The Great War and Modern Memory Study Guide

The Great War and Modern Memory by Paul Fussell

BOOKRAGS

Contents

Plot Summary

The Great War and Modern Memory by Paul Fussell is a look at primarily the literature of World War I. Fussell looks at the different myths, themes, and kinds of things that come about because of the situation of war. The literary style changed because of the war, which is one of the things that Fussell looks at. He begins by looking at a Thomas Hardy poem and its use of irony and then goes on to discuss why war itself is ironic.

He spends much of the introductory chapter giving a history of the war and how the British needed some new methodology to attack the Germans. There is the big preparation for the big attack by Haig, only to find it fully anticipated by the Germans. The British needed the element of surprise and they found this in Plumer. Most of this chapter is given to a discussion of the war, which sets the scene for the literary discussion of the rest of the book. Fussell talks about different aspects of the war, but does not devote as much time to the history of the war as he did in the first chapter.

Fussell says that one of the problems was the assumption that values and pressures were the same as they had been in the previous war, more than one hundred years earlier. The thing is that values and social pressures had changed during that time, as had the language and the kinds of terms that people used. At the beginning of the war there were attempts to portray things like training camp as a humorous situation. They had to make everyone think that the soldier was going off to have fun somewhere when he went to training, and different circumstances are looked at.

Each chapter is concerned with different literary aspects. There is a difference in the English model of the world, which is basically compared to as a big garden. This means that there is a lot of use of pastoral scenes. The elements of the pastoral scene are considered in each of the chapters. There is the use of sunrise and sunset to denote beginnings and endings. There is the use of red poppies and roses to symbolize blood. The rose is the flower that seems to represent England to its soldiers.

Fussell shows how the language and style changed due to the war. Since battlefield conditions were too harsh for some, they more-or-less candy-coated the words in terms of symbolism and allusion. This made it easier to accept the war for many people. Many of the terms, like "over the top", are still in use today.

Fussell's book is interesting reading for literature enthusiasts. It may take a few days to read the book, but there are many interesting points that the author makes.

A Satire of Circumstance

A Satire of Circumstance Summary and Analysis

"By mid-December, 1914, British troops had been fighting on the Continent for over five months. Casualties had been shocking, positions had settled into self-destructive stalemate, and sensitive people now perceived that the war, far from promising to be 'over by Christmas,' was going to extend itself to hitherto unimagined reaches of suffering and irony" (Chap. 1, p. 3).

Fussell begins by quoting a Thomas Hardy poem and says that it offers the mechanism for viewing the war because of its use of irony. He goes on to mention other poems and their use of irony, such as a dog digging at its owner's grave. Fussell refers to Hardy as the master of spiritual irony and uses Hardy's works as examples of why war itself is ironic. He claims that the reason is that every war is worse than it was expected to be because the actions of war are out of proportion to the end results of the war.

The Great War was the most hideous and the most ironic. The press tried to glorify the battles with the names and phrases they used. He uses the entry of Great Britain into the war in August 1914 and how things changed within five months when the original British army had almost been wiped out. The army entry requirements had also been lowered in order to recruit enough men. Both sides were deadlocked by Christmas and 1915 was a year marked by the failure of the British to break through the German lines.

A big problem for the British is that they weren't prepared. They weren't prepared for the amount of munitions they would need and they also carried out attacks on a narrow front, which allowed the Germans to easily attack them. In time, they couldn't fill the ranks with volunteers and had to resort to conscription. This is what the Military Service Act did in 1916.

The British commander was Sir Douglas Haig. It was obvious to him that they needed an attack that was larger and wider than what they had tried in the past. Haig spent the first six months of 1916 preparing this kind of attack to take place on the Somme. He felt that this attack would bring the war to an end. The quantity of manpower would outnumber the Germans seven to one. The attack had to rely on the use of British manpower because the French were so badly beaten at Verdun. This attack eventually became known as the Great Fuck-up among the troops. It was the largest engagement ever fought in history up until that time and more than sixty thousand men were killed on one day in the battle.

The July 1, 1916 Haig offensive was a disaster. The attack had been predicted by the Germans, who had dug-in and waited for them. The bloody battle dashed the British hopes of breaking through the German line and ending the war. There was no winner, but in spite of this, the British continued with the offensive until the bad weather set in during November. It was at this battle that the tank was introduced as a weapon. It

surprised and demoralized the Germans, but the British only had thirty-two tanks and they weren't very effective against the mass numbers engaged at the Somme. In March of 1917, the British finally captured Bapaume, their first objective in the Somme battle. By this time German submarines were active in the Atlantic and this brought America into the war in April 1917. The Allies knew they would win the war in time.

At this time a more successful attack was carried out by General Sir George Plumer. Plumer had the imagination that Haig didn't have and surprised the Germans with his attack at Vimy Ridge. The French miners had dug tunnels under the German lines and filled them with explosives. The imagination of this method of attack took the Germans by surprise.

It was obvious that if enough tanks were used, the British could overcome the entrenched Germans. The Germans had shifted their troops to the Western Front by the end of 1917. By this time Russia had withdrawn from the war due to the Bolshevik revolution, so the Germans didn't need their troops on the Eastern Front. The Germans attacked along the Somme in March 1918 and handed the British a stunning defeat as they penetrated forty miles through the British lines. Haig then issued a no retreat order, saying that every position must be held no matter what the cost. The troops never received the order and the German advance continued and then just halted. The German soldiers wearied of war just as defeated armies do.

In August, the Allies broke through the German lines when they counterattacked. By November, the Kaiser had fled, Germany became a Republic, and the peace armistice was signed. Eight and one half million men lost their lives in this war. "Irony is the attendant of hope, and the fuel of hope is innocence. One reason the Great War was more ironic than any other is that its beginning was more innocent" (Chap. 1, p. 18).

There were many assumptions by the British on entering the war. They hadn't been engaged in a major war for almost one hundred years and felt there would be a few marches and battles and that it would quickly end. They were wrong. They also assumed that there were the same values and social pressures as in the past. Language is also affected by time and war. Fussell presents a chart showing the high diction and discusses how it has changed.

Modern war requires an accompanying literature. It must portray things like training camp as fun, with all of the camaraderie occurring between the troops. Fussell goes on to point out some pieces of literature that achieved this goal in both world wars. Many survivors of the battles, interviewed after the war, describe their experiences using ironic terms.

The Troglodyte World

The Troglodyte World Summary and Analysis

"The idea of 'the trenches' has been assimilated so successfully by metaphor and myth ('Georgian complacency died in the trenches') that it is not easy now to recover a feeling for the actualities. Entrenched, in an expression like entrenched power, has been a dead metaphor so long that we must bestir ourselves to recover its literal sense" (Chap. 2, p. 36). There was a trench system that moved very little from the winter of 1914 until the spring of 1918. It moved only a few miles in either direction during that time period. There were trenches running through France and Belgium for about four hundred miles. This was known as the British Line and there were thousands of miles of trenches in total in this area. Many pieces of art and architecture were destroyed in the war.

Usually there were three lines of trenches, with the front line trench located about fifty yards from the enemy. Behind it, about one hundred yards, was the support line trench, and a few hundred yards behind it was the reserve line. There were firing trenches and communications trenches and saps. Saps were the shallowest and were used to advance a position. The firing trench was six to eight feet deep and four to six feet wide. Men did not look over the trench; they used periscopes. The trenches zigzagged every few yards and were numbered by sections of thirty yards each with directional and traffic control signals. They were like an underground city but they were cold, wet sinking places. The German trenches were a contrast to those of the British. They were deeper and cleaner and some even had bunk beds and kitchens and electricity.

The day in the trenches began about four-thirty in the morning, with the troops ready for a dawn attack by the Germans, since dawn was always a favorite attack time. If there was no attack they would stand down and prepare breakfast. If it was quiet during the day, the soldiers made repairs to the trenches and equipment, wrote letters, and relaxed. They stayed hidden in the trenches during the daylight hours, only leaving the trenches during the dark to make repairs to fences and dig new saps. This is when they moved around supplies and equipment.

Many writers wrote about their lives before and after the war. The sky and sunsets were particularly popular topics, and Fussell quotes Evelyn Waugh's opening to Officers and Gentlemen as an example. The sunrise and sunset are used to dramatize the effects of war with the war ruining the beauty and effects of nature. One very popularly quoted poem is 'For the Fallen' by Laurence Binyon, which was written when the way was only seven weeks old. It talks about how they won't grow old like the ones who are left will, and is referring to the soldiers who have died or will die in the war.

George Sherston uses the sky to describe various relationships. It is twilight when he first meets a new friend. Several months later the sky is angry and red when the friend in buried in a sack. Sherston used to carry as a good luck piece, a chunk of fire opal,

which he referred to as his pocket sunset. Most of this reference and use of sunrise and sunset is gone by the time of World War II.

Poems about the Great War rely on traditional ritual meaning where dawn represents a new beginning or something that is morally meaningful. Dawn is usually associated with volunteers, as in Thomas Hardy's "Men Who March Away". As a form of a beginning, dawn is also a call for the beginning of action. Sometimes the flash of guns is referred to as a false dawn, and Blunden is quoted to illustrate this point. Dawn is associated with marching into battle.

During World War II, many soldiers fought far from home. Other soldiers were stationed quite close to their home, only a short train ride away. For them, the situation was difficult to grasp, in that they were sitting in trenches and a few miles away, life was going on as usual for everyday people. The irony of the situation is that the troops were basically in exile, but they were very close to home with newspaper and mail service. They were close enough that their magazine subscriptions continued with a simple change of address. Stores like Harrods had a gift assortment that could be sent to the men at the front.

The men in the trenches were so close but so far away from home and ordinary life. This was the irony of the war in Europe for them. This closeness to home in the first war is one of the things that Hardy captured in his works. He could hear the sounds of guns across the Channel.

When the war ended, all of the trenches had to be filled in. The area was like a graveyard, with craters and ditches with metal buried all over the area. Today, there are vegetable fields along the Somme where the fierce battle was fought. The farmers still find some war garbage buried in the fields. Many of the little huts that used to house British soldiers in the field are used today as tool sheds. Human bones are still sometimes found.

While the war was going on, it seemed endless to those who were involved. They thought it would never end.

Adversary Proceedings

Adversary Proceedings Summary and Analysis

'What we can call gross dichotomizing is a persisting imaginative habit of modern times, traceable, it would seem, to the actualities of the Great War. 'We' are all here on this side; 'the enemy' is over there. 'We' are individuals with names and personal identities; 'he' is a mere collective entity. We are visible; he is invisible. We are normal; he is grotesque. Our appurtenances are natural; his, bizarre. He is not as good as we are" (Chap. 3, p. 75). Life in the trenches is rough on humans. When it is prolonged, it has various psychological, social, and political implications. For example, they knew the Germans were there, but weeks might pass without them seeing any. The soldiers become polarized in their thinking. The enemy is different than they are; they don't think in the same way. The time spent in the trenches resulted in the enemy being described in different terms by survivors of the war experience. The Germans are usually described in terms of the color grey, since it was the color of their uniforms at the time.

In many instances, the mind imagines the enemy to be bigger than life. Fussell uses Blunden literature as examples of this, where the grenade thrower is imagined to be stretching over his trench. This kind of us and them confrontation is basically expressed in terms of modern versus habit. This is another way of saying that it is in terms of one thing expressed in terms of another thing.

Another soldier in a book by Stuart Cloete, called, How Young They Died, views time as being a dividing line that a train whistle divided. This is analogous to his experiences during the war. Before being sent to the Sommes, he was cheerful and proud to be in France. Two weeks later he was telling a different story about suffering a seventh hell.

There is also quite a dichotomy between the officers and the soldiers. The soldiers in the trenches are subject to the commands of the officers in the rear. Examples from literature are presented to illustrate this situation. Many are from train stations and the differences in the travel situations of the different ranked men. The troops felt that the officers didn't know what was happening on the front lines. The higher ups did not understand the situation that the men were in and they felt just as distant from the English people as they did from their commanders. Some soldiers experienced a deep hatred for officers and civilians. Many soldiers were not always truthful of their war experiences in their letters. Even if they did, it would have been cut out of the censors. There was also censorship of the press during this time.

A variety of the works of Siegfried Sassoon are discussed in the next session, and how the different works deal with different periods in his life is discussed. The last of the volumes, called Siegfried's Journey, deals with the Great War period from the viewpoint of the Second World War since it was published in 1945.

There is also a discussion of Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man, whose last part has the character George Sherston in the Cavalry in autumn of 1914. His character goes through training and loses friends in the battles. His best friend is shot at the front in 1915 and he goes on a mission of revenge on the night patrol by trying to track a prisoner. The second part of the trilogy, Memoirs of an Infantry Officer, is concerned with the irony of war. The irony is expressed in terms of repeated experiences in the trenches and then in the quiet of home. George is injured and lunching in his London club when the Messines attack begins. The final volume, Sherston's Progress, was written during the Great Depression, when there were already signs of the coming war in Europe. In this volume, Sherston is in a psychiatric hospital where he attributes it to his pacifist's views. He figures he will only have peace if he returns to the war. The purpose of the trilogy is to show the ironic redemption of the shallow Sherston as he becomes caught up in the events of the war. Even though the trilogy makes a moral point, there is no moral point in Sassoon's life.

Myth, Ritual, and Romance

Myth, Ritual, and Romance Summary and Analysis

"A world of such 'secrets,' conversions, metamorphoses, and rebirths is a world of reinvigorated myth. In many ways it will seem to imply a throwback way across the nineteenth and eighteenth centries to Renaissance and medieval modes of thought and feeling. That such a myth-ridden world could take shape in the midst of a war representing a triumph of modern industrialism, materialism, and mechanism is an anomaly worth considering. The result of inexpressible terror long and inexplicably endured is not merely what Northrop Frye would call 'displaced' Christianity. The result is also a plethora of very un-modern superstitions, talismans, wonders, miracles, relics, legends, and rumors" (Chap. 4, p. 115). Personalities change as people are exposed to war.

There is also the story of the Crucified Canadian. In this one a captured Canadian soldier was crucified on a tree with his hands and feet held by bayonets as the Germans stood around until he died. There were different versions of this story concerning the nationality of the soldier and the location of the crucifixion. This story provided a lot of symbolic suggestion for writers, such as Robert Nichols's "Battery Moving Up to a New Position from Rest Camp: Dawn". In this poem, soldiers who are walking by a church find that they could have injuries like those Jesus suffered in the crucifixion. Many other writers like Sassoon and Wilfred Owen compare the soldiers marching off to battle with a Christ that is marching to his crucifixion.

There were many rumors surrounding the farmers who continued to work their fields behind the lines. One was that the direction of the plowing was an indication of where troops or embankments were. Another was that the color of the plow horse was a method of signaling troop movements. This was also attributed to the pattern of laundry that was hung out to dry.

Another rumor fed many short stories. This was the one of a German officer that appeared in the trenches before attacks. This mystery story goes on for the entire war, even though he is never captured or seen returning to the German side. He is always wearing a soft cap, whereas the British troops had steel helmets. Blunden and George Coppard both have stories about him. This officer-spy rumor spawned many mutations. Henry Williams had the officer-spy as an admiral who was a mad inventor.

A rumor of most wars concerns deserters. These deserters were of all nationalities and lived underground or in caves and only came out at night after battles to steal what they could from the wounded and the corpses. They didn't know if the wounded were hallucinating or if there really were thieves of this type. These kinds of rumors have various emotional effects. The wounded are left alone in the battlefield at night and this causes shame in those who abandoned them. The story of packs of deserters also

basically takes a slap at authority. The fact that the deserters all of various nationalities means that the war is the enemy of both sides.

Other rumors surrounded good luck charms of various kinds and their power to deflect bullets and other projectiles. Other myths had to do with what the soldier did and didn't do. There were also many rumors and myths surrounding the number three. The number played prominently in the methodology of the war. There were three lines of trenches; a unit was divided into three groups with one alert while the other two rested; there were three men in every bay, etc. Many came to view things of war in terms of three. Red, white and blue came to symbolize injury and hospitalization, with red representing blood, white represented the ambulance and blue the colors of the robes the patients wore, according to a poem, "Tricolor" by someone called R.W.M.

The military use of threes fed many myths in literature. Pythagoras views three as a perfect number since it has a beginning, middle, and end. Neptune had a trident; Pluto had a three-headed dog; the riddle of the Sphinx divided life into three parts. There are three virtues, faith, hope, and charity. There are three Furies, three Harpies, and three Graces. Plays are triadic in nature since they have beginnings, middles ,and ends. In the military, maneuvers are divided into three parts: the preparations, the execution and the critique.

There was a ruined basilica with a statue of the Virgin and Child on top in Albert, France that was the source of many myths. Some believed the war would end when the statue fell into the street. Both the Germans and the French tried to hit the statue with artillery. Then the myth evolved that the side that shot down the statue would lose the war. The British finally toppled the statue in April 1918 when the Germans captured the town. Trees and forests are also used in the literature of the war, just as they always have been.

David Jones is an English-Welsh artist and author who wrote of the war and his experiences in it. He wrote of lives in the trenches and of the myth of the crucifixion. His work In Parenthesis concerns the after effects of war and the re-attachment of traditional meanings and values. The traditions of war itself result in suffering being a form of sacrifice and heroism being the result of individual efforts. The poem tries to rationalize war. The seven-part poem has John Ball as the representative British soldier.

Oh What a Literary War

Oh What a Literary War Summary and Analysis

The literature of the time is alive with allusion. Stephen Graham discusses Clarence's dream, where he talks about jewels scattered about on the bottom of the sea like skulls and bones. When they find that the Gallipoli expedition is postponed, they say that the word postponed is like hell.

There were two movements that coincided in England at the time the Great War occurred. The first was the belief that education included classical and English literature. The other movement involved self-improvement and popular education. The world's classics were considered to be texts. Literature and the arts were considered to be the main form of entertainment. Thomas Hardy was a very popular author.

"With all this reading going on and with all this consciousness of the world of letter adjacent to the actual world - even louse-hunting was called 'reading one's shirt' - it is to be expected that one's reports on experience will to an extraordinary degree lean on literature or recognize its presence and authority. A standard experience during the war was the company officer's discovery that his attitude toward his men, beginning in anxiety and formality, had turned into something close to devotion. The men trusted their officer not just to safeguard their lives if he could but to deal with them decently when out of danger." (Chap. 5, p. 164).

There were a variety of poems and other works of literature that expressed this relationship, like Herbert Read's 'My Company.' This relationship is why they don't have many mutinies during battle because they have a relationship based on trust. The war experience literalizes what had once been figurative. Pilgrim's Progress is mentioned quite a bit with its references and allusions to war.

Some thought that the English language was not adequate to deal with war, but it is pointed out that there are adequate words and terms to express the various situations. In some cases, it is pointed out that even when dead, the British soldier exudes moral superiority. The British even look different while they are lying dead in the field, as if they had taken care in their last moments to project a particular image. For the most part, the war began for the British in terms of language following the assassination of the Archduke Ferdinand. Serbia became known as Serbia and various words in the language changed from the German.

From the appearance in publications, the Ypres Salient was a slight protuberance. In actuality, it was an eighteen square mile enclosure in which troops were trapped and subject to shelling from all sides. This is an example of what Fussell calls equivocation.

There were also euphemisms used for various things. The 1917 French mutinies were called the acts of collective indiscipline. Death was denoted as going west, going out of it, going under, and to be knocked out, among other terms.

The troops also had some other uses of the vernacular. They had the Anglicized names of European cities, like Etaples was eat-apples, as well as other pet names for the cities and places, like Idiot Crossroads. There was also a vocabulary that developed that troops used in their everyday speech as they moved around. Germans were called Jerry or old Jerry. The word bugger was used to refer to passing units on the road. Another way of dealing with the war was to discuss it in a matter of fact way. This is the antithetical style of sang-froid. This is a direct way of saying what transpired, instead of using symbols or allusion.

Many terms stemmed from the war, such as trench coat. Some terms, such as "goes over the top" and 'behind the lines", were adopted into everyday usage. The war changed the language and the usage of language as people tried to find terms that softened the effects of the realities of the war. Some of these terms are still in use today.

Theater of War

Theater of War Summary and Analysis

"Peculiar to military language is the use of terms with significant unintended meanings which to the outsider may easily seem ironic. Mess is an example; so is fatigue. The conscript ordered to Fall out! at the end of a thirty-mile training march will find it hard to avoid an ironic response. . . The most obvious reason why 'theater' and modern war seem so compatible is that modern wars are fought by conscripted armies, whose members know they are only temporarily playing their ill-learned parts" (Chap. 6, p. 191).

Some writers associate the military with theater. The men are wearing uniforms and have character parts, like private, sergeant, etc. Before a battle, they calmly discuss the plans and tactics. If there was a siren, the speaker would pause for a fraction of a second, then finish his sentence before they would take cover. They all had their roles of actor and audience. Blunden's book, Undertones of War, and George Adams's Behind the Scenes at the Front, both illustrate the use of the theatrical figure.

The British soldiers are considered to have a flair for theatrics. Fussell thinks that there are two reasons for this. The first is due to the British class system, and the other is due to Shakespeare being British and basically considered a national asset. The pre-war class system in Britain was the most pronounced in Europe. People were placed on the social scale by their clothing and accent. Class distinctions also applied to the military, as class and antiquity determined their positions in battle. These class distinctions were supposed to apply to the dead also, but the Imperial War Graves Commission ruled that the dead were all considered to be equal. The traditional social distinctions did not apply to the French cemeteries.

Robert Graves's works are discussed with examples from Goodbye to All That, which basically tells the story of his life. He enters the military at the age of nineteen when the war began. He receives a commission and is stationed at Bethune and then Laventie. He meets Sassoon and his Lieutenant David Thomas when he joins the First Battalion. The lines of the three characters follow that of their class. At time each character plays a role as the audience where they listen; at other times they play the role of actor. Their friend is killed in action and Graves is seriously injured and is listed as dead. He has to write his family to convince them that he will recover.

The book also includes many other pieces of written text, like his students' examination papers, letters, and other documents that fit in with much of the literature of the time, which portrays many of these documents in their farcical ineptitude. When Graves recovers from his injuries, he returns to his unit on the Somme. He comes down with bronchitis and is sent to a hospital on the Isle of Wight. When he is released, he spends the remainder of the war in Ireland and England, and marries Nancy Nicholson in January of 1918. After he is demobilized, he contracts Spanish influenza and takes

almost a year to recover. Afterwards, he attends Oxford to study English literature. After completing his thesis, they move to Egypt where the character has a teaching job.

To Americans, most of the sites of both World War I and II were distant and not known to them. The song "Over There" was basically an American song of World War I. The only knowledge most Americans have of the war comes from the movies, unless they were in the military.

Anthony Burgess is writer who has made the Great War the backdrop for his novel The Wanting Seed. The book is set in the twenty-first century with World War I like trench battles to control the size of the population. When the main character Tristram Foxe's wife is pregnant by Tristram's brother Derek, she runs off to the Midlands to have her babies. He searches for her and becomes a pariah or a conscript in an unknown war. He doesn't know who the enemy is but figures there must be one and a war because there is an army. He is demoted when he lets it be known to his men that he wonders what the war is all about.

When his unit is marching, Tristram decides that the war is a farce. The sounds of the battle are being amplified by a scratchy record playing on a record player. He tells them that the whole thing is a fake and doesn't see why they should have sentries at the front. When he is at the front, he finds during the battle that the enemies are women, not Orientals. He plays dead lying in the trench and escapes to London and is reunited with his wife. He had been in what was called an extermination session where the dead are made into bully beef.

Neither of the two books is very plausible and are both the products of their author's imaginations. They show the way in which the war sets the stage for novels of these kinds.

Arcadian Recourses

Arcadian Recourses Summary and Analysis

"If the opposite of war is peace, the opposite of experiencing moments of war is proposing moments of pastoral. Since war takes place outdoors and always within nature, its symbolic status is that of the ultimate antipastoral" (Chap. 7, p. 231). Yet, there are many things pastoral in the literature about the war. There is talk of flowers, birds, bees, gardens, nymphs, and such things. This is basically the model-like world of English writing. This English model is quite prevalent in literature, and that is what this chapter is all about.

Gardens have always been important factors in English literature and the use of the pastoral also applies to some of the war literature. There is a great deal of use of gardens and flowers in the war literature. For example, Wilfred Owen's "Exposure" talks about the men freezing in the trenches as they dream of being in grassier blossom filled ditches. In other works, barbed wire is discussed in terms of thickets, like garden hedges. The use of the pastoral allusion is good in getting across the point of irony.

Shepherds and sheep are also a part of things pastoral and are used as such in the literature. Generals and other commanding officers are referred to as shepherds tending to their sheep. There are many comparisons of soldiers as sheep being led to slaughter, or to an innocent death. Sheep and shepherds are not enough to make a situation pastoral. The pastoral also requires birds and the songs of birds like the larks and nightingales. Larks are associated with dawn and nightingales are associated with sunset. There are various references cited such as Sassoon as Cloete as to how references to these birds are used.

Flowers, such as roses and poppies, are also a part of the pastoral. Both of these flowers are a blood red color, so they have symbolic value for the war literature. Red roses carried the meaning of sacrifice and loyalty in the Middle Ages and were always a mainstay of English poetry. To many people, the rose meant loyalty to England, even if the rose was in France.

Elegies are also based on the pastoral. The speaker of an elegy becomes aware of his own mortality. The use of perennial flowers tends to lend credence to the immortality of the situation. An example of this is Blunden's Undertones of War. This work illustrates the use of the pastoral with the use of irony. The work tells the story of Edmund Blunden's adventures in the war, and various passages are presented in support of different literary points, like the use of the pastoral. Blunden is at Ypres when artillery fire strikes the position he is at and kills many of the people he was with. This attack was to haunt him for the rest of his life.

Blunden has been changed by the war. His work exemplifies many personifications and allusion but his style is busy with many rhetorical questions and exclamations. Some

say that Blunden is trying to escape into the past and others say, if he is, then let him. It doesn't really matter. Blunden has made his point about the war.

Soldier Boys

Soldier Boys Summary and Analysis

"Since antiquity everyone who has experienced both war and love has known that here is a curious intercourse between them. The language of military attack - assault, impact, thrust, penetration - has always overlapped with that of sexual importunity. Seventeenth-century wit, so conscious of its classical inheritance, would be sadly enfeebled if deprived of its staple figure of 'dying' on one's 'enemy'" (Chap. 8, p. 270). There are many literary links between war and sexuality. Looting is usually associated with rape. Masturbation is usually associated with the excitement of fighting in the infantry and on the battlefield.

The soldier's world in the battlefield is basically a womanless world. The soldier is somewhat deprived of affection and sought affection as a way of countering the loneliness and terror of the battle front. Homosexuality can also be an issue and can function in the same way as love for women. For some, the absence of woman was a blessing since they preferred the company of men and the army and war gave them a life that was not complicated by women.

In the literature, men developed crushes on officers as in Grave's But It Still Goes On, which is a comedy about two young people, David and Charlotte. In actuality, both of them are secret homosexuals and in love with someone else. David finally confesses this fact to Charlotte.

In most of the literature, the men who were worshipped or homosexual were usually portrayed as blonds. This was true of German corpses also. This specialness of blonds is portrayed by Sassoon, Rupert Brooke, D. H. Lawrence, A.C. Benson, and Frances Cornford. A.E. Houseman also made a contribution to the war with the word "lad". Young male beauty was exemplified by the Greek god Uranians. There are many examples of this in the literature, such as Frederick Rolfe's The Artist, G.G. Gillett's The Spirit Lamp, and Rennell Rodd's Requiescat.

Wilfred Owen had his own homoerotic theme to his writing before the war. These would later be glorified in his poems of war. He served in the war and was injured. When he was released in 1917, he was assigned to Scarborough. He wanted to return to the front, even though he knew he would be killed. He was killed in November, right before the armistice became effective. His mother allowed the publication of his works after he was dead.

Bathing soldiers are also a part of wartime literature. Naked soldiers are vulnerable and this is shown in bathing scenes. Robert Nichols is one of the writers who portrays the vulnerability of soldiers through their bathing. He writes of officers watching their men bathe and wondering how many would be alive soon. These are mostly pastoral scenes

as are those by Sassoon and Blunden. Owen remembers the pleasant days of boys bathing.

Most of the examples using bathing soldiers are basically conveying the vulnerability of the naked flesh and the threats of metal artillery and other weapons against it. That is the thrust of Keith Douglas's poem "Mersa" and F.T. Prince's "Soldiers Bathing".

Persistence and Memory

Persistence and Memory Summary and Analysis

"As we have seen, the memoir is a kind of fiction, differing from the 'first novel' (conventionally an account of crucial youthful experience told in the first person) only by continuous implicit attestations of veracity or appeals to documented historical fact" (Chap. 9, p. 310). When personal writing moves from the strict daily diary, they begin to approach the figurative and the fictional. Sometimes the diaries do not capture the event in the way the writer had hoped.

Fiction is dependent on the hero's power of action. This is part of Frye's Theory of Modes. He talks about there being five modes that go around in a circle. The characters go from being free in the pre-war days to being prisoners of wartime bondage and absurdity, and life in Britain seems to commemorate the war. This is in terms of the odd closing times of the pubs with the afternoon closing. Eggs and chips became a popular meal because bacon and steak were scarce.

During the Second World War, the behavior on the front and military policy was influenced by the experiences in the First War. Ted Hughes was a wireless operator for the RAF as well as a writer and poet. In his writing, he explored the First War. Michael Longley also explored the First War from the viewpoint of a burial taking place in Ulster. He conveyed the irony of the situation in that way.

Some feel that they have a duty toward the war. This may mean visiting battlefields or other sites. This is a view expressed by Owen in a letter to his mother. Thomas Pynchon's Gravity's Rainbow discusses the voluntary torment of the war. There were different organizations involved in the war, like Special Operations Executive who purpose was espionage. They were like an exclusive club, although some people thought they were nutcases.

There were many sights and smells at the front and there are many ways of trying to remember them. Pynchon talks about the filth and the terrible smell and says that the word shit is mild in comparison. And then there is Pudding, tiptoeing through the different rooms, each of which contains a test for him. This leads him to his climax of sadistic sex.

The book begins and ends with references to Thomas Hardy.

Characters

Sir Douglas Haig

Sir Douglas Haig was the commander of the British forces in World War I. He was a stubborn Scot, inflexible and intolerant, especially of the French. He was religious and attended a Church of Scotland service every week, no matter where he was stationed. He attended Clifton College as a youth. He realized the shortcomings in the method of attack the British had historically used, and believed that any successful attack had to be broader and stronger. This is what he and his staff spent six months planning in 1916. This attack was to take place at the Somme. It became known among the troops as the Great Fuck-up. It was the largest engagement in the history of the world and it was a disaster for the British. There was no element of surprise. The Germans were dug in and waiting for them. The event marked the end of hopes of breaking through the German lines and ending the war. In spite of the events at the Somme, Haig was promoted to the rank of Field Marshall in early 1917.

General Sir George Plumer

Plumer was a general in the British army and is described as unmilitary in appearance. He is viewed as the intellectual hero of the war in that he had the imagination that Haig lacked. The big problem that the British were facing was that there was no imagination in any of the attacks that they planned. The Germans anticipated him. This changed with Plumer. He planned the April 1917 attack at Messines, where French miners tunneled under German lines and filled the tunnels with explosives. After the explosives were detonated, Plumer led the attack against the Germans. The attack resulted in ten thousand casualties, with seven thousand Germans taken prisoner. The Germans had been caught off guard by the imagination of Plumer's attack. This was one of the first victories the British experienced in the war.

Edmund Blunden

Edmund Blunden is an author who is quoted throughout the book. He was born it Tottenham Court Road in 1896, the son of a London schoolmaster. They moved to Kent, and the child eventually went on to Oxford. He was eighteen at the time of the war. He married in 1918 and was discharged from the army in 1919. He taught literature at the University of Tokyo and in other places after World War II. He died in Suffolk in 1974 at the age of seventy-seven. Fussell uses Blunden's work as examples for many of the points that he is trying to make.

David Jones

David Jones is an English-Welsh artist and writer who was born in Brockley, Kent in England. His father was Welsh and his mother was English. He learned to draw at an early age because his father was an artist. He attended the Camberwell Art School before the war and the Westminster School of Art after the war. During the war, he served in the royal Welch Fusiliers and was assigned to the front from December, 1915 to March, 1918. Among his works are In Parenthesis and The Anathemata. After the war he joined an artist's colony in Sussex and spent several years there.

Wilfred Owen

Wilfred Owen was a poet of the period. His works exhibited the early twentieth century homoeroticism. Owen was born on March 1893 in Shropshire. His father was a railway official and his mother was totally dedicated to her children, especially the oldest, Wilfred. His mother encouraged him to choose a career in the church but he decided he wasn't suited for it. He moved to Bordeaux in 1913 and taught at Berlitz. He then became a private tutor until he enlisted in the Artists' Rifles in 1915.

Lord Derby

Lord Derby is the British government official who devised the first conscription scheme for World War I in 1916. There weren't enough volunteer soldiers to fill the ranks of the army no matter how much they lowered their admission standards, so a non-voluntary measure had to be resorted to. The conscription was accomplished with the Military Service Act. This was said to mark the beginning of the modern world.

Robert Graves

Robert Graves was a writer. He wrote for money, not for the art form. He was born in 1895 to a Scotch-Irish father who was a school inspector as well as a composer and collector. His mother was German. He was nineteen at the outbreak of the war when he enlisted.

Siegfried Sassoon

Siegfried Sassoon was a writer who is cited throughout the book. He was born of a good family in 1886 in Kent. He was of Jewish descent and had a brother who died at Gallipoli in 1915. Sassoon was educated at Marlborough College and at Clare College and left Cambridge before taking a degree. He loved horses and was quite a horseman. He was in the cavalry in August 1914.

Erich Maria Remarque

Erich Maria Remarque is the author of All's Quite of the Western Front, which is citied several times during the book.

Thomas Hardy

Thomas Hardy is a British author who is quoted often by Fussell. He is said to be the first author of the modern world that began with World War I.

Objects/Places

Verdun, France

Verdun is the battle site where the French were badly beaten.

The Somme

The Somme is a river in France which was the site of the largest engagement in history up to that time.

Albert, France

Albert is a town in France where there is a ruined basilica with the Virgin and Child atop.

Ypres Salient

Ypres Salient was a battlefield in France. It was basically an eighteen square mile enclosure that troops would become trapped in.

Isle of Wight

The Isle of Wight is an island in the Channel and the sight of a military hospital during World War I.

Germany

Germany was the site of battles in both World War I and World War II.

Ireland

Ireland is the location of some of the British bases and troops during the war.

Germany

Germany was the enemy of the British in World Wars I and II.

England

England was a participant in both wars and is the country where many of the authors are from.

United States

The United States was also a participant in both wars and is also home to many of the authors that are discussed.

Themes

Harshness of War

One of the themes of the book is expressed right from the beginning, and has to do with the harshness of war. Fussell spends most of the first chapter of the book dealing with the realities of war. He describes the trenches in detail, how there were three rows with each row having a different purpose. He explains or tries to explain about the smell and the filth, especially after rain. The trenches are cold, wet places. The German trenches were a little more sophisticated than the Allied trenches.

The harshness of war is also exemplified by the fact that many times it could not be referred to directly. This is why there is so much language that came into being to refer to the war. One of the terms that has survived is "over the top". Another way to soften the harshness is to use symbols and allusion instead of referring to an event directly.

The harshness of war is not a new theme for books, but this book discusses the realities of the war and then looks at how people and literature deal with these realities.

Change

Change is another theme of the book in that the book looks at how things change from one war to another. Fussell points out that prior to World War I, it had been one hundred years since England had been involved in a major war. Views changed during that one hundred years, even though the British thought that the social pressures and values had stayed the same.

Change is represented by the distance factor. For the soldiers from England, the war was so close but so far away. In some cases they would have dinner in a London restaurant with their family, and then a few hours later, when their leave ended, they were back at the front. The change in their condition was hard for many of them to comprehend, where they could have the comforts of home and then just a few short hours later be back in the trenches with the horrors of war.

All war represents change and the Great War was no different. This change was illustrated in various ways throughout the book.

The English Model

Another theme running through the book is the English Model. This basically refers to the view taken in literature of the war. The English Model is based on the English way of life. This means looking at things from the English point of view. Much of this had to do with gardening, as the British were very big on gardening at this time. It is said that most of the men in the army or navy came from homes with gardening.

The English Model then views things in terms of a garden, or the components of a garden. This means that there is a lot of symbolism and allusion. There are a lot of references to sunrise and sunset. Sunrise is seen as a beginning, with the sunset seen as an end. Most battles begin at sunrise, so sunrise is written about with that in mind.

There are also many other references to nature, many of them based on the British pastoral view of things. Flowers, birds, birdsongs, sheep, and shepherds are relevant in the war literature because they are all a part of the English model.

Style

Perspective

The book is written from the third person point of view. The author is clearly the narrator of the story, even though he uses quite a few quotations. The book is about the Great War but focuses on the British literature pertaining to the war, and Fussell does focus on British authors.

Fussell teaches English Literature at the University of Pennsylvania, so he is well qualified to write this kind of book. Instead of just looking at British writers, what he does is to look at the literature during periods of wartime. He ends up emphasizing the Great War, or World War I, and looks at how literature treated the war and changed with the war.

The intended audience is anyone who is interested in the Great War or in English literature.

Tone

The book is written in the third person with the narrator being the author. The book is pro-English so obviously one can't say that Fussill is objective concerning the war. Fussill takes a pro-British view as he looks at the role of British authors in the war literature.

The reader can sense the pro-British view of the author and is effected by the fact that Fussill is very obviously pro-British. There is nothing wrong with the pro-British view because he is viewing the war from the perspective of the British. His view does not force the material on the reader, but the reader is aware that Fussill's involvement is on the side of the British. The reader can catch the author's enthusiasm for the subject as he reads through the book.

Fussill lets his pro-English literature view come through but he doesn't let any other views come through. He is very objective about the topic of homosexuality that he covers in the book.

Structure

The book is divided into nine chapters, each with a written title that is more or less descriptive of the material included in the chapter. Each chapter is based on a topic and not on an author, so there is some overlap between the chapters and the same work may be discussed in more than one place in the book. But this format allows the writer to bring in many authors when he is giving examples.

There is also a Preface, a Contents, a List of Illustrations, Notes, and an Index. The Illustrations give the book a more real feel since there are faces that go with some of the names. The Notes are good because the reader can easily check any of the references that are cited in the book.

The structure works well for the book.

Quotes

"Every war is ironic because every war is worse than expected. Every war constitutes an irony of situation because its means are so melodramatically disproportionate to its presumed ends. In the Great War eight million people were destroyed because two persons, the Archduke Francis Ferdinand and his Consort, had been shot. The Second World War offers even more preposterous ironies. Ostensibly begun to guarantee the sovereignty of Poland, that war managed to bring about Poland's bondage and humiliation. Air bombardment, which was supposed to shorten the war, prolonged it by inviting those who were its targets to cast themselves in the role of victim-heroes and thus stiffen their resolve." Chap. 1, pp. 7-8

"The new year, 1915, brought the repeated failure of British attempts to break through the German line and to unleash the cavalry in pursuit. They failed, first, because of insufficient artillery preparation - for years no one had any idea how much artillery fire would be needed to destroy the German barbed wire and to reach the solid German deep dugouts; second, because of insufficient reserves for exploiting a suddenly apparent weakness; and third, because the British attacked on excessively narrow frontages. Enabling every part of the ground gained to be brought under retaliatory fire." Chap. 1, p. 10

"During May and June the Germans advanced to great effect near the rivers Lys and Marne. But unwittingly they were engaged in demonstrating the most ironic point of all, namely, that successful attack ruins troops. In this way it is just like defeat. This is a way of reiterating Blunden's point that it is the war that wins. The spectacular German advance finally stopped largely for this reason: the attackers, deprived of the sight of 'consumer goods' by years of efficient Allied blockade, slowed down and finally halted to loot, get drunk, sleep it off, and peer about. The champagne cellars of the Marne proved especially tempting." Chap. 1, pp. 17-18

"Henri Barbusse estimates that the French front alone contained about 6,250 miles of trenches. Since the French occupied a little more than half the line, the total length of the numerous trenches occupied by the British must come to about 6,000 miles. We thus find over 12,000 miles of trenches on the Allied side alone. When we add the trenches of the Central Powers, we arrive at a figure of about 25,000 miles, equal to a trench sufficient to circle the earth. Theoretically it would have been possible to walk from Belgium to Switzerland entirely below ground, but although the lines were 'continuous,' they were not entirely seamless: occasionally mere shell holes or fortified strong-points would serve as a connecting link." Chap. 2, p. 37

"Thus, by the time the war began, sunrise and sunset had become fully freighted with implicit aesthetic and moral meaning. When a participant in the war wants an ironic effect, a conventional way to achieve one is simply to juxtapose a sunrise or sunset with the unlovely physical details of the war that man has made." Chap. 2, p. 55

"Spill, fresh, sanguine: with those terms the two dimensions of the poem merge into one. Georgian figure and discovered actuality merge; the red of sunset is seen as identical with the red of freshly shed blood. With sacrifice, the poem, although still maintaining its pose of abstract literariness, turns to face actual facts, and we realize that it is no longer talking about sky effects and Literature but about people and action. Without rudeness or abruptness, Ruskin has been invited to squat in a jump-off trench on a hill near Albert." Chap. 2, p. 61

"The physical confrontation between 'us' and 'them' is an obvious figure of gross dichotomy. But less predictably the mode of gross dichotomy came to dominate perception and expression elsewhere, encouraging finally what we can call the modern versus habit: one think opposed to another, not with some Hegelian hope of synthesis involving a dissolution of both extremes (that would suggest 'a negotiated peace,' which is anathema), but with a sense that one of the poles embodies so wicked a deficiency or flaw or perversion that its total submission is called for. When Wordsworth said of his mind in 'seed-time' that it was 'fostered alike by beauty and by fear,' he was, as Herbert Read says, thinking of 'some dialectic of beauty and fear, a process leading to a higher synthesis.' But with the landscape, the former domain of 'beauty,' ravaged and torn, and with 'fear' no longer the thrill of the old Sublime but a persistent physical terror, the time-honored nineteenth-century synthesis is no longer thinkable. Such subtle overlaps and associative connections as Wordsworth had in mind will not seem hopelessly sentimental and archaic." Chap. 3, p. 79

"It was not just from their staffs that the troops felt estranged: it was from everyone back in England. That division was as severe and uncompromising as the others generating the adversary atmosphere. The visiting of violent and if possible painful death upon the complacent, patriotic, uncomprehending, fatuous civilians at home was a favorite fantasy indulged by the troops. Sassoon, as he indicates in 'Blighters,' would like to see them crushed to death by a tank in one of their silly patriotic music halls, and in 'Fight to a Finish' he enacts a similar fantasy." Chap. 3, p. 86

"But the full exaggerated imagery of battlefield confrontation has been found indispensable by a later generation which likes to think of itself as highly politicized, especially when questions of literature are under discussion." Chap. 3, p. 108

"Rumor, 'painted full of tongues,' is in attendance, as Shakespeare knew, at every war. Yet the Great War seems especially fertile in rumor and legend. It was as if the general human impulse to make fictions had been dramatically unleashed by the novelty, immensity, and grotesqueness of the proceedings. The war itself was clearly a terrible invention, and any number, it seemed, could play." Chap. 4, p. 115

"These rumors resemble much of the more formal literature of the war in that their purpose is to 'make sense' of events which otherwise would seem merely accidental or

calamitous. Other rumors were consolatory in function, like the popular one hinting the imminent transfer of a unit to Egypt, or later, to Italy." Chap. 4, p. 121

"What we must consider now is the relation between this practical, ad hoc, empirical principle of three in military procedure and the magical or mystical threes of myth, epic, drama, ritual, romance, folklore, prophecy, and religion. In the prevailing atmosphere of anxiety, the military threes take on a quality of the mythical prophetic. The well-known triads of traditional myth and ritual donate, as it were, some of the meanings and implications to the military threes. The result is that military action becomes elevated to the level of myth and imbued with much of its portent." Chap. 4, p. 127

"One of the cruxes of the war, of course, is the collision between events and the language available - or thought appropriate - to describe them. To put it more accurately, the collision was one between events and the public language used for over a century to celebrate the idea of progress. Logically there is not reason why the English language could not perfectly well render the actuality of trench warfare: it is rich in terms like blood, terror, agony, madness, shit, cruelty, murder, sell-out, pain and hoax, as well as phrases like legs, blown off, intestines gushing out over his hands, screaming all night, bleeding to death from the rectum, and the like." Chap. 5, pp. 169-170

"The war began for the British in a context of jargon and verbal delicacy, and it proceeded in an atmosphere of euphemism as rigorous and impenetrable as language and literature skillfully used could make it. " Chap. 5, p. 175

"Nobody alive during the war, whether a combatant or not, ever got over its special dictation and system of metaphor, its whole jargon of techniques and tactics and strategy. (One reason we can use a term like tactics so readily, literally or in metaphors, is that the Great War taught it to us.) And often what impressed itself so deeply was something more than language. Not a few works written during the war, and written about matters far distant from the war, carry more of the war about them is always recognized." Chap. 5, pp. 187-88

"If soldiers in general are like actors, British soldiers are more like actors than others, as a reading of German, French, and American memoirs of the war will confirm. The machine-gun actor taking his final bow may have been German, but the eye that noticed and the hand that recorded were British. " Chap. 6, p. 196

"That is typical of Grave's theatrical method: the scene is a conventional, almost ritual confrontation between character types representative of widely disparate classes who are presented externally by their physical presence and their dialogue. We feel that the King would not be playing the scene properly if his whisper were anything but a stage-whisper: after all, the audience wants to hear what he's saying." Chap. 6, p. 211

"The suspense is well managed, and the effect is surprisingly exciting. 'The Attack' must have constituted a sort of folk war-memoir for many thousands of households, allowing veterans when the need was on them to re-play vicariously the parts they had once played in actuality. Their instinct, if pitiful, was sound: they sensed that so theatrical a war could well be revisited theatrically." Chap. 6, pp. 229-30

"Recourse to the pastoral is an English mode of both fully gauging the calamities of the Great War and imaginatively protecting oneself against them. Pastoral reference, whether to literature or to actual rural localities and objects, is a way of invoking a code to hint by antithesis at the indescribable; at the same time, it is a comfort in itself. Like rum, a deep dugout, or a woolly vest. The Golden Age posited by Classical and Renaissance literary pastoral now finds its counterpart in ideas of 'home' and 'the summer of 1914.' The language of the literary pastoral and that of particular rural data can fuse to assist memory or imagination." Chap. 7, p. 235

"In addition to shepherds and sheep, pastoral requires birds and birdsong. One of the remarkable intersections between life and literature during the war occurred when it was found that Flanders and Picardy abounded in the two species long the property of symbolic literary pastoral - larks and nightingales. The one now became associated with stand-to at dawn, the other with stand-to at evening." Chap. 7, p. 241

"As I have tried to suggest, the poem resonates as it does because its details point to the traditions of pastoral and of general elegy. As in all elegies written out of sympathy for the deaths of others, the act of speaking makes the speaker highly conscious of his own frail mortality and the brevity of his time." Chap. 7, p. 253

"Is Blunden 'escaping' into the past? If he is, let him. But I don't think he is. He is, rather, engaging the war by selecting from the armory of the past weapons against it which seem to have the greatest chance of withstanding time. In his own shy way, he is hurling himself totally and emotionally into opposition." Chap. 7, p. 269

"And some relations between warfare and sexuality are more private and secret still. There are numerous testimonies associating masturbation and exhibitionism with the fears and excitements of infantry fighting. Perhaps prolonged threats to the integrity of the body heighten physical self-consciousness and self-love." Chap. 8, p. 271

"No one turning from the poetry of the Second War back to that of the First can fail to notice there the unique physical tenderness, the readiness to admire openly the bodily beauty of young men, the unapologetic recognition that men may be in love with each other. 'War poetry,' observes Richard Fein, 'has the subversive tendency to be our age's love poetry.' That seems strikingly true about poetry of the Great War." Chap. 8, p. 280

"Naked bodies need not be imagined swimming to dramatize the pathetic vulnerability of flesh. The homely ceremony of louse-hunting provides an occasion for reminding a viewer that the hunters bear an ironic, 'displaced' relation to those nude soldiers

surprised by attack so popular among Florentine painters and engravers near the end of the fifteenth century." Chap. 8, p. 302

"Blond but scrawny Kid Sampsom is the latest of the naked swimming soldiers contrived by the post-Great War imagination to register the supreme pathos of flesh menaced by hurtling iron. These later-day soldier boys of Douglas and Prince and Kirstein and Heller are objects of concern not because they are beautiful and sexually attractive - it is too later for that, their delineators seem to be saying - but because they are surely doomed. Brigadier Crozier's bathing soldiers look 'wonderful' - 'hard, muscular, fit, strong and supple.' Heller's Kid Sampson is pale, skinny, and white, 'even from so far away.' Heller seems to be remembering something from a long time ago." Chap. 8, p. 309

"The further personal written materials move from the form of the daily diary, the closer they approach to the figurative and the fictional. The significances belonging to fictions are attainable only as 'diary' or annals move toward the mode of memoir, for it is only the ex post facto view of an action that generates coherence of makes irony possible." Chap. 9, p. 310

"Throughout this book we have been in the presence of literary characters (including narrators) who once were like us in power of action but who now have less power of action than we do, who now have less power of action than we do, who occupy exactly Frye's 'scene of bondage, frustration, or absurdity.' Conscription is bondage ('It was a "life-sentence,' says Hale's Private Porter); and trench life consists of little but frustration (Sassoon, Blunden) and absurdity (Graves).The passage of these literary characters from prewar freedom to wartime bondage, frustration, and absurdity signals just as surely as does the experience of Joyce's Bloom, Hemingway's Frederick Henry, and Kafka's Joseph K, the passage of modern writing from one mode to another, from the low mimetric of the plausible and the social to the ironic of the outrageous, the ridiculous, and the murderous." Chap. 9, p. 312

"In this study of a small bit of that culture of the past, I have tried to present just a few such recognition scenes. My belief is that what we recognize in them is a part, and perhaps not the least compelling part, of our own buried lives." Chap. 9, p. 335

Topics for Discussion

Why does Fussell believe that war is ironic?

What was the significance of the sunrise and sunsets in the literature of war?

What is the special significance of the number three? How did the number derive a special meaning?

In what ways is the military theatrical? What are the analogies that Fussell draws?

In what way is the pastoral used in the war literature? What are some of the elements of the pastoral and how are they used?

What associations are there between sexuality and war?

How do memoirs differ from fiction?