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## War, Witness, Modernism and David Jones's Subversive Voice

Scholars agree—through their disagreement—that *In Parenthesis* defies classification. It conforms to the standards of prose and verse as well as the genres of Modernism and Great War poetry. David Jones's self-described "war book" (*IP* iv) also walks the line between witness and allegory which separates fiction from nonfiction. The inability to classify *In Parenthesis* is part of the author's effort to reveal The Great War's destabilizing effect upon language and society. By using "discontinuous or episodic narratives, verbal textures that mix idiomatic concision with dense allusive references, [and] a cast of dramatic characters" (Sherry, *The Great War* 191), Jones creates vehicle for relating his wartime experience and circumvents war's meaning-robbing effects. Jones is less fragmented and more succinct when explaining his title: "This writing is called 'In Parenthesis' because I have written it in a kind of space between—I don't know between quite what—but as you turn aside to do something...the war itself was a parenthesis—how glad we thought we were to step outside its brackets at the end of '18—and also because our curious type of existence here is altogether in parenthesis" (xv). The author's parentheses section his wartime-self off from his greater identity; they section off The Great War from the normal flow of history; and they situate his unique aesthetics in a category unhindered by the conventions of both Modernists and WWI poetic conventions. Jones's mingling of the heroic epic, Welsh tradition, and chivalric Romance with the real horror of his experience and subsequent disillusionment problematizes the categorical systems of language

used by critics to classify writing. As a result, unraveling the complexity of Jones's "war book" recreates for the reader the process Jones experienced unraveling his postwar mind in the process of creating it.

Jones enlisted with the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers on January 2, 1915 and left for France in December of the same year. On July 10-11, 1916 he was wounded in Mametz Wood in the Battle of the Somme (Rees). Samuel Rees "without apology...advocate[s for] the reading and study of Jones's work...it has been all too easy for some to dismiss him as an imitator. I am then at some pains to establish Jones's readability and worth in his own right." Jones's war fought was like no other; he saw bodies decimated by the most technologically advanced weaponry ever created and likely struggled to comprehend what he witnessed. Rees's dismissal of charges of imitation is important; it sidesteps stylistic arguments, revealing an appreciation for how the reader's deciphering of *In Parenthesis* might also reflect Jones's understanding and representation of WWI experience.

As a scholar and personal advocate of Jones's work, William Blissett understands the surreal nature of WWI combat: "Consider the bayonet. The bayonet is horrible enough in all conscience, the more effective as a psychological weapon because its horror is well within the compass of anyone's imagination" (194). Jones's protagonist, Private Ball, certainly *considers* the bayonet in Mametz Wood:

The inorganic earth where your body presses seems itself to pulse deep down with your heart's acceleration...but you go on living, lying with your face bedded in neatly folded, red-piped, greatcoat and yet no cold cleaving thing drives in between expectant shoulder-blades, so you get to your feet, and the sun-lit chalk is everywhere absorbing fresh stains. (167)

The speaker describes lying in the dirt, expecting death from the thrust of a blade into his back. However, Ball lives on in one of many instances of forestalled expectation in *In Parenthesis*. Blissett explains that "language at its limit was sought for experience at its limit, the first impulse of the unskilled was to drum up a hubbub of sound-effects in combination with the loose, 'Modernistic' license of the then-new free verse" (195). Jones's takes full control of language, alternating between verse and prose—allegory and experience—for just the right effect. *In Parenthesis* is more than free verse: it is the work of years of searching for the voice and words needed to describe the indescribable. Jones's work is also a struggle between self and character; he navigates his darkest memories, using Private Ball as an intermediary for the sake of art.

The author's wound mimics the wound of his fictional alter-ego. Private Ball's shot to the leg is first conceived as liquid—the kind of conception that might expectantly spring into a traumatized subject's mind while in the midst of combat—pouring into his boot:

And to Private Ball it came as if a rigid beam of great weight  
flailed about his calves, caught from behind by ballista-baulk  
let fly or aft-beam slewed to clout gunnel-walker  
below below below.

When golden vanities make about,  
you've got no legs to stand on.

He thought it disproportionate in its violence considering  
the frailty of us.

The warm fluid percolates between his toes and his left boot  
fills, as when you tread in a puddle—he crawled away in the  
opposite direction. (183)

The wounding of Private Ball occurs in Part 7 of *In Parenthesis*. In a 1973 letter to his friend, Rene Hague, Jones gives account of his own wound:

Talking of 'mass' and what the scientists tell us of velocity causing weight—I suppose that's why when a machine-gun or maybe a rifle bullet passed clean through my left leg without touching the fibula or the tibia—but merely through the calf, it felt as if a great baulk of timber or a heavy bar of some sort had struck me sideways, in fact I thought a ponderous branch had been severed by shrapnel and had fallen across my leg but couldn't account for the *extreme violence and weight*. I did not realize it was S.A.A. until I tried to stand up & felt the wetness seeping from the wound that I'd been hit by a mere little bullet, but the disproportion of the smallness of the projectile and the great bludgeoning weight of the impact astonished me even at the time. (qtd. in Rees 16)

Oddly enough, it is "89 Jones" who is "detailed for escort[ing]" the wounded Ball out of the battle (Jones, *IP* 170). Imagining Jones's mind's eye looking down upon his creation—a created version of his wartime self—is significant: Jones fights and is wounded in The Battle of the Somme; twenty years later he writes about it; he creates a character that is part himself, part every soldier; he uses his wound to

create Ball's dilemma, writing himself into the story as the means of deliverance. In these ways, Jones remembers but also creates his own past, blurring the lines of Modernism, Great War poetry, and even autobiography in the process.

*In Parenthesis* received a stamp of approval for its use of the Modernist style from T. S. Eliot: "David Jones is a representative of the same literary generation of Joyce and Pound and myself" (qtd. in Jones, *IP* viii). At the same time, Jones is part of the tradition of Great War poets who struggled to find a voice capable of speaking to postwar society: "When Pound exhorted his fellow members of the avant-garde to 'make it new,' he was not speaking to the men in the trenches. Owen, Gurney, and Sassoon came upon this principle on their own. What they were making 'new' and 'whole' again was in fact the versions of themselves necessary if they and their voices were to endure" (Hipp 198). Jones's Private Ball is a vehicle for exploring a conflicted set of realities. Nowhere is this clearer than in the delineation between the trench soldier and the "stinking physicist" (*IP* 24) that repeatedly brings death to soldiers.

In WWI "the enemy became the war itself in a dehumanized form, rather than those men in the other trenches fighting for their nation's cause" (Hipp 19). This existential enemy may have been the focus of The Great War poets—Owen, Sassoon, and Gurney—in Hipp's study, but Jones personifies his enemy as the rationalists responsible for using scientific knowledge as a means of destruction rather than human advancement. In Part 2 the soldiers receive "lectures on...military tactics... by the Bombing Officer... he predicted an important future for the Mills Mk. IV grenade, just on the market; he discussed the improvised jam-tins of the veterans, of the bombs of after the Marne, grenades of Loos and Laventie" (13). The Bombing Officer that Private Ball encounters is a man who understands aptitude in sports as candidacy for deploying the new toys of war: "He took the names of all those men who professed efficiency on the cricket field—more particularly those who claimed to bowl effectively—and brushing away with his hand pieces of straw from his breeches, he sauntered off with his sections of grenades and fuses and explanatory diagrams of their mechanism stuffed into the pockets of his raincoat, like a departing commercial traveler" (13). It is important to note that this officer is not a German; but he is the enemy. He is a cog in the British War machine. He does not fight for the crown or for owner; he is a capitalist dealing in death. It is this personification of rationalism that Jones melds with images of glory and the rhetoric of Romance.

In "To the Rose upon the Rood of Time" Yeats channels the spirit of Ireland through Cuchulain, the figure from Irish folklore who fights and kills a man only

to find out that it was his son: “Red Rose, proud Rose, sad Rose of all my days! / Come near me, while I sing the ancient ways: / Cuchulain battling with the bitter tide” (11). Yeats references both Shelly and Spencer in the poem, rooting his work in English tradition while arguing for the rich spiritual heritage of the Irish. The image of Cuchulain raging against the ocean elicits an emotional effect in the reader *because* of its Irishness. Similarly, but with an opposite effect, Jones’s use of “Y Gododdin, The Battle of Brunanburh and Chanson de Roland, of Chaucer, Malory, Shakespeare and Hopkins, of the Bible and Catholic liturgy” (Noakes 185) elicits Welsh emotion; then the war destroys it. Here, in channeling the meaning-robbing power of war, Jones finds his voice. Eliot comments, “My own belief is that we, including David Jones, have all been desperately anxious to communicate, and maddened by the difficulty of finding a common language. May not the malady perhaps be in the reader, rather than the writer, unless it is a malady of the world to-day from which we all suffer?” (42). If Eliot and Yeats were the forefathers of Modernism, it is Jones who finds its practical use.

Judging Jones’s writing according to the standards of witness poetry provides another example of how it defies classification. It also illuminates another element of the author’s voice. In “Poetic Witness” Thomas Vogler asks, “[I]s witness a surplus added onto literature; or is the literary/poetic added on to witness? Is poetry serving witness, or is witness serving poetry?” (181). *In Parenthesis* provides an “all of the above” answer to this question. Jones’s war book is a combination of experience and an attempt to reinvent aspects of both language and history. Hal Foster’s conclusion that “the traumatic subject does indeed exist, and it has absolute authority” (qtd. in Vogler 178) explains why someone like Jones might be drawn to the conventions of witness poetry. Witness poetry “does not have to be specific; but it does have to be *extreme*” (184). Vogler continues, “In the case of trauma witness poetry, crucial parts of the concept are that the suffering be on a very large scale, that it be human-inflicted, and that the victims be considered innocent” (184). Certainly, the violence Jones experienced on the battlefield was extreme; WWI was absolutely an atrocious event on the grandest of scales; but innocence cannot be ascribed to combatants. To actively support, let alone fight and kill in a war, results in the loss of innocence, the most common of trope (next to death) in war writing of all genres. But the inability to classify *In Parenthesis* as witness poetry is merely an example of its lasting, destabilizing effect.

Jones toys with his readers like a scab, picking at them to expose their underlying, hidden condition of disillusionment in post-WWI Britain. Valentine Cunningham discusses the importance of contextualization: “[Literature] can only be read

and interpreted adequately, in anything approaching its possible fullness, if it's perceived... [within] the dense textures of the wider literature and history of the period in which this particular textual moment, and its immediately containing text...were produced" (7). Jones did not write in a vacuum: In the thirties "[t]he headlines' sense of crisis got refocused: on to European affairs, at whose heart was the rampant rise of fascism, signaled most powerfully by the coming to power in 1933 of Adolf Hitler" (Cunningham 39). He creates *In Parenthesis*—the allegorical account of his real experiences in war—as the British prepare for the next war. If the author is correct in that “the war itself was a parenthesis,” separated from the normal flow of history and the evolution of meaning, his function is to extend the parentheses to encompass not only his wartime experience, but the world he lives in as he writes. Jones must make the wound bleed again.

As society tries to resuscitate the heroic figure that died in Jones's war, *In Parenthesis* reminds society of his death. Jones is keenly aware of the expectations of war writing; but he does not give in to every demand from his audience. With bayonets drawn, moving toward the enemy, Jones's speaker-narrator describes the dreadful task of traversing no-man's-land:

Every one of these, stood, separate, upright, above ground,  
...  
moved in open order and keeping admirable formation  
and at the high-port position  
walking in the morning on the flat roof of the world  
and some walked delicately  
sensible of their particular judgment" (162)

Jones dignifies the occasion: “But how intolerably bright the morning is where we who are alive and remain, walk lifted up, carried forward by an effective word” (162). Jones's “effective word” may have been profane; it may have simply been a well-spoken order to advance. Regardless, “the effective word” is nowhere to be found. The rhetoric that motivates men to inch forward when already on the precipice of death remains a mystery except only to those who were on “the roof of the world.” If Jones's audience wants to gratify themselves by learning this language, they must commit to the death and carnage that ensues. Does this dignified Romance celebrate rather than oppose war?

Fred Crawford charts the development of poetry before, during, and after the war: “Even after the Somme Offensive provided grim evidence that ‘patriotism

is not enough,' poets not only supported the war but also tried to ennoble it. In retrospect, it seems odd to regard the war as a continuation of chivalric tradition, but even those who fought were slow to reject the romance of chivalric combat" (25). Jones rejects "the romance of chivalric combat" by saturating his war book with it. The author's time to reflect also gives him a special vantage from which to write: "As the war progressed, poets' attitudes toward the war changed, which led them to shift their poetic techniques. Poets who modified form and attitude include the Imagists, those searching for a broader perspective, those adopting a comic stance, those who protested... applied a prewar revolution in poetic expression to their perceptions of a new reality" (Crawford 27). Jones simply asks his reader to consider war, to remember it, to accept the wounds it caused and to understand that they should rightly become scars. Jones will never forget his experiences; and his writing suggests that Britain should follow his lead. Still, there is an element of conflict between the Jones who wrote and the Jones who fought.

James Lampinen and Timothy Odegard ask, "So what do people mean when they say things like, 'I'm not the same person anymore'?" (231). In an exploration of diachronic disunity, Lampinen and Odegard claim that there "is a causal connection between the things that happened to them in the past and their current self, even if they can't fully articulate those connections... they feel as if they are not the same person anymore because when they look back on that old self, it doesn't *feel* like them" (231). Private Ball is the unifying bond between the Jones of the 1930s and the Jones who fought with the Royal Welch Fusiliers. Lampinen and Odegard explain that instances of disunified selves from the past are often changed by making their problems "someone else's problem...even if that somebody else is merely a past version of themselves" (233). Jones likely struggled alone, seeking to understand his wartime self in the midst of people who could not understand him. Scholar and personal acquaintance, Rene Hague, believed that Jones's mental breakdowns had nothing to do with his wartime experiences despite his getting ill almost immediately after hearing a broadcast of *In Parenthesis* on BBC radio in 1972 (Matthias 23). Jones's illness peaks at times when he must recall the version of himself that fought in WWI. But he finds a permanent solution to his diachronic disunity in Private Ball, a character upon whom he bestows the wounds of his past.

John Matthias claims that "[a] careful reading of the Preface shows a pride and delight in the type of war that, by David's reckoning, ended in 1916" (24). Despite its author's willingness to highlight the themes of bravery and gallantry through his allusions, *In Parenthesis* is a decidedly anti-war work and David Jones's personal letters do not portray him as a man delighted by his own service. In a letter written

in 1935, Jones describes some “mental miseries” using, as he often did, a warlike rhetoric to discuss “generals” and “Soviets,” echoing the rise of Marxism: “I’ve always always as long as I can ever remember felt my business (however blindly) to be my work, and always knew that everything had got to go for that. I’ve always felt ‘agnostic’ about every other matter” (*A Self Portrait* 75). Jones’s work helps him to escape his miseries; any delight in war perceived is simply a misinterpretation of a traumatized mind trying to put order to the memories of war through writing about it. Jones never considered himself much of a soldier and his writing was his only solace. Still, he was ready to rejoin the fight in 1935: “What of this Italians-Abyssinia war. Thinks what of it—it’s going to be a horrible old nashti orl right. Beal coming up—get your kit ready old son... Shall I go fight for the Abyssinians—I still have my Royal Welsh tunic and cap” (*A Self Portrait* 79). Jones’s words indicate pride, not disillusionment, confusing the matter of Jones’s allegiance further at first glance. Just like his war book, Jones defies classification.

If anything connects Jones to his war book and his protagonist, it is the instance where Private Ball leaves his rifle on the field. Crawford explains how Jones left his rifle unsecured while at the demobilization center and how the event haunted him for years: “Confiding this secret to his friend Peter Orr years later, he asked Orr not to repeat the story lest the military authorities take some action against him even at that late date” (Crawford 223). The separation between Jones’s willingness to put on his Royal Welsh garb and an unrealistic fear of being prosecuted for carelessness are clear instances of diachronic disunity. Jones leaves the issue of guilt and his rifle with Private Ball:

It’s difficult with the rifle.  
 Leave it—under the oak.  
 Leave it for a salvage-bloke  
 let it lie bruised for a monument  
 dispense the authenticated fragments to the faithful.  
 It’s the thunder-besom for us  
 it’s the bright bough borne” (183)

Struggling with the decision to leave the weapon behind for the expediency of escape, Ball is torn between the two choices. His training immediately starts to berate him:

[M]en must really cultivate the habit of treating this weapon with the greatest care and there should be a healthy rivalry among you—it should be a matter of very proper pride and  
Marry it man! Marry it!  
Cherish her, she's your very own. (183)

Ball's reiteration of military doctrine only underscores Jones's guilt about his failure to cherish his weapon at the demobilization center. It is only through writing that he can truly try to put his selves together and create a sense of continuity between what lies inside and outside of the parenthetical war he describes.

Prior to leaving his rifle, Ball experiences the terror of incoming mortar fire. It was likely in an uninteresting corner of the war that Jones also first brushed with death. Interestingly, the vivid account of the details immediately preceding the attack is the most poetic: "The exact disposition of small things—the precise shapes of trees, the tilt of a bucket, the movement of a straw, the disappearing right boot of Sergeant Snell—all minute noises, separate and distinct, in a stillness charged through with some approaching violence—registered not by the ear nor any single faculty" (24). Private Ball perceives everything—understands his surroundings with impeccable clarity—but he cannot describe his means of detecting or becoming aware of the "approaching violence." The threat is so foreign that it cannot be categorized in the same world as "the tilt of a bucket" or "the movement of a straw." Instead, headed the speaker's way is "an on-rushing pervasion, saturating all existence; with exactitude, logarithmic, dial-timed, millesimal—of calculated velocity, some mean chemist's contrivance, a stinking physicist's destroying toy" (24). These descriptors are those of rationalist thought—the type of language you might expect in a laboratory—and Ball finds them foreign to everything he knows. They are also the imprinted memories preceding trauma in the mind of an author; he summons the touchstones of normalcy to immediately show how his understanding of the world was shattered in an instance.

Blissett believes that the reader of war poetry "is required to be exceptionally alert and active. One has the sense of patrolling the no-man's-land between the regularities of parallelism and pattern—a danger zone fraught with sudden breaks in syntax, prickly hyphenations, explosive verbal nouns, deceptive underpunctuation, and other risky devices" (198). Jones follows normalcy with just the sort of description of terror that Blissett would expect:

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. (24)

The “universal world” of meaning is unmade through its juxtaposition with its antithesis: war. Naturally, Private Ball retreats to the world that existed before the shelling: “John Ball picked up his mess-tin and hurried within; ashen, huddled, waited in the dismal straw” (24). The avoidance of trauma gives it its staying power; Ball assumes the roles of fictional character, vehicle of Jones's witness, and—like Ball running for the safety of “dismal straw” after the shelling—British society trying to forget a terrible event.

Samuel Rees claims that “Jones shares with Eliot and Pound a verse style characterized by its eschewal of clear narrative continuity, and by its use of esoteric allusions, abrupt juxtapositions, relative freedom in language(s), idioms, syntax, and verse forms” (136). Jones appropriates this Modernist aesthetic for his own needs, utilizing it an obscene manner to show the disparity between glorified fragments and mortar shells. *In Parenthesis's* climax involves Private Ball hurling a grenade into Mametz Woods during the Battle of the Somme:

You tug at rusted pin—  
it gives unexpectedly and your fingers pressed to released flange.  
You loose the thing into the underbrush.

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 flesh fragile shoots  
that brush the sky

...

And the other one cries from the breaking-buckthorn.  
He calls for Elsa, for Manuela  
for the parish priest of Burkersdorf in Saxe Altenburg. (169)

Jones's speaker adopts a technique which signals his departure from the Modernists; the direct address of “You” connotes a need to teach—rather than

describe—the horrors of war. With adrenaline rushing and fear paralyzing the speaker, experience comes in short, vibrant bursts. Poetry proves the best means of reproducing these bursts because of its ability to convey such concentrated extremes. Jones’s “making new” of language is really an effort to express war in a way that circumvents its unmaking power. Ball utilizes the direct address, fighting to give his author’s account using the conventions of prose or poetry as needed. The author’s experience separates him from the Modernists and allies him with the war poets. The Modernist sought to make language new; the war poets sought to make the war felt. Jones uses the means of the Modernists to achieve the aims of the war poets.

Robert Graves’s “Recalling War” is another work that touches upon the healing wound of British disillusionment. Like *In Parenthesis*, Graves’s 1935 poem describes the scars of being forgotten by a new generation: “Entrance and exit wounds are silvered clean, / The track aches only when the rain reminds. / The one-legged man forgets his leg of wood / The one-armed man his jointed wooden arm” (1-4). Jones describes a war “fought these twenty years ago” (7) from the perspective of still being in the parentheses. At the same time, Graves writes in the present, as the wounds scab over and as

Like a child, dandelions with a switch.  
Machine-guns rattle toy-like from a hill,  
Down in a row the brave tin-soldiers fall:  
A sight to be recalled in elder days  
When learnedly the future we devote  
To yet more boastful visions of despair (41-46)

Children continue on with the perpetuation of the “old lie” warned about in Owen’s most famous poem, “Dulce et Decorum Est.” Graves’s and Owen’s poems are clear warnings about war’s cyclical pattern. Jones, however, takes on the war poet mantle in Modernist fashion, attempting to warn the public not to forget the war that he experienced, defragmenting his consciousness, rebuilding his work using both old and new elements.

Jones’s wartime-self results in the coexistence of a creator-speaker instead of a poet who creates a speaker. Milliseconds before battle he makes certain that his thoughts are known. Ball takes charge of the narration at the exact moments when Jones wants his story to be the most accurate, in the instances where the myths of war are exposed:

Racked out to another turn of the screw  
 ...  
 and the world crumbled away  
 and get ready to advance  
 you have not capacity for added fear only the limbs are leaden  
 to negotiate the slope and rifles all out of balance, clumsied  
 with long auxiliary steel  
 seems five times the regulation weight—  
 it bitches the aim as well. (156)

Jones shares his shattered world—his ambiguous relationship to the war and the Royal Welch Fusiliers—by drawing connections between his experience and his heritage. *The Boast of Dai Greatcoat* stands as the culmination of Jones's unmade reality made new.

Noakes explains that *The Boast* stands in the “ostensible centre of the heroic imagination ... [as] a soldier garbed in (and named after) the standard-issue trench wear, ‘Dai Great Coat’... tells his part in the major campaigns of Western history and myth and legend, but configures this soldierly condition in terms of a most timely paradox, in a series of enigmatic images” (193). Dai begins his boast “with alien care,” suggesting its origin to be a place and time beyond the trenches (Jones 79). He speaks of his fathers who fought with “the Black Prince of Wales,” claiming to have been with “Abel when his brother found him,” mixing ancestral heritage with a building of the “shit-house for Artaxerxes” (79). Jones explains in a note that Artaxerxes's army was destroyed because of a lack of sanitation, the type of death that should have vanished with technology but that resurged in WWI trench warfare. Dai is a man before his time, possessing a superior intellect and wealth of experiences to draw from.

Dai continues his boast: “I was the spear in Balin's hand that made waste King Pellam's land” (78) and even places himself at the cross by claiming, “I saw Him die” (83). Sherry claims that Dai “is not Balin wielding the spear, he is the weapon itself” and “while he is passive in each instance, he is also performing an action, at least in an instrumental way (*The Great War* 193). Dai's passivity reflects that of Ball in the shelling scene. Ball's encounter with the shell mirrors Dai's passive encounters because both characters can perform but not prevent their own destruction. Their relationship to the chivalric narrative suggests that history is not a progression; it is a regression masked in heroism and bravado. In a war “where

any single man's strength is subordinate to the power of the new weaponry, and where individual martial prowess, which offers the source of the distinctive heroic action, is subordinate to the co-ordinate force of massed infantry" (Sherry, *The Great War* 193), Ball and Dai become victims, not the heroic myths of war used for its cyclical continuation.

Compare Dai Greatcoat's boast to the sobbing soldier found on the eve of battle in the opening of Part 7: "He found him all gone to pieces and not pulling himself together nor making the best of things. When they found him his friends came on him in the secluded fire-bay who miserably wept for the pity of it all and for the things shortly to come to pass and no hills to cover us" (153). Jones eschews notions of gallantry and heroism with his use of a passive boast, an unheroic protagonist, and by placing the horrors of war he experienced on display: "The contrast between epic values and Jones's modern perspective reveals how far removed nobility has become from modern war. The Great War had precious little to offer for an epic celebration" (Crawford 225). Neither the sobbing soldier nor the boasting Dai Greatcoat are immune to humanity's best effort at murder. Jones's characters are created only to be undone. But Jones's remains after his war and even after his society has moved on.

Both Wilfred Owen and Jones struggle to find voice because of their victimization in no-man's-land. Though he died in 1918, Owen lived long enough to develop a stammer as part of his post-traumatic stress that only dissipated through therapy and writing. Hipp explains, "The prevalence of disorders of voice suggests that putting the experience into words forms one of the central difficulties with the soldier's comprehension or control over the war experience" (43). Jones's technique is to show the absurdity of heroism through characters like Dai Greatcoat, a man of rich inheritance that dies just like the rest. Hipp continues, "[A]ttempts at psychological healing is their striving for a poetic idiom which will capture their experiences in warfare in a manner that enables their controlling and reenvisioning the war linguistically" (43). Jones's voice emerges through the debasement of chivalric inheritance; but his technique of combining prose with poetry and shattering both conventions also suggests a shattering of selves caught within the loop of diachronic disunity. *In Parenthesis*, then, reenvisions Jones's wartime experience by scrapping the author's previous notions about the war and concluding with a reconstruction of this painful narrative from scratch.

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