Form and Ideology in First World War Narratives*, by Evelyn Cobley, *Modernism/Modernity* 3.1 (1996), 153-154.

[24] Hüppauf, 154. In-text citations and the parenthetical comment on Jünger are Hüppauf's; brackets are mine.

[25] Hüppauf, 155.

[26] Cobley, 18.

War is somewhat suspect: "I have chosen, unlike many other commentators, to eschew consideration of poetry and drama, concentrating instead on prose narratives which seek to reproduce the war experience as authentically as possible."[27] Her reasoning implies that poetry and drama *do not* seek to reproduce the war experience "authentically." But the question is, what is the *goal* of "authentic" war writing? One definition of the goal might be to attempt a communication of experience, even in the face of the realization that the experience one would communicate—in this case, being on the Western Front between 1914 and 1918—might well be incommunicable.[28] If this is a condition of authenticity in war writing (that is to say, war writing that strives to communicate the experience of war even as it acknowledges the possibility that there may be no way to do so) then poetry would seem to fit the bill—perhaps even more so than documentary narrative, which takes *telling about experience* as its goal, whereas poetry takes *showing experience* as its own. The problem for Cobley, and the reason I (as well as Hüppauf) suspect that she chose not to include poetry in *Representing War*, is that fitting it into her "homogeneous pattern" of works guilty of "ideological complicity" with the war they ostensibly protest would be more difficult than to simply exclude it altogether.

Given that she decides to "eschew consideration" of Great War poetry, it is all the more telling that Cobley decides to approach *IP* as an experimental modernist novel. There is nothing inherently wrong with this approach; Blissett points out that "*In Parenthesis* has been called a poem, an epic poem, a novel, an autobiographical novel, a war book—with varying degrees of disquiet."[29] Although it is generally regarded as a

[27] Cobley, 13.
[28] The reader will recall Edmund Blunden's remark—that to write about the war was "almost useless"—cited in the previous chapter (Blunden, 7, cited in Cobley, 7).
[29] Blissett, 283.

poem, sections of which happen to be written in prose, Cobley's decision to treat *IP* as a novel is important to her study; she has too much to say about modernism and by extension about Jones's text to leave it out, but she cannot include it as a poem, for to do so would be to open the door to the other Great War poets. What is vaguely troubling, however, is that Cobley does not so much as acknowledge the critical debate over how Jones's text should be classified until Chapter 6. When her acknowledgement finally does come, it does so by way of a lengthy endnote in which Cobley summarizes the debate with a series of one-line quotations from critics such as Blamires, Bergonzi, Ward, and Dilworth—the majority of whom, incidentally, indicate that they read *IP* as poetry—and then declares: "It seems to me that calling *In Parenthesis* 'poetry' is as arbitrary a choice as calling it a 'novel.' "[30] For the reader not already familiar with the debate, however, its introduction in Chapter 6 comes too late; by this point in Cobley's text the assertion that *IP* is doubtless a novel (and an ideologically complicit one at that) has been thoroughly reified.

In her Introduction to *Representing War*, Cobley writes, "What has largely gone unscrutinized is the fact that these war narratives have inherited a conceptuality which unavoidably limits their discourse in certain ideologically suspect ways."[31] This claim is relevant to my critique of Cobley's treatment of Jones in that it is an overarching claim that applies to all of the narratives with which she engages in *Representing War*. What Cobley calls a fact in this case is instead an intellectual supposition—a theory, one which Cobley has set out to prove in her study. Talking about facts may seem simple, but in reality is a risky, complicated business, and as we can see, Cobley gets into trouble when

[30] Cobley, 182 n1, 239-240.
[31] Cobley, 17.

she occasionally oversimplifies the complexity of discussing facts.[32] She continues in the Introduction to tell us that "no matter how we might conceptualize the war, the fact remains that men were killed in great numbers for a purpose which has become increasingly dubious."[33] While "men were killed in great numbers" is no doubt a fact, "for a purpose which has become increasingly dubious" is not. Surfacing twice within five pages of *Representing War*'s Introduction, this somewhat cavalier manner of dealing with a loaded and delicate issue—what constitutes a fact—does not bode well for the soundness of argument in the remainder of the monograph.

While some of Cobley's arguments in *Representing War* are intriguing, others occasionally verge on ludicrous. She suggests that one narrative purpose of a character who looks at no-man's-land through a periscope or over the fire-step is for the character to see the landscape in order to describe it to the reader in turn. This is an interesting idea, until Cobley claims that far from being *a* narrative purpose, seeing-to-describe is *the* narrative purpose and indeed the very reason behind the introduction of any character who sees. In her terms, the character is in fact *created by* the landscape: "A new arrival appears because a description of the devastated landscape requires his presence. Although the narrative succession might persuade us that the new arrival generates the description, the causal relationship may well be the reverse."[34] An example Cobley gives of a character being created by his view of landscape is John Ball, one of the central characters of *IP*. Ball's first view through a periscope out at no-man's-land doesn't happen until well into the narrative, however, long after he has been introduced and

[32] For a primer on the hidden complexities of discussing facts, see the philosopher Nelson Goodman's book *Ways of Worldmaking* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1978).
[33] Cobley, 21.
[34] Cobley, 48.

established as integral to the workings of the poem; and so Cobley's inclusion of him as an example of a character created by the landscape he sees seems to weaken her argument.

Cobley echoes Fussell's crabbed complaint regarding the "strenuous" allusiveness ("some think to the point of incoherence") of Jones's work, especially *IP*, when she tells us that "[some] find this web of citations highly disruptive and defamiliarizing," and "[t]o make matters worse, Jones's intertextual sources are not just scholarly but often quite obscure and simply private."[35] Dilworth, however, puts Jones's allusive tendencies in perspective by comparing them with those of James Joyce:

> The difficulty of understanding the unfamiliar references can be overcome. And the process is educational, since everything Jones refers to has historical or cultural significance. In this respect his allusions are more intrinsically rewarding, for example, than many of those by James Joyce, who so often engages the reader in playing turn-of-the-century Dublin trivial pursuit. As with Joyce, however, the allusions are essential to meaning and aesthetic effect.[36]

Dilworth has a point about the rewards intrinsic to literary, historical, or cultural self-edification, although one could argue that ancient Britain trivial pursuit is no more engaging than turn-of-the-century Dublin trivial pursuit. Still, literary critics complaining about a work's "strenuous" allusiveness, no matter how obscure it may be, is a problem, for writers are tasked with writing, critics with interpretation. Part of the critic's job is to explicate the allusions present in a given narrative; to build on Dilworth's example, Joyce studies would be in a bit of a shambles if his critics declined to attempt explication of *Ulysses*' allusive network because they preferred to investigate more obvious and less time-consuming texts. Choosing not to engage a given text's allusiveness on the basis of

[35] Cobley, 63.
[36] Dilworth, 4.

its difficulty or obscurity seems, to put it delicately, like a convenient way of avoiding the road less traveled.

Another noticeable problem in Cobley's study is that she sometimes loses control of her arguments. For example, she theorizes that combatant writers feel pity and resentment toward the dead comrades they commemorate, and also feel it for themselves as survivors. "The memoir," she tells us, "thus functions as an apology and an excuse. The narrator feels ashamed that he has survived when so many perished."[37] Complicating the shame is a guilt that arises from the culturally-inscribed myth that honor requires the death of the soldier. Soldier-authors feel an intense need to apologize to the dead as well as to justify their own survival. So far, so good. From here, however, it is only a short, reductive jump to "[c]ommemorating the dead is therefore an attempt to alleviate guilt through the act of confessing one's own part in the war."[38] Encountering a statement which so drastically simplifies a myriad of motivations for writing-to-remember and commits such a blatant misstep often has the effect of stopping the reader in mid-argument.

One way to engage the problem with surviving and commemoration that Cobley proposes—and although her description of it is reductive, it is a problem—is to look closely at Jones's use of the *Ancient Mariner*. Blissett points to the title of *IP*'s Part 1, "The Many Men So Beautiful," as establishing early on the idea "of a narrative that must be told by a survivor, a narrative in which those who do not survive are [valorized]."[39] The stanza of the *Ancient Mariner* in which the line originally appears is as follows:

The many men, so beautiful!

[37] Cobley, 9.
[38] Cobley, 9.
[39] Blissett, 285.

> And they all dead did lie.
> And a thousand thousand slimy things
> Lived on; and so did I.[40]

Cobley might construe the speaker's self-association with the "thousand thousand slimy things" that also live on as a scourge with which he flagellates himself for not having died alongside "the many men so beautiful." But, in the context of Jones's poem and the Western Front, the stanza (linked, as it is, through synecdoche by the first line serving as chapter title) may suggest something else—namely, a determined endurance. A thousand thousand slimy things lived on after every single trench-shelling, after every push over the top into barking machine guns, through all the repetition and drudgery and exhilaration and terror and loneliness and hopelessness; and so did Jones. Only the dead are beautiful and free; the living are covered in mud and blood, and they emerge from their holes after the concussions cease, or descend from the fire-step once the enemy soldiers stop coming, condemned to go on about their troglodyte business.[41]

The synecdochichal suggestion of Jones's appropriation from the *Ancient Mariner* may indeed point to some stoic endurance; and for Jones, this hypothetical endurance may well be heroic. For Cobley, endurance is a "passive" display best relegated to a

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[40] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, 1834, *Coleridge's Poetry and Prose*, ed. Nicholas Halmi, Paul Magnuson, and Raimonda Modiano (New York: 2004), 4.232-239.

[41] Blissett quotes Gerald Brenan's vivid description of the morbidly beautiful dead in Mametz Wood after the real-life battle that serves as the climax of *IP*:

> What seemed extraordinary was that all the dead bodies there lay just as they had fallen in their original places, as though they were being kept as an exhibit for a war museum. Germans in their field-gray uniforms, British in their khaki lying side by side, their faces and their hands a pale waxy green, the colour of rare marble. Heads covered with flat mushroom helmets next to heads in domed steel helmets that came down behind the ears. [. . .] I felt I was visiting a room in Madame Tussaud's Chamber of Horrors, for I could not imagine any of these bodies having ever been alive. Yet the effect in its morbid way was beautiful. (Gerald Brennan, *A Life of One's Own* (New York: Farrar, 1962), 205-206, cited in Blissett, "To Make a Shape," 296.)

subordinate position behind "an assertion of active human triumph."[42] She later notes, "Although the ironic ritualization of routine activities and military orders indicates an awareness of war as perversion and sacrifice, Jones also suggests that human endurance under such conditions is ennobling."[43] I submit that Jones suggests it because it is true. Samuel Hynes has written movingly on the question of what form "courage" could possibly take in the world of the trenches. Here he writes that courage in the trenches may well mean enduring life in them:

> The courageous act [. . .] is not some extreme individual gesture [. . .], but simply going back to the trenches and standing there, enduring the shells, the misery, and the privation, and *not trembling*. It is passive courage, a stoic endurance where there is nothing else to be done. Such courage doesn't win medals, but it is a fine and difficult virtue, as old soldiers know.[44]

I would venture that recognizing the courageous quality of passive endurance that Hynes points out is made easier by hard-earned experience. Soldiers recognize it in other soldiers. As Jones proclaims at the end of *IP*, quoting from the *Chanson de Roland*: "The geste says this and the man who was on the field . . . and who wrote the book . . . the man who does not know this has not understood anything" (187).[45] Fussell could be mistaking the experience of weary endurance for a flippant militarism when he gripes: "[Jones] is careful to say of the NCO who issues the digging tools that he is 'thickly greaved with mud' (89), and we get a sense that his condition is really no worse than that of the Roman soldiers wearing greaves who diced at the Crucifixion. Cushy, really."[46] We might consider that any speculation about leg-armor could be in vain, however, if Jones is punning: we may be supposed to understand that the NCO is thickly *grieved*, or

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[42] Cobley, 141.
[43] Cobley, 195-196.
[44] Hynes, *The Soldiers' Tale*, 58. Italics are Hynes's.
[45] The ellipses appear in Jones's text.
[46] Fussell, 150. The in-text citation of *IP* is Fussell's.

plagued, with mud. We might also consider that slimy things, like mud-covered men, may not always be all bad; as Owen writes, "I, too, saw God through mud, - / The mud that cracked on cheeks when wretches smiled."[47] These considerations would seem to be logical in that they address *IP*'s capacity to exhibit a wide emotional and experiential spectrum rather than simply condemning surface-level apprehensions of the text with a ready cynicism.

In Chapter 1 of this thesis, I endeavored to make the reader aware of the constant strangeness and horror that soldiers of the Great War, particularly those on the Western Front, had to endure. I then linked David Jones to the Welsh bard Aneirin and discussed the former's technique of allusive "seeing" in detail, positing that it operates in *In Parenthesis* as a method of making order from the chaos of war (much like the bard makes order through his song) by associating scenes of strangeness and horror with familiar imagery gleaned from a study of myth and literature. In addition, I noted the facility of Jones's allusive technique for rescuing the war's soldiers from the anti-heroic stance that the Great War's industrial character barred the soldiers from consideration as heroes. Chapter 2 objectively reviewed the arguments of Paul Fussell and Evelyn Cobley, who have written that *In Parenthesis*, through its association of the war with mythic, literary, and liturgical elements, is ideologically implicated in the war by its reification of the very Enlightenment values whose failure the war symbolized. Finally, Chapter 3 rebutted the arguments offered by Fussell and Cobley and claimed that, despite arguments to the contrary, Great War heroes were not made through extravagant gestures of gallantry (of which, on the Western Front, there were few), but rather through a stoic, passive endurance unique to soldiers of that particular war.

[47] Owen, "Apologia," *Penguin*, 197.

The roots of Fussell and Cobley's discontent with *IP* lie in the poem's mythic structure; this much is clear. Although Cobley's critique of Jones's war text highlights the mythic method as its biggest problem, her commentary reaches beyond the poem's allusiveness and touches on formal and historical concerns such as Jones's "lexically ostentatious" employment of language and *IP*'s existence within the continuum of literary modernism, among others. Fussell's "honorable miscarriage" critique of the poem, however, suggests that without the inclusion of the mythic method—in other words, the elimination of the poem's allusive referents—*IP* could and would be universally considered a bona fide masterpiece. Unfortunately, Fussell doesn't seem to realize the effect his proposed mythopoetic erasure would have on Jones's visionary communication of experience: it would, for all intents and purposes, cut the heart out of the poem. It would also omit a portion of Jones's experience critical in the retelling, for as I hope I have established in this thesis, the poem's mythic method operates, in part, in the narrative present; and Jones notes in his Preface that many of the allusive associations made in the text were made on the battlefield. Fussell's solution to the poem's "problem" would only produce a *real* honorable miscarriage, rendering all the sterility and death of the war but none of the life that endured it. In the end, *In Parenthesis* is a poem about war, but it is moreso a poem about men and the heroism of their endurance. Without Jones's use of the mythic method, although it would still be a war poem, *In Parenthesis* simply would not—could not—be these things, and could not be the masterwork that it is.

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