

DAVID JONES: ENGRAVER, SOLDIER, PAINTER, POET by Thomas Dilworth, *Jonathan Cape*, London, 2017, pp. xi + 432, £25.00, hbk

For over 30 years the creative imagination of David Jones has enlivened my mind, delighted my eye and given nourishment to my spirit. A profusely illustrated biography by Thomas Dilworth was therefore a welcome addition to my library of works by and about David Jones. I was keen to read a biography by this scholar with such an extensive knowledge of his subject. I was also keen to read a biography rather than a compendium of facts and opinions about an artist whom I already knew and loved.

I had been lucky enough to hear BBC Radio 4's adaptation of this book. Sara Davies had condensed the biography into five 15-minute performances, beautifully narrated by Nicholas Farrell. The Dilworth biography came to life in an hour and 15 minutes. Davies carved an elegant narrative sequence from the 353 pages. At its end, I felt I understood David Jones better as an artist and writer, as well as having a feel for him as a man. However, the radio adaptation did what the full book failed to achieve: to give the listener a story that allowed them to get a hold of this wonderful, complicated and beautifully expressive artist, writer and man. Unfortunately Thomas Dilworth is no storyteller. This biography often reads as a compendium of facts, anecdotes, opinions and analysis.

Dilworth is probably one of the foremost scholars on David Jones (1895-1974). He has studied Jones for over four decades and this biography has been 30 years in the making. The book covers Jones's life from cradle to grave in great detail. The biography is divided into 14 chapters, the chapters clustered into six parts, each with a thematic purpose: for example, 'New Beginnings', 'The Wonder Years', 'Resurrections'.

Dilworth guides us through Jones's early childhood, his parents brought vividly to life and we get a taste of the three children's sibling rivalry. He beautifully evokes a world of women who, once married, did not work; a world where servants still 'did' for middle-class families, a world of tent missions and horse-drawn buses. Dilworth highlights Jones's early artistic promise and how from a young age his own religious expression was at odds with his father's evangelical Protestantism. Dilworth narrates Jones's learning difficulties and his parents' worry that David would never be able to create an independent life for himself. He also shows how Jones's love for Wales was slowly awoken when, as a boy, his father took him back to see his family. There Jones fell in love with the Welsh countryside and the language, something that would stay with him for the rest of his life.

From childhood and primary school we move with Jones to art college, and from there to World War I and the horror of early 20th-century warfare. After the trenches, Jones makes the painful transition back to London and life as an artist. He lived a very peripatetic life, treating

his parents' home as a base. Dilworth details Jones's life with Eric Gill and the Ditchling community, and later with Gill in Wales. David Jones fell in love a number of times in his life; always these relationships were significant, meaningful and ultimately painful for him. As he never married, he shared houses from time to time with various friends and acquaintances, but also lived in boarding houses and hotels.

Jones suffered with mental health problems throughout his adult life. His mental ill health was variously diagnosed as 'depression', 'schizophrenia', 'shellshock' and an Oedipal Complex. Dilworth annoyingly tries to analyse and second-guess Jones's psychological difficulties. This is probably the least successful part of the biography. Mental health is fiendishly difficult to diagnose successfully, and even the best professionals can mis-diagnose. Also the ever-changing names that are given to universal conditions (e.g. 'PTSD' has replaced 'shellshock', and 'bipolar' has replaced 'manic-depression') make it difficult to talk with any certainty about diagnoses such as an Oedipal Complex – one would really need to be in the room with Jones and his psychiatrist. However, what Dilworth successfully shows is the devastating – and creative – effect of mental illness on Jones's life and work. He also highlights the good and helpful cures, but also the horrific and heavy-handed treatments for mental illness available during David Jones's lifetime.

However, Dilworth struggles to create a story that flows. At times he is successful, particularly when there is a dramatic force behind the narrative, such as when he describes Jones's time in the trenches, his break with Petra Gill, and the events surrounding his collapses in mental health. At other times he is less successful, and the book reads as though someone has joined together various recollections that neither meet nor comfortably interweave. Consequently the reader is left struggling to make a coherent narrative sequence of the events. This is partly because Dilworth has too much material taken from too many disparate sources, unwilling to leave any of it out. Unfettered by judicious editing, we are left with a biography that has insufficient narrative flow. It is hard, perhaps impossible, to do David Jones justice in a biography that does not have such digressions and deviations, but perhaps these diversions could have been dealt with in the well-established Jonesian footnote. But perhaps I am being unfair to Dilworth, because Jones never married, lived a very peripatetic life and had many friends and acquaintances: consequently there were many stories about him. Also as his creative output was so diverse it slips through categorisation and classification, making it difficult to write about it in a straightforward manner.

There is too much detail, complexity and richness here. Having read the book, I know a lot more about Jones's life, both professionally and personally, but while reading I struggled to keep hold of a sense of him. It is as though there is the signifier and signified but no actual sign. This is a shame because when I read David Jones's poetry and essays

and look at his pictures or engravings, it is as if he gives something of himself in his works. The essence of him is there in his works. But sadly in this book I found it difficult to keep hold of Jones, my mind being too full of recollections and speculations about him. I would also take issue with Dilworth's treatment of Jones's faith. David Jones was an adult convert to Roman Catholicism and a Dominican tertiary. It is clear that without his Catholic faith Jones would not have produced the body of work we see before us. His creative opus would have been different in every sense. While Dilworth talks extensively about David Jones's mental health and sexual struggles, he underplays the faith and religious engagement that are arguably the cornerstone of his life and work.

The book paints a picture of a man who formed good and lasting friendships, whose friends mattered to him, and he to them, mutually enriching and nourishing. David Jones was a great leveller in friendship, enjoying the company of rich and poor, powerful and powerless. Likewise he comes across as a man who is both spiritual and physical, who embraces what it is to be fully human with a body and a soul. Very Thomist, truly Dominican, as well as being 'the lost Great Modernist'.

JENIFER DYE

A FRAMEWORK FOR THE GOOD by Kevin Kinghorn, *University of Notre Dame Press, Indiana, 2016, pp. x + 348, \$45.00, pbk*

There are many divergent positions in normative ethics and metaethics available to the philosopher. Those who seek to uphold theism have, however, fewer options. Some positions in ethics and metaethics, for example that there are no moral facts, are generally ruled out by theists. But there are other positions, whilst not incompatible with traditional forms of theism, are often considered to be in tension with them.

Kevin Kinghorn's project is distinguished by his concern for both general Christian orthodoxy (*e.g.* Trinity, Incarnation, afterlife) and his advocacy of philosophical positions that many broadly traditional theologians would be uncomfortable with. The most important of these for Kinghorn's project is that goodness should be understood solely in terms of what is good for someone (well-being) and that the only non-instrumental goods are mental experiences. Different degrees of well-being should be understood in terms of the experience of different feeling tones. Kinghorn also supports a number of related positions, such as the Humean doctrine that only desire states can motivate and not reasons or belief.