

THE INWARD CONTINUITIES:
AESTHETICS, CRISIS, AND THE ANATHEMATA OF DAVID JONES

by

VICTOR PAW HOON LI
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Department of ENGLISH

The University of British Columbia
2075 Wesbrook Place
Vancouver, Canada
V6T 1W5

Date September 1975

Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to show the interrelationship between David Jones's writings on aesthetics, his expressed concern over the threat technology presents to the practice of art, and the compositional problems of The Anathemata.

David Jones's aesthetic concepts appear idiosyncratic and strange to many of us because we no longer understand the language of poiesis and signs in which he speaks. Hence the language of his aesthetics needs to be translated, his aesthetic concepts defined. Accordingly, the first three chapters explore Jones's writings on art and attempt to define and explain certain key terms in his aesthetic vocabulary, terms such as poiesis, sign, sacrament, anamnesis, 're-present', materia poetica, and so on.

The fourth chapter investigates David Jones's contention that the arts are in a state of crisis in our technological epoch. The dominant utilitarian ideology of our technocracy, Jones argues, threatens the 'extra-utile,' gratuitous nature of artistic activity. Consequently, he believes that a modern aesthetic must be based on anxiety. This chapter also discusses how Jones's aesthetic views presented in the first three chapters furnish at once a critique of modern technological trends and an aesthetic valid for our epoch.

In the fifth chapter, The Anathemata is examined in the context provided for it by the preceding chapters. In particular, this chapter examines the problems (especially of a structural nature) faced by David Jones in composing a long poem like The Anathemata. It also argues that Jones successfully solves the problem of unity in The Anathemata by adopting a flexible structure which not only accommodates a multiplicity and variety of allusions, ideas, and themes, but, at the same time, manages to conjoin them into an ordered whole.

Finally, the thesis concludes that the central principle which informs David Jones's writings is his belief in the interrelatedness of all things, a belief supported by his practice as an artist and his faith as a Catholic.

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Introduction

An illuminating connection of meanings can be discerned in the lettering David Jones designed for the cover of the paper-back edition of The Anathemata. These words appear on the book's cover: DAVID JONES' ANATHEMATA FABER LONDINIUM. Faber is of course the name of the publishing company: Faber and Faber Limited, London. But in its Latin form it is also an apt description of the book's author--a maker. The proximity of 'Faber' to 'Londinium' is perhaps David Jones's way of suggesting, however obliquely, the Latin meaning of the former. Anathemata, a word that will be examined in greater detail later, means those man-made things offered up to God. In its Latin form, London may be regarded as a synecdoche of Britain and its historical past (especially Roman Britain). David Jones, faber, makes works of art out of the cherished things he has inherited from the cultural past of Britain and offers them up as anathemata. We have, therefore, in the words which appear on the cover of The Anathemata, a statement, in shorthand, of the central concerns of David Jones, artist and cultural conservator.

The word 'connection' is a password that allows us access to the works of David Jones. His writings on art and his own practice of such arts as painting and poetry are based on the belief that there is an intimate connection between art and our humanity. Art is, therefore, as inseparable from the past of man as it is from his present. The inseparability of art from the cultural past is clearly stated by Jones. The potency of art, Jones argues, resides to a great extent on "the continued validity of a whole unbroken past, as parti-coloured as Joseph's coat, as seamless as the tunic 'wove from the top throughout' for which the soldiers cast lots. Incidentally, that seamless vesture is an apt figure of art: either you have it all or (in the long run) you will not have it at all. You cannot dissever it." The

practice of the arts, therefore, depends "upon some apperception of that continuous sign-making which is an entailed inheritance, coming to us from our remote forebears."¹

At the same time, however, the present plays a crucial role in determining the practice of art and the direction that practice will take. The artist, Jones writes, is born into a given civilizational situation, and consequently, his problems (i.e. his problems as an artist) will be what might be called 'situational problems.' He continues:

If, owing to a complex of causes, sable-hair brushes, chinese white and hot-pressed water-colour paper went off the market, you would, if you were a user of such commodities, be faced with a situational problem of a very awkward but fundamentally material sort....Well, the situational problem which concerns us here is of an equally objective nature, but so far from affecting only the materials of one particular kind of artist, it affects man-the-artist as such, and affects him not at one peripheral point, but crucially.²

The situational problem which concerns David Jones the most is that posed by the utilitarian ideology of our technological civilization. Not only is this utilitarian ideology opposed to the non-utilitarian and gratuitous making of works of art, but in its drive to improve our material condition, it has often been destructive of past traditions that have stood in its way. Thus, for an artist like David Jones whose aesthetic is based on the concept of gratuitous making and the establishing of an unbroken continuity with the past, discussion about art inevitably means a confession of anxiety over the crisis facing it. This thesis will argue that an aesthetic such as Jones's, which considers the arts in relation to society, will inevitably have to be, in our technological age, an aesthetic based on anxiety.

"Esthetics," the American artist Barnett Newman once declared, "is for the artist as ornithology is for the birds."³ But while aesthetics may be as unnecessary to an artist as ornithology is to a bird, the same conclusion is not applicable to an art-audience or to bird-watchers. A bird-watcher,

after all, must know something about the physical traits and behavior patterns of a bird if he is to distinguish between a finch and a wren. Similarly, a knowledge of the nature and function of art helps an audience to a better and more appreciative understanding of works of art. The uneducated eye sees nothing. My discussion of David Jones's aesthetics is prompted by such a consideration.

In trying to identify a rare species of bird, a knowledge of ornithology is especially necessary. Similarly, a discussion of aesthetics is necessary in the case of David Jones. For even among artists, Jones is something of a rara avis. His aesthetic concepts are unfamiliar to many of us. They strike us as unique and idiosyncratic. But if Jones's aesthetic concepts appear strange to many of us, it is because we no longer understand the language of poiesis and signs in which he speaks; a language, incidentally, that a medieval audience would have had far less trouble understanding. The language of Jones's aesthetics must, therefore, be translated, his concepts defined, if we are to understand a poem like The Anathemata.

Accordingly, the first three chapters of this thesis will explore David Jones's writings on art and attempt to define and explain certain key terms in his aesthetic vocabulary, terms such as poiesis, sign, sacrament, anamnesis, materia poetica, 're-presentation,' and so on. The fourth chapter will then investigate Jones's anxiety over the difficulties our technological civilization imposes on the practice of art. This chapter will also discuss how the aesthetic views presented in the first three chapters furnish at once a critique of certain modern trends and an aesthetic valid for our difficult epoch. Finally, in the fifth chapter, The Anathemata will be examined in the context provided for it by the preceding chapters. This thesis, therefore begins with a general discussion of David Jones's aesthetics and ends with an examination of a specific poem. By organizing my study in this

manner I hope to avoid the narrowness of the explication du texte approach without, however, losing myself in generalities.

Footnotes

1

"Use and Sign," The Listener, 24 May 1962, p. 901.

2

David Jones, "Preface," The Anathemata (London: Faber, 1952), pp. 22-23. Subsequent references to The Anathemata will be indicated in the text of the thesis under the abbreviation A.

3

Quoted in Harold Rosenberg's The Anxious Object (New York: Horizon Press, 1966), p. 172.

Chapter I

Art as Poiesis

'art'....comprehends all our activities from boat-building to poetry.

-James Joyce

David Jones was born into a family of craftsmen. His grandfather John Jones of Holywell, Wales, was a plasterer, and his father, James Jones, a printer. On his mother's side, his grandfather Eb Bradshaw was a "Thames-side mast-and-block maker."¹ As a young woman, David Jones's mother, Alice Bradshaw, had taken up drawing and we are told that some examples of her work were "framed about the house."² Raised in such a household, it is not surprising that David Jones should hold the view of art as a skill in making.

This view of art as a skill in making finds expression in David Jones's insistence that aesthetics should not consist of speculations on the nature of art; instead, it should be, for the practising artist, an attentive enquiry into, and a practical approach to, the day to day problems that confront the artist in the course of his work.

Ars is adamant about one thing [David Jones writes]: she compels you to do an infantry man's job. She insists on the tactile. The artist in man is the infantryman in man....To-day most of us are staff-wallahs of one sort or another. That may be why so much that is said concerning the things of Ars reminds one more of what the General's wife said to the cabinet minister concerning war-aims than of what is factually 'war' for those in the place of contact.³

By insisting that art should be contactual and that the proof of its nature is in its making, Jones is able to argue that a full and satisfactory answer to the perennial aesthetic question, "what is a work of art?", can emerge only if we are prepared to extend our definition of art to include not only the finished artefact but also the human activity of making. Thus

Jones's aesthetic is a practical aesthetic for it proceeds as an enquiry into the disciplines of art and exhibits a concern for the problems encountered in making a work of art.

In an autobiographical talk broadcast on the Welsh Home Service of the B.B.C., David Jones acknowledged a debt to Eric Gill and the other craftsmen of the Guild of St. Joseph and St. Dominic at Ditchling for helping to shape his understanding of the nature of art. In this connection Jones also mentioned the name of Jacques Maritain.⁴ That Maritain's name should immediately follow that of Gill is appropriate for Gill and his associates at Ditchling found in Maritain's Art et Scolastique a coherent philosophical exposition of the nature and function of art that agreed with their own views on art, views gained through practical experience. They obviously thought Maritain's book important, for in 1923 the St. Dominic's Press at Ditchling printed on hand-made paper 500 copies of John O'Connor's translation of the book under the title of The Philosophy of Art.⁵

It was through Eric Gill and his circle that David Jones became familiar with the writings of Maritain. As he described it: "Round about 1923 there was available John O'Connor's translation of Maritain, and that, from the pen of a formal philosopher, provided certain reassurances and further data with regard to some matters which had occupied our thoughts as makers of things."⁶ The last phrase, "makers of things," furnishes us with the reason for Maritain's considerable influence on Jones and his friends at Ditchling. For in Art and Scholasticism, Maritain outlines an aesthetic which sees art as "the making of a work" and which argues that "wherever you find art you find some action or operation to be contrived, some work to be done."⁷ In the tradition of Aristotle and the medieval Schoolmen, Maritain argues that art is an activity of making, a poiesis.

The concept of art as poiesis finds its classic formulation in a brief but significant chapter of Aristotle's Nichomachean Ethics. In Book VI, chapter 4 of the Ethics, Aristotle distinguishes between making (poiesis) and doing (praxis). Aristotle argues that art involves "a rational faculty exercised in making something."⁸ (Aristotle, as it will become clear, uses the term 'art' in its generic sense, as does David Jones in his writings.) In fact, he continues, there can be no art that cannot be so described. He then concludes with a definition of art which is worth quoting in full:

An art is nothing more or less than a productive quality exercised in combination with true reason. The business of every art is to bring something into existence, and the practice of an art involves the study of how to bring into existence something which is capable of having such an existence and has its efficient cause in the maker and not in itself. This condition must be present, because the arts are not concerned with things that exist or come into existence from necessity or according to Nature, such things having their efficient cause in themselves.⁹

There are several points worth noting in Aristotle's definition of art. First, his definition of art is an inclusive, generic definition; he does not distinguish between the fine arts and the useful arts such as pottery-making for example. Second, he emphasizes the fact that art is an activity of making. Third, his definition concerns itself with the practice of art, the how of making. And finally, Aristotle makes an important point when he says that a work of art has its efficient cause in the maker and that, consequently, it owes its existence not to Nature or necessity but to its being made by man. These Aristotelian ideas greatly influenced David Jones's thinking on the nature of art. Brief and fragmentary though Book VI, chapter 4 of The Nichomachean Ethics may be, Jones has described it as a "foundational fragment," one that "contains so much for those concerned with the kind of thing that art is."¹⁰

If art is poiesis then phronesis or prudence (i.e. practical wisdom)

belongs to the realm of praxis. According to Aristotle, phronesis or prudence is concerned with right doing or action. It is "a rational faculty exercised for the attainment of truth in things that are humanly good and bad."¹¹ As such, prudence is both an intellectual and a moral virtue whereas art is solely an intellectual virtue that concerns itself with the rational production of artefacts and not the rational performance of moral actions. Prudence does not involve the making of something; rather, prudence is a quality inherent in what a man does. Through poiesis something is brought into existence; "whereas in doing something [praxis]¹² the end can only be the doing of it well."

Aristotle's definition of art as poiesis and the distinction he drew between the poiesis of art and the praxis of prudence greatly influenced medieval thinking on the subject of art. As Maritain points out in Art and Scholasticism, the medieval Schoolmen were very interested in the question: "How does Prudence, at once an intellectual and moral virtue, differ from Art, a merely intellectual virtue?"¹³ As we can see from this question, the Schoolmen adopted the Aristotelian distinction between art and prudence and made it the point of departure for further enquiries into differences between the two.

Maritain's Art and Scholasticism closely follows the arguments of these medieval 'aestheticians' and devotes its opening chapters to a discussion of making and doing (or action, as it is translated by J.F. Scanlan). Doing or action, as the Schoolmen defined it, "consists in the free use (free being here emphatic) of our faculties or in the exercise of our free will considered not in relation to things themselves or the works of our hands, but simply in relation to the use to which we put our freedom."¹⁴ Now, since our will or appetite tends to our good, and moreover, since in the Christian sense our good is ultimately tied to our perfection in God, the Schoolmen

logically saw doing as belonging to the realm of Prudence, "the queen of the moral virtues...[who] measures our acts in their relation to an ultimate end which is God Himself."¹⁵ To doing the Schoolmen opposed making, which they defined as "productive action, considered not in relation to the use to which, assuming it, we put our freedom, but simply in relation to the thing produced or the work taken by itself."¹⁶ Making is therefore concerned not with the perfection of man but with the perfection of the work. Consequently, art, whose only governing law is that it should look to its own good, belongs to the sphere of making. But though art pursues a non-human end it is human in its method of working. All works of art bear the mark of reasoned activity, and since man is the only creature that can be deemed rational, it follows that the activity of art is human even if its end is not. Art is not just an activity; it is a rational activity. Art involves some work to be done, but that work is controlled by man's reason. If the matter of art is that which has to be worked on, then its form is that direction and shape conferred on it by the mind. Thus, if prudence is at once an intellectual and moral virtue, then art is solely an intellectual virtue. Maritain could, therefore, see art as more intellectual than prudence which is dependent on will, and declare: "...art remains entirely by the side of the mind."¹⁷

David Jones found in the Aristotelian and Scholastic definition of art a statement of his own views. These views are eloquently expressed in an essay entitled "Art and Sacrament." In this central essay, Jones adopts the art-prudence distinction only to show that while the two may be different in kind they are also interdependent. Jones, therefore, departs somewhat from the Aristotelian-Scholastic position that Maritain outlines in his book.

In Art and Scholasticism, Maritain argues that not only are art and prudence different in kind, they are also opposed to one another. He talks about a conflict between the prudent man and the artist. While the prudent man criticizes a work of art from the perspective of morality and measures it against the good of man, the artist defends his work in the name of what he considers a higher virtue, Beauty. Thus, as Maritain maintains: "It is difficult...for the Prudent Man and the Artist to understand one another."¹⁸ However, as a Christian, Maritain sees a resolution to the conflict in the concept of an inclusive Christian Wisdom: "...Wisdom, being endowed with the outlook of God and ranging over Action and Making alike, alone can com-¹⁹pletely reconcile Art and Prudence."

"Art and Sacrament", Jones tells us, was written partly in objection to the view that art and prudence are opposed to each other or that they have claims against each other. Moreover, unlike Maritain, Jones is able to reconcile art and prudence without recourse to any strictly theological argument. What links art and prudence together, according to Jones, is man's freedom. Acknowledging the fact that "we all are committed to a Prudentia of sorts," Jones goes on to say that it is precisely because, unlike any other creature, man is endowed with reason and a measure of free will that he is also committed to Prudentia's world of faith and morals.²⁰ In other words, man belongs to a world of faith and morals because he is a free agent; and because man is a free agent, and therefore not subject to a pure determinism, he is also the only creature capable of gratuitous acts. And it is this ability of man to act gratuitously that also commits him to Ars and makes him an artist.

To emphasize the importance of the role played by the gratuitous in that human activity we call art, Jones compares the transitivity of beastly activity to the intransitivity of man's artistic endeavours. The spider's

web and the honey-comb, according to Jones, may be compared favourably to the most ingenious of man's works. They may even be considered beautiful after a fashion. But these ingenious designs of beasts show no evidence of the gratuitous. The activities of animals are determined and controlled by their instincts. And their instincts direct them to create objects that would ensure their survival or satisfy their needs. Thus the creations of animals are wholly functional, their activities purely transitive.

Man, on the other hand, is a free agent capable of acting gratuitously and intransitively. Not all his actions are determined or controlled by natural instincts. Consequently, not all of his creations are functional or have survival value. Man is the only creature who creates for the sake of creation; his works often exhibit a concern for their own good rather than some other utilitarian good. We may recall that for Aristotle "the arts are not concerned with things that exist or come into existence from necessity or according to Nature."²¹ For Aristotle art must be free of necessity; hence, gratuitousness is part of his definition of art. We may also recall that for the medieval Schoolmen "the virtue of art has only one object, the good of the work to be done; to make matter resplendent with beauty, to create a thing in accordance with the laws of its being, independently of anything else."²² Here again art is defined as a gratuitous and intransitive activity. The object of art is not the good of something else. Art is for art's sake. Or to be more precise: "Art is the sole intransitive activity of man."²³

To repeat: animals lack freedom of will; and because they lack freedom of will they are irresponsible agents guided solely by natural instinct; and because they are irresponsible agents their making lacks gratuitousness and cannot, therefore, be called art. The 'incorporeal intelligences' or angels, to take the other extreme from beasts, have freedom of will like men

and hence can be described as prudential beings. But they are not artists because they lack corporeality. Animals have corporeality but not free will, and are therefore rejected by Prudentia and Ars alike. Angels have free will but no corporeality and are therefore prudential beings who cannot make things. Situated between the beasts and the angels, men are corporeal and have a measure of freedom and are therefore both prudential beings and artists. Thus, man's freedom which makes him Prudentia's subject also enables him to serve Ars. As Jones puts it: "...it is a degree of freedom of some sort that causes man to be, of necessity, an artist and the same freedom of sorts commits him of necessity to Prudentia." Or again, as Jones declares: "Man could not belong to Prudentia except as an artist and he could not be an artist but for that tie-up with Prudentia." ²⁴

It is typical of David Jones that he should find a 'tie-up' between art and prudence. For central to all of David Jones's works is the belief that if one looks carefully one can discover all kinds of tie-ups, connections, and continuities in the world. After all, for a Catholic like Jones, the world must be the rational construction of a rational Mind. It is, therefore, apposite that for Jones art is not only an activity but an activity of fitting together, and consequently, the end of art is the achievement of the perfect fit. In a sense, the artist's activity is like God's: the rational construction of a unity in which everything fits. As Jacques Maritain puts it, the artist is "an associate of God in the making of works of beauty; by developing the faculties with which the Creator has endowed him...and making use of created matter, he creates as it were in the second degree." ²⁵ But while God creates in the 'first degree' ex nihilo, man creates in the 'second degree' out of created matter or 'shapes' as Jones calls them. Art is, therefore, an activity of juxtaposing and fitting together 'shapes' of some sort to create a 'form' of some sort.

The created matter or 'shapes' used may be simple or complex. As Jones describes them:

They may be of material substances or they may be of immaterial concepts given tangible, visual or audible expression and the resultant 'form' which these 'shapes' in juxtaposition created will vary accordingly. Thus a piece of turned iron pierced at intervals, and formed at one end to handle, by which we regulate the opening of a casement-window is neither less or more contrived by Ars than are those juxtaposings of concepts that take material expression under the shapes of arranged lines of words, spaces, commas, points, by which poets regulate the openings of casements for us to enjoy and suffer the sights they would show us.²⁶

We may observe here in passing that Jones's description of a poem as the "juxtaposings of concepts that take material expression under the shape of arranged lines of words, spaces, commas, points" is also an apt description of The Anathemata. For the present context of discussion, however, the important point to note is Jones's grouping together of the making of a window-latch and the writing of a poem under the heading of Ars.

Jones points out that the 'form' created by the juxtaposings of 'shapes' may vary according to the simplicity or complexity of the 'shapes' employed. Thus a poem is different from a window-latch and a window-latch is different from a painting or a chair. But though these 'forms' or artefacts are different from one another, they are alike in their making which is an intransitive activity of juxtaposing and fitting together with no other end than that of achieving a 'good fit.' Thus, while there is to any making a transitivity, a passing over into the state of an object, the making itself is an intransitive activity concerned only with the perfecting of its own process. Let us take as an example for discussion the making of a window-latch. This is a difficult example for a window-latch, unlike a poem, is patently a functional object. And indeed, in a certain sense, we can say of the making of a window-latch that it is transitive, that it has for its object a functional implement that regulates the opening and closing of

windows. Yet we may call this making of a window-latch 'art,' if we discern in the making any sign of the gratuitous. That is to say, if we see in a window-latch any indication of the gratuitous like a filigree design traced along its length, or a certain pronounced and non-essential curve to its handle, we can call its making art because the maker, in making the window-latch, was obviously as interested in the beauty and perfection of the work as he was in its functionality. Such a window-latch would be the embodiment of a union of the useful and the gratuitous and the latter characteristic would qualify it as a work of art. Admittedly a professional philosopher may find many logical faults in the attempt to ascribe intransitivity to window-latch making. Jones himself was aware of such a problem, and he confesses that his examples and analogies may sometimes break down.²⁷ But his argument that window-latch making may be an intransitive activity, and hence, as much an art as poem writing, obtains our assent whenever we are moved to discover beyond its utility, the self-sufficient beauty of a patch-work quilt or a glazed porcelain vase or a finely woven rattan chair.

It is Jones's attempt to base the unity of the arts on the concept of intransitivity that leads him to consider and compare such disparate activities as window-latch making, poem writing, bowling in a cricket-match, picture painting, boat-building, boot-making, horticulture, cake baking, carpentry, and the celebration of Mass. He argues that any definition of art must take into consideration the whole field of making and not dwell solely on such obvious arts as painting and music. This is one of the reasons why Jones takes exception to the sort of distinction art-critics and connoisseurs make between the fine arts and the crafts. In a review of Bernard Berenson's Aesthetics and History, Jones takes the eminent art historian and connoisseur to task for insisting on a distinction between 'art' and 'artefact.' Going against the grain of such received views as

Berenson's, Jones writes:

I can see no difference--of kind, but only of infinite degrees, between works of the 'arts of form' once utility has to any degree been overpassed and where the quality of gratuitousness has to any degree been operative, whether it be a wooden spoon carved by a Welsh peasant for his sweetheart, or Bewcastle Cross, or our old favourite, the Aphrodite of Melos, or Picasso's Chandelier, pot et casserole émaillée, or the enamelled 'Battersea shield' in the British Museum, or the headstones in Cookham churchyard..., or the beasts in manganese in the Lascaux caves, or Fouquet's Virgin of Melun, or the Capel Garmon fire-dogs, or Leonardo's Virgin and St. Ann. In all these almost absurdly diverse works, utilitarian death has been swallowed up in the victory of the gratuitous. It is the only rubicon I know of dividing the activities of man....There is little or no point, so it seems to me, in stressing the differences of degree. I believe the tendency to stress those differences of degree and to posit a difference of kind comes from theorists rather than from workmen, from 'philosophers' rather than from 'makers.'²⁸

The last sentence in the foregoing quotation betrays a rather hasty and polemical tone uncharacteristic of Jones and more like a statement that his mentor, Eric Gill, would have made. But polemical tone aside, it reflects Jones's approach to questions of art. Jones's essays on art are always more concerned with the practice of art than with the discriminations of taste. He writes from the point of view of a practitioner and not from that of a connoisseur. While the connoisseur is interested in the finished product, the practitioner is more concerned with the process of production. The connoisseur's interest in art may be termed 'secondary' in so far as that interest is directed to the result of an activity rather than to the activity itself. On the other hand, the practitioner's interest in art is 'primary' because he is interested in the activity of art itself. This is not to say that the artist is not interested in the result of his work; rather, the point is that if the artist is not concerned with the process of making then the end result of his efforts will not amount to much and will not engage the 'secondary' interest of the connoisseur.

Now, when Jones says that he sees little point in stressing differences of degree among works of art, he is speaking as a practitioner whose interest in art is of the 'primary' sort. Distinctions of degree, so dear to art-critics and connoisseurs alike, do not really offer us a definition of art. What these distinctions do is help us distinguish between good and bad works of art; they offer us a lesson in taste rather than an understanding of the principles of art. Unanswered by art-critics and connoisseurs, the question remains: What is the activity we call art? This question, Jones argues, can only be answered if we adopt the practitioner's point of view and fix our attention on the activity of art rather than on the different products of that activity. To understand the nature of art we must turn from the 'secondary' consideration of works of art to the 'primary' consideration of the activity that is art. Any definition of art must, therefore, be radical; radical in the sense that it must begin by considering the activity of art, the 'root' from which grow 'secondary' aesthetic concerns.

The discussion so far has shown that central to Jones's aesthetic is the belief that the 'root' of art is the activity of making. Moreover, as we have seen, making or poiesis includes all the activities of man to which is attached a degree of intransitivity and gratuitousness. Consequently, Jones believes that art embraces a wide range of activities. He quotes Joyce favourably: "art...comprehends all our activities from boat-building to poetry." ²⁹ Although he is irritated by any sort of distinction between the fine arts and the 'lesser' crafts, Jones does not deny that a poem is different from or even better than a boat. He believes, however, that instead of concentrating on 'secondary' differences of form, the far more important thing to do is to seek a common factor which would enable us to consider as art both the writing of a poem and the building of a boat.

Believing that 'a desire and pursuit of the whole is natural to us all,' Jones opts for a definition of art that is inclusive rather than exclusive. The alternative to such a definition, Jones argues, would be "too Jekyll and ³⁰Hydich to afford us satisfaction." As we have noted earlier, central to all of Jones's works is the belief that there are all kinds of continuities and connections in the world. His inclusive definition of art can therefore be regarded as another indication of this belief.

Two important principles emerge from Jones's view of art as a making or poiesis. First, art as poiesis means art as an activity of making, or to be more specific, an activity of fitting together. Second, the concept of art as poiesis leads naturally to a consideration of the whole field of man's making and to a realization of its unity in the concept of the gratuitous. The first principle inevitably leads to the second; art is a making and making comprehends a wide range of human activities. As we shall see, The Anathemata is an elaboration of both principles: it is a poem about the making of itself as well as a record of man's making from the cave-paintings of Lascaux to "The Wasteland" of T.S. Eliot.

Footnotes

- 1
David Jones, "Autobiographical Talk," in Epoch and Artist (London: Faber, 1959), p. 26. Epoch and Artist will henceforth be abbreviated as EA.
- 2
Ibid.
- 3
"The Utile," EA, p. 183.
- 4
See "Autobiographical Talk," EA, p. 30.
- 5
In 1930 a new translation of Art et Scolastique by J.F. Scanlan was published under the title of Art and Scholasticism by Sheed and Ward, New York. This is the edition used in my thesis, and it will henceforth be abbreviated as AS.
- 6
"Art and Sacrament," EA, p. 172.
- 7
Maritain, AS, p. 4.
- 8
The Ethics of Aristotle, trans. J.A.K. Thomson (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1955), Book VI, chapter 4, p. 175.
- 9
Ibid., pp. 175-76.
- 10
"Art and Sacrament," EA, p. 172.
- 11
The Ethics of Aristotle, Book VI, chapter 5, p. 177.
- 12
Ibid.
- 13
Maritain, AS, p. 1.
- 14
Ibid., p. 5.
- 15
Ibid., p. 6.
- 16
Ibid.

17

Maritain, AS, p. 11.

18

Ibid., p. 66.

19

Ibid., p. 67.

20

"Art and Sacrament," EA, p. 147.

21

The Ethics of Aristotle, Book VI, chapter 4, pp. 175-76.

22

Maritain, AS, p. 98.

23

"Art and Sacrament," EA, p. 149.

24

Ibid., p. 150.

25

Maritain, AS, p. 49.

26

"Art and Sacrament," EA, p. 151.

27

Ibid., p. 153.

28

"A Note on Mr. Berenson's Views," EA, pp. 274-75.

29

"Art and Sacrament," EA, p. 172.

30

Ibid., p. 153.

Chapter II

The Work of Art as Sign and Sacrament

The true sign annihilates perspective.

-Saunders Lewis

The work will make present to our eyes, together with itself, something else, and still something else, and still something else indefinitely, in the infinite mirrors of analogy. Through a kind of poetic ampliation, Beatrice, while remaining the woman whom Dante loved, is also, through the power of the sign, the light which illuminates him.

-Jacques Maritain

If art is an activity of making, what is the nature of the things made? Put concisely, the answer would be: "...the things made by the activity of art are not only the things of mundane requirements but are of necessity the signs of something other."¹ As the notion of sign is of crucial importance for an understanding of David Jones's aesthetic, his concise answer needs expounding in greater detail. This chapter will attempt such a detailed exposition of Jones's concept of the work of art as sign.

In "Art and Sacrament," an essay which contains his most complete statement on the nature of art, David Jones argues that the palaeolithic drawings of animals on the cave-walls of Lascaux are evidence that from the earliest times to the present man is as much a maker of signs as he is homo sapiens. Palaeolithic man, Jones continues, "juxtaposed marks on surfaces not with merely utile, but with significant intent; that is to say a 're-presenting,' a 'showing again under other forms,' an 'effective recalling' of something was intended."² Since these palaeolithic drawings transcend the merely utile, they must qualify as works of art, for as we have seen, Jones defines

as a work of art any man-made thing that reveals the slightest evidence of the gratuitous, the more than merely utile. But while a work of art must exhibit a certain gratuitousness, this gratuitousness does not imply a lack of meaning in the work of art. As David Blamires points out, though the activity of art may be gratuitous, it is not meaningless. "On the contrary," Blamires continues, "its very gratuitousness is significant in the etymological sense of the word."³ Thus, as Jones's description of the Lascaux drawings implies, a work of art is gratuitous (in the sense that its making is not dictated solely by utile considerations arising from certain needs) and, at the same time, significant. It is precisely because a work of art transcends the merely utile that its significant purpose becomes apparent. Or to put it another way: once we become aware that a work of art is not made with solely utile intent we are required to look for the real reason behind its making; and, for David Jones, man makes works of art with significant intent, that is, with the intent to 're-present' or 'effectively recall' something other. For David Jones, therefore, the work of art is a sign.

David Jones's argument that a work of art may be regarded as a sign because it 're-presents' or 'effectively recalls' something other is supported by the Scholastic definition of the sign:

"Signum est id quod repraesentat aliud a se potentiae cognoscenti." For scholastics, the sign is that which makes present for knowledge something which is other than itself. The sign makes manifest, makes known: and it makes manifest or makes known something distinct from itself, of which it takes the place and with regard to which it exercises a ministerial function, and on which it depends as on its measure.⁴

Thus, when David Jones argues that a work of art 're-presents' and 'shows again under other forms' something other than itself, he is presenting us with the view that the work of art is a sign.

If the work of art is a sign, then what is the relationship between it and the prior 'reality,' the something other it 're-presents'? David Jones attempts to answer this question by resorting to analogy. He writes: "From the doctrinal definition of the substantial Presence in the sacramental Bread, I learnt by an analogy...that a tree in a painting or a tree in an embroidery must not be a re-presenting only of a tree, of sap and thrusting wood; it must really be 'a tree,' under the species of paint or needlework or whatever."⁵ In believing the Bread to be the Body of Christ, Catholics hold "the view that sign and thing signified...[have] a true identity....and reject the opinion...that such an identification overthrows the nature of a sign."⁶ Such a view, Jones maintains, provides an analogy for the arts.

The analogy between the Christian doctrine and the arts leads to the conclusion that the work of art and the 'reality' it 're-presents' share an 'identity.' The word 'identity' is to be understood of course in a special sense. By 'identity' Jones seems to mean both a difference and a sameness. Thus, in the example he provides, the painting of a tree contains the 'tree' under the species of paint. That is to say, though the signified (the tree) is present in the sign (the painting), thereby allowing for a sameness, it is present under the species of paint, thereby making for a difference.

Similarly, looking at a painting of, say, the Matterhorn, one does not mistake the painting for the real mountain itself. And yet one sees the Matterhorn when one looks at the painting; one sees the Matterhorn in the painting; one can therefore say that the Matterhorn is present in the painting in another mode of existence. There is a cogent discussion of just such a sign theory in Maritain's essay "Sign and Symbol":

The external senses make use of signs (I see Socrates when I see his statue, my eye sees him in it). For the use of the sign does not necessarily involve inference and comparison. There is thus a certain presence--presence of

knowability--of the signified in the sign; the former is there in alio esse, in another mode of existence.⁷

Maritain then quotes John of St. Thomas on a point of cardinal importance for a sign theory:

"Quid est illud in signato conjunctum signo, et praesens in signo praeter ipsum signum et entitatem ejus? Respondetur esse ipsummet signatum in alio esse." "What may be that element of the signified which is joined to the sign and present in it as distinct from the sign itself and its own entity? I answer: No other element than the very signified itself in another mode of existence."⁸

Returning to the example of the painting, one can ask the same question that John of St. Thomas asked: "What is that element of the Matterhorn which is joined to the painting and present in it as distinct from the painting itself and the mountain's own reality of rocks and snow?" The answer would be: "No other element than the Matterhorn itself in another mode of existence." Thus when one looks at the painting one does not just see the canvas with its lines and masses of colour, one also sees the Matterhorn; not the actual Matterhorn of rocks and snow, to be sure, but a Matterhorn in alio esse, a Matterhorn of paint. One can therefore say that the lines and masses of colour which constitute the painting 're-present,' make present in their visible form, the mountain itself. This idea was expressed by Jones when he said that a painter ought to tell himself: "This is not a representation of a mountain, it is 'mountain' under the form of paint." And then, by way of emphasizing the importance of this principle, he added: "Indeed, unless he says this unconsciously or consciously he will not be a painter worth a candle."⁹

Jones's belief that the mountain in a painting is indeed a mountain, under the form of paint, allows him to declare as axiomatic the proposition¹⁰ "that all art is 'abstract' and that all art 're-presents.'" A work of art is never simply an impression, or imitation, or copy of a reality. It

is an abstraction of that reality. By abstraction is meant here both a withdrawal from the particular to arrive at the general and the essential, as well as a drawing away or separating of a certain part or parts from some whole for closer consideration.¹¹ To return to the painting of the Matterhorn, we can say that the mountain we see in it is an abstraction of the real Matterhorn; the mountain is painted in such a way that what we see is the 'essential' Matterhorn, its general feature, a triangular peak capped with snow, immediately recognizable to all; but at the same time, in painting the mountain the artist has concentrated on certain aspects of the Matterhorn, isolating and emphasizing certain visual qualities at the expense of his total sensory experience of the mountain (obviously, works of art are prevented by the limitations of their respective media from expressing the total experience of a 'reality;' hence all works of art are necessarily abstractions of the 'real'). The painting of the Matterhorn is, therefore, an abstraction, in both senses of the term, of the Swiss mountain.

Having learned his post-Impressionist lesson well, David Jones argues that an art-work is a 'thing' in its own right and thus, an abstraction and not an impression of some other thing. He quotes approvingly what Cézanne¹² is reported to have said: "We must do Poussin again after Nature." The same quotation as it appears in J.F. Scanlan's translation of Maritain's Art and Scholasticism is differently worded and perhaps clearer in meaning:¹³ "What we must do is Poussin over again on Nature." In making that statement, Cézanne was probably thinking of the Poussin who painted a landscape like "The Death of Phocion" with its classical proportions and mathematical precision. He also probably meant that we must like Poussin not slavishly copy nature but paint nature with an eye to the rules and demands of the art of painting. We should also note that this advice to "Poussin over again on nature" came from a painter who painted several pictures in which appear

abstract forms of la montagne Sainte-Victoire.

If it is true that the abstract quality in Botticelli's Primavera, or in Finnegan's Wake, or in the shape of the liturgy, or in the shape of a tea-cup, renders these examples of man's making works of art, ¹⁴ then it is equally true that works of art also 're-present,' as the second half of Jones's axiom has it and as the discussion of the hypothetical Matterhorn painting has shown. One can, therefore, say that the work of art is a sign exhibiting simultaneously a separation from and an 'identity' with some 'reality.' The work of art is an abstraction of a 'reality'; it is separate and different from the 'reality' it seeks to communicate; as a sign it is different from its signified. But the work of art also 're-presents' a 'reality'; it shares an 'identity' with the 'reality' it seeks to communicate; as a sign it includes within itself the signified in another mode of existence. Such a view of the nature of the work of art, though somewhat paradoxical, nevertheless guides us through the confusion that surrounds such words as 'abstract' and 'representation' and puts an end to the meaningless strife between those who prefer 'representational' art and those who prefer their art 'abstract.'

Throughout the discussion so far, I have followed Jones's use of the hyphenated 're-present.' This hyphenating of the word is not a preciosity of style; Jones has a good reason for doing so. Using as example Hogarth's painting, "The Shrimp Girl," Jones explains why he prefers the hyphenated 're-present' to the unhyphenated form. The unhyphenated 'represent' has the conventional meaning of the exhibiting of an image or the copying of some object or person. Thus to ask what Hogarth's painting represents is to receive the simple answer: a young female street-vendor. We are obviously no closer to what the work in fact is. But, argues Jones, "If I wrote 're-presented such and such' there is a slight gain and 're-presented such and

such under other forms' is still more of a gain."¹⁵ With the hyphen in it, 're-present' yields the meaning of a presenting again of something. This is definitely a gain for it emphasizes the importance of the medium (that which does the presenting) and allows the work of art to be more than just a mere copy since the 'original' is present in it in alio esse.

Thus through a clarification of his use of the hyphenated 're-present,' Jones is able to arrive at the following description of what Hogarth's painting is: "It is a 'thing,' an object contrived of various materials and so ordered by Hogarth's muse as to show forth, recall and re-present, strictly within the conditions of a given art and under another mode, such and such a reality. It is a signum of that reality and it makes a kind of anamnesis of that reality."¹⁶ But what is the 'reality' of which Hogarth's painting is a signum? Superficially, one could say the painting 're-presents,' under the form of paint, "a female street-vendor's mortal flesh and poor habiliments seen under our subtle island-light in the gay squalor that was eighteenth century low-life in England."¹⁷ But in fact the 'reality' is too complex and complicated for us to describe with any certainty what it is.

Goodness knows what that 'reality' was in Hogarth's mind. Though the fact that he claimed to have discovered something he called 'the line of beauty,' and wrote an analytical treatise attempting to prove it and to thereby establish a canon of aesthetics based on formulae of proportions, should be sufficient to warn us that that 'reality' was complex and that the conveyance of it in paint involved a lot besides verisimilitude to the accidents of nature.... 'Shrimp Girl' is but a label only for a complex of realities.¹⁸

The quotation marks around 'reality' are therefore cautionary; they warn us that the 'reality' 're-presented' by a work of art may be more complex than we think. The same caution has informed the placing of quotation marks around 'réality' in this chapter.

A painting, then, may 're-present' a natural object or person; but in turn the 'person' or 'object' in the painting may 're-present' a remote and

complicated matter. Hogarth's painting not only signifies a 'shrimp girl,' it also signifies a complex 'reality.' Thus a work of art may simultaneously 're-present' a simple as well as a complicated 'reality.' In Dante's great poem, Beatrice is not only the Florentine lady whom Dante loves, she is also a manifestation of the authority of the Church, Holy Wisdom, and Divine Love. Similarly, a poem about dear Flo may also turn out to be about "Flora Dea and Venus too and the First Eve and the Second also and other and darker figures, among them no doubt, Jocasta." ²⁰ Picture also in the mind's eye the following scene: a group of soldiers on a wet hill-road at sundown watching a pretty lass drive a red-coloured cow before her. What does the scene call to mind? Years later, one of the soldiers recalling this encounter with the cattle girl wrote in a letter to a friend:

It was a red sundown and I was coming with some other Fusiliers along a wet hill-road by a white washed cabin and we met a girl with a torn white shift of sorts with a red skirt with a plum-coloured wide hem to the skirt which reached a bit below the knee; and she had auburn hair floating free over her shoulders and in the wind, and her feet and arms were bare and she had a long stick; she was driving a red-coloured cow before her and the evening sun bathed all these differing reds and bronzes....For some reason that's another image I associate with Troy--the red sunset on the red cattle-girl in Munster...cattle raiders, horse raiders, soldiers, queens, queans, and the red as of flames--and the great dignity--well, fuit Ilium.²¹

The author of the letter has created out of the momentary encounter with the cattle-girl the sign of a 'reality' that is a complication of Helen of Troy, the idea of feminine beauty, perhaps Aphrodite in tattered disguise, the passions of men, the destruction of cities, and those lines in the Aeneid describing a Troy in flames. The author of the letter was David Michael Jones, and it is a good illustration of his belief that in making a work of art "there is always a recalling, a re-presenting again, anaphora, anam-
²² nesis." Like his painting, "Aphrodite in Aulis," in which soldiers from different times and places--Greek and Trojan warriors, an Arthurian knight,

British 'Tommies,' Wehrmacht troopers--are ranged on the same plane around Aphrodite who is also Iphigeneia (a sacrificial victim like Christ) and, inevitably, the Madonna, Jones's letter abolishes the barriers of time, space, and identity by compressing and conflating together the remote past and the twentieth century, Troy and Munster, the beautiful Helen who launched a thousand ships and the auburn-haired cattle-girl in tattered dress. The laws of perspective are violated. Or as Saunders Lewis puts it: "The true sign²³ annihilates perspective." We shall see the same annihilation of perspective when we examine The Anathemata. In that long poem, in which nearly every noun is a sign, the distances and separations of perspective are replaced by the conflations of anamnesis.

The sign not only recalls what may have been forgotten, it also shows forth and makes known what would otherwise remain mute. Without Jones's letter, Helen of Troy would not have shone through the mean vestments of the cattle-girl. "You need a poet," William Carlos Williams once remarked, looking across a park, "otherwise it would all be voiceless."²⁴ The sign is the audible voice man the artist gives to the voiceless. The sign must, however, not only be 'audible,' it must also in some sense be intelligible; that is to say, an observer looking at a sign must know it to be a sign made by another man signifying something other than itself. It is important to note here, in order to avoid confusion, that by sign Jones means 'conventional' signs and not 'natural' signs such as smoke which is the 'natural' sign of a fire. Thus, as a rational construction intelligible to others, and as man's way of giving voice to the voiceless, the 'conventional' sign is an invaluable cultural tool. It enables a person to communicate his experiences, feelings, and ideas to others. In fact it would be impossible to conceive of a human culture without signs. As David Jones puts it: "...man is essentially a culture-making animal,...and a culture is nothing but a sign."²⁵

Thus where we have culture we have signs, and where we have signs we have culture.

Most of us would agree with Jones's contention that the work of art is in some sense a cultural sign. But few of us would be prepared to follow David Jones in taking the argument a step further. Jones argues that the signs made by man must be 'sacred.' "Ars knows only a 'sacred' activity,"²⁶ he declares. But why does a sign imply the sacred? A sign implies the sacred because a sign 're-presents' a 'reality.' Now for anything to be real, the argument continues, it must have esse, 'being.' And 'being' can only be good because bonum et ens convertuntur (good and being are inter-changeable).²⁷ Having established the goodness of 'reality,' Jones can conclude: "A sign then must be significant of something, hence of some 'reality,' so of something 'good,' so of something that is 'sacred.' That is why I think that the notion of sign implies the sacred."²⁸ If the argument appears rather abbreviated it is probably because Jones has taken it for granted that his readers would be familiar with, if not subscribe to, certain Christian assumptions such as the belief in the goodness of God's creation. As it is, Jones's argument makes sense only if we suspend for a moment our scepticism and grant him his assumption that because 'reality' is good, the work of art which 're-presents' it must be 'sacred.'

The main purpose of David Jones's argument, however, is not to lead us into metaphysics or theology; rather, it is to show us that such terms as 'sacred,' 'sacrament,' and 'religion' have meanings other than those normally attributed to them. Believing in continuities and expressing concern over the separation of the Sacraments with a capital 'S' from sacraments (i.e. signs)²⁹ with a small 's,' he tells us: "Such dichotomies are not healthy." He, therefore, attempts to rescue the term 'sacrament' from those Christians who see it in a specialized and narrow sense and from those secularists who

view such a term with suspicion or hostility. By recovering the word's primary meaning, Jones is able to declare that in as much as a work of art 're-presents' a 'reality' that is good, it is also a 'sacrament;' that is to say, in so far as a thing shows forth a 'reality' that is good, and in so far as goodness pleases God, that thing is made holy and consecrated and becomes, therefore, a 'sacrament' (sacrum in Latin meaning a holy thing or place).

A similar desire to recover a word's primary meaning informs David Jones's use of the word 'religion.' He does not use the word in its more accustomed sense "as pertaining to pieties, dispositions of the will, explicit acts of worship, states of mind or soul."³⁰ In his usual fashion, Jones uses the word 'religion' in its primary and inclusive sense. He notes that 'religion' shares a common etymology with 'obligation,' that the same root is present in 'ligament,' and that in all three words a binding of some sort is indicated. Thus, as Jones describes it: "[The word 'religion'] refers to a binding, a securing. Like the ligament, it secures a freedom to function. The binding makes possible the freedom. Cut the ligament and there is atrophy--corpse rather than corpus."³¹ The notion of binding together reminds one of the juxtaposing and connecting activity of art. Moreover, when Jones says that the binding makes freedom possible, we are reminded that he regards the intransitive and gratuitous activity of art as a manifestation of man's freedom. The activity of art is therefore identified as a 'religious' activity. As Jones declares: "Implicit in the activity called art, and belonging to the very essence of that activity there is that which makes it a ligament."³² The activity of art can be termed 'religious' because it binds things together to form a healthy, freely functioning corpus. Departing from the common usage of the terms 'sacrament' and 'religion,' Jones can say that art is a 'religious' activity of making signs that are sacred, 'sacraments.'

In making the claim that works of art are 'sacraments' and that the activity of art is at its root a 'religious' activity, Jones is not contradicting any fundamental dogma of the Church. While it is true that the Church retains the term 'sacrament' for those seven 'sacraments of faith,' it also provides for the use of 'sacramentals' or sacred signs patterned after the 'sacraments of faith.' The 'sacramentals' are instituted in the belief that "there is scarcely any right use of material things that cannot be directed to the sanctification of man and the praise of God."³³ It appears, therefore, that when David Jones puts quotation marks around the word 'sacrament' to distinguish it from the 'sacraments of faith,' he is really talking about what the Church calls 'sacramentals,' material things that rightly used become consecrated objects.

It is of central importance to David Jones that Christianity is committed to the use of sacraments. He has in fact declared bluntly: "No artefacture no Christian religion"("Preface," A, p. 31). What he means is that if not for the fact that man is an artist and his natural activity that of making signs, the central act of Christian worship, the Eucharist, would be without meaning. For the institution of the Eucharist in the Cenacle involved a making, a poiesis. Certain manual acts were performed and certain signs were instituted by Christ and handed down to the faithful as "a traditio 'received of the Lord.'"³⁴ These manual acts involving material substances "can have been done only by virtue of the doer being a man along with us; more explicitly, by his being man-the-artist along with us." Jones can therefore conclude: "What was done [in the Cenacle] would have been neither necessary nor possible unless man is man-the-artist."³⁵ Moreover, what was done in the Cenacle was a sign-making and hence an act of *Ars*.

The everyday things, the food and drink common to a given civilizational milieu, yet already typic and significant

owing to some milleniums of association with rite, cultus, disciplinae (thus saturated with Ars) were, in the supper-room, declared to signify such and such. So far from there being any abrogation of Ars there was a deliberate employment of Ars by the gratuitous institution of a new and impletive rite. [Emphasis mine].³⁶

The Christian religion, therefore, commits man to poiesis, to an act of Ars.

"Do this for an anamnesis of me," Christ commanded when he instituted the 'art-form' of the Eucharist; and whenever the faithful obey this command they commit themselves to Ars, artefacture, sign. In addition, their commitment requires participation in an activity, for anamnesis means more than just remembrance. As Dom Gregory Dix (whose influence Jones acknowledges in a footnote in the "Preface" to The Anathemata) puts it:

[Anamnesis] is not quite easy to represent accurately in English, words like 'remembrance' or 'memorial' having for us a connotation of something itself absent, which is only mentally recollected. But in the scriptures both of the Old and New Testament, anamnesis and, the cognate verb have the sense of 're-calling' or 're-presenting' before God an event in the past, so that it becomes here and now operative by its effects.³⁷

Consequently, for the faithful, the command, "Do this for an anamnesis of me," means not just a mental recollection of the 'art-form' of the Eucharist, it also means a re-enactment of Christ's sign-making, and hence, a commitment to poiesis and Ars. For Jones, therefore, Christianity makes explicit what is implicit: that art is the natural activity of man.

David Jones concludes his remarkable essay, "Art and Sacrament," the general arguments of which this chapter has outlined, by quoting the French Catholic theologian, Maurice de la Taille: "He [Christ] placed Himself in
38
the order of signs." The same quotation also serves as epigraph to Epoch and Artist, a selection of Jones's essays on art in which "Art and Sacrament" is included. Jones placed great importance on this quotation for it supports his belief that a close relationship exists between the central act of Christian worship and the natural sign-making activity of homo faber. Art, sign,

and sacrament--these qualities are evident in the works of man, from the cave paintings of Lascaux to the abstract canvases of Ben Nicholson, from baking a cake for Susan's birthday to an anamnesis of what was done on Maundy Thursday. Man lives in a world of signs, and Christianity takes cognisance of this fact by emphasizing that Christ "placed Himself in the order of signs."

Footnotes

- 1
"Art and Sacrament," EA, p. 150.
- 2
Ibid., p. 155.
- 3
David Jones: Artist and Writer (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1971), p. 24.
- 4
Jacques Maritain, "Sign and Symbol," in Ransoming the Time, trans. Harry Lorin Binsse (New York: Scribner, 1941), p. 218.
- 5
Quoted in H.S. Ede, "David Jones," Horizon, 8 (1943), 128.
- 6
"Art and Sacrament," EA, p. 170.
- 7
Maritain, "Sign and Symbol," p. 220. Also see John W. Hanke's Maritain's Ontology of the Work of Art (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973) for an excellent discussion of Maritain's theory of sign, especially pp. 52-67.
- 8
Ibid.
- 9
"Art and Sacrament," EA, p. 170.
- 10
Ibid., p. 173.
- 11
For an interesting discussion of the two meanings of abstraction in art, see S. Giedion's The Eternal Present: The Beginnings of Art (New York: Pantheon, 1962), pp. 12-14.
- 12
"Art and Sacrament," EA, pp. 170-71.
- 13
Maritain, AS, p. 48.
- 14
See "Abstract Art," EA, p. 265.
- 15
"Art and Sacrament," EA, pp. 173-74.
- 16
Ibid., p. 174.

- 17
"Art and Sacrament," EA, p. 174.
- 18
Ibid.
- 19
See Maritain, AS, pp. 45-46. Also see Hanke, p. 47.
- 20
"Art and Sacrament," EA, p. 167.
- 21
Quoted in René Hague, "David Jones: A Reconnaissance," Agenda, 5, Nos. 1-3 (1967), 63.
- 22
"Art and Sacrament," EA, p. 167.
- 23
"Epoch and Artist," Agenda, 5, Nos. 1-3 (1967), 115.
- 24
Quoted in Hugh Kenner, The Pound Era (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1971), p. 512.
- 25
"Art and Democracy," EA, pp. 87-88.
- 26
"Art and Sacrament," EA, p. 157.
- 27
Ibid.
- 28
Ibid.
- 29
"Preface by the Author," EA, p. 13.
- 30
"Art and Sacrament," EA, pp. 160-61.
- 31
Ibid., p. 158.
- 32
Ibid., p. 160.
- 33
The Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (De Sacra Liturgia), trans. Dom Gregory Bainbridge (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1967), article 61, p. 26.

34

"Art and Sacrament," EA, p. 162.

35

Ibid., p. 167.

36

Ibid., p. 169.

37

The Shape of the Liturgy (Westminster: Dacre Press, 1945), p. 161.

38

"Art and Sacrament," EA, p. 179.

Chapter III

The Poet and his Materia

...to make a shape out of the
very things of which one is
oneself made.

-David Jones

Only God creates ex nihilo. Man must create out of pre-existing matter. This fact must be firmly registered if we are to understand David Jones's aesthetic. For out of man's dependence on matter comes Jones's definition of art as the juxtaposition or fitting together of pre-existing materia or 'shapes.' Now, while it is true that the mind plays a crucial role in the form-making activity of art, there must be, to begin with, some sort of matter to be formed. Jones agrees with Maritain's statement that "art abides on the side of the mind."¹ But he also adds that Maritain, along with Classical and Medieval philosophers, understood the practice of the arts to belong to the 'practical' and not the 'speculative intelligence.' "That is to say the artist has to make 'things.' He cannot make them from nothing...he can 'make' only from what is contactually known to him."² In this chapter I will explore certain aspects of Jones's contactually known materia poetica. I will confine my attention to Jones's art of poetry because, as he puts it, the other arts are not as "occupied with the embodiment and expression of the mythus and deposits comprising...[a] cultural complex [as poetry is]" ("Preface," A, p. 19).

'Contactual' is a key word that appears often in David Jones's writings on art. Assessing Malory's Morte Darthur, he notes that Malory "could still write authentically of knighthood," and praises him for being 'contactual':

[Malory's] data (his visual, felt, data I mean), were accurate, experiential and contactual. And something of that sort is a

necessity to the making of a work, there can be no getting round that necessity in the long run. The imagination must work through what is known and known by a kind of touch. Like the Yggdrasil of northern myth, the roots must be in hard material though the leaves be conceptual and in the clouds; otherwise we can have fancy but hardly imagination.³

Another poet, a physician who lived in Rutherford, New Jersey, put it more concisely: "Say it, no ideas but in things."⁴ For Dr. Williams, physician-poet, 'contact' was essential either in delivering babies or making poetry out of the speech of immigrant Polish mothers. No ideas but in those things one knows and knows by a kind of touch. Or: "To make a start, / out of particulars / and make them general."⁵ It is a long way from Rutherford, N.J., to Harrow-on-the-Hill, but the infantryman of 1915 would have understood the physician. The infantryman was to write a prize-winning book which had to do with some things he "saw, felt, and was part of."⁶ He was also to write: "The contactual is essential. You have to have been there. Ars is adamant about one thing: she compels you to do an infantryman's job. She insists on the tactile."⁷ And: "'We proceed from the known to the unknown.' The concrete, the exact dimensions, the contactual, the visual, the bodily, what the senses register, the assembled data first--then is the 'imagination' freed to get on with the job. The vague, the fanciful, the generalized have no place."⁸ The scholastic injunction, "We proceed from the known to the unknown," chimes pleasantly with the declaration "No ideas but in things." Together they tell us that men know things and that out of known things come ideas and poems. Out of such known things emerged, from New Jersey, Pater-son, and from Harrow, The Anathemata.

What are the known things for David Jones? The answer inevitably involves biography. After all, as David Jones reminds us, one can only "make a shape out of the very things of which one is oneself made" ("Preface," A, p. 10). In the autobiographical talk broadcast on the Welsh Home Service of

the B.B.C., Jones began by recounting two apparently irrelevant and unrelated facts: the little known victory of the Welsh prince Owain Gwynned over his Welsh and English enemies at Coleshill in 1149, and the birth of James Jones in 1860 in Holywell, about three miles north-west of the scene of Owain Gwynned's victory. A connection nevertheless exists; for David Jones, son of James Jones, an 'inward continuity' can be discerned between the dates 1149 and 1860, a continuity supremely relevant to his practice of the visual and aural arts.

But however unapparent, the connection is real enough: for that victory [at Coleshill] symbolized the recovery of a tract of Britain that had been in English possession for well over three centuries. Had that twelfth century recovery not occurred the area around Holywell would have remained within the Mercian zone of influence. In which case its inhabitants would, centuries since have become wholly English in tradition, nomenclature and feeling. Had local history taken that course, it follows that I should not now be speaking to you at the invitation of the Welsh B.B.C., as an artist of Welsh affinities. You see by what close shaves some of us are what we are, and you see how accidents of long past history can be of importance to us in the most intimate sense, and can determine integral things about us.⁹

Several important points emerge from this passage: first, Jones's deep feeling for things Welsh; second, his belief in the shaping influence of local culture; and third, his conviction that history, far from being merely a record of the past, determines "integral things about us" and is therefore 'present' in our cultural identity.

Locality and history were to dictate that David Jones's heritage and cultural identity would be complex. In 1885 David Jones's father moved to London, and in 1888 married Alice Ann Bradshaw, "the daughter of a Thames-side mast-and-block maker, whose wife [the poet's maternal grandmother], was of partly Italian descent."¹⁰ His father's move to London and marriage to a Thames-side resident made David Jones a Londoner; and the port of London and its main waterway and link to other cultures, the Thames, were to provide

him with materia for such pieces of writing as "The Lady of the Pool" section in The Anathemata. James Jones's marriage to an English girl of partly Italian descent was also to enlarge David Jones's materia poetica by incorporating into his Welsh heritage the traditions of the English and the Mediterranean peoples. David Jones's conversion to Catholicism in 1921 was to draw the Londoner closer to Rome. "The loves of Britain and Italy are a long-standing affair," Jones declares. ¹¹ Evidence for such a love affair may be found in the Romano-Celtic past of Britain; or in Geoffrey of Monmouth's claim that the Kingdom of Britain was founded by Brutus, great-grandson of the founder of Rome, Aeneas; or in the history of those missionaries the Church in Rome sent to convert the British heathens.

David Jones's heritage is indeed a mixed bag. Or to alter the metaphor somewhat, thereby incorporating a pun, there are many things in David Jones's 'locker': there are the things native and local to Britain--the things Welsh, for instance; and then there are also the things of foreign derivation--the things Christian and Roman, for example. That all these things are mixed and jumbled-up in one small 'locker' does not make an enquiry into David Jones's materia poetica any easier. Nevertheless, the complexity and complications of his heritage should be noted not merely for its biographical interest, but also because "as one is so one does" and "making follows being" ("Preface," A, p. 11). Thus, asked what The Anathemata is about, Jones wrote:

I answer that it is about one's own 'thing,' which res is unavoidably part and parcel of the Western Christian res, as inherited by a person whose perceptions are totally conditioned and limited by and dependent upon his being indigenous to this island. In this it is necessarily insular; within which insularity there are the further conditionings contingent upon his being a Londoner, of Welsh and English parentage, of Protestant upbringing, of Catholic subscription ("Preface," A, p. 11).

Jones's admission to a certain insularity of outlook points to an important characteristic of his writings. Gertrude Stein's comment on the insularity of English literature is appropriate here:

[English poetry] is the poetry of the things with which any of them [the English] are shut in in their daily, completely daily island life. It makes very beautiful poetry because anything shut in with you can sing. There are the same things in other countries but they are not mentioned not mentioned in that simple intense certain way that makes English poetry what it is.

... [The English poets] have shut in with them in their daily island life but completely shut in with them all the things that just in enumeration make poetry, and they can and do enumerate and they can and do make poetry, this enumeration.¹²

One may quarrel with Stein's sweeping statement; but what she has to say of the insularity that leads to the writing of poetry which enumerates the things 'shut in' on the island of Britain is as apt a description of David Jones's poetic practice as we can hope to find.

A simple example of the poetry of enumeration occurs in the following passage from Jones's In Parenthesis (and it is interesting to note that the Britisher's insular habit of enumeration survives even in a retrospect account of events that occurred in France):

Picks, shovels, dredging-ladles, carriers, containers, gas-rattles, two of Mrs. Thingumajig's patent gas-dispersing flappers; emptied S.A.A. boxes, grenade boxes, two bales of revetting wire, pine stakes; rusted-to-bright-orange barbed wire of curious design--three coils of it; fine good new dark efficient corkscrew staples, splayed-out all ways; three drums of whale oil, the splintered stock of a Mauser rifle, two unexploded yellow-ochre toffee-apples, their strong rods unrusted; three left-leg gum-boots; a Scotch officer's fine bright bonnet; some type of broken pump, its rubber slack punctured, coiled like a dead slime-beast, reared its brass nozzle out from under rum-jar and picket-maul.

This trove piled haphazardly, half-submerged. You must have a lumber room where you have habitation.¹³

The trove may be piled haphazardly, but where there is enumeration there is also the taking of an inventory. The discarded things, half-submerged and

ignored, are remarked on, named. A wasteland of junk becomes the lumber room of a human habitation. By naming the discarded things the poet redeems them from their state of neglect; like Lance-Corporal Aneirin Merddyn Lewis, the poet's language "brings in a manner, baptism, and metaphysical order to the bankruptcy of the occasion."¹⁴ But to enumerate or take an inventory is also to appropriate, to gather-in, to hoard. And what goes into David Jones's 'locker' is more than picks and shovels. In the 'locker' that is The Anathemata we find things as ancient as the bones of Tyrannosaurus or as modern as "The Wasteland," as monumental as Virgil's Aeneid or as slight as the song "All the Nice Girls Love a Sailor," as sophisticated as the Greek korê or as crude as the "Venus of Willendorf," as tragically serious as Malory's account of the mutual fratricide of Balin and Balan or as charmingly surrealistic as the nursery rhyme "Sing a Song of Sixpence."

Inspecting the contents of David Jones's 'locker' we discover that though most of the things bear a 'Made in Britain' label, the entry of foreign imports is not prohibited. After all, Britain is a maritime nation, an island approachable from all directions; and London, its capital, is a 'free port' with lenient 'customs officers.' For David Jones, Britain's insularity does not mean isolation; for him, the seas that surround Britain are not barriers but 'trade routes' through which come 'foreign goods' to enrich and stimulate 'local manufactures.' Thus, when Jones celebrates the local he is not being narrow or parochial; for the local is made up of various things, some of which come from overseas. While Jones shows "an appreciation of the particular genius of places [and] men,"¹⁵ he also recognizes that Britain is made up of several particularities, that it shows forth a 'several-ity.' The contents of David Jones's locker reflect, therefore, the "great confluency and dapple...that is...the shape of things all over Britain."¹⁶ In the London of The Anathemata, for example, we hear a babble of accents:

Welsh-accented English mingles with the French of Mediterranean sea-ports, Billingsgate Cockney jostles university Latin. London is as British (not English but British which already means a 'severality') as it is Western European; it shows forth a 'severality.' Other places are therefore present in a particular place; to celebrate the local is also to celebrate the universal. Starting from particulars we arrive at the general. Out of particulars and differences emerges an identity; or to be more precise, the identity of a place is the relationship of particulars, of differences.

Not only other places, but other times are also present in a particular place. The passage from 'then' to 'now,' the change of people and cultures on the same unchanging site, is best expressed, according to Jones, by James Joyce's celebration of the palimpsest of site: "Northmen's thing¹⁷ made Southfolk's place." Joyce's compact sentence describes, in shorthand, the history of changes that have taken place on the stationary unchanging site of Dublin. It speaks of how the Viking (Norsemen) assembly, or 'Thing,' in time, metamorphosed into the 'Suffolk Place' of modern Dublin. Thus a particular place, site, or locality contains not only the spatial extensions of other places or sites, it also contains the temporal extensions of the past. To know a place is to know it palimpsestically. People and cultures come and go, but the site remains to ensure continuity. On the unchanging site the remains of the various cultures deposit themselves, accumulate, pile up, form strata. The geological metaphor is a favourite of Jones. His description of the geology of Arthuriania applies as well to the geology of site: "There are the sedimented strata laid down on earlier strata, there are the intrusive rocks thrust up from fires long since dead, there are the inversions and the faultings, there are the strange erratics brought by flows from very far off, there are the recent¹⁸ deposits and there is metamorphosis, and pseudomorphosis as well."

Geology furnishes us with the language to describe the layered structure of our cultural deposits or myths. (By myth is not meant a fictitious narrative but a recorded body of tradition; Jones links 'myth' to the Greek mythos which means something told, and hence, for future generations, a record of the past—"Preface," A, p. 40, n. 1.) But it is archaeology which is the poet's profession. If poetry is "the song of deeds,"¹⁹ then the poet's task is to be an 'excavator' of deeds that have entered the soil of history. Like the archaeologist, the poet's business is "to keep open the lines of communication"²⁰ by digging up and revealing deposits from the past. According to Elen Monica, Lady of the Pool, seller of lavender and dispenser of amorous favours, "what's under works up" (A, p. 164). Like archaeology, poetry must see to it that what's under works up. This credo is stated plainly in the "Preface" to The Anathemata: "I believe [declares Jones] that there is, in the principle that informs the poetic art, a something which cannot be disengaged from the mythus, deposits, matière, ethos, whole res of which the poet is himself a product" ("Preface," A, p. 20). The writing of poetry involves an 'excavation' of the poet's own culture, all the layers of it. Jones's method of poetic 'excavation' was made the subject of an encomiastic essay by a professional archaeologist, Stuart Piggott. Praise from such a quarter merits a quotation of some length, especially since Mr. Piggott's remarks bring "splendidly to light" the exploratory 'archaeological' method of the poet who is the subject of his praise:

Perhaps it is not for nothing [Mr. Piggott begins] that 'deposits' is a favourite word of his [Jones], both in poetry and in prose. 'Deposits' are an essential part of his poetry....It is a significant and revealing word. Deposits may imply a slow historical process of accretion, stealthily forming silts, slow strata, the layers of a pearl; or again, they are the man-made caches and hoards--hidden treasures; votive, ritual and foundation deposits, and the last great deposit of all, the body in burial. Medieval (and indeed modern) Treasure Trove law turns on the question of the animus retrovandi, the intent to recover which was in the mind

of the man who made the deposit. Was the treasure buried with an intention or at least a hope that it would again be retrieved by the owner or his heirs? But whatever the animus may have been, its aspirations were not always fulfilled, and the treasure lay unregarded and lost. David Jones does not let poetic treasure trove go unclaimed: like the Crown in law, he steps in as ultima haeres to the deposits, and brings them splendidly to light. He explores poetic deposits with the anxious care of the good excavator (far better than Schliemann "who digged nine sites down in Helen's laughless rock"), alert for the unexpected feature, the illuminating oddness, the links that bind culture to culture.²¹

As archaeologist the poet uncovers the deposits of the past. But the uncovering is also a recovery, a gathering-in safely of the treasures lost or unclaimed. The poet is an archaeologist because he is also a conserver of things.

As ultima haeres, David Jones can draw on the buried treasure troves of Britain for materia poetica. Thus, into a 'locker' already crammed with such foreign treasures as Vergil's Aeneid, the Heimskringla, and Greek kouroi, go such ancient native treasures as the 20,000 to 40,000 year old remains of the Upper Palaeolithic South Welshman buried in Paviland lime-rock in Gower (see A, p. 76, n. 1), the megaliths found all over South Wales and Cornwall, and the earliest Welsh poems by Taliesin and Aneirin. One is therefore tempted to argue that David Jones's 'locker' is as magical as the bag Rhiannon gave to Pwyll in the old Welsh tale "Pwyll, Prince of Dyfed."²² In that tale Rhiannon's magical bag can be filled with all the meat and drink of seven cantrefs and yet be no fuller than before. And if we know in addition that a 'cantref' in Welsh means a hundred towns we can better appreciate the magical flexibility and spaciousness of Rhiannon's bag. As we shall see, David Jones's The Anathemata is a veritable Rhiannon's bag, the contents of which prove to be for the reader un embarras de richesse.

Other materia poetica that goes into Jones's magical 'locker' are those indelible and painful memories of life in the front-trenches during the Great War and the more agreeable memories of a visit to the Middle East in

1934. In Parenthesis, for example, is a book which draws largely from Jones's experience as a front-line infantryman in the Great War. Moreover, military terms and imagery pervade the texture of all his work, from the soldiers of his painting "Aphrodite in Aulis," to the analogy he drew between the artist and the infantryman in his essay, "The Utile." In The Anathemata there is a remarkable and moving description of a Christmas truce during which British 'Tommy' and German 'Jerry' exchange gifts; and the whole description is personally signed by David Jones with the words: "when I was a young man in France" (A, p. 216). Memories of his visit to the Middle East, and especially Jerusalem, provided him with materia for most of the poems in his latest book (and last to be published in his lifetime) to appear, The Sleeping Lord. Poems like "The Wall," "The Dream of Private Clitus," "The Fatigue," and "The Tribune's Visitation" have for their subject the grousing of Roman soldiers of mixed recruitment (with the inevitable Celt from Britain among them) stationed in Palestine around the time of Christ's Passion. In a letter to his friend, Saunders Lewis, David Jones describes how on seeing a squad of British soldiers armed with riot-shields and batons on parade in Jerusalem, he was reminded of the Roman legions of two millenia ago. Out of such sights and memories come poems like "The Fatigue." Similarly, certain passages in The Anathemata owe their origin to memories of the Middle East trip (see, for example, A, p. 52, n. 2 and p. 231, n. 1). Jones's visits to Bethlehem and Jerusalem also provided him with a first-hand 'feel' of these significant Christian sites; and for a poet who believes in working contactually, getting a first-hand 'feel' of these places is important especially since the Nativity and the Passion are two important subjects of his poems.

Both trips abroad were forced on Jones. He went to France as a member of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers; and his trip to the Middle East was recommended

for medical reasons. He describes his visit to the Middle East as 'forced':
 "'Forced' because of illness, for it is certain I should never have gone to
 Palestine off my own hat, for I hate what our American friends call 'going
 places.'" ²⁴ Gertrude Stein's description of the English poet who shuts in
 with himself the things of his island, the better to sing them, can also
 stand as a description of David Jones's life and work, between which there
 exists a clear continuity. For in later life, David Jones himself was a
 'shut-in,' an invalid of sorts who for reasons of ill health did not budge
 from the cluttered room he occupied for years at the Monksdene Residential
 Hotel in Harrow-on-the-Hill. But temperament also played a part in turning
 him into what a friend described as "a sociable hermit in a cave." ²⁵ We
 catch a glimpse of the temperament that was to turn the older David Jones
 into a recluse in these words of the younger painter: "I always work from
 the window of a house if it is at all possible. I like looking out onto the
 world from a reasonably sheltered position. I can't paint in the wind, and
 I like the indoors outdoors, contained yet limitless feeling of windows and
 doors. A man should be in a house; a beast should be in a field and all
 that." ²⁶

David Jones may have been a hermit, but he lived, as the foregoing
 statement implies, in "a cave with a view, a full cave not an empty one,
 with everything marked with the occupant's sign-manual." ²⁷ A cave through
 which the light of memory filtered through; for David Jones faithfully served
 Mnemosyne, mother of the Muses, in his cave. A cave that is also a 'count-
 ing-house' in which David Jones the poet made out of counting, poetry. A
 cave that is also a 'locker' in which David Jones, like a miserly Gobseck,
 stored the treasures he found, following as advice Picasso's "I do not seek,
 I find" ("Preface," A, p. 35).

The poet, then, must be a collector, enumerator, and conserver. He must be, according to Jones, "something of a vicar whose job is legatine—a kind of *Servus Servorum* to deliver what has been delivered to him" ("Preface," *A*, p. 35). The poet is keeper and guard of the materia poetica, the treasured myths of his culture. What Jones describes as the genuine function of myth holds equally true for the function of the poet: "To conserve, to develop, to bring together, to make significant for the present what the past holds, without dilution or any deleting, but rather by understanding and transubstantiating the material,...saying always: 'of these thou hast given me have I lost none.'" ²⁸ In The Anathemata this function is admirably fulfilled. So if David Jones's 'locker' is a 'safe' into which all is safely gathered in, it is also an 'archive' to which we may gain access and from which we may learn.

Finally, from the previous chapter, we may recall that the artist is a maker of signs. We may also remember that a sign 're-presents' and 'recalls' a 'reality.' A sign is by nature both expansive and contractive, centrifugal and centripetal. It moves outwards to its 'referent' or 'referents' so that it may gather them into itself in order that it may 're-present' them, that is, make them present again in itself. A sign collects and gathers in its 'referents' in order to show them forth. A sign is therefore both a 'locker' (which gathers in) and an 'archive' (which shows forth). It is little wonder, then, that David Jones should see the poet as both a conserver and a sign-maker; the two activities are one and the same.

Footnotes

- 1
David Jones, "Looking Back at the Thirties," London Magazine, 5, No. 1 (1965), 53.
- 2
Ibid.
- 3
"The Myth of Arthur," EA, p. 244.
- 4
William Carlos Williams, Paterson (New York: New Directions, 1963), Book I, 1, p. 14.
- 5
Ibid., Book I, "Preface," p. 11.
- 6
David Jones, "Preface" to In Parenthesis (London: Faber, 1937), p. ix.
- 7
"The Utile," EA, p. 183.
- 8
"James Joyce's Dublin," EA, p. 306.
- 9
"Autobiographical Talk," EA, p. 25.
- 10
Ibid., p. 26.
- 11
"The Myth of Arthur," EA, p. 221.
- 12
"What is English Literature," in Gertrude Stein: Writings and Lectures 1909-1945, ed. Patricia Meyerowitz (Baltimore, Maryland: Penguin, 1971), pp. 34-35.
- 13
In Parenthesis, p. 90.
- 14
Ibid., p. 2.
- 15
Quoted in Robin Ironside, David Jones (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1949), p. 14.
- 16
"Preface by the Author," EA, p. 17.

- 17
Quoted by Jones in "The Arthurian Legend," EA, p. 210.
- 18
David Jones, "Foreword" to R.W. Barber's Arthur of Albion (London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1961), p. vii.
- 19
"Past and Present," EA, p. 140.
- 20
Ibid., p. 141.
- 21
"David Jones and the Past of Man," Agenda, 5, Nos. 1-3 (1967), 77-78.
- 22
See The Mabinogion, trans. Gwyn Jones and Thomas Jones (London: Dent, 1949), pp. 13-15.
- 23
Letter from David Jones to Saunders Lewis, in Agenda, 11, No. 4-12, No. 1 (1973/74), 23.
- 24
Ibid., pp. 23-24.
- 25
Quoted in Janet Watts, "David Jones," Guardian, 9 June 1975, p. 8.
- 26
Quoted in H.S. Ede, "David Jones," Horizon, 8 (1943), 131.
- 27
William Blissett, "David Jones: Himself at the Cave-mouth," University of Toronto Quarterly, 36 (1967), 264.
- 28
"The Myth of Arthur," EA, p. 243.

Chapter IV

An Aesthetics of Crisis

What forces our interest is
Cézanne's anxiety--that's
Cézanne's lesson.

-Pablo Picasso

In the preface to his first published book, In Parenthesis, David Jones expressed his concern that modern technology may disrupt the age-old ways and activities of man (this concern from one who witnessed and was never to forget the deadly efficiency of high explosives and poison gas). In particular, as an artist, he asks: "It would be interesting to know how we shall ennoble our new media [the products of technology] as we have already ennobled and made significant our old--candle-light, fire-light, Cups, Wands and Swords, to choose at random." ¹ In Parenthesis was published in 1937. Twenty-eight years later Jones concluded an essay by quoting the foregoing passage from the "Preface" to In Parenthesis along with the comment that although much had happened since 1937, he did not think there had been "any radical change in direction but rather a vast extension and unprecedented acceleration of the technologies referred to, which leaves the dilemmas of the artist much the same, but intensified." ²

The intensification of the artist's dilemmas is reflected in Jones's post-1937 writings. Where the "Preface" to In Parenthesis briefly touched on the problems that face the modern artist, the "Preface" to The Anathemata and essays such as "Art and Sacrament," "The Utile," and "Use and Sign" make those problems a central part of their concern. What emerges from these essays is an aesthetics of crisis, a view of the practice and function of contemporary art founded on anxiety; anxiety over modern technology's disruption of man's age-old sign-making activity. We can, therefore, para-

phrasing Picasso, say that what forces out interest is David Jones's anxiety, an anxiety that is also his lesson.³

In the passage from the "Preface" to In Parenthesis quoted above, an important question is posed: How shall we ennoble and make significant our new media? On the surface, the answer appears simple enough. One could point, for example, to the glorification of the machine by the Italian Futurists. Or, closer to home, one could mention the attempts to ennoble the Dynamo by British and American poets of the thirties; Stephen Spender's "The Express" or "The Landscape near an Aerodrome" are good examples of such an attempt at ennobling and making poetic the products of modern technology. But all these attempts are more revealing of man's intrinsic need for beauty than they are of the nature and aims of technology. The automobiles of the Italian Futurists are not the automobiles of Ford or General Motors. When F.T. Marinetti, the leading theorist of Italian Futurism, described an automobile as a "snorting beast [with] a torrid breast" or as a "fine shark...speeding along...on its powerful fins," he was not speaking the language of the automobile manufacturers.⁴ For the engineers and the technocrats, the automobile is not, as it was for Marinetti, a symbol of bestial potency and brute power; rather, the automobile is regarded solely as a means of transportation, and the more efficiently it can proceed from point A to point B the better it is. Similarly, while the express may glide by majestic as a queen or flame by like some fiery comet in Stephen Spender's poem, it is merely an engine to the engineers who designed it and an express-train to the men who have to speed it from one place to another so it may live up to its name. What is at issue is not how successfully or unsuccessfully Spender or Marinetti utilized the products of technology as subject matter; rather, the point to consider is that automobiles, trains, and other inventions of modern technology are made with efficiency as their

determining characteristic and utility their ultimate end. Lacking the gratuitous these products of modern technology are not works of art. While a painting of a locomotive by Umberto Boccioni (his "States of Mind: The Farewell" of 1911 for example) or a poem about an express by Spender are works of art, the same cannot be said of the locomotive that is the subject of the painting or the express that is the subject of the poem. Ultimately, neither Spender's poem nor Boccioni's painting ennoble or make significant the actual express or locomotive. Thus, those paintings and poems which have as their subject the products of technology are instructive for they tell us not only of the human need to convert the strictly 'utile' into so many gratuitous 'snorting beasts,' or 'sleek sharks,' or 'majestic queens,' but also inform us, in their choice of subject matter, that the 'utile' surrounds us at every turn.

It is the tension between the accelerating proliferation of the 'utile' and the persistent human need for art that is the source of David Jones's anxiety. In asking how one may ennoble the new inventions of technology, Jones has already acknowledged a separation between the gratuitous but ennobling activity of art and the 'utile' activity of technology. This 'separation' Jones and his friends christened 'The Break.' Historically, Jones situates this 'Break' in the nineteenth century (though its causes may be located earlier in time):

...in the nineteenth century [Jones writes], Western Man moved across a rubicon which, if as unseen as the 38th Parallel, seems to have been as definitive as the Styx. That much is I think generally appreciated. But it was not the memory-effacing Lethe that was crossed; and consequently, although man has found much to his liking, advantage, and considerable wonderment, he has still retained ineradicable longings for, as it were, the farther shore ("Preface," A, pp. 15-16).

For Jones, the crossing of this unseen rubicon meant Western man's entry into the brave new world of technology, a world in which if the light of

knowledge lengthens so does the cold strengthen to chill the arts.

That the title of a book of essays by David Jones should be Epoch and Artist testifies to his belief that a close connection exists between a given historical situation and the practice of art. The problems of the artist are what Jones calls 'situational problems;' that is to say, whatever the artist's temperament or bias may be, the problems he faces are objective problems, problems that are inherent in the particular historical situation he finds himself in. The artist can therefore be seen as a sort of seismograph sensitive to the least tremor of a 'situational problem.' "The whole complex of these [situational] difficulties," Jones writes, "is primarily felt by the sign-maker, the artist, because for him it is an immediate, day by day, factual problem. He has somehow or other, to lift up valid signs; that is his specific task" ("Preface," A, p. 23). And most of the difficulties faced by the modern artist can be attributed to the technological mentality of the epoch in which he lives.

It is the mentality spawned by modern technology that more than its 'utile' products threatens to disrupt man's sign-making activity. This modern positivistic and pragmatic mentality is perhaps best revealed in the words of the Hegelian Dr. Caird, Master of Balliol (circa 1900):

It is the peculiar strength of the modern time that it has reached a clear perception of the finite world as finite; that in science it is positive--i.e. that it takes particular facts for no more than they are; and that in practice it is unembarrassed by superstition--i.e. by the tendency to treat particular things and persons as mysteriously sacred. The first immediate awe and reverence which arose out of a confusion of the absolute and universal with the relative and particular, or in simpler language, of the divine and human, the ideal and the real, has passed away from the world.⁵

The eminent Dr. Caird offers us a sophisticated version of Bitzer's definition of a horse as nothing but a quadruped. The reductionist who sees a thing as nothing but a thing and takes particular facts for no more than

they are will obviously be impatient of, if not hostile to, the 'vagaries' of art. To the man who, in Kathleen Raine's telling words, sees "in the pearl nothing but the disease of the oyster,"⁶ the sign-making activity of art will appear as a lot of superstitious nonsense and metaphysical rubbish. To the pragmatist for whom a spade is a spade, the view that a thing may be the sign of something other is mere fancy and to be tolerated as one tolerates a child's caprice. With the Dr. Cairds and Bitzers clearly in the majority, the modern artist's sign-making activity can only become more and more difficult.

David Jones's anxiety centres precisely on the problematics of sign-making in an epoch, the dominant sensibility of which is indifferent, if not hostile, to the concept of sign and sacrament. The problem is succinctly posed by Jones:

The technocracy in which we live is of its nature concerned with the purely utile, with what functions. This of necessity demands a preoccupation with the analytical, with formulae that have as their end the furthering of devices as signa of something other than themselves.

As the artist is concerned precisely with making things that are signa of some otherness (no matter what) his works would appear to have no essential and crucial place in such a situation were the matter carried to its logical conclusion.⁷

And to Jones such a 'matter' seemed increasingly to be carried to its logical conclusion. In a conversation with Peter Orr, David Jones forwarded a similar view that the arts are in "a state of crisis," and expressed his worry that modern schoolboys "don't easily accept the language of allegory which, of course, is almost the whole language of the arts."⁸ These schoolboys don't easily accept the language of allegory or analogy because our educational system, which is progressive and geared to modern (i.e. technological) needs, teaches them the values of logic, clear-sightedness, and precise thinking, values more suited to the prose of technology than to the

poetry of the imagination. Schoolboys nowadays are Bitzers who have as their teachers Dr. Cairds. Given such a situation the anxiety expressed by Jones in the following passage is not without reason:

If the poet writes 'wood' what are the chances that the Wood of the Cross will be evoked? Should the answer be 'None,' then it would seem that an impoverishment of some sort would have to be admitted. It would mean that that particular word could no longer be used with confidence to implement, to call up or to set in motion a whole world of content belonging in a special sense to the mythus of a particular culture and of concepts and realities belonging to mankind as such. This would be true irrespective of our beliefs or disbeliefs. It would remain true even if we were of the opinion that it was high time that the word 'wood' should be dissociated from the mythus and concepts indicated. The arts abhor any loppings off of meanings or emptyings out, any lessening of the totality of connotation, any loss of recession and thickness through ("Preface," A, pp. 23-24; emphasis mine).

In a technocracy peopled with Bitzers and Dr. Cairds who take "particular facts for no more than they are," the recessive, thick, and connotative language of the arts will increasingly sound 'Jug Jug' to insensitive or ignorant ears.

The sensibility which takes "particular facts for no more than they are" will in practice be "unembarrassed by superstition--i.e. by the tendency to treat particular things and persons as mysteriously sacred." Rid of our superstition, we no longer feel compelled to treat our fellowmen and Nature with the reverence and deference due things sacred. With superstition banished, the massive application of technology becomes possible. No longer sacred, the world becomes malleable to human will. As the Mexican poet Octavio Paz observes: "For technology, the world presents itself as resistance, not as archetype: it has reality, not shape." The task of technology is therefore to shape the world. And its success is attested to by the fact that the only reality we know today is technological reality: "...a reality so powerfully real--visible, palpable, audible, ubiquitous--that the real

reality has ceased to be natural or supernatural; industry is our landscape,
 our heaven and our hell."¹⁰ Technology has radically shaped not only the
 outer reality of our landscape, it has also shaped our inner reality, our
 very soul (if such a 'vague' word is allowed to exist in the vocabulary of
 technology). In his penetrating analysis of Western technological civiliza-
 tion, Jacques Ellul argues that technique in the form of psychology or
 sociology invades even the inner life of people. Ellul writes:

Since the human sciences are applications of technical means,
 this entails rounding up those elements of the human person-
 ality that are still free and forcing ('reintegrating') them
 into the expanding technical order of things. What yet re-
 mains of private life must be forced into line by invisible
 techniques....Reintegration involves man's covert spiritual
 activities as well as his overt actions. Amusements, friend-
 ship, art--all must be compelled toward the new integration,
 thanks to which there is to be no more social maladjustment
 or neurosis. Man is to be smoothed out, like a pair of pants
 under a steam iron.¹¹

Technology, therefore, completely interposes itself between us and the
 world; "it closes every prospect from view."¹² Whether we like it or not
 we are ineluctably citizens of a world shaped by technology.

In a world shaped by technology, utility and efficiency set the stan-
 dard for all other values. What we demand, David Jones claims, "is that
 'the wheels go round' not 'significantly,' not as signa of something other,
 but with maximum utilitarian effectiveness."¹³ Jones's definition of the
 word 'utile' helps us to a clearer understanding of the purely functional
 nature of technological works: "I restrict the liberty of the word 'utile'
 and use it only with reference to such things as carburettors and gull's
 pinions, that is to say, I restrict it to man's functional contrivances and
 to the contrivances of animals and the processes of nature [such as nest-
 building or mountain-building]."¹⁴ He goes on to argue that "the charac-
 teristic works of our present technocracy at its best and at its worst seek
 the 'utile.'"¹⁵ At its best our technocracy produces certain works that

may elicit the adjective 'beautiful' from some of us. Thus, sleek war-planes or even "the gleaming and exact apparatuses...seen from the dentist's chair" may please us with their 'beauty.' But all such products of our technocracy, Jones is quick to add, "derive their beauty from the play of light on shapes which seek an uncontaminated utility"¹⁶ [Emphasis mine]. In other words, the beauty of a war-plane or a dentist's drilling-machine is a secondary (or perhaps even accidental) attribute, utility and efficiency being the determining characteristics of technological products. At its worst, our technocracy produces "the thousand-and-one utensils and impedimenta of our daily lives," most of which may be described as "mediocre, shoddy and slick."¹⁷ Thus "the search in antique-dealers' shops for a single spoon that does not affront the senses" may no longer be dismissed as "an aesthete's faddishness or as a collector's craze or as an obsession with the past."¹⁸ Moreover, such an effort "is symptomatic of a general, if muddled, nostalgia for things which though serviceable and utile are not divorced from the extra-utile and which, on that account, conform to man's ordinary, normal and proper, if obscured, desires--the fundamental desires of all men, of Man."¹⁹

Thus, our efforts to secure from antique shops utensils which though serviceable are also beautiful, indicate that in past civilizations the utile and the extra-utile were not divorced from one another as they are today. Instead, past civilizations have been characterized by a nuptials of sorts, "a mutual intermingling of the utile and the inutile."²⁰ Though it may have been a 'marriage of convenience,' it was also quite fruitful: "And every now and again the progeny of that union has caused later generations to wonder with a great admiration. Hence some have spoken of the 'miracle that was Greece' and others of 'that dear middle-age these noodles praise.'" ²¹ In fact, the marriage often had a dominant partner; when de-

cision time came it was the extra-utile, the gratuitous, the aesthetic that had the final say. As Jacques Ellul observes:

[In the past] the modifications of a given type [of instrument] were not the outcome of calculation or of an exclusively technical will. They resulted from aesthetic considerations. It is important to emphasize that technical operations, like the instruments themselves, almost always depended on aesthetic preoccupations. It was impossible to conceive of a tool that was not beautiful. As for the idea, frequently accepted since the triumph of efficiency, that the beautiful is that which is well adapted to use--assuredly no such notion guided the aesthetic searchings of the past. No such conception of beauty (however true) moved the artisan who carved a Toledo blade or fabricated a harness. On the contrary, aesthetic considerations are gratuitous and permit the introduction of uselessness into an eminently useful and efficient apparatus.²²

Such a preoccupation with the beautiful and the gratuitous was certainly true of the men who built the Cathedral of Chartres. But the same men must also have "assiduously applied themselves to the technics without which the stone could not have climbed so high to canopy the Sacrament."²³ Thus in a construction like the Cathedral of Chartres, David Jones sees "sufficient evidence that... [in the Middle Ages] the utile and the extra-utile were indissolubly wed: there was no diriment impediment to that union."²⁴

However, for modern technology to develop and advance, aesthetic considerations had to be jettisoned. To quote Ellul again:

The machine can become precise only to the degree that its design is elaborated with mathematical rigor in accordance with use. And an embellishment could increase air resistance, throw a wheel out of balance, alter velocity or precision. There was no room in practical activity for gratuitous aesthetic preoccupations. The two had to be separated.²⁵

Thus, unlike David Jones's favourite 'Battersea shield' which, apart from its obvious use, has a significance and an aesthetic value all its own, the camera of the tourist (who, let us say, visits the British Museum in which that shield is housed) is merely a tool required solely to perform efficiently its function: taking photographs. A similar contrast may be drawn

between the purely functional factories, airports, and power plants of our technological epoch and the cathedrals, mosques, and Mayan temples of the past. The latter are what Octavio Paz describes as "works impregnated with significance: they endure because they were built upon lasting meanings, not only because of the greater or lesser resistance of their materials."²⁶

The Industrial Revolution of the nineteenth century meant the triumph of technology and the separation of the utile from the extra-utile; the former was apotheosized and the latter shunted off to museums or cast aside as so many playthings one has outgrown. Yet in an age of Coketowns, Utilitarianism, and Blue Books, we also find the Gothic Revival, Morris and Co., and Yellow Books. As Jones reminds us: "In a world of Blue Books, Yellow Books are to be expected and are a sign of relative normality rather than the reverse. The 'aesthete' in man will out."²⁷ Unlike the 'aesthetes' of the nineties, however, men like Ruskin and Morris were not interested in separating art from life. Instead they sought to integrate art and society; they desired a marriage of the utile and the extra-utile. Their admiration of the Middle Ages was based on the belief, however mistaken or simple, that such an integration of art and society characterized that age. In that important chapter of The Stones of Venice entitled "The Nature of Gothic," Ruskin argued that the marvels of Gothic architecture were the work of humble artisans allowed freedom to create.²⁸ To Ruskin and Morris the lowliness and anonymity of these artisans testified to a society in which the activity of art was a natural and not a specialized or privileged activity.²⁹ Margaret Grennan, in her study of William Morris's 'medievalism,' tells us that Morris took as a compliment the critical remark "that while the standard of craftsmanship was universally high in the Middle Ages, few rose above their fellows."³⁰ To Morris the lack of 'geniuses' in the Middle Ages meant that artists were not separated from workmen and accorded special privileges.

Unlike our own epoch in which a few artists create works appreciated only by a comprehending few, Morris saw the Middle Ages as an age in which every worker was an artist and every artist a workman. The Middle Ages, in Morris's view, escaped from the modern age's "fatal schism between art and daily life."³¹ A similar view was put forward by Eric Gill, David Jones's mentor and friend, who was a founding member of the crafts guild at Ditchling:

The artist, they [the men of the Middle Ages] held, is the skilled workman....The beautiful thing, they held, is that which being seen pleases; and they did not dream of the possibility of useful articles being anything but beautiful or of the possibility of beauty being divorced from usefulness. The idea of work, the idea of art, the idea of service and the idea of beauty were and are, in spite of our peculiar century, naturally inseparable; and our century is only peculiar in that we have achieved their unnatural separation.³²

However false or naive the 'medievalism' of Morris or Gill may have been, they saw a return to the medieval principle of unity as the only way of closing the gap between art and the other activities of man.

While sympathetic to the attempts to re-unify art and society, Jones also knew that such attempts could not hope to succeed in our epoch. We may recall from Chapter I Jones's belief that art "comprehends all our activities from boat-building to poetry." Such a belief is consistent with the 'integrative' view of art held by Morris and Gill. However, in Jones's writings we also discover the 'pessimism' of a man who is aware that the times are against any such integration of art and society. In our technocracy an artist like Eric Gill, Jones argues, "is an oddity." He continues:

Such a person [as Eric Gill] is not knit with, has no necessary part in, exists by sufferance of, our civilization.... One need not necessarily subscribe to Spengler's whole thesis to admit that in his 'technics instead of lyrics' theme he shows us through which door the wind blows, and that steel wind gathers weight and drive as these unkindly decades proceed. I find it impossible to consider the work of Mr. Gill without keeping in mind this situation, because he sought to work as though a culture of some sort existed or, at all events, he worked as though one should, and could make a culture exist.³³

Thus, though Jones praises Eric Gill for his dedication to his art, he is also forced to criticize his friend's insistence on working "as though a culture of some sort existed" or as though one "could make a culture exist." For the unpleasant truth is that "we live in a period devoid of a cul-
 34 ture." And in the absence of a corporate culture there can be no corporate renewal, though here and there a few individuals "may locally and in a tentative and fluid manner make the desert bloom."
 35 Moreover, in a technological society characterized by mobility and change, a culture rooted in tradition and site does not stand a chance of flourishing. In fact, not only can a local culture not flourish, but technological advances, "one way or another and whether beneficent or otherwise, [have been] destructive of immemorial ways of life, of rooted cultures of all sorts and of erosions too
 36 numerous to mention, at all sorts of levels." Such destructions have occurred not only in Jones's beloved Wales (see, for example, the essay "George Borrow and Wales" in Epoch and Artist) but also all around the world, from Africa to New Guinea, from the Indian sub-continent to South America, from one country to another in the 'sad tropics.'

In past cultures that were rooted in tradition and site, the artist and his audience shared a common language of signs. Moreover, in such a traditional culture, the artist was a person of recognized status with clearly defined duties; if he was a poet, for example, his role in society would be that of custodian, rememberer, embodier and voice of its traditions, its mythus (see "Preface," A, p. 21). Art was considered part of the 'social fabric' and not some sort of 'cultural activity' to be indulged in occasionally or a form of entertainment to amuse the public. But in the absence of a corporate culture, the artists of our technocratic 'megapolitan diaspora' ("Preface," A, p. 26) are, figuratively speaking, adrift. To continue the metaphor, modern artists having been cast out of our efficiently run,

technological-marvel-of-a-ship-of-state, are left "drifting on [their] experimental floats in search of the goddess on a chancy ocean."³⁷

The modern artist is like Aeneas but without the consolation of knowing his destiny. Like Aeneas he harbours a sense of loss, and in his lament we detect a longing for a destroyed past. But again, like Aeneas, he knows that he can only go forward. However, unlike the glorious destiny that awaited Vergil's hero Aeneas, we cannot tell in advance what landfall the modern artist will make. He can only continue to explore and fare forward anxiously. Thus, an aesthetics for the dispossessed modern artist, if it is to avoid becoming a sterile 'aestheticism' isolated and divorced from the problems of its epoch, must be founded on crisis and anxiety.

In his perceptive review of David Jones's Epoch and Artist (the title of the review also serves as the title of this chapter), the American art-critic Harold Rosenberg praises Jones's book for containing "some of the most acutely relevant writing on contemporary form and value to have appeared in years."³⁸ Jones's relevant insights, Rosenberg argues, come from the unique perspective he brought to contemporary problems of artistic creation. Unlike the usual elegist of cultural decline, Jones saw in Western civilization's crisis of values "a valuable means of orientation."³⁹ While conscious of modern decadence, and not without a touch of nostalgia for the past, Jones also realized that art can only go forward. In Rosenberg's opinion, Jones even took pleasure in the questions raised by modern decadence.⁴⁰ Pleasure, however, does not seem to be quite the appropriate description of Jones's anxiety over the age's indifference or hostility to the practice of art. Rather than pleasure, it was the instinct to survive (we will do well to remember that Jones was an infantryman in the Great War) which forced Jones to assess carefully the precarious position of the arts in the face of advances by the enemy--technology; to count sadly the cas-

ualties suffered by the forces of art; and, with the flanks turned and the advance positions occupied by the enemy, to attempt to survive with some dignity, organize some sort of resistance, and hope somehow for small victories. Jones's writings on art are therefore "formed in the dual perspective of regret and possibility."⁴¹ The regret for the losses suffered by art is balanced by a search for possibilities of artistic activity.

To say of the elegaic strain in David Jones's writings that it is a species of primitivism would be to argue a half-truth. Such a half-truth is argued by Frank Kermode when he declares that Jones's primitivism "is of the Romantic tradition; it would have seemed painfully odd neither to Joyce... nor to Yeats, whose belief that art must be 'constantly flooded with the passions and beliefs of ancient times' Mr. Jones would fully endorse."⁴² But if Jones's writings are "flooded with the passions and beliefs of ancient times," they are also very concerned with current problems of artistic creation. In fact, the criticism that Kermode levels at Jones, Jones had directed at Charles Williams's Arthurian poems. Jones found a lack of 'now-ness' in Williams's poems: "Somehow, somewhere, between content and form, concept and image, sign and what is signified, a sense of the contemporary escapes, or rather appears to me to escape."⁴³ "What the artist lifts up," Jones further argued, "must have a kind of transubstantiated actual-ness. Our images, not only our ideas, must be valid for now."⁴⁴ At first glance, Jones's Romano-Celtic, Arthurian, and Christian materia poetica seems rather remote from the concerns of the present. But this materia from the past is not used to build a fantasy-world one can escape to; rather, for Jones, the ancient materia serves to remind the present not only of its links to the past but also warns us that what we have gained through technological advances we have lost in the way of certain traditions. Jones's backward look cannot be interpreted, therefore, as a form of escapism or a

stubborn refusal to face current problems of artistic creation; indeed, it can be regarded as a critique of the present. The past is valid for the present, if it reminds us of what we have lost.

We are often too involved, too immersed in the here-and-now to have time to listen to the voices that speak the language of regret, of deprivation. Moreover, most of us do not feel a sense of loss over the destruction of the past. The Canadian philosopher George Grant attributes this lack of a sense of deprivation to the modern belief that technology will enable us to create freely a world we desire. Grant writes: "It is difficult to think whether we are deprived of anything essential to our happiness, just because the coming to be of the technological society has stripped us above all of the very systems of meaning which disclosed the higher purposes of man, and in terms of which, therefore, we could judge whether an absence of something was in fact a deprivation."⁴⁵ With the 'de-construction' of traditional "systems of meaning, given in myth, philosophy and revelation" we are left without any established language with which to criticize or protest against technological imperialism. As Grant notes:

All coherent languages beyond those which serve the drive to unlimited freedom through technique have been broken up in the coming to be of what we are. Therefore it is impossible to articulate publicly any suggestion of loss, and perhaps even more frightening, almost impossible to articulate it to ourselves. We have been left with no words which cleave together and summon out of uncertainty the good of which we may sense the dispossession. The drive to the planetary technical future is in any case inevitable; but those who would try to divert, to limit, or even simply to stand in fear before some of its applications find themselves defenceless, because of the disappearance of any speech by which the continual changes involved in that drive could ever be thought as deprivations.⁴⁶

If the language of technology has won the day, all we can hope for are a few sad voices reminding us of the costs of that victory. To quote Grant again:

Only in listening for the intimations of deprivation can we live critically in the dynamo....Any intimations of authentic deprivation are precious, because they are the ways through which intimations of good, unthinkable in the public terms [of technology], may yet appear to us. The affirmation stands: how can we think deprivation unless the good which we lack is somehow remembered? To reverse the platitude, we are never more sure that air is good for animals than when we are gasping for breath.⁴⁷

The writings of David Jones speak such a language of deprivation. His view of the poet as a rememberer, his care for the heritage of Britain, his respect for local traditions, his anxiety over the obliteration of "the holy diversities" and the imposition of "the rootless uniformities" by our technocracy, his fear that man the artist in becoming man the utilist would become less than human--together, all these concerns (some would call them obsessions) form David Jones's language of deprivation.⁴⁸ For an example of how Jones's idiom of deprivation works, we can consult any one of the lists of artefacts given in The Anathemata; by listing down the artefacts made by man the artist, Jones reminds us of what we have lost in becoming man the utilist. Thus, by speaking of the deprivations caused by the acceleration of technology, Jones's writings affirm the need for, and the goodness of, those things we ignore and, consequently, have lost.

In his essay on David Jones, Frank Kermode examines the gap between the 'two cultures' and concludes that the character of modern art "is such that it must be in conflict with a scientific world-view to survive at all."⁴⁹ Such a conclusion, as much as he disliked it, seemed to Jones to be the only answer. Unlike the artists of traditional cultures, Jones argues, the artist "in the present phase of our civilization...is no longer an integral part of a living culture; he has to swim against the tide."⁵⁰ Alienated from his civilization, the artist turns antagonist. As Jones sees it, "the tradition of the individual artist could only be in our sort of civilization, [and] it is, paradoxically, a contradiction, a fifth column, within that

civilization, and here it shares the honours of sabotage with the tradition of religion, for both are disruptive forces, both own allegiance to values in any event irritant, and easily becoming toxic to those values which of necessity dominate the present world-orders." ⁵¹ The artist is therefore

forced by our technological civilization either to employ "guerilla tactics" ⁵² or go underground and lead "a very private and secret labyrinthine life."

The description of the artist as a guerilla and fifth-columnist may be applied to David Jones himself. Although he led a very private life (in later life, he was, as we have seen, almost a hermit), in his writings Jones was a fifth-columnist who conducted a subversive campaign against the technocratic mentality. By conserving and preserving myths and other ancient traditions in his poems and essays, Jones goes against the technocratic view which regards such myths and traditions as so much superstitious 'rubbish.' By employing an elegaic language of deprivation, he attempts to unsettle the technocrat's conscience by reminding him of the losses suffered in the course of technological progress. To suppress our repeated attempts to look backward, our technocratic society tries to turn us into amnesiacs. To cure us of this unnatural amnesia, Jones invites us to perform the act of anamnesis. Refuting at every turn the progressive utilitarian ideology of our technocracy, Jones's writings proclaim opposition and assume a subversive character.

The most subversive act an artist living in a technocracy can perform is to carry on with his sign-making activity and continue turning out works of art despite the difficulties. Thus, though beset by hard times, the artist must continue to search for possibilities of artistic activity. The main difficulty he will have to face, according to Jones, is the absence of a corporate culture. In a traditionless civilization, the artist will have to take on and solve the problems of art all by himself; with no common tradition to rely on, the artist will have to forge, as best he can, a tradition

for himself. Attempts to establish "a formal artistic discipline derived from the outside," according to Jones, will fail; "for no 'external discipline' can be real, invigorating, and integrating unless it comes to us with the imperatives of a living tradition."⁵³ Consequently, Jones is compelled to criticize critics and art historians like Berenson who continue to believe that objective canons of taste can be derived from a 'Great Tradition.' But instead of adopting the static principles of classicism advocated by many art-critics, historians, and theoreticians, modern artists continue to be eclectic, innovative, exploratory, experimental. Without a living tradition to sustain him, the modern artist works in isolation, trying out this or that criterion, exploring this or that idea, hoping that he will somehow arrive at some valid principle of creation. Hence the general art situation is 'Alexandrian' and eclectic. At the same time, however, the best works of modern art tend to be individual in vision and subjective in nature. As Jones puts it: "...the best of what has been produced during these years has tended to have perfections of a rather personal sort--this or that man pushing this or that notion as far as his sensitivities would allow him in this or that rather limited terrain."⁵⁴ In the absence of a corporate culture, "there is opportunity for the employment of native and individual vision....Instinct rather than rule will have to serve."⁵⁵ In our epoch, therefore, individual vision and effort will determine the possibilities available for art. A traditionalist at heart, Jones disliked such a state of affairs. But he also knew that short of a radical change in "the actual civilizational situation," the artist will have to continue to work in isolation, often in conflict with his society.⁵⁶

In his perceptive review of Epoch and Artist, Harold Rosenberg makes the interesting point that David Jones's aesthetic 'envisions an individual equivalent of the kind of art that is typical of traditional cultures.'⁵⁷

In other words, Jones's aesthetic contains a paradox. While his poems (and his paintings for that matter) draw on materia from traditional sources (see Chapter III) and depend for their validity on a common understanding of the signs they show forth (see Chapter II), they are, in their final form, individual to the point of idiosyncrasy. The difficulty we encounter in reading a poem like The Anathemata is to a great extent due to our inability to categorize it, to fix its genre. Its aims appear to be those of an epic; it attempts to embody and express the mythus and deposits of the cultural complex that is Britain. And yet, finally, The Anathemata is not an epic; a true epic can only be written in a corporate culture, and The Anathemata is only an individual's attempt to recover and conserve certain aspects of his heritage. Thus, when John Holloway criticizes The Anathemata for being subjective, idiosyncratic, and private, and hence, "at odds with the status and intention of epic," he is correct in a sense. ⁵⁸ But what Holloway overlooks in his criticism is precisely the fact that what Jones's aesthetic envisions is not an epic but an individual equivalent of epic. The Anathemata is not Jones's recipe for epic; rather, it outlines the possibility of an aesthetic (or poetics, to be more precise), a method of composition available to a poet like Jones, a traditionalist in a traditionless civilization.

What is this method of composition available to such an artist in a time of crisis? The general method is outlined in the 'Preface' to The Anathemata. Jones writes:

I regard my book more as a series of fragments, fragmented bits, chance scraps really, of records of things, vestiges of sorts and kinds of disciplinae [i.e., the proper way of making a thing], that have come my way by this channel or that influence. Pieces of stuffs that happen to mean something to me and which I see as perhaps making a kind of coat of many colours, such as belonged to 'that dreamer' in the Hebrew myth. Things to which I would give a related form, just as one does in painting a picture. You use the things that are yours to use because they happen to be

lying about the place or site or lying within the orbit of your 'tradition' ("Preface," A, p. 34).

According to Harold Rosenberg, Jones's description of The Anathemata's method of composition "is about as good a general model of twentieth-century work as one can find."⁵⁹ Rosenberg makes a similar statement in another essay, "The Concept of Action in Painting." In that essay, Rosenberg argues that the method of composition outlined by Jones in his "Preface" to The Anathemata is valid because of the collapse of traditional Western forms. Deprived of traditional forms, Rosenberg continues, the poet or painter is forced "[to pick] his way among the bits and pieces of the cultural heritage and...[put] together whatever seems capable of carrying a meaning."⁶⁰

The modern poet or artist is, therefore, essentially a bricoleur engaged in an activity of bricolage. In French, a bricoleur means a Jack of all trades who puts things together out of scraps, bits and pieces, odds and ends. In The Savage Mind, Claude Lévi-Strauss advances the proposition that mythical thought is a kind of intellectual bricolage. Faced with a particular task, Lévi-Strauss writes, the bricoleur will first of all interrogate "the heterogeneous objects of which his treasury is composed to discover what each of them could 'signify' and so contribute to the definition of a set"⁶¹ (cf. Jones's "Pieces of stuffs....to which I would give a related form"). Each object in the bricoleur's treasury, however, is limited by its own particular history and "by those of its features which are already determined by the use for which it was originally intended or the modifications it has undergone for other purposes." "The elements which the bricoleur collects and uses are 'pre-constrained,'" continues Lévi-Strauss, "like the constitutive units of myth, the possible combinations of which are restricted by the fact that they are drawn from the language where they already possess a sense which sets a limit on their freedom of manoeuvre."⁶² Thus, like the

bricoleur who has to make do with whatever is at hand (cf. Jones's "the things...that happen to be lying about the place or site or lying within the orbit of your 'tradition'"), mythical thought is dependent on the 'pre-constrained' material provided by a language. It seems, then, that mythical bricolage is dependent on the prior language or text of a heritage; in the words of Boas: "...it would seem that mythological worlds have been built up, only to be shattered again, and that new worlds were built from the frag-

ments."⁶³ Mythical thought builds structured sets out of the debris of prior structured sets. As Lévi-Strauss puts it: "...the characteristic feature of mythical thought, as of bricolage on the practical plane, is that it builds up structured sets, not directly with other structured sets but by using the remains and debris of events: in French des bribes et des morceaux, or odds and ends in English, fossilized evidence of the history of an individual or

a society."⁶⁴ What Lévi-Strauss has to say of the bricolage activity of myth-making applies equally to the modern artist's bricolage activity of putting together a new structure or form from the bits and pieces of past cultural forms and traditions shattered by the rise of technology. And, as we may have gathered, the method of composition outlined in the "Preface" to The Anathemata is a kind of bricolage.

The concept of bricolage explains why a poem like The Anathemata is objective, impersonal, and public, and at the same time, subjective, idiosyncratic, and private. The structured set created by the bricolage activity, Lévi-Strauss observes, "will ultimately differ from the instrumental set only in the internal disposition of its parts."⁶⁵ A switch in terminology reveals how appropriate Lévi-Strauss's observation is to the kind of poetic composition described by Jones in the "Preface" to The Anathemata. A poem like The Anathemata (the structured set) depends on the available mythus and deposits of a cultural complex (the instrumental set) for its materia. The poet's

choice of facts and data from among the possibilities offered by the cultural deposits, and the way in which he arranges and shapes this chosen materia spell the difference between the structured set of the poem and the instrumental set of the cultural deposits. This difference also defines the subjective, idiosyncratic quality of the poem. In the absence of an authoritative tradition, the poet will have to choose and arrange and shape his materia according to ability, preference, instinct; as Jones has observed, in a traditionless civilization, "Instinct rather than rule will have to

⁶⁶ serve." Thus, from his choice of materia, and from the way in which he shapes it, will emerge an account of the poet's personality and life. What Lévi-Strauss says of the bricoleur--"he always puts something of himself into it [his creation]" ⁶⁷--may be said of the poet as well. John Holloway's criticism of The Anathemata was levelled precisely at this subjective and idiosyncratic aspect of the bricolage activity. But in his criticism Holloway overlooked the other aspect of the bricolage activity, namely, its dependence on a prior existent set of tools and materials, which, in the case of a poem like The Anathemata, would be the objective and publicly available mythus and deposits of a cultural complex. From an objective and publicly available set of heterogeneous materials the bricoleur chooses certain things and puts them together to form a structure that testifies to his skill and individual genius. Similarly, from the objective and publicly available mythus and deposits of the British cultural complex David Jones chooses certain facts and data and then arranges, juxtaposes, and combines them into a poem like The Anathemata which bears a strong imprint of his personality, his cares and his loves. The paradox of a poem like The Anathemata--a poem both objective and subjective, public and private--can be explained, therefore, by the bricolage activity of giving a subjective and idiosyncratic form to the objective data, however incoherent or fragmented, of an in-

herited cultural complex.

From his analysis of the cultural crisis to his view of the artist as a fifth columnist, from his use of a language of deprival which reminds us of our losses to his preference for the bricolage method of composition, in all of Jones's discussions and writings on the subject of art, one important point crops up again and again: while the practice of art has never been easy, in our epoch the practice of art is synonymous with the constant struggle to solve problems. It is little wonder then that David Jones's writings are suffused with anxiety; aesthetics, for Jones, means an aesthetics of crisis founded on anxiety. Yet, ironically, anxiety in our epoch is not a vice but a virtue. As Harold Rosenberg remarks: "The anxiety of art represents the will that art shall exist, despite conditions that might make its existence impossible."⁶⁸

In art, therefore, anxiety represents the will to try out new possibilities of form. Consequently, an aesthetics founded on anxiety must necessarily be exploratory and experimental; or, in Jones's words, it must be part of "a tradition of a feeling-toward."⁶⁹ The poems of David Jones are written with such an exploratory aesthetic as model; they are "personal sorties into possibilities of language and feeling rather than works fashioned for the satisfaction of a pre-existing taste."⁷⁰

David Jones's aesthetics of crisis is characterized, therefore, by a dialectic of anxiety and exploration. The dialectic works in the following way: the problems posed by our technocracy cause the artist anxiety; this anxiety will force him to search for new and valid forms of expression; the search for these new forms, a search made difficult by the civilizational situation, will in turn cause anxiety; and this new infusion of anxiety will no doubt cause the artist to redouble his exploratory efforts. Faced with a problem, we become anxious; but our anxiety in turn acts as a spur to effort.

It is this positive action that emerges from our struggling with a problem that Harold Rosenberg praises when he writes: "It is finding the obstacle to going ahead that counts--that is the discovery and the starting point of metamorphosis. Uniqueness is an effect of duration in action, a prolonged hacking and gnawing....Apart from that every kind of excellence can be copied."⁷¹ Or as W.C. Williams puts it: "Blocked. / (Make a song out of that: concretely)."⁷² For an aesthetic to be valid in our epoch, it must face up to the civilizational problems and see in these problems possibilities of 'song.' As we shall see, much of the vigour of The Anathemata consists of its turning the problems that confront its making into possibilities of poetic composition. A 'formal embodiment of crisis,' The Anathemata⁷³ owes much of its interest to its metamorphosing anxiety into song.

Footnotes

- 1
David Jones, "Preface" to In Parenthesis, p. xiv.
- 2
"Looking Back at the Thirties," London Magazine, 5, No. 1 (1965), 53.
- 3
Picasso's remark on Cézanne (which appears as epigraph to this chapter) is quoted in Harold Rosenberg's The Anxious Object (New York: Horizon Press, 1966), p. 232.
- 4
See F.T. Marinetti's "The Foundation and Manifesto of Futurism," in Theories of Modern Art: A Source Book by Artists and Critics, ed. Herschel B. Chipp (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1970), pp. 284-86.
- 5
Quoted by Jones in "Preface by the Author," EA, p. 14.
- 6
Kathleen Raine, Defending Ancient Springs (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 113.
- 7
"Looking Back at the Thirties," p. 50.
- 8
"David Jones," The Poet Speaks, ed. Peter Orr (London: Routledge, 1966), p. 10.
- 9
"Signs in Rotation," in The Bow and the Lyre, trans. Ruth L.C. Simms (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1973), p. 241.
- 10
Ibid.
- 11
The Technological Society, trans. John Wilkinson (New York: Vintage Books, 1964), p. 411.
- 12
"Signs in Rotation," p. 241.
- 13
"Use and Sign," The Listener, 24 May 1962, p. 901.
- 14
"The Utile," EA, p. 180.

- 15
"The Utile," EA, p. 181.
- 16
Ibid.
- 17
Ibid.
- 18
Ibid.
- 19
Ibid.
- 20
"Use and Sign," p. 900.
- 21
Ibid.
- 22
The Technological Society, pp. 72-73.
- 23
"Use and Sign," p. 900.
- 24
Ibid.
- 25
The Technological Society, p. 73.
- 26
"Signs in Rotation," p. 242.
- 27
"Art and Democracy," EA, p. 95, n. 1.
- 28
See Selected Prose of Ruskin, ed. Matthew Hodgart (New York: Signet, 1972), pp. 113-14.
- 29
For a discussion of artistic anonymity in the Middle Ages, see Rayner Heppenstall's "The Question of Anonymity" which is appended to Eric Gill's Art and a Changing Civilization (London: John Lane, 1934), pp. 141-45.
- 30
William Morris: Medievalist and Revolutionary (New York: King's Crown Press, 1945), p. 144.
- 31
Quoted in Grennan, *ibid.*

- 32
Art and a Changing Civilization, p. 39.
- 33
 "Eric Gill as Sculptor," EA, pp. 288-89.
- 34
 Ibid., p. 291.
- 35
 "Religion and the Muses," EA, p. 105.
- 36
 David Jones, "Looking Back at the Thirties," p. 52.
- 37
 "Eric Gill: An Appreciation," EA, p. 300.
- 38
 "Aesthetics of Crisis," The New Yorker, 22 August 1964, p. 114.
- 39
 Ibid.
- 40
 Ibid.
- 41
 Ibid.
- 42
 "On David Jones," Puzzles and Epiphanies (London: Routledge, 1962), p. 30.
- 43
 "The Arthurian Legend," EA, p. 209.
- 44
 Ibid., p. 210.
- 45
 "A Platitude," in Technology and Empire: Perspectives on North America (Toronto: House of Anansi, 1969), p. 137.
- 46
 Ibid., p. 139.
- 47
 Ibid., p. 141.
- 48
 The phrases "the holy diversities" and "the rootless uniformities" come from David Jones's poem "The Tutelar of the Place" collected in The Sleeping Lord and Other Fragments (London: Faber, 1974). A companion poem to "The Tutelar of the Place," "The Tribune's Visitation," also speaks in the idiom of deprivation.

- 49
"On David Jones," in Puzzles and Epiphanies, p. 34.
- 50
"A Note on Mr. Berenson's Views," EA, p. 274.
- 51
"Religion and the Muses," EA, p. 100.
- 52
Ibid., p. 106.
- 53
"If and Perhaps and But," EA, p. 278.
- 54
"A Note on Mr. Berenson's Views," EA, p. 273.
- 55
"Religion and the Muses," EA, p. 105.
- 56
"If and Perhaps and But," EA, p. 278.
- 57
"Aesthetics of Crisis," p. 118.
- 58
"A Perpetual Showing," The Hudson Review, 16, No. 1 (1963), 127.
- 59
"Aesthetics of Crisis," p. 121.
- 60
"The Concept of Action in Painting," Artworks and Packages (New York: Horizon Press, 1969), p. 216.
- 61
The Savage Mind (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966), p. 18.
- 62
Ibid., p. 19.
- 63
Ibid., p. 21.
- 64
Ibid., pp. 21-22.
- 65
Ibid., p. 18.
- 66
"Religion and the Muses," EA, p. 105.

67

The Savage Mind, p. 21.

68

The Anxious Object, p. 18.

69

"Religion and the Muses," EA, p. 98.

70

Rosenberg, "Aesthetics of Crisis," p. 121.

71

The Anxious Object, p. 20.

72

Paterson, Book 2, ii, p. 78.

73

The phrase 'formal embodiment of crisis' is Harold Rosenberg's. See his "Aesthetics of Crisis," p. 121.

Chapter V

The Flexible Unity of The Anathemata

The speed of light, they say, is very rapid--but it is nothing to the agility of thought and its ability to twist and double on its tracks, penetrate recesses and generally nose about.

-David Jones

Gathering all things in, twining each bruised stem to the swaying trellis of the dance, the dance about the sawn lode-stake on the hill where the hidden stillness is at the core of struggle,... where the king sits, counting out his man-geld, rhyming the audits of all the world-holdings.

-David Jones, "The Tutelar of the Place"

If works of art are signs, then what is The Anathemata a sign of? The answer is not at all simple. For a sign, as I have argued, tends to be centrifugal in its attempt to 're-call' and 're-present' a 'reality' that is often complex. And The Anathemata happens to be centrifugal with a vengeance. Generally speaking, however, one can say that The Anathemata is an attempt to 're-call' and 're-present' a complex 'reality,' that complex 'reality' being nothing less than the cultural history of the Christian West as seen by an Anglo-Welsh Londoner of Catholic subscription (the complicated, dappled nature of this inherited 'reality' has already been examined in Chapter III). A more specific answer to the foregoing question is given in David Jones's radio talk:

More recently, in making The Anathemata I was explicitly concerned with a re-calling of certain things which I myself had received, things which are part of the complex deposits of this Island, so of course involving the central Christian rite and mythological, historical, etc.,

data of all sorts. These were, so to say, my 'subject matter.' Here the commemorative intention was as plain as a pikestaff, however unplain the result may have seemed to the reader.¹

Plain though the poet's intention may be, in order to understand more clearly what The Anathemata is about, two further questions have to be asked. The simpler question concerns the reason for 're-calling' one's cultural inheritance. Of the many subjects available to the poet why does he choose to 're-call' the things he has received from his culture? The other question is harder to answer. It is concerned with the problems of composition: How does the poet give a structure or form to what is such a large and complicated subject, and what kind of problems does he have to tackle in the process of composition? The answer to this question will form the major part of this chapter.

To David Jones the poet is "something of a vicar whose job is legatine--a kind of Servus Servorum to deliver what has been delivered to him" ("Preface," A, p. 35). In another essay Jones declares that "the poet is a 'rememberer' and that it is a part of his business to keep open the lines of communication. One obvious way of doing this is by handing on such fragmented bits of our own inheritance as we have ourselves received."² The last sentence is an apt description of The Anathemata's contents: "...a series of fragments, fragmented bits, chance scraps really, of records of things, vestiges of sorts and kinds of disciplinae...[that] happen to be lying about the place or site or lying within the orbit of your 'tradition'" ("Preface," A, p. 34). By gathering together and incorporating into his book the fragments scattered within the orbit of his 'tradition,' David Jones fulfils the poet's legatine role of conserving and delivering to the future what has been delivered to him from the past. Such a conservative, legatine task is especially necessary in our epoch, for the technocracy in which we live

has been destructive of all kinds of traditions and cultures (as we saw in the previous chapter). The fragments that have survived the destruction of time and technology are, therefore, to be valued, for by their presence they testify to a continuity, however tenuous and fragile, between our utile age and the extra-utile cultures of the past. By 're-presenting' and 're-calling' in his poem these fragments from the past, Jones is able to argue that the lines of communication between the present and the past are still open, and that, consequently, a 'tradition' of sorts can still be maintained by an individual in a traditionless civilization. Here, in the poet's attempt to maintain a 'tradition,' we have the answer to our first question. David Jones's commemorative intention in The Anathemata is part of his 'rear-guard' defence of 'tradition' against the tradition-destroying, culture-smashing forces of technology.

Though he persisted in the belief that a 'tradition' of sorts could be maintained in our age, David Jones was also agonizingly aware of the enormous difficulties such a conservative and legatine task would have to face. These difficulties, for a poet like David Jones, are ultimately problems of composition. Two problems especially worried Jones. The modern reader's unfamiliarity with the connotative language of signs presented Jones with the problem of communication. Since his whole poetic practice is based on the concept of words as signs, the modern reader's inability to understand the symbolic power of words naturally worried him. Jones also worried a great deal over the structural unity of The Anathemata. Attempting to compose an inclusive, encyclopaedic poem, Jones found himself faced with the bricoleur's typical problem: how to give a related form to the diverse and scattered data, the fragmented bits and pieces of his cultural inheritance. This structural problem is further compounded by Jones's tendency to be centrifugal in his handling of the poetic material. It will be argued that

in The Anathemata these two problems--the problem of communication and the problem of structural unity--are incorporated into the fabric of the poem; or to put it another way, the poem reveals in its form the problematics of poiesis, of making.

Thumbing through The Anathemata we are immediately struck by the notes that accompany almost every page. Our attention is also drawn to the long thirty-four page "Preface." To many readers, critics, and poets, such prefaces and footnotes are anathema. Prefaces and footnotes, so the objection runs, either display unnecessary pedantry or indicate an inability to shape a poem into a self-contained whole. David Jones is not guilty of either pedantry or incompetence.

In annotating his text, David Jones was aware that the charge of pedantry would be levelled at him. Anticipating just such an accusation, he has written:

It is sometimes objected that annotation is pedantic; all things considered in the present instance, the reverse would, I think, be the more true. There have been culture-phases when the maker and the society in which he lived shared an enclosed and common background, where the terms of reference were common to all. It would be an affectation to pretend that such was our situation today. Certainly it would be an absurd affectation in me to suppose that many of the themes I have employed are familiar to all readers, even though they are, without exception, themes derived from our own deposits....I have, therefore, glossed the text in order to open up 'unshared backgrounds'...if such they are("Preface," A, p. 14).

Annotation is, therefore, an act of generosity. Instead of displaying pedantry, footnotes help the reader to understand certain references or allusions that may otherwise escape his comprehension. Footnotes help to open up 'unshared backgrounds.' For Jones, therefore, footnotes are not obstacles but guides that help facilitate our reading of the poem.

Though the footnotes help to open up 'unshared backgrounds,' their very necessity indicates the existence of a cultural crisis. Not only do poets

and the society in which they live no longer share common terms of reference, but, as the previous chapter has shown, most of the inhabitants of our modern technological society have also lost the ability to understand the allegorical and symbolic language of poets and suffer from a kind of historical and cultural amnesia. Trained to take particulars for no more than they are, the inhabitants of our technocracy must be 're-educated' if they are to understand the language of signs in which the word 'wood' may refer not only to the bark of trees but also to the Wood of the Cross. Anyone who has taught a freshman English class and has been introduced to the students' lack of historical knowledge will not be surprised by Jones's remark³ that "the word 'Aphrodite' might not be understood now by lots of chaps." There is, therefore, a communication gap between a 'traditionalist' poet like David Jones and a modern audience without memory or tradition.

Jones's "Preface" and footnotes attempt to meet these problems of communication; in their own fashion, they seek to 're-educate' those who are willing to learn. But in our 'post-literacy' (the phrase is George Steiner's) such a pedagogic task becomes more and more difficult. Irritated though we may be by his Wagnerian, apocalyptic tone, we are, nonetheless, forced to recognize the truth of George Steiner's gloomy prediction that in-
⁴creasingly all our 'classics' will require annotation. Even our understanding of the 'classics' of our own language will increasingly depend on the mediation of footnotes, on translation. And the more we require footnotes to help us understand a poem, the more we can be certain that the gap between the poet and his society has widened. Thus, although David Jones's "Preface" and footnotes attempt to bridge the communication gap, their very necessity testifies to the existence of such a gap. One can argue, therefore, that if The Anathemata is, in Harold Rosenberg's phrase, a "formal
⁵embodiment of crisis" it owes this designation in part to the crisis of

communication which in the form of the "Preface" and the footnotes is embedded into the very texture and fabric of the book. In other words, by inserting a "Preface" and notes into The Anathemata, Jones has incorporated the problems of communication into the total form of his poem.

Footnotes not only indicate the existence of communication problems they also question a text's internal unity. It is in the nature of footnotes to refer outwards away from the text and towards some external source or sources. Hence they tend to subvert and disrupt the internal unity of the text by subordinating it to external contingencies. It is little wonder, then, that footnotes attached to poems are regarded with so much distaste. For the addition of footnotes violates the cherished notion that a poem should be 'self-contained.' A poem, one such ars poetica advises, "should be palpable and mute / as a globed fruit." From such a point of view, the notes of The Anathemata, to extend the simile, will appear as so many extraneous and superfluous twigs and leaves that need lopping off.

The impulse to prune away the 'superfluous' also informs the prescriptive reading techniques of the 'New Criticism.' From the 'intentional fallacy' of Wimsatt and Beardsley to the 'referential fallacy' of Riffaterre, the 'New Criticism' has shown itself to be reductionist in its methodology. The 'new critic' isolates a poem from its environment and erects barriers around it to prevent 'intention' from slipping in or 'reference' from slipping out. Though the methods of the 'New Criticism' have yielded many interesting insights into the art of poetry, it is also apparent that they are somewhat limited in scope. While the methods of the 'New Criticism' applied to short tightly-knit poems have led to a greater awareness of the poet's intricate verbal craft, one shudders to think of some energetic 'new critic' eagerly murdering to dissect such 'loose, baggy monsters' as Pound's Cantos, Williams's Paterson, or Jones's The Anathemata.

To read The Anathemata along reductionist lines would be to perform Procrustean violence on its network of references and allusions to ancient Welsh tales, folk songs, nursery rhymes, archaeological findings, Roman history, geological texts, "The Dream of the Rood," Langland's "Piers Plowman," Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner," Malory's Morte Darthur, several Shakespearean plays, Donne's Holy Sonnets, Milton's "Nativity Ode," Vergil's Aeneid, several poems by G.M. Hopkins, Eliot's "The Wasteland," the Christian liturgy, the author's memories of the Great War and a trip to Palestine, and so on. "The arts," David Jones firmly declares, "abhor any loppings off of meanings or emptyings out, any lessening of the totality of connotation, any loss of recession and thickness through" ("Preface," A, p. 24). And Jones's footnotes make even thicker and more connotative the already thick, connotative, and branching language of The Anathemata. The notes impart a centrifugal movement to the poem, drawing it out of its covers and inserting it in a complex network of other poems, books, texts, works of art; in short, the notes deny the autonomous existence of the poem by placing it in a wide cultural context. This dependence on a cultural context is further confirmed by the long list of acknowledgements with which Jones concludes the "Preface" to his poem.

Michel Foucault's description of a book as a node within a network of discourse is especially relevant to my discussion of the efferent quality imparted to The Anathemata by its notes:

The frontiers of a book [Foucault writes] are never clear-cut: beyond the title, the first lines, and the last full stop, beyond its internal configuration and its autonomous form, it is caught up in a system of references to other books, other texts, other sentences: it is a node within a network....The book is not simply the object that one holds in one's hands; and it cannot remain within the little parallelepiped that contains it; its unity is variable and relative. As soon as one questions that unity, it loses its self-evidence; it indicates itself, constructs itself, only on the basis of a complex field of discourse.⁶

By extending the frontiers of the poem, the centrifugal notes of The Anathemata raise the problem of the poem's unity.

A similar centrifugal tendency is evident in Jones's handling of his poetic material. Instead of taking any intellectual or formal 'short-cuts' to consolidate the poem's unity, Jones adopts an exploratory mode of composition. Acknowledging the complexity of the cultural deposits from which he draws his poetic material, he shuns the easy short-cut and instead patiently follows the meandering and labyrinthine contours of the deposits. In his essay, "The Myth of Arthur", Jones warns us that "in considering the tradition of a folk and a locality we must be prepared for a tortuous journey. The zone we search is traversed and troia'd, we stumble from sections of well-revetted entrenchment, upon old workings fallen-in and shapeless, bombarded by the creeping-barrage of successive traditions." Any poet wishing to use material drawn from the ancient cultural deposits is therefore required to embark on a journey of exploration in which a short-cut will more often than not trip him up and the long tortuous route gain him poetic treasure. Jones's criticism of Tennyson for not taking the long, tortuous route through the Arthurian material is instructive. By concentrating only on certain parts of the Arthurian tradition, Jones argues, Tennyson lost contact with the complex of the ancient deposits. In his use of the Arthurian myth Tennyson should have gone further back to the roots, to the folk-lore deposits, to Nennius' Historia Brittonum and the early Welsh tales such as Culhwch and Olwen. As it is, Jones observes, we can attribute Tennyson's fault to "what he left⁸ out." Jones therefore advises us, in following any myth, to feel "the whole⁹ weight of what lies hidden--the many strata of it."

David Jones's advice comes out of his own exploratory method of composition, a method I called 'archaeological' in a previous chapter. Like Heinrich Schliemann "who digged nine sites down in Helen's laughless rock" ("Pre-

face,"(A, p. 39), David Jones was aware that the cultural deposits from which he drew his material were many-layered. To uncover a layer is to know that there are many layers still left beneath it. It is, as Jones warns us, "always a case of before and before again."¹⁰

In the "Rite and Fore-time" section of The Anathemata, we have a series of sentences, each beginning with the word 'before' and each taking us farther and farther back to those times before man first appeared, to the fore-time of glacial-drifts and the "proto-historic transmogrification of the land-face," to "before all time"(see A, pp. 64-73). Like the New Light of Christ which, according to Jones's conceit, shines through all the various geological strata, his writing also uncovers layer after layer and penetrates deeper and deeper through the many strata.

Piercing the eskered silt, discovering every stria, each score and macula, lighting all the fragile laminae of the shales.

However Calypso has shuffled the marked pack, veiling with early the late.

Through all unconformities and the sills without sequence, glorying all the under-dapple.

Lighting the Cretaceous and the Trias, for Tyrannosaurus must somehow lie down with herbivores, or, the poet lied, which is not allowed.

However violent the contortion or whatever the inversion of the folding.

Oblique through the fire-wrought cold rock dyked from convulsions under.

Through the slow sedimentations laid by his patient creature of water.

Which ever the direction of the strike, whether the hade is to the up-throw or the fault normal.

Through all metamorphs or whatever the pseudomorphoses (A, p. 74).

The sentences are typographically arranged to suggest stratification, and the harsh consonantal orchestration conveys an impression of the resistance encountered while attempting to penetrate hardened sediment and rock. The difficulty of geological exploration is also suggested by the rather whimsical description of Calypso (in Greek, 'she who covers') shuffling and mixing up the geological layers so that the explorer will be baffled by the

"unconformities and the sills without sequence."

To pursue the geological analogy, one can say that the poetic exploration of ancient cultural deposits will have to contend with the same 'underdapple,' contortions, inversions, foldings, and complications that are to be found in the earth's strata. Fittingly, the "Rite and Fore-time" section is full of questions that tentatively probe for the earliest signs made by man. For instance, the poet asks of the artist who sculpted the 'Venus of Willendorf' (circa 25,000 B.C.):

Who were his gens-men or had he no Hausname yet
no nomen for his fecit-mark
 the Master of the Venus?
whose man-hands god-handled the Willendorf stone
 before they unbound the last glaciation(A, p. 59)

and of Neanderthal burial sites (circa 40-60,000 B.C.):

What, from this one's cranial data, is
like to have been his kindred's psyche; in that they, along
with the journey-food, donated the votive horn? and with
what pietas did they donate these among the dead--the life-
givers--and by what rubric?(A, p. 61).

These are the kinds of questions archaeologists keep asking over and over again for no complete answers are available. The fragments uncovered by archaeologists yield only fragmentary answers, answers that are provisional and incomplete. Thus, like the archaeologist, the poet who uses material from the ancient deposits has to contend with fragments; his task is to interpret the significance of these fragments and fit them together as best he can into some kind of structure however incomplete or elliptical it may appear to the reader.

The 'archaeological' method of composition (in which the poet must attentively record every fragment he comes across) inevitably results in a loose structure in which tentative arrangements of insights or associative juxtapositions of fragments are favoured over any pattern that coerces the fragmentary and scattered data into a rigid unity. In his review of a col-

lection of essays on the early history of Britain, Jones puts forward the view that a too consistent pattern may lead to the simplification of a complex matter:

The less sweeping and the more tentative the claims the more we are inclined to cock our ears. The conveniently worked-out, the completed cross-word, no loose ends, a too consistent pattern...at such we shy in all matters which still demand more and more exactitude and slow piecing together of bits of fragmented and far-scattered evidence.¹¹

Jones's refusal to simplify the complex nature of his cultural inheritance results in The Anathemata having an uneven, unfinished appearance. Like the long, rambling, and digressive monologue of the lavender-seller, Jones's poem is "pieced in parts with and descanted upon of certain matters" (A, p. 155). The Anathemata's subtitle, "fragments of an attempted writing," is therefore appropriate for a book which is literally made up of fragments that have been pieced together. These fragments, in turn, are quite multifarious and varied; their variety is of course in keeping with the dappled, pied condition of the British deposits. As Jones has observed: "Who would represent this Island must be clothed in a mantle of variety. For the whole tradition of Britain is 'of couple-colour as a brinded cow' as G.M. Hopkins¹² wrote in 1877 of the skies of Gwynedd." Thus, reading The Anathemata we immediately notice that it is multi-faceted, many-hued. Instead of an homogeneous, smooth surface we encounter an heterogeneous, uneven texture made up of bits of fragments, each quite different from its neighbours. Such an uneven, jagged texture is clearly evident in the different languages that jostle one another throughout the poem. By different languages I do not mean just the use of Welsh, Latin, and German words in the poem. The Anathemata also mixes together 'languages' from different spheres of discourse. Thus, in the poem, we have a verbal collage of geological terms ('cretaceous,' 'pliocene'--A, p. 74), liturgical formulae ("dona ei requiem sempiternam,"

"non perdidit ex eis quemquam"--A, p. 66), nursery rhymes ("such was his counting-house / whose queen was in her silent parlour"--A, p. 157; "Her Thursday's child / come far to drink his Thor's Day cup"--A, p. 224), the technical jargon of shipwrights ('raked,' 'bluffed,' 'hawse-holed'--A, p. 174), the earthy Cockney intonations of the lavender-seller ("There's a poor curly--fairish for a Wog--not a' afreet but a' elfin! / Plucked with his jack bucket from the Punic foreshore: b' a bollocky great Bocco procurer"--A, p. 167), the hyperbolic Gorhoffed or boast of old Welsh poetry ("Atheling to the heaven-king. / Shepherd of Greekland. / Harrower of Annwn. / Freer of the Waters."--A, p. 207), and so on.

By shying away from "a too consistent pattern" and "the conveniently worked out," and by adopting a collage technique which results in an uneven, jagged texture rather than a smooth, unified surface, Jones has opted for a method of composition which calls attention to the problems of making, the problems of conferring form on widely scattered and fragmentary data. Instead of a smoothly flowing narrative we have, in The Anathemata, juxtaposings of fragments. Consequently, by exposing the joints and rough edges of its juxtaposed fragments, the poem makes visible as well the process of its making and shaping. Discussing David Jones's paintings, Paul Hills makes the following acute observation:

David Jones never covers his tracks, the very first touches of pencil will tell in the finished water-colour, the boshed line is left, the ghost of an envelope hovers on the table or a bottle wobbles between two outlines. Thus the picture reveals the artist's hand at work; it is never static or quite complete, it gathers and re-presents, elusively perhaps, the time passed in its making.¹³

Hill's description of David Jones's water-colours applies equally to The
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Anathemata. The poem lacks formal finish. It does not cover its tracks; instead, through its footnotes and sharply defined fragments, it reveals to the reader the sources of its material and the way in which the material is

shaped and conjoined. By not concealing its tracks, and by showing us the process of its making, The Anathemata acknowledges its dependence on and its reverence for the cultural deposits of Britain. Unlike the 'self-contained' and 'finished' poem which may often be Procrustean in its imposition of a unified form, The Anathemata tends to be inclusive, allowing itself to contain all kinds of fragmentary data. It declares the importance of tradition, the transmission and reception of fragments from the past. The Anathemata's lack of formal finish is therefore due to its inclusiveness, its openness to any and all kinds of data from the cultural deposits of Britain. As David Jones has remarked: "He [the artist] must deny nothing, he must integrate everything."¹⁵

Openness is destructive of structure. It implies expansion, centrifugality, diffusion. As I have demonstrated, the inclusiveness of The Anathemata is also an openness to all kinds of data, a willingness to take the long route through the complex of the cultural deposits, a centrifugal movement away from the conveniently worked-out, completed pattern. The impression that The Anathemata has an 'open' form' is further strengthened, as I shall presently argue, by the evocative power of fragments.

In his brilliant study of modernist literature, The Pound Era, Hugh Kenner notes the importance poets like Pound, H.D., and Richard Aldington placed on the Sapphic fragments that were "salvaged from among masses of illegible papyrus scraps that came to Berlin from Egypt in 1896."¹⁶ These modern poets, Kenner argues, found "virtue in scraps, mysterium in fragments, magical power in the tatter of a poem, sacred words biting on congruent actualities of sight and feeling and breath."¹⁷ And for a poet like Pound¹⁸ "fragments of a fragment grow into radiant gists." Or as Pound succinctly put it: "Points define a periphery."¹⁹ Pound's "Papyrus," which may have been written with tongue in cheek, nonetheless illustrates how a Sapphic

fragment may define a periphery as it radiates out into possibilities of meaning.

Spring.....
Too long.....
Gongula.....

Similarly, for David Jones, fragments are evocative. Their very incompleteness radiates possibilities of meaning. In "The Sleeping Lord," for example, the ruins and fragments of a Roman port (on the Western sea-board of the Island of Britain?) become suddenly radiant with meaning as they remind us of the Romano-British past.

...by the narrowing and silted estuary where the great heaped ruins are, that tell of vanished wharves and emporia and cement bonded brick and dressed-stone store-cellae for bonded goods and where walk the ghosts of customs officials and where mildewed scraps of sight drafts, shards of tessera-tallies and fragile as tinder fragmented papyri, that are wraiths of filed bills of lading, litter here and there the great sandstone blocks of fallen vaulting...where also, if you chance to be as lettered as the Irish hermit upstream, you can read, freely & lightly scratched in the plaster of a shattered pilaster, in mercatores' Greek, what seems to mean: Kallistratos loves Julia and so does Henben and so do I
and a bit more
that you can't decipher...²⁰

There may be a bit more that you can't decipher, but what fragments you have are enough to allow you a glimpse of the long vanished past of a Roman trading port in Britain. The remnants of Roman architecture, the scraps of papyri that were once bills of lading, the graffiti of some love-lorn Greek trader—these fragments define what was once a colony of the Roman Empire; their survival recalls for us the Mediterranean res that came to Britain through military invasion and trade.

The evocative power of fragments, their expanding suggestiveness, is clearly evident in the note that Jones appends to the following lines from The Anathemata:

and four caliga'd other ranks
 torque-wearers
 off parade
 started a fox
 on Nile bank.

By their Hausnamen no longer called, their nomina
 already Anatolian:
 not now of Wald or llan but, of the polis(A, p. 185).

Jones's annotation of these lines reads:

Celts were serving as mercenaries in Ptolemaic Egypt and four such at Abydos in 185 BC left a scratched memorial of themselves on the walls of a chapel of Horus: 'Of the Galatians, we Thoas, Callistratos, Acannon and Apollonios came here and caught a fox.' That four privates off duty in a strange land should chase a jackal and call it a fox and record the event fits perfectly with all we know of serving soldiers of today. Cf. H. Hubert, The Celts.

The inscription is in Greek and the names are Greek, but we know from St. Jerome that even five centuries later the Galatians of Asia Minor, the descendants of the various groups of mercenaries, still retained their Celtic dialects, though long since Greek in culture.

I use the Welsh word llan because it comes direct from Old Celtic landa which in turn is cognate with the German key-word Land and so equally with our own integral English word 'land' and our delectable English word 'lawn'(A, p. 184, n. 4).

An ancient version of the 'Kilroy was here' graffiti, a Galatian mercenary's scratched memorial becomes for the poet the first link in an associative language-chain that stretches forward to the poet's native English and back to Old Celtic. But the language-chain is also an analogue for the history of the Celts and their many cultural metamorphoses. A racial continuity is established between the Galatian mercenaries and the Welsh of today by a poet of Anglo-Welsh descent. An inscription may, therefore, evoke the history of a people in the same way that points may define a periphery.

For a poet like David Jones, whose Celtic imagination is far-reaching and rapid as light, the evocative power of fragments is greatly increased. Steeped in "a half-aquatic world...of transparency and interpenetration of
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 one element with another, of transposition and metamorphosis," it is only

natural that the Celtic mind should invest things with the ability to signify widely. In this context, Jones's comment on an English song is illuminating:

Interestingly enough, the English song commencing "There were three jovial Welshmen" seems to pay tribute to this [the sense always of something other in each thing]. In any typical English hunting song, the huntsmen meet to hunt a fox, they hunt a fox and they kill a fox. But the three jovial Welshmen went to hunt a mortal creature, but at the "view" the thing hunted turns out to be a "ship a-sailing," which turns out to be the moon, which turns out to be made of cheese--I forget the sequence and the detail, but it is interesting as marking a quite definite difference of outlook.²²

The ability to see in a thing something other is of course a faculty possessed by artists, those quintessential makers of signs. And David Jones, an artist of Welsh descent whose whole practice revolves around the making of signs, goes woolgathering in The Anathemata with as much vigour as those three jovial Welshmen of the English song.

The centrifugal, woolgathering tendency of Jones's method of composition is clearly stated toward the end of the "Preface" to The Anathemata:

In a sense the fragments that compose this book are about, or around and about, matters of all sorts which, by a kind of quasi-free association, are apt to stir in my mind at any time and as often as not 'in the time of the Mass.' The mental associations, liaisons, meanderings to and fro, 'ambivalences,' asides, sprawl of the pattern, if pattern there is--these thought-trains (or, some might reasonably say, trains of distraction and inadvertance) have been as often as not initially set in motion, shunted or buffered into near sidings or off to far destinations, by some action or word, something seen or heard, during the liturgy. The speed of light, they say, is very rapid--but it is nothing to the agility of thought and its ability to twist and double on its tracks, penetrate recesses and generally nose about. You can go around the world and back again, in and out the meanders, down the history-paths, survey religio and superstitio, call back many yesterdays, but yesterday week ago, or long, long ago, note Miss Weston's last year's Lutetian trimmings and the Roman lat-iclave on the deacon's Dalmatian tunic, and a lot besides, during those few seconds taken by the presbyter to move from the Epistle to the Gospel side...("Preface," A, pp. 31-32).

The mental associations, digressions, meanderings and asides are clearly illustrated in the sprawling pattern (for, as it will be argued, there is a

pattern) of The Anathemata. In fact, as the "Preface" hints, the whole poem is one long digression initiated by the events celebrated at Mass. Thus, the lifting up of the efficacious sign at the Consecration sets in motion a train of associations that goes far back to the earliest signs made by man--such signs as the 'Venus of Willendorf' and the ritual markings on stones (see the "Rite and Fore-time" section of The Anathemata).

A summary of any of the sections of The Anathemata will reveal David Jones's digressive and meandering method of composition. "Mabinog's Liturgy," for example, is a long meandering digression set off by the celebration of the Nativity Mass. The section opens with a brief synoptic history of the Celts and their migration to the British Isles(A, p. 185). Without any transition we are then presented with a brief sketch of Roman history and political intrigue(A, pp. 185-87). Both Celtic and Roman history are dated in relation to the Nativity. Then follows a conflation of the Annunciation and the Passion(A, pp. 187-94). We are reminded that the Annunciation and Nativity foreshadow the Passion: "Already they have put wood into his bread"(A, p. 188). The Virgin at the Nativity then sets off a digression in which she is compared and found to be more beautiful and powerful than Helen, Aphrodite, Emma Hamilton ("the British Venus"), Vanabride or Freyja ("a kind of Teutonic Venus"), Diana ("she has your hunter's moon as well"), Athena ("Day-star o' the Harbour"), and Gwenhwyfar(A, pp. 194-95). The name 'Gwenhwyfar,' in turn, initiates a long description of the consort of Arthur at a mid-night Christmas Mass(A, pp. 195-205). The detailed description of her clothing sets off several digressions as well; the most notable of these digressions concerns the charming fantasy of how her "thong-tags and other furnishings of polar ivory" were obtained by Manawydan, a sea-god possessed of magical powers(A, pp. 199-201). Without a transition we move to a passage which records the supernatural events surrounding Christ's Nativity(A, pp. 205-207). Then

follows a recital of the divine qualities and powers of Christ(A, pp. 207-209). And then, as if emerging mysteriously out of the mist, three British sibyls (they are named Marged, Fay, and Mabli), versed in ancient lore and well-read in the classics ("you in y'r stockings of blue"), debate the significance of the Nativity(A, pp. 209-215). Consulting the classics, one of them reads the Fourth Eclogue in which Vergil uncannily prophesies a miraculous Birth which will usher in a new Golden Age(A, p. 213). (In a sly dig at his own method of composition, David Jones has one of the witches give her reason for preferring Vergil to Ovid: "No, no, not Ofydd, not the Ars--how your mind runs--and we've metamorphoses enough!"--A, p. 213.) Their attention then shifts to Mary, Theotokos and first among women. One of the sibyls argues that there is no need to be jealous of Mary, for by choosing her to be mother of the incarnated God-child, God acknowledges the importance of all women; God can do without man but He cannot do without woman ("If her fiat was the Great Fiat, nevertheless, seeing the solidarity, we participate in the fiat--or can indeed, by our fiats--it stands to reason."--A, p. 214). Acknowledging, therefore, the power of Mother and Son, the three sibyls kneel in reverent adoration(A, p. 215). Then follows an eye-witness account of a Christmas truce during the First War (the eye-witness, the "I," is David Jones himself). Gifts were exchanged by the belligerents "BECAUSE OF THE CHILD"; thus, the truce testifies, in the realm of reality (as opposed to the fantasy of the witches), to the power of the Child(A, p. 216). "Mabinog's Liturgy" ends with a description of the triple Nativity Mass celebrated in Rome. The same meandering, digressive development also characterizes the other sections.

The brief summary of "Mabinog's Liturgy" has clearly shown the lack of narrative progression. There are few transitions, and temporal or causal connections are absent. The development of the whole section is based on

the principle of association. Ideas, themes, and images are placed side by side, paratactically. The dictionaries define 'parataxis' as the arrangement of clauses or propositions without connectives. To avoid any misunderstanding, it should be made clear from the outset that I use the term 'parataxis' more in the structural sense of the juxtaposition of ideas, images, themes, or propositions, than in the syntactical sense of the co-ordination of clauses.

In his perceptive study of parataxis in Homer, James A. Notopoulos warns us of the error of applying the Aristotelian notion of organic unity to the inorganic, paratactic structure of the Homeric epics. Organic unity in literature is admirably expressed by Aristotle's formula that a story should be based on a single action with a clear beginning, middle, and end, that is to say, an action that is a complete whole in itself. Such a notion, concerned as it is with organic unity, would unhesitatingly adopt Michelangelo's definition of art as "the purgation of the superfluous." The paratactic structure of the Homeric epics, on the other hand, cultivates the superfluous. In the Homeric epic "digressions...are actually the substance of the narrative, strung paratactically like beads on a string." Such a paratactic structure, Notopoulos observes, is evident in The Iliad where the wrath of Achilles "tacks, as it were, through such digressions as the dream of Agamemnon, the Catalogue, the aristeia of Diomedes, the Doloneia, until it reaches its fulfilment in the nineteenth book." Notopoulos attributes parataxis in the Homeric epics to their oral mode of composition. Nevertheless, his discussion of paratactic composition is germane to a discussion of structure in The Anathemata. His argument against applying the Aristotelian theory of organic unity to the study of paratactic structures is a clear warning to us not to approach The Anathemata looking for an orderly narrative progression with a beginning, middle, and end. Certain other simi-

larities suggest themselves as well. Like the Homeric epics, The Anathemata favours a paratactic structure in which digressions are strung like beads on a string (as the summary of "Mabinog's Liturgy" has shown).

Parataxis is evident not only in the overall structure of a section like "Mabinog's Liturgy;" it is also to be found in the various individual passages that make up a section. In "Mabinog's Liturgy", for example, parataxis characterizes the structure of the passage in which the Virgin (Tota pulchra es Maria) is compared to other beautiful women and goddesses.

Brow of Helen!

hide your spot that draws the West.

No! nor cast eyes here of green or devastating grey
are any good at all.

Had she been on Ida mountains
to whose lap would have fallen y'r golden ball, if not to hers
that laps the unicorn?

And you!

She has your hunter's moon as well.

Vanabride! y'r cats come to her call.

Whose but hers, the Lady of Heaven's hen? and, as Dürer
knew, the butterfly is proper to her himation.

Look to y'r title, Day-star o' the Harbour!

...in all her parts

tota pulchra

more lovely than our own Gwenhwyfar

when to the men of this Island

she looked at her best

(A, pp. 194-95).

Not only is the syntax paratactical (the passage is largely made up of a series of independent simple sentences), but the very meaning of the passage emerges out of a paratactic arrangement of images and ideas. In the first four lines, for example, Helen's beauty is juxtaposed to Aphrodite's and Emma Hamilton's. These three beautiful women, however, are not connected to one another by an orderly narrative presentation; rather, they are connected associatively through their blemishes which apparently enhanced the beauty of all three of them (A, p. 194, n. 2). There is also an implied comparison between their blemishes and the immaculateness of the Virgin. The Virgin who is immaculata (that is, without blemish) must therefore be considered more

beautiful than Helen, Aphrodite and Emma Hamilton. The rest of the passage develops the theme of feminine beauty and excellence through a series of allusions to the golden apple awarded by Paris to the beautiful Aphrodite who promised him the beautiful Helen, to Vanabride who is "the most beautiful of the Vanir" (A, p. 59, n. 2), to Dürer's painting "Virgin with the Irises," to that Virgo Potens--Athena (whose title "Day-star o' the Harbour" links her to the Virgin who is described in one of the anthems addressed to Her as stella maris), and to Gwenhwyfar who "appeared loveliest at the Offering, on the day of the Nativity" (A, p. 195, n. 3).

Judging from the associations yielded by the various juxtaposed images (the footnotes prove indispensable in helping the reader see these associations), the passage under discussion appears to be a eulogy to the beauty and excellence of the Virgin who is found not only to be lovelier than Helen, Aphrodite, Emma Hamilton, Vanabride, and Gwenhwyfar, but also to be more powerful than Aphrodite (Paris, the passage implies, would have awarded the golden apple to the Virgin), Vanabride (the white cats that draw Vanabride's chariot across the sky would have come at the Virgin's call), Diana ("She has your hunter's moon as well"), and Athena (who is warned to "look to y'r title"). The eulogy, however, is not developed in a straightforward, 'linear' fashion. Instead of a logical, progressive argument which would have taken the form of a sentence like "Mary is more beautiful than Helen or Aphrodite, and more powerful than Vanabride or Athena," we are presented with a paratactic arrangement of images linked associatively and not integrated into a narrative sequence.

Such a paratactic arrangement is in some ways similar to the rapid succession of images that characterizes the cinematic film. Like the film's audience, the reader of The Anathemata must fill in the gaps, as it were, and make the necessary associations between the succession of images. In a pre-

face to his translation of St.-John Perse's Anabasis, T.S. Eliot has this to say of the poem's 'obscurity':

...any obscurity of the poem, on first readings, is due to the suppression of "links in the chain," of explanatory and connecting matter, and not to incoherence, or to the love of cryptogram. The justification of such abbreviation of method is that the sequence of images coincides and concentrates into one intense impression....The reader has to allow the images to fall into his memory successively without questioning the reasonableness of each at the moment; so that, at the end, a total effect is produced.

Such selection of a sequence of images and ideas has nothing chaotic about it. There is a logic of the imagination as well as a logic of concepts....And if, as I suggest, such an arrangement of imagery requires just as much "fundamental brainwork" as the arrangement of an argument, it is to be expected that the reader of a poem should take at least as much trouble as a barrister reading an important decision on a complicated case.²⁷

One could not ask for better advice on how to read The Anathemata than that given by Eliot in this quotation. As the summary of "Mabinog's Liturgy" has shown, the section as a whole, as well as the various individual passages that constitute the section, are structured paratactically with all temporal or causal connections suppressed. There is, however, a logic of association, and to understand such an abbreviated form of logic requires us to do a certain amount of brainwork. And what is true of "Mabinog's Liturgy" is also true of the other seven sections of The Anathemata. In reading The Anathemata, therefore, we would do well to heed Eliot's advice to "take at least as much trouble as a barrister reading an important decision on a complicated case."

Paratactic structure characterizes not only the associative or digressive method of composition, it is also the structure of the list or catalogue. After all, if we mean by parataxis the juxtaposing of things next to each other in a co-ordinated series, then nothing is more paratactic than a list or a catalogue. David Jones's conservative instinct naturally led him to compose lists which allow him to gather together as much of the surviving

fragments of the past as he can. In fact, one can regard The Anathemata as a long list composed of the mixed data gathered by David Jones from the cultural deposits of Britain. To paraphrase Nennius, one can claim The Anathemata to be a list of all that David Jones could find.

At any rate, The Anathemata itself is full of lists. The passage from "Mabinog's Liturgy" that was examined earlier can be seen as a list of beautiful and powerful women. Christ's boast can be seen as a catalogue of His mighty titles(A, pp. 207-208). In the section called "Keel, Ram, Stauros," we have a list of the 'pet names' of siege-engines(A, p. 177) and a catalogue of the various parts of a ship(A, pp. 173-75). In "The Lady of the Pool" section we encounter several lists. Of note among these are a list of most of the parish churches of London(A, pp. 127-28) and the Milford boatswain's recital of those cherished native things or persons a Welshman could swear by(A, pp. 151-53). One may also refer to the record of man's making which is scattered throughout the poem (the "Redriff" section, for example, with its emphasis on the craftsmanship of Eb Bradshaw). The record of man's making is especially evident in the "Rite and Fore-time" section of the poem. This section records the earliest examples of artefacts made by man--those various anathemata, from the marks etched on stone to the more sophisticated 'Venus of Willendorf,' that our earliest ancestors offered up to their gods. In the same section, through the conceit of Christ as a Welsh shepherd counting his flock, we are given the raison d'être of lists:

When on a leafy morning
 late in June
 against the white wattles
 he numbers his own.

As do they
 taught of the herdsman's Ordinale
 and following the immemorial numeri
 who say:
 Yan, tyan, tethera, methera, pimp
 sethera, lethera, hovera, dovera, dick.

For whom he has notched
 his crutched tally-stick
 not at: less one five twenties
 but
 at centum
 that follow the Lamb
 from the Quaternary dawn.
 Numbered among his flock
 that no man may number
 but whose works follow them
 (A, pp. 77-78).

Through the conceit of a sheep-count we are shown Christ as the supreme conserver who "would lose, not any one / from among them. Of all those given him / he would lose none" (A, p. 65). In an analogous way, Jones attempts to follow Christ's example and conserve as best he can in his inclusive lists the many things he has inherited from his culture.

The paratactic structure of the list and the paratactic structure of the digressions both reveal a similar tendency towards centrifugality and expansion. Both forms of parataxis tend to emphasize the many; both the meandering digression and the list pile data on data, image on image, idea on idea. Paratactic composition, therefore, poses the serious problem of structural unity. In his study of parataxis in Homer, James Notopoulos argues that paratactic composition is preoccupied more with particulars than with any concept of the whole. In paratactic composition the one has to give way to the many. Reviewing a book on paratactic composition, J. Tate, with an eye on parataxis in Homer, noted: "Homer's aim is the perfection of the parts rather than the integrity of the whole; he thinks more of variety and abundance than of qualitative selection and the orderly disposition of the parts." In The Anathemata the variety and abundance of particulars (Jones's insistence on particulars goes as far as the retention of Welsh and Latin words unfamiliar to many) threatens the poem with incoherence and chaos.

As the following remark he made to Peter Orr shows, David Jones was fully aware that his expansive, centrifugal method of composition posed a serious threat to the coherence and unity of The Anathemata:

I found in writing The Anathemata that I went out so far on limbs, as it were, that I couldn't get back again to the main trend with any sort of intelligibility, and that necessitated a good deal of pruning. You see an enormous number of facets of the thing, and one thing suggests another, but if you aren't very careful it takes you too far from the concept and you can't get back to it again except at very great length, and that might be artistically bad.²⁹

Some readers of The Anathemata may even wish David Jones had used his 'pruning-shears' more vigorously and conscientiously than he has done. Nevertheless, the very fact that Jones was concerned with shaping the abundant data at his disposal into some sort of coherent unity should warn us that there are countervailing forces of unity working against the centrifugal tendency of the poem. Despite its modest subtitle, "fragments of an attempted writing," we would do well not to regard The Anathemata as simply a heap of fragments. Rather, as David Blamires has suggested, "the heap is in fact a pile,³⁰ as the Victorians would have put it, an edifice."

There are two ordering principles that enable the fragments of The Anathemata to cohere into an 'edifice.' We may call the first principle of unity formal or rhetorical, and the second, thematic. However, it must be remembered that this division, though convenient, is in a sense arbitrary as both principles are closely related and equally contribute to the unity of the poem.

David Jones employs several rhetorical devices to knit together the various parts of the poem.³¹ In the "Preface" to The Anathemata, he writes: "If it [The Anathemata] has a unity it is that what goes before conditions what comes after and vice versa" ("Preface," A, p. 33). By 'conditions' Jones obviously does not mean a causal relationship among the parts of the

poem. As I have shown, causal links are suppressed in the poem. So that in ascribing the unity of his poem to the fact that "what goes before conditions what comes after and vice versa," Jones appears to mean that the relationship between what goes before and what comes after and vice versa depends on an imaginative association of sorts. In other words, an association of ideas or images is the indispensable condition for the knitting together of the various parts of the poem.

Associative repetition is therefore employed heavily in the poem. Associative repetition takes various forms. Sometimes a single word is repeated in another part of the poem thereby creating an associative link. Thus the word 'chryselephantine' which appears on page 94 of the poem is repeated again on page 203. The word is first used to describe a Greek kore or statue of a maiden:

One hundred and seventeen olympiads
 since he contrived her:
 chryselephantine
 of good counsel
 within
 her Maiden's chamber
 tower of ivory
 in gilded cella
 herself a house of gold

(A, p. 94).

The description of the kore not only points to a resemblance between the Greek statue and the carved queens in their niches at Chartres (a resemblance already established earlier in the poem; see A, p. 92, n. 2) but also evokes the epithets traditionally used to describe the Virgin. Such phrases as "of good counsel," "tower of ivory," and "house of gold" recall the titles given the Blessed Virgin in the Litany. (It is interesting to note that the word 'chryselephantine' which is used for things made of gold and ivory aptly conjoins and conflates "tower of ivory" and "house of gold.") The word 'chryselephantine' appears next in a description of Gwenhwyfar at worship:

It's cold in West-chancels.
 So, wholly super-pellissed of British wild-woods, the
 chryselephantine column (native the warm blood in the
 blue veins that vein the hidden marbles, the lifted
 abacus of native gold) leaned, and toward the Stone
 (A, p. 203).

'Chryselephantine' is not a commonly-used word. Consequently, when it is repeated a second time, the attentive mind registers the repetition. The repetition of the word establishes an associative link between the description of Gwenhwyfar as a kind of statuesque "chryselephantine column" and the chryselephantine kore with all its allusions to the Virgin and the statues at Chartres. Through the associative link provided by the word 'chryselephantine' the motif of the art-work as anathema (the singular of anathemata, and hence, used in the sense of an offering) is related to the motif of the person as anathema (the act of worship, Gwenhwyfar's or ours, involves the celebrant offering himself or herself to God). Moreover, an association is forged between the Virgin and Gwenhwyfar, thereby adding another link to the long chain of women and pagan goddesses who partake of certain qualities of the Virgin who is first among women. The associative repetition of the word 'chryselephantine' knits together, therefore, several of the motifs that are scattered throughout the poem.

Associative repetition also takes the form of a repetition of phrases. Thus, the repetition of the liturgical phrase dona eis requiem on pages 65 to 66 and again on pages 158 to 159, links together not only those two passages but also establishes a connection and a continuity between the dead of prehistoric times ("the last of the father-figures / to take the diriment stroke / of the last gigantic leader of / thick-felled cave-fauna? / Whoever he was / Dona ei requiem sempiternam"--A, p. 66) and those yet to be born ("And of these such, yet to come, a tidy many from the many hithes of this river,.../ dona eis requiem / sempiternam"--A, p. 159), between the arte-

facts of the past ("By the utorial marks / that make the covering stone an artefact. / By the penile ivory / and by the viatic meats. / Dona ei requiem"--A, p. 65) and the inventions of the future ("by what new gear and a deal of dials, gins of propulsion and all manner of contraptions"--A, p. 158).

Two other notable examples of the use of associative repetition to link motifs and themes together are: the megaron/margaron pun (megaron meaning the large hall of a Greek palace and margaron meaning pearl) which is applied to Helen the pearl-to-be-sought within the walls of Troy(A, p. 56) as well as to Christ in his tomb(A, p. 243); and the long catalogue of hills which appears on pages 55 to 57 and is echoed on page 233 (these two passages knit together the various motifs of the geological transformation of the landscape; the sack of Troy or Hissarlik--"hill of cries" and "first revetted of anguish-heights;" and the Passion on Golgotha by which everything is indeed transformed). One can go on citing examples, but the point is clearly established: the use of associative repetition effectively contributes to the structural unity of the poem.

Structuring by another type of repetition is also evident in the poem. Anaphora, the rhetorical device of beginning successive sentences or lines with the same word or phrase, is prominently employed in the middle sections of The Anathemata. The second half of "Middle-Sea and Lear-Sea" describes a voyage from the Mediterranean to the stormy and treacherous Scilly Isles off the coast of Cornwall. Though the voyage appears on the surface to be a commercial venture in search of tin, there are several references and allusions to liturgical imagery which make it clear that it is also an allegory of Christ's coming to the British Isles. The section ends with a question: "Did he berth her? / and to schedule? / by the hoar rock in the drowned wood?"(A, p. 108). The interrogative opening "Did he?" (which seems to echo

Blake's "And did those feet in ancient times...") is taken up immediately in the next section, "Angle-Land," which begins with these lines: "Did he strike soundings off Vecta Insula? / or was it already the gavelkind igland? / Did he lie by / in the East Road?"(A, p. 110). The next three sections, "Redriff," "The Lady of the Pool," and "Keel, Ram, Stauros" also begin with questions that have the "Did he?" construction. Thus, through anaphora, sections 2 to 6 are linked together. Through the repeated question "Did he (i.e., Christ) do such and such or meet so and so?", the five sections become one long speculative enquiry into the imagined journey of Christ through the various parishes of London and the various parts of Britain. The impression of unity in these five sections is also reinforced by the final two lines of "Keel, Ram, Stauros": "He would berth us / to schedule"(A, p. 182). In these two lines we have the answer to the original question ("Did he berth her? / and to schedule?") which started the long anaphoric sequence of questions. In the language of soteriology, Christ has arrived on schedule.

The question and answer which frames sections 3 to 6 illustrates a type of anaphoric device called 'ringcomposition.' "Ringcomposition," Noto-
poulos tells us, "usually takes the form of repetitions which frame the beginning and the end of a digression; it often repeats the same or similar
32
verb; repetitions extend from words to ideas." Such a device, as one may quickly sense, would provide an invaluable means of conferring unity to such a meandering and digressive work as The Anathemata. Barbara Herrnstein Smith has pointed out, for example, that the problem of poetic closure posed by the expansive, centrifugal nature of paratactic structures is solved by enclosing the paratactic structure within a 'frame' provided by a fixed opening and closing (as in the fixed opening and closing verses of a folk
33
song).

That David Jones was aware of such a framing device as 'ringcomposition' is evident in his description of The Anathemata's shape: "If it has a shape it is chiefly that it returns to its beginning" ("Preface," A, p. 33). The passage of prose that immediately precedes the title page of the first section of The Anathemata provides us with another clue to the 'ring-shape' of the poem. The passage, in its entirety, reads: "It was a dark and stormy night, we sat by the calcined wall; it was said to the tale-teller, tell us a tale, and the tale ran thus: It was a dark and stormy night..." By circling back to its beginning the passage describes a ring. Similarly the ending of The Anathemata circles back to its beginning. The Anathemata opens with a description of a priest celebrating the Catholic Mass (A, pp. 49-50). He is described as conducting a rear-guard action against the surrounding hostile infiltration; his position is precarious, 'a cult-man' alone in Pellam's land (that is, the wasteland belonging to the maimed King Pellam of Malory's Morte Darthur). The Anathemata ends also with the celebration of Mass by the 'cult-man.' Towards the end of "Sherthursdaye and Venus Day," the final section of the poem, the wasteland motif is repeated:

In the wasted land
 at jackal-meet
at the division of the spoils
with his hands stretched out
 he continues (A, p. 231).

And on the second to last page of the poem, the act of Consecration described in its opening lines is repeated:

Here, in this high place
 into both hands
he takes the stemmed dish
 as in many places
by this poured and that held up
wherever their directing glosses read:
 Here he takes the victim (A, p. 242).

Ending by returning to its beginning the poem frames, encloses, and unites in the celebration of Mass all the various digressions and mixed data which

form its substance.

The metonymic linking of images is another unifying device used by Jones in the poem. Three metonymic image-chains run through The Anathemata thereby lending it a degree of structural integrity. Extending throughout the length of the poem these three metonymic chains bind together the various images scattered through the different sections of the work. The three basic terms which are stretched metonymically through the poem are stone, water, and wood. These three terms are given early in the poem: "the stone / the fonted water / the fronded wood" (A, p. 56). The lines are adapted from Vergil's description of Priam's palace. In his note to these lines Jones writes: "By whatever means of fusion he [Vergil] hands down three of the permanent symbols for us to make use of" (A, p. 56, n. 2).

These three permanent symbols have a special potency for the Christian writer. In the symbolic language of a Christian writer like David Jones stone means Golgotha (or perhaps Christ's Tomb-stone--see A, p. 243), water means the Sacrament of Baptism, and wood means the Cross. By 're-presenting' Golgotha under the species of stone (that is, by making Golgotha 'present' in stone in the sense discussed in Chapter II), Jones is able to create a chain of metonymic substitutes for the Hill of the Passion. Thus all the stone images--altars, hills and mountains, walled cities like Troy--are transformed into metonyms of Golgotha. Similarly, water images--streams, rivers, seas, oceans, fountains, pools--become metonyms of the Sacrament of Baptism. For instance, annotating a passage abundant in water imagery, Jones tells us that his references are:

to the term 'valid matter' used by theologians of the material water in the Sacrament of Water; to the material water essential to the Sacrament of Bread and Wine; to the water-metaphor used of all the seven signs; to the entire sign-world to which the metaphor of water flowing from a common source could apply; to the actual streams, our rivers, which are themselves signs of conveyance and themselves physically convey, which not only

provide the metaphors but the material stuff without which the sacraments could not be (A, p. 236, n. 1).

(Although Jones uses the term 'metaphor' instead of 'metonym,' it may be remembered that a metonym is an 'implicit metaphor' in the definition provided by M.H. Abrams; that is to say, like a metaphor in which the 'tenor' is not stated but implied, a metonym substitutes one term for another without explicitly spelling out the relationship between the two terms.)³⁴ Finally, images of wood--trees, May-poles, tables, crutched tally-sticks, various parts of a ship, especially the transomed mast and the keel--are linked together as metonyms of the Cross.

The three image-chains are brought together and inter-linked in the final section of The Anathemata. Hill of Passion, the restorative Sacrament of Water, Cross of salvation, and their various metonyms, appear frequently in "Sherthursdaye and Venus Day." Moreover, they are all interrelated and brought together in the context of an impressionistic account of the crucifixion of Christ. The following poignant description of the suffering Christ is a representative example of the kind of inter-linking of the three potent signs by Good Friday's event:

Of all the clamant waters
firthing forth from the Four Avons
himself the afon-head.
His cry
from the axile stipe
at the dry node-height
when the dark cloud brights the trembling lime-rock
(A, pp. 236-37).

In "Sherthursdaye and Venus Day," therefore, the various metonymic images are gathered and united by the sacrifice of Christ.

In his critique of structure, the French philosopher Jacques Derrida makes an important point about the nature of structures. Where there is structure, Derrida argues, there is a centre. And the function of this centre is

not only to orient, balance, and organize the structure--one cannot in fact conceive of an unorganized structure--but above all to make sure that the organizing principle of the structure would limit what we might call the free-play of the structure. No doubt that by orienting and organizing the coherence of the system, the centre of a structure permits the freeplay of its elements inside the total form. And even today the notion of a structure lacking any centre presents the unthinkable itself.³⁵

In short, the centre of a structure not only organizes the elements of the structure into a coherent whole, it also limits their chaotic proliferation and expansion. Following Derrida's argument, one can say that a thematic centre, by unifying all the various motifs and themes of a poem, reveals itself to be a structuring principle. At the same time, by ordering all the disparate themes into some sort of pattern, the thematic centre of a poem controls the 'freeplay' of thematic expansion.

If The Anathemata reveals, ultimately, a unity and coherence, it is because it possesses a thematic centre. The central theme of The Anathemata is clearly the celebration of Mass. Attempting to explain the unity of his poem, Jones once remarked to a friend:

When I say somewhere in Preface [sic] that one can think of a lot of things in the brief moment it takes the celebrant of the Mass to move the missal from the Epistle to the Gospel side of the mensa domini ["Preface," A, p. 32], I literally meant that. The action of the Mass was meant to be the central theme of the work for as you once said to me "The Mass makes sense of everything."³⁶

The Mass makes sense of The Anathemata's abundant and confusing variety.

At this point, a brief excursus into the nature and meaning of the Mass will help us see more clearly its central importance for the unity of The Anathemata. By Mass is meant the celebration of the eucharist, the central act of Christian worship. Without becoming too entangled in theological details, one may describe the eucharist as "an action--'do this'--with a particular meaning given to it by our Lord Himself--'for the anamnesis of

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Me.'" Specifically, the eucharist is an anamnesis (in the sense defined in

Chapter II) of the institution of the Sacrament of Bread and Wine at the Last Supper and the ratification of the same Sacrament by Christ's sacrifice on Calvary.

Since it is a 're-calling' of the sacrifice of Christ who offered Himself to God for all men, the eucharist may be extended to include a 're-calling' of the dead. Such a conception of the eucharist as an anamnesis of the dead was advanced by Serapion, an Egyptian bishop of the fourth century. 38
Annotating a passage describing the excavated remains of an Upper Palaeolithic man, Jones mentions Serapion's intercessory prayer:

...in the rite of the fourth-century Egyptian bishop, Serapion, the eucharist is regarded as a recalling of all the dead: 'We entreat also on behalf of all who have fallen asleep, of which this (i.e. this action) is the recalling.' Here 'all who have fallen asleep' refers to the departed members of the Christian community in Egypt and throughout the world, because no institution can, in its public formulas, presume the membership of any except those who have professed such membership. But over and above these few there are those many, of all times and places, whose lives and deaths have been made acceptable by the same Death on the Hill of which every Christian breaking of bread is an epiphany and a recalling.

With regard to the Upper Palaeolithic South Welshman buried in Paviland, it would seem that Theology allows us to regard him among the blessed by forbidding us to assert the contrary (A, p. 76, n. 2; emphasis mine).

By 're-calling' the lives and deaths of "those many, of all times and places," the eucharist fulfils the promise of Good Friday's victim: "I have not lost of them any single one" (see A, p. 66, n. 1). Such a catholic (i.e. wide-ranging and universal) and generous conception of eucharistic anamnesis agrees with Jones's definition of the poet as a conserver and rememberer of his past and concurs with his stated commemorative intention in writing The Anathemata.

Eucharistic anamnesis involves artefacture. That is to say, we 're-call' the sacrifice on Calvary by continuing the sign-making instituted by Christ at the Last Supper. As Jones puts it: "...according to the belief of the

Catholic Church the sign-making instituted in the Upper Room is to be closely associated with what was done on the Hill that the benefits of those doings are said to be chiefly (but far from exclusively) mediated through a continuation of that sign-making.³⁹ Without the signs of bread and wine there can

be no anamnesis of Christ's sacrifice. Jones states the point bluntly:

"Something has to be made by us before it can become for us his sign who made us. This point he settled in the upper room. No artefacture no Christian religion" ("Preface," A, p. 31). Through the eucharist Christianity commits man to the notion of sign and artefacture. Stressing this commitment to artefacture, Jones writes: "...the records describe how the redeemer 'on the day before he suffered' involved the redeemed in an act of Ars. As it was the whole world that he was redeeming he involved all mankind, from before Swanscombe Man to after Atomic Man, in that act. If the very mean or channel of redemption is intricated in Ars we conclude that Ars and Man are inseparable."⁴⁰ Thus, by identifying the anamnesis of His sacrifice with an act of poiesis, of sign-making, Christ not only validated the view of man as a 'maker,' an artist, but also redeemed man's artefacts by transforming them into analogues of His own oblation.

For Jones, therefore, the eucharist is all-inclusive; for by 're-calling' through the Sacrament of Bread and Wine the universally redemptive sacrifice of Christ, the eucharist also redeems, blesses, and makes acceptable the dead of all times and places, as well as all man-made artefacts, from the earliest microliths to the latest abstract paintings. By offering His life for all mankind, Christ ratifies and consecrates all those offerings of both persons and things from time immemorial.

These consecrated offerings of persons and things Jones calls anathemata. Tracing the etymology of the word 'anathema' to its Greek origin, Jones recovers its original, beneficent meaning; for "in antiquity the Greek word

anathema (spelt with an epsilon) meant (firstly) something holy"("Preface," A, p. 27). In English this ancient and beneficent meaning is preserved in the plural 'anathemata' which means devoted things. At the same time, the English word 'anathema' commonly means something accursed, a profane thing. Thus, in calling his poem The Anathemata, Jones utilizes a pun. The pun serves to emphasize the redemptive nature of Christ's sacrifice. By making Himself anathema (in the sense of an offering to God, and hence, the singular of anathemata), Christ redeems anathemas (in the sense of profane things) and changes them to anathemata (that is, things consecrated to divine use). Consequently, the title of Jones's poem, in the spirit of the eucharist, is all-inclusive. However obliquely, Jones's title is made to mean, or evoke, or suggest:

the blessed things that have taken on what is cursed and the profane things that somehow are redeemed: the delights and also the 'ornaments,' both in the primary sense of gear and paraphernalia and in the sense of what simply adorns; the donated and votive things, the things dedicated after whatever fashion, the things in some sense made separate, being 'laid up from other things'; things, or some aspect of them, that partake of the extra-utile and of the gratuitous; things that are the signs of something other, together with those signs that not only have the nature of a sign, but are themselves, under some mode, what they signify. Things set up, lifted up, or in whatever manner made over to the gods("Preface," A, pp. 28-29).

Similarly, persons who offer and dedicate themselves to God are also anathemata("Preface," A, p. 30). To trace the etymology of a word is, therefore, not only to link it to its past but also to "seek hidden grammar to
41
give back anathemata its first benignity."

The anamnesis performed at Mass is, therefore, an anamnesis not only of the Anathema of Christ but also of all anathemata, both of persons and things. As Charles Stoneburner puts it: "The Mass is the offering of Christ to God, and, in Him, of all things. It is [therefore] appropriate to think about anything in worship. There is nothing that is not being lifted up and pre-

42
 sented to God." Hence, with the action of the Mass as the thematic centre
 of his poem, Jones "need not feel sheepish about his woolgathering (it ob-
 43
 tains the golden fleece)." With the Mass as centre, Jones's woolgathering
 does not lead him astray: "[For] the whole poem chants that everything is
 preparation for the Mass, and that everything is like it....All things lead
 44
 him to the Mass, all things remind him of the Mass."

Thus, the artefacts made by prehistoric men are seen to be analogous to
 the artefacts employed at the eucharist.

Did the fathers of those
 who forefathered them
 (if by genital or ideate begetting)
 set apart, make other, oblate?

By what rote, if at all
 had they the suffrage:
 Ascribe to, ratify, approve
 in the humid paradises
 of the Third Age?
 (A, pp. 64-65).

The questions asked in the foregoing passage are clearly answered: "If there
 is any evidence of...artefacture then the artefacturer or artifex should be
 regarded as participating directly in the benefits of the Passion, because
 the extra-utile is the mark of man"(A, p. 65, n. 2). The poiesis of Christ
 which is 're-called' at Mass ratifies and makes acceptable all other forms of
poiesis from the crudest piece of pottery to the most sophisticated of stat-
 uary.

The life and death of ancient heroes and pagan gods are seen as fore-
 shadowing the life and death of Christ which we 're-call' at each Mass. Thus
 the "I AM BARLEY" inscribed on the coffin of an Egyptian king(A, p. 205)
 echoes the "I am your Bread" of Christ(A, p. 82). The death of Hector pre-
 figures that of Christ(A, p. 84); similarly, Adonis, for whom Ishtar weeps,
 sheds his blood as Christ shed His on Calvary(A, p. 233). God's command to
 Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac prefigures Christ's offering of His life

to the Father(A, p. 232). The self-sacrifice of Odin ("Myself to Myself"), pierced by a spear and hung on a "windy tree," echoes the events of Good Friday(A, p. 225). In addition, the pattern of Christ's life and death provides a fore-type for those heroes who come after Him. Hence Peredur (or Percival) who restores the Wasteland is seen as a Christ-like figure(A, pp. 225-26).

If the male figures in the poem are seen as types of Christ, the female figures are all related to the Virgin. In 're-calling' the life and death of Christ at Mass, we also 're-call' the Virgin through whose fiat mihi Christ took on human flesh. Thus, the various digressions on Gwenhwyfar or Helen or Aphrodite are all generated by the poet/celebrant's 're-calling' of the beauty and excellence of the Virgin in the course of the celebration of Mass. Similarly, even the vulgar and profane seller of lavender becomes a Mary-figure; by her association with the Virgin, her earthy slang is transformed into the soteriological language of Mass: "an' ransom him with m' own woman's body"(A, p. 167).

In the celebration of Mass, therefore, all mankind and all forms of artefacture are 're-called' and 're-presented.' Accordingly, the Mass can be regarded as a kind of all-inclusive sign which 're-calls' and 're-presents' everything. Everywhere becomes the here of the Mass; all time is present in its celebration.⁴⁵ Everything is brought together and conflated by the Mass; as a result, perspective is annihilated in its celebration. As Saunders Lewis puts it: "The Mass concertinas all history and gives life itself, the whole lot of it, the right look."⁴⁶

By making the action of the Mass the central theme of The Anathemata Jones has built into his poem a powerful unifying principle which can make sense of everything. Thus, with the Mass as its centre, the poem can gather "to itself Maundy Thursday and Good Friday, geological and organic evolution, the cultivation of grain and the production of pottery (for sacramental dish

and cup) by prehistoric man, the sacrifices and precious deaths of paganism and the stories about them."⁴⁷ There is nothing too lowly or insignificant that may not be assimilated by the poem's thematic centre. A powerful centripetal movement informs the poem as everything is rounded-up and safely gathered-in. If the poem expands centrifugally outwards it does so only in order that it may collect the abundant variety of the deposits available to the poet and integrate them into its thematic centre--"the secret garth and inmost bailey...where such unlike conjoinings are"(A, p. 144). The poem may be 'open' but it has form as well; it opens out into order. There is 'freeplay' but it is 'freeplay' without anarchy or chaos. The Anathemata may lack the formal finish of a sonnet or a 'Metaphysical' poem, but it has a unity all the same. Although the poem contains an almost bewildering variety of allusions and a dazzling multiplicity of themes, everything in it 'rhymes,' as it were, with the thematic centre, the Mass. Put poetically, the same conclusion reads:

Gathering all things in, twining each bruised stem to the
 swaying trellis of the dance, the dance about the sawn
 lode-stake on the hill where the hidden stillness is at
 the core of struggle, the dance around the green lode-
 tree on far fair-height where the secret guerdons hang
 and the bright prizes nod, where sits the queen im Rosen-
hage eating the honey-cake, where the king sits, counting-
 out his man-geld, rhyming the audits of all the world-
 holdings.⁴⁸

The flexible structure of the poem, its ability to expand and move outward without losing its unifying centre, provides David Jones with the necessary poetic form for an age of crisis. Like the priest of The Anathemata's opening lines, the modern poet is surrounded at every turn by the utile. In such unpropitious times, his task will have to be a 'rear-guard' action of conservation. Such an act of conservation requires his gathering-in all those things given to him by his culture, things threatened with destruction by an uncharitable technocracy. This gathering-in of the many things he has in-

herited requires a certain flexibility in the structure of his poem. The additive mode of paratactic composition meets the requirement of flexibility but not that of structural unity. However, flexibility need not be sacrificed for the sake of unity if certain rhetorical devices are used and if an accommodating and inclusive thematic centre can be found. As this chapter has shown, in The Anathemata David Jones successfully achieves such a conjoining of flexibility and unity.

Finally, The Anathemata is not only about anathemata, it is itself an anathema, an offering. The Anathemata not only 're-calls' and 're-presents' the offerings both of persons and things, it is itself a thing fashioned out of David Jones's loves and dedicated and offered up to God on behalf of Jones himself, his parents and forebears, the people of Britain, and, ultimately, all mankind.

Footnotes

- 1
"Autobiographical Talk," EA, pp. 30-31.
- 2
"Past and Present," EA, p. 141.
- 3
The Poet Speaks, ed. Peter Orr (London: Routledge, 1966), p. 100.
- 4
See George Steiner's In Bluebeard's Castle (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1971), pp. 98-111.
- 5
"Aesthetics of Crisis," The New Yorker, 22 August 1964, p. 121.
- 6
The Archaeology of Knowledge, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), p. 23.
- 7
"The Myth of Arthur," EA, p. 232.
- 8
Ibid., p. 234.
- 9
Ibid.
- 10
Ibid., p. 231.
- 11
"The Heritage of Early Britain," EA, p. 196.
- 12
"Wales and the Crown," EA, p. 47.
- 13
"The Radiant Art of David Jones," Agenda, 10, No. 4-11, No. 1 (1972/73), 128.
- 14
Cf. Hugh Kenner's The Pound Era (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1971), p. 445.
- 15
Quoted in H.S. Ede, "David Jones," Horizon, 8 (1943), 135-36.
- 16
Kenner, p. 54.

- 17
Kenner, p. 51.
- 18
Ibid., p. 66.
- 19
Quoted in Kenner, p. 67.
- 20
David Jones, "The Sleeping Lord," in The Sleeping Lord and Other Fragments (London: Faber, 1974), p. 81.
- 21
David Jones, "The Myth of Arthur," EA, pp. 238-39.
- 22
Quoted in Ede, p. 132.
- 23
"Parataxis in Homer: A New Approach to Homeric Literary Criticism," TAPhA, 80 (1949), 1-23.
- 24
Quoted in Notopoulos, "Parataxis in Homer," p. 2.
- 25
Ibid., p. 6.
- 26
Ibid., p. 8.
- 27
"Preface" to St.-John Perse's Anabasis, rev. ed. (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1949), p. 10.
- 28
Quoted in Notopoulos, "Parataxis in Homer," p. 13.
- 29
The Poet Speaks, p. 99.
- 30
David Jones: Artist and Writer (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1971), p. 118.
- 31
My discussion of the various rhetorical devices employed by David Jones to confer unity on The Anathemata owes a debt to James A. Notopoulos's discussion of the connective devices used in Homeric epics. See his "Continuity and Interconnexion in Homeric Oral Composition," TAPhA, 82 (1951), 81-101.
- 32
Ibid., p. 98. 'Ringcomposition' is Notopoulos's adaptation of the Dutch philologist Van Otterlo's term 'Ringkomposition.'

33

Poetic Closure (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1968), pp. 100-101.

34

See M.H. Abrams's A Glossary of Literary Terms, 3rd ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), pp. 61-62.

35

Jacques Derrida, "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," in The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man, eds. Richard Macksey and Eugenio Donato (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1970), pp. 147-48.

36

Letter from David Jones to Saunders Lewis, in Agenda, 11, No. 4 - 12, No. 1 (1973/74), 20.

37

Dom Gregory Dix, The Shape of the Liturgy (Westminster: Dacre Press, 1945), p. 238.

38

Ibid., pp. 162-72.

39

"Art and Sacrament," EA, p. 168.

40

Ibid., pp. 168-69.

41

David Jones, "The Tutelar of the Place," in The Sleeping Lord, p. 61.

42

Charles Joseph Stoneburner, "The Regimen of the Ship-Star: A Handbook for The Anathemata of David Jones," Diss. University of Michigan, 1966, pp. 172-73.

43

Ibid., p. 172.

44

Ibid.

45

For a discussion of the treatment of time in The Anathemata see Angela G. Dorenkamp's "Time and Sacrament in The Anathemata," Renascene, 23 (1971), 183-91.

46

"Epoch and Artist," Agenda, 5, Nos. 1-3 (1967), 115.

47

Stoneburner, p. 172.

48

David Jones, "The Tutelar of the Place," in The Sleeping Lord, p. 61.

Conclusion

The adaptations, the fusions
the transmogrifications
but always
the inward continuities...

-David Jones,
The Anathemata

To understand the art of David Jones is to understand his belief in the interrelatedness of all things. His concept of art as poiesis, for example, allows him to see the unity of all made things. His argument that a work of art is a sign relates the art-work to the ideas or things it signifies. In declaring that a poet can only make a shape out of the very things of which he himself is made, Jones ties him to his culture and traditions.

David Jones's belief in the interrelatedness of things has profound implications for his writings on aesthetics. For example, the anxiety exhibited by some of these writings can be attributed to his conviction that should the civilization in which the artist finds himself be hostile or insensitive to the practice of art, then the artist's work will invariably suffer. David Jones would have understood the following statement made by Ezra Pound: "But the one thing you shd. not do is to suppose that when something is wrong with the arts, it is wrong with the arts ONLY. When a given hormone defects, it will defect through-out the whole system." ¹ The fate of art is inextricably linked to the state of the nation.

In a technological epoch which scorns the backward glance, traditions are either destroyed or left to die of their own exhaustion. Here again Jones's belief in the interrelatedness of things influences his aesthetic programme of conservation. He has written that the practice of the arts depends "upon some apperception of that continuous sign-making which is an entailed ² inheritance, coming to us from our remote forebears." Thus, as I have shown

in the fifth chapter, The Anathemata records and shows forth that West European cultural res inherited by the poet. The poem demonstrates well T.S. Eliot's famous declaration about the continuity of tradition: "[The poet] must be aware that the mind of Europe--the mind of his own country--a mind which he learns in time to be much more important than his own private mind--is a mind which changes, and that this change is a development which abandons nothing en route, which does not superannuate either Shakespeare, or Homer, or the rock drawing of the Magdalenian draughtsmen." ³ In The Anathemata nothing is abandoned and everything is brought together. Like those cave-drawings in which animal forms were superimposed palimpsestically one on top of another by generations of cave-dwellers, The Anathemata conflates and joins together the widely varied data from the cultural deposits. Siegfried Giedion's description of prehistoric cave-drawings also characterizes aptly the simultaneous order of things in The Anathemata: "Gigantic bulls of the Magdalenian era could stand alongside tiny deer from Aurignacian times, as around the dome of Lascaux. Violent juxtaposition in size as well as in time were accepted as a matter of course. All was displayed within an eternal present, the perpetual interflow of today, yesterday, and tomorrow." ⁴

For a Catholic like David Jones to celebrate Mass is to participate in an eternal present in which today, yesterday, and tomorrow are all present. The Mass 're-presents' (i.e. makes present) all history and all manner of persons and things. Good Friday's victim, by His sacrifice, redeems and makes sense of everything. As The Anathemata puts it:

He does what is done in many places
 what he does other
 he does after the mode
 of what has always been done
 (A, p. 243).

By making the Mass the thematic centre of The Anathemata, Jones not only rescues and preserves the past, but also makes it present. It is because the

Mass is at the centre of the poem that Harman Grisewood could confidently say: "It is not a sense of living in the past which Mr. Jones brings us; but a sense of the past living in us."⁵ The Mass makes real the inward continuities between past and present.

Comparing the art of David Jones to the present civilizational situation Nancy Sandars writes:

...in spite of a superficially increasing uniformity, the movements today are all towards fragmentation: in the specialization of the scholar, the scientist or technician, it is the same. Everything is flying apart like our universe itself according to one interpretation, because 'the centre cannot hold.' In general, the well-made objects, the right actions, are presented to us as scattered, too soon dissipated, too small, tiny gestures quickly lost. Against this David Jones shows us a world that is whole, concentrated and converging, a logical palimpsest where ages and persons juggle their differences and are found to be one age and one person.⁶

Against the fragmentation of our times David Jones proposes an integrative and unifying aesthetic. Against the deracination of modern man he offers the comforting continuities of a rooted tradition. We learn from a poem like The Anathemata that all times are contemporaneous and that all men are united by the anathemata they offer. The Chinese painter of landscapes, the African sculptor in wood, the Eskimo stone-carver, and the Action painter in New York are, for all their differences, colleagues united by their acts of poiesis. The cave-drawings of Lascaux and Duchamp's Large Glass share a common bond in as much as they are made not with merely utile, but with significant, intent.

Reading the works of David Jones one gets a powerful sense of the unity of life and art. Even while we may disagree with some of Jones's conclusions, there is a cogency to his claim that through art we may achieve a communion with men of all times and places. Through all the transmogrifications and metamorphoses of human cultures, art reveals the inward continuities that bind all mankind. If such a conviction appears too optimistic, we have, at

least, T.S. Eliot's judicious assessment to fall back on: "It seems to me that if we approach [authors like David Jones] in the right way we shall find that in coming to understand the different worlds in which each of them lives, we shall, each of us, come to know about his own. And this is, at least, a⁷ surcease to solitude."

Footnotes

- 1
Guide to Kulchur (New York: New Directions, 1938), p. 60.
- 2
"Use and Sign," The Listener, 24 May 1962, p. 901.
- 3
"Tradition and the Individual Talent," in The Sacred Wood (London: Methuen, 1920), p. 51.
- 4
The Eternal Present (New York: Pantheon Books, 1962), p. 538.
- 5
David Jones: Writer and Artist, Annual Lecture for 1965 of the B.B.C. in Wales (London: B.B.C. Publications, 1965), p. 12.
- 6
"The Inward Continuities," Agenda, 5, Nos. 1-3 (1967), 93.
- 7
Quoted in Stoneburner, "The Regimen of the Ship-Star," Diss. University of Michigan, 1966, p. 103.

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