

THE USE OF ALLUSION IN  
LITERATURE OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR

ALLUSION IN WAR LITERATURE BY  
FREDERIC MANNING, DAVID JONES AND  
EDMUND BLUNDEN

By

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The purpose of allusion in a literary work is essentially the same as that of all other types of metaphor--the development and revelation of character, structure, and theme--and, when skillfully used, it does all of these simultaneously. An allusion achieves its purposes through inviting a comparison and contrast of the context in which it is used with its original context. Allusion is distinguished from other varieties of metaphor or analogy by the greater complexity and potential its context necessarily brings with it; it is a metaphor with an almost inexhaustible number of points of comparison.

Weldon Thornton, Allusions in Ulysses, p. 3.

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to show the diverse ways in which these authors use the allusions which pervade their First World War literature. Frederic Manning, in The Middle Parts of Fortune, uses Shakespearian allusions which are external to the main text; David Jones, in In Parenthesis, uses a variety of allusions which are organic to the text; the allusions of Edmund Blunden, in Undertones of War, are predominantly from eighteenth-century literature and are found in the text and structure of the work. Although each work, in itself, is complex because of the associations evoked by the allusions, the method of presenting the allusions varies in complexity from one to the other. Taken together, the allusions and the method of presenting them broaden the scope of the works, and elevate them to a position where their significance is universal.

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## INTRODUCTION

The First World War inspired a great deal of literature by British writers; although much of it was composed during, and immediately after, the war, the flow of literary works about this war continues to the present day. Common to all the writers of the "war generation" seems to have been a need to record their experiences, not simply in order to add to the historical and literary documentation of the war, but also to make some sense of the experience for themselves. This can be accounted for partly by the fact that the Great War was initially seen as a noble cause, "the war to end all wars", and the subsequent disillusionment was therefore extreme.

Many of the memoirists and fiction writers turned to the literature of earlier eras to help to define and illuminate the significance of the war. But whereas the war-poets had alluded principally to their immediate predecessors, the Georgians and the Romantics, and while references to Shakespeare abound in most of the prose works, irrespective of the date of composition, later war-writers tended to search more widely through literary history to find suitable contexts to elucidate their experiences. The function of literary allusions in the exposition of the war has never been fully explored: critics have tended to



note their frequent occurrence but have not examined closely the allusions' purposes and effects.

The works I have chosen to study may, at first glance, appear to have little in common except that they are concerned with the war. However, there are several other important common denominators which encouraged the use of allusion and which influenced the choice of sources.

All three writers were to some extent alienated from the twentieth century and what they felt to be their "roots". Frederic Manning (1882-1932) was an Australian who spent most of his life in England but was never really claimed by either country. He was a minor poet and wrote, with difficulty, the official biography of Sir William White, a Director of Naval Construction. However, he excelled as a Classical scholar and his translation of Epicurus appeared in 1926. His knowledge of the Classics and the Renaissance pervades his only novel, The Middle Parts of Fortune.

David Jones (1895-1974) born in England of Welsh parents, always regretted the fact that he was not Welsh and could not speak the Welsh language. He is equally well known as an artist and as a poet, and his conversion to Roman Catholicism was an important influence on his literary work, second only to that of the Welsh (particularly the ancient Welsh) culture.

Edmund Blunden (1896-1974) was very much an eighteenth-

century man with a natural affinity to that period; so that as an essayist, biographer and critic, he has been mainly concerned with the Augustans and pre-Romantics. His fictional works are also informed by his knowledge of that period, and in his memoir, Undertones of War, there is a parallel between his own and the eighteenth-century prose writer's techniques.

All three men were profoundly affected by the war. Manning suffered from tuberculosis after, and possibly during, the war and spent his last years in a sanitarium. Blunden, as he has said, was haunted by ghosts of the war throughout his life. Jones had several nervous breakdowns, the causes of which can be attributed to his war experiences. These men were in action for most of the war: they all fought in the Somme offensive and both Jones and Blunden were invalided out in early 1918.

The three works were composed several years after the war had ended. Undertones of War appeared in 1928, although Blunden, like Robert Graves, had attempted to write his memoir earlier. Manning's novel was first published as Her Privates We in 1930 under the pseudonym "Private 19002"; an unexpurgated edition, The Middle Parts of Fortune, finally appeared in 1977. Jones' prose poem, In Parenthesis, was, after ten years of composition, published in 1937.

The patterns which are formed by the authors' sources of allusion are very different. Blunden turns primarily to the eighteenth

century for his allusions; Jones' literary allusions are very wide-ranging and extend as far back as the sixth century; Manning uses the Classical ethos as a general framework and fuses to it the vision of Shakespeare. Moreover, there is a great variety in the manner in which they use their allusions. Manning's allusions are almost entirely external to the main text, while Jones' are both external (in the section titles and epigraphs) and also conspicuously evident within the text itself. Blunden's is perhaps the most complex use of allusions in that he uses them as chapter titles, as quoted references within the text, and also incorporated in the text so thoroughly disguised that few readers would notice them. Jones' work is a self-conscious mosaic of allusions; Blunden, with a similarly large number and variety of allusions, seems to be at pains to distract attention from them so that they will not dominate the reader's perceptions of the exposition of the war; Manning, rather tantalizingly, leaves his epigraphs identified only by the name "Shakespeare".

These very different methods of using allusions prompt questions about each author's purpose and its effect. To what extent does it matter if the reader fails to recognize and identify the allusions? Does it matter greatly if he draws different associations from those intended by the author? In studying the use of allusions in these three works I hope to show their particular significance within the works themselves, and the diverse ways in which allusions can be used successfully.

## CHAPTER I

### FREDERIC MANNING: THE MIDDLE PARTS OF FORTUNE

#### I

Frederic Manning has created in The Middle Parts of Fortune a complex and tightly structured novel with an elaborate network of echoes and anticipations. With similar care he has selected resonant quotations as epigraphs to each chapter. The result is a work of multiple vision which evokes the ethos of Shakespearian drama. It is within this context that Manning places the First World War and explores the psyche of the private soldier who is attempting to retain his personality and sense of being despite the traumas of trench life and the debilitating weariness, restlessness and monotony which typify life behind the lines.

Apart from a fairly obscure Biblical allusion and a line from an Horatian Ode, the novel's allusions are all Shakespearian and, as epigraphs, external to the text. Nevertheless they may cause difficulties for the reader because they are not fully identified. They are not quotations with which the reader is likely to be familiar, at least to the extent where he can identify them immediately; and so the question

arises as to whether or not the lines, out of the plays' context, are to be taken only at face value. If they are, they either sum up, or provide an ironic contrast to, the chapters' contents. However, once the reader has identified their context a rich area of associations is opened up. Read with their original context in mind, they bring to the novel Shakespeare's full intended meaning, and some popular misconceptions about war have to be reviewed.

The epigraphs and themes of the novel are used to explore what Manning often terms the mystery of man. The real battle takes place not in the trenches but within the mind; the war creates a particular set of circumstances which makes the characters aware of their own fragility and isolation but also makes them aware, eventually, of their own strength of personality. Although half the epigraphs are taken from Henry IV and Henry V, Manning does not simply draw on the popular patriotic associations often aroused by these plays.<sup>1</sup> His purpose is more complex. While the individual epigraphs have a specific relevance to their chapters, the plays from which they are taken provide a correlation to the representation of the Great War and the humanist portrayal of man which Manning undertakes.

Like Shakespeare, Manning presents diverse views of war. For example, Hal at Agincourt ponders his double responsibility as both man and king--the "king is but a man", he concludes, but "must bear all" (Henry V, 4, i, 85-290). A parallel can be drawn with

Bourne,<sup>2</sup> in Manning's novel, who frequently compares the responsibility an officer has with the common soldiers' freedom from responsibility.<sup>3</sup> Like Shakespeare, who portrays the two extremes of honour in Falstaff and Hotspur, Manning presents more than one definition of honour. The concept of honour, like the concepts of duty and patriotism, has its valid place in the community these works present; but the authors, while recognizing their necessity in the battlefield, simultaneously indict warfare and show it to be a sordid business. The crucial difference between the two approaches to war is that while Shakespeare follows a linear movement that results in a happy resolution in Henry V, Manning's novel is circular in movement. He uses the motif of the Medieval wheel of fortune to show that while Bourne's conflict ends with his death, man's struggle continues. As Tozer says, the situation and the problems remain the same, only the faces change.<sup>4</sup>

This circular movement is suggested in the novel's title. The soldiers are at a mid-way point in the revolution of the wheel and it is implied that only chance can decide their fate. The original context of the lines from Hamlet,<sup>5</sup> from which the title is taken, does not convey the idea of chance, but a later reference to Horatio, using similar terms to those of Manning, consolidates the idea. Horatio is described as one whom "Fortune... hath seal'd... for herself" (Hamlet 3, ii, 65), and there is a pervasive idea in the novel that the soldiers have been

selected by Fate in whose control they may remain.

The title and the final epigraph are taken from the same dialogue in Hamlet:

Hamlet: Then you live about her waist, or in  
the middle of her favours?

Guildenstern: Faith, her privates we.

Hamlet: In the secret parts of fortune? O  
most true; she is a strumpet.

The final epigraph, "Fortune? O most true; she is a strumpet", has, by the time the reader encounters it, a bitterly ironic force because of the preceding accretion of knowledge about the anguish of the war and the men's attempts to control its effects on them. Manning has edited this epigraph to remove the sexual innuendo in "secret parts" but this is the only occasion on which he distorts a quotation's sense and wider significance.<sup>6</sup>

The return in the epigraphs to their point of departure is paralleled in the general narrative movement, which begins and ends with a delineation of the aftermath of battle and the picture of a returned soldier dead in the trenches. Manning further consolidates this circular movement in the opening scene, which has a general survey of the men returning from a raid and proceeds to focus on Bourne's thoughts. The movement is reversed in the closing scene, which turns from a particular contemplation of the significance of Bourne's death to a general contemplation of the survivors, thus recalling the opening

of the novel.

The reader, as well as the characters, undergoes a change in attitude towards the war experience. This is brought about partly by the allusions, but also by Manning's use, in the structure of the novel, of the Medieval concept of tragedy. This concept, combining with the Renaissance vision of Shakespeare and the Greek concept of tragedy, powerfully informs Manning's exposition of the war. Usually at least one of these concepts enhances the experiences depicted, and their interaction helps to create Manning's 'simultaneous' vision. Before concentrating on the particular effect wrought by the Shakespearian allusions, it is useful to consider the general tragic framework.

## II

The idea of Fate predominates in the novel, but Manning is careful to define the terms in which he uses it. There is always the larger issue of uncontrollable destiny in the form of unforeseeable and unpredictable events, and to this the characters are resigned. But Fate has not caused the war: as Manning says in his Preface, war is made by man, "not by beasts or by gods. It is a peculiarly human activity". In Shakespeare's Henry IV and Henry V, the cause of war can be attributed to divine retribution for the characters' moral failure, but in Manning's case the cause is indistinct. He makes a general comment in his Preface that the First World War is not just a crime,



"it is also the punishment of a crime" (p. viii). The Great War was not, as Manning points out, primarily about democracy or liberty or any of the other noble causes celebrated in the popular press of the time. There was little reason for the European powers to go to war and events escalated as one mistake followed another. As A. J. P.

Taylor has written:

Men are reluctant to believe that great events have small causes. Therefore, once the Great War started, they were convinced that it must be the outcome of profound forces. It is hard to discover these when we examine the details. Nowhere was there conscious determination to provoke war. Statesmen miscalculated. They used the instruments of bluff and threat which had proved effective on previous occasions. This time things went wrong. The deterrent on which they relied failed to deter; the statesmen became prisoners of their own weapons. The great armies, accumulated to provide security and preserve the peace carried the nations to war by their own weight.<sup>7</sup>

The fact that this war was so seemingly pointless adds further irony to an already tragic situation. Manning emphasizes this tragedy by using the concept of Fate, but he does this to show man's ability to transcend it. Fatalism, in the form of characters shown as merely toys at the mercy of a superior force, only operates to a limited degree and is symptomatic of man's struggle with the war machine and all its appurtenances. The principal struggle is a test of personality which is defined in purely individual terms and which includes a process of self-discovery. This is as traumatic as the destructive background

with which it is connected and against which it is set. Manning presents this struggle to attain and maintain completeness of being on the scale of tragedy. Recalling the battle, Bourne considers the dichotomy:

It had seemed impossible to relate that petty, commonplace unheroic figure. . . to the moral and spiritual conflict, almost superhuman in its agony, within him. . . . The true inwardness of tragedy lies in the fact that its failure [the assertion of one's own will against anything opposing it] is only apparent, and as in the case of martyrs also, the moral conscience of man has made its own deliberate choice, and asserted the freedom of its being. (p. 10)

The exercise of freewill is intrinsic to this assertion and it also aids in the characters' efforts to prevent themselves from breaking under stress. Bourne is able to observe with detachment the private soldier's toy-like significance compared to the greater Powers (p. 10). He is also aware of the manipulative powers of the Staff and, although he is not in a position to alter the situation, he can at least exert some control over the degree of effect they have on his own personality. Despite army regulations and the attempt to reduce the men to a common level, the personality, or will, of the men remains unaffected:

It seemed that once they were in the front line, men lost a great deal of their individuality; their characters, even their faces, seemed to become more uniform. . . . Actually, though this pressure of external circumstances seemed to wipe out individuality, leaving little if any distinction between man and man, in himself each man became conscious of his own personality as of something very hard, and sharply defined against a background of other men, who remained merely generalized as 'the others'. (p. 183)

Bourne is not ground down by events but retains his discriminatory faculties and the ability to bend and adapt to circumstances. Above all, he retains the sense of self. He is deeply affected by the war experience but it does not annihilate his psyche. The conflict within him stems from the effort to maintain his personality against the destructive forces of war and the manipulative powers of the Staff. Although the effort is always successful, the process is agonizing. From the art of successful scrounging to the mind's agony in battle, Manning presents the entire gamut of mental gymnastics which must be performed if sanity is to be preserved. Bourne's is the central consciousness through which Manning presents these experiences common to the men at the front. He is at once the classical hero who experiences a form of catharsis, and Everyman.

Significantly, Bourne is first introduced as "uncertain of his direction: he stumbled alone" (p. 1). His isolation is to be remarked upon during the novel, as is the fact that he seems to be out of place in the ranks because he has a superior quality the others lack.<sup>8</sup> His uncertainty of direction here is also notable in the light of the passages towards the end of the novel where his tortured thoughts are linked with the fog, which aids and hinders the second major attack (pp. 213-216). The fog motif is suggestive of that lack of mental clarity which is symptomatic of the mind's partial loss of control.<sup>9</sup> His isolation and temporary loss of direction, coupled with the description of him

as exalted, without panic and infinitely weary, suggest the endlessness and tragic magnitude of his ordeal (p. 1).

An early passage in the novel, which fuses Bourne's recollection of his actions in the first attack and the narrative commentary on the significance of these, places his struggle within a classical framework:

One had lived instantaneously during the timeless interval, for in the shock and violence of the attack, the perilous instant, on which he stood perched so precariously was all that the half-stunned consciousness of man could grasp; if he lost his grip on it, he fell back among the grotesque terrors and nightmare creatures of his own mind. Afterwards, when the strain had been finally released, in the physical exhaustion which followed, there was a collapse, in which one's emotional nature was no longer under control. (p. 3)

The emphasis of man poised on "the perilous instant" illustrates not only the element of chance, but also man's insignificance in the face of the overwhelming forces with which he grapples.<sup>10</sup> The loss of control over one's emotional nature is distinguished from the loss of will which Bourne witnesses in the three Scotsmen (p. 3). They have the irresolution of weary men, and Mr. Clinton, in making their decision for them, absolves them from a responsibility which they are incapable of fulfilling. Resolution and the ability to assume responsibility for oneself are quintessential controlling factors in the assertion of one's own being: the loss of them is equated with the reduction of men to the level of automatons and the complete submergence of

personality to circumstance. Recalling the "obscure and broken" memories of the attack, Bourne demonstrates the difficulty of maintaining this assertion. He relives the paradoxical nature of "the immense effort to move and the momentary relief which came with movement", the "restraint and the haste" which are indicative of the opposing impulses within the mind (pp. 6-7). The division is between the wish to die and so be released from the war, and the stronger will to live which incorporates the former agony. The fury of the battle is "inseparable" from the fury of the divided impulse within him. Bourne, during a battle, is in a vacuum where neither time nor space exist, but everything is "inevitable and unexpected": he is "an act in a whole chain of acts" (p. 8). Thus Manning creates the simultaneous vision of man as a cog in the scheme of things and at the mercy of Fate, while also establishing him as in control of his personal fate through the exercise of his will.

During a battle Bourne's "mind itself seemed to have gone. . . only the instincts of the beast survived" (p. 8), but he has also the tragic grandeur with which Manning endows him. Manning defines the conflict within each man later in the novel--it is the kind of conflict which Lear in his 'madness' undergoes on the heath:

One could not separate the desire from the dread which restrained it [the wish to die]; the strength of one's hope strove to equal the despair which oppressed it; one's determination could only be measured by the terrors and difficulties which it

overcame. All the mean, peddling standards of ordinary life vanished in the collision of these warring opposites. Between them one could only attempt to maintain an equilibrium which every instant disturbed and made unstable. (p. 214)

In Bourne, "at once the most abject and the most exalted of God's creatures", the "extremities of pain and pleasure had met and coincided too" (p. 215). The "warring opposites" have been nullified or transcended and the effect on Bourne is cathartic. His will or spirit has triumphed over the apparent dictates of Fate and in this is the affirmation of man's spirit which Manning depicts. Bourne's death, while poignant, does not create a pessimistic conclusion suggesting that destiny controls man: he, as an Everyman figure, survived the mental traumas of the war without breaking under the ordeal. Others remain to continue the struggle, which is common to all the men. A more specific delineation of the ordeals with which man has to cope is to be found in the inter-relationship of the Shakespearian epigraphs and Manning's presentation of the war.

### III

Each epigraph sums up the theme of the chapter, but often its context is more relevant than the meaning of the lines themselves. Francis Feeble's words (from Henry V) in the opening epigraph have a dual significance:

"By my troth, I care not; a man can die but once;  
 we owe God a death. . . and let it go which way it  
 will, he that dies this year is quit for the next."  
 (p. 1)

His words refer to his own particular dilemma but they assume a greater significance within the play. The idea of owing God a death is explicable in the light of Christian dogma, which states that God gives life and therefore it must be returned. Feeble is also punning on death/debt and this is relevant to both play and novel. His words bring to mind an important theme of the play--the continuing effects of Bolingbroke's usurpation of the throne of Richard II, and the war with France to detract attention from Henry's troubled reign. In Henry IV, the wars are seen as divine retribution for this usurpation and the idea continues, to a lesser extent, in Henry V. This, perhaps, is intended to underline by analogy Manning's view that the Great War is the punishment of a crime.

Feeble's words include the idea that death can be a blessing. (In the novel, the manner of death becomes almost a moral issue for the soldiers, p. 11.) In context, the quotation reveals the resigned patriotism and exceptional courage of Falstaff's recruits. In the novel, the soldiers have just returned from an attack and, despite their resignation to whatever their fate might be, there is also the courage and undefeated spirit on which the tailor comments (p. 6). As Clinton says, "we'll keep moving out of one bloody misery into

another, until we break" (p. 4). The men, in fact, do not "break", even though their courage is tested to a point almost beyond endurance.

One of the many trials the men have to come to terms with is the death of friends. Their stoicism in achieving this is part of their dignity. The description of Pritchard's tears--"like raindrops" (p. 15)--on hearing of his friend's death, is associated with the epigraph from Henry V in which Exeter reports to Henry on the deaths of Suffolk and York at Agincourt:

"But I had not so much of man in me.  
And all my mother came into mine eyes  
And gave me up to tears." (p. 12)

In Pritchard's case, the tears are shed unconsciously and his steadiness compels admiration.<sup>11</sup> The sympathy evoked for him is paralleled in Exeter's words and, in each response, there is portrayed a dignified pity and grief.

Both Shakespeare and Manning, however, divert attention from the grief: Shakespeare does this by having Henry raise a new alarm, and, in the novel, Tozer converts Pritchard's emotional distraction into anger at his wife--a safer, less self-destructive channel through which to vent his pent-up emotion. This apparent callousness is necessary because to dwell on the grief would be detrimental to the soldiers. However, the difficulty in maintaining this show of indifference is evident. They talk of their "common experience"--the death of friends during the battle--and master it (p. 19), but the grief returns during



the roll-call where:

for a moment the general sense of loss would become focused on one individual name. . . and after that he, too, faded into the past. . . . There was nothing perfunctory in that summary regret; it was keen and deep, but one could not pause on it. (pp. 21, 22)

The men are not brutal, as may first have been assumed: they are trying to preserve their mental and emotional equilibrium. Brutishness in the novel is only to be found in the yarn of the two drunken, fighting Lancashire lads. This chapter is headed by a quotation from Othello--significant because in that play drink makes beasts of men:

"Is your Englishman so expert in his drinking?"  
 "Why, he drinks you with facility your Dane dead drunk; he sweats not to overthrow your Almain; he gives your Hollander a vomit ere the next pottle can be filled." (p. 19)

The geniality of the scene from which these lines are taken, is misleading, but, in the novel, there is a genuine warmth in the passage to which they apply. There, the yarn is prefaced by an elaborate discussion of honour in which self-interest is never absent for long (pp. 24-25). But Manning distinguishes between self-interest and selfishness. This is not Falstaff's "catechism" of honour (Henry IV, 5, i, 126-143): it is a practical, if partial, individual code which takes heed of the needs of others. This discussion of honour and the story of the drunken brawl coalesce in the regimental's narration of the tale in which Bourne, through cunning rather than force, established a moral superiority over his two Lancashire prisoners. He questions his right to this superiority

but does not pursue the moral intricacies of it and leaves it, rather inconclusively, with the thought that "every man had a minimum of self-will, and when an external discipline encroached on it, there was no saying what might happen as a result." (p. 36)

The context of the Othello quotation is used here ironically to stress the fact that these men are not brutes and are only to a certain extent victims of a manipulative force. Cassio is easily manipulated by Iago because the alcohol has an over-powering effect on him. Bourne, as drunk as the others while in charge of the prisoners (pp. 32-34), does not lose his sense of responsibility or his integrity. The escort had tried to make a fool of him and failed, but Bourne does not leave them in their drunken predicament as others might have (pp. 33-34).

The evening's drinking, which provided the opportunity for the relation of the yarn, is succeeded by a move from the trenches to behind the lines. This move creates a corresponding change in the psychological state of the men. Their physical energy is spent but the adrenalin created by the excitement of battle still flows and results in their sensation of anti-climax:

They had behind them no longer the moral impetus which thrust them into action, which carried them forward on a wave of emotional excitement, transfiguring all the circumstances of their life so that these could only be expressed in the terms of heroic tragedy, of some superhuman or even divine conflict with the powers of evil; all that tempest of

excitement was spent, and they were now mere derelicts in a wrecked and dilapidated world, with sore and angry nerves sharpening their tempers, or shutting them up in a morose and sullen humour from which it was difficult to move them. (p. 39)

Compare Vernon's words, "And now their pride and mettle is asleep". (p. 37)

These words (from Henry IV, Part 1), which form the epigraph to Chapter IV, are directed to Hotspur prior to the Battle of Shrewsbury, which Hotspur's exhausted and outnumbered army is to lose. Manning uses Vernon's description of exhaustion to highlight its understatement of the actual condition of the soldiers. His own account of their state is more vividly detailed and accurate than Vernon's.

This discrepancy between what words convey and the true nature of a situation is an underlying theme of the novel. It is similar to Manning's opinion that:

each man is a mystery to himself [and] an open book to others; the reason being, perhaps, that he sees in himself the perplexities and torment of the mental processes out of which action issues, and they see in him only the simple and indivisible act itself. (p. 39)

The discrepancy arises when thoughts or experiences are put into words which cannot convey the essence of the referent.<sup>12</sup> Military life has become a world in itself: civilian life seems now to be totally disconnected from the lives of the men, and standards and attitudes have to be redefined in accordance with this new world. The division between reality and the words used to define it has to be bridged. Vernon's words are a summation of exhaustion; Manning explores the nature

of exhaustion.

Most of the novel's action takes place behind the lines but even there the men are not safe from death. The incidents in which two men are killed outside the orderly room (pp. 54-55), and members of the Scots battalion are killed (pp. 181-182), result from the Command's insistence "which regulated, so strictly, every detail of [the soldiers'] daily lives" (p. 181). The epigraph to the chapter in which the first incident occurs is from King Lear and it sums up the sense of injustice the men feel when the Command can manipulate their actions and cause the wanton death portrayed:

I begin to find an idle and fond bondage in the oppression of aged tyranny, who sways not as it hath power but as it is suffered. (p. 47)

The orderly room incident is not used simply to demonstrate the Staff's inefficiency: Manning also uses it to illustrate the mind's reaction when it is reminded of the proximity of death. After the initial shock, Bourne, who had witnessed the accident, resumes his typing practice but only catches fragments of the neighbouring signallers' conversation. These correspond to his own fragmented thoughts, which seem by dint of pure will to avoid a confrontation with the knowledge of the fragility of life. The "odd bits of verse, Latin tags" which occur to him while he is typing are singularly appropriate (p. 56). Manning provides a translation of "pavimento mero"--"And richer spilth the pavement stain" (p. 56). This is not unusual in the

circumstances of the soldiers' death, but what is interesting is the inclusion of "Aequam memento rebus in arduis Servare mentem" (p. 56). Even in what is presumably a mild state of shock, Bourne is thinking along the lines of "one must not break". The quotation translates as "Remember when life's path is steep to keep your path even" (Horace, Ode 3, verse 1). Clinging to the hope and belief present in the Horatian Ode, Bourne's mind retreats from the encroaching thought of death.

It is significant that a form of escape, other than the mind's retreat, is also outlined in this chapter: "In the shuddering revulsion from death one turns instinctively to love as an act which seems to affirm the completeness of being." (p. 50). Bourne, in the estaminet (pp. 63-64), abjures the crude, violent sexuality aroused by the waitress and remains in poignant, self-imposed isolation. He does, however, turn to Thérèse later in the novel in the hope of finding a more satisfactory kind of love. Chapters IX and X, dealing with this topic, are well juxtaposed, as the epigraphs illustrate:

But thy speaking of my tongue, and I thine, most  
truly-falsely, must needs be granted to be much  
at one. (p. 97)

This is from the courtship scene of Henry and Katherine, in Henry V, which prepares their union, consolidating the hard-won peace of the play. Despite the language barrier, it is possible for them to establish a loving relationship--but this is not the case with Bourne and Thérèse. The language difficulty arises with them too, but it is the differences

between the civilian and military outlooks which prohibit the formation of a relationship (pp. 108-109).

Despite the fact that Thérèse is using Bourne to translate letters from her English lover, she does not make an "instrument" of him in the way that Rosalind's words, referring to Silvius, suggest in the epigraph to the following chapter:

Do you pity him? no, he deserves no pity. Wilt thou love such a woman? What, to make thee an instrument and play false strains upon thee? Not to be endured! Well, go your way to her, for I see love hath made thee a tame snake, and say this to her: that if she love me, I charge her to love thee; if she will not, I will never love her unless thou entreat for her. If you be a true lover, hence, and not a word; for here comes more company. (p. 112)

As You Like It

Bourne, realizing that a relationship with Thérèse cannot be formed, is philosophical. He is not blinded by love, "a tame snake" like Silvius, and neither is he guilty of that Petrarchan romantic delusion which Shakespeare lampoons in this play. He has a carpe diem attitude and does not seek sympathy, because he values his time with Thérèse for what it is:

In all action a man seeks to realize himself, and the act once complete, it is no longer a part of him, it escapes from his control and has an independent objective existence. It is the fruit of his marriage to a moment, but it is not the divine moment itself, nor even the meaning which the moment held for him, for that too has flown feather-footed down the wind. (p. 120)

Bourne, in many ways a Hal figure, cannot emulate Hal's

success in love. This is not due to any deficiency on the part of himself or Thérèse--there is "a surprise of recognition" when he kisses her (p. 118)--the failure may be due to the differences between the nature of the twentieth-century war in France and Hal's war against France. The stability which is lacking in the men's way of life may be held for them in "yesterday or tomorrow", but in the meantime, as Manning has said,<sup>13</sup> the civilian and military outlooks of the Great War are incompatible.

A study of the particular ethics of the war is made by Manning when he uses Fluellen's idea of the ceremonies of war. In three successive chapters, whose themes fall under this general heading, Manning contrasts older and modern aspects of war. He uses the epigraph to Chapter VI ironically:

So! in the name of Chesu Christ speak lower. It is the greatest admiration in the universal world when the true and aunchent prerogatifs and laws of the wars is not kept. . . there is no tiddle-taddle nor pibble-pabble in Pompey's camp. I warrant you, you shall find the ceremonies of the wars, and the cares of it, and the forms of it, and the sobriety of it, and the modesty of it, to be otherwise. (p. 65)

Manning shows that the "otherwise" is the dull monotony of a sordid business, not the glorification which Fluellen imputes. He highlights the fallacious beliefs on which the army is founded (pp. 68-69), but the "infallible" war machine is operated by fallible human beings, and this has disastrous results. The position of the army is aphoristically

summed up:

One of the penalties of infallibility is that it cannot remedy its mistakes, because it cannot admit having made them. (pp. 71-72)

This sardonic remark applies both to the working-party farce which Captain Mallet argues about (p. 72), and the shelled parade (pp. 54-55). The Commander's lack of courage in standing up for his men (p. 72) has had tragic results but the repercussions do not stop there. Mr. Clinton, because of the adjutant's ill-will over this affair, is sent on a raid in which he is fatally wounded. This picture of the petty-fogging administration, the political manoeuvrings to save face, the venting of irritation on the ranks by the Staff for events which arise from their own stupidity, their lack of imagination, old officers using obsolete methods in a new type of warfare--these have become the administrative ceremonies of the wars.

Ambition and the instinct for self-preservation are also important factors in Manning's discussion of the war. Chapter VII, important for its presentation of the men's motivations for joining the war, is prefaced by these words from Falstaff in Henry IV, Part 2:

'Tis no matter if I do halt; I have the wars for my colour, and my pension shall seem the more reasonable. (p. 74)

Falstaff's cowardice is not an easy matter upon which to pronounce judgement. His philosophy is practical, he himself is generally loved by anyone who has read Shakespeare. In this perhaps lies the essence



of the irresolvable paradox Manning presents. Falstaff is a coward but his wisdom has that ring of truth for which he is seldom given credit in the plays. He is anarchic because one is forced to review, perhaps uncomfortably, the accepted values he disrupts.

The deserter, Miller, fulfils a similar Falstaffian anarchic role in as much as his presence, or absence, forces the men to consider subjects they would rather ignore. Miller appears at regular intervals and when last heard of he has again deserted. When he is first mentioned, he provokes a mixed response. On the one hand, the other men are glad that he has escaped but, on the other, they consider him a nuisance. Furthermore, they have a greater resentment of the fact that he deserts his mates than that he deserts his duty, but they would not like to be active in his execution (pp. 81-82). The second time he deserts and is brought back he is used to highlight the farcical element in martial law. Bourne realizes that after the war there will be a general amnesty and that Miller's prison sentence will be forgotten. Meanwhile, Miller is paraded in front of the companies as an example to them and his "tragedy, but for the act of unspeakable humiliation which they had just witnessed, became a farce" (p. 168). His third escape makes him a hero and the soldiers hope that he is successful this time, which he is.

The determination of Miller to escape must have its roots in something other than cowardice. Bourne ponders the question in

relation to Weeper Smart, "for no one could have had a greater horror and dread of war than Weeper had. It was a continuous misery to him, and yet he endured it." (p. 193). Bourne locates Weeper's strength in his imagination rather than in his will-power: Miller he dismisses as "not far from madness" (p. 194), but Manning does not leave it at that. He is counter-balancing Weeper Smart, Miller and Falstaff in relation to the questions of honour and cowardice. They each represent different sides of the issue but, as in the other men's discussions of honour (pp. 150-156), the partiality of the individual codes remains and Manning does not favour one or the other, all are valid.<sup>14</sup>

Chapter VIII forms the third of this group in which Fluellen's assumptions about warfare are re-examined. The epigraph has a surface irony in relation to Bourne's lack of ambition:

... ambition,  
The soldier's virtue, rather makes choice of loss  
Than gain which darkens him. (p. 86)  
Antony and Cleopatra

It is generally agreed that Bourne should be an officer and that his lack of ambition is a liability to him, but there is a difficulty in one from the ranks showing himself to be a leader. In the play, one loses favour if one becomes one's captain's captain. Bourne's excuse for refusing the commission is that he has taken on the "colour" of the ranks and therefore could not learn to do the things an officer must. He also prefers the anonymity of the ranks, where he knows what is expected

of him. Moreover, he is aware that if he accepts, he will lose the valuable friendship of Shem and Martlow. Despite the fact that his chances of survival would be increased if he goes to officer-training school, he decides to remain where he is. No matter what he chooses he will lose in some way and so, for the moment, he makes his "choice of loss" and remains with his friends.

A great fuss has been made by the Command about Bourne's "shirking his responsibility" in not accepting the commission, and the repetition of this phrase assumes the ironic quality of Antony's "honourable man" in Julius Cæsar. Repetition devalues the word "responsibility" and one is forced to reconsider its meaning. Bourne, like Hal in Henry V, is troubled by the unwanted responsibility which is foisted upon him. In a company with a shortage of good officers, it is understandable that Bourne, a natural leader as many episodes prove,<sup>15</sup> should be chosen for officer-training. He is aware of this, but the bond of comradeship is strong. Like Hal in Henry IV and with a similar small band of cronies--Shem, Martlow and, increasingly, Weeper Smart--Bourne is loath to leave his relatively carefree existence to assume the burden of responsibility for others.

The second movement of the novel begins as the company prepares for the second major attack. Manning's interplay of Classical and Shakespearian drama increases as he dramatizes the themes which were only stated in Bourne's recollection of the first attack. The

quotation from King Lear, when Lear is an outcast on the heath and at his most pitiful, is a portentous indication of what the men, marching to the front-line, are to undergo:

Where is this straw, my fellow?  
The art of our necessities is strange,  
That can make vile things precious. (p. 125)

The suffering which is suggested here is re-echoed in the overwhelming misery of the men as they pass the stone calvary:

[They] who had known all the sins of the world  
lifted to the agony of the figure on the cross,  
eyes that had probed and understood the mystery  
of suffering. (p. 129)

This view of the men as martyrs, or sacrifices, may be a little over-emphatic and Manning does not dwell on it. Rather, he emphasizes the idea that they have known suffering at its most profound, as Lear has. He also presents the body of marching men as one unit: they have become Everyman. This is in keeping with the "common impulse" of the men which is leading them in a relentless forward movement to death (p. 139). After meeting the curé, who stands in a pose "at once beautiful and ominous", Bourne feels that he has "relinquished everything... he had ceased... to have any self-consciousness at all [and soon his mind would] mirror only the emptiness of the night" (p. 139). This is the stripping away of all the trappings of the self which Lear undergoes, but for Bourne it is only the beginning of the ordeal: he is to be stripped of everything he ever was in a kind of baptism of fire

which is the catharsis of the tragic hero.

The factors which comprise Bourne's "fate" are suggested in Chapter XII, where the ineptly planned raid, which precedes the battle in which Bourne is to die, is appropriately introduced by an important thought on war from Henry IV, Part 2:

Yes, in this present quality of war  
 Indeed the instant action, a cause on foot  
 Lives so in hope, as in an early spring  
 We see the appearing buds, which to prove fruit  
 Hope gives not so much warrant, as despair  
 That frosts will bite them. (p. 142)

The tenuous hope present in these lines is indicative of the thin dividing line between success and failure. More relevant to this chapter, perhaps, are the succeeding lines from Bardolph's speech (1, iii, 41-62), which are an adaptation of the parable of the Builder, Luke xiv, 28-30. The Staff in their orders for trench practices in ideal conditions are guilty of that action Bardolph describes: "We fortify in paper and in figures / Using the names of men instead of men" (lines 56-57). The practices are worthless, as the men know--they need plans based on accurate information (pp. 164-165). The incident with the lady farmer further illustrates the Staff's inefficiency. Manning describes the Staff in mock-heroic terms and has the lady, whose fields have been taped out as trenches, successfully rout them. However, placated with promises of recompense, she allows the practice to continue and it becomes the Staff's "victory for method" (p. 167). In brief, the

plans have to be the right kind of plans, whether they are for the building of a house, a kingdom, or, in this case, a battle.

In the orders for the attack, the Staff foolishly underestimate both their own men and the enemy, and the badly planned attack, founded on false assumptions--Bardolph's "paper" plans--will almost inevitably result in failure and wanton death. This is compounded by the delay which erodes what little value these practices have had, and the interminable waiting is summed up in the epigraph from Julius

Caesar:<sup>16</sup>

Between the acting of a fearful thing  
And the first motion, all the interim is  
Like a phantasma or a hideous dream. (p. 180)

The speech from which this is taken is relevant to Manning's purpose here for more than conveying the terror of waiting. Brutus' speech continues:

The genius and the mortal instruments  
Are then in council, and the state of man,  
Like to a little kingdom, suffers then  
The nature of an insurrection.

Brutus is contemplating the murder of Caesar, and Manning's characters their probable imminent death, but the inner conflict in both cases is the same. The immortal spirit (genius) and the mortal body (mortal instruments) are in opposition and the result is the undermining of the "state of man". Manning, in incorporating this Medieval theme of the human body as a microcosm, connects man, fate, will and the war in

the all-encompassing "mystery of man":

It is not much use telling them [the soldiers] that war was the only ultimate problem of all human life stated barely, and pressing for an immediate solution. When each individual conscience cried out for its freedom that implacable thing said: "Peace, peace; your freedom is only in me!" Men recognized the truth intuitively, even with their reason checking at a fault. There was no man of them unaware of the mystery which encompassed him, for he was a part of it; he could neither separate himself entirely from it, nor identify himself with it completely. A man might rave against war; but war, from among its myriad faces, could always turn toward him one, which was his own. (p. 182)

The problem of this inter-relationship cannot be resolved: all that is possible is the recognition of it and the accompanying self-recognition:

The mystery of his own being increased for him enormously; and he had to explore that darkness alone. . . grasping one support after another and relinquishing it when it yielded. . . as it slid into the insubstantial past, calling forth another effort, to gain another precious respite. If a man could not be certain of himself, he could be certain of nothing. The problem which confronted them all equally. . . did not concern death so much as the affirmation of their own will in the face of death; and once the nature of the problem was clearly stated, they realized that its solution was continuous, and could never be final. Death set a limit to one factor in the problem, and peace to that of another; but neither of them really affected the nature of the problem itself. (p. 184)

The orders finally come to prepare for the move into the line, and there is a ritual leave-taking where Shem, Martlow and Bourne realize that they cannot "keep together. . . [because] each must go alone and. . . each of them already was alone with himself" (p. 209). The ominous foreboding engendered by these thoughts and the sinister

stillness, where "earth, and life, and time, were as if they had never been" (p. 210), is connotative of that foreboding at Agincourt in Henry V which re-echoes in the following epigraph:

We see yonder the beginning of day, but I  
 think we shall never see the end of it. . .  
 I am afeard there are few die well that  
 die in a battle. (p. 211)

The subsequent attack is disastrous. Bourne succeeds in maintaining the equilibrium of "warring opposites" (pp. 214-215), and he transcends his fears. However, Shem has been wounded and "Bourne moved closer to Martlow" as if physical proximity can protect the spiritual bond of friendship (p. 215). Martlow's death almost undoes Bourne, and the previously gentle man, in his cries of impotent rage and anguish, gives vent to all the filth he has seen and heard<sup>17</sup> (p. 217).

Bereft of his friends, Bourne attempts to regain his emotional equilibrium after the attack. On fire-duty, his senses probe the territory of No Man's Land attempting to establish control over it: the territory "had become as it were his whole mind" (p. 226) and he is vigilant in his protection of it. He is haunted by the presence of Martlow (p. 232), and this, as well as the earlier dream sequence where he felt that dead hands were groping out of the mud to claim him (p. 224), are significant in the light of the epigraph to this chapter (p. 222). The lines from Hamlet are from the scene where Hamlet anticipates the appearance of his father's ghost. In the play, the ghost's demands



on Hamlet are paralleled in the apparent dictates from the grave which Bourne feels are present in his dream--that is, that he should join his friends in death. A closer parallel is to be found when Bourne receives his commission and a reply to his letter of condolence to Mrs. Martlow. Martlow had expressed his disapproval of the commission on previous occasions, and now, when Bourne has accepted, this memory returns as if in reproach<sup>18</sup> (p. 238).

Despite Tozer's protestations, Bourne volunteers for a raid because "it was part of his road, to whatever place it might lead" (p. 243). His "perversity" in going, unnecessarily, on the raid seems to make his death inevitable, and when he is wounded, Weeper's efforts to carry him back to the trenches are acutely poignant. Weeper had promised to look after Bourne, and his fatherly words (p. 242) form one part of the complex relationship between the two men at this point of the novel. Weeper, in many ways, has been the Fool in the novel (note the description of him on p. 145), but at the end, Bourne becomes the Fool (pp. 241, 243), while, for a moment, Weeper is the tragic hero. Both Weeper and Bourne have played the part of the wise Fool who sees the truth, and it is left to Weeper to add the final touch of pathos. The poignancy of his words to Sergeant Morgan (p. 247), and the poignancy of the picture of the dead Bourne, are carried over into the larger picture of the survivors trying to solve their own "mystery", and it is this which prohibits a pessimistic view of the novel. The war

continues and essentially nothing has changed, but hope still remains in the undefeated spirit of the men. They are ordinary but they have the capacity for the heroic, and Manning, in fusing his vision with that of Shakespeare and with the Classical ethos, has portrayed the continuous struggle of man with himself and has used these visions to inform the First World War to the extent where one is better able to understand the dictum that "one is bound to try, one is not bound to succeed" (p. 237).

## FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER I

1. For example, Hal's speech "Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more", from Henry V, has often been used to evoke patriotic fervour.
2. The etymological root of the word "bourne" may be of significance in Manning's choice of the name. It means "limit" and "goal", which signify important motifs in the novel. Furthermore, the meaning "death", taken together with the pun on "born", seems to imply that Bourne is an Everyman figure.
3. Frederic Manning, The Middle Parts of Fortune (Mayflower: 1977), p. 155. All future references will be to this edition and quotations will be identified in the text by page numbers within brackets.
4. See p. 239.
5. All the sources of the epigraphs are listed in the Appendix at the end of Chapter I.
6. The title of the expurgated edition, Her Privates We (1930), carries the sexual pun which is omitted in Manning's editing of the scene from which its original title also originates. Manning edits the title so as to emphasize fortune rather than to exploit the correlation between sex and war as other writers have. He makes the point that in the trenches:
 

Man's efforts were directed to the... business of keeping himself alive, the pursuit of women ... may seem to rank only as the rather trivial diversion of a man's leisure moments; and in the actual agony of battle, these lesser cupidities have no place at all, and women cease to exist so completely that they are not even irrelevant. (p. 50)
7. A. J. P. Taylor, The First World War, p. 16.
8. This conforms to Aristotle's description of the tragic hero.

9. A similar motif to that of Ken Kesey in One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest where it is also used to indicate the mind's loss of control.
10. One thinks of a tragic hero like Oedipus.
11. Martlow also sheds tears unconsciously when going over the top (pp. 38-39). In his case the pathos and admiration stem from the fact that he is very young in years but old in so many other ways. In his tears there is "more of a primitive fury than would fill the souls of grown men."
12. See Bourne's thoughts on the love letters he translates for Thérèse, p. 117.
13. See pp. 108-109.
14. In relation to the question of honour, Manning says:
 

War, which had tested and had wrecked already so many conventions, tested not so much the general truth of a proposition, as its truth in relation to each and every individual case. (p. 25)
15. For example, in the episode in the cellar where Bourne takes control, pp. 170-179.
16. These words are also connotative of Macbeth where the interval between decision and action is crucial.
17. Bourne is distinguished in many ways and, in this instance, it is in his language. In a novel which gives credence to the phrase "swearing like a trooper", Bourne has refrained from using the colourful phrases which characterize the speech of others. It is all the more startling and effective, therefore, that he should use them now.
18. Similarly on p. 177, Bourne's commission is mentioned and he recalls Bates' words of reproach. Bates, too, has just died and the coincidence of the commission and Bourne's sense of his presence is similar to that in the experience with Martlow.

## APPENDIX TO CHAPTER I

For ease of reference I have listed the sources of the epigraphs below.

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| Title     | <u>Hamlet</u> 2 / ii / 231-234          |
| Ch. I     | <u>Henry IV Part 2</u> 3 / ii / 229-233 |
| Ch. II    | <u>Henry V</u> 4 / vi / 32              |
| Ch. III   | <u>Othello</u> 2 / iii / 72             |
| Ch. IV    | <u>Henry IV Part 1</u> 4 / iii / 23     |
| Ch. V     | <u>King Lear</u> 1 / ii / 48-50         |
| Ch. VI    | <u>Henry V</u> 4 / i / 65-75            |
| Ch. VII   | <u>Henry IV Part 2</u> 1 / ii / 276     |
| Ch. VIII  | <u>Antony and Cleopatra</u> 3 / i / 22  |
| Ch. IX    | <u>Henry V</u> 5 / ii / 192-194         |
| Ch. X     | <u>As You Like It</u> 4 / iii / 65-73   |
| Ch. XI    | <u>King Lear</u> 3 / ii / 69-71         |
| Ch. XII   | <u>Henry IV Part 2</u> 1 / iii / 36-41  |
| Ch. XIII  | <u>Antony and Cleopatra</u> 3 / xi / 39 |
| Ch. XIV   | <u>Julius Caesar</u> 2 / i / 63-65      |
| Ch. XV    | <u>Henry V</u> 4 / i / 113-117          |
| Ch. XVI   | <u>Henry V</u> 4 / i / 89-90, 141       |
| Ch. XVII  | <u>Hamlet</u> 1 / ii / 197-199          |
| Ch. XVIII | <u>Hamlet</u> 2 / ii / 235              |

## CHAPTER II

### DAVID JONES: IN PARENTHESIS

#### I

David Jones in In Parenthesis uses allusions in two different ways. Like Manning, he provides epigraphs for the work's sections, but he also incorporates a wide range of allusions in the text itself. Jones' emphasis on an all-encompassing heritage, in which all humanity is implicated, is one reason for the range and complexity in his use of allusions. The passages quoted beneath each section-title as epigraphs are from Y Gododdin--a poem which, for Jones, symbolizes the Welsh, Scottish and English unity--"the Island as a corporate inheritance".<sup>1</sup> The wish to impose unity and to establish a common literary heritage also prompts his use of the myth of Arthur, which is part of the British cultural memory. The idea of a heritage provides an objective, accepted tradition against which the disruptions of war can be placed in a broader perspective. His use of religious allusions is similar in effect to his use of literature. It not only provides theological parallels, contrasts and consolation, but also introduces a wider frame of reference in which ritual plays its part. This provides

another common tradition and, moreover, the allusions often ennoble man. Ultimately Jones, from the destruction and chaos of war, affirms and celebrates man's potential for regeneration.

Although Jones places the Great War in an historical continuum with other wars, he does not do this to diffuse the impact of the experience, but rather to intensify it by drawing on associations and giving them a new significance. While the narrative outline is straightforward and the characters are presented simply, the complex reverberations instigated by the allusions, the sharply juxtaposed styles and ideas, remove the work from a conventional emotive or satiric exposition of war and place it in a wider context where the diversity of life is portrayed. Manning, in choosing the novel as his literary vehicle, was necessarily limited by the aesthetic demands of the genre--characterization and narrative line require a consistency and progression which would prohibit a free-ranging use of allusion of the kind which Jones employs. Jones provides a concentrated word-picture of the feel of war, with the artist's eye amassing closely-observed detail, and this further concentrates the effects of the associations already evoked.

Jones' density of allusions to early Welsh literature with which few people are familiar has been seen by his detractors<sup>2</sup> as perverse, but there is a clear purpose in it. In his collection of essays The Dying Gaul,<sup>3</sup> Jones discusses the difficulties of using an unfamiliar tradition. "On the Difficulties of One Writer of Welsh Affinity Whose Language is

English" defines the problem:

[People who] are the heirs of an anterior tradition, a tradition very much of this island, but the deposits of which are in a language which is no longer their language, and the traditions of which have not been assimilated into the English tradition. . . are made aware of a hiatus between the soil of the language they use and their own roots.

. . . It is the materia that presents the main difficulty. But it is precisely from the deep materia, with the asides and allusions and implications deriving from a virtually lost tradition, that the poet may wish to draw. (pp. 30-32)

The problem for Jones is irresolvable and leads to his extensive annotations to the text, which are intended to acquaint the reader with his "materia". Y Gododdin and the tales of The Mabinogion are part of that virtually lost tradition, but several of their themes are repeated in the Arthurian legends as Malory presents them in Morte D'Arthur. The Grail quest, the "otherworld", heroic deeds, loyalty and bravery are common to all. While parallels can be drawn between Morte D'Arthur and In Parenthesis, The Mabinogion and Y Gododdin serve in a general way to highlight the regeneration theme in Jones' work.

Y Gododdin is a poem which immortalizes the deeds of the defeated "300" at the sixth-century battle of Catraeth, emphasizing their ferociousness in battle and their gentility in Court. Translators may disagree on the number who returned from Catraeth<sup>4</sup> but it is agreed that the poet, Aneirin, returns, as if by divine intention, to tell of the battle and to immortalize the dead in poetry:



Of those that hastened forth. . . none  
 escaped but three. . . and I, with my  
 blood streaming down, for the sake of  
 my brilliant poetry.<sup>5</sup>

Jones draws on this to define his own role as poet and he calls on the spirit of Gododdin in the epigraph to the final section:

Gododdin, I demand thy support.  
 It is our duty to sing: a meeting  
 place has been found. (p. 151)

The return of Aneirin is also paralleled in John Ball's return from the Somme battle.<sup>6</sup>

The Mabinogion tales' emphasis on a seasonal return, or cycle, ultimately fulfils the same function, but changes the specific context from a martial one to one of cultural regeneration. Jones draws on two stories mainly, "Branwen the Daughter of Llyr" and "Kilhwch and Olwen or the Twrch Trwyth". Each story mentions a life-giving cauldron--the essence of the Grail legend before it assumed specifically Christian associations. The cyclical pattern in all the stories is emphasized,<sup>7</sup> and it is the life-cycle, and the regeneration implied in it, which Jones incorporates in his work and which forms its essential optimism. This knowledge that history and culture run in cycles prohibits a pessimistic view of the significance of one particular war, without detracting from the personal effects on man of that war.

Jones' literary allusions derive mainly from Malory but he also includes Chaucer, Dunbar, Shakespeare, Milton, Coleridge, Tennyson,

Hopkins and Eliot, along with references to several books of the Bible. It is not possible here to trace the significance of all Jones' allusions -- the subject is too large; and for that reason I have concentrated on Jones' use of the Arthurian legends, the mythology of the Welsh literature and the religious parallels which Jones creates. These offer the most consistent and systematic parallels to his exposition of the Great War, and are especially relevant to the predominating theme of regeneration. In order to illustrate the range of complexity of the allusions, however, it is useful to consider first the sections' titles and their relation to the work as a whole.

## II

The title of the first section, "The many men so beautiful", is from Coleridge's Ancient Mariner and it suggests the innocence of the soldiers as they prepare for their first tour of duty. The line suggests hopefulness but, as Blamires points out, the unquoted following line of the poem, "And they all dead did lie", indicates the bleak contrast which is to follow this initial optimism.<sup>8</sup> The Ancient Mariner is an important focus for Jones because of its theme of sacrifice and atonement. Moreover, an intensely compassionate humanity colours the poem, and Jones reflects this in his own work. The poem supports the overall cyclical pattern, for John Ball, like the mariner, returns to tell his tale and Jones implies that recognition of the veracity of Ball's

experience is vital to the reader's comprehension of it. In the closing lines of the work, Jones says:

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. (p. 187)

John Ball's "tale" is not simply of the war, because Jones has removed it from a purely martial context, and in Ball's experience the joys and sufferings, failures, successes and hopes of mankind are exemplified. This is a major component of the "Branwen" story, where the seven warriors of the battle between Ireland and Britain open a forbidden door and rediscover all the miseries they have known. The crucial passage from the story forms the epigraph to In Parenthesis:<sup>9</sup>

So he opened the door. . . and when they had looked, they were conscious of all the evils they had ever sustained, and of all the friends and companions they had lost and of all the misery that had befallen them.

The door in the story is the door of a castle which looks out onto Cornwall, but Jones' placing of these lines at the beginning of his work suggests, perhaps, that the act of opening the book will make the reader conscious of all the miseries of the war. (That same implication is present in the closing lines quoted above.)

The practical elements of the second section are introduced by the stage direction "Chambers go off, Corporals stay", from Henry V, which immediately follows Hal's opening speech of Act 3, sc. i. It

marks the subsidence of the tone of patriotic fervour established in the first section and its replacement by the mundane atmosphere wrought by camp duties. This peace is shattered by Ball's first experience of an exploding shell, which is apocalyptic in magnitude:

Out of the vortex, rifling the air it came--  
bright, brass-shod, Pandoran; with all-filling  
screaming the howling crescendo's up-piling  
snapt. The universal world, breath held, one  
half second, a bludgeoned stillness. Then the  
pent violence released a consummation of all  
burstings out; all sudden up-rendings and  
rivings-through--all taking-out of vents  
--all barrier-breaking--all unmaking.  
Pernitric begetting--dissolving and  
splitting of solid things. (p. 24)

This creates in him a new awareness of what is to become the reality of war and it also develops the initiation theme suggested in Part 1. Interestingly, Jones' use of "Pandoran" suggests the door in the "Branwen" story through which evils and misery enter, and the shell marks the beginning of Ball's knowledge of misery.<sup>10</sup> His new state is reflected in the change of language: the increasingly broken syntax, the use of a more elliptical style and the more frequent use of poetry in Part 3, entitled "Starlight Order". This phrase is from Hopkins' poem "The Buglar's First Communion", and there is irony in the fact that there is little order in the night-march, only chaos compounded by darkness. It is also significant that Hopkins' poem is a prayer for protection, and here, there is a plea by the men for the spiritual protection of the moon (p. 35). The order which had been

carefully established on the opening page--the parade and the chain of command--is being eroded but, nevertheless, Ball is guided by a light and keeps in touch with his companions. The image of light is always present, even in the midst of an apparently hopeless situation, and this indicates a fundamental aspect of Jones' philosophy. It suggests hope; and this, coupled with the plethora of explicit religious references in this section, associates them with those earlier religious references where the Easter rites and the initiation theme are linked (pp. 8-9).

As with the use of The Ancient Mariner, "King Pellam's Launde", of Part 4, connotes the idea of sacrifice and hope, as well as introducing the Grail theme of Malory and The Waste Land. The narrative pauses here in a résumé. The religious preparations for Christmas, the evocation of the Holy Communion and the liturgical responses (pp. 72-74), Dai's boast (pp. 79-84) and Lewis as the focus for Welsh history and culture (p. 89), all provide a view of humanity which is universal and timeless. This is the central section of the work, where the strong cultural background is brought together and firmly established before the second movement begins. As Blamires points out, the second half closely parallels the first in its general sweep from the known Britain to the unknown France, and, once there, from the familiar camp life to the unprecedented horrors of trench warfare.<sup>11</sup> Jones evokes the modern waste land which represents the desolate land of Malory's King Pellam. War and modern evils have made the land

derelict and one of Jones' marvellously pictorial lists captures the scene:<sup>12</sup>

The untidied squalor of the loveless scene spread far horizontally, imaging unnamed discomfort, sordid and deprived as ill-kept hen-runs that back on sidings on wet weekdays where wasteland meets environs and punctured bins ooze canned-meats discarded, tyres to rot, derelict slow-weathered iron-ware disintegrates between factory-end and nettle-bed. Sewage feeds the high grasses and bald clay-crop bears tins and braces, swollen rat-body turned-turtle to the clear morning. (p. 75)

Part 5 resumes six months later and the title of the section, "Squat Garlands for White Knights", is a synthesis of passages from Hopkins' poem "Tom's Garland"--the first line of which is "Tom--garlanded with squat and surly steel"--and Lewis Carroll's Through the Looking Glass. Hopkins' poem is an adaptation of the Pauline image of society as a body with many members and this is in keeping with Jones' idea that a soldier is not only a member of a fighting unit, but is also one of the diverse "types" of which society is comprised. By extension, it also recalls the Shakespearian concept of the body politic, as it is fully developed in the opening scene of Coriolanus. The implication is that what affects one part of the "body" affects all the other parts and so the soldier is one part of the "body" of mankind and his experiences become those of all men.

The most obvious reason for linking these two allusions in the title is the visual impact; the soldiers with their new regulation

shrapnel helmets are an unusual sight and the helmets are humourously seen as the "harbinger of their anabasis... of a more purposed hate" (p. 114). But the soldiers are given some dignity in being described as knights, which word has, of course, a wealth of romantic associations behind it. The strangeness of appearance is one aspect of the unreal nature of the experience so far. Dai's speech has a similarly fantastic element in it, but this, and Lewis as the representative of the Welsh mythic culture, is equally a part of the apparent unreality--except that all has been reversed. They are no longer mythic, no longer a poetic fiction. The reference to the Baroque (p. 124) is incongruous in a trench description, but in a world of incongruity it is not wholly out of place. It is included for ironic purposes and Jones uses it to highlight the loss of touch with reality, or with the 'normal' world, because the war now becomes that reality.

Part 6 precludes the climactic battle of the work with a general description of the background. The title, "Pavilions & Captains of Hundreds", is a synthesis of allusions to the omnipresence of pavilions in Malory's battlefields and to the multitudes in the Old Testament descriptions. The strange calm and utter ordinariness of the action is the respite before the onslaught depicted in Part 7, which is introduced by the reference to Lewis Carroll's The Hunting of the Snark.

Gardiner in his Annotated Snark cites several opinions on what

the Snark might be about. Carroll himself claimed that he did not know, but thought that a possible explanation might be that it was an allegory for the pursuit of happiness.<sup>13</sup> The snark has represented material wealth to some readers, and to others the poem has been a satire on social advancement or on the business world in general.<sup>14</sup>

Gardiner quotes Holiday's statement that "on all sorts of occasions, in all the daily incidents of life some line from the poem was sure to occur to him that fitted exactly".<sup>15</sup> Different eras have interpreted it according to the particular malaise of the times, and Gardiner's own view may be of relevance to Jones' purpose here. Reading it existentially, he sees it as a poem about the fear of death or non-existence<sup>16</sup> and, given that Jones' soldiers are about to enter the Somme offensive, this is an appropriate interpretation.

Blamires suggests in his discussion of this final section that the title, "The Five Unmistakable Marks", is indicative of the sense of humour which reputedly never deserted the soldiers.<sup>17</sup> This may be true; but while Jones elsewhere in the work proves his ability to convey the soldiers' humour, with an eye and ear to the more colourful aspects of the soldiers' life,<sup>18</sup> it seems to be not wholly accurate to suggest, as Blamires does, that Jones only implies that a sense of humour is the means to endure the momentous events which conclude the work. The fear of death is present but Jones centres endurance in Christian faith and, more specifically, in the significance of Easter.



The theme of resurrection is not limited to the theological context: the myth of Arthur endows him with the power of a protective, regenerative deity and it is this possibility of regeneration in nature and in man which is the basis of mankind's hope and faith.

### III

Jones in his essay "Notes on the 1930s" discusses Joyce's achievement and says that "It was from the particular that he made the general shine out".<sup>19</sup> This is also true of Jones' work and Part 4 offers a good illustration of it in the Christmas section (pp. 65-74). Jones establishes the context in the opening line of the section (p. 59) with a reference to Sir Launcelot's as yet unsuccessful search for the Holy Grail. Until he has atoned for his sins, Launcelot cannot receive the grace of the Holy Grail and his state of misery and of being without grace is associated with that of Jones' soldiers.

The strong element of ritual in the Christmas scene is anticipated in the preceding rifle-cleaning description (pp. 63-65) where the effort to fulfil the task is enormous and makes the soldiers aware that they are "unseasoned" in the trials of war. But this difficulty is small in comparison to the sorrows and frustrations yet to come. Their pathos here is magnified in the preparations for breakfast, which are presented in the language of the liturgy of the Holy Communion--they are "serving their harsh novitiate" (p. 70).

Jones does not limit the religious connotations to Christianity-- it is morning "at the time of Saturnalia" (p. 65). The pagan celebration predates the Christian which now coincides with it, and in this simple but effective way Jones evokes the significance, past and present, of this time of year. The contrast between what should be done on this day and what is being done is obvious: man should be celebrating the life and hope which Christ symbolizes but, instead, Ball is on fire-duty and is about the business of war. This is in contradiction to the spirit of Christmas and it is significant that Ball has a restricted view of his position and even that is only provided by the "cunning glass" (p. 65). Despite his limited vision, symptomatic, perhaps, of the limited vision of man which created the misery in which Ball now finds himself, the humanity of the men prevails, although in an attenuated form.

The distribution of the breakfast supplies is reminiscent of the moment of communion (p. 72), but it is without the customary Christian devotion. Jones does, however, emphasize the preciousness of the food and this reverence is continued in Ball's acceptance of tea from a corporal (p. 74). In accepting the tea, Ball, for a few moments, is drawn into a humane circle of warmth with the men from the Vickers team. The mundane has become precious and Jones' language, reflecting this, is raised to the level of ritual:

Dispense salvation,  
 strictly apportion it,  
 let us taste and see,  
 let us be renewed,  
 for christ's sake let us be warm.  
 O have a care--don't spill the precious  
 O don't jog his hand--ministering;  
 do take care.  
 O please--give the poor bugger elbow room. (p. 73)

Jones prevents these scenes, where the breakfast supplies are being distributed, from becoming spuriously sentimental by incorporating both the liturgical language and the soldiers' colloquialisms. He succeeds in conveying the pathos of the men without being sacriligious because the ritual language raises the men from the mundane to a position of dignity.

The failure to observe the traditional rites of Christmas is caused by inability rather than unwillingness because the effects of the war prohibit it. Jones elaborates on this in his description of the "loveless scene" and the "men-bundles" (pp. 75-76) which culminates in a passage of bitter outrage typical of Sassoon's war poetry:

All their world shelving, coagulate. Under-earth  
 shorn up, seeled and propt. Substantial matter  
 guttered and dissolved, sprawled to a glaucous  
 insecurity. All sureness metamorphosed, all  
 slippery a place for the children of men, for  
 the fair feet of us to go up and down in.

It was mild for the time of year, what they  
 call a Green Christmas. (p. 76)

After this description, the irony of "Green" is uncompromising; but Jones does not only make satirical comments on war, he also includes

a humane, emotive lamentation for the dead--"the men-bundles" (p. 75). Furthermore, Jones' depiction of the men's discussion of the distant battle at Ypres illustrates not only the humorous gusto of trench conversation but also its friendly intimacy (pp. 78-79).

In sharp contrast to this language is Dai's masterpiece of rhetoric (pp. 79-84). As Jones says in his notes, this boast is associated with that of Taliesson and other heroic figures. It is a traditional element in Welsh literature and normally takes the form of the listing of the deeds a knight will perform in battle (as in Y Gododdin). In his speech, Dai has been everywhere and is everyone--he is not confined by time or place and the claim which Christ makes, "before Abraham was, I am" (John xiii)--sums up the kind of figure Dai represents. This speech is not intended to be realistic: Dai is the personification of all cultures, battles and histories. His speech is not only poetry, it is a marvel of rhetorical devices and it subtly develops the themes, causes and effects of warfare through its wide range of allusion. This, the elliptical style and use of juxtaposition and the recondite Latinate expressions, which contrast with the colloquialisms, force the reader to be at once critical of, and receptive to, all suggestions about war.

The myth of Arthur is integral to the portrayal of the desolation of the land and here he is held responsible for it (p. 82). The complementary epithets are names by which Arthur is variously known; but

he violates the buried king who is to protect the land, and intends to rule by his own strength. This overweening interference on Arthur's part is the "third woeful uncovering" of traditional Welsh literature which tells of the repeated spoliation of the land. His act results in soldiers' misery when now "cruel feet march because of this / un-gainly men sprawl over us" (p. 82). A general parallel can be drawn with the situation of those in the First World War. Similarly, the cause of war is attributed to the evil represented by Lord Agravaïne, who "nets" the men "into expeditionary war" (p. 83). The word "expeditionary" brings to mind the British Expeditionary Force. The evil which causes war is not only attributed to Lord Agravaïne--general causes are also implied; but Dai's claim that he was "the spear in Balin's hand that made waste King Pellam's Land" suggests that the evil is located in every man (p. 79). As Jones says in his notes to this section, he is fusing the evil represented by Lord Agravaïne and that in the "Branwen" story. Peace is only restored, and the land protected again in "Branwen", when the seven warriors bury the head of Brân the Blessed under the White Tower as he had instructed them to. In the Grail legend, peace can only be restored when the quester asks the right question of the afflicted Fisher king figure. In Malory, that figure is King Pellam and it is Launcelot who seeks the Grail and eventually the land is restored. In Dai's speech, the question is not asked:

I was in Michael's trench when bright Lucifer  
bulged his primal salient out.

That caused it,  
that upset the joy-cart,  
and three parts waste.

    You ought to ask: Why,  
what is this,

what's the meaning of this.

Because you don't ask,  
although the spear-shaft  
drips,

there's neither steading--not a roof-tree. (p. 84)

The words "trench" and "salient" locate this wasteland in the Western Front: the "spear-shaft" represents Balin's spear which wounded King Pellam and it is used to symbolize the soldiers' rifle. Because no one has yet asked the question Dai mentions, the land remains desolate. It is not until the final section that there is the possibility of its restoration.

In Dai's speech, many wars and battles are mentioned and by using earlier wars to inform the present one, Jones emphasizes the cyclical pattern of war, inherent in which is the cyclical hope of regeneration. The spiritual salvation of man and the restoration of the modern wasteland is symbolized in both Launcelot's quest for the Grail, and in the Sacred Wood. It is in the myth of the Sacred Wood that Jones locates man's spiritual possibilities, and although the myth is suggested in Part 4, its fruition comes only in the final section. In Part 4, Ball looks out on to the "twisted wood":

visually so near, yet for the feet forbidden  
 by a great fixed gulf, a sight somehow to  
 powerfully hold his mind. To the woods of all  
 the world this potency. (p. 66)

For the moment, the "fixed gulf" is No Man's Land, but the trees beyond are associated with the Sacred Wood into which man cannot yet enter without "bruising the green". Man is at war and the wood belongs to Odin, the god of war (p. 67), but it is man who has brought chaos to the wood, which is in itself passive. Ball's salvation is effected there but he has to take good into it before he can receive its benefits; in effect, he has to unlearn everything which has taught him to be a soldier.

Ball's thoughts on the distant, unreachable wood in Part 4 have already established what woods have signified to man in the past (p. 66). In Part 7, Jones consolidates the intimacy between man and wood, and he obscures the mechanistic aspect of war, as in the description of the throwing of a hand grenade:

Dark-faceted iron oval lobs heavily to  
 fungus-cushioned dank, wobbles under low leaf  
 to lie, near where the heel drew out just now;  
 and tough root-fibres boomerang to top-most  
 green filigree and earth clods flung disturb  
 fresh fragile shoots that brush the sky. (p. 169)

The effect of the grenade thrown into the tree is the death of a German soldier who has become united with the tree to the extent that his blood is as the tree's blood, "ruby drops from young beech-sprigs" (p. 169). This recalls The Dream of the Rood and the sacrificed Christ.<sup>20</sup> Men

and trees are further identified in the reference to Birnam Wood in Macbeth where men are trees (p. 179), and in the closing lines of Jones' work where men are "striplings" (p. 187). The equations between man and tree abound in this section: sometimes the trees are living, "the shrieking wood" (p. 171), or are a memorial to a dead man:

Who under the green tree  
had awareness of his dismembering, and deep-bowelled  
damage; for whom the green tree bore scarlet memorial, and  
herb and arborage waste. (p. 162)

The wood is also the place where the Queen of the Woods honours the dead. It is in a strategic position (p. 66) where enemy and allies are brought together and where a select but representative group of the dead are honoured. Most of those introduced in the first section died in the Somme offensive and the descriptions of the deaths of Aneurin Lewis and Mr. Jenkins are particularly significant.

Lewis "had somewhere in his Welsh depths a remembrance of the nature of man, of how a lance-corporal's stripe is but held vicariously and from on high, is of one texture with an eternal economy. He brings in a manner, baptism, and metaphysical order to the bankruptcy of the occasion" (pp. 1-2). His death provides an opportunity to recount the Welsh tradition he represents (p. 155). Significantly, the battles mentioned in his eulogy are defeats but Jones, in his essay "In illo tempore", explains the significance, to him, of Celtic defeats:



At least I sensed a continuity of struggle and a continuity of loss. I could not recall hearing of works celebrative of victory, but only of relentless resistance culminating in defeat. But from each defeat came the living embers to feed the fires of resistance yet to be.<sup>21</sup>

The sprig which Lewis receives is for the glory of Wales, and the Queen of the Woods has special words for him (p. 186). What he represents has not died with him because that "remembrance" of the past continues as an integral part of the present.

Mr. Jenkins had been referred to previously as a shepherd to his flock of soldiers, and Jones' depiction of his death is particularly touching. Jones does, however, emphasize the mechanical: Jenkins "swings like a pendulum and a clock run down" (p. 166). Until now, Jones has avoided the portrayal of death which includes references to a mechanized war, and the terms in which Jenkins has been described earlier would not lead one to expect such a description now. However, death is the great "leveller" in this work and it is indiscriminate. The Queen of the Woods reflects this in her impartiality in bestowing her honours, "she plaits torques of equal splendour for Mr. Jenkins and Billy Crower" (p. 185).

It is also significant that Dai is not present to receive her honours. He is a mythic figure and, appropriately, Jones is ambiguous about Dai's fate. He has been wounded and he calls on the female muses--"Mother earth...Maiden of the digged places...Mam, moder,

mother of me, Mother of Christ"(p. 176)--but when the Queen of the Woods calls him, he is nowhere to be found. As his boast asserted, he is everywhere and his spirit is immortal.

The woods do not only represent death: they are protective of the living too, as when Ball creeps under a decimated oak after he has been wounded. It is significant that he has been wounded in the leg<sup>22</sup> because this corresponds to King Pellam's thigh wound, which was caused by the dolorous stroke, and has brought desolation which only the curing of his wound can recover. Ball's injury is perhaps symbolic of those injuries caused by the war, and his 'cure', his salvation, is brought about in the Sacred Wood. In order to achieve this he has to leave behind his rifle--symbolic of Balin's spear. The decision to leave his rifle is agonizing because it has become so much a part of him--his training has made the care of it instinctive (pp. 183-184). It has also come to represent many things: interestingly it is compared to the cross:

let it lie bruised for a monument  
dispense the authenticated fragments to the faithful. (p. 183)

As the cross symbolizes Christ, so the rifle has come to symbolize war, which Ball must leave behind him. The rifle weighs him down like the "Mariner's white oblation" and he sheds it at the gate of the wood (p. 186). It is this action which symbolizes his hope and regeneration.

Ball is not left at the end of the work as the representative victim of war: he is the representative of man's spiritual possibilities. The agonies of the war continue, as Jones demonstrates (p. 187), and there is the pathos of those hospitalized wounded; but there, again, are the protective trees (p. 186). The suffering for Ball has ended: he lies under the oak, next to both enemies and allies, to await the stretcher-bearers. His wound enables him to leave the war but it is his action of leaving his rifle that is indicative of the separate peace he has made.

Several critics, Samuel Rees, for example, have maintained that Ball is the victim of the mechanized evil of the First World War;<sup>23</sup> but to limit the conclusion in this way is in complete contradiction to the spirit of Jones' work. The exceedingly complex accretion of associations which is operating by this point of the work--the religious, secular, pagan, theological, mythical and literary allusions--all indicate the hope of spiritual resurrection and natural regeneration. Jones has not written an anti-war or a pro-war work; either would imply a too-easy moral judgement of war: he uses his sources to draw on the cyclical pattern of history, and to place the Great War in the complex historical continuum which is part of the British cultural heritage.

## FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER II

1. David Jones, General Notes to In Parenthesis (London: Faber and Faber, 1978), p. 192. Further quotations from this work will be identified in the text by page numbers within brackets.
2. See, for example, Paul Fussell's comments on the work in The Great War and Modern Memory, pp. 144-154.
3. The Dying Gaul and other Writings.
4. The two manuscripts are contradictory, and inconsistencies arise within each manuscript. The Old Welsh is now partly lost to the modern era and this compounds the other difficulty which arises from the later thirteenth-century scribe's corruption of the sixth-century manuscript. The difficulties of this are discussed by Kenneth Hurlstone Jackson in his introduction to The Gododdin: The Oldest Scottish Poem.
5. Y Gododdin, Ed. K.H. Jackson, A. 21, p. 125.
6. Ball's return is also paralleled in The Ancient Mariner.
7. Most stories include arrangements for the characters to meet again within a specific time period. The pattern is repeated throughout "Pwyll Prince of Dyved" as well as "Branwen" and "Kilhwch and Olwen".
8. David Blamires, David Jones: artist and writer, p. 86.
9. The epigraph to the work, p. xix, is from "Branwen" in Lady Charlotte Guest's translation.
10. There may be a parallel with Milton's Paradise Lost in as much as Ball has acquired knowledge which removes him from a state of innocence.
11. Blamires, p. 85.
12. This is comparable with the visual, detailed description in Part 3, p. 39.
13. Martin Gardiner's Annotated Snark, p. 22.

14. Ibid. , pp. 23-24.
15. Ibid. , p. 23.
16. Ibid. , pp. 25-31.
17. Blamires, p. 88.
18. In the incident with the dog, Belle, for example, p. 90.
19. The Dying Gaul, p. 46.
20. The soldiers' situation is further identified with that of Christ in the allusions to the Agony and the Betrayal in the Garden, p. 158, and in the final quotations from various Old and New Testament Books, p. 226.
21. The Dying Gaul, p. 26.
22. Samuel Rees in David Jones, includes Jones' own account of his leg wound, p. 16. This and other factors in In Parenthesis suggest an autobiographical element in the work.
23. Rees, p. 72.

### CHAPTER III

#### EDMUND BLUNDEN: UNDERTONES OF WAR

##### I

Blunden's use of allusion in Undertones of War is exceedingly complex. Part of his method is similar to that of Jones and Manning in that he uses simple allusions in the chapter titles and within the text. The difficulty in Manning's novel lies in the wide and complex range of associations which the allusions evoke, but the method of presenting the allusions themselves is relatively straightforward. This is also true of Jones: the complexity lies in the sources of his allusions and the many simultaneous parallels which they create. Blunden's case is different because it is in his method of presenting some of the allusions, the most important ones, that the difficulties for the reader emerge.

Blunden imitates the style of eighteenth-century authors, and even though the memoir is based on fact, this pervasive use of a literary device helps to give it the aura of fiction. Eighteenth-century literature had an important influence on Blunden's work, and, though the memoir has specific references to Tristram Shandy, on the whole Blunden's technique is to imitate general characteristics of

eighteenth-century style.

In many ways Undertones of War is like a picaresque novel: it leads the reader through a series of adventures--some pleasant, some gruesome, but mostly presented with wit and wry understatement. The narrator's persona is attractive and he has an engaging turn of mind; because of this, his final 'release' from the war is welcomed by the reader. The insistent undertones, however, indicate that, although the narrator is physically safe, he has not left the war unscathed. This point is made by the first allusion, the memoir's epigraph, from Bunyan, which sums up Blunden's fate:

Yea, how they set themselves in battle-  
array I shall remember to my dying day.

After it had ended, Blunden was haunted by the war and this knowledge, at the time of composition in 1924, naturally influenced his exposition of the war.

The narrator's "picaresque" journey begins in earnest when he arrives in France and he embarks on apparently never-ending travels between the trenches and rest stations. The irony of this unnerving bustle is tellingly apparent, for this is essentially a static war. The picaresque idea of a 'journey' of maturation is also incorporated in the memoir, but in a modified form. The references to Pilgrim's Progress imply that the narrator's 'journey', "the crisis of his life"<sup>1</sup> entails enduring a series of trials--Schwaben Redoubt, at Thiepval, is only one

instance of "the land of despair" through which he must pass (p. 114). Significantly, his "pilgrim's staff" is stolen before he arrives at the Front (p. 22), indicating perhaps that there will be nothing to aid him in his trials,<sup>2</sup> or that this is a different kind of pilgrimage. The major battles themselves are ordeals which he must endure, and although he survives them without physical injury or loss of sanity, there is not an equivalent of Pilgrim's Heavenly City awaiting the narrator. Instead, there is only an erroneous faith in the natural scene, and the author indicates in the Preliminary that, now older, he perceives the falsity of this faith.

Blunden turns the main characteristic of a picaresque narrative to his own purpose. The narrator's travels are far from being delightful romps: they are accompanied by the ever-present threat of death. This is demonstrated in the incident which occurs after the narrator's arrival at the "thirsty, savage training ground" of Etaples (p. 23). Here, Blunden introduces a device which is to be used throughout the memoir. Within a paragraph, he establishes the significance of "The Bull-Ring", his own innocent preconceptions of it and of the war, his inexperience and the contrasting experience of the sergeant-major who has never had an accident while training recruits. The paragraph unexpectedly concludes with a picture of the dead instructor--a grenade having exploded in his hand--and the recruits, "blood-masked dead and alive" (p. 23). This paragraph is preceded by long descriptive passages



about the warm, somnolent surroundings and the description seems to have been leading to an entirely different conclusion. But Blunden, having set his trap, springs it so that the shock of the accident is as startling to the reader as it is to the recruits. This use of the unexpected within a conventional description is a technique employed by the eighteenth-century poets to great effect.<sup>3</sup> The device creates an illusion, in which the reader experiences events in the same way as the young Blunden.

Blunden is presenting factual experiences; but he does this in such a way as to obscure the reader's awareness of the distinction between the illusion and the reality. In a similar way, it is difficult to locate the narrator's position at any given time because Blunden has effectively confused the sense of place in the memoir. Despite the detailed descriptions of each village, one place becomes very much like another in the uniformity of ruination. Blunden only distinguishes between being in the line and being in the countryside, and, by the end of the memoir, even that distinction is unclear because both are devastated.

The distortion of time parallels this confusion of place. In a statement relating to his use of time, Blunden writes:

Are not pictures and evocations better than horology? What says Tristram? -- "It was some time in the summer of that year." (p. 34)

There are several time schemes in the memoir: there is the different

appearance of the war in different years,<sup>4</sup> and also the progression of the seasons.<sup>5</sup> Blunden, in his *Preliminary* (p. 11), emphasizes the tricks memory played while he was composing the work and this is demonstrated in the fusion of the narrative's present-time with past-time remembered as the author reminisces.<sup>6</sup> This is a deliberate conflation by Blunden to emphasize the fact that past time is irrevocable. The allusion to one of the important themes in Tristram Shandy further underlines the point, and Blunden uses the theme to suggest an aspect of the narrator's state of mind.

Throughout the memoir, there is a yearning to return to the idyllic pre-war period, and, as this proves to be inaccessible because the war has become the narrator's world, he longs for the return of the comparatively pleasant time of earlier war years. This takes the form of the memory of Arcadian moments which are all the more precious for having been snatched from the misery of war. However, the war always impinges to spoil his remembrance. After the Somme battle and prior to the preparations for Thiepval, the narrator alludes to Wordsworth's idea of emotion recollected in tranquillity, when he evokes the memory of the peaceful Beaumont Hamel: "Recollection paints [it]... as a tranquil time" (p. 96). However, the bombed dugout which he discovers full of "unutterably mangled" bodies is a cruel reminder of the war, and it is this kind of impingement which precludes the desired tranquillity.

The attempt to control this impingement is evinced in the narrative style, where Blunden often adopts the pose of the guiding narrator. By doing this, he breaks any superficial illusion that this is a strictly factual account and self-consciously directs the reader's attention to particular events. The memoir opens with the narrator pointing out incidents on Victoria station prior to his embarkation for France, "Next, let us remark. . ." (p. 22). The tone in this case is pleasantly whimsical and the reader willingly joins the tour. Similarly, the reader enjoys the aside, "(note it, recording Angel, or spirit of Sterne, if you did not then)" (p. 79), in the relation of the incident with the woman at Auchel who hurries to provide lodgings for the men on their way to the Somme. However, the guiding-narrator device is used more equivocally as the narrative proceeds.

At Auchenvillers, "a good example of the miscellaneous, picturesque, pitiable, pleasing, appalling, intensely intimate village ruin close to the line", the narrator genially includes the reader--"As we go up to the new sector, we must pass through [Auchenvillers], and we will look about us" (p. 93). What we see is the ruin caused by the war, we receive ominous hints of the Thiepval battle, and, interestingly, we hear of the manoeuvre with the straw dummies devised to attract the enemy's fire:

A good joke: but with the subaudible meaning, that the operators might

have been playing the part of these  
marionettes, and no doubt would be yet. (p. 97)

Blunden, like numerous other war writers, pictures the soldier as a puppet. Perhaps to counteract this feeling of being manipulated, the narrator, in turn, manipulates the reader. The description of the Thiepval "inferno", which is a particularly traumatic battle for the narrator, is postponed because:

I would have you see that little  
reconnaissance in its natural, or  
unnatural evolution. Date yourself  
1916, and come. (p. 100)

Pointing out interesting sights en route, the narrator leads the reader into the "disjointedness [which] now dominates the picture" and, once again, he and the reader are in the thick of battle (p. 101). Similarly with the battle of Ypres: its postponed description is the "ghat... with which we must now renew acquaintance" (p. 164). Blunden draws the reader in to share the experiences, and, by means of the guiding narrator, he imposes a firm order on the memoir's structure. There is not simply a succession of events linked only by the central consciousness of the narrator: attention is focussed on the events which culminate in the first major battle, and, relaxing the tension only a little, proceeds to the next major episode. More important, though, this device gives the narrator that semblance of control over historical events which is, in the actuality, denied him.

The narrator's need for control over events is suggested in an

early chapter, "The Cherry Orchard", which also encapsulates what are to be the crucial changes in the narrator's sensibility. The allusion to Chekhov's play provides an interesting parallel because he focusses attention on a small group of people and their interaction. This is suggested in Undertones of War by the personification of nature and war and their interaction with the young Blunden. Moreover, the characters in The Cherry Orchard do not direct their own lives, and to do this in the memoir is impossible given the manipulative powers of Command and the unpredictability of the war's events. Beyond this though, there is a closer identification in that Chekhov's characters are caught in a period of inertia between a hazy, nostalgically remembered past and an equally hazy but possibly better future. The narrator of the memoir is contemplating the idyllic quality of Hinges, and, in both memoir and play, the emphasis is placed on the fact that the characters are waiting, with some apprehension, for the world they have known to be swept away and be replaced by a new, possibly unwelcome one. This impression is reproduced in the memoir:

So long as the war allowed a country-rectory quietude and lawny coolness... and summer had even greater liberty than usual to multiply his convolvulus, his linnets and butterflies, while life was nevertheless threatened continually with the last sharp turnings into the unknown, an inestimable sweetness of feeling beyond Corot or Marvell made itself felt through all the routine and enforcement; an unexampled simplicity

of desire awoke in the imagination  
and rejoiced like Ariel in a cowslip  
bell. It was for a short time, but even  
that heightened the measure. (p. 42)

There is frequent mention of the idea that "tomorrow... will be a new world again" (p. 77), but the change is never, in fact, for the better. Blunden exploits the device of the guiding, manipulative narrator to demonstrate the need for control over events: control in the form of tempering the adverse effects of the war on the narrator's sensibility.

Despite the details of time and place, the accurate diagrams and maps (pp. 27, 47, 95), the narrator's references to, and comments on, the works of other poets (pp. 54, 70, 169, 174), and other factual elements expected in a memoir, Blunden by his use of these literary devices, presents an impression of the war which is an illusion. But, as the quotation from Tristram Shandy indicates (p. 34), in that illusion, there may be a more accurate delineation of the essence of what the war meant to Blunden than simple facts and straightforward reporting could convey.

## II

The important changes within the narrator are specifically reflected in nature. It is to the poetry of the eighteenth-century that Blunden turns to enhance the reader's awareness of the parallels between the metamorphosis of the countryside and the modifications

within the narrator's sensibility. Blunden speaks of the "profound eighteenth century calm" which provides a retreat for him from the violence and instability of trench life (p. 187). His use of neo-classical literature is not confined to providing him with consolation, however: he inverts the theory of nature and it is by means of this inversion that the reader can perceive the menacing effects of the war.

Alexander Pope, in his Discourse on Pastoral Poetry (1704), theorizes that a pastoral is "an image of the Golden Age" (lines 39-40) which shows the "tranquility of the country-life" (line 60). His Pastorals, however, are not fully consistent with his prescription in the Discourse, where he says that a pastoral poem should mask the miseries of the bucolic life. In the Pastorals, the affairs of mankind are reflected, and nature shares in man's feelings of grief and misery in love. Pope's Discourse is founded on the tenets of contemporary thought, of which the fundamental doctrine is that nature is a manifestation of Order and Reason behind all things. Moreover, the Reason in man reflects, and is reflected in, the Reason in nature--Pope's idea that nature gives us back the image of our mind.

Blunden subscribes to the theory of the Golden Age but when war encroaches on the "tranquility" of the pastoral scene, it brings chaos. Because of this, Blunden uses Pope's idea of Nature mirroring the "image of our mind" ironically: the chaos in nature reflects the chaos in the narrator's mind: disorder mirrors disorder. Moreover,

Blunden inverts the significance of the kind of landscape which dominates the Pastorals and into which human activity and experience are to be absorbed and harmonized. In the memoir, human activity is absorbed into the landscape, but it is the activity of warfare and the result is discord. The ordered world which Pope conceives, and which answers to man's needs, offering a calm order into which he can retreat, is destroyed for Blunden. The process is gradual and takes the form of the transformation of Arcadia into Hades.

The opening descriptions of the "cultivated fields and the colonnades of trim trees" (p. 25) suggest order, but the war intrudes. Flying bullets are "furious insect-like zips", and the sounds of nature, the frogs, imitate the guns' "co-ash, co-ash" (pp. 28, 36). The first image uses nature to describe the sounds of war, but Blunden, in the second, is aware of the similarity between the sounds of the innocuous frogs and the guns. As yet, these images suggest the co-existence of war and nature, and, although this is disconcerting to the narrator, it is not menacing until the war encroaches further:

On the blue and lulling mist of evening,  
proper to the nightingale, the sheepbell  
and falling waters, the strangest phenomena  
of fire inflicted themselves. (p. 30)

Similarly, the "once pretty house", which is the company headquarters at Festubert, does not have the traditional roses around the threshold: instead, there are "monstrous rusty" shells, and, behind the orchard



wall, there is secreted a "field battery glaring brutally out" (p. 35). The instruments of war begin to replace nature, and within nature itself there is a substantial threat to man.

The increasing incongruity of war and nature is emphasized in each of the main offensives on the Somme and at Ypres. The Somme marks the first climax of the memoir, and the narrator, immediately before marching to that battle, appraises the interaction of the war, nature and his psyche (pp. 77-78). It is virtually a passage of stream of consciousness, with an elliptical, impressionistic series of broken images. Its principal point is that the Somme heralds a new era and marks the end of a cherished one. Unemphatically included in this passage are images of war and nature--"Germans seen as momentary shadows among wire hedges. . . a garden gate, opening into a battle-field". This last image simply but effectively encapsulates the narrator's position: he longs to remain in the "Arcadian quality" of Givenchy, but must go to the Somme. The impossibility of a return to his "Arcadia" is indicated in the quoted lines from Young's Night Thoughts:<sup>7</sup>

Time glides away, Lorenzo, like a brook. . .  
In the same brook none ever bathed him twice. (p. 78)

The narrator's interest in architecture is also used to parallel the motif of a lost Arcadia. The village ruins of Givenchy are almost a metaphor for the narrator's state:

To visit such relics of a yesterday whose  
genial light seemed at once scarcely gone

and gone for ages, relics whose luckless situation denied them the imagined piety of contemplation and pity, was part of my war. (p. 73)

It is as if the narrator identifies himself with the relics and their "luckless situation". Both belong to a bygone era and it is the mere chance of circumstance which unites and ruins them.

The Somme battle is one point of division in the methods which were used to fight the Great War and it is also an important watershed for the narrator. This is symbolized by the fact that art still has an ascendancy over the effects of war before the Somme battle:

The heartiness of ordinary life prevailed.  
C'est triste, la guerre, ah malheur, malheur.  
 That note was there, but above it for the time played the spirits of delight in whatever baffled war's grey tentacles. In the church the twilight bloomed with art's ancient beauty; the music adorned its own centuries of grandeur. (p. 79)

The Somme is a momentous ordeal for the narrator; after it, art's ascendancy over the war, like the narrator's, survives, although in a more tenuous form, in "the foolish persistence of ruins that ought to have fallen but stood grimacing" (p. 82).

The "ominous discommunication" which pervades the actual battle (p. 89), also typifies the narrator's mental state after it. His pleasure in nature is diminishing but even at Thiepval the "sylvan genius" lingers on (p. 100). At Thiepval, the repository for "all the strange artifices of war", the increasing use of tunnels (suggesting

the underworld of Hades, pp. 114-116) indicates the nature of the continuing effects of the war on the narrator. The war is beginning to dominate his perceptions and when he returns from the "abysmal peregrinations" there is an illustration of war-induced madness which is reminiscent of Lear on the heath:

Up aloft. . . our poor half-wit. . . is running  
out above the Schwaben half-naked, slobbering  
and yet at times aware that he is not in  
his perfect mind. (p. 116)

This madness is reflected in the chaos and destruction of the countryside. The battlefield is "denatured and dun. . . a billowing desert. . . [a] satire in iron brown and field grey" (p. 106). It is a "gluey morass. . . [with a] cocoon of trenches in which mud, and death, and life were much the same thing. . . [and where] the deep dugouts. . . were cancerous with torn bodies" (p. 114).

Despite the veritable Hades of the Thiepval 'inferno', the narrator retains his capacity for pleasure in the countryside, and it retains its capacity to provide him with consolation. During the march northwards to Ypres, he immerses himself in the "dream scenery" on the "resurrection" road to Doullens (p. 125). The portrayal of the idyllic quality of his surroundings is coloured by almost religious sentiments. The Golden Age to which the neo-classicists hoped to return is equated in much of their poetry with the restoration of Eden. Blunden's language in the description of this march has religious tones, but

the end of the march connotes a departure from Eden. Doullens, a "miniature triumph of domesticity", is no more than a stage on the way to Ypres. The narrator's thought, "but it was a beautiful world even then" (p. 125), suggests that his experiences at Ypres will radically alter him and his perceptions.

During the description of the events at Ypres, there are straightforward comments which reveal the narrator's awareness that he has "lost" a part of his former self (as in the encounter with Kapp, for example, pp. 181-182). The idea of the old ghosts of the self was popular amongst soldiers looking back on their war years, and the narrator, too, comments on the changes within himself. It is often presented in terms of being wiser because of his experiences, but Blunden's inversion of the theme of nature specifies the particular nature of this 'wisdom'. The fragility and increasing instability of the narrator's psyche is evinced when his faith in order is eroded as his Arcadia--the relatively untroubled natural and mental landscape--is swept away.

The real and imagined Arcadia is transformed into Hades during and after the battle of Ypres. The corresponding change in the narrator is that he approaches madness, only just regaining self-control, he is not only greatly disillusioned about the war, he has become aware of the deceptive appearance of the countryside.<sup>8</sup> The metamorphosis occurs as the war proceeds, and, increasingly, a

poem such as Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" is brought to mind. Beneath the superficial calm of the "Elegy", there are strong disturbing emotions of the kind which Blunden reflects in an interesting adaptation of the theme of Nature.

The neo-classic penchant for ornamental gardens has a particular relevance to Undertones of War. The imposition of order on disorder, which is the prime concern of several mainstream eighteenth-century poets, was carried over into the landscape gardens of the time.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, the less conventional poets, such as Edward Young, sought the impression of ordered disorder in their work.<sup>10</sup> It seems to be more than fortuitous, therefore, that Blunden includes several descriptions of the ornamentation of nature in his memoir. The picturesque planned irregularity of such landscapes blurs the distinction between artifice and reality (as Blunden does in the style of the memoir), and thus, nature physically reflects a mode of Augustan thought. The main importance of this is that man imposes order on nature to make it more like art. As Addison says: "We find the works of Nature still more pleasing the more they resemble that of art" (Spectator, Number 414).

Winter landscapes were popular topics because of the appearance of artifice which is produced by frost and snow.<sup>11</sup> It is perhaps significant, therefore, that Ypres is first viewed during the winter of 1916-1917:

Now winter. . . there was a heavy snow, then  
the blue sky of hard frost. . . . The snow  
was crystal clean, the trees filigreed  
and golden. (p. 132)

It is also the "quietest period ever known in the Salient" (p. 132); but this artifice is cruelly deceptive. There have already been anticipatory remarks made about the true nature of Ypres--"the skeleton of Ypres. . . began to give us a nudge and a whisper. . . nor, even when I arrived there did the unholy Salient at first reveal itself. . . . [Of the soldier with a self-inflicted wound], perhaps he divined the devilish truth beyond this peaceful veil" (pp. 128-131).

Images of artifice and deception predominate, but artifice is to be conquered by reality. The beautiful ornamental lakes and gardens are ruined and they reveal the natural chaos (p. 133). Moreover, the forced order of the ornamental lakes is cruelly mimicked by the "lakes" created by the war. The narrator and his friend, Craddock, view the scene after Ypres:

We looked over the "ornamental lakes", now  
a swamp with a dry crust of a surface. . .  
we ran for life through the shelling and  
the swamps. These were called Dombarton Lakes.  
The screech and shelling filled a square of  
the old pleasure-garden. (pp. 187-188)

Mud-filled shell craters replace the ordered lakes because man and war have not only reversed the imposed order, they have destroyed the natural order too. The Yser canal is "drastically rearranged" to facilitate the movement of weapons (p. 67), the lingering "sylvan

genius" (p. 100) has vanished from the woods (p. 166), which have become "a gross darkness and surcharged crucible".

The metamorphosis is further reflected in the Ypres battle itself. References to Hades and the labyrinthine tunnels abound, and the "trees in the battlefield are already described by Dante" (p. 174). The havoc of destruction reflects the narrator's condition at this time: his "powers of endurance lay gasping" after the unearthliness of the attack and "the stricken landscape offered no relief" (p. 177). The necessity of responding to another company's call for help, forces the narrator to regain his self-control,<sup>12</sup> and, once out of the area, he alludes to Macbeth in his realization that:

It was a deal too ambitious to vaunt it  
at Ypres. And even our pastoral retreat is  
now being visited at night by aircraft well  
accustomed to the art of murdering sleep if  
not life. (p. 177)

Previously, his pleasure in nature could offer consolation to his troubled mind, but that is now impossible. Instead, he turns to the stability of the comradeship of the battalion, where there are still a few men who have shared his war experiences. A salve is also to be found in Young's Night Thoughts:

I felt the benefit of this grave and  
intellectual voice, speaking out of a  
profound eighteenth century calm...  
The mere amusement of discovering  
lines applicable to our crisis kept  
me from despair. (p. 187)

His divorce from nature is virtually complete because his only pleasure in it now is in his distorting memory.<sup>13</sup> The present time of the narrative can only offer the countryside as a wasteland and this symbolizes the desolation which confronts the narrator.

### III

Bernard Bergonzi, in Heroes' Twilight, has written that Blunden's:

contrast between the brutal realities of war and the remembered or imagined beauties of nature and the rural order. . . is not bitter or ironical, rather it forms a balance of opposites that go to make up a unified picture. Even when he is describing a scene of destruction, Blunden's choice of phrases and images is such that the sense of disorder is blended with a feeling for the continuity of what has been, for the time being, disturbed. (pp. 151-153)

Blunden's inversion of nature indicates that this is not the case. He has used nature ironically and the disorder the war has created in his sensibility is permanent. The occurrence of the spring thaw of 1918, when the narrator returns to England, is accompanied by the "young crops greening" (p. 209). Spring, being the traditional bearer of hope, will restore the ravaged countryside, but considerable doubt is cast on the possibility of the narrator's regeneration. He doubts the veracity of the "mercy of nature", but the final scene suggests that he is still innocent:



I was too young to know its depth of ironic cruelty [the deceptiveness of the pastoral scene]. No conjecture that in a few weeks, Buire sur Ancre would appear much the same as the cataclysmal railway cutting by Hill 60, came from that innocent greenwood. (p. 209)

The young Blunden is unaware of this but the reminiscing author is not.

As Paul Fussell says,<sup>14</sup> the narrator's Fall will be:

the knowledge that the remaining countryside of Picardy has been ravaged. That will be the fatal, serpent-borne Knowledge of Good and Evil for Blunden. But at the (delusive) present moment [Blunden remains innocent of this].

Fussell's point is valid but it is too simple. It is not a case of Good or Evil, innocence or experience: the effect of the war has been to influence permanently Blunden's perceptions. The remaining countryside will be damaged but it will restore itself; Blunden cannot.

Fussell goes on to say that:

Blunden's attention is constantly on pre-industrial England, the only repository of criteria for measuring the otherwise unspeakable grossness of the war. . . . Every word of Undertones of War. . . can be recognised as an assault on the war and on the world which chose to conduct it. Blunden's style is his critique. It suggests what the modern world would look like to a sensibility that was genuinely civilized. He is. . . engaging the war by selecting from the armoury of the past weapons against it which seem to have the greatest chance of withstanding time. <sup>15</sup>

Again, this is too simplistic. Blunden is writing his memoir as a therapeutic exercise, but moral indictment of modern man for causing the war is not (as Fussell implies) part of his purpose. Blunden's Introduction--"What a piece of work is a man!' But what a mystery it is that he has so often worshipped, or at least made obeisance to, the red god Mars" (p. 8)--acknowledges man's weaknesses but does not condemn them.

Blunden inverts the doctrine of the eighteenth century, revealing the turbulent reality which underlies the order of the neo-classicists. He laments the passing of the Golden Age of the pre-war years, but he also laments the passing of those idyllic moments during the early stages of the war. From his present time, the past always seems preferable; even at the time of writing, in the mid 1920s, his former equanimity has not been restored: he wants to return to the war years.

Shortly before his death in 1974, Blunden wrote:

My experiences in the First World War  
have haunted me all my life and for  
many days I have, it seemed, lived in  
that world rather than this.<sup>16</sup>

The author's memory remains sharp because it is only his memory that can provide a retreat for him. The irresolvable paradox of this is accentuated by the fact that, in recalling the past to recapture pleasant memories, he necessarily recalls the traumatic memories he is

attempting to exorcise. Similarly, the order associated with his allusions and the disorder which dispels that order form the same paradox: a paradox which he images in the last line of the memoir: he is a "shepherd in a soldier's coat". The inversion of the allusions to the theme of nature depicts his dilemma because their original context always recalls the desired order which has vanished.

Jones and Manning use allusion to illustrate man's ability to transcend the temporal, but for Blunden this is impossible. He uses allusions to show the underlying disorder, which they do not, and cannot, resolve. There is no subsequent transcendence. Instead, there is only a recognition, instigated by the war, of the facade of order which covers nature. Blunden shows how he has been made aware of this, and that his only consolation is to retreat into the past.

## FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER III

1. Edmund Blunden, Undertones of War (New York: Harcourt, 1965), p. 22. Further quotations from the memoir will be identified simply by the page numbers within brackets.
2. It is also perhaps significant that the young Blunden misplaces and lends some of his poetry books--his copies of John Clare and Edward Young in particular. These books have helped him to endure his experiences and, as with the loss of his pilgrim's staff, their loss may be indicative of the fact that he will no longer be able to seek help or consolation from literature.
3. See Pope's Moral Essay II, lines 7-14, and Moral Essay IV, lines 141-146.
4. For example, "In ancient days, perhaps in 1914" (p. 35); "a legacy of the ingenuity of 1915" (p. 64); "(even after June [1916]) [it was] a sort of '1915' sector" (p. 66); "such heaps [of food] would not be found in 1917" (p. 67).
5. For example, the movement from winter to spring (pp. 126-127), spring into summer (p. 159), autumn and the harvest (p. 163), and the return to winter (p. 190).
6. This pervades the entire memoir but there are occasions on which the author deliberately breaks the illusion to indicate a point which is informed by future knowledge. See pp. 35, 93, 125, 145, 164, 196.
7. The thought is similar to Pope's "Time conquers All and We must Time obey", Pastorals, Winter line 88.
8. Blunden has given a powerful description of his approach to madness, or at least loss of control, in the poem "Third Ypres" (p. 230). This poem incorporates much of the material presented in the memoir's delineation of the battle. Similarly, the threat he now perceives in nature is demonstrated in such poems as "The Midnight Skaters" and "The Pike" in his collection Poems 1914-1930, Cobden-Sanderson, London, 1930.

9. Pope himself designed landscape gardens, thus actually imposing Order on nature.
10. This "ordered disorder" is still to be found in the landscape gardens at Stourhead, England, which are the work of Henry Flitcroft and Henry Hoare, 1744-1765.
11. See Ambrose Philips' poem "A Winter Piece, To the Earl of Dorset", or Cowper's "Winter Morning" from The Task, with its "glittering turrets" of ice and "pillars of pellucid length", V, 122.
12. In "Third Ypres", the persona's "salvation" is brought about by the fieldmice (lines 107-110). The mice are mentioned in the memoir (p. 175) but their significance is reduced.
13. The scene is no longer accurate because it is viewed through a "marvellous lens" (p. 190) in the same way as it might be viewed through the memory.
14. Paul Fussell, The Great War and Modern Memory, p. 267.
15. Ibid., pp. 268-269.
16. Let the Poet ed. James Gibson (1973), p. 37.

## CONCLUSION

Allusions, as Manning, Jones and Blunden have used them, evoke a wide range of associations related to the themes of the works, thus intensifying the reader's appreciation of the war experiences presented. They also condition the way in which the reader responds to the characters.

Manning's allusions, unlike those of Jones and Blunden, are almost entirely external to the main text and are drawn from only one source, but their effect on the reader is not as limited as these restrictions may first suggest. Because the allusions are external, the reader can, if he chooses, ignore the epigraphs, but he will miss the depth of characterization afforded by the associations with Shakespeare. Manning's method of presenting the allusions is relatively simple, but its effect is complex. His allusions are not drawn from the history plays alone--if they were restricted to Henry IV and Henry V, for example, the novel might be seen as a simple re-working of Shakespeare's presentation of warfare in those plays. But Manning, by drawing on a romantic comedy and the tragedies, broadens the scope of the novel and alerts the reader to the similarities between a character in the novel and the several Shakespearian characters evoked at various

times in relation to that character. This conflation allows the reader to see Bourne as having attributes of the young irresponsible Hal in Henry IV, and Hal as soldier, lover and king in Henry V, as well as of the tragic hero and the wise Fool. Although they do not have the same complexity as Bourne, Weeper Smart, Shem, Martlow and Miller also assume a variety of roles. In this way, Manning discourages the reader from identifying a character with only one of Shakespeare's, and adds to the fully-rounded characterization which creates the resonance, and is one of the main strengths of, the novel.

Jones achieves a similar multi-associational effect, particularly in his presentation of John Ball, Dai and Lewis. Because his work is a prose poem, Jones does not have to be concerned, as Manning does, with presenting credible, convincing characters and so his allusions contribute to the formation of his characters as the representatives of concepts. Thus Ball is Launcelot, fallen from grace, and in search of the Grail which symbolizes salvation; he is the wounded Fisher King; he represents the masses, as his twelfth century namesake did; and he is Everyman. The effect of Jones' use of allusion in this respect is similar to that in Manning's novel: the too-easy and too-simple one-to-one identification of a character with one in the allusions' source is prevented. Just as both Manning and Jones present several views of warfare, thus forcing the reader to be both receptive to, and critical of, the authors' suggestions, so the method of characterization, or

representation, alerts the reader to several simultaneous points of character association.

Blunden also uses allusions to condition the reader's response to his narrator and to develop his theme. The young Blunden is a poet (Undertones of War, p. 73), and his quotations from the eighteenth-century works consolidate the fact that he is a literary man. Many of his identified quotations, and those which are not, come from the neo-classicist period, but while the general literary context of the memoir is eighteenth-century, he also uses quotations from other periods. Thus he captures the essence of the young soldier who is "like Mr. Pickwick's Fat Boy in khaki" (p. 29), or he uses allusions to describe his thoughts:

Each circumstance of the British experience  
[in the war] that is still with me has ceased  
for me to be big or little, and now appeals to me  
more even than the highest exaltation of pain  
or scene in the "Dynasts", and than the heaven  
of adoration incarnadined with Desdemona's  
handkerchief. (p. 155)

The young Blunden obviously has a keen interest and profound knowledge of literature: he reads, refers to or discusses the works of Barbusse (p. 103), Young (p. 151), Tennyson (p. 165), Sassoon (p. 169) and many others.

However, Blunden thwarts the reader's expectations of the memoir's genre by his method of presenting historical facts. In Undertones of War, he frequently uses fictional devices which are more



common to the novel, not to distort historical facts, but rather to enhance the reader's appreciation of the facts. The less obvious allusions, in the guiding-narrator device and in the theme of Nature, undermine the reader's expectations. This is brought about in two stages: the reader is first lulled into a state where he is so comfortably in the control of the narrator that he accepts the superficial appearance of order and method. When this is undermined, the reader can see that the allusions have been used to expose the chaos beneath the order and that, as Blunden presents it, the chaos is the true fact in this exposition of the war.

Allusions must be recognized, of course, if they are to be completely effective. Blunden usually identifies his sources and they are ones with which many readers will be familiar. Manning, too, indicates the author, if not the plays, from which the epigraphs are drawn. The Shakespearian allusions allow the novel to be read on another level than simply that of an account of experiences in the Great War. Although the reader who does not know Shakespeare's plays will miss the parallels, ironies, similarities and contrasts afforded by the application of the epigraphs to the chapters, the novel would still be effective as an exposition of men in war.

The problem of Jones' Welsh allusions is more complex. In Parenthesis is constructed predominantly from allusions (almost to the same extent as the play Oh! What a Lovely War). The allusions are

organic to the text and the reader must have the prerequisite knowledge to appreciate the work, and this has often been seen as its main weakness. M.S. Greicus voices the perennial criticism when he says that In Parenthesis is a "hyperconcentration of reality and fancy, requiring so many annotations, which has left the work, after thirty years, an experimental oddity rather than a memorable piece of literature".<sup>1</sup> The problem which every reader encounters in In Parenthesis is that the access to Jones' Welsh allusions is difficult. Jones has confronted the problem in his essay, "On the Difficulties of One Writer of Welsh Affinity Whose Language is English" (p. 32, quoted above), and he concludes the essay by taking an extreme stance:

It does not matter much whether it's appreciated at all [a work which uses obscure allusions to 'show forth' the things that concern the poet]. What does matter is that one feels oneself that it is valid.<sup>2</sup>

Jones seems to be driven to this point by the fact that most British people have lost touch with those cultural roots which are founded in the Old Welsh literature from which Jones draws his "materia". He implies that the only way in which a reader can fully appreciate the Welsh allusions is to become acquainted with their sources and thereby re-establish contact with the British cultural heritage. Without this knowledge, much of this prose poem can still be appreciated--especially its poetry. But any serious reader must use the Notes carefully. Although perhaps distracting on a first reading of the work, the Notes are

necessary because the allusions constitute part of Jones' attempt to infuse a new significance into the myths he uses, to show "ritual words made newly real" (p. 28).

The genres the authors have chosen permit an extended use of allusion in the exposition of the war. Also, by composing their works several years after the war had ended, they could take advantage of the perspective which time affords and so increase the objectivity of their works. The poets who wrote during the Great War also alluded to their predecessors, but the effect of their poems was often limited by their concern to provoke an immediate response to the war: as Blunden says of Sassoon, his poetry wages "war on the war" (Undertones of War, p. 169). Jones, Manning and Blunden are not immediately concerned with the moral rights and wrongs of warfare. Although they do criticize aspects of the First World War, they are also free to celebrate the traditional values of honour, courage and pride in soldiering, as opposed to killing. Their emphasis is on the effect of war on man, and the isolation of the central characters--Bourne, Ball and the young Blunden--assumes different meanings in the light of the authors' extensive use of allusion. Through the broadening effect of allusion, the reader recognizes that the young Blunden has had his sensibility permanently and adversely modified by his experiences to the extent where he is caught in a paradox which is irresolvable and therefore acutely poignant.

Ball has sought and been able to achieve his spiritual salvation. Bourne has transcended the temporal, his "fate", and in so doing has affirmed man's spiritual possibilities. The emphasis is placed on the universal aspects of human nature rather than on the particular historic events of the 1914-1918 war. The war is predominantly a catalyst and a backdrop to the enacted human drama, and the allusions enhance the reader's awareness of the universal difficulties with which man is confronted and which he may, or, in Blunden's case, may not, be able to overcome.

## FOOTNOTES TO THE CONCLUSION

1. M.S. Greicus, Prose Writers of World War I (Writers and their Work, Number 231), p. 42.
2. David Jones, The Dying Gaul, p. 34.

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