DAVID JONES, MODERNISM, AND THE MIDDLE AGES

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Graduate Department of English Literature, in the
University of Toronto

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David Jones, Modernism, and the Middle Ages

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Doctor of Philosophy, 2001

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ABSTRACT

My thesis examines the relationship between Modernism and medieval culture in the poetry of David Jones (1895-1974). I argue that Jones's treatment of the Middle Ages is an important response to the cultural transformations of modernity, forging a vital link to the west's pre-modern past while anticipating post-modern responses to culture and history.

In my introductory chapter, I explore important historical and cultural backgrounds for David Jones's medievalism. Among the most important of these are his Pre-Raphaelite inheritance and his crucial relationship with the cultural historian, Christopher Dawson. After discussing Jones's understanding of history and tradition, the chapter concludes with a discussion of the importance of medieval and neo-Thomist aesthetics for the Modernism of David Jones and James Joyce, and an exploration of the importance of medieval form for Jones's poetry, Joyce's Finnegans Wake, and the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins.

My chapter on In Parenthesis (1937) explores the ways in which David Jones attempts to forge continuities with the past through his allusive interpretation of three key medieval texts, the early Welsh elegies of Y Gododdin, Sir Thomas Malory's Morte Darthur, and the Welsh tales collected in The Mabinogion. In my two chapters on The Anathemata (1952), I discuss the importance of Spengler's view of the medieval era and
of Joyce's language for Jones's understanding of the importance of culture and site in the Middle Ages. I also show how Jones interprets the culture of early medieval Europe in his portrait of Gwenhwyfar, contrasting his portrayal with that of William Morris. The final chapter examines how Jones’s Roman poems antipate the Middle Ages, and attempts to demonstrate the importance of William Blake for Jones’s later Arthurian fragments, collected in The Sleeping Lord (1974). After a detailed exploration of how these poems draw upon early Welsh literature and history, I conclude by considering Jones’s portrayal of Launcelot in his Mass poems, and by showing how The Book of Balaam's Ass uses the Middle Ages to critique modernity’s calculating perspective on reality.
UXORI ANDREAE
OFF WOMENHEID ANE FLOUR DELICE

FAMILIAE MEAE

IN MEMORIAM AVI MEI
WILLIAM THOMAS DOVEY

ET AVIAE MEAE
MARGARET ELIZABETH DOVEY

REQUIEM ÆTERNAM DONA EIS DOMINE
ET LUX PERPETUA LUCEAT EIS
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A study of Jones’s engagement with the cultural origins of the modern west would have been impossible without the efforts of previous generations of Jones scholars. I am indebted to the late Peter Levi, who first introduced me to the work of David Jones in 1994. I want to acknowledge the following critics as especially crucial for this study: David Blamires, William Blissett, Thomas Dilworth, A.C. Everatt, René Hague, Jonathan Miles, Kathleen Henderson Staudt, and Colin Wilcockson. Their work in particular has guided, inspired, and challenged my thinking as I researched and wrote. Thanks also to Dr. Anne Price-Owen, whose leadership of the David Jones Society has helped bring together all those who value his work.

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# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>...ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedication</td>
<td>...iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>...v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table of Contents</td>
<td>...vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviations</td>
<td>...viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Medievalism, Modernism, and David Jones</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Nineteenth-Century Backgrounds</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 David Jones and Christopher Dawson</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 History and Typology</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 The Middle Ages and Tradition</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 Modernism and Medieval Aesthetics</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6 Modernism and Medieval Form</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 The Undoing of All Things: In Parenthesis</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 The Traddodiad</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 “It is our duty to sing”: Y Gododdin</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 “Things can seem Malorian”: Morte Darthur</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 “So he opened the door”: The Mabinogion</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 Dai’s Boast</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6 Conclusion</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 In the Young Time: The Anathémata I</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 David Jones and Spenglerian Gothic</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.2 Site and Culture.................................................................167
3.3 Angle-Land...........................................................................170
3.4 The Lady of the Pool............................................................182
3.5 Vexilla Regis.......................................................................197

4 What Says His Mabinogi?: The Anathemata II........................203

4.1 Mabinog’s Liturgy................................................................203
4.2 Gwenhwyfar.......................................................................209
4.3 “What says his mabinogi?”..................................................238
4.4 Conclusion: Sherthursdaye and Venus Day..........................243

5 Fragments of the Past: The Sleeping Lord and The Roman Quarry……249

5.1 The Roman Poems: Dreaming the Middle Ages ......................250
5.2 Acts of Albion: David Jones and William Blake......................256
5.3 Arthur in Context: Between Myth and History .......................267
5.4 The Mass Poems.....................................................................290
5.5 “A bloody lie turned gallantly romantical”: The Book of Balaam’s Ass....298

6 Conclusion...............................................................................310

Bibliography.............................................................................313
## Abbreviations

The following abbreviations will be used throughout to refer to works by David Jones and frequently cited critical sources:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ana</td>
<td>The Anathêmata</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dai</td>
<td>Dai Great-Coat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DG</td>
<td>The Dying Gaul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E&amp;A</td>
<td>Epoch and Artist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IN</td>
<td>Inner Necessities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IP</td>
<td>In Parenthesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ</td>
<td>The Roman Quarry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SL</td>
<td>The Sleeping Lord</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LC</td>
<td>The Long Conversation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SM</td>
<td>The Shape of Meaning in the Poetry of David Jones</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter I

Medievalism, Modernism, and David Jones

The poetry of David Jones is a tapestry woven from a rich variety of linguistic and literary threads. The last of the major Modernists, Jones presents a holistic vision of western culture from its geological and biological origins through to its technocratic present, evoking successive developments by means of complex allusive patterning. These patterns give Jones's poetry astonishing historical depth and cultural resonance but also challenge the reader to rediscover the sources of modern civilisation. Central to Jones's vision of the West are the culture and history of the Middle Ages. Because of the relative unfamiliarity of many of his medieval sources, his allusions to them have been a persistent cause of critical misjudgement, from Paul Fussell's *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1976) to more recent criticism, such as Evelyn Cobley's *Representing War* (1993). These two studies engage only with Jones's epic of the Great War, *In Parenthesis* (1937), which consistently returns to a few key medieval texts for analogy and contrast with the present. Jones's major poem, *The Anathemata*, remains outside most histories and critical studies of Modernism, in part because this densely footnoted text is formidably difficult on first reading, and because its allusive complex reaches beyond the backgrounds of most educated readers. A central goal of this study is to put Jones's poetry as a whole within reach of those readers who do not share his particular cultural sympathies or background; I hope my commentary demonstrates that time spent growing familiar with these is amply rewarded in the experience of re-reading Jones's poetry.
Thomas Dilworth's groundbreaking study, *The Shape of Meaning in the Poetry of David Jones* (1988), identifies how his poetry communicates meaning through skilful engagement with form and genre, while explicating the major difficulties a reader may encounter. With Jones scholarship set on firm critical ground, more specific aspects of his literary art can now be explored in greater detail. Although David Blamires's pioneering *David Jones: Artist and Writer* (1972) draws attention to the importance of the Middle Ages for his work as a whole, the medieval dimension of his poetry and prose urgently needs fuller study, not only because of the continuing difficulty it presents to readers, but because it is crucial to his cultural analysis, an analysis which I hope this study will show is important both in itself and for Modernism more generally. In this introductory chapter, I will consider the historical and theoretical backgrounds to David Jones's medievalism. After examining the importance of his Pre-Raphaelite inheritance, I will discuss his relationship with the cultural historian Christopher Dawson, perhaps the greatest single influence on his interpretation of western history and the meaning of its culture. I will then examine the ways in which Jones interprets the past from several theoretical and historical perspectives. To shed light on the theoretical basis of Jones's medievalism, I explore the significance of medieval philosophy for his aesthetics, looking in particular at the Thomism of Jacques Maritain, and contrasting Jones's adaptation of scholasticism with that of James Joyce. Jones's engagement with medieval Celtic form as a structural principle will then be situated in a wider literary context including Joyce, Hopkins, and Dylan Thomas.
1.1 Nineteenth-Century Backgrounds

Referring to David Jones’s *The Sleeping Lord* (1974), Seamus Heaney insightfully remarks that his poetry is often “a version of pastoral, based on a visionary nostalgia for a British Golden Age” (*Preoccupations* 180). This aspect of Jones’s medievalism situates his poetry within a tradition stretching back at least to the origins of the Romantic era. Beginning in the eighteenth century, writers looked back to the Middle Ages to contrast it with their own time, a strategy anticipated in Shakespeare’s history plays. Texts such as Gray’s poem “The Bard” (1757), Hurd’s *Letters on Chivalry and Romance* (1762), Macpherson’s *Ossian* (1762), Percy’s *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765), Chatterton’s “Rowley” poems (1777), and Walpole’s *Castle of Otranto* (1796) reveal the diversity of Britain’s fascination with its medieval past and helped generate a counter-discourse that challenged prevailing Enlightenment views on reason and progress. In the nineteenth century, writers such as Sir Walter Scott and Thomas Carlyle increasingly turned to the Middle Ages as a means of imaginatively redressing the evils of the present day. Alice Chandler, the principal chronicler of nineteenth-century medievalism, observes that the Middle Ages grew more appealing as society became industrialised:

The more the world changed, and the period of the medieval revival was an era of ever accelerating social transformation, the more the partly historical but basically mythical Middle Ages that had become a tradition in literature served to remind men of a Golden Age. The Middle Ages were idealized as a period of faith, order, joy, munificence, and creativity.

(1)
This was the vision of the medieval past which inspired Ruskin and the Pre-Raphaelites, and it was through the latter that David Jones would initially develop his vision of the Middle Ages.

Although the initial Pre-Raphaelite goal, in poetry and painting, had been the kind of gritty realism expressed in a poem such as Rossetti’s “Jenny”, “the public came to identify Pre-Raphaelitism solely with the long-necked, sad-eyed maidens of Rossetti and the more elaborate groupings of similar figures in the canvases of his later disciple, Edward Burne-Jones” (Stevenson 17).¹ Medievalism hardly influenced the work of John

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¹ The standard reference work on Pre-Raphaelitism remains William E. Fredeman’s Pre-
Raphaelitism: A Bibliocritical Study (1965). Following Fredeman, scholars recognise the original Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood as including Dante Gabriel Rossetti; James Collinson; William Holman Hunt; John Everett Millais; William Michael Rossetti; Frederic George Stephens; and Thomas Woolner. Important associates of the movement and later Pre-Raphaelites are Ford Madox Brown; Edward Burne-Jones; William Morris; Christina Georgina Rossetti; and John Ruskin. Fredeman’s bibliography includes collections of Pre-Raphaelite materials; art exhibitions and sales; publications by and about the Pre-Raphaelites and their circle; scholarly studies; and book illustrations. The Pre-Raphaelite movement is conventionally seen as beginning in 1848, when the original brotherhood was founded, and ending in 1882 with the death of Dante Gabriel Rossetti. John Ruskin began to publicise the movement with letters to the Times and a pamphlet entitled Pre-Raphaelitism in 1851 (Fredeman 7). In 1857, the Pre-Raphaelites garnered world-wide attention through major exhibitions in London and New York (14-15). Their literary output began with The Germ, succeeded by The Oxford and Cambridge
Everett Millais and was only a minor concern for Holman Hunt; it was particularly strong in Rossetti’s middle period, and in Morris’s first book of poems, *The Defence of Guenevere* (1868), which takes as its subject matter Arthurian romance and Froissartian history. While a student at Camberwell School of Arts from 1909-14, Jones studied under A.S. Hartrick, who had known Van Gogh and Gaugain in Paris, and Reginald Savage, who introduced his students to the nineteenth-century English illustrators and the Pre-Raphaelites (*Dai* 20). One of the earliest surviving paintings of David Jones is a picture of Launcelot done in the Pre-Raphaelite style, which he painted in 1916 for a cousin’s wedding invitations. His ambition at the time was “to illustrate historical subjects – preferably for Welsh history and legend”, revealing a typically Pre-Raphaelite

*Magazine* (7, 14). The movement was instrumental in shaping later Victorian taste in art and literature, particularly its medievalism. Although David Jones was familiar with the Pre-Raphaelites and in sympathy with them, he made no close study of them as he did with Dawson, Spengler, and Maritain, and my exploration of his engagement with medieval culture does not require more detail than is presented in this brief account. In Chapter Four, I will consider David Jones’s portrayal of Gwenhwyfar in relation to William Morris’s “The Defence of Guenevere”, and in Chapter Five, I will examine Jones’s Arthurian poems in relation to William Blake, the visionary Romantic championed by Rossetti.

2 Muriel Whitaker’s *The Legends of King Arthur in Art* (1990) surveys this aspect of Pre-Raphaelitism, and includes a discussion of the Arthurian paintings of David Jones.

3 Mr. Anthony Hyne, nephew of David Jones and trustee of his estate, kindly showed this picture and explained its provenance in July, 1998.
enthusiasm for medieval subjects (20). John Ruskin, whose writings provided the Pre-Raphaelites with their theories of art, died in 1900, and his ideas were part of the nineteenth-century legacy passed on to Jones at Camberwell (Wilcockson 127). William Morris, who extended and applied Ruskin's thought in a variety of political and practical ways, died in 1896, leaving his own legacy of work and ideas for English artists to draw upon. In his memorial essay on the sculptor Eric Gill, with whom he was affiliated at Ditchling and Capel-y-ffin during the 1920's, David Jones writes, "He was a true master in the sense that Morris was a master; indeed with Morris he had much in common..." (E&A 297). Jones himself has much in common with Morris; both are poets and visual artists, and both turn to the Middle Ages for inspiration in the wasteland of industrialised modernity.

Morris is a major source for an idea central to Jones's interpretation of western history. In his "Preface" to The Anathemata, David Jones relates that during "the late nineteen-twenties and early 'thirties among my most immediate friends there used to be discussed something that we christened 'The Break'" (15). Over the course of the nineteenth century, "Western Man moved across a rubicon [sic]", which made traditional symbolism increasingly unavailable for the modern artist (15-16). Jones's friend, the publisher Tom Burns, writes that "In endless talk and rumination with friends like David Jones and Christopher Dawson and Harman Grisewood, we would come to face what we called 'the Break' - an alienating event in what was known of our civilisation: more a slow-burner than an event, in fact" (52). The medievalist Colin Wilcockson persuasively links Jones's idea of "The Break" to a passage in a lecture on "The Beauty of Life", in which Morris criticises the effects of industrialism:
... the whole civilised world had forgotten that there ever had been an art
made by the people for the people as a joy for the maker and user. But
now it seems to me that the very suddenness of the change ought to
comfort us, to make us look upon this break in the continuity of the golden
chain as an accident only, that itself cannot last ... (Hopes and Fears 82,
qtd. in Wilcockson 130)

In support of his argument, Wilcockson draws several striking parallels between this
lecture’s image of the prehistoric artist, who “graved with a flint splinter on a bone of the
mammoth”, and Jones’s imagery of “elk-bones”, “mammoth and elk”, and “flint worked
ivory agalma” in The Anathémata (Wilcockson 130). To Wilcockson’s discovery I
would add a passage from Morris’s lecture on “Gothic Architecture”, where he praises
the Middle Ages as an inspiration for modern building:

... remote as those times are from ours, if we are ever to have architecture
at all, we must take up the thread of tradition there and nowhere else,
because that Gothic architecture is the most completely organic form of art
which the world has seen; the break in the thread of tradition could only
occur there: all the former developments tended thitherward ... (News
from Nowhere and Other Writings 333; italics mine)

“Break” is a loaded word for both William Morris and David Jones, signalling a major
cultural discontinuity. This sense of discontinuity within western culture is familiar to
contemporary readers in the work of Michel Foucault, who claims there are “two great
discontinuities in the episteme of Western culture: the first inaugurates the Classical age
(roughly half-way through the seventeenth century) and the second, at the beginning of
the nineteenth century, marks the beginning of the modern age” (*Order of Things* xxii). Unlike Foucault, however, Jones sees deep cultural continuities enduring over time, however fearful he may be that the present era marks the “the last phase / of our dear West” (*Ana* 115). Jones’s medievalism, in *The Anathemata* and elsewhere, reveals his own intention to follow Morris’s example and “take up the thread of tradition” from the past and extend it into the modern era. In this sense, Jones’s poetry can be seen as continuing the Pre-Raphaelite project of integrating past and present.

David Jones’s enthusiasm for the Pre-Raphaelites endured well beyond his early years as an art student. In 1948, he writes to his friend Harman Grisewood, “We ought to try and go to the Tate together to see the Pre-Raphaelites while they are on” (unpublished letter, 5 October 1948). A few days later, he writes to Grisewood concerning the Pre-Raphaelite poet and painter William Bell Scott, after enthusiastically recommending Scott’s poem “The Witch’s Ballad”:

> Glad you like the *Witch’s Ballad*. I think it has [the] genuine thing in it – jolly nice anyhow.

> I think in v. 3.

> ‘Mysie smiled w’ miming mouth etc.’

> the second line

> ‘Innocent mouth, mincing mouth etc.’

---

4 Unless otherwise indicated, David Jones’s unpublished correspondence to Harman Grisewood refers to the collection of letters in the Beinecke Library, Yale University (“158 ALS to Harman Grisewood”, Uncatalogued MS Vault 287).
would be best left and date it rather – the odd thing about repetitions – you have to be jolly careful with them – & it’s a rather ‘Pre-Raphaelite’ trick!

(unpublished letter, 7 October 1948)

Jones’s comments reveal considerable familiarity with the formal conventions of Pre-Raphaelite verse, and a Modernist desire to avoid them in his own work, suggesting the powerful influence such poetry exercised on his own imagination. Scott’s poem, I would also suggest, is a source for the section of *The Anathématata* called “Mabinog’s Liturgy”, which features dialogue between three witches. “The Witch’s Ballad” is a monologue spoken by a witch out on a husband-seeking spree with her three companions; she longs for the “Blackamoor” who first initiated her into the mysteries of witchcraft, but by the end of the poem she and her companions are satisfied with the husbands they have won by enchantment. In “Mabinog’s Liturgy”, Christ himself is the initial object of the witches’ curiosity and interest. Whereas the speaker of “The Witch’s Ballad” recalls the occasion when the Blackamoor “spoke the great Word over me” (103), the witches in *The Anathématata* recall the Incarnation of an even greater Word, “Alpha es et O” (207).

Perhaps the most apparent link between David Jones and the nineteenth century is his enthusiasm for Malory, who had first achieved canonical status among the Pre-Raphaelites. It was not until 1855 that William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones “first encountered Malory’s *Morte Darthur*, which was still little known; Morris bought a copy of Southey’s 1817 edition in a bookshop, and it immediately became their ultimate gospel of medieval romance, though at first they felt embarrassed to confess their rapture over such an obscure book” (Stevenson 132). The following year, the two young men came down from Oxford, and in London came under the influence of Dante Gabriel Rossetti:
"When they heard him say with his customary dogmatism that the Morte Darthur and the Bible were the two greatest books in the world, they at length felt emboldened to admit their secret veneration for Malory; it seemed like their initiation into an esoteric confraternity" (Stevenson 134). David Jones was probably familiar with this anecdote, for he too compares Malory with the Bible: "Incidentally, Malory's book has points of resemblance to our Latin Vulgate, in the sense that it can be called a true version, the precise originals of which are no longer all available to us" (E&A 244). While Morris, Burne-Jones, and Rossetti were painting Arthurian murals at the new Oxford Union Debating Hall, Algernon Charles Swinburne "was introduced to the group and proved to be another of the secret fraternity of Malory addicts" (Stevenson 137). Jones's own addiction to Malory, especially evident in the dense layer of Malorian allusion running throughout In Parenthesis and his seminal essay "The Myth of Arthur", is a major imaginative connection with his Pre-Raphaelite precursors.

The most famous Arthurian poem of the nineteenth century, Tennyson's Idylls of the King, is dismissed by Jones altogether. For Jones, Tennyson's poem fails because of "what he left out":

The objection that he invested his subject with the values of his own age, is in itself an unsound objection – the poets have always done that and in some sense it is indeed part of their job. But all the time we should feel, along with its contemporary twist, application, or what you will, the whole weight of what lies hidden – the many strata of it. (E&A 234)

Unlike Malory, Tennyson fails to evoke the "unplumbed deeps and recessions below and beyond the medievalized and christianized story" (234-5). This may be seen in
Tennyson’s “Balin and Balan”, where the spear of Longinus is prosaically described as “The longest lance his eyes had ever seen / Point painted red” (405-6) – merely a fraudulent medieval relic. In contrast, during Dai Greatcoat’s boast at the centre of In Parenthesis, David Jones evokes this object with haunting mythical resonance: “I was the spear in Balin’s hand / that made waste King Pellam’s land” (79). Nonetheless, the closing passage of Idylls of the King anticipates Jones’s “The Sleeping Lord” in identifying the popular tradition of Arthur with the landscape of Celtic Britain (“cairn”; “cromlech”):

    that gray king, whose name, a ghost
    Streams like a cloud, man-shaped, from the mountain-peak,
    And cleaves to cairn and cromlech still (“To the Queen” 39-41)

Significantly, Tennyson indicates that it is precisely this Arthur of Celtic folk tradition that he will not evoke; rather, he will present “Ideal manhood clothed in real man” (38), his Arthurian figures embodying a conventionally Victorian table of virtues and vices.5

5 Tennyson is of course a subtler poet than the Modernists were willing to admit. Although I personally find Idylls of the King virtually unrivalled in dullness, E.D.H. Johnson sees the moral conflicts of the poem’s principal characters as its major interest: “They exist not only in the outer world of positive achievement, but also in the interior world of conflicting motives. It is the interaction between the two realms of consciousness which gives the poem its strange quality of intensity. Every action has its imaginative counterpart through the instrumentality of dream, madness, vision, and the quest” (48). More compelling from a contemporary perspective are the poem’s strained sexual politics and its conflicting accounts of Arthur’s origins, which seem to undermine
Jones's antipathy to Tennyson is balanced by his more receptive attitude to the poets and painters of the Pre-Raphaelite movement, whose work anticipated that of the Modernists in a number of important ways.

In her edition of William Morris’s *The Defence of Guenevere and Other Poems*, Margaret Lourie observes that Ezra Pound’s development of Imagist poetics, a crucial stage in modern poetry, grew partly out of his early enthusiasm for the Pre-Raphaelites. “For Pound the image had to be an unadorned, precisely defined description, typically taken from nature. He railed against artificial descriptive language like ‘dove-grey’ and ‘pearl-pale.’ If the Pre-Raphaelites had tried to purge painting of artifice, Pound meant to do the same for modern poetry” (26-7). Jerome McGann similarly challenges the conventional view of the “softness” of Pre-Raphaelite poetry: “Compared with the ballads of the romantic period as such, Morris’s *Defence of Guenevere* poems represent new departures because they want to incise and harden the edges of their signifiers” (53). This hardening finds its fulfilment in Imagism. Similarly, as Lourie points out, the

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6 The relationship between Pre-Raphaelitism and Modernism has only begun to be explored. Jerome McGann, in *Black Riders: The Visible Language of Modernism* (1993), shows important connections between the Pre-Raphaelite book, particularly those printed at Morris’s Kelmscott Press, and the early Modernist book, such as the Cuala Press editions of Yeats and the limited editions of early books by Ezra Pound and Wallace Stevens.
Modernist engagement with the past owes much to the example of previous generations.

Nineteenth-century poets returned now with Arnold to the Greeks ‘who saw life steadily and saw it whole,’ now with Pater and Browning to the Renaissance, but most often to the Middle Ages with poets like Scott, Tennyson, Morris, and Rossetti. For similar reasons Yeats would later look back to Irish legend, Joyce to the *Odyssey*, and Pound to Provence. (Lourie 1)

In a similar quest for wholeness, Jones turns to the Matter of Britain and the heroic literature of early medieval Europe. McGann claims that “Part of Pound’s success in England must be traced to his Pre-Raphaelite commitments. Pound helped to bring forth a new avant-garde by marrying what we now call ‘modernism’ to the writing of the late nineteenth century” (19). This marriage of Modernism and Pre-Raphaelitism is also, quite independently, a crucial dimension of David Jones’s poetry, which, while formally Modernist, often employs themes and allusions which are also characteristic of earlier generations of British poets. In the chapters which follow, these connections will be more fully elaborated.

1.2. David Jones and Christopher Dawson

One of the most important and formative influences on David Jones’s thought was the historian of culture, Christopher Dawson. In his Preface to *The Anathémata*, Jones

7 David Jones, although familiar with the work of Eliot and Joyce, was only marginally acquainted with the work of Ezra Pound. Significantly, he did read Pound’s 1910 study of medieval literature, *The Spirit of Romance*. 
mentions Dawson first in his acknowledgements, as one “to whose writings and conversations I feel especially indebted” (36). T.S. Eliot similarly singles Dawson out for special thanks in *The Idea of a Christian Society* and *Notes towards the Definition of Culture*. Both Jones and Dawson shared a passionate interest in the formation and fate of western civilisation. When nineteen years old, Dawson visited Rome, where, on the steps of the Capitol, he “conceived the idea of writing a history of culture, that is to say a history of the life of civilizations from prehistoric times to the modern age, which he envisaged over a span of five volumes” (Scott, “Vision” 12). This anecdote parallels a similar tale of inspiration in the life of Dawson’s hero, the eighteenth-century historian Edward Gibbon. Of his projected volumes, only *The Age of the Gods* (1929), *Progress and Religion* (1929), and *The Making of Europe* (1933) were completed. Dawson’s other writings deal with a staggering variety of subjects, from medieval culture to contemporary issues in politics and education. His vast learning earned him the affectionate nickname “Tiger” in Jones’s circle after his friend Prudence Pelham exclaimed “My God, what a tiger!” following dinner and conversation with Dawson (*Dai* 70).

In an unpublished letter to Harman Grisewood, David Jones praises the synthetizing power of Dawson’s mind: “He is a master of the art of driving a chariot with innumerable horses without getting the reins tangled. I don’t know what one would do without the Tiger” (6 February 1952). Dawson was appointed to the newly created Stillman Chair in Roman Catholic Studies at Harvard in 1958 – the first Roman Catholic to be invited to join Harvard’s divinity faculty.

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8 René Hague records that this nickname was never used to Dawson’s face (*Dai* 70).
Central to Dawson's historical vision is the importance of the early Middle Ages in the formation of Europe. A recent commentator notes that this emphasis has adversely affected Dawson's legacy, and the same could be said for David Jones:

A central reason for the reluctance of modern critics to be persuaded by Dawson's interpretation of European history is his insistence that the true 'making' of Europe should be located in the period AD 400-1000, in other words, the period that only until a few years ago was known as 'the Dark Ages'. What could modern, cosmopolitan Europe, the champion of secular, liberal democracy, possibly derive from this remote and obscure period? (Cervantes 54)

Nonetheless, in *The Making of Europe*, Dawson insists on the importance of four major factors from this period in the formation of European unity: the Roman Empire; the Catholic Church; the Classical tradition; and the barbarian peoples (3-24; Cervantes 55-8). These factors are also central preoccupations in the poetry of David Jones.

The following passage from *The Making of Europe* effectively summarises several of Dawson's central theses as shown in the transition from Classical to Medieval Europe:

The old culture of the city state with its civic religion passed away owing to a gradual process of internal change, and its place was taken by a theocratic monarchy in close alliance with the new world-religion – Christianity. But while in the East this development was closely linked with a native oriental tradition of immense antiquity, in the West it was entirely new, with no basis in past history; and here, accordingly, it failed
to strike root. In its place we find the old European type of tribal society tending to reassert itself, and on the ruins of the provincial city states there re-appears a rural society of noble landowners and peasant serfs, such as had existed in Central Europe before the coming of Rome. Consequently the new age in the West is not to be explained solely by the forcible intrusion of the Germanic peoples, but also to the renaissance of an older type of society on the soil of the Empire itself, as we see with special clearness in Western Britain. In fact, the break-up of the new territorial states might have followed very much the same course, even without the intervention of the barbarian invaders. (79-80)

It is the sweep and scope of Dawson’s vision that most irks contemporary historians, for whom “the modern study of history is fundamentally opposed to an understanding of the past as an organic, intelligible whole. Metahistory is even more discredited than metaphysics” (Cervantes 52). Peter Brown’s recent study, The Rise of Western Christendom (1996), covers the same ground as Dawson’s The Making of Europe, but approaches its subject piecemeal, without daring to offer a synthetizing vision of the past. It is precisely Dawson’s holistic vision, however, which most appealed to David Jones, for whom historical continuity, unity, and synthesis are central thematic concerns.

For Christopher Dawson, cultural history offered an important alternative to traditional, narrowly nationalist histories, one which “goes behind the political unit and

9 Brown’s book is part of a series edited by Jacques LeGoff entitled “The Making of Europe”, but no mention of Dawson’s landmark study is made by either Brown or LeGoff in their introductory comments.
studies that fundamental social unity which we term a culture” (*Age of the Gods* xiii). Inspired by Dawson’s writings, T.S. Eliot made a similar appeal to “that fundamental social unity” in a 1946 radio broadcast to Germany, arguing that

For the health of the culture of Europe two conditions are required: that the culture of each country should be unique, and that the different cultures should recognize their relationship to each other, so that each should be susceptible to the influence from the others. And this is possible because there is a common element in European culture, an interrelated history of thought and feeling and behavior, an interchange of art and ideas. (*Christianity and Culture* 197)

The “common element in European culture” balances and enriches the particularism of local cultures for both Dawson and Eliot. As we shall see in chapter four, David Jones similarly explores the relationship between Europe’s common Latin Christian inheritance and the local culture of early medieval Britain in “Mabinog’s Liturgy”, Part VI of *The Anathémata*.

Cultural history, for Dawson, also involves a respect for the achievements of the past in themselves, not merely as precursors to the present. Challenging the kind of historical writing typified by H.G. Well’s *The Outline of History*, Dawson writes that positivist history “involves the subordination of the past to the present, and instead of liberating the mind from provincialism by widening the intellectual horizon, it is apt to generate the Pharisaic self-righteousness of the Whig historians or, still worse, the self-satisfaction of the modern Philistine” (*Making of Europe* xvi). Intellectual and imaginative liberation is one of history’s most important functions:
One of the great merits of history is that it takes us out of ourselves – away from obvious and accepted facts – and discovers a reality that would otherwise be unknown to us. There is a real value in steeping our minds in an age entirely different to that which we know: a world different, but no less real – indeed more real, for what we call "the modern world" is the world of a generation, while a culture like that of the Byzantine or Carolingian world has a life of centuries. (xvi)

Dawson celebrates the past’s otherness, acknowledging its intrinsic value. He also recognises the dangers posed by a purely Romantic approach to history, which can lead either to an escapist idealisation of the past or to propaganda: “Of these the latter is the most serious, since the romanticist at least treats history as an end in itself” (xvii).

Dawson acknowledges the importance of Romanticism in reviving interest in the Middle Ages: “it is in fact to the romantic historians that we owe the first attempts to study mediaeval civilisation for its own sake rather than as a means to something else” (xvii).

The distinction Dawson makes between history “for its own sake” and history “as a means to something else” exactly parallels David Jones’s distinction between the gratuitous and the utile in human artefacture. By calling art gratuitous, Jones means that a work of art is made freely and for its own sake: “I understand the theologians to say that God’s creation of the cosmos was a gratuitous act: it is interesting therefore that it is that very quality of gratuitousness which we recognize in the creative works of man” (E&A 275).10 The utile, in contrast, refers to “the wholly functional works of nature … and

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10 Our colloquial use of gratuitous to mean undesirable excess reveals the deeply utilitarian bias of modern culture.
such works of man as tend to approximate these processes of nature" — in other words, works which are primarily instrumental (E&A 180-1). There are deep congruities between Dawson’s and Jones’s thought, and it is clear why Jones considered Dawson “someone whose brain is of the right kind” (Dai 119).

Unlike the romantic historian, the propagandist “is inspired by motives of a non-historical order, and tends unconsciously to falsify history in the interests of apologetics” (Making of Europe xvii). Dawson has in mind such Roman Catholic controversialists as Hilaire Belloc and G.K. Chesterton, who use history primarily as a form of Christian apologetics, but also the Oxford Movement among Anglo-Catholics, who similarly used history to justify their theological position. He sees the tendency to make history a branch of Christian apologetics as “a danger to which Catholic historians of the Middle Ages are peculiarly exposed, since the romantic revival first brought in the conception of the Middle Ages as ‘The Age of Faith,’ and of mediaeval culture as the social expression of Catholic ideals” (xvii). Despite these reservations, Dawson in Medieval Essays (1954) argues that “Medieval Christendom is the outstanding example in history of the application of Faith to Life: the embodiment of religion in social institutions and external forms...” (11). The Thomist revival inspired by Pope Leo XIII identified the Middle Ages as the zenith of the Christian intellectual tradition, producing a similar tendency to idealise medieval culture in modern Catholic philosophical circles. As we will see, this is an important aspect of Maritain’s thought, which was particularly influential in Dawson’s and Jones’s milieu. Dawson sees the Middle Ages as an age of faith primarily because people then “had no faith in themselves or in the possibilities of human effort, but put their trust in something more than civilization and something outside history” (Making of
Europe xix). The Middle Ages as a challenge to humanism is a common thread in the writings of Dawson and Maritain, anticipated by earlier writers like William Morris, John Ruskin, and, as we shall see, the early Modernist poet and critic T.E. Hulme. For Dawson, this "something" is a motivating force within history: "There is in it always a mysterious and inexplicable element, due not only to the influence of chance or the initiative of the individual genius, but also to the creative power of spiritual forces" (25). This is a view of history as much at odds with contemporary, post-modern historiography as it was with that of earlier, positivist historians; in a sense, however, Dawson's "creative power of spiritual forces" plays a similar role in his own thought as ideas of contingency do in postmodernism, the main difference being that Dawson attributes meaning and purpose to what postmodernists interpret as meaningless and random.

David Jones shares Dawson's belief in the directing power of creative, spiritual forces, but for Jones these cosmic powers are most clearly seen in the shaping of the earth itself. In The Anathémata, the geological and biological development of the earth is guided by a divine light:

From before all time
the New Light beams for them
and with eternal clarities

*infulsit* and athwart
the fore-times:

era, period, epoch, hemera.

Through all orogeny:

group, system, series, zone.
Brighting the five life-layers

[sub-]species, species, genera, families, order. (73-4)\textsuperscript{11}

Kathleen Henderson Staudt suggests that this passage "can be read as a poetic
improvisation on Dawson's observation in Age of the Gods that "not only the oceans, but
the 'eternal hills' themselves rise and fall in obedience to the cosmic law, so that the
mountain ranges rise from the flow of the ancient seas, and in their turn fade away again
like snow wreaths under the sun and rain" (4)" (125). The mystery of the development of
life on earth is here identified with the shining of the New Light, in a "point of
intersection of the timeless / With time" (Eliot, Collected Poems 212). Eliot in Four
Quartets, Jones in The Anathémata, and Dawson throughout his writings express a faith
that eternity and time exist in a positive relation: "history is a pattern / Of timeless
moments" (Eliot, Collected Poems 222). The title of a recent collection of essays on
Dawson's thought, Eternity in Time (Caldecott 1997), suggests the close affinity between
his view of history and that of Eliot and Jones.

Jones reveals his appreciation for Dawson's friendship in a 1942 letter to Harman
Grisewood: "O dear, it's nice to talk to someone whose brain is of the right kind -- that's
what one sighs for -- the disagreements don't matter -- but the temper -- the kind -- the sort
of thing that a chap regards as significant -- that's what one wants -- and that is hard to
come by" (Dai119). He and Dawson shared an enthusiasm for early medieval Britain. In
April 1935, Jones writes to René Hague, "We talked a lot about Wales -- he told me the

\textsuperscript{11} The original edition of The Anathémata prints "species, species", and although this is
changed in subsequent editions to "species, sub-species", the logical order, moving from
smallest group to largest, would seem to demand "sub-species, species".
first thing he ever wrote was an essay on early Welsh stuff, Gododdin and Co.” (Dai 70-1). At the time, Jones was putting the finishing touches on In Parenthesis, and his conversations with Dawson may well have influenced his decision to place fragments from the early Welsh poem, Y Gododdin, as epigraphs to each section of his book. Dawson’s mother’s family was of Welsh extraction, and she had even made some translations from Welsh poetry (Scott Historian’s World 15).

In July 1935, Jones writes of a planned trip with Dawson to Grasswood, “a tangled wood about the size of Mamez [where Jones had fought during the Battle of the Somme] a mile or so square and the site of a British village and fortified hill – Dawson thinks post-Roman, perhaps the capital of Urien Rhedeg [sic]12 – who became the Uriens of M. Dartur” (Dai 74). According to Dawson’s daughter, Christina Scott, while Jones was living at Sidmouth in the early 1940’s, the two men became more closely acquainted, “going for long walks together and discussing Welsh literature, Celtic mythology and the traditions of Greece and Rome” (Historian’s World 127). Following the publication of The Anathémata in 1952, Dawson wrote to Jones saying “he thought Ana in some ways used the English language rather as the 6th Cent. Celts used Latin. He then asked if this was deliberate on my part! Dear Xtopher, he always thinks chaps are as learned as he is himself” (IN 76).13

In the view of a recent commentator, “The most important Catholic salon” during the 1920’s was that which convened in the house of Charles Burns, doctor and

12 Urien Rheged, sixth-century king of Rheged (in the south of modern Scotland) and patron of the early poet Taliesin.

13 Letter to Desmond Chute.
psychologist, in St. Leonard’s Terrace, Chelsea (Nichols 30). The Catholic publisher Tom Burns, Charles’s brother, alludes more informally to “the fairly frequent parties which seemed to spring up spontaneously at our house” (41). Jones and Dawson were frequent guests, and Eric Gill and Stephen Spender were also occasional participants (Nichols 32; Burns 42). Jacques Maritain also paid a visit (Dilworth, “Maritain Conversation” 51). The conversations at these gatherings led to “the spontaneous generation of an idea for a review dedicated to reforming the Catholic Church, at least in its local manifestation” (Burns 44). This review was called Order, and had as its main targets “ecclesiastical materialism”, “the hideous aesthetic expressions of modern religion”, and the complacent Catholic press (44-5). Tom Burns singles out The Tablet of the 1920s as especially “sectarian and puritanical, pompous and parochial” (45): “I attacked it mercilessly, without, of course, the slightest idea that I would myself be in the editorial chair forty years on” (45).

For the cover of Order, David Jones carved a wood engraving of “a unicorn prancing in an enclosed garden to ‘cleanse the waters’, as in the medieval myth” (45). The “medieval myth” is a legend alluded to by Jones in the “Dai’s Boast” passage of In Parenthesis:

I am the Single Horn thrusting
by night-stream margin
in Helyon. (84)

In his note to these lines, Jones quotes from the Itinerarium de Joannis de Hese, which tells of a stream in Helyon poisoned nightly by “venomous animals”: “but in the

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14 The image is beautifully reproduced on page 196 of Burns’s The Use of Memory.
morning, after sunrise, comes the Unicorn, and dips his horn into the stream, driving the Venom from it, so that the good animals can drink there during the day” (210, n.N). The unfinished wood engraving, “He frees the waters”, opposite page 213 in *The Anathémata*, also illustrates this scene.

*Order* has been completely ignored in accounts of the 1920’s *avant-garde*, but Tom Burns notes that its “first issue had a bombshell effect, sold 2,000 copies in two weeks and was reprinted” (45). The review’s title “had nothing to do with the New Order of German or Italian nationalism emerging at that time”, but rather came from the Aquinas quotation which provided *Order’s* epigraph: “According to established popular usage, which the Philosopher considers should be our guide in the naming of things, those are called wise who put things into their right order and control them well” (46). Burns notes that the group was astonishingly apolitical – with the exception of Christopher Dawson, whose *Beyond Politics* (1939) is cited by Eliot as an important source for *The Idea of a Christian Society* (Burns 46; Eliot, *Christianity and Culture* 3).

In her unsympathetic study, *David Jones: Mythmaker*, Kathleen Ward offers a darker picture of the Chelsea group’s politics, worth mentioning primarily for her quotation from an unpublished paper by Harman Grisewood, Jones’s close friend and a regular at the gatherings at St Leonard’s Terrace:

Harman Grisewood has committed himself to the judgement that the Chelsea Group was ‘*avant-garde* in a rightist, Catholic, European style’, a description which summarises its special brand of radical conservatism both pithily and accurately, capturing as it does the striking combination of aesthetic experimentation … and political sympathies unequivocally
characterised by Grisewood in retrospect as lying 'so far to the right of Stanley Baldwin' as to put them off the page of English politics altogether.

Ward would like to identify Jones’s poetry as congruent with Nazi ideology (see for example her fixation with Jones’s use of *Gleichschaltung* in “The Tutelar of the Place” (190)), and her book reveals a deep animus toward Catholic thought in general. Thomas Dilworth makes the best case against reading Jones as proto-fascist in his article “David Jones and Fascism”, which reprints Jones’s early, unpublished essay on Hitler in its entirety.\(^{15}\) Jones’s poetry is, as Dilworth points out, consistently anti-imperialist and antitotalitarian (144).

Following the demise of *Order*, Dawson became co-editor with Burns of “a series of *Essays in Order* – little books of 100 pages or so which took *Order* deeper into the heartland of contemporary problems” (47). David Jones provided another unicorn engraving, and Burns records that it was Jones who discovered the passage from John of Hesse quoted above, which served as epigraph to the series of books (50). The passage had great significance for Burns:

\(^{15}\) “The essay is essentially a plea for peace, in which Jones sees Hitler’s ambitions as similar to those behind the first and second British Empires” (147). Dilworth quotes from a note written by Harman Grisewood and attached to the essay’s typescript, explaining the decision to omit the essay from *Epoch and Artist*: “perhaps it would not be so difficult now as it seemed in 1959 to attach an explanatory Note to show that the sentiments in the article do not imply any sympathy whatever with the Hitlerian methods” (qtd. 147 n. 6).
To me this was an allegory of everything that I believed in. There seemed to me a stream of clear thought seeping through the world from ancient Greece, and long before, which had come to be poisoned by sophistries and prejudices and passions throughout history. To me the unicorn symbolised the Holy Spirit coming to visit and clarify these turbulent waters. (51)

Jones and Dawson both shared this profound sense of an inner spiritual continuity running, at times subterraneously, from humanity’s prehistory through to the present. *Essays in Order* was an attempt to apply this wisdom to problems of modern life. Contributors included Dawson himself, Jacques Maritain, Herbert Read, E.I. Watkin, Peter Wust, and Theodore Haecker. In 1932, *The Manchester Guardian*, which Burns characterises as a “staunch upholder of secularist ideals, virtually Bloomsbury’s parish magazine”, surprisingly praised *Essays in Order* for doing so much “to bring Catholicism within the orbit of the modern Englishman” (qtd. in Burns 53).

Aidan Nichols offers an assessment of the Chelsea group that recognises its close affiliation with the kind of social conservatism (a conservatism which nonetheless radically challenged the society of 1930’s Britain) associated with T.S. Eliot:

If the main non-Catholic participant in the Chelsea set was T. S. Eliot, in many ways its members echoed Eliot’s basic themes: the reintegration of a fragmented cultural heritage, the overcoming of a disruption between thought and sensibility; the defence of the presence, within fine literature, of concepts drawn from metaphysics and religion, the reunion of
rationality and mysticism, and the setting forth of the conditions for a new
order in society by way of a Christian sociology. (39-40)
Nichols claims that under Eliot's influence, "they tended to suppose that the current of
cultural history was flowing in their direction – towards a 'new Christendom'. The post-
war world with its growing secularism, levelling democracy hostile to élite culture, and
bureaucratization, would prove a sad awakening" (40). Although Eliot, Jones, Dawson,
and Burns clearly entertained high cultural aspirations, they were not as naïve as Nichols
suggests, and their post-war disillusionment merely confirmed their earlier suspicions
concerning the technocratic drift of modern civilisation.

The most important difference between Jones's and Dawson's historical thought
is their differing attitudes toward Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of the West*. Spengler
argues (perhaps asserts gives a better sense of his aggressive style) that cultures are
organisms, and grow, decline, and die like living beings. More darkly, he also argues that
cultures compete with each other for survival, allowing for virtually no positive
interactions between them. For Spengler, cultural mixing is a symptom of weakness and
degeneracy. Byzantine civilisation, for example, is in Spengler's view a degenerate
Oriental culture disguised by the trappings of the late Roman Empire – a process he calls
"pseudo-morphosis" (1: 209-12). Christopher Dawson, in contrast, sees interaction as
absolutely vital for cultural development. In *The Age of the Gods*, for example, he argues
that the bronze-age culture of western Europe arose as a fusion between the warrior
society of the Celts and the pre-Celtic megalithic peoples: "According to Caesar,
Druidism was introduced into Gaul from Britain, where the Celtic element was, of
course, weaker, while in Britain its most important sanctuary was the island of Anglesey,
an old centre of the megalithic culture" (231). More important, Dawson was also one of the first historians to acknowledge the enormous debt European culture owes to the highly advanced civilisation of medieval Islam. He explicitly challenges Spengler in Progress and Religion. Seeing the German success of Spengler’s The Decline of the West as “principally due to the way in which its thesis appealed to the pessimism and disillusionment of the defeated peoples” (31), Dawson argues that its “relativist philosophy of history ends by denying the very existence of relations, and dissolves the unity of history into an unintelligible plurality of isolated and sterile cultural processes” (43). It is precisely the creative interaction of cultures which Dawson sees as the main source of cultural development.

Jones’s own attitudes toward Spengler’s ideas are ambivalent, selective, and complex. His passionate identification with medieval Wales led Jones to share “the pessimism and disillusionment of defeated peoples” which Dawson identifies in post-war Germany as the leading cause of Spengler’s positive reception. In his essay “The Myth of Arthur”, Jones writes, “Spengler had very special insight into the cyclic character of the periods of decline, and certainly the trend, as far as we can see, of the contemporary world, verifies a number of his conclusions” (E&A 242). In Spengler’s view, societies in their earliest form develop organic cultures rooted in the folkways of a given place; as they lose their connection with blood and soil, these cultures become increasingly artificial and cosmopolitan civilisations (see, e.g., The Decline of the West I: 107-8). Medieval Europe embodied a variety of thriving cultures; modern Europe is a civilisation in the last stages of decline. Whatever the value of Spengler’s analysis of the twentieth-century West, Jones found his distinction between cultures and civilisations “a most
useful distinction and a valid one” (E&A 288, n.1). The complexity of Jones’s reaction to Spengler is most clearly seen in a frequently quoted letter to Harman Grisewood (26 February 1942): “He’s so right, and, as I think, also so wrong. But I can’t really tell quite where, or what, it is. I believe it resides in that Jackson Knight thing – he has liquidated Juno. It is a male thought-world entirely” (Dai 115). Although he has little patience for those who dismiss Spengler’s ideas out of hand, Jones confesses

...I’m still pretty undecided what I do think about it nevertheless. A lot of it one just reads as if one were reading one’s own exact thoughts for the past twenty years put down by someone who could think clearly and who had the power of expression and elucidation. One just recognizes the ‘truth’, but it is far other with large tracts of it. So far I’ve only been able to ascertain that what I disagree with, and resent, is his insensitivity and scorn at certain important junctures, his schoolmaster’s laying-down-the-law tendency, his cheapness and brutality and inhumanity, and something very like bluster when he is on a sore-ish point. Such expressions as ‘Who cares if they do go under’ – that will not do. (115)

16 Jones’s friend Jackson Knight, in his study of the Aeneid, Cumaean Gates, writes:

“There is a difficulty in seeing what the personality of Juno means, and why a goddess, honoured at Rome, should be so hostile. The answer is that Juno is fiercely feminine. She was not among the principal early deities of Rome, and was never one of the greatest. Rome worshipped male gods first; Rome began, because Juno acknowledged defeat.

Vergil knew of the cost of empire; the cost in suffering, and the cost to conscience and to so many graceful things” (272-3).
Jones clearly sees more value in Spengler’s writings than does Christopher Dawson, but recognises the unsavoury violence that characterises Spengler’s often crude analyses. He is not, however, entirely immune to Spengler’s crudity, for in the same letter Jones writes, “He is particularly fearful of a double impact coming from the ‘white’ revolution of the proletariat and the ‘coloured’ uprising joining forces (without meaning to) to destroy the West. I think he’s pretty good as to this …” (Dai 116). Those who value Jones’s work can only be thankful that, as I will show in the chapters which follow, Christopher Dawson’s sane and balanced cultural analysis had a deeper impact on his historical imagination than Spengler, in spite of Jones’s adoption of such key Spenglerian terms as culture and civilisation.

1.3 History and Typology

Nietzsche provides a useful point of departure for considering Modernist perspectives on history. Although he would likely have found his philososophy distasteful, he would have known his basic ideas through conversation with the Chelsea Group and with his friend Prudence Pelham, for whom Nietzsche was a particular favourite. In Nietzsche’s early work, On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life, he emphasises the need to live fully in the contemporary world, but with an awareness of the past which shaped it. He insists that “the unhistorical and the historical are equally necessary for the health of an individual, a people and a culture” (10; italics his). This dichotomy may be seen in a variety of Modernist texts which, while contemporary in form, engage with a variety of historical traditions: Eliot’s The Waste Land, Joyce’s Ulysses, Pound’s Cantos, and the poetry of David Jones. Nietzsche
privileges the present moment as the moment of creation, and his remarks seem to prophesy the explosion of artistic activity stimulated by the formal innovations of modernism: “only through the power to use the past for life and to refashion what has happened into history, does man become man: but with an excess of history man ceases again, and without that cloak of the unhistorical he would never have begun and dared to begin” (11). Tradition is subordinated to the present, as it is for Eliot in his influential essay, “Tradition and the Individual Talent”: “The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them” (Selected Prose 38). Nietzsche’s criticism of the “excess of history” is paralleled by Eliot’s dismissal of that narrow form of tradition which consists of “following the ways of the immediate generation before us in a blind or timid adherence to its successes” (38). For David Jones, the contemporary world, not the past, determines the signifying power of art: “If a certain now-ness is not present, the sign, valid in itself, is apt to suffer a kind of invalidation” (Ana 15). Within Anglo-American Modernism, the artist’s engagement with the past is thus a crucial test of the value and validity of the work of art.

David Jones’s approach to the past can be understood through Nietzsche in two main ways. As an interpreter of the ancient traditions of Britain and Europe, he suggests Nietzsche’s antiquarian: “By tending with loving hands what has long survived he intends to preserve the conditions in which he grew up for those who will come after him – and so he serves life” (19). David Jones opens his “Preface” to The Anathémata by quoting the early British historian Nennius, who “speaks of an ‘inward wound’ which was caused by the fear that certain things dear to him ‘should be like smoke dissipated’”
Jones notes that, like Nennius, “Part of my task has been to allow myself to be directed by motifs gathered together from such sources as have by accident been available to me and to make a work out of those mixed data” (9).

The second and more significant aspect of Jones’s reading of history involves what Nietzsche identifies as a suprahistorical perspective, in which “the past and the present is one and the same, that is, typically alike in all manifold variety and, as omnipresence of imperishable types, a static structure of unchanged value and eternally the same meaning” (13). In *The Anathemata*, Jones relates the Last Supper and Crucifixion to a variety of cultural practices, concluding that Christ does what is done in many places what he does other he does after the mode of what has always been done. (243)

His reading of history is fundamentally typological, an important aspect of his turn to the traditions of medieval Wales throughout his poetry. Murray G.H. Pittock, in *Poetry and Jacobite Politics* (1994), observes that

Typological history, history as recurrence, myth, archetype and image is often history sought by the defeated, whose linearity and incrementality have been exiled into colonialism or absorbed into a greater identity (as ‘British’ history so often absorbs its peripheries.) (9-10)

These comments help us understand the archetypal and typological interpretations of the past in such writers as James Joyce and David Jones, and are also suggestive for
understanding Nietzsche’s own view of history from a standpoint peripheral to those dominating nineteenth-century Europe.

Pittock’s argument further illuminates Jones’s turn to the Middle Ages by suggesting the kind of past often invested with typological values. “Typological history does not evolve along timescales: it takes a remote mythic or historical era, and glorifies it either to lament its passing or praise its return” (10). Jones thus evokes a mythical Wales extending from Arthur to the last Welsh prince, Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, whose passing in 1282 saw the end “of a pattern of Britain known to Cadwaladr, known to Arthur, known to Cunedda and to the Caesars” (E&A 62). In “The Sleeping Lord”, Jones suggests the possibility of return and renewal, for the figure of Arthur slumbers still: “Does the land wait the sleeping lord / or is the wasted land / that very lord who sleeps?” (SL 96).

Jones’s evocation of such archetypal meanings can be historicised in a specifically Welsh context. Cultural nationalism in nineteenth-century Wales routinely turned to the kinds of tradition evoked by Jones, particularly that of the “returning or delivering hero (Arthur or Owain)” (Pittock 204). In The Anathemata, Jones explicitly alludes to “the efficacious asylums” which include “that cavern for / Cronos, Owain, Arthur” (55). Far from being an isolated Welsh phenomena, however, typological history has deep foundations in western culture, and endures into our own post-colonial era. Beginning with the Hebrew prophets, who portray “the nation’s past covenant with God always being betrayed and always renewed”, what Erich Auerbach calls “the figural structure of universal history” becomes a characteristic feature of medieval literature, particularly evident in the mystery plays, such as the Chester Play of the Deluge, for
which Jones made wood engravings in the 1920's (Pittock 204; Auerbach, Mimesis 158). Later examples include “the returning Stuart Aeneas of Dryden, the Cuchulain of Pearse’s Scoil Eanna and the Rising, and the use of Zimbabwe’s ruins as a focus for native nationalism in Rhodesia” (Pittock 10). Dryden’s Stuart Aeneas is significant here, for Pittock identifies typological history in Britain as the central Tory tradition, as well as that of the Celtic peripheries, and the two frequently intersect. In the “Preface” to In Parenthesis, David Jones quotes from Christopher Dawson’s review of R.G. Collingwood’s and J.N.L. Myres’s Roman Britain and the English Settlements: “‘And if Professor Collingwood is right, and it is the conservatism and loyalty to lost causes that has given our tradition its distinctive character, then perhaps the middle ages were not far wrong in choosing Arthur, rather than Alfred or Edmund or Harold, as the central figure of the national heroic legend’” (xiii). Jones’s quotation from Virgil in The Anathémata, “IAM REDIT ... VIRGO” (219), is also, as Pittock describes it, “the eternal Stuart quotation”, promising the return of a Golden Age typologically identified with the reign of the Virgin Queen, Elizabeth (83). Jones’s cultural politics can thus be situated within a wider tradition which challenges the dominant, Whig view of history and its valorising of progress and economic liberty at the expense of tradition and community. The more ancient tradition is familiar to Canadians through the writings of George Grant, whose Lament for a Nation (1965) argues that Canada was founded on “the social doctrine that public order and tradition, in contrast to freedom and experiment, were central to the good life” (71). Grant significantly concludes his lament with a quotation from Virgil: “Tendebantque manus ripae ulterioris amore” (97).17

17 “They were holding their arms outstretched in love toward the further shore.” (Aeneid
1.4 The Middle Ages and Tradition

The suprahistorical, typological perspective on history described by Nietzsche is only one dimension of David Jones’s complex interpretation of the past. In Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry (1990), the philosopher of ethics Alasdair MacIntyre sees Nietzschean genealogy as only one possible approach to the past, a necessary corrective to the positivist, encyclopaedic view of human knowledge which Nietzsche successfully challenged. Although David Jones shows some affinities with Nietzsche’s thought, his engagement with the past is more suggestively viewed in light of MacIntyre’s third alternative, tradition. A.C. Everatt is the first to recognise the deep congruities between MacIntyre and Jones, in his recent, insightful essay “Doing and Making”. Before demonstrating MacIntyre’s relevance for Jones’s medievalism, I will show the importance of his understanding of tradition for Jones’s poetics more generally, taking Everatt’s essay as my point of departure.

In After Virtue (1982), MacIntyre notes that we are all born into various kinds of traditions: “I find myself part of a history and that is generally to say, whether I like it or not, whether I recognize it or not, one of the bearers of a tradition” (221). David Jones, in his “Preface” to In Parenthesis, contrasts the traditions of his English and Welsh companions during the Great War, but unlike MacIntyre, identifies tradition with genetic inheritance: “These came from London. Those from Wales. Together they bore in their bodies the genuine tradition of the Island of Britain, from Bendigeidvran to Jingle and

Book VI; Grant’s translation).

18 In David Jones: Diversity in Unity. ed. Anne Price-Owen and Belinda Humfrey
Marie Lloyd" (x). Nonetheless, A.C. Everatt recognises that Jones and MacIntyre both share "a similar understanding of, pride in, and solidarity with displaced or defeated Celtic cultures…" (66). A tradition for MacIntyre consists primarily of a set of inherited cultural practices. It is important to recognise that "practices always have histories and that at any given moment what a practice is depends on a mode of understanding it which has been transmitted often through many generations" (After Virtue 220). Everatt sees an important correspondence between MacIntyre’s "practices" and Jones's disciplinae (72). For Jones, disciplinae are "the various modes and traditions of doing this or that, from bowling a hoop to engraving on copper" (Ana 34 n.1). Christ's participation in the Jewish passover is thus done "according to the disciplina / of this peculiar people" (Ana 241).

The relationship between narrative and tradition is central for both MacIntyre and Jones. David Jones begins The Anathémata with an epigraph situating human life in the context of story:

**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 ...**

For MacIntyre, "man is in his actions and practice, as well as in his fictions, essentially a story-telling animal" (After Virtue 216). When considering a course of action, "I can only answer the question 'What am I to do?' if I can answer the question 'Of what story or stories do I find myself a part?'" (216). Like Jones, "MacIntyre lives in a story-shaped universe" (Everatt 70).
The Middle Ages provide Jones and MacIntyre with their paradigmatic narrative of human life, the quest: “The unity of a human life is the unity of a narrative quest. Quests sometimes fail, are frustrated, abandoned or dissipated into distractions; and human lives may in all these ways also fail. But the only criteria for success or failure in a human life as a whole are the criteria of success or failure in a narrated or to-be-narrated quest” (After Virtue 219). Everatt identifies life-as-quest as an important motif in The Anathemata, one which “can be supported by a systematic ethics which, for his artistic purposes, he has consciously disregarded” (71). Jones’s poetry makes frequent allusion to the quest, such as that of Peredur, the Welsh Percivale, who “has seen the questing milites, he would be a miles too” (Ana 225). In A.C. Everatt’s view, “The dialectic of The Anathemata is of open question and hidden answer, the quest itself being the answer” (72).

Seeing these connections between tradition and narrative in MacIntyre and Jones, we can now link them to the typological reading of history discussed earlier, and show their importance for understanding David Jones's medievalism. MacIntyre defends medieval historiography as a means of understanding human life through relating that life to larger historical patterns:

Modern historians of the middle ages often emphasize the weakness and inadequacy of medieval historiography; and the narratives which the greatest writers use to describe that journey which they take to be man’s life are fictional and allegorical. But that is in part because medieval thinkers took the basic historical scheme of the Bible to be one within which they could rest assured. They did indeed lack a conception of
history as invoking a continuous discovery and rediscovery of what
history is; but they did not thereby lack a conception of human life as
historical. \(\text{After Virtue 176}\)

David Jones’s medievalism recovers an approach to the past that foregrounds the nature
of human life as quest, typologically relating the individual’s quest to a rich variety of
fictional quests drawn primarily from the literature of early medieval Europe, and
ultimately to that of Christ’s own life. Heroic literature, such as *Y Gododdin* or *La
Chanson de Roland* or *The Dream of the Rood*, is especially important for Jones, because
it integrates pagan and Christian narratives, using typology to retain indigenous traditions
within a Christian framework, as MacIntyre observes:

> Germans, Anglo-Saxons, Norwegians, Icelanders, Irishmen and
> Welshmen all had a pre-Christian past to remember, and many of their
> social forms and much of their poetry and story embodied those pasts.
> Often both forms and stories were Christianized so that the pagan warrior-
> king could emerge as the Christian knight, remarkably unchanged. Often
> Christian and pagan elements coexisted in varying degrees of compromise
> and tension, much as Homeric values coexisted with those of the city-state
> in the fifth century. In one part of Europe it was the Icelandic sagas which
> came to play much the same role as that of the Homeric poems, in another
> it was the *Tain Bó Cuailgne* and the tales of the Fianna, in a third the
> already Christianized Arthurian cycle. \(\text{After Virtue 166}\)

Jones suggests that these early traditions retain their significance for Europeans, because
“we are Germans, Latins, Celts and can apprehend only in a Latin, Germanic and Celtic
fashion" (*Ana* 241, n.1). This conflation of cultural and genetic inheritance is typical of Jones, as we have seen in his "Preface" to *In Parenthesis*, but it could be argued that western modes of apprehension are determined by our whole cultural history, including its formative centuries.

This approach to the early medieval traditions of Europe needs to be situated within a broader modernist conception of tradition, that articulated by Eliot in "Tradition and the Individual Talent". Eliot argues that an innate "historical sense" is vital for the modern poet, and that it involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous order. This historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional. (*Selected Prose* 38)

From this point of view, the literature of early medieval Europe need not seem remote or obscure, if taken as part of a whole tradition that is simultaneously present for the poet.

David Jones’s engagement with the past is shaped in large part by his notion of "the Break", and we have already considered its likely genesis in the writings of William Morris. Jones’s sense of a break in the west’s cultural continuity extends Eliot’s view of the “dissociation of sensibility” which he assigned to the seventeenth century (*Selected Prose* 64). The separation of thought and feeling diagnosed by Eliot inevitably leads to a
diminution in the possible meanings conveyed by symbols expressing a more unified sensibility. It is a concept, however, which is also an important part of MacIntyre’s philosophy, “the idea of a gross and irreversible break in the intellectual and moral history of the West” (Everatt 69). From antiquity through the beginnings of the Renaissance, the cultures of the west held “an idea of human nature intelligible to reason. A human action is intelligible as rational deliberation as means to an end, itself understood and set by reason” (69). After the seventeenth century, western ethics becomes dominated by the Enlightenment attempt to construct a universal and scientific morality. As we have seen, Michel Foucault identifies the Enlightenment with two ruptures in the history of western thought, “two great discontinuities in the episteme of Western culture: the first inaugurates the Classical age (roughly half-way through the seventeenth century) and the second, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, marks the beginning of the modern age” (Order of Things xxii). Foucault claims that by revealing “the deepest strata of Western culture, I am restoring to our silent and apparently immobile soil its rifts, its instability, its flaws; and it is the same ground that is once more stirring under our feet.” (xxiv). The patterns of knowledge established in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries hardly constitute the “deepest strata of Western culture”; David Jones shares Foucault’s archaeological sense of the past as “deposits” of cultural strata, but goes deeper down than Foucault, turning to classical antiquity and to the formative centuries after the fall of Rome in which many enduring features of Western culture took shape. In doing so, Jones follows the lead of most historians, including Christopher Dawson.
Like Jones and Foucault, Alasdair MacIntyre sees a major discontinuity characterising the civilisation of nineteenth-century Europe. MacIntyre asks whether the priggish morality of the Victorian era “might not itself after all be what [Canadian philosopher Charles] Taylor termed a survival, or a set of survivals, that is, rules, attitudes, and responses which had once been at home within some larger context in terms of which their intelligibility had been spelled out and their rationality justified but which had become detached from that context” (Three Versions 29). This larger context, for MacIntyre, is ultimately the Aristotelian tradition which culminates in the medieval synthesis exemplified by the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas (80). With this in mind, we are now in a position to recognise David Jones’s medievalism as an imaginative attempt to reintegrate modernity into the wholeness embodied by the medieval synthesis from which it ultimately derives. Jones’s engagement with the Thomist tradition, particularly through Jacques Maritain, forms the aesthetic and theoretical basis of his medievalism, and it is to that engagement that we must now turn.

1.5 Modernism and Medieval Aesthetics

The major source of aesthetic theory for David Jones was Jacques Maritain’s Art et Scholastique, translated in 1923 by Father John O’Connor as The Philosophy of Art. René Hague identifies The Philosophy of Art as “a sort of text-book” for Eric Gill’s circle of artists and craftsmen in the early 1920’s, who debated and discussed Maritain’s ideas (David Jones 27). Although Hague argues that “it is easy to attach too much importance to what we learnt from it” (27), Harman Grisewood describes Jones’s attitude towards it as one of veneration (Dilworth, “Maritain Conversation” 44). “By the mid-1920’s,”
writes Thomas Dilworth, "its relationship to his mind resembled that of a map to a place" (44). In this section, I will offer a reading of Maritain's aesthetic philosophy in relation to David Jones's own poetics, situating his theory of art within a wider Modernist context through comparison with James Joyce.

Maritain's philosophical project is the fruit of the revival of Thomism within Catholic intellectual circles, which began in the late nineteenth century but had its major achievements in the twentieth. The founding document of modern Thomism is the encyclical letter Aeterni Patris published by Pope Leo XIII in 1879 ...

... Aeterni Patris summoned its readers to a renewal of an understanding of intellectual enquiry as the continuation of a specific type of tradition, that which achieved definitive expression in the writings of Aquinas, one the appropriation of which could not only provide the resources for radical criticism of the conception of rationality dominant in nineteenth-century modernity ..., but also preserve and justify the canonical status of the Bible as distinct from, yet hegemonic over, all secular enquiry.

(MacIntyre, Three Versions 25)

In looking back to the Middle Ages to find the basis for a "radical criticism" of modernity, the Thomist revival has specifically English analogues in the writings and paintings of John Ruskin, William Morris, and the Pre-Raphaelites. Maritain sees his own enquiry in The Philosophy of Art as a contribution to "rediscovering the spiritual conditions of honest labour" (2). He engages with the art and theories of modern writers and artists as diverse as Baudelaire, Cézanne, and Rodin; with movements central to the history of Modernism, such as Impressionism, Futurism, and Cubism. On Cubism, for
example, Maritain writes that it "propounds in rather violent manner the question of imitation in art" (80), and assents to its Modernist challenge to artistic representation; to identify art with mimesis is to side with Plato, who "misunderstands like all extreme intellectuals the proper nature of art" (81). Thomas Dilworth justly recognises The Philosophy of Art as "a seminal work of aesthetic theory" which "would join the writing of Fry and Bell and the Russian and Czech formalists in generating a broad-based international formalist aesthetic that would inform mid-twentieth century art theory and literary theory" ("Maritain Conversation", 44). T.S. Eliot himself cites the interpretation of modern painting given in Art et Scholastique in The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism (113). Like many Modernist theories, Maritain's aesthetic philosophy is designed to alter modern culture itself, "so that artworks could generate the values of modernity, not vice-versa" (Berman 9). Central to this project is Maritain's vision of the artist as craftsman, a vision shared by the English tradition of craftsmanship represented by William Morris and Eric Gill. Jerome McGann's recent observation on Morris's poetics reminds us how radical this view of art really is: "Our interest in theory of art has been dominated for so long by the conceptual forms of Enlightenment and romantic thought that we have forgotten the revolutionary character of the basic insight: that if we wish to understand art and poetry we have to approach them as crafts, as practical forms of making" (xiii).

The craftsman, for Maritain, is the normal human being: "The craftsman in the normal type of human development and in a civilization really humane represents the average man. If Christ willed to be a craftsman of a little country town, it is because he willed to take on the ordinary condition of mankind" (Philosophy 28) Jones follows
Maritain in seeing artistic creativity as humanity’s defining feature: “It is the intransitivity and gratuitousness in man’s art that is the sign of man’s uniqueness” (*E&A* 149). The medieval craftsman thus serves as an historical example of the normal human being. As Alice Chandler remarks, “Medievalism was not only actuated by a desire for the ideal, it was also rooted in a nostalgia for the ordinary” (52). The artist’s rôle as craftsman in the Middle Ages was determined by its hierarchical society: “In the powerful social structure of medieval civilisation the artist ranked only as craftsman, and every sort of anarchic development was barred to his individualism, because the natural, social discipline imposed on him from without certain limiting conditions” (Maritain *Philosophy* 30). This perspective contrasts with that of William Morris, who stresses the potentially revolutionary character of the Middle Ages, when “in the teeth of … exclusive and aristocratic municipalities the handicraftsmen had associated themselves into guilds of crafts and were claiming their freedom from legal and arbitrary oppression, and a share in the government of the towns” (486). In this late nineteenth-century perspective, “Medieval society is seen to be built upon imagination and emotion; modern society upon a shallow rationalism” (Chandler 152-3). The distant past thus serves as a screen onto which conflicting social and political desires of the present can be projected. Despite the clear differences between Morris and Maritain, a common feature of “the many different expressions of medievalism is the desire to return to an ordered yet organically vital society in the face of great social change” (Harris 1-2).

In *Religion and Culture*, one of the *Essays in Order* published by Tom Burns, Maritain articulates a typically Catholic vision of medieval society:
The Middle Ages had fashioned human nature according to a “sacral” type of civilisation, based on the conviction that earthly institutions, with all their vigour and strength, are at the service of God and divine things to realise His Kingdom on this earth. The Middle Ages doggedly strove to realise that Kingdom on earth, dreaming – yet without any rigour of austerity and without preventing life from pursuing the normal course of its activity – of a hierarchically unified world, in which the Emperor on the summit of the temporal should maintain the body politic of Christendom in unity, as the Pope on the summit of the spiritual maintained the Church in unity. (13-14)

The conditions imposed by such a society on the artist, far from diminishing his potential, allowed him to find fulfilment in service to his community: “He did not work for worldly people and merchants but for the faithful, of whom it was his mission to foster the prayer, to instruct the intelligence, to delight the soul and the eyes” (Philosophy 30-1). In his essay on “Gothic Architecture”, William Morris similarly praises the Middle Ages as a time when “every village had its painter, its carvers, its actors even; every man who produces works of handicraft is an artist” (487).

The understanding of art as craft provides a rational basis for apprenticeship, practised in the Middle Ages and in Eric Gill’s and Hilary Pepler’s Guild of St. Joseph and St. Dominic: “the mode of teaching which naturally suits it is apprentice education, the working novitiate under a master and face to face with the real thing, not lectures given out by professors” (Maritain Philosophy 61). Jones learned a great deal during his affiliation with the Guild (he was never a member), but also from his art teachers at
Camberwell and Westminster, notably A.S. Hartrick and Walter Sickert; his art-school training might have led him to question Maritain’s dismissal of the “fine-art school” as an absurdity along the lines of a state-sponsored “higher course of virtue” (Philosophy 62).

Maritain’s idealisation of medieval culture is primarily religious, movingly expressed in this paean to a vanished epoch:

O matchless time, when a candid people was moulded to beauty, without even being aware, as perfect religious ought to pray without knowing that they pray! when doctors and imagemakers taught the poor for love, and the poor relished their schooling because they were all of the same royal race born of water and the Holy Ghost. (Philosophy 31)

This naïve enthusiasm needs to be balanced against Maritain’s more realistic appraisal of the relationship between modernity and the Middle Ages in Religion and Culture:

Christian wisdom does not suggest that we return to the Middle Ages: it would have us move further forward. Besides, the civilisation of the Middle Ages, however magnificent and splendid it may have been, more splendid still, no doubt, in the refined memories of history than in the reality of experience, was very far removed from the full realisation of the Christian idea of civilisation. (23)

Maritain nonetheless elevates the Middle Ages over the Renaissance as a time when artists “created more beautiful things, and worshipped themselves less” (Philosophy 31-2). Morris also praises those “few pieces of household goods” that survive from the Middle Ages as “marvels of beauty” (“Gothic Architecture” 487). For Maritain, the Renaissance, by contrast, spoiled the artist “by shewing him his own greatness and letting
loose upon him that fierce Beauty which the Faith had held spell-bound and drawn after her, docile, tied by one of our Lady’s apron strings” (*Philosophy* 31-2). Eric Gill, following Maritain, writes that “At the beginning of the fifteenth century the class of persons now called artists did not exist, nor was there such a thing as an architect’s profession. There were simply various grades of workman, skilled and less skilled, well known and honoured, or unknown and unhonoured” (132). The medieval workman’s anonymity finds an important corollary in David Jones’s insistence on the importance of impersonality in art: “the workman must be dead to himself while engaged upon the work, otherwise we have that sort of ‘self-expression’ which is as undesirable in the painter or the writer as in the carpenter, the cantor, the half-back, or the cook” (*Ana* 12; Dilworth, “Maritain Conversation” 45).

As mentioned, Jones, trained in the fine arts, is more ambivalent about the artist’s rôle as workman than Maritain, Morris, or Gill. While affiliated with Gill’s Guild of St Joseph and St Dominic, Jones unsuccessfully attempted to master the workman’s craft of carpentry but excelled at wood engraving, a craft tending more toward the fine arts, producing many beautiful book illustrations, such as those for the medieval *Chester Play of the Deluge* (Hague, *David Jones* 19). Jones did, however, unreservedly accept the scholastic definition of art as craft. Umberto Eco, whose book on *The Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas* owes much to Maritain, writes that for scholasticism,

Art was not an expression, but construction, an operation aiming at a certain result. The word *artifex* applied alike to blacksmiths, orators, poets, painters, and sheepshearers. *Ars* was a very broad concept, which extended to what we think of today as technology and craft. The theory of
art was in the first instance a theory of craftsmanship. The craftsman or *artifex* produced something which completed, integrated, or prolonged nature. (165)

Jones approvingly cites Sir Ifor Williams, who observes that “the bards of an earlier Wales referred to themselves as ‘carpenters of song’. Carpentry suggests a fitting together and as you know the English word ‘artist’ means, at root, someone concerned with a fitting of some sort” (*E&A* 29). In his seminal essay “Art and Sacrament”, Jones further defines the artistic process as “a means by which is achieved a ‘perfect fit’ (*E&A* 150). This “fitting together” is itself the sole aim of art: “In so far as art has an end that end is a ‘fitting together’…” (151). As Umberto Eco remarks, describing the Thomist understanding of art as construction, “This was art as *bricolage*” (*Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas* 219). *Bricolage* is a key term in French structuralism, and Eco recognises close affinities between structuralism and scholasticism, in particular two methodological features: “it proceeds by way of binary divisions (true and false, *sic et non*, the dual structure of the *quaestio*, the dual structure of the *distinctio*); and it thinks synchronically” (*Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas* 216-7). David Jones’s poetics, which include such binary divisions as culture/civilisation, local/imperial, and sacrament/technology, articulate a synchronic vision of human culture and history. Far from being idiosyncratic, Jones’s artistic theories and techniques are typical of mid-twentieth century formalism, looking back to its roots in medieval thought and forward to structuralism and its successors in contemporary theory.

Maritain’s characterisation of the artist as craftsman follows from the scholastic and Aristotelian definition of art as craft. Thomism itself is a synthesis of Aristotelian
philosophy and Augustinian Christianity. David Jones quotes (or rather misquotes) with approval "St. Augustine’s remark that ‘empire is great robbery’" (Dai 150); Augustine literally says, "Remota itaque iustitia quid sunt regna nisi magna latrocina?" – "And so if justice is left out, what are kingdoms except great robber bands?" (City of God IV, 4: 16-17; trans. William H. Green). In The Anathémata, the mother of the Roman people comments "T’s a great robbery / – is empire" (88). It is the Aristotelian strand in scholastic thought, however, that chiefly inspires Jones. Aristotle defines art specifically as “a state of mind, conjoined with true Reason, apt to Make” (Ethics 134; VI, iv, 1140a). Making (poiesis) is distinguished from mere doing (praxis), a distinction reflected in Jones’s description of art as “the sole intransitive activity of man” (E&A 149). For Maritain, “Doing, in the restricted sense in which the Schoolmen understood the word, consists in the free use, qua free, of our faculties, or in the exercise of our free-will considered not in relation to things themselves or the works which we produce, but purely in relation to the use which we make of our liberty” (6). Thomas Dilworth recognises the importance of this distinction for Eric Gill and his circle, for whom “modern scientific civilization was concerned only with doing, … whereas man’s special and proper activity is making” (“Maritain Conversation” 44). In Jones’s later thought, the binary division of doing/making becomes identified with Oswald Spengler’s binary division of civilisation/culture, which includes that of modernity/Middle Ages.

According to Maritain, “Art belongs to the practical order. It is set towards action, not towards the pure inwardness of knowing” (Philosophy 5). This understanding of art as practical craft is a radical departure from the mainstream English view, since Sidney, of the artist as removed from action and as creating a non-active second nature.
Maritain's view can thus be seen as an Aristotelian corrective to the excessively idealising, Platonic view of art which entered the West with the Renaissance and culminated in Romanticism. Brian Davies clarifies the distinction between the speculative and practical intellect in his recent study of The Thought of Thomas Aquinas (1994):

Under the heading of 'intellectual virtues', Aquinas acknowledges three virtues of what he calls 'speculative intellect', and two virtues of 'practical intellect'. By 'speculative intellect' he means the mind as understanding at a purely theoretical level, and, under this heading, he distinguishes between 'understanding' (intellectus), 'science' (scientia), and 'wisdom' (sapientia). By 'practical intellect' he means the mind as understanding with a view to action. (240-1)

Davies defines the three speculative virtues as follows: "'Understanding' is a matter of grasping basic principles of reasoning. 'Science' is a matter of good reasoning using these principles to arrive at truth regarding different kinds of things in the world. 'Wisdom' is a matter of good reasoning concerning God" (242). All theoretical and speculative inquiry falls within the domain of the speculative intellect.

In contrast with the speculative intellect, the practical intellect includes only the two virtues of ars and prudentia: "'Art' is correct reason about things to be made. 'Prudence' is correct reason about things to be done and aims at the good of the agent" (240-1).\(^\text{19}\) Aristotle defines prudence, or practical wisdom, as "a state of mind true, conjoined with Reason, and apt to Do, having for its object those things which are good

\(^{19}\text{See Summa Theologiae Ia2ae.57.2ff.}\)
or bad for Man” (135; IV, v, 1140b). Jones poetically observes that “we use Prudentia for convenience to denote, as it were, the tutelary genius who presides over the whole realm of faith, moral, religion, ethic; she is thought of as Holy Wisdom” (E&A 145). Umberto Eco comments that art and prudence are somewhat analogous, both being practical, “but prudence governed the practical judgement in contingent situations, and sought the good of mankind, whereas art regulated operations on physical materials, as in sculpture, or upon mental materials, as in logic and rhetoric. Its aim was a goodness of the work (bonum operis)” (Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas 164). The scholastic emphasis on the end of art being the “goodness of the work” led Jones to conclude that “even Wilde’s ‘Art for art’s sake’ is a valuable assertion when seen in its historical context and contains, apart from that context, ‘a truth’, if properly related to the whole behavior of Man…” (E&A 95). He distinguishes between “the whole behavior of Man” and “the behavior of special sorts of men such as can only exist in the tired and artificial phases of late civilizations” (E&A 95). Once again, in a healthy society the artist is “the average man” (Maritain Philosophy 28).

Alasdair MacIntyre also accepts the classical and scholastic definition of art as craft. His consideration of the ends of art sheds light on David Jones’s special understanding of “Art for art’s sake”:

Every craft is informed by some conception of a finally perfected work which serves as the shared telos [end] of that craft. And what are actually produced as the best judgements or actions or objects so far are judged so because they stand in some determinate relationship to that telos which furnishes them with their final cause. (Three Rival Versions 64)
Whereas Maritain and Jones emphasise the distinction between *ars* and *prudentia*, MacIntyre shows how they complement each other in a life that is fully human:

... the moral life is the life of embodied moral enquiry and those individuals who live out the moral life as farmers, or fishermen, or furniture makers embody more or less adequately in those lives, devoted in key part to their own crafts, what may not be recognised as a theory, the product of the theorist's very different craft, but which nevertheless is one.

(*Three Rival Versions* 80)

For MacIntyre, philosophical inquiry is itself a craft, thereby collapsing the traditional, Platonic opposition between art and philosophy. The complementary relationship between *prudentia* and *ars* finds exemplary expression in two medieval writers, Aquinas and Dante: “If from the Thomistic point of view Aquinas was the philosopher *par excellence* of theoretical enquiry into the practical life, Dante was the philosopher *par excellence* of the practical life itself. And moral enquiry can therefore extend itself by drawing both upon Aquinas and upon Dante” (*Three Rival Versions* 80). David Jones was never able to appreciate *The Divine Comedy*, calling it “‘conceptual’ and not ‘of this flesh’” (*Dai* 239), as well as finding it “cold and unmoving except in a few places” (240). Nonetheless, the relationship between Maritain and Jones is analogous to that between Aquinas and Dante, insofar as they inherit a particular tradition of enquiry, and in their concern for the practical application and extension of that tradition.

Central to Jones's and Maritain's application of scholastic theories to art is the concept of beauty. Maritain argues that beauty is one of the transcendentals, a technical term in scholastic thought referring to metaphysical qualities; they “inhere in being
coextensively and can be discerned in every being, and they determine the character of beings both in themselves and in relation to other beings. They are a bit like differing visual angles from which being can be looked at” (Eco 21). According to Maritain, “Like the one, the true, and the good, beauty is Being itself taken from a certain point of view, it is a property of Being…” (Philosophy 43). Beauty, in its essence, is the splendour of God. In the expanded version of Art et Scholastique translated by Joseph Evans as Art and Scholasticism, Maritain further defines beauty as “the splendour of all the transcendentals together” (132).²⁰

For Aquinas and Maritain, beauty is conditional upon three qualities, which give pleasure and enlighten the understanding of the beholder:

If beauty delights the understanding it is because it is in essence a certain excellence or perfection in the proportion of things to the understanding. Hence the three conditions laid down for it by St Thomas: integrity, because the understanding loves being; proportion, because the understanding loves order and unity; last and above all, splendour or clarity, because the understanding loves light and intelligibility.

(Philosophy 34)

²⁰ Umberto Eco remarks that Maritain’s “definition has certain peculiarities. I am not aware that it has any ancestry either in Aquinas himself or in neo-Thomism” (39), but Eco is concerned with Thomist aesthetics as part of an historically determined system; he consistently misreads Maritain as giving an account of that system, when in reality Maritain is extending the scholastic tradition and applying it to problems of modernity.
As Thomas Dilworth reminds us, this is a formulation familiar to readers of James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (“Maritain Conversation” 46). In the novel, Stephen Dedalus presents the three conditions of beauty to his friend Lynch as three stages of the aesthetic vision: “the most satisfying relations of the sensible must therefore correspond to the necessary phases of artistic apprehension. Find these and you find the qualities of universal beauty” (*Portrait* 211-2). This apprehension of the beautiful, expressed by Aquinas and Maritain as a *visio*, is characterised by Umberto Eco as “a kind of seeing or looking which is mediated by the senses but is of an intellectually cognitive order, and which is both disinterested and yet produces a certain kind of pleasure” (*Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas* 58; italics Eco’s).

Stephen’s quotation from Aquinas (“ad pulchritudinem tria requiruntur, integritas, consonantia, claritas” (212)) is a paraphrase of Summa Theologiae I, 39, 8c:

\[
\text{Ad pulchritudinem tria requiruntur. Primo quidem integritas sive}
\]
\[
\text{perfectio: quae enim diminuta sunt, hoc ipso turpia sunt. Et debita}
\]
\[
\text{proportio sive consonantia. Et iterum claritas; unde quae habent colorern}
\]
\[
\text{nitudum, pulchra esse dicuntur.}
\]
\[
\text{Three things are necessary for beauty: first, integrity or perfection, for}
\]
\[
\text{things that are lacking in something are for this reason ugly; also due}
\]
\[
\text{proportion or consonance; and again, clarity, for we call things beautiful}
\]

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21 Joyce never read Maritain, and responded scoffingly when a friend reported Maritain’s comment that the “structure” of Baudelaire’s mind was fundamentally Catholic (Noon, *Joyce and Aquinas* 15).
when they are brightly colored. (Eco *Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas* 65; trans. Eco)

Maritain quickly passes over the first two conditions of beauty, but Stephen Dedalus offers an interpretation that is helpful in showing what they might mean for a modern artist. Using the example of a butcher boy's basket, Stephen argues that “The first phase of apprehension is a bounding line drawn about the object to be apprehended” (*Portrait* 212). Located in space or time, “the esthetic image is first luminously apprehended as selfbound and selfcontained upon the immeasurable background of space or time which is not it. You apprehend it as one thing. You see it as one whole. You apprehend its wholeness. That is integritas” (*Portrait* 212). This sense of wholeness is central to Aquinas’s understanding of integritas, according to Umberto Eco: “Aquinas identifies integrity with perfection, and perfection means the complete realization of whatever it is that the thing is supposed to be” (*Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas* 99).

Speaking of consonantia, Stephen Dedalus observes that “the synthesis of apprehension is followed by the analysis of apprehension. Having first felt that it is one thing you feel now that it is a thing. You apprehend it as complex, multiple, divisible, separable, made up of its parts, the result of its parts and their sum, harmonious. That is consonantia” (*Portrait* 212). Umberto Eco emphasises the importance of the observer’s rôle in perceiving consonantia, which is “known to us by way of what is at bottom a new incidence of psychological proportion: the senses have their own intelligence (ratio quaedam est) and will recognize the familiar harmony of things irrespective of how it may appear” (*Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas* 98).
The final condition of beauty, *claritas*, is the most important for Maritain, Joyce’s Stephen Dedalus, and David Jones. Maritain identifies it as “a sunburst of intelligibility”, which Aquinas calls *splendor formae*:

> for the “forma,” that is to say, the principle which makes the proper perfection of all that is, which upbuilds and completes things in their essence and in their qualities, which is, in a word, if one may so say, Being, purely such, or the spiritual essence of all reality, is above all the proper principle of intelligibility, the proper clarity of all things.

*(Philosophy 35)*

From this Aristotelian understanding of form, it follows that “to say with the Schoolmen that beauty is the shining out of form over the well-proportioned parts of matter is equal to saying that it is the lightening of intelligence over matter intelligently arranged” *(Philosophy 35)*.

Stephen Dedalus offers a definition of *claritas* that is very close to that of Maritain, and which can serve as a useful bridge to David Jones’s own concept of form. After conceding a certain inexactness in Aquinas’s use of *claritas*, Stephen argues that “The radiance of which he speaks is the scholastic quidditas, the whatness of the thing. This mysterious quality is felt by the artist when the esthetic image is first conceived in the artist’s imagination. The mind in that mysterious instant Shelley likened to a fading coal” *(Portrait 213)*. William Noon, in his study of *Joyce and Aquinas*, suggests that “What Stephen seems to mean by claritas may have been expressed better by the *haecceitas* of Duns Scotus than by the quidditas of Aquinas” (51). Like Maritain, however, Stephen sees the radiance implied by *claritas* as belonging to an individuating
form. He praises this quality as the crucial moment in the contemplative stasis induced by an authentic work of art:

The instant wherein that supreme image of beauty, the clear radiance of the esthetic image, is apprehended luminously by the mind which has been arrested in its wholeness and fascinated by its harmony is the luminous silent stasis of esthetic pleasure, a spiritual state very like to that cardiac condition which the Italian physiologist Luigi Galvani, using a phrase almost as beautiful as Shelley’s, called the enchantment of the heart.

(Portrait 213)

Stephen’s romantic language conveys a sense of the impression made by *claritas* upon the beholder. Eco offers a more austere definition against which to balance the enthusiasm of both Maritain and Stephen: “*Clarity is the fundamental communicability of form, which is made actual in relation to someone’s looking at or seeing an object*”

(*Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas* 119; italics Eco’s).

For David Jones, form is historically contingent, as it is in the scholastic tradition, where the apprehension of form depends on a pre-existing actuality (Brian Davies 126). In the Preface to *The Anathémata*, Jones writes that “The forms and materials which the poet uses, his images and the meanings he would give to those images, his perceptions, what is evoked, invoked or incanted, is in some way or other, to some degree or other, essentially bound up with the particular historic complex to which he belongs” (19). His account of his early views on art given in a 1954 “Autobiographical Talk” for the BBC reveals more clearly Jones’s affinity with Maritain:
I had views as to what a painting ought to be: A ‘thing’ having abstract qualities by which it coheres and without which it cannot be said to exist. Further, that it ‘shows forth’ something, is representational. If this was true of one art I supposed it to be true of another. I knew the inter-stresses of the ‘formal’ and the ‘contential’ created so precarious a balance in the case of drawing or painting. (E&A 30)

Jones’s view of an artwork as a “thing” suggests the quality of *integritas*, which Stephen Dedalus identifies with the separation of an object from its background of time and space (*Portrait* 212). The “abstract qualities by which it coheres” suggests *consonantia*, in which the beholder recognises the object “as complex, multiple, divisible, separable, made up of its parts, the result of its parts and their sum, harmonious” (*Portrait* 212).

Finally, Jones’s central claim that art “‘shows forth’ something” corresponds to *claritas*, which Jacques Maritain defines as the “shining out of form over the well-proportioned parts of matter” (35). For Jones, all art is “representational” insofar as it reveals form; it need not be mimetic in the conventional sense.

“Shape” in David Jones’s writings is a word with similar meaning to “form”. In the Preface to *In Parenthesis*, Jones comments, “I have only tried to make a shape in words…” (x). In “Art and Sacrament”, however, “shape” identifies the elements arranged by the artist: “a number of existing shapes (which themselves may or may not require re-shaping) are shifted about; by which activity a form, not previously existent, is created” (E&A 159). The overall form of the artwork is here distinguished from the constituent forms or “shapes” which make it up, revealing Jones’s fundamentally constructivist approach to art. Aquinas employs a term equivalent to the English “shape”
(figura), which Umberto Eco defines as "the boundary of any continuous quantity; it means the definition or limit which a thing possesses or has imposed upon it" (*Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas* 177). It is possible that the idea of figura, translated as "shape", was current in the Thomist-inspired conversations with Eric Gill and his circle, and retained by Jones; however, the changing meaning of "shape" in Jones's writing suggests that he employed it initially as a synonym for form, then to identify form's constituent elements, in order to avoid duplication.  

More intriguing and suggestive is David Jones's use of "sign", which he employs in a non-Saussurean sense much closer to "symbol". Thomas Dilworth identifies Maritain's *The Philosophy of Art* as the source of Jones's understanding of "sign" ("Maritain Conversation" 50). According to Maritain, art "mak[es] known other things themselves, that is to say as signs. And the thing signified may itself be a sign in turn, and the more the work of art is laden with significance ... the vaster and the richer and the higher will be the possibility of joy and beauty" (84). This is why, in the end, a non-abstract artwork is "incomparably richer" than an abstract design (84). David Jones himself never became an abstract painter, a decision which cost him membership in Ben Nicholson's Seven and Five Society in the 1930's (Dilworth, "Maritain Conversation" 50-1). Jones writes that "A sign must be significant of something, hence of some 'reality', so of something 'good', so of something that is 'sacred'. That is why I think the notion of sign implies the sacred" (*E&A* 157). By radically collapsing the Saussurean

22 There is no indication that Jones or his circle was familiar with Erich Auerbach's seminal essay, "Figura," first translated in *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature* (1959).
dichotomy between sign and signified, David Jones recovers a pre-modern sense of image and language, in which “nature and the word can intertwine with one another to infinity, forming, for those who can read it, one vast single text” (Foucault *Order of Things* 34). Umberto Eco observes that this is a salient feature of medieval concepts of the sign, going back to John Scotus Eriugena:

Eriugena taught the Middle Ages to look upon things with a penetrating eye, to read the universe, to read nature, as if it were a vast store of symbols. For him, the relations between God and things were not solely causal, but were also like the relations between sign and signified. The created world is a revelation. Nature is a theophany. In this theophanic harmony, objects are symbols, disclosures, indicators. It is their nature to point toward God and to God conceived as Beauty revealing itself through harmonious design. It is a theophanic vision which is openly and profoundly aesthetic. (*Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas* 24)

The poetry of David Jones shares in this theophanic vision, reconstituting its possibility within Modernism.

Michel Foucault locates an *aporia* occurring in the seventeenth century centred on the concept of the sign: “Ever since the Stoics, the system of signs in the Western world had been a ternary one, for it was recognized as containing the significant, the signified, and the ‘conjuncture’” (*Order of Things* 42). This “conjuncture” consists of those “similitudes that link the marks to the things designated by them”; in other words sign and signified are linked by something that renders the sign analogous to its signified (*Order of Things* 42). After the seventeenth century, however, “the arrangement of signs
was to become binary, since it was to be defined, with Port-Royal, as the connection of a significant and a signified" (*Order of Things* 42). In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, "The art of language was a way of 'making a sign' – of simultaneously signifying something and arranging signs around that thing" (*Order of Things* 43). When David Jones talks about "a valid sign" (*Ana* 204), he does not mean the mimetic sign Foucault associates with Enlightenment language, but rather a symbolic sign which expresses what Foucault calls "the living being of language" (*Order of Things* 43). For Jones, however, the sign can be word or image: any symbol that expresses meaning, the "living being" which lends pattern and significance to human life.

Foucault observes that in modern culture, nothing recalls the pre-Cartesian sense of language as being, "except perhaps literature – and even then in a fashion more allusive and diagonal than direct. It may be said in a sense that 'literature', as it was constituted and so designated on the threshold of the modern age, manifests, at a time when it was least expected, the reappearance, of the living being of language" (*Order of Things* 43). David Jones is precisely the kind of poet identified by Foucault as "he who, beneath the named, constantly expected differences, rediscovers the buried kinships between things, their scattered resemblances. Beneath the established signs, and in spite of them, he hears another, deeper, discourse, which recalls the time when words glittered in the universal resemblance of things"; but whereas Foucault claims that "in the language of the poet, the Sovereignty of the Same, so difficult to express, eclipses, the distinction existing between signs", Jones's poetry "searches out buried kinships" while maintaining the particularities and differences expressed in signs (*Order of Things* 49).
David Jones's sense of the sacredness of the sign is remarkably similar to Augustine's and Aquinas's understanding of the sacraments. For Augustine, "a sacrament is always a 'sign' (signum) of some sacred 'thing' (res). By 'sign' here Augustine means something visible (e.g. the materials used and the procedure followed in celebrating a Christian rite, including the words spoken). And he thinks of this as an image or reflection of the sacred 'thing' considered as something invisible" (Davies 347). Aquinas sees the sign as man's connection with the sacred: "'When we speak of the sacraments', says Aquinas, 'we have in mind one specific connection with the sacred, namely that of a sign. And it is on these grounds that we assign sacraments to the general category of signs'" (Davies 349, citing Summa Theologiae 3a60.I). David Jones argues that in the celebration of the Lord's Supper, Christians of all denominations "re-present, recall or show forth something under certain signs and by manual acts", thereby producing a kind of "art-work" (E&A 163). "We are committed to body and by the same token we are committed to Ars, so to sign and sacrament" (E&A 165). This understanding of the sign as fundamentally embodied is opposed to that of Foucault and contemporary post-structuralists, for whom signs form a disembodied discourse which in turn constitutes man, in a kind of parody of Christian Incarnation. Jones considers the world of signs as redeemed by the Incarnation, quoting the theologian Maurice de la Taille in the epigraph to Epoch and Artist: "He placed Himself in the order of signs".

1.6 Modernism and Medieval Form

Twentieth-century interest in the formal dimensions of medieval artwork is part of a wider appreciation of geometric form. In "Modern Art and Its Philosophy", T.E.
Hulme praises the pyramidal composition of Cézanne’s ‘Women Bathing’, which distorts the women to accommodate the painting’s form: “The form is so strongly accentuated, so geometric in character, that it almost lifts the painting out of the sphere of ‘vital’ art into that of abstract art. It is much more akin to the composition you find in the Byzantine mosaic (of the empress Theodora) in Ravenna, than it is to anything which can be found in the art of the Renaissance” (280-1). Hulme first encountered Byzantine mosaic at a time when he believed humanism was reaching an end: “At that time, then, I was impressed by these mosaics, not as by something exotic, but as expressing quite directly an attitude I agreed with. Owing to this accident, I was able to see geometric art, as it were from the inside. I then saw how essential and necessary a geometrical character is in endeavouring to express a certain intensity” (271). The intensity of modern experience demands a geometrical art analogous to that of medieval Europe, though Hulme recognises that this art is likely to be very different (276). In his essay on “Art and Sacrament”, David Jones calls T.E. Hulme’s Speculations (1924) “rewarding”, acknowledging him as an early influence on his own theories of art (E&A 172). Hulme’s friend Ezra Pound was making contemporary discoveries in medieval poetics, particularly in the complex forms known as canzoni, which “satisfy not only the modern ear, gluttonous of rhyme, but also the ear trained to Roman and Hellenic music, to which rhyme seems a vulgarity” (Spirit of Romance 22).

Hulme acknowledges as his inspiration the modern German historian of medieval art, Wilhelm Worringer (271). In Abstraction and Empathy, Worringer distinguishes between two motivations in art: “Just as the urge to empathize as a pre-assumption of aesthetic experience finds its gratification in the beauty of the organic, so the urge to
abstraction finds its beauty in the life-denying inorganic, in the crystalline, or, in general terms, in all abstract law and necessity” (4). The turn to abstraction is characteristic of periods when the relationship between man and the world is one of uncertainty:

Whereas the precondition for the urge to empathy is a happy pantheistic relationship of confidence between man and the phenomena of the external world, the urge to abstraction is the outcome of a great inner unrest inspired in man by the phenomena of the outside world; in a religious respect it corresponds to a strongly transcendental tinge to all notions. We might describe this state as an immense spiritual dread of space. (Abstraction 15)

This “spiritual dread of space” can be related to the attempted mastery of space which many thinkers, including Michel Foucault and Catherine Pickstock, have identified as characteristic of western modernity itself.\(^{23}\) Pickstock, for example, argues that after Ramus and Descartes, “space becomes a pseudo-eternity which, unlike genuine eternity, is fully comprehensible to the human gaze, and yet supposedly secure from the ravages of time” (48). If Worringer’s analysis is correct, this mastery of space can be seen as a belated attempt to overcome the West’s deepest cultural fears.

Worringer’s aesthetics are highly suggestive for understanding the shift from Romanticism to Modernism, but his main interest lies in the artwork of medieval northern Europe. He identifies the native art-form of northern Europe as primarily ornamental and

geometric. By northern art, Worringer means "the interlaced strap-work style of ornament that dominated the whole North of Europe during the first millenium A.D."

(Abstraction 76), in particular

Northern Celto-Germanic decorative art, as manifested in the ornament of the Scandinavian and Irish North, in the style of the Migrations of the Peoples and in Merovingian art, which despite local variations constitutes a quite distinct artistic direction. All the artistic volition of these peoples finds its gratification within this ornamental art, and so we may ... identify the art of the Northern peoples with their ornament. (Abstraction 106)

This ornamental art is unique, reconciling abstraction and empathy in a style that is at once paradoxically inorganic and vital:

In spite of the purely linear, inorganic basis of this ornamental style, we hesitate to term it abstract. Rather it is impossible to mistake the restless life contained in this tangle of lines. This unrest, this seeking, has no organic life that draws us gently into its movement; but there is life there, a vigourous, urgent life, that compels us joylessly to follow its movements. Thus, on an inorganic fundament, there is heightened movement, heightened expression. Here we have the decisive formula for the whole medieval North. (Abstraction 76-7)

Northern art is thus characterised by the inorganic line, which traces an animated path compelling the viewer with its intricate restlessness, an observation which might be applied to the pencilled lines of David Jones's watercolour paintings.
James Joyce and David Jones are two modernists who apply the structural principles of medieval northern art to the formal problems of modern art. Joyce took much of his formal inspiration from *The Book of Kells*, an early medieval Irish manuscript illuminated in "the interlaced strap-work style of ornament" discussed by Worringer. In a letter to Valery Larbaud, Joyce writes, "Indeed, you can compare much of my work to the intricate illuminations" of *The Book of Kells* (Ellman 545). The importance of this manuscript for Joyce's technique was not missed by David Jones, who comments on the formal relationship between Joyce's writings and Celtic ornamental art:

In that visual art questions of the formal and the contential hardly arise because what we see is the visible image of their union. It was just this total oneness of form and content that the unflinching integrity of Joyce was determined to achieve in literary form; it was not for nothing that he looked steadfastly at a page from Kells. (*E&A* 63-4)

In chapter 1.5 of *Finnegans Wake*, in which Biddy Doran discovers ALP's buried letter, the narrator comments that the letter's "proteiform graph itself is a polyhedron of scripture" (107.8). A recent critic, Vern Lindquist, notes that *The Book of Kells* is itself "polyhedronic": "This is especially notable on the Tunc page [Sullivan Plate XI], with which Joyce seems particularly concerned. *The Book of Kells* works as an analogue for *Finnegans Wake* precisely because they have a common structural principle..." (84).

Lindquist and Jones both recognise the illuminated manuscript's importance as a formal analogue for Joyce's own work.

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24 Joyce knew this manuscript from *The Book of Kells, described by Sir Edward Sullivan, Bart., and illustrated with twenty-four plates in colour* (1914).
In *The Book of Kells*, the Tunc page illuminates Matthew XXVII, 38: "Tunc crucifixerant cum eo duos latrones" ("Then were crucified with him two thieves"), interpolating the Greek symbol for Christ, XPI, between "crucifixerant" and "cum". Joseph Campbell and Henry Robinson characterise the illumination as "an astonishing comment on this text, strangely suggestive of pre-Christian and oriental symbols" (103). Indeed, Joyce’s explicators suggest that the reader will find in the Tunc page "something like a mute indication that here is the key to the entire puzzle: and he will be the more concerned to search its meaning when he reads Joyce’s boast on page 298: ‘I’ve read your tunc’s dismissage’" (103). Joyce interprets the form of ALP’s letter and *The Book of Kells* as symptomatic of a sexual pathology, specifically "the nymphomaniacal psychosis of the writer" (Lindquist 85). On page 107, Joyce describes the contents of the letter as "a very sexmosaic of nymphosis" (107.12). Lindquist suggests that the juxtaposition of the Christian and pagan elements on the Tunc page is mirrored by Joyce’s use of biblical language to present a future change in human sexuality, when "the manewanting human lioness with her dishorned discipular manram will be down together publicly flank upon fleece" (112.19-23). In Joyce’s use of scriptural imagery, "such a coupling of sacred and profane implies that the former has more in common with the latter than is commonly admitted" (Lindquist 85). As David Jones says of his friend Fr. Martin D’Arcy’s book, *The Mind and Heart of Love*: "Eros & Agape kiss each other, as it were" (qtd. in SM 207).

Medieval Celtic form offers Joyce structural and thematic analogues to weave into the larger tapestry of *Finnegans Wake*. David Jones more thoroughly assimilates Celtic form into his poetry and painting as a major formal and technical principle.
Wilhelm Worringer was among the first to perceive an affinity between northern poetry and visual art:

The very peculiar interlacing of words and sentences in early Northern poetry, its artful chaos of interrelated ideas, the expressive rhythm imposed upon it by alliteration and the intricate repetition of the initial sounds (corresponding to the repetition of motives in ornament and producing in the same way the character of a confused, unending melody): all these are unmistakable analogies to Northern ornament. (Worringer *Form* 79)

It is likely that Jones had some first-hand knowledge of Worringer’s central ideas, as his friend Herbert Read had translated Worringer’s *Form in Gothic* in 1927.  

In the introduction to his 1956 anthology *The Burning Tree*, Gwyn Williams explores the significance of interlace patterning in Welsh poetry. The early Welsh poets, Williams argues,

were not trying to write poems that would read like Greek temples or even Gothic cathedrals, but, rather, like the stone circles or the contour-following rings of the forts from which they fought, with hidden ways slipping from one ring to another. More obviously, their writing was like the inter-woven inventions preserved in early Celtic manuscripts and on stone crosses, where what happens in a corner is as important as what happens at the centre, because there often is no centre. (15)

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25 In a personal note to me, Thomas Dilworth indicates that David Jones “was not friendly with Herbert Read till c. 1929 or later”. 
Williams recognises this kind of decentred design as a salient feature of the work of David Jones:

*In Parenthesis* and *The Anathemata* are constructed on an inter-weaving pattern much like that of the *Gododdin* or Gwalchmai's *Gorhoffedd*, and one has only to contrast Jones's *Merlin Land*, or almost any other picture of his, with a Bellini or a Picasso to see how the thing works out in painting, how a dimension is created which is unachievable within the Classical convention. (15)

Thomas Dilworth's interpretation of *The Anathémata*’s form as a series of concentric rings (see *SM* 168 for an illustration) suggests Williams’s image of the concentrically ringed Celtic hill-forts. Principles of medieval Celtic design thus inform the whole of Jones’s artistic and literary achievement, and the tension between concentric and decentred form is a major structural ambivalence in his work.

Modernism’s experimentation with formal conventions allows for the renovation of alternative traditions, and Jones's and Joyce’s turn to Celtic form is analogous to other modern artists’ turn to African or pre-Classical Greek art for formal inspiration. The

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26 Dilworth acknowledges Williams’s influence on subsequent interpretations of form in Jones’s poetry (*SM* 155), seeing in Williams’s comments the origin of Jeremy Hooker’s understanding of *The Anathémata* as labyrinthine in form (Hooker 40). William Blissett’s article “Himself at the Cave Mouth” (1967) thoroughly explores the significance of labyrinths and caves in Jones’s poetry. Tom Goldpaugh’s current work on the “Ur-**Anathémata**” situates the genesis of the poem’s labyrinthine, concentric, interlacing form in Jones’s compositional methods (Goldpaugh 1999).
decentred nature of early Celtic art makes its form especially appealing from the perspective of postmodernism, in which the displacement of centres is welcomed as an overturning of traditional forms of western dominance. The ancient arts of Ireland and Wales implicitly challenge the very concept of centre. It should be noted in connection with Jones’s early training as a painter, however, that the de-centred nature of early Celtic art has a parallel in Pre-Raphaelite painting, in which the precise rendering of detail in both background and foreground “tends to create a kind of democracy of components in which every part of a picture vies for attention with all the other parts” (Lang xii). Texts such as *Finnegans Wake* or *The Anathémata* emerge out of the culture of high modernism, but anticipate post-modern forms; Umberto Eco thus characterises *Finnegans Wake* as an exemplar of the post-modern “open text”, while George Steiner praises *The Anathémata* as a “prolegomena to future forms” (390). Paradoxically, the “now-ness” of these texts is achieved in part by a recovery of artistic forms developed in the early medieval west.

David Jones consciously employs formal and technical features derived from medieval Welsh poetry, a strategy also followed by Gerard Manley Hopkins and, indirectly, Dylan Thomas. Traditionally, Welsh poetry relies on a complex system of consonance, assonance, and rhyme to order its material. The musical aspect of this order

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is achieved through a variety of elaborate, intertwining sonic devices, known collectively as *cynghanedd*, in which “the sound of one word is orchestrated with the sound of another so that the ear quickly divines a pattern which it expects to be completed” (Caerwyn Williams 192). For example, in his elegy (*marwnad*) on Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, the last native prince of Wales, Gruffudd ab Yr Ynad Coch frequently employs a line called the *cyhynedd hir*, which J.E. Caerwyn Williams describes as “one metrical line usually set out as two of ten and nine syllables forming four sections, each with two stresses; the first three sections rhyme with each other while the fourth bears the end-rhyme” (178). The example he quotes is from Gruffudd’s *marwnad*:

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Gwae fi o’r gôlled./ gwae fi o’r dynged./
Gwae fi o’r clîwed / fod clîw ãrnaw (9-10)
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Williams notes that in *cyhynedd hir*, “the basic pattern seems to be more honoured in the breach than in the observance”, suggesting a certain flexibility in the actual employment of these metres (178). How this kind of sonic patterning may be adapted to English may be seen the familiar first verse of Dylan Thomas’s “Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night”:

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Do not go gentle into that good night
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;
Rage, rage against the dying of the light. (1-3)
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28 I have highlighted those repeated sounds which are most evident to the eye; certain sounds in Welsh are considered equivalent for the sake of rhyme, making the actual pattern of these lines even more intricate than my crude emphases indicate.
Thomas's complex patterns of assonance and consonance complement the intricate repetitions of the villanelle, and demonstrate the poet's technical brilliance, perhaps the most strikingly Welsh feature of his art. David Jones speculates on "how much those theatre audiences who are finding such delight in Under Milk Wood may, however obliquely and at whatever remove, be indebted to something in the bardic manipulation of words, and the aesthetic that regarded sound and sense as indivisible" (E&A 64).

Gwyn Williams observes, however, that "Of these two, David Jones is the more aware of the tradition in which he creates" (11), giving his work a cultural resonance absent from Dylan Thomas's pyrotechnic display of skill.

Gerard Manley Hopkins is a mediating figure in both David Jones's and Dylan Thomas's adaptations of Welsh poetics. Unpublished until 1919, Hopkins's poetry entered a modern milieu that valued formal inventiveness and linguistic complexity. Jones was perhaps among the first to recognise a Welsh dimension in Hopkins's poetry, telling William Blissett that he made this suggestion to an Oxford don in the 1920's. "The don was most unpleasant, telling David that if he didn't know for certain he shouldn't express an opinion. But later scholarship has proved the interest of Hopkins in Welsh" (LC 59). Jones writes that Hopkins "derived much of his technique and something more than technique from an acquaintance with the intricacies and interior rhythms of that Welsh poetry" (DG 68). In a pioneering article on Hopkins and Welsh, Gweneth Lilly notes that "Hopkins's free use of initial alliteration often gives his work a superficial resemblance to Anglo-Saxon verse, but a closer parallel might be found in early Welsh poetry, in which alliteration is used as occasion demands, sometimes freely,
sometimes not at all" (396). Hopkins composed a few occasional verses in Welsh, not altogether successfully (White 115-6). Norman White points out that “Hopkins’s stress-timed ‘sprung rhythm’ was a remarkable freedom almost opposite in effect to the finically puritanical restrictions of syllabic Welsh verse” (120), although this does some injustice to the nuances possible within Welsh prosody. As an example of “cynghanedd effect” in Hopkins’s poetry, White (121) cites the following line from “The Wreck of the Deutschland”, stanza 2:

The swoon of a heart that the sweep and the hurl of thee trod

The consonantal pattern of th, sw, h, th, t is repeated in the second half of the line, creating a highly formal repetition suggestive of Welsh practice. White cites several other examples which suggest specific Welsh metres, but this example is sufficient to show the kind of effect Hopkins could create using Welsh models. His influence on David Jones’s poetry is difficult to assess. In Thomas Dilworth’s view, “Jones thoroughly assimilated his influence, so that it is not always discernible in Jones’s writing or distinguishable from what is broad and deep affinity” (“Jones and Hopkins” 53). An important aspect of this affinity is the two poets’ shared interest in the bardic poetry of Wales.

For Jones, the formal significance of Welsh verse lies in its unifying “sound and meaning” through intricate sonic patterns:

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29 For a recent, very balanced account of Hopkins’s relationship with the Welsh language, see Norman White, *Gerard Manley Hopkins in Wales* (Bridgend: Seren, 1998), chapter seven.
Sound and sense were regarded as having parity so that the verse-structure and the meanings of the words used in making that structure were regarded as forming one indissoluble unity. If that is so then the aesthetic principle of the bardic tradition is beyond reproach and one can see why it produced so objective an art-form. \(E&A\ 63\)

In “Wales and Visual Form”, Jones observes that the bard’s “poetic forms have been of a peculiarly intricate and constructed nature” \(DG\ 68\). His emphasis on tradition and objectivity is typical of the Modernism exemplified by T.S. Eliot. The Welsh bard, like Eliot’s individual talent, “must inevitably be judged by the standards of the past” \(Eliot Selected Prose\ 39\). Jones remarks that “Welsh aural art belonged to the same order of being as that which made possible a visual abstract art in other Celtic lands” \(E&A\ 63\), a claim that is congruent with the theories of Wilhelm Worthington.

Thomas Dilworth characterises Jones’s adaptations of Welsh prosody as a kind of acoustic medievalism, pointing out “mistress of asymmetry” from “The Tutelar of the Place” as “a perfect example of Welsh cynghanedd” \(SM\ 320\). It is in Jones’s late fragment, “The Hunt”, set in early medieval Britain, that Jones most explicitly draws upon the technical resources of Welsh poetry. Dilworth observes that the acoustic beauty of the poem is most apparent in Jones’s recorded reading, and that its “richness consists of interpenetrating alliterative patterns which approximate the cynghanedd of Middle Welsh verse and so constitute a continual historical allusion” \(SM\ 321\); while “approximate cynghanedd” overstates the case somewhat, Jones’s alliteration nonetheless consciously echoes Welsh devices more so than Old English. At times, Jones is able to
poetically fuse visual interlace imagery with complex consonance and assonance, as in
the passage describing Arthur's ride through the woods:

   for the thorns and flowers of the forest and the bright elm-
shoots and twisted tanglewood of stamen and stem clung and
meshed him and starred him with variety

   and the green tendrils gartered him and briary-loops galloon
him with splinter-spike and broken blossom twining his royal
needlework (SL 67)

Dilworth recognises that "the language of the poem here is itself symbolic. Not only do
its striking alliterative patterns approximate cynghanedd, they also aurally trace the
variety and visual interlace of the tangled vegetation" (SM 327). The passage also
provides an astonishing illustration of Worringer's theory concerning the "confused,
unending melody" of Northern European poetry and ornament (Form 79). Jones's turn to
medieval Celtic form takes place within a broader Modernist context in which artists and
writers sought forms complex enough to render art meaningful in the twentieth century.

David Jones's medievalism is rooted in many different backgrounds, the most
important being Pre-Raphaelitism, Thomism, and Christopher Dawson's analysis of the
history of western culture. In Jones's writings and paintings, these sources are merged
with a Modernist turn to alternative cultural paradigms rather than those which
historically dominate western art. Through a comparative reading of Jones's and
Joyces's adaptation of Thomist aesthetics and Celtic form, the importance of Jones's
artistic project within Modernism becomes more apparent. Whereas Joyce ultimately
rejects scholastic philosophy and casts a cynical eye on many Celtic traditions, Jones
negotiates between these traditions and the demands of modernity. Through a poetry that
is formally experimental, he forges links with the deepest strata of western culture using a
variety of allusive and linguistic techniques. As my commentary on his poetry will show,
Jones's project is, on the whole, a successful one. Through his interpretation of a central
part of the western tradition, David Jones is able to "make it new", an achievement that
renders his poetry an important contribution to modernism and to modern literature in
English.
Chapter II

The Undoing of All Things: In Parenthesis

More than any other British response to the Great War, In Parenthesis brings a consciousness of the past to bear upon the events it relates. Modernist in its formal and stylistic innovations, the poem maintains contact with the experiential data of trench life through vivid, concrete imagery, and with a range of cultural traditions through allusion and analogy. The centrality of the Middle Ages in David Jones's sense of cultural tradition has long been recognised: "In his stubborn fidelity to his special vision, he is a modernist. In his loving celebration of that vision of past and present culture and his place in it, he is a medievalist" (Baron 248). Critical debate has centred on the allusive layer of meaning within In Parenthesis, in part because Jones's references are not always familiar to readers of modern literature, although Jones takes more care than most to explain them, and also because Paul Fussell, in The Great War and Modern Memory (1975), probably the most influential study of the literature of the Great War, dismisses the poem for its use of allusion. Every lengthy analysis of In Parenthesis to appear in the last twenty-five years has engaged with Fussell's arguments, and all have rejected them, for a variety of reasons. Fussell criticises Jones's poem for being "a deeply conservative work which uses the past not, as it often pretends to do, to shame the present, but really to ennoble it. The effect of the poem, for all its horrors, is to rationalize and even to validate the war by implying that it somehow recovers many of the motifs and values of medieval chivalric romance" (147). This charge has been convincingly refuted by most critics of the poem (e.g. Blissett Rev. of The Great War and Modern Memory 269-274; Ward 104-5; Dilworth SM 106; Miles Backgrounds 81; Staudt 19; Wilcockson
"Presentation" 254-6), but the endurance and wide readership of Fussell’s study compel commentators on the poem to continue to address it. In spite of the nagging persistence of this irritant to Jones criticism, there has never been a thorough-going analysis of the layer of medieval allusion that permeates *In Parenthesis*. In what follows, I will attempt to demonstrate that Jones is interested neither in shaming nor in ennobling the present, but rather in exploring the cultural continuities and discontinuities suggested to him by the experience of modern war.

Jones’s poetry is always an exploration of the possible, and with *In Parenthesis* he leads a reconnaissance to discover where and when cultures can maintain meaningful contact with each other in order to create a holistic synthesis, what Seamus Heaney has called “the central, epoch making role that is always available in the world to poetry and the poet” (*Redress* 38). David Jones saw the war as undermining the potential for culture itself, and his art is in a sense like the Battalion Signallers’ “lonely nocturnal searchings for broken telephone wires” (*IP* 197,n. 32). One of the connections Jones sought to repair was that between modern Britain and its ancient heritage, particularly that of Wales. If Jones has at times been unfairly treated as a war writer, and generally marginalised in relation to the High Modernist canon, in Wales he has long been recognised as a major literary artist, one whose work belongs to international Modernism but whose pre-occupations are shared by modern Welsh writers in both English and Welsh languages. I would like to approach *In Parenthesis* first in its Welsh aspect as a preamble to a more detailed consideration of Jones’s use of three medieval texts crucial in weaving his poem’s allusive medieval texture, Aneirin’s *Y Gododdin*, Sir Thomas Malory’s *Morte Darthur*, and the anonymous tales of *The Mabinogion*. I will conclude
with a detailed reading of "Dai's Boast", the site in Jones's poem where the medieval allusions come most sharply into focus to form, in miniature, a thematic analogue for the poem as a whole.

2.1 The Traddodiad.

In Frontiers in Anglo-Welsh Poetry (1997), Anthony Conran distinguishes between two strands in modern Welsh culture. The first he characterises as the 

\textit{buchedd}, "way of life' or 'ethos'", rooted in Methodism and spanning the eighteenth through the twentieth centuries (1-4). This is the Wales of William Williams of Pantycelyn's hymns, the chapel, temperance, and choral music. Modern Wales is shaped by the tension between 

\textit{buchedd} and industrialisation, which transforms the country from an agricultural society to one dominated by the coal pits of the south. 

\textit{Buchedd} values begin to break down in the early twentieth century, as its social and cultural conventions are increasingly rejected by the emergent middle class (9), while much of its ardour and sense of solidarity are transferred to Socialism. "Land of my fathers – my fathers can keep it!" is Dylan Thomas's petulant expression of this rejection (9). The other strand of Welsh culture Conran calls \textit{traddodiad}, tradition, the ancient culture of Wales, rooted in a devotion to locality and kin, history and myth, finding its main expression in the Welsh language and its literature. This is the Wales of Taliesin and Aneirin, Arthur and \textit{The Mabinogion}, Llewelyn ap Gruffydd and Owain Glyndwr. Self-consciously Welsh writers from the new middle classes, such as the Lancashire-born Saunders Lewis or the Kent-born David Jones, turn to the \textit{traddodiad} as a cultural alternative to both modernity and \textit{buchedd} conventions (67, 72).
The traddodiad represents what Michel Foucault calls "subjugated knowledge," a form of knowledge suppressed or excluded by the dominant culture, the values of which it may threaten (Power/Knowledge 82). Wales's virtual non-existence as a political entity within the Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland in the early twentieth century, despite Lloyd George's early enthusiasm for Home Rule, renders the attempt to recover the traddodiad a potentially subversive cultural strategy, one explicitly "concerned with a historical knowledge of struggles" (Foucault Power/Knowledge 83; italics his). Conran links the modern discovery of the traddodiad to Welsh scholarship, which began to make available reliable editions of Welsh texts in the late nineteenth century. The traddodiad thus demonstrates a clear "association between the buried knowledges of erudition and those disqualified from the hierarchy of knowledges and sciences" (Foucault Power/Knowledge 82). Through the medium of popular translations, such as Lady Charlotte Guest's Mabinogion, the traddodiad became accessible to English readers, including the young David Jones. William Blissett has drawn attention to the importance for Jones of the fact that "one of the great popular collections of affordable classics, Everyman's Library, had as its editor Ernest Rhys, a poet and man of letters of Welsh extraction, who from the beginning took pains to include in it an impressive Welsh representation" ("Welsh Thing In Here" 104). This representation included The Mabinogion, Gerald of Wales, and Geoffrey of Monmouth. Jones writes that "mainly via the English translation of The Mabinogion, Giraldus Cambrensis, the Arthurian cycle, the works of John Rhys, John Lloyd, and others, I maintained, and, I think, with a deeper understanding, an enthusiasm for the Welsh heritage" (DG 31). For Jones, the traddodiad offered an affirmation of Welsh identity to counter the Englishness of his own
upbringing and immediate cultural milieu. By bringing sustained critical attention to this aspect of the Preface to *In Parenthesis*, I will show that this cultural engagement is absolutely central to the poem’s meaning.

The balance between English and Welsh cultures that shaped David Jones’s own life also found expression in the 15th Battalion (London Welsh) of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers, in which he served during the Great War. Introducing *In Parenthesis*, Jones writes: “My companions in the war were mostly Londoners and Welshmen, so that the mind and folk-life of those two differing racial groups are an essential ingredient to my theme” (*IP* x). The phrase “mind and folk-life” offers a connection to the past of London and Wales, a central theme in *The Anathemata*, and suggests Eliot’s view of poetry as a means of connecting with “that vanished mind of which our mind is a continuation” (qtd. in Kenner 137). For David Jones, however, these traditions are embodied by the soldiers, an incarnational view of tradition quite different from Eliot’s view of tradition as a disembodied order of words. The soldiers of the London Welsh Battalion “bore in their bodies the genuine tradition of the Island of Britain, from Bendegeidvran to Jingle and Marie Lloyd” (*IP* x); they symbolically evoke a sense of the wholeness of Britain (south of the Tweed, at least), a wholeness made problematic by a dominant English culture that consistently relegates “the more venerable culture” to a position of marginality and inferiority.

Jones feels obliged to draw attention to his reliance on this other tradition:

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1 The traditional spelling of *Royal Welsh* with a ‘c’ was in abeyance during the war, and only afterwards re-instated. See Colin Hughes, *Mameitz* 7.
I would say something of the ‘Welsh’ element. Ladely Worm, Brunanburh, Fair Worcester City, Fair Maid of Kent: these, rightly, for our own ears, discover a whole English complex; whereas the Boar Trwyth, Badon Hill, Troy Novaunt, Elen of the Hosts, will only find response in those who, by blood or inclination, feel a kinship with the more venerable culture in that hotch-potch which is ourselves. Yet that elder element is integral to our tradition. From Layamon to Blake ‘Sabrina’ would call up spirits rather than ‘Ypwinesfloet.’ As Mr. Christopher Dawson has written: ‘And if Professor Collingwood is right, and it is the conservation and loyalty to lost causes of Western Britain that has given our national tradition its distinctive character, then perhaps the middle ages were not far wrong in choosing Arthur, rather than Alfred or Edmund or Harold, as the central figure of the national heroic legend.’ (IP xiii)

One cultural complex is dominant in the Union, the other a knowledge which is subjugated and excluded, available only to those who identify with it “by blood or inclination,” but which nonetheless endows Britain with its distinctive character.

Jones attempts to bring Welsh culture to English readers by making it an important part of the poem’s texture. In doing so, he seeks to constitute a new community of readers, an audience for the very traditions that he desires to restore to life through an elaborate texture of allusion and analogy. Although his vision is an integral one, he necessarily privileges the Welsh aspect as a corrective measure to offset English cultural dominance. This strategy leads him to emphasize the antiquity of the older tradition: “These were the children of Doll Tearsheet. Those are before Caractacus was”
(IP x). Caractacus (in Welsh tradition, Caradoc) led a doomed resistance to the Roman occupation from the lands of the Silures in (modern) south Wales (Collingwood and Meyers 94-6). Although Jones at first seems to relegate the Welsh to an irrecoverable past – they have existed from a time “before Caractacus was” and “are” still there (cf. John viii, 58: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am”) – his cultural engagement with the matter of Wales in his poetry suggests the possibility of a rebirth in the present, a theme explored many years later in “The Sleeping Lord.”

Jones’s concern in his Preface is explicitly cultural, contrasting the two elements in the life of his battalion and showing how they came together:

Every man’s speech and habit of mind were a perpetual showing: now Napier’s expedition, now of the Legions at the Wall, now of ‘train-band captain’, now of Jack Cade, of John Ball, of the commons in arms. Now of High Germany, of Dolly Gray, of Bulcalf, Wart and Poins; of Jingo largenesses, of things as small as the Kingdom of Elmet; of Wellington’s raw shire recruits, of ancient border antipathies, of our contemporary, less intimate, larger unities, of John Barleycorn, of ‘sweet Sally Frampton’. Now of Coel Hen – of the Celtic cycle that lies, a subterranean influence as a deep water troubling, under every tump in this Island, like Merlin complaining under his big rock. (IP xi)

Just as the soldiers’ bodies incarnate “the genuine tradition of the Island of Britain”, so their speech is a “perpetual showing” of this tradition in all its variety. Jones’s epic list forces these diverse elements into a kind of whole, but there is an obvious tension between the “Jingo largenesses” of imperial Britain and the “subterranean influence” of a
defeated Celtic tradition. The image of "Merlin complaining under his rock" is a fitting image for the "subjugated knowledge" of the *traddodiad*, which includes the figure of Coel Hên, founder of the northern Welsh dynasties, known to most only as the severely diminished "Old King Cole" of the nursery rhyme.² By "the Celtic cycle" he means the entire complex of Celtic myth and history that is associated with the geography of Britain, and which is present in his poem as a mode of redress for the modern, predominantly English, positivist and technocratic culture that produced the Great War itself.

The notion of poetry as redress has been recently advanced by Seamus Heaney in *The Redress of Poetry* (1995), and is suggestive for understanding David Jones’s turn to the *traddodiad* and other medieval traditions in his poetry. Heaney writes that in poetry there is a tendency to place a counter-reality in the scales – a reality which may be only imagined but which nevertheless has weight because it is imagined within the gravitational pull of the actual and can therefore hold its own and balance out against the historical situation. This redressing effect of poetry comes from its being a glimpsed alternative, a revelation of potential that is denied or constantly threatened by circumstances. *(Redress 3)*

The neglected cultural legacy of the Middle Ages offers a "counter-reality" to the "historical situation" of the Great War in Jones’s poetry. An example of this balancing out can be seen in the contrast Jones makes between the mechanised destruction of the last years of the Great War and the friendships possible in its earlier phases, exemplified

² *Hên* is the Welsh for "old".
by the figures of Roland and Oliver: "The wholesale slaughter of the later years, the
conscripted levies filling the gaps in every file of four, knocked the bottom out of the
intimate, continuing, domestic life of a small contingent of men, within whose structure
Roland could find, and for a reasonable while, enjoy, his Oliver" (IP ix).

What Heaney calls "the gravitational pull of the actual" continually informs
Jones's search for imaginative redress in the literature of the past. Jones turns to Malory,
for example, to convey a sense of the terror and power of the war landscape:

...I think the day by day in the Waste Land, the sudden violences and the
long stillnesses, the sharp contours and unformed voids of that mysterious
existence, profoundly affected the imaginations of those who suffered it.

It was a place of enchantment. It is perhaps best described in Malory,
book iv, chapter 15 – that landscape spoke 'with a grimly voice'. (IP x-xi)

Modern discursive language is unable to convey the uniqueness of the war landscape, but
Malory's language offers redress for this inadequacy. Thomas Dilworth draws attention
to the negative connotations of "enchantment" in Malory (SM 64). The perception of a
landscape speaking belongs to an older form of consciousness, with which Malory can
connect us, offering a perspective from which to view the experience of modern warfare.

With its overarching theme of a fellowship established and undone, *Morte Darthur* is to
*In Parenthesis* what the *Odyssey* is to *Ulysses*, but where Homer's poem gives Joyce's
novel structure and coherence, Malory's book offers Jones suggestive thematic analogues
which are brought into the texture of his poem through quotation and allusion. The rôle
of *Morte Darthur* throughout *In Parenthesis* will be discussed presently; what I wish to
indicate here is the way in which Jones turns to the remote past as a way of coming to
terms with the present, and that it is the "historical – Jones would say 'civilisational' – situation" that determines the terms of this engagement. Jones writes of his time in the trenches, "I suppose at no time did one so much live with a consciousness of the past, the very remote, and the more immediate and trivial past, both superficially and more subtly" (IP xi).

Jones's medievalism extends to his construction of himself as poet, and he explicitly identifies himself with the Bard of the Household in medieval Wales:

We are shy when pious men write A.M.D.G. on their notepaper – however, in the Welsh Code of Court Procedure, the Bard of the Household is instructed to sing to the Queen when she goes to her chamber to rest. He is instructed to sing first to her a song in honour of God. He must then sing the song of the Battle of Camlann – the song of treachery and of the undoing of all things; and afterward he must sing any song she may choose to hear. I have tried, to so make this writing for anyone who would care to play Welsh Queen. (IP xiii)

The figure of the Bard reminds the reader that there was a time when the poet held a more integral and privileged place in British society than that of the alienated modern writer. The text of the Welsh Laws describing the Bard's duties differs from the account given by Jones:

When a song is required to be sung, the chaired bard starts, first of God, with the second of the King to whom the court belongs, and if he has nothing to sing of him, let him sing of another king. After the chaired bard, the bard of the household is to sing three songs of some other kind.
If it happens that the Queen wants a song, let the bard of the household go and sing to her without stint, and that quietly, so that the hall is not disturbed by him. (Jenkins 20)

In spite of Jones’s creative revision of bardic procedure at court, his gesture toward the past is not an empty one. The passage suggests that In Parenthesis is meant to honour God, recall Camlann, and please the reader. This somewhat coy admission of intent is nonetheless accurate as far as it goes; a hint of how the poem might honour God is found in Jones’s comment that “the ‘Bugger! Bugger!’ of a man detailed had often about it the ‘Fiat! Fiat’ of the saints” (IP xii). The battle of Camlann, Arthur’s final defeat, casts its shadow over In Parenthesis, but the initial defeat encountered by the reader is that suffered by the Gododdin tribe at the battle of Catraeth.

2.2  Y Gododdin

Y Gododdin is an Old Welsh poem preserved in a single thirteenth-century manuscript known as “The Book of Aneirin,” named after the bard to whom the poem is attributed. Gododdin was a Brittonic tribal kingdom in the south-east region of Scotland, with its capital at Din Eidyn, modern Edinburgh (Koch xiii-xiv). The poem Y Gododdin is a series of elegies for the Gododdin warriors and their allies who fell in battle during a disastrous raid on the Anglo-Saxons of Catraeth, modern Catterick in the Vale of York, between A.D. 540 and 603 (xiii. lxxx). Dating the poem has been a matter of controversy for Celtic scholars, but its most recent editor, John T. Koch, has attempted to reconstruct the poem’s original language, presenting a strong case for dating the oldest parts of the

3 Cardiff, South Glamorgan Library, MS 2.81 (Koch ix, n. 2)
written text to the mid-seventh century, and suggesting an even earlier period of oral transmission (lxxx). If Koch's reconstruction and dating of the poem are correct, Y Gododdin is among the oldest surviving poems in Britain and contains the earliest vernacular reference to Arthur (23, 147, n.). Despite the enormous historical and cultural interest of the poem, Y Gododdin has remained relatively unknown outside Celtic scholarship. Among English poets before David Jones, only Thomas Gray expresses

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familiarity and enthusiasm for the poem, translating part of it in “The Death of Hoel” and calling Aneirin “Monarch of the Bards” (Gray and Collins 150).

David Jones relied on Edward Anwyl’s translation of *Y Gododdin* for *In Parenthesis*, but no consideration of the relationship between these two texts has given adequate attention to Anwyl’s pioneering version. It was published in *The Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* for 1909-10. The appeal of this translation for David Jones perhaps lies in Anwyl’s incantatory language, highly suggestive of a bardic style, which catches something of the rhythms of the original. John T. Koch expresses admiration for Anwyl, “elements of whose translation are sometimes reverted to” in his own (x, n. 2). Jones was keenly aware of the auditory dimension of the ancient Welsh poem. In a 1957 review of Gwyn Williams’s *The Burning Tree* anthology of Welsh verse, Jones remarks that “In some lines the words seem to thrust and thud and dilapidate to silence as though they themselves were the effect of what they signified, namely, the familiar things of a battlefield” (*E&A* 57). Writing to Saunders Lewis in 1971, Jones criticises the more accurate *Gododdin* translation of Kenneth Jackson for its lack of poetic suggestiveness, calling it “dull and lacking in *poiesis* of any sort,” claiming that “Unless the ‘form’ of the original *Gododdin* in some way redeems the ‘content’ as given by Jackson, I feel we might as well not have it” (Lewis 28). This is hardly fair to Jackson, as he aimed to give a literal reading of the poem as possible for study.

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5 The Welsh bardic tradition has had an oblique, but important, influence on English poetry. Blake’s sense of the poet as visionary bard, inherited by Yeats, is in part derived from the eighteenth century cult of Milton, but also inspired by Gray’s translations from Welsh literature. Blake produced engravings for Gray’s “The Bard” in 1797.
purposes – and succeeded admirably, as anyone who has relied on Jackson while reading the original text will testify. Jonathan Miles cites Jones’s preference for Anwyl as evidence that “Jones clearly favoured the kind of creative translation used by Pound in his _Homage to Sextus Propertius_”, but this is misleading as Anwyl’s version of the poem is not a radical re-working, as Pound’s translations so often are, in spite of his re-ordering of individual poems (which he regarded as “stanzas”). (Backgrounds 65-6).

Anwyl’s translation is based on William F. Skene’s edition of the Book of Aneirin in _The Four Ancient Books of Wales_ (Edinburgh, 1868). He significantly alters the stanzaic order of Skene’s text, claiming “the series of stanzas are arranged as far as possible consecutively” (120). By “consecutively” Anwyl means that his arrangement attempts to impose a narrative pattern on the poem, beginning with the stanzas which open “Men went to Catraeth” (Gwyr a aeth gatraeth) (120). In Skene’s edition, these stanzas are scattered throughout the poem (lines 57-104, 121-130, 226-233, and 338-345), but Anwyl groups them together as introductory verses, identifying them as the “‘Gwyr a aeth gatraeth’ Series” (120). _Y Gododdin_ is not a narrative poem, however, and Anwyl’s scheme breaks down near the conclusion, where the “Verses Mentioning Aneirin” are inexplicably followed by fourteen more elegies for the fallen heroes and the “Dinogat” fragment; a more logical narrative order, though absent in the Old Welsh text, might conclude with the stanzas in which the poet identifies himself and relates his own role in the events he has narrated (Skene 76-7, lines 434-456). Skene himself sees a break in the text at this point (line 434 ff.), regarding the passage in which Aneirin identifies himself and all subsequent verses in the manuscript as a later continuation of the original poem (361). The lack of linear narrative structure in _Y Gododdin_ clearly
perplexed the poem’s early editors and commentators, but proved highly suggestive for David Jones, who recognises the poem’s resistance to narrative in his selection of “fragments” as epigraphs to the seven parts of In Parenthesis.

In a letter to Harman Grisewood (12 August 1957), Jones recalls his late addition of quotations from Y Gododdin to In Parenthesis:

I had finished writing the text of In Parenthesis before I had read the English trans. of Gododdin. The bits from it which precede each part being inserted along with the titles of the parts when I was writing the Preface in Sidmouth in 1936-7. Of course I had known for many, many years about the battle at Catraeth, and knew there was a poem in Old Welsh about it – but that was all I knew until I got, in an old copy of the Cymmrodorion publication, the Edward Anwyl trans. in, I suppose, 1935 or so. I cannot now recall. (Dai 174)

Y Gododdin forms a vital part of the poem’s texture in the form of epigraphs and allusions, but it is not crucial to the structure of In Parenthesis as conceived by Jones, nor does it offer a mythic parallel the way the Odyssey does for Joyce’s Ulysses. While acknowledging that the Gododdin epigraphs “help define the structure of Jones’s poem”, Thomas Dilworth argues that “the ancient work is not as important to In Parenthesis as it might seem” (SM 96). Dilworth may be referring to John H. Johnson’s analysis of the poem, which uses the allusions to Y Gododdin to argue “that the author has consciously attempted to write a modern heroic poem” (286). Despite his over-emphasis on Y Gododdin as a model, Johnson clearly understands Jones’s use of analogy and contrast in his use of past literature. Analogy stresses “the fundamental unity of human experience”,

whereas contrast makes the reader "conscious of ironic discrepancies which emphasize the unprecedented violence and suffering imposed by the conditions of modern technological warfare" (304). Although it is an exaggeration to claim *Y Gododdin* as "the one continuous strand to which *In Parenthesis* is bound" (Eaves 51), it does offer a fragmented allusive perspective which presents the *materia* of *In Parenthesis* in light of past conflict and defeat.

David Jones’s "General Note" on *Y Gododdin* offers important evidence for his reading of the poem, as well as providing background information for readers. He characterises *Y Gododdin* as "an epical poem" rather than an epic, a distinction which acknowledges the poem’s epic qualities, such as its celebration of a heroic ideal, while recognising its fundamental differences from conventional epic, such as an absence of narrative form (*IP* 191). In the letter to Harman Grisewood quoted above, Jones reveals his sensitivity to the poem’s generic difficulties, commenting that "the scholars will not allow one to call *Y Gododdin* an epic. They call it a series of lyric fragments" (*Dai* 174). His arrangement of "lyric fragments" paradoxically suggests a narrative form by association with the narrative of *In Parenthesis*. Thomas Dilworth observes that Jones alters our sense of *Y Gododdin* itself: "The Old Welsh poem is a fragmented, multiple

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6 Eaves’s analysis is marred by her reliance on the 1977 translation of *Y Gododdin* published in the *Oxford Book of Welsh Verse in English* (Oxford: Oxford U. P., 1977). Modern translators have been able to take advantage of Sir Ifor Williams’s pioneering edition of *Canu Aneirin* (Cardiff: U. of Wales P., 1938), but as I argue here, Edward Anwyl’s earlier translation and arrangement of the poem influenced Jones’s response in important ways.
elegy without narrative sequence. By juxtaposing bits of it to his own narrative, Jones endows it with the ghost of narrative continuity” (SM 96). In David Blamires’s judgement, Y Gododdin’s original lack of narrative gives the poem “a curious bittiness despite the vividness and punch of numerous passages” (Artist and Writer 83). I argue here that Jones’s strategy both draws out Y Gododdin’s latent narrative and incorporates some of the poem’s most vivid passages. As shown earlier, Edward Anwyl himself attempted to impose a narrative sequence on the poem by rearranging stanzas in his translation; however, Jones’s epigraphs are chosen for thematic reasons, and do not follow Anwyl’s rearrangement.

Jones praises Aneirin for his “most convincing images,” citing as example, “‘He who holds a wolf’s mane without a club in his hand must needs have a brilliant spirit within his raiment’” (IP 191). He consistently praises early Welsh poetry for its vivid and precise imagery, a judgement placing him firmly in the mainstream of Modernist criticism as practised by Hulme, Pound, and Eliot, for whom the concrete image was a central aesthetic criterion (Dilworth SM 34). Aneirin’s “most convincing images” also convey a sense of personal familiarity with the men and events of Y Gododdin. He relates how “Three men alone escaped death including the poet, who laments his friends” (IP 191). The legend of Aneirin escaping from the battle is now believed to be a later addition to the poem, but for Jones, Y Gododdin is an authentic account of the warriors who fell at Catraeth, composed by a “man who was on the field” (IP 187); it is at once a powerful elegy and poetic representation of people and events. He compares the memorialising aspect of Y Gododdin to that of the Catholic liturgy in his review of The Burning Tree, observing that it “does make a kind of anamnesis of the personnel of a
troop of heavily armed, mounted warriors who ride out from their fort at Dineiddyn (now Edinburgh) to be totally destroyed by a very large concentration of Angles at Catraeth (Catterick) in Yorkshire" (E&A 58). Throughout In Parenthesis, Jones follows the example of Aneirin in combining poetic and historical imagination to relate his vision of the events leading up to the assault on Mametz Wood and its aftermath.

*Y Gododdin* strongly engaged David Jones’s historical imagination. Although it refers to events in sixth century Britain, *Y Gododdin* evokes for Jones the vanished civilisation of Rome:

There seems an echo of the Empire in the lines I use for Part 1:

‘Men marched; they kept equal step....

Men marched, they had been nurtured together.’

Perhaps he had ancestral memories of the garrison at the Wall; of the changing guard of the hobnailed Roman infantry. (*IP* 191)

The “echo of the Empire” he hears in these lines is a tentative one, possessing imaginative and associative power, whatever they may have suggested for Aneirin and his audience. His hesitant tone, his use of “seems” and “perhaps”, recognises that the original meanings evoked by these lines are ultimately unknowable. This sense of the contingency of historical knowledge allows Jones to speculate poetically on associations which illuminate the cultural context of past artefacts and events. He sees, and wants his readers to see, *Y Gododdin* against a Roman Imperial background, out of which the tribal culture of the poem emerged. The warriors of the Gododdin evoke the Roman legionaries of an earlier generation of Britons, just as, throughout In Parenthesis, the British soldiers evoke the men of Gododdin. The irony of these evocations lies in the
enormous cultural gap separating sub-Roman from Roman Britain, and the even greater
gap between these and mechanised warfare and medieval chivalry.

Jones draws upon the contemporary significance of *Y Gododdin* for the demise of
the British Empire in his review of *The Burning Tree*. Aneirin's poem
illustrates the now becoming-familiar incongruities of a post-imperial,
post-colonial epoch. Heavy mobile horse rather than marching legions
had been the symbol of *romanitas* in the later phases of the late empire.
Rather as today it is tanks and mortar shells, not Tommies in column of
route and narrow boxes of S.A.A. that symbolize our thing for the young,
sambrown'd, nationalist leaders whose grandfathers or great-grandfathers
were Kipling's fuzzie-wuzzies. (*E&A* 58)

No critics have yet offered a post-imperial interpretation of *Y Gododdin*, but Jones's
comments reveal a remarkable historical imagination interpreting the past in light of the
present, and the present in light of the past. Modernity - or post-modernity - is not
wholly new, nor are past artefacts wholly irrelevant in comprehending the contemporary
world.

In his note, Jones argues for the cultural and historical significance of *Y
Gododdin*: "The whole poem has a special interest for all of us of this Island because it is
a monument of that time of obscurity when north Britain was still largely in Celtic
possession and the memory of Rome yet potent; when the fate of the Island was as yet
undecided" (*IP* 191). The importance of *Y Gododdin* lies in its status as "a monument of
that time of obscurity," offering a glimpse into a remote but crucial phase of Britain's
history. Jones claims *Y Gododdin* not only for the Welsh, but for "all of us of this
Island,” as part of its “corporate inheritance”. His insistence on a common British heritage in the poem is perhaps suggested by Edward Anwyl’s introduction, where he identifies Pictish support for the Gododdin in battle and situates the poem in the context of early medieval Scotland (104-5; 109-116). Nonetheless, it is the Welsh alone who remember this obscure time, as Jones reminds us: “In Wales, the memory was maintained of Gwr y Gogledd, ‘the men of the north’. The founders of certain Welsh princely families came from the district of the Tweed in the late 4th century” (IP 191). Jones’s sense of the poem as cultural legacy informs his decision to use it as a source of epigraphs: “the choice of fragments of this poem as ‘texts’ is not altogether without point in that it connects us with a very ancient unity and mingling of races; with the Island as corporate inheritance, with the remembrance of Rome as a European unity” (IP 191-2).

Amid the cultural disintegration of the early twentieth century, many poets found past historical unities available only in fragmented form, as in Eliot’s The Waste Land or Pound’s Cantos. In his 1932 Norton Lectures, Eliot affirmed his belief that poetry offered a means of connecting with earlier unities, “sinking to the most primitive and forgotten, returning to the origin and bringing something back, seeking the beginning and the end” (Use of Poetry 111). The unity which Jones evokes through his use of fragments from Y Gododdin is cultural and historical. He comments that “The drunken 300 at Catraeth fell as representatives of the Island of Britain,” a unity re-created under very different conditions on the Western Front, in a regiment of mixed London and Welsh soldiers: “My companions in the war were mostly Londoners, with an admixture of Welshmen, so that the mind and folk-life of those two differing racial groups are an essential ingredient to my theme” (IP 192; x).
Using translations of *Y Gododdin* is a means of connecting readers unable to read Old Welsh with that "ancient unity," but Jones retains the original language in his epigraph to the poem as a whole: "seinyessit e gledyfym penn mameu", "His sword rang in mothers' heads" (*IP* title page; 191).7 Explaining his use of the line on the title page, Jones says it "seems to be one of the most significant lines" (*IP* 191). Edward Anwyl singles out this line in his introductory essay, citing it as evidence for "the influence of conceptions of humanity which have a singularly modern ring," an obvious attempt to make the ethos of the heroic age palatable to his Georgian audience (119). The grief caused to mothers by war is rendered by the aural image of a ringing sword, which evokes the clash of battle while providing a kind of "objective correlative" for the mothers’ sorrow. In his essay "Art in Relation to War," Jones finds that contemplating the art of war leads him to recall

that line from the earliest of all 'war-poetry' that this island has produced, the line from Aneirin's *Gododdin* which turns for a moment from praising the swordsmanship of the heroes to reflect that: ‘His sword rang in mothers’ heads’. (Horace’s ‘war, detested of mothers’ means the same, but does not lift up an objective image, as the Welsh poet does, and which the best poetry must.) (*DG* 130)

In the context of the *Gododdin*, this line would seem to be meant as praise of martial ferocity rather than an expression of regret, but Jones’s reading demonstrates his acute awareness of the cost of war, and belies the claims made by critics who accuse him of

7 Jones does, however, change the original *seinyessyt* to *seinyessit*, putting the original into standard Middle Welsh orthography, presumably as an aid to readers.
merely romanticising warfare by alluding to past heroic literature. The language of the passage is straightforward enough for modern Welsh speakers to understand, perhaps an important consideration in Jones's choice, given that he elects to use translations from *Y Gododdin* in the rest of the poem. By using the original language, Jones insists on the otherness of ancient Welsh tradition, but having done so, he then offers readers a means of connecting with the past through allusion and translation.

The epigraphs to the seven parts of *In Parenthesis* offer thematic analogues for the sections they introduce, and cumulatively suggest the Battle of Catraeth itself as a synchronic analogue for the Battle of Mametz Wood. Jones situates Catraeth in an historical pattern of Celtic defeat in his essay "The Myth of Arthur": "Catraeth and Camlann are, in a sense, more of tradition than of history and are symbolic of disaster, the former more glorious, where at Catterick, Yorks, three hundred Welsh mounted warriors of North Britain are destroyed by an enormously larger English force – this is given permanence in the *Gododdin* poem." (*E&A* 254). For Thomas Dilworth, "The influence of Catraeth on the assault that concludes *In Parenthesis* derives primarily from the value of the ancient battles as a historical symbol. Catraeth occurs at the start of the seven-centuries-long defeat of the British Celts" (*SM* 96). My reading of Jones's note on *Y Gododdin* suggests, however, that the poem's historical and symbolic value derives from its importance as documentary evidence and as cultural inheritance.

In *David Jones: Mythmaker*, Elizabeth Ward observes that

the *Gododdin* fragments signify an analogy in terms of which the First World War rehearses that legendary disaster, not merely the magnitude and futility of the slaughter (the conventional parallel to which the title of
Part I alludes) but more importantly as a re-play of the perennial conflict between imperialism and locality of which the Welsh defeat, by implication is an early instance, the war a contemporary one. (90)

Jones himself articulates this sense of analogy between past and present, writing that “In Europe today ‘men march, they keep equal step’ to ‘death’s sure meeting-place the goal of their marching’, they follow a ‘laughing leader, going down into the host, into the loveless battle’” (E&A 240). The epigraph to Part I, “Men marched, they kept equal step... / Men marched, they had been nurtured together” (Anwy1 122; Skene 73), discussed above, suggests the almost familial intimacy among soldiers, and introduces the period of John Ball’s training as a kind of nurturing. This image of nurturing is rendered ironic in both poems by being embedded in a text concerned with warfare, and is highly suggestive in light of Jones’s comment in the preface that he “would prefer it [In Parenthesis] to be about a good kind of peace” (IP xii-xiii). Taking into account the Roman associations Jones sees in these lines, the concluding “together” evokes the “ancient unity” suggested in Jones’s note, and a synchronic association of three distinct periods which nonetheless offer analogues for each other: the men of Gododdin marching for the Island; an echo of the Roman legions marching for the Empire; the Royal Welsh marching for the Island, but in an “expeditionary war” as part of an Empire. A sense of a transhistorical wholeness thus emerges from the complex of associations implied by these lines and their immediate context. (Even without the notes, only the Roman allusive dimension might be lost).

Jones introduces Part 2 with lines suggesting the men of Gododdin’s own battle preparations:
On Tuesday, they put on their dark blue raiment; 
On Wednesday they prepared their enamelled shields. (Anwyl 129; Skene 83)

These lines feature the "most convincing images" Jones praises in the poem, and generate a sense of anticipation consonant with that of Part 2. In Anwyl's translation of *Y Gododdin*, the days of the week build up to slaughter, but Jones omits these grimmer days just as he omits the refrain *Timor mortis conturbat me* from Dunbar's "Lament for the Makars" (*IP* 95), adding additional irony for those who can recognise it:

- on Thursday harsh was their ravaging: on Friday corpses were borne around: on Saturday nimble was their joint action: on Sunday their red blades were carried: on Monday a scene of blood was visible, reaching to the top of the thigh. (Anwyl 129; Skene 83)

The complete sequence provides a chronology for the events underlying *Y Gododdin*, but they also suggest a structural parallel with *In Parenthesis*. Characteristically oblique and tentative, Jones does not provide the entire sequence as a kind of diagram for the poem, only a fragmentary allusion to a larger complex of events and images. The structural parallels and thematic analogues emerge in the texture of the poem itself.

Part 3 begins with an epigraph evoking a sense of camaraderie among soldiers:

Men went to Catraeth, familiar with laughter.

The old, the young, the strong, the weak. (Anwyl 120; Skene 64)

The laughter is both tragic and ironic in light of the slaughter to follow. Syntactically, the first line can be read as the men being familiar with each other through laughter, or familiar with laughter itself, but the word "familiar" conveys the sense of being made
into a kind of family, echoing the statement of the previous epigraph that the men “had been nurtured together.” Jones splices together two lines from the first verse in Anwyl’s translation (lines 57-64 in Skene’s edition), emphasising the easy intimacy of the Gododdin warriors and omitting all reference to bloodshed and slaughter, strongly marked in Anwyl’s text:

Men went to Catraeth familiar with laughter, bitter in fight, with the spear setting themselves in array: barely for a year are they at peace. Botgat’s son wrought vengeance: his hand wrought it. Though they may have gone to churches to do penance, the old and the young, the strong and the weak, death’s sure meeting place is the goal of their marching. (120)

Where *Y Gododdin* is expansive, Jones is restrained. His alteration of Anwyl’s punctuation both disguises the gap between the two lines in his source text and renders them more concise and expressive by omitting Anwyl’s repetition of “and”, although this conjunction is present in the original Welsh (*A hen a yeueing a hydyr allaw*). However, Jones may have been influenced in his punctuation by Skene’s edition, where the two lines both end with a full stop, rather than running into subsequent lines as they do in Anwyl’s English version. In his use of *Y Gododdin*, Jones consistently demonstrates the care with which he deploys quotation, subtly altering his materials to fit the needs of his art without compromising the sense of the original text.

The epigraph to Part 4 is made up of three separate lines, and Jones acknowledges the gaps in his text through the use of ellipses:

Like an home-reared animal in a quiet nook, before his day came …

before entering into the prison of earth … around the contest, active and
defensive, around the fort, around the steep-piled sods. (Anwyl 125, 127; Skene 71, 75)

The image of a “quiet nook” suggests the sleeping soldiers in the trenches, while the “steep-piled sods” suggest the piled sandbag defences. Jones’s omission of the subject of these lines universalises their referent, while his use of ellipses renders the epigraph paratactic, resisting linear syntax and conveying a sense of fragmentary experience wholly lacking in the original Gododdin, but in accord with the bewildering bombardment experienced by the soldiers in Part 4 (85-6).

The epigraph to Part 5, “He has brought us to a bright fire and a white fresh floor-hide” (Anwyl 135; Skene 89), evokes the hospitality the soldiers enjoy at Alice’s estaminet, a calm before the storm which finds an analogue in the generosity of Mynyddog Mwynfawr (whose identity John Koch disputes in his recent edition) toward the men of Gododdin prior to their assault on Catraeth. The image of “a white fresh floor-hide” conjures the heroic world of the warrior’s hall, which stands at an ironic distance from the cafés frequented by the soldiers of the Great War.

Jones considerably re-arranges his material for the epigraph to Part 6:

Men went to Catraeth as day dawned: their fears disturbed their peace.

Men went to Catraeth: free of speech was their host … death’s sure meeting place, the goal of their marching. (Anwyl 120; Skene 65, 64)

In Anwyl’s version, the first line of the epigraph occurs two stanzas after the epigraph’s second line, while the passage following the marks of ellipses occurs in Anwyl’s first
stanza, quoted above. Jones arranges his quotations to emphasize the analogy between the fear experienced by the men of Gododdin and that of the British soldiers, while the free-speaking host corresponds to the Staff officers and “death’s sure meeting place” to the impending battle at Mametz wood.

The final epigraph, to Part 7, is sinister in its brevity and filled with a sense of impending doom:

Gododdin I demand thy support.

It is our duty to sing: a meeting place has been found. (Anwyl 132, 128; Skene 79, 82)

The “meeting place” echoes “death’s sure meeting place” of the previous epigraph, while the “duty to sing” suggests the necessity to commemorate which underlies the whole of In Parenthesis and Y Gododdin itself. René Hague sees in this final epigraph “a poignant looking forward to the opening cry of a later desperate poem, A. a. a. Domine Deus” (David Jones 39). Given the composition history of In Parenthesis, Thomas Dilworth is accurate in saying that “The many correspondences between the two poems are unintended and serve only to indicate the underlying similarity of all military campaigns” (SM 96); however, this observation needs to be qualified by noting that Jones’s selection of epigraphs is intended to emphasize those similarities. While omitting the actual slaughter at Catraeth, Jones’s carefully chosen quotations nonetheless hint at Y Gododdin’s major themes, shedding an ancient light from a “time of obscurity” on the events at Mametz Wood, forging a tentative connection between two ages characterised by violence and cultural disintegration.
The figure of Aneirin Lewis, named for the bard of Y Gododdin, provides another link between the world of Welsh antiquity and the contemporaneity of the Great War. His introduction at the beginning of Part I opens a spiritual and imaginative dimension on the routine life of soldiering:

Temporary unpaid Lance-Corporal Aneirin Merddyn

Lewis had somewhere in his Welsh depths a remembrance of the nature of man, of how a lance-corporal's stripe is but held vicariously and from on high, is of one texture with an eternal economy. He brings a manner, baptism and metaphysical order to the bankruptcy of the occasion. (IP 1-2)

Lewis’s “baptism” may be that of a Non-Conformist, but his “Welsh depths” are rooted in the hieratic world of the Middle Ages. The Welsh spelling of Merddyn instead of the more recognisable English spelling Merlin emphasises the ancient otherness of Lewis’s tradition. Jones typically sees the traddodiad of Wales as bringing or adding something to modern British life and institutions. In his 1953 broadcast, “Wales and the Crown,” he characterises the Welsh inheritance as offering the Crown “things Christian and Roman together with things representative of the fragmented tradition of the Brythonic Celts and of their non-Celtic predecessors concerning what the bards have called The White Island, The Honey Isle, the Island of the Mighty and of all that pertains to Britannia the Mother” (E& A 48). Like Dai Greatcoat, Lewis remembers what is forgotten under the immediate pressures of modern warfare: “Lance-Corporal Lewis sings where he walks, yet in a low voice, because of the Disciplines of the Wars. He sings of the hills about Jerusalem, and of David of the White Stone” (IP 39). Between Jerusalem and the Great War, Lewis
evokes the Welsh song “David of the White Rock” and Shakespeare’s Henry V
(Fluellen’s “Disciplines of the Wars”, Act III, Scene 2), bringing a consciousness of
things past incomprehensible to his fellow soldiers:

Lance-Corporal Lewis looked about him and on all this
liquid action.

It may be remembered Seithenin and the desolated can-
trefs, the sixteen fortified places, the great cry of the sea,
above the sigh of Gwyddno when his entrenchments stove
in. Anyway he kept the joke to himself for there was none to
share it in that company, for although Watcyn knew every-
thing about the Neath fifteen, and could sing Sospan Fach to
make the traverse ring, he might have been an Englishman
when it came to matters near to Aneirin’s heart. For Wat
cyn was innocent of his descent from Aeneas, was unaware
of Geoffrey Arthur and his cooked histories, or Twm Shon
Catti for the matter of that – which pained his lance-corporal
friend, for whom Troy still burned, and sleeping kings re-
turn, and wild men might yet stir from Mawddwy secrecies.

And he who will not come again from his reconnaissance –
they’ve searched his breeches well, they’ve given him an ivy
crown – ein llyw olaf – whose wounds they do bleed by day
and by night in December wood.

Lance-Corporal Lewis fed on these things. (IP 89)
Modernity has separated Watcyn from his own cultural inheritance. This passage reveals Welsh culture not merely as a fossilised medieval survival, but as a dynamic and interrelated complex that includes local legend (Seithenin, Mawddwy), legendary history (Geoffrey Arthur of Monmouth), and folk-hero (Twm Shon Catti). Jones is well aware that most of his readers, Welsh or otherwise, are as “innocent” as Watcyn of these traditions, and he appends a lengthy endnote to explain the allusions in this passage.

He is also more alert than some of his commentators to the comic irony of Lewis’s encyclopaedic learning amid the crude conditions of life in the trenches. The passage opens with Lewis making a private joke, and Jones himself acknowledges the extravagance of much Welsh tradition by characterising Geoffrey of Monmouth’s Historia as “cooked histories”. Nonetheless, Jones is open to Geoffrey’s legendary history as an important foundational myth of Welsh identity, drawing attention in his endnote to Geoffrey’s account of “how Aeneas, after the fall of Troy, journeyed to Italy (as in the Aeneid), how his grandson Brute eventually came to this island and founded the British Kingdom, with the New Troy, London, as its chief city, and how he is regarded as the father of the British race” (IP 211, n. 42). Like Y Gododdin, the myth of Trojan origins evokes for Jones an “ancient unity” of Romano-British culture, a unity entirely absent in Watcyn’s football-dominated imagination. Jones comments in his 1948 review of Charles Williams’s Arthurian Torso that “Geoffrey of Monmouth appeared to imagine himself to be writing a kind of new Aeneid for the Angevin Empire. Remember the core of all this is with us of this Island…” (E&A 204). Jones is concerned to draw out the wider significance of material which seems to have only limited meaning for a small community. Lewis, “for whom Troy still burned,” is a bearer of these traditions into the
modern age, but it is significant that he has no-one with whom to share his feelings, not even among his own countrymen. It is left to Dai Greatcoat to sing as a bard, but even his song is met with a mixture of incomprehension and derision.

In the above-quoted passage, Jones’s oblique allusion to Llewelyn ap Gruffydd, the last native Prince of Wales, as ein llyw olaf (“our last ruler” (IP 211, n. 42)), is the earliest reference in his poetry to a figure crucial to his historical imagination and his mythologising vision of Wales. Jones explains Llewelyn’s significance in a note8:

‘Our last ruler’, the last Llywelyn. Killed on December 10th-11th, 1282 near Cefn-y-Bedd in the woods of Buelt; decapitated, his head crowned with ivy. A relic of the Cross was found ‘in his breeches pocket’. The greatest English poet of our own time has written:

‘And sang within the bloody wood
   When Agamemnon cried aloud.’

If the song of birds accompanied Llywelyn’s death cry, with that chorus-end, ended the last vestiges of what remained of that order of things which arose out of the Roman eclipse in this Island. ‘Ein llyw olaf’ is an

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8 Despite this note, Evelyn Cobley misidentifies the last Welsh prince: “Even if readers are not familiar with the story of, say, Llywelyn from the Y Gododdin, they pick up from the text (and the notes) that he was a tragic redeemer figure. Linking a legendary Welsh figure with soldiers on the Western front, Jones is able to suggest a redemptive interpretation of the war without having to say so on the level of realistic description” (115). Bernard Bergonzi remarks that Cobley’s analysis “is sometimes acute, though I am not sure how far she really understands In Parenthesis.” (201,n.)
appellation charged with much significance, if we care at all to consider ancient things come at last to their term. He belonged, already, before they pierced him, to the dead at Camlann. We venerate him, dead, between the winter oaks. His contemporary, Gruffydd ap yr Ynad Côch, sang of his death: ‘The voice of Lamentation is heard in every place ... the course of nature is changed ... the trees of the forest furiously rush against each other.’ (211-2, n. 42)

Jones’s note is a poetic meditation on the significance of history for cultural memory and the analogic imagination. Just as the age of Y Gododdin marks the birth of “that order of things which arose out of the Roman eclipse in this Island”, so the killing and subsequent humiliation of Llywelyn signals its death. Jones calls Llywelyn’s principality of Gwynnedd “the last remnant remaining of a pattern of a Britain known to Cadwaladr, known to Arthur, known to Cunedda and the Caesars” (“Welsh Poetry”, E&A 62). The period between these two ages is the formative period of Welsh history. In “Wales and the Crown” Jones identifies Cunedda Wledig, an ancestor of the Welsh dynasties who “appears to have been a Romano-British official” and Llywelyn ap Gruffyd as the two parentheses for this historical epoch: “Between the, so to say, terminus a quo of Cunedda and the terminus ad quem of Llywelyn the entity we now call Wales together with its unique tradition came into being” (E&A 41-2).

At Llywelyn’s terminus ad quem, the murdered Welsh prince becomes, in Jones’s imagination, an analogue for the crucified Christ. Jones characterises his death as a piercing, his body venerated “between the winter oaks,” just as the venerated body of Jesus hung between the two thieves. Commenting on the legendary presence of a relic of
the Cross on Llywelyn’s person, Jones writes that “it comes about that in thinking of the life-giving Tree of the Cross we may find ourselves thinking also of the death of this last Welsh ruler and all that is comprehended in that terminal event” (E&A 40). In death, Llywelyn becomes part of the mythopoeic history of Wales, and Jones places him in the doomed ranks of Arthur “among the dead at Camlann” even before he met his historical death. In this mythopoeic vision of Llywelyn’s death, Jones is exercising a sort of bardic prerogative he later identifies with the processes of Welsh cultural psychology: “We might perhaps say that in the Welsh ‘collective unconscious’ there were retained many images, some dim, all crossed with other images, and that the attributes of some of the most ancient and archetypal of those images got attached to figures of historic times. So that prototype and type became one” (E&A 45-6). Alert to the implications of Jones’s reference to The Waste Land in his note, Thomas Dilworth observes that the quotation from ‘the Corpus Christi Carol’ (“whose wounds they do bleed by day and by night” (IP 89)) identifies “Llywelyn as a Maimed King of a wasted land,” bringing Llywelyn within the archetypal field of Jones’s Arthurian mythopoeic complex (SM 96).

2.3 “Things can seem Malorian”: Morte Darthur

The legends of King Arthur and his knights were a part of Jones’s late Victorian childhood. He relates that he used to pay his sister a penny to read to him from a child’s storybook called The Knight of the Sparrowhawk “and much else” (DG 25). At Ditchling in the early 1920’s, Malory was among the English authors Eric Gill read aloud to his family. Gill’s choice of literature reflected his own medievalising impulses, and included Coleridge and Spenser (Miles, David Jones and Eric Gill 59). By the late 1920’s, during
the early compositional stages of *In Parenthesis*, Malory was much on Jones’s mind. Douglas Cleverdon invited Jones to make some engravings for *Morte Darthur* in 1929. Jones wrote to Cleverdon, refusing:

I hate to feel not equal to a decent task – but there it is! It requires almost a ‘life work’ for a modern person to extract what is ‘essential’ and external from the *Morte d’Arthur* & free it from Chain-mail - sword - knight - lady - pennon - castle - serf - romance - gothic - Cloth of Gold - Chess-board business. (qtd. in Miles and Shiel 77-8)

Jones rejects the Romantic vision of the Pre-Raphaelite Middle Ages, while admitting he is not himself able “to extract what is ‘essential’ from the *Morte d’Arthur*”, although he cites poor health and weak eyesight as his reasons for turning down Cleverdon’s offer (Miles and Shiel 77-8). “One drypoint, *The Wounded Knight*, remains from this unrealized project and the fact that Jones chose such an image as his first response to the *Morte D’Arthur* indicates that even in his early thirties, Jones, by showing the wounded warrior at sunset and the riderless horses scattering, focused on the cycle’s concern with decline” (Miles and Shiel 216). As we shall see, Jones’s allusions to Malory throughout *In Parenthesis* converge on the theme of the destruction of “fellowship,” representing an attempt to extract the “essence” of *Morte Darthur* and make it part of his own poem.

Colin Wilcockson observes that Malory’s “*leitmotif*, sounded many times, is precisely that of *In Parenthesis*, the lament over misadventure and regretted enmity” (244). As late as 1935, Jones was reading Malory on his trip to the Middle East, which suggests that *Morte Darthur* was a constant imaginative companion during the entire process of composition and revision (Miles and Shiel 170).
Prior to Eugéne Vinaver's 1947 edition of Sir Thomas Malory's *Works*, David Jones relied on the Everyman edition (1906), edited by John Rhys. The importance of Rhys's preface has been overlooked by Jones's commentators, but is crucial to his evolving relationship to Arthurian myth and his mythopoeic vision of Wales. Rhys begins his preface by reviewing the (now rejected) case for Malory's own Welsh origins, appropriating him for the *traddodiad*. Rhys observes that Malory's name is found written not only Malory or Malorye, but also Maleore. It occurred to me some years ago that this fact lent countenance to the statement ascribed to Leland and others, that Sir Thomas Malory is a Welshman; for Maleore reminded me of *Maylawr, Maelawr* or *Maelor*, the name of two districts on the confines of England and Wales: a 'Welsh Maelor' is included in the County of Denbigh, and an 'English Maelor' in that of Flint. How such a name could readily become a surname may be seen from the designation, for instance, of a lord of the two Maelors in the twelfth century, named *Gruffudd Maelor*. Literally rendered, this would mean 'Griffith of Maelor.' (vii)

Nowhere in his published writings does David Jones argue for Malory's Welshness, but he does refer to "the land waste as far as English Maelor" in his lyrical praise of the moon in Part 3 (*IP* 35).

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9 Thomas Dilworth, in his article on "Wales and the Imagination of David Jones", relates that Eugéne Vinaver once had his life threatened by two Jesus College students at Oxford for denying Malory's connection with Wales (43).
The whole of Rhys’s introduction is given over to illustrating the origins of Arthurian romance in Welsh history, topography, and legend, after briefly acknowledging Malory’s immediate French sources (viii-ix). In Rhys’s view, the legends of Arthur reached France through Brittany, where they had been brought during the sixth-century British migration, but he derives the Grail legends directly from Wales (ix-x). Arthur, for Rhys, is founded on an historical person. He quotes from the early ninth century *Historia Brittonum*, attributed to Nennius, which relates that Arthur fought the Saxons alongside the British kings, *sed ipse dux erat bellorum* (“but he himself was a war-leader”) (xi). Rhys comments that “the words here cited are very suggestive, for without explicitly saying that Arthur was one of the kings of the Brythons, they make him the general or *dux bellorum*, in whom one readily recognises the superior officer, known in the time of Roman rule as the *Comes Britanniae*” (xi). Rhys then turns to the tenth-century *Annales Cambriae*, citing the entries for the battles of Badon Hill (516) and Camlan (537) as further evidence for Arthur’s historicity (xii). Like *Y Gododdin*, the corpus of Arthurian romance ultimately has some basis in history.

Legend too plays a major role in the development of Arthurian myth, and Rhys quotes the Latin *Mirabilia* relating that at Buellt may be seen the footprint of Arthur’s dog Cabal, made when he was hunting the *porcum Troit*, the monstrous boar Twrch Trwyth of *Kulhwch ac Olwen*, whose legend provides the basis for Jones’s poem “The Hunt” (xiii). Rhys also relates several legends of the sleeping Arthur and his men who will one day return (xiv-v), the inspiration for Jones’s “The Sleeping Lord.” He quotes a passage from Plutarch to suggest the ancient mythic foundations of this legend, which Jones also quotes in his notes to *In Parenthesis* to explain his image of “mess-mates
sleeping like long-barrow sleepers" (IP 51, 198-9, n.38). It is related that in the far north of Britain, there is "an island in which Cronus is imprisoned, with Briareus keeping guard over him as he sleeps; for as they put it, sleep is the bond forged for Cronus. They add that around him are many deities, his henchmen and attendants." (Rhys’s italics; xvi).

Even more than Llywelyn, Arthur is a figure in which "prototype and type became one" (E&A 45-6).

Rhys then surveys the oldest Welsh poetry alluding to Arthur, which shows him as a mysterious hero undertaking supernatural quests, such as that for the cauldron of Hades in the poem Preddeu Annwfn (xxii-xiv). The preface concludes with Rhys acknowledging the vast gap between the Welsh Arthur and that of Malory: "How greatly this rude delineation of the triumph of man over violence and brute force differs from the more finished picture of the Arthur of Malory's painting, it would be needless to shew to anyone bent on perusing the Morte Darthur" (xxvi). The significance of this preface for David Jones lies in the way Rhys explores the many layers of history, myth, and legend that lie beneath the surface of the more polished King Arthur of European romance. This archaeological approach is one Jones himself develops in his later Arthurian essays and poetry.

Malory's Morte Darthur is present throughout In Parenthesis primarily as part of the poem's allusive texture, but it also provides structural and thematic analogues, particularly in the destruction of a fellowship of comrades-in-arms, a theme shared by Y Gododdin. Commenting on John H. Johnson's singling out of Y Gododdin as Jones's source, the poet writes to Harman Grisewood, "I should have thought that if a past literary source were to be sought for In Parenthesis, the works of Malory would be
perhaps more noticeable in that allusions to passages in Malory are pretty frequent in parts" (Dai 174). Jones alludes to those elements in Malory which most clearly suggest the structural and thematic coherence of *In Parenthesis*; his oblique allusions to the Chapel Perilous evoke only Launcelot’s failed quest for the Sangraal. As William Blissett observes, the Malorian allusions “build up an expectation that the shape of *In Parenthesis* may resemble that of the *Morte Darthur* in the reader’s experience, an expectation that is fulfilled” (“To Make a Shape” 71). The failed quest motif is one shared by Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, but Jones goes further than Eliot in turning to its origins in medieval romance, going beyond Jessie Weston’s fashionable theories. Harold Bloom’s theory of influence is suggestive here, and Jones’s turn to Malory may be read as an evasion of *The Waste Land*’s powerful influence on his poetry. The influence of Eliot on *In Parenthesis* can, however, be exaggerated or misunderstood. Jones was familiar with the Matter of Britain from his boyhood, and claims to have read Jessie Weston’s *From Ritual to Romance* before reading *The Waste Land* (Blissett, LC 96). The waste land and quest motifs enter Jones’s imagination initially from his early reading, while Eliot’s poem reveals their significance for the modern “civilizational situation.”

Significantly, none of Jones’s Malorian allusions is directly to Arthur himself. Rather, Jones turns to Launcelot, the failed quester and frustrated lover, whose unsuccessful search for spiritual and romantic fulfilment finds a twentieth-century analogue in the cultural pessimism articulated in *The Waste Land*. The figure of Launcelot would haunt Jones’s imagination his entire life, and conveys a sense of sexual tension, social ambivalence and spiritual desire throughout his painting and poetry. As early as 1916, Jones’s painted a Pre-Raphaelite Launcelot for his cousin’s wedding
invitation. The success of Jones’s adaptation of *Morte Darthur* in his own work depends in large part on his own sense of sharing the same hopes, fears and desires as the figures in Malory’s world. In a 1939 letter to Harmon Grisewood, Jones identifies his romantic plight over Prudence Pelham with Launcelot’s love for Guenevere: “O dear, this old romantic love, the only type I understand, does let you down. I do see why Lancelot [sic] ran ‘wood mad’ in the trackless forest for four years so that no man might know him is easily understandable, but all that one does is to smoke cigarettes and drink an extra whisky or something” (*Dai* 93). Of Jones’s contemporaries, only Robert Graves approaches romantic love with such a strong mythologising impulse, but Jones recognises the irony implicit in such idealism in the twentieth century. Jones finds literary correlatives for his own private emotional experiences, lending a numinous quality to his allusive painting and poetry. As Derek Shiel and Jonathan Miles observe, “Jones’s treatment of Arthurian material both in painting and poetry is compelling because the artist re-experienced its themes of cultural anxiety and of sexual disquiet.” (218).

Jones’s views on Malory are most clearly expressed in Part II of his seminal essay, “The Myth of Arthur”, originally published in 1941. He regards *Morte Darthur* as “the normal and national source” of Arthurian legend for English-speaking readers, comparing it to the Authorised Version of the Bible, and observing that “Malory’s book has points of resemblance to the Latin Vulgate, in the sense that it can be called a true version, the precise originals of which are no longer all available to us” (*E&A* 244). This sense of analogy between sacred and profane literature anticipates Northrop Frye’s view of romance as secular scripture. Jones shows an acute awareness of the historical context in which *Morte Darthur* was written. “Malory wrote his book just, and only just, in time:
a little later and it would have been a romantic rather than a romance document. He was just in time to be part of that decaying world that knew the shadow of feudalism...” (E&A 244). Just as Jones is able to accurately represent the experience of soldiering during the Great War, Malory “could still write authentically of knighthood. His data (his visual, felt data I mean), were accurate, experiential and contactual” (E&A 244). This relationship with the actual is the foundation of Malory’s art, for “imagination must work through what is known and known by a kind of touch” (E&A 244). In contrast to Malory, Spenser’s poetry “has already lost liaison with the concrete” (E&A 245). By Spenser’s time, the social and technological bases of chivalry have broken down: “The whiff of gun-powder was already in the nostrils of horse and rider, fire-locks are opening the visors, the jousts and tournays are already Ye olde – and no degree of artistry can overcome the fact” (E&A 245). Jones recognises that literary conventions have a basis in the contingency of the historical world. Spenser writes “a romantic rather than a romance document” because he does not live in the medievalised world he envisions. Jones’s own relationship to romance is ironic and paradoxical, avoiding Spenser’s romanticism and recognising the impossibility of recovering an authentic chivalry in the modern age, despite Jones’s obvious admiration for chivalric values, such as honour, courage, and truthfulness. Malory’s timing is also crucial in a linguistic sense, for if he had “written a century and a half earlier his English would have been sufficiently archaic to require translation” (E&A 245). The Morte Darthur thus offers readers a cultural and linguistic link to a vanished chivalric order, whose values challenge, and perhaps redress, those of a dehumanised, mechanistic war and the age that produced it.
Jones's judgements of Malory's artistry are important in light of his own writing. As Jon Silkin notes, "When Jones, writing of the end of Morte Darthur, says that 'The tension snaps or rather there is a ruinous explosion', there seems at least a parallel between the end of In Parenthesis and Malory's work" (332). Jones places Malory at the end of a Spenglerian civilisational cycle, analogous to the position of the modern artist:

Though we may know that he represents the sophisticated end of a tradition and that he but partially appreciated the inwardness of the astonishing material at his disposal, and though his artistry was of the late autumn, whereas his sources were of the springtime, of the medieval culture, none the less his achievement was great. (E&A 245)

Jones identifies a salient feature of Malory's prose style in "the characteristic emphasis by double-negatives," and notes that "The formal strength of the sentences seems to have a relationship with the degree of determination required by the content" (E&A 245). In other words, Malory's prose derives its strength from the way in which its form is determined by content, a feature of Jones's own writing and of Modernism generally. As well as perceiving the "formal strength" of Malory's prose, Jones also sees the unfolding of a thematic pattern as providing the structural basis for the Morte Darthur as a whole:

"The notion that the Morte Darthur lacks construction has always seemed to me somewhat superficial, for it gathers depth and drive as it proceeds to the final disaster, as do few writings ..." (E&A 248). Thematic development determines the form of the Morte Darthur considered as a whole, just as content determines the form of sentences within its verbal texture, two observations which are equally descriptive when applied to Jones's own writings. "The explosiveness of the content never cheapens the form or
otherwise hurts the shape of the writing. The liturgy proceeds toward the inevitable
disintegration of the realm and toward the 'most piteous history of the morte of King
Arthur' (E&A 250). Malory's work thus embodies a perfect marriage of *forma et
materia*, fulfilling Jacques Maritain's insistence that the end of art is "to make a form
shine on matter" (Art and Scholasticism 28).

Jones candidly describes the way a text can shape perception, noting that "this
very late medieval English translation from early medieval French material, was, none
the less, a creative work, and creative works tend to have a conditioning quality: hence
things can seem Malorian" (E&A 250). This observation recalls the "Preface" to In
Parenthesis where Jones writes that the war landscape "is perhaps best described in
Malory, book iv, chapter 15 - that landscape spoke 'with a grimly voice'" (x-xi). For
Jones, however, the relationship between text and world works both ways, as can be seen
in his comments on Launcelot's escape from Guinevere's chamber: "For all the late-
medieval accidents and accents, Tommy-guns seem to be racking the enclosed space, the
hero unscathed - 'so Jesus be my shield'" (E&A 249). The war conditions Jones's
reading of Malory, just as Malory shapes his imaginative apprehension of the war. As
Jonathan Miles and Derek Shiel observe, Jones's liturgical sense of synchronicity
between past and present is typical of High Modernism:

Such a notion of contemporaneity entertains a vision of history that is
shared by literary modernism's tendency to de-historicize time by
juxtaposing elements from different epochs. If events are
contemporaneous, if a pattern of culture is inevitable, then a person
escapes, through the idea of simultaneity, from the burden of history, from
causal responsibility. The ritualistic cadences and hieratic modes of poets like Eliot, Pound and Jones suggest that the transhistorical habit has affinities with ritual which takes place both inside and outside of time.

(232)

Although Miles and Shiel are correct in seeing affinities between Jones, Eliot, and Pound, Jones does not de-historicise time by appealing to a transhistorical order in *In Parenthesis*; rather, he incarnates the transhistorical within the events of history itself.

Malory’s language, themes, and characters are incorporated into the verbal texture of *In Parenthesis*, suggesting analogies between the events narrated by Jones and those narrated by Malory.

*Morte Darthur* forms part of the allusive texture of *In Parenthesis* through direct and oblique allusion, vocabulary, and syntax. Absent for the most part in the poem’s first two sections, the Malorian allusions and language gather momentum over the course of the poem. The first direct allusion to Malory in the poem itself occurs in Part 3, as the soldiers approach the cemetery. Jones turns to Malorian language only when the power of ordinary discursive language to convey emotional pitch has been exhausted:

Mr. Jenkins watched them file through, himself following, like western-hill shepherd.

Past the little gate,

into the fields of upturned defences,

into the burial-yard –

---

10 For a complete table of Malorian allusions throughout *In Parenthesis*, see Wilcockson, "Presentation and Self-Presentation" 247.
the grinning and the gnashing and the sore dreading – nor

saw he any light in that place. (IP 31)

For the wave of terror and anxiety that washes over the soldiers, their sense of dreadful obstacles and impending horror in the cemetery, Jones finds a correlative in Launcelot’s visit to the Chapel Perilous. His note directs the reader to Malory VI, chapter 15, where the knight enters the churchyard and meets “thirty great knights, more by a yard than any man that ever he had seen, and all those grinned and gnashed at Sir Launcelot” (174). Although Launcelot “dread him sore,” “they scattered on every side of him, and gave him the way, and therewith he waxed all bold, and entered into the chapel, and he saw no light but a dim lamp burning, and then was he ware of a corpse hylled with a cloth of silk” (174). He retrieves a piece of silk and the knight’s sword, whereupon the earth shakes. Returning to the churchyard, “all the knights spake to him with a grimly voice, and said, Knight Sir Launcelot, lay that sword from thee or else thou shalt die. Whether that I live or die, said Sir Launcelot, with no great word get ye it again, therefore fight for it an ye list” (174). Launcelot passes through them, and before departing, resists the sexual charms of “Hellawes the sorceress, Lady of the Castle Nigramous,” who subsequently dies of sorrow (175). Wilcockson notes that Jones makes two significant changes in his allusion to Malory: “First, the symbolic record of the deaths of previous knights (the upside down shields) is replaced by the havoc the defences have suffered during bombardment” (244); second, Jones replaces Malory’s “church-yard” “with the far more grim ‘burial-yard’” (248). By economically choosing only a few phrases from this passage, Jones expresses its emotional tone in a single line. The language is at once suggestively medieval and comprehensible for modern readers. For those familiar with
the passage in Malory, a dimension of allusive meaning is opened which offers
Launcelot’s visit to the Chapel Perilous as an ironic analogue for the forced march of the
soldiers into the cemetery. Jones’s allusion allows Launcelot to be seen as a frightened
soldier, not so different from the modern soldiers in their entrance into a place of terror.
This is not the equivalent of romanticising warfare as such. The allusion acknowledges
terror as part of a soldier’s experience, and obliquely recognises the soldier’s courage in
facing it.

The title of Part 4, “King Pellam’s Launde” is a more explicitly literary allusion
than the generic “waste land” of Eliot’s poem. In book ii, chapter 16, Malory relates how
Balin injures King Pellam with the spear of Longinus, and the dire consequences which
ensue: “And all that were alive cried O Balin, thou hast caused great damage in these
countries; for the dolourous stroke thou gavest unto King Pellam, three countries are
destroyed, and doubt not but the vengeance will fall on thee at the last” (65). The
opening line of “King Pellam’s Launde” is lifted verbatim from Malory, book xiii,
chapter 19: “So thus he sorrowed til it was day and heard the foules sing, then somewhat
he was comforted” (IP 59; Malory 189). Jones changes the modernised “fowls” in the
Everyman to the Middle English “foules”, emphasising his medieval source, confident
that any educated reader would be familiar with at least this Middle English word from
Chaucer: “And smale foules maken melodye” (Prologue 9). In Malory, the source of
Launcelot’s sorrow is his loss of helmet, sword, and horse after being healed by the
Sangraal. John Ball’s sorrow is the misery of the infantryman, unrelated to the mystical
and chivalric circumstances of Launcelot’s grief. On the one hand, Jones represents
Ball’s sorrow as being as heroic as Launcelot’s; on the other, Launcelot’s grief is
common to all soldiers, at all times. The emotional impact of modern warfare has
suddenly made the emotional dimension of chivalry comprehensible; “things seem
Malorian” (E&A 250). Jones’s reference to

the early bird,

and meagre chattering of

December’s prime

shriil over from

Biez wood (IP 59)

also alludes to Malory xiii, 19, where Launcelot at prime comes upon a hermit going to
mass, who urges him to be thankful. Here the allusion works ironically, as the “shriil”
prime heard by the soldiers is an occasion for dread, rather than thanks. Jones likely
knew that “shriil” in Middle and Early Modern English did not have the pejorative
connotations it now has.

The Malorian allusions are sometimes seamlessly woven into a larger texture of
medieval allusion evoking a variety of traditions lost to the modern world. This is most
evident in Dai’s Boast, which will be discussed separately, but another such passage is
the lyric meditation on forests, where men

come in gathering nuts and may;

or run want-wit in a shirt for the queen’s unreason.

Beat boys-bush for Robin and Bobin.

Come with Merlin in his madness, for the pity of it; for

the young men reaped like green barley,

for the folly of it.
Jones in his note indicates that lines culminating in “for the queen’s unreason” allude to “the madness of Launcelot because of Guenevere’s stupidity when he lay the second time with Elaine unwittingly, and by enchantment” (IP 203, n.12). He quotes the passage in Malory, where Launcelot “ran forth he wist not whither, and was wild wood as ever was man; and so he ran two years, and never man might have grace to know him”\footnote{Jones mistakenly cites book xi, chapter 3 as the source of this passage, which is actually from chapter 7; in chapter 3, Launcelot discovers he has lain with Elaine under an enchantment.} (135).

Commenting on her cruelty, Jones writes that Guenevere “well deserved the epithet the Welsh attach to her: ‘Gwenhwyvar the daughter of Gogyrvan the Giant, bad when little, worse when big’” (IP 203, n.12). The motif of lover-turned-wildman is one with roots deep in Celtic literature, and is found most famously in the Irish legend of Suibne Geilt.\footnote{See Seamus Heaney's 	extit{Sweeney Astray} (1984) for a contemporary translation of the medieval 	extit{Buile Shuibhne}.}

In Malory’s account, Merlin goes mad with love for the nymph Vivien, and is subsequently imprisoned in a rock, but Jones surprisingly suggests an alternate tradition, which derives Merlin’s madness from his witnessing the bloody battle of Arderydd, related in Geoffrey of Monmouth’s poem, the 	extit{Vita Merlini} (IP 204, n.12). Another witness of a bloody battle, the bard Aneirin, is alluded to in the image of “young men reaped like green barley”; in 	extit{Y Gododdin}, Aneirin describes the slaughter with the image of “Princes falling like green barley on the ground” (Anwyl 130). The reaping of men suggests the complex of ancient fertility rites discussed in Frazer’s 	extit{The Golden Bough},
which yields the image of “perilous bough plucking” in which the priests of Nemi were murdered by their successors.

For the title of Part 6, “Pavilions & Captains of Hundreds”, Jones directs the reader to “Malory and Historical Books of OT”, suggesting he wishes to evoke Biblical and Arthurian battles without suggesting a specific text. The opening passage of Part 6 consists of paratactic quotations from several books of Malory, having in common the theme of preparing for battle:

And bade him be ready and stuff him and garnish him ... 
and laid a mighty siege about ... and threw many great engines ... and shot great guns ... and great purveyance was made on both parties. (IP 135)

The discontinuity between the quotations conveys a sense of chaos and fragmentation. Jones’s insertion of the phrase “and shot great guns” has the double effect of modernising the Malorian allusions while giving the illusion that the phrase itself is found in Malory. This allusive passage reverses Jones’s allusive technique throughout In Parenthesis as a whole, where the web of medieval allusions is embedded in the modernist narrative of twentieth-century material.

As the gunners and drivers make ready for the impending assault on Mametz Wood, Jones again quotes Malory: “And so on the morn Elias the Captain came” (IP 136). In book X, chapter xxix of Morte Darthur, Elias comes to King Mark to warn him of the arrival of Sir Tristram: “So on the morn Elias the captain came, and bad King Mark: Come out and do battle, for now the good knight Sir Tristram is entered it will be shame to thee, said Elias, for to keep thy walls” (v. 2: 21). Jones usually omits direct
references to specific characters in the *Morte Darthur* in order to render the allusion more universal, but this figure evoked for Jones an actual Captain Tom Elias "who, one morning in July, came to bid them all do battle" (Hughes, "Straight Reporting" 164).

The most striking example of Jones’s use of Malorian allusion and quotation occurs when the “Distressed artillery Lieutenant” arrives at ‘B’ Company to deliver the suicidal battle plans for Mametz Wood. The events are reported by Private Saunders:

> After a while he saw men wearing the sewn-on triangle and the sign he sought and he came to ‘B’ Company’s lines. He gave them the latest as he had heard tell of the devising of this battle … and in what manner it should be. He said that there was a hell of a stink at Division – so he had heard from the Liaison Officer’s groom – as to the ruling of this battle – and the G.S.O.2 who used to be with the 180th that long bloke and a man of great worship was in an awful pee – this groom’s brother Charlie what was a proper crawler and had some posh job back there reckoned he heard this torf he forgot his name came out of ther Gen’ral’s and say as how it was going to be a first clarst bollocks and murthering of Christen men and reckoned how he’d throw in his mit an’ be no party to this so-called frontal attack never for no threat nor entreaty, for now, he says, blubbin’ they reckon, is this noble fellowship wholly mischieffed.

> Fall of it what may said this Big-head.
Alas said this staff-captain.

Ah dam said this staff major.

Alas alas said Colonel Talabolion. (*IP* 138)

Here, the Malorian language is seamlessly embedded in modern discursive language, raising the emotional pitch of the Lieutenant’s speech. On the level of mimetic discourse, Malorian language is unrealistic in the mouth of a distressed Lieutenant, but its presence suggests a sudden eruption of archetypal meaning through the surface of everyday language. On the allusive level, the lieutenant’s speech echoes that of Sir Gawaine and Sir Gareth in Malory XX, chapter I, when they lament the decision of Agravaine and Mordred to inform Arthur of Launcelot’s adulterous affair with Guenevere: “Alas, said Sir Gawaine and Sir Gareth, now is this realm wholly mischieved, and the noble fellowship of the Round Table shall be disparray¹³: so they departed” (v. 2: 340). In a letter to H.S. Ede (7 March 1935), Jones celebrates this chapter as “about the limit … the packed small room, the impotence of Gawain, Gareth and Co., the venom of Agravaine and the sense of imminent ruin in the space of the Hampstead tube lift. In fact from then on to the end of the book it’s all simply matchless” (*Dai* 65). The allusion strengthens the sense of impending disaster, situating the Battle of Mametz Wood in the context of Camlann before the battle even begins.

Malorian syntax and vocabulary are even more seamlessly embedded in the poem than are the straightforward allusions. Bernard Bergonzi characterises Jones’s style as “a flowing descriptive prose largely derived from Malory, interspersed with the cockney that serves as the lingua franca of army life” (195). Jones’s style, however, is more than a

¹³ *Disparply* = scattered.
derivation, as a direct comparison with Malory reveals. In Part 4, the Tommies perform their routine duties, and Jones describes the process of rifle-cleaning:

Then was a pulling through of barrels and searching of minute vents and under-facets with pins, and borrowing of small necessaries to do with the care of arms. Then began prudent men to use their stored-up oil freely on bolt and back-sight-flange. And harassed men, and men ill-furnished, complained bitterly. And men improvising and adventurous slipped away along the traverses, to fetch back brimming mess-tin lids, or salvaged jam tins steaming. (*IP* 64)

Among the most striking syntactic features of this passage, the repetition of the conjunction *and*, the beginning of sentences with adverbial *then* followed by a verb, the inversion of modern subject (noun)-predicate (verb) order, are also typically found in Malory:

Then departed Sir Percivale from his aunt, either making great sorrow. And so he rode till evensong time. And then he heard a clock smite; and then he was ware of an house closed well with walls and deep ditches, and there he knocked at the gate and was let in, and he alit and was led unto a chamber, and soon he was unarmed. And there he had right good cheer all that night; and on the morn he heard his mass, and in the monastery he found a priest ready at the altar. (book XTV, chapter iii; i: 194)

Jones does not merely parody Malory’s style, as Joyce does in “The Oxen of the Sun” chapter of *Ulysses*, but incorporates it into his own. One distinguishing feature of Jones’s
style, the verbal noun, is not commonly used by Malory, but appears three times in the Jones passage: pulling, searching, and borrowing. The verbal noun is also a common feature of Middle Welsh prose literature, such as the *Mabinogion*, and Jones may be consciously adapting this syntactic feature to English prose. William Blissett observes that Jones uses the verbal noun "to convey progressive action", in this case the steps involved in the cleaning of a gun ("Syntax" 200). The verbal adjective, also rare in Malory, is used freely by Jones, as in improvising, brimming, and steaming. This accumulation of verbal nouns and adjectives conveys a dual sense of "thinginess" and "happening", of many actions occurring simultaneously as the soldiers perform their routine activities. Jones's syntax suggests synchronic activity among the soldiers, and his adaptation of Malory's syntax evokes an allusive synchronicity with the Knights of the Round Table.

2.4 "So he opened the door": The *Mabinogion*.

*The Mabinogion* is the name given by Lady Charlotte Guest to a collection of medieval Welsh tales published under her name in three volumes between 1838 and 1849. Gwyn Jones and Thomas Jones, whose 1949 translation is considered authoritative, praise Guest's edition as "a charming and felicitous piece of English prose", although marked by "the absence of texts, the lack of strict scholarship, and the ever-present sense of an undertaking ad usum filioli" (xxvii). The Welsh texts are found in two manuscripts, *The White Book of Rhydderch* (1300-1325) and *The Red Book of Hergest* (1375-1425), with the exception of the sixteenth-century *Taliesin* (ix). The name *mabinogion* is a modern one given by Lady Guest to the eleven tales she published; the
form *mabynogyon* occurs once in the manuscripts, but is now considered a scribal error for the more common form *mabinogi* (ix-x). Four of the tales, *Pwyll*, *Branwen*, *Manawydan*, and *Math* form the four branches of the *mabinogi*, while the remaining seven are unrelated romances and tales. *Mabinogi* is believed to be derived from *mab*, meaning youth, and "meant first 'youth,' then a 'tale of youth,' then a 'tale of a hero', and finally little more than 'tale' or 'story'" (xii). The standard modern edition is that of Sir Ifor Williams, *Pedeir Keinc Y Mabinogi*, which appeared in 1939, two years after *In Parenthesis*. For *In Parenthesis*, Jones uses the Guest translation, and of the four branches only draws upon *Branwen*, in which Bran the Blessed leads a military expedition to Ireland to rescue his sister Branwen, who suffers grievous insults at the hands of the Irish. Of the remaining tales, the most important for David Jones were *Kilhwch and Olwen* for its portrait of a primitive, heroic Arthur, *The Dream of Macsen Wledig* for its romantic vision of Roman Britain, and *Peredur Son of Evrawc*, a Welsh romance of Sir Percivale, the knight who in early versions of the Grail legend achieves the Quest.

The tale of *Branwen the Daughter of Llyr* provides the epigraph which Jones in his notes designates as the Prologue:

> Evil betide me if I do not open the door to know if that is true which is said concerning it. So he opened the door ... and when they had looked, they were conscious of all the evils they had ever sustained, and of all the friends and companions they had lost and of
all the misery that had befallen them, as if
all had happened on that very spot; ... and
because of their perturbation they could not
rest.

After returning from Ireland in *Branwen*, the companions of Bran feast day and night in
Gwales with Bran’s singing head, on condition they do not open a certain door. Jones
characteristically omits details which would localise this passage within the narrative in
order to foreground its wider emotional significance:

One day said Heilyn the son of Gwynn, “Evil betide me, if I do not open
the door to know if that is true which is said concerning it.” So he opened
the door and looked towards Cornwall and Aber Henvelen. And when
they had looked, they were conscious of all the evils they had ever
sustained, and of all the friends and companions they had lost, and of all
the misery that had befallen them, as if all had happened on that very spot;
and especially of the fate of their lord. (47)

By leaving out these markers of character and place, Jones draws out the universal and
archetypal resonances of the passage, presenting a vision of consciousness as the
knowledge of grief and loss.

What follows in *Branwen* elaborates the consequences of Heilyn’s transgression,
and forms a major part of the allusive texture of Dai’s Boast in Part 4 of *In Parenthesis*:

And because of their perturbation they could not rest, but journeyed forth
with the head towards London. And they buried the head in the White
Mount, and when it was buried, this was the third goodly concealment;
and it was the third ill-fated disclosure when it was disinterred, inasmuch as no invasion from across the sea came to this island while the head was in that concealment. (47)

Heilyn’s transgression in opening the door is eventually followed by the transgression of disinterring Bran’s head, which the Triads attribute to Arthur (see below). Where Heilyn acts out of curiosity, Arthur acts from pride, the implications of which are explored fully in Dai’s Boast. Jones’s Prologue suggests that *In Parenthesis* opens the door on evils sustained and companions lost “and of all the misery that had befallen them”.

*Manawydan’s Glass Door* is the title Jones gave to a 1931 water-colour painting which depicts a seascape seen through a closed window. The numinuousness of Jones’s watercolour style suggests, “even without the allusive title, that there is more in this than mere physical appearances” (Blamires *Artist and Writer* 56). Commenting on this numinous quality, Derek Shiel and Jonathan Miles suggest that “We seem to be in a kind of magic realm as Jones looks through the windows towards the French coast and perhaps ponders over memories of the First World War” (122). These memories were flooding Jones’s consciousness as he wrote *In Parenthesis* and continuously painted during the late 1920’s and early 1930’s. The image of a glass door suggests psychological fragility; Jones suffered his first nervous breakdown in 1932. The Prologue not only evokes the profound sorrow of those who survived the Great War, but also hints at the enormous psychic price Jones paid in opening the door on his own painful memories to write *In Parenthesis*.

The legend of *Kilhwch and Olwen* furnishes Jones’s imagination with the Twrch Trwyth, a monstrous boar that devestates Britain and Ireland before being subdued by
Arthur. In Welsh tradition, the Boar is actually a king transformed by God for an unnamed transgression, but his mythical precedents run deep in Celtic culture, and include the Torc Triath, king of the boars in the Irish Book of Invasions (MacKillop 41). Arthur’s pursuit of the boar is treated in Jones’s later poem, The Hunt, where the Boar becomes symbolic of the cultural and cosmic powers of chaos. Throughout In Parenthesis, the Twrch Trwyth symbolises a natural destructive force outdone by the mechanical devastation of the Great War itself. Jones in his note identifies the boar with the animal kingdom: “He and his brood seem to typify the wrath of the beasts of the earth – and his name stands in Celtic myth like the Behemoth of Job” (IP 211, n. 40). This dichotomy between the mechanistic destruction of war and the “wrath of the beasts” is made explicit in an allusion in Part 7: “Properly organised chemists can let make more riving power than ever Twrch Trwyth...” (IP 155). Thomas Dilworth identifies Twrch Trwyth with “Ares, who takes the form of the boar to kill Adonis in classical myth” (SM 91-2).

The Boar makes his first appearance amid intensive shelling in Part 4, as the narrative surface is interrupted by allusion to “Kilhwich and Olwen”:

They say that when Boar Trwyth broke the land, by Esgier Oerwel, with a fifth part of Ireland; who in his going by destroyed indifferently, men and animals, and the King’s son there, Llaesgeven who was good for no one, got off without a scratch, to come safe home again. The ingenious Menw, despite his craft, was a sick man all his life after because of the poisons loosed. The two auxiliaries who were swift and
useful were not seen again after that passage, when the quiet
came again with the sudden cessation – in the tensioned
silence afterwards you couldn’t find a rag of them –
only someone complaining about a broken revetting-frame. (IP 86)
The allusion generates a sense of disorientation while suggesting a mythological chaos
which evokes the chaos of shelling more powerfully than straightforward narrative. In
the figure of Menw, the mythological and modern narratives eerily merge with each
other. The narrator of “Kilhwch and Olwen” tells how “the boar rose up angrily and
shook himself so that some of his venom fell upon Menw, and he was never well from
that day forward” (Guest 129). In In Parenthesis, Menw is poisoned by gas, or seems to
be; the narrative ambiguity introduces an indeterminacy which renders his presence
unlocatable on either the level of myth or realistic narrative. This incorporation of
material from The Mabinogion foreshadows Jones’s technique in Dai’s Boast.

2.5 Dai’s Boast

The allusive texture of In Parenthesis finds its crystallisation in Dai’s Boast at the
centre of the poem. The figure of Dai Greatcoat functions as surrogate within the poem
for Jones himself, known to friends as Dai, and also suggests Dai de la Cote Male Taile
from the Morte Darthur (Dilworth SM 109; Sherry, “Ineluctable” 228). Jones
consciously associates the boast with Welsh and English traditions; he alludes to Welsh
traditions of Arthur from Kilhwch and Olwen and Nennius, as well as Branwen and the
Triads; he also alludes to Malory’s version of the waste land legend, and the demise of
the Round Table. Dai’s Boast is, in one sense, the revelation of human sorrow described
in the Prologue, a connection emphasised by the shared allusive source in *Branwen*.

Vincent Sherry feels “Dai speaks as a kind of Universal Soldier, viewing life through the metaphor of war and managing to condense aeons of human experience into his own timeless present” (“Ineluctable” 227).

In his note, Jones writes that he associates Dai’s Boast with Taliesin’s boast at the court of Maelgwn, the boast of Glewlywyd, Arthur’s porter, and the boast of Widsith. In the legend of *Taliesin*, the poet visits the court of Maelgwn to confound the learned bards with his own poetry, which has the power to free his lord Elphin from Maelgwn’s prison. He boasts:

> I was with my Lord in the highest sphere,

> On the fall of Lucifer into the depth of hell

> I have borne a banner before Alexander;

> I know the names of the stars from north to south

> I have been on the galaxy at the throne of the Distributor;

> I was in Canaan when Absalom was slain;

> I conveyed the Divine Spirit to the level of the vale of Hebron;

> I was in the court of Don before the birth of Gwydion (Guest 273)

In contrast to the cosmological and mythological content of Taliesin’s boast, that of Widsith belongs to the world of the heroic north:

> I was with the Franks and the Frisians and the Frumtings, the Rugians and the Glommas and the Rommas. Likewise I was in Italy with Aelfwine: he had of all men of whom I have heard the readiest hand for deed of praise,
a heart most liberal in the giving of rings, of shining armlets – the son of Eadwine! (Chambers 212)

Glewglwyd in *Kilhwch and Olwen* boasts of his long service, but unlike Widsith, his list includes places belonging to the world of romance:

> Half my life is past, and half of thine. I was heretofore in Kaer Se and Asse, in Sach and Salach, in Lotor and Fotor; and I have been heretofore in India the Greater and the Lesser; and I was in the Battle of Dau Ynyr, when the twelve hostages were brought from Llychlyn. And I have also been in Europe, in Africa, and in the islands of Corsica, and in Caer Brythwch, and Brythach, and Verthach; and I was present when thou didst slay the family of Clis the son of Merin, and when thou didst slay Mil Du the son of Ducum, and when thou didst conquer Greece in the East. And I have been in Caer Oeth and Annoeth, and in Caer Nevenhyr; nine supreme sovereigns, handsome men, saw we there, but never did I behold a man of equal dignity with him who is now at the door of the portal. (Guest 99)

Jones also has in mind Christ’s words in John viii, 58: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am” (King James Version). These four texts can all be considered boasts, and run from the oracular (Jesus) through the heroic (Widsith) and romance (Glewglwyd) modes. Taliesin’s boast, although embedded in a romance, contains oracular material, and interpreters of the poem have tended to read it either as a playful romance parody of the learned or heroic boast, or as a solemn oracle hinting at
lost traditions, possibly of druidic origin.¹⁴ Northrop Frye identifies oracular poetry with the mythic mode, in which “The poet’s visionary function, his proper work as a poet, is on this plane to reveal the god for whom he speaks” (Anatomy 55). For Christians, Jesus’s words are understood as a revelation of His identity with God, a kind of absolute oracle. The boast of Widsith belongs to the high mimetic tradition of heroism, while Glewglwyd’s belongs to romance.

Dai Greatcoat draws upon all these traditions, but his boast is primarily an oracular revelation of the mysterious operation of God’s will in history, never more mysterious than in war itself. This interpretation finds support in Thomas Dilworth’s characterisation of Dai’s Boast as “a rhetorical approximation of the central event of epic, the descent to the underworld, which is really a visit to the past in order to learn the future” (SM 108). Dai’s ambiguous relationship to war is noted by Vincent Sherry, who remarks that Dai “confounds our ideas of human agency and passivity in war; this paradox of active passivity performs a sharp twist on the vision of soldier as passive victim” (“Ineluctable” 230). For Jones, the moral status of war depends upon whether it is in some sense defensive or mainly aggressive. In “Art in Relation to War,” Jones controversially argues that “as artists, we cannot deny, in as far as any art still resides in war, that the art of war is capable, at all events, of a form-creating quality” and that “any hunger for any art-form is a good in itself” (DG 132; 133-4). Dai boasts “I was in

¹⁴ For contemporary explorations of the oracular nature of this poetry, see the introduction to Patrick Ford’s edition of the Ystoria Taliesin (1992) and Sarah Lynn Higley’s Between Languages: The Uncooperative Text in Early Welsh and Old English Poetry (1993).
Michael’s trench when Lucifer bulged his primal salient out”; Lucifer’s war of rebellion enacts chaos and sin, but Michael’s defense of heaven serves the formal goodness of cosmic order (*IP* 84). St. Michael was especially important to David Jones, who took his name at confirmation; the title of *In Parenthesis*, Part 3, “Starlight Order”, is from Hopkins’s “The Bugler’s First Communion”, in the stanza addressed to St. Michael as “Frowning and forefending angel-warder” (17; *Poetical Works* 162). This allusion to Christian cosmology is the climax of an oracular revelation mediated, for the most part, through a web of allusions to medieval history and literature, particularly that of Wales.

The Middle Ages provide a source of collective memory and poetic *materia* which Jones reconstitutes through Dai’s boast, placing the *traddodiad* in a cosmic and metaphysical context. Jones carefully embeds the boast in the social world of the trenches, following the boasts of an old soldier who “knew these parts back in ‘14” and a counter-boast made on behalf of Nobby Clark, whose family has served in the regiment for centuries. In recognising the oral and performative origin of the genre, Jones also evokes the overwhelmingly oral vernacular culture of the Middle Ages. The poem’s multiple voices, allusions to songs and ballads, and its evocation of a shared verbal culture through its use of cockney and slang all suggest the popular folk culture of medieval Britain.

In its *materia*, Dai’s Boast moves from history to myth, replicating in miniature the movement of *In Parenthesis* from the low mimetic to the oracular. Anthony Conran argues that “*In Parenthesis* traces a progression from the low mimetic of its opening through the ironic tragedy of its denouement to the appearance of myth at its close”, and, as Thomas Dilworth indicates, Dai’s Boast “comes close to being the entire work in
microcosm” (Conran 93; SM 108). The opening of the boast alludes to the battle of Crécy, in which Welsh and English soldiers fought together in France – an image of the “unity of the Island” in which the two peoples fight alongside each other, rather than as opponents, as they do in *Y Gododdin*:

My fathers were with the Black Prinse of Wales

at the passion of

the blind Bohemian king.

They served in these fields,

it is in the histories you can read it, Corporal – boys

Gower they were – it is writ down –yes. (*IP* 79)

Jones’s sympathies are clearly with “the blind Bohemian king” who, through allusion to his “passion,” becomes a type of Christ. Dai identifies the “histories” as his source, a technique employed by Geoffrey of Monmouth, whose own histories provided Wales with an early sense of identity through constructing a national mythology (John Davies 123).

That Dai’s Boast is an oracle in the ironic mode is suggested by the joking Cockney interruption, “Wot about Methusalem, Taffy?” Dai responds by adopting the formula of Taliesin, claiming “I was with Abel when his brother found him, / under the green tree”, an allusion to Genesis mediated through Malory XVII, v. Malory relates the legend that Eve took with her a bough from the Tree of Knowledge after being expelled from Eden (*IP* 79). She planted the bough, which grew into a white tree until she engaged in sexual relations with Adam, whereupon it turned green. “And so it befell many days after, under the same tree Cain slew Abel, whereof befel great marvel. For
anon as Abel had received the death under the green tree, it lost the green colour and became red; and that was in tokening of the blood” (2, 243). The tree’s changing colours betoken loss of innocence, and Dai is significantly present at the moment this is wrought by violence. In claiming to be “the spear in Balin’s hand / that laid waste King Pellam’s land” (IP 79), the spear of Longinus that maimed King Pellam and so made the land waste, Dai implicitly identifies himself with the Roman power that crucified Christ. Although this might seem at odds with the claim that he was “in Michael’s trench,” the power of Rome unknowingly became an instrument of redemption through the crucifixion, just as the maiming of King Pellam was a necessary condition for Galahad’s seeking and finding the Holy Grail.

The Bohemian king and King Pellam are the first in a series of figures who could be characterised as displaced Christs, or analogues for the suffering Jesus. They are all representative of medieval culture, and reflect how deeply the Passion narrative was embedded in the imaginative life of the Middle Ages. The series includes an obscure figure like Derfel Gadarn (or Gatheren), whose statue was the focus of the “engaging optimism” of medieval piety; “In the iconoclasm under T. Cromwell this image was used at Smithfield for the martyrdom of John Forest, the Greenwich Franciscan” (IP 208, n.B); that the allusion will be missed by most readers, even Welsh ones, only emphasises the lack of unity and connection with the past among modern readers. The Welsh believed that “Derfel’s suffrages could fetch souls from their proper place,” and Vincent Sherry draws attention to this feat of “gathering souls” in relation to Jones’s substitution of Gatheren for Gadarn (“Ineluctable” 235). Sherry sees in this legend a strong analogue for Christ’s Harrowing of Hell (“Ineluctable” 235). Significantly, Dai does not identify
himself with any of the possible analogues for Christ, and Jones, in a letter to Rene Hague, rejects Wilfred Owen's identification of soldierly suffering with that of Christ's Passion (Dai 245). Dai next alludes to Roland, and identifies himself with the "south air" blown too late through the Olifant. The allusion to the Chanson de Roland reminds readers that the French recovery of Spain for Christendom is primarily a (defensive) response to the conquest of Spain by Islam, an advance on Europe halted only by the victory of Charles Martel, Charlemagne's grandfather, at Tours in 732.

The boast's initial Arthurian allusion is to the beginning of the end of the Arthurian world, where Dai identifies himself as

I the adder in the little bush
whose hibernation-end
undid,
unmade victorious toil (IP 80),
an allusion to the snake-bite which, according to Malory, initiates the Battle of Camlann, in which Arthur is killed:

Right soon came an adder out of a little heath bush, and it stung a knight on the foot. And when the knight felt him stung, he looked down and saw the adder, and then he drew his sword to slay the adder, and thought of none other harm. And when the host on both parties saw that sword drawn, and they blew beamous, trumpets, and horns, and shouted grimly. And King Arthur took his horse, and said: Alas this unhappy day! and so rode to his party. And Sir Mordred in likewise. And never was there seen a more dolefuller battle in no Christian land; for there was but rushing and
riding, foining and striking, and many a grim word was there spoken either
to other, and many a deadly stroke. (XXI, v; 386)

The allusion to the snake-bite suggests what I have argued is the central theme of Dai’s
Boast, the mysterious operation of God’s will in history, a preoccupation shared by the
Middle Ages; in the context of early Britain, for example, St Gildas sees the Saxon
victories as punishment for the iniquity of the Britons (Gildas 20). In the legendary
Welsh history that grows from the writings of Gildas and Nennius, the “victorious toil”
of Arthur is “unmade” at Camlann. Dai lists Arthur’s twelve victories as listed by
Nennius, recovering a tradition lost in the wake of Arthur’s final defeat and the “centuries
long defeat” of his people. Nennius’s Arthur is the dux bellorum who “with all the kings
and military force of Britain, fought against the Saxons” (Nennius 28). Significantly,
Nennius concludes his account of Arthur’s twelve victories by observing that “no
strength can avail against the will of the Almighty” (28). Following the reference to
Nennius’s semi-historical Arthur, Dai’s boast turns to the world of myth; that is, the boast
moves from the low-mimetic to the mythic and oracular.

Dai’s powerful hymn to Helen of the Hosts, a Welsh mythical figure, evokes the
Roman dimension of Welsh tradition. She is patroness of the viae, or Roman roads, and
the soldiers who march upon them:

I am the Loricated Legions.\(^{15}\)

Helen Camulodunum is ours;

she’s the toast of the Rig’ment,

\(^{15}\) “Loricated Legions”, Jones tells us, is the Welsh name for both the Roman soldiers and
those led by Arthur (208, n. H).
she is in an especial way our Mediatrix.

She's clement and loving; she’s Friday’s child, she’s loving and giving;

O dulcis imperatrix.

Her ample bosom holds:

Pontifex maximus,

 Comes Litoris Saxonici,

 Comes Britanniarum,

 Gwledig,

 Bretwald, as these square-heads say.

She's the girl with the sparkling eyes,

she's the Bracelet Giver,

she's a regular draw with the labour companies,

whereby the paved army paths are hers that grid the island which is

her dower.

Elen Luyddawg she is – more she is than Helen Argive. (IP 80-1)

In The Dream of Maxen Wledig, a tale included in Guest’s Mabinogion, the Emperor Maxen dreams of a beautiful woman, Helen, and travels to Wales to wed her. After Britain is entrusted to her father,
Helen bethought her to make high roads from one castle to another throughout the Island of Britain. And the roads were made. And for this cause they are called the roads of Helen Luddyawc, that she was sprung from a native of this island, and that the men of the Island of Britain would not have made these great roads for any save for her. (Guest 86-7)

In his note on Helen Luyddawg, Jones characterises her as “quasi-historical – so she seems to be discerned, a majestic figure out of the shadows of the last ages in Roman Britain” (IP 209, n.1); she thus belongs to the same cultural complex as Y Gododdin, in which Jones saw echoes of the marching legions (191, n.4). Jones’s paean to Helen Luddyawc, recognisably in the Welsh tradition of praise poetry, identifies her with the Virgin (as “Mediatrix”), and her generosity and patronage of the soldiers places her in a higher moral category than Helen Argive, who is typically, if misogynistically, blamed for the Trojan War.

In his radio broadcast “The Viae,” Jones observes that “There is always a Virgo Potens to direct the via” (E&A 195). He suggests that we have to posit some kind of archetypal ‘Elen’ from remote Celtic antiquity to wholly account for the splendour attaching to Elen Luyddog (Helen of the Hosts) after whom the viae were called the Roads of Helen of the Hosts; and there are on the map of Wales sections of Roman road still called Sarn Elen, Helen’s highway.16 (E&A 195)

16 Although Welsh mythology associates Elen Luyddawc with the roads, the phrase sarn Elen is now believed to be derived from sarn elin, meaning an angled [Roman] road, as distinct from Y Lleng (“the legions”), the normal Welsh name for straight Roman roads
“Her ample bosom” is imagined holding “Pontifex maximus,” normally a title of the Pope, but here it would seem to allude to Bran the Blessed, who became a “great bridge” to allow his men to cross a river while campaigning in Ireland; his generosity in providing his men with a bridge parallels Helen’s gift of roads (Guest 41-2). “Comes Littoris Saxonici” (“Count of the Saxon Shore”) and “Comes Britanniarum” (“Count of the Britons”) both suggest the figure of Arthur. R.G. Collingwood speculates that the historical Arthur, called by Nennius dux bellorum, may have been commander of “a mobile field-army of the kind which, early in the fifth century, had been commanded by the comes Britanniarum” (321-2). Gwledig carries the sense in Welsh of lord or king, and so includes both traditions of Arthur as leader and king. Helen Luyddawc thus becomes a matrix as well as a mediatrix, presiding over and including those elements of Welsh culture which connect with Rome and its legions, and by analogy with modern British soldiers as well.

The following layer of allusion builds on the mythology of Bran, of which the Prologue to In Parenthesis represents a small part. Dai Greatcoat identifies himself with the working party detailed to inter Bran’s head in London, evoking all those working parties of the Great War, as well as those “labour companies” who built the Roman roads under Helen’s directive:

(its evidence of the antiquity of Wales’s linguistic and cultural inheritance). There is also in Breton tradition a goddess of roads named Ahes (MacKillop 157). See Rachel Bromwich’s discussion of Elen’s association with St Helena in Trioedd Ynys Prydein (1978 ed., 341-2).
I saw the blesséd head set under
that kept the narrow sea inviolate.

To keep the Land,
to give the yield:

under the White Tower,

I trowelled the inhuming mortar. (81)

In *The Mabinogion*, Bran’s men “buried the head in the White Mount, and when it was buried, this was the third goodly concealment; and it was the third ill-fated disclosure when it was disinterred, inasmuch as no invasion from across the sea came to this island while the head was in that concealment” *(Guest 47).*17 The “third ill-fated disclosure” was made by none other than Arthur himself: “Arthur disclosed the Head of Brân the Blessed from the White Hill, because it did not seem right to him that this Island should be defended by the strength of anyone, but by his own” *(Bromwich, *Trioedd* 89).*

Bran’s role in keeping the Land relates his myth to the whole complex of waste land mythology, enforced by the subsequent prayer to “Let maimed kings lie”. The artisans are portrayed here as “keepers,” staving off the wasting of the land:

beneficent artisans knew well how to keep

the king’s head to keep

the land inviolate. (*IP* 81-2)

17 See Triads 37 and 37R in *Trioedd Ynys Prydein* for “Three Concealments and Three Disclosures of the Island of Britain” (1978, 88ff.).
In contrast to the artisans, Arthur extends “his imperium” out of pride and brings ruin to the Island by disinterring Bran’s head, determined to preserve Britain through his strength alone:

The Bear of the Island: he broke it in his huge pride, and
over-reach of his imperium.
The Island Dragon
The Bull of Battle

(this is the third woeful uncovering). (IP 82)

This Arthur is presented from a peculiarly Welsh perspective as an overbearing war-leader, not as the romantic King of English tradition. He thus provides an analogy for the aggressive Staff of the Great War, a sort of parody of General Haig, whose strategic pride so often cost the lives of ordinary infantrymen.

Praise and prayer, absent from strictly heroic boasts like that of Widsith, form an important part of Dai’s oracular utterance. In addition to his paean to Helen of the Hosts, Dai also prays for the preservation of Bran’s head:

Let maimed kings lie – let be
O let the guardian head
keep back – bind savage sails, lock the shield-wall, nourish
the sowing. (IP 82)

The prayer moves from optative statement to an apostrophe to Brân, identified with Britain itself:

O Land! – O Brân lie under.
The chrism’d eye that watches the French-men
that wards under
that keeps us
that brings the furrow fruit,
keep the land, keep us
keep the islands adjacent. (*IP 82*)

This is a prayer not only for the defense of Britain, but for the integrity of its inhabitants.

There follows an account of the depletion of the men of Britain through "expeditionary war" which has a clear analogue with the losses suffered during the Great War, as Thomas Dilworth has recognised (*SM 111*):

I marched, sixty thousand and one thousand marched, because of the brightness of Fflur, because of the keeper of promises

(we came no more again)

who depleted the Island,

(and this is the first emigrant host)

and the land was bare for our going.

O blessèd head hold the striplings from the narrow sea.

I marched, sixty thousand marched who marched for Ky-nan and Elen because of foreign machinations,

(we came no more again)

who left the land without the harness

(and this is the second emigrant host). (*IP 82-3*)
The allusion to the first and second emigrant hosts corresponds to Triad 35, "Three Levies that departed from this Island, and not one of them came back" (Bromwich, *Trioedd 75*), but as Thomas Dilworth has indicated, the third term is missing, suggesting that Jones intended this to be filled by the British Expeditionary Force (*SM* 111). Fflur is alluded to in Triad 67, "Three Golden Shoemakers of the Island of Britain", which includes "Caswallawn son of Beli, when he went to Rome to seek Fflur" (176) and Triad 71, "Three Lovers of the Island of Britain", which again mentions "Caswallawn son of Beli (for Fflur daughter of Ugnach (?) the Dwarf)" (189). She belongs to a lost tale which appears to have involved a rivalry between Caswallawn and Julius Caesar (Bromwich, *Trioedd 352*); Caswallawn’s seeking of Fflur in Rome symbolically reverses Maxen’s seeking of Elen in Wales.

The prayer to Brân continues, and Dai again prays for peace:

\[
O\text{ Brân confound the counsel of the councillors, } O \text{ blessèd head, hold the striplings from the narrow sea.}
\]

\[
\text{In the baized chamber confuse his tongue:}
\]

\[
\text{that Lord Agravaine.}
\]

\[
\text{He urges with repulsive lips, he counsels: he nets us into expeditionary war. (IP 83)}
\]

"Expeditionary war" is here clearly identified as an evil to be avoided. Lord Agravaine is a type of the bellicose Staff officer, who "urges with repulsive lips," inciting others to violence from a position of relative personal safety; Neil Corcoran’s ingenious suggestion that, in the context of the late 1930’s, Agravaine represents Churchill, is unlikely, given that the poem was essentially complete by 1932 (Corcoran, "Spilled Bitterness" 216).
After boasting he was present at the crucifixion with the "Dandy X" – significantly, the same regiment that accompanied Caesar to Britain – Dai then makes the claim discussed above, "I was in Michael's trench when Lucifer bulged his primal salient out". In contrast to the "expeditionary war" urged by Agravaine, Michael is here conducting a necessary war of defence. The poem thus builds up to a revelation of the cosmic archetype of all war, but the meaning of war, indeed of all wasting and destruction, is left for the reader to discover:

You ought to ask: Why,
what is this,
what is the meaning of this.
Because you don't ask,
although the spear-shaft drips,
there's neither steading – not a roof tree. (84)

The allusion is to the legend of Peredur, whose failure to ask the question of the Grail’s meaning leads to the wasting of the land. Dai’s ironic oracular boast thus throws its audience back upon itself, foregoing the certainties associated with oracular utterance, and insisting that the meaning of war, and of the experience of war, must be actively sought.

2.6 Conclusion

If Y Gododdin marks the inner circle of the traddodiad, which expands outward to include the tales of The Mabinogion, with Malory skirting its outermost limits, Le
*Chanson de Roland* lies well outside its compass, emerging out of the continental experience of Charlemagne’s Christian empire and the threat posed by Moslem expansion in the early Middle Ages. David Jones’s friend, the historian Christopher Dawson, sees in the *Chanson* “the old heroic tradition in the process of transformation under the influence of new religious ideals” (*Medieval Essays* 172). The *Chanson* provides Jones with the concluding lines of *In Parenthesis* and underlies Jones’s depiction of the death of Lieutenant Jenkins and John Ball’s relinquishment of his rifle in Part 7. There are personal reasons for Jones’s choice of the *Chanson* as a literary source, such as his visit to the Béarn country and that his friend René Hague translated the poem. Thematicallly, however, the *Chanson* has clear affinities with the other major medieval texts used by Jones, and it is these affinities I would like to consider by way of conclusion.

As elsewhere in *In Parenthesis*, the affinities work through analogy and contrast. For example, the battle between Saracens and Frenchmen offers an analogy for that between Britons and Saxons at Catraeth. However, despite the death of Roland and his companions, the French win a crushing victory upon the return of Charlemagne, whereas Catraeth marks the virtual annihilation of a whole society. The French invasion of Spain is, like the raid on Catraeth, essentially a pre-emptive strike to halt the further advance of an aggressor. In this respect, the French expedition to Spain is somewhat similar to British involvement on the western front, at least from the infantryman’s point of view, that of “the man who was on the field” (*IP* 187). More important, despite enormous

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casualties, the French are ultimately victorious, as are the Welsh soldiers at Mametz Wood; Catraeth and Camlann are powerful analogues for the slaughter at Mametz, but the analogy exhausts itself when we remember that the battle was a British victory, albeit a costly one. The total absence of triumphalism – or even mention of the battle’s outcome – throughout *In Parenthesis* acknowledges the paradox of war, that every victory is someone else’s defeat, and vice-versa.

Jones’s evocation of Roncevalles near the end of the poem, however, suggests that he recognised the imperfect fit between the Celtic traditions of defeat and the British victory at Mametz. It also suggests a certain restlessness in Jones’s imagination, a determination not to be bound by any one cultural complex, as he turns toward continental traditions to complement his obsession with the Matter of Britain and its antecedents. In the figure of Roland, who is analogously identified with both Lieutenant Jenkins and John Ball, the ambiguity between victory and defeat finds a kind of resolution. Roland is last of the many figures which I have called “displaced Christs” to appear in the poem, like the Welsh prince Llewelyn, who gain a kind of victory in defeat and death. His death in the *Chanson* opens the possibility for Christian victory, as Christ’s crucifixion opens the possibility for Redemption. David Jones was extremely wary of any analogy between Christ and a soldier, as the letter cited earlier suggests, but Roland is a dying hero who is typologically superseded by Christ, even though he comes after Christ in time. Roland is thus a pivotal figure in Jones’s imagination, pointing toward his cultural and religious pre-occupations in *The Anathemata* as the poet expands his sympathies beyond the *traddodiad* and Britain generally, to include the whole of western civilisation.
Chapter III

In the young time, in the sap years: The Anathémata I

The Anathémata’s bibliographic features proclaim its medievalism, at least in its original hard-cover edition. Its vellum-coloured dustjacket and plates which feature Jones’s medievalised lettering evoke the physical appearance of a manuscript, and like many medieval manuscripts, the poem gathers together diverse materials. David Jones announces his poem’s medievalism on the first page of his “Preface to The Anathémata”, quoting Nennius¹: “I have made a heap of all that I could find” (9). This quotation resonates with the poem’s subtitle, fragments of an attempted writing, suggesting that The Anathémata is intended to be read as a “heap” of “fragments”. This characteristic modesty is misleading, as Jones’s own comments indicate: “The title-page describes this book as ‘fragments of an attempted writing’ because that is an exact description of it. It had its beginnings in experiments made from time to time between 1938 and 1945” (Ana 14). Tom Goldpaugh, who is currently preparing an edition of the “Ur-Anathémata”, has scrutinised Jones’s manuscripts, and in a recent article shows the significance of his compositional methods, which involve the progressive insertion of new material in the middle of previously composed passages, creating a series of poems within poems, a process first recognised by Thomas Dilworth (Goldpaugh “Mapping”; Dilworth SM

¹ Or as he is now rather disappointingly called, Pseudo-Nennius; see David Dumville’s article “‘Nennius’ and the Historia Brittonum”, reprinted in Histories and Pseudo-Histories of the Insular Middle Ages, 79-95.
David Blamires sees the poem's "circularity of composition" as conveying "a profound sense of the unity and order of life in David Jones's view of the world, and it is no accident that so many of his quotations and allusions should be medieval in their origin, for it was during the Middle Ages in particular that this ordering was most strongly experienced" (Artist and Writer 124). Jones gathers together in The Anathémata those passages from his manuscripts which he was able to bring into formal unity. His quotation from Nennius should be understood, in part at least, as reflecting this process of selection.

The motivation given by Nennius for his writing, or compilation, offers commentary on Jones's own artistic goals:

He speaks of an 'inward wound' which was caused by the fear that certain things dear to him 'should be like smoke dissipated'. Further he says, 'not trusting my own learning, which is none at all, but partly from writings and monuments of the ancient inhabitants of Britain, partly from the annals of the Romans and the chronicles of the sacred fathers, Isidore,

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2 In conversation with me in 1998, Goldpaugh made the fascinating suggestion that Jones's method of composition anticipates contemporary hypertext technology, where certain words in an on-line text provide a "link" to new pages of text - texts-within-texts in a potentially infinite web of words. Goldpaugh characterised The Anathémata as an essentially hypertextual poem. In this sense, it looks forward to radical changes in the technology of the word, even as its physical appearance recalls the pre-Gutenberg culture of the scriptorium. The Anathémata's epigraph thus takes on bibliographic significance: "This prophecie Merlin shall make, for I liue before his time."
Hieronymus, Prosper, Eusebius and from the histories of the Scots and Saxons although our enemies ... I have lispingly put together this ... about past transactions, that [this material] might not be trodden under foot.'

(Ana 9; ellipses and brackets Jones's)

Jones identifies his own cultural anxiety with that of Nennius, implying an analogy between the civilisational breakdown of the Dark Ages and that of the twentieth century. Throughout Jones's poetry, lists and names appear as acts of recovery. This passage also offers a justification for Jones’s use of an astonishing array of sources to construct his poem. Nennius first pleads an ignorance paralleled by Jones’s own sense of being an autodidact, and then expresses a desire to preserve the past from obliteration. His ‘inward wound’ is a profound fear of oblivion, a motivation Jones recognises as central to the artist’s psychological make-up, and one which he experienced daily as a soldier on the western front. The contingency of the Historia Brittonum lies in its reliance on whatever sources its compiler had available to him, and this too is echoed by David Jones: “Part of my task has been to allow myself to be directed by motifs gathered together from such sources as have by accident been available to me and to make a work out of those mixed data” (Ana 9).

In this chapter and the one which follows, I will consider the importance “of those mixed data” which Jones derives from the Middle Ages for the cultural vision articulated in The Anathémata. To establish the interpretive context for Jones’s presentation of medieval culture in this present chapter, I begin by examining the motif of Gothic architecture in light of Spengler’s The Decline of the West, a crucial text for Jones throughout the 1940’s. Significant influences on Jones’s engagement with Spengler, I
will argue, are John Ruskin's nineteenth-century defence of Gothic architecture and Wilhelm Worringer's *Form in Gothic*, translated by Herbert Read in 1927. In contrast with Spengler's view of art as the mystical expression of a racial soul, Jones retains a rational, Thomist approach to human artefacture. Another significant point of departure from Spengler is Jones's view of the feminine as a nurturing, strengthening force in human culture, rather than a symptom of weakness and decadence. I conclude the opening section by considering the crucial relationship between site and culture which characterises, for Jones, an authentic, organic culture.

My reading of Part III, "Angle-Land", foregrounds Jones's macaronic technique as a strategy to give expression to the early settlement of eastern Britain by the Anglo-Saxon peoples, developing the motif of site and culture while emphasising the theme of British-German relations in the context of World War II. At the centre of my discussion is Christopher Dawson's comparison of Jones's macaronic style with the Hisperic Latin poetry of early medieval Ireland, a comparison also made by Umberto Eco in relation to Joyce's language in *Finnegans Wake*. I then consider Part V, "The Lady of the Pool" specifically as an evocation of medieval London, showing how Jones connects this particular site with the wider culture of the West. My reading concludes with an exploration of the importance of *Vexilla Regis*, a sixth-century Christian hymn, for Jones's poetry and its interpretation of the meaning of western culture.

3.1 David Jones and Spenglerian Gothic

The culture of the Middle Ages is invoked at the outset of the poem to contrast with the deadening effects of modernity, which appears in "Rite and Foretime" as an
empty repetition of outer forms, void of meaning. In spite of unpromising appearances, humanity's innately sacramental nature finds expression among those in attendance at the Mass, "These, at the sagging end and chapter's close, standing humbly before the tables spread, in the apsidal houses, who intend life" (Ana 49). The church's apse provides an architectural link to both the Romans and the Normans. René Hague notes that "the apse is first used in connection with Roman houses and public buildings, which were so built and laid out, with provision for a presiding magistrate, altar, etc., that from the fourth century onwards the pagan basilica could easily be adapted to the needs of the Christian ecclesia" (Commentary 16). He quotes from a letter where Jones claims that the apse was "the only good thing 'those goddam Norman panzer-gangs' brought us" (Commentary 16).

Modernity is "the sagging end" of a declining western culture, and Jones here articulates a vision of history inspired by Oswald Spengler's The Decline of the West. Jones first read Spengler in 1941, and the metaphistorian's gloomy prognostications fit well with his own cultural disillusionment during that decade. His assent to many of Spengler's theses concerning western history separates him most sharply from Christopher Dawson, who categorically rejected the Spenglerian vision. Between the wars, a sense of cultural decline was widespread, and certainly felt as much by Dawson as Spengler. From the latter Jones mainly acquired the important distinction between "culture" and "civilization", and a poetic identification of cultural with natural cycles. Jones grafts these empowering elements of Spengler's scheme onto a coherent interpretation of western culture rooted in the writings of Christopher Dawson and supported by his own considerable historical knowledge. The best discussion of the
relationship between Spengler’s ideas and David Jones’s poetry remains that of Jonathan Miles (*Backgrounds* 36-64). Miles shows how Spengler’s emphasis on the importance of site and his identification of the twentieth century as a period of late civilisation work their way into Jones’s poetry, but whereas Spengler saw only decline, Jones began “to seek for hope among the ruins” (64). Kathleen Henderson Staudt also explores the relationship between Jones, Dawson, Spengler, and Joyce in *At the Turn of a Civilization*, Chapter 6 (117-38) and between Jones and Spengler in “The Decline of the West and the Optimism of the Saints: David Jones’s Reading of Oswald Spengler” (in Mathias *David Jones: Artist and Poet*, 443-63).

In the opening scene of *The Anathémata*, the worshippers’ will to life raises them above the imitative and crudely made features of the church,

- between the sterile ornaments
- under the pasteboard baldachins
- as, in the young-time, in the sap-years:
- between the living floriations
- under the leaping arches. (*Ana* 49)

The will to life connects those in attendance with the worshippers of the Middle Ages, for whom architecture was an organic expression of shared faith and culture. Oswald Spengler, whose vision of historical decline infuses these lines, identifies the Middle Ages with the organic beginnings of western culture:

> Every Culture passes through the age-phases of the individual man. Each has its childhood, youth, manhood and old age. It is a young and trembling soul, heavy with misgivings, that reveals itself in the morning of
Romanesque and Gothic. It fills the Faustian landscape from the Provence of the Troubadours to the Hildesheim cathedral of Bishop Bernward. The spring wind blows over it. (I: 107)

In the modern era, the Faustian culture of the West hardens into a civilisation that can do no more than imitate its own earlier achievements:

At last, in the grey dawn of Civilization, the fire in the Soul dies down. The dwindling powers rise to one more, half-successful, effort of creation, and produce the Classicism that is common to all dying Cultures. The Soul thinks once again, and in Romanticism looks back piteously to its childhood; then finally, weary, reluctant, cold, it loses its desire to be, and, as in Imperial Rome, wishes itself out of the overlong daylight and back in the darkness of protomysticism, in the womb of the mother, in the grave.

(I: 108)

Spengler chillingly prophecies Germany’s nihilistic turn to darkness and death in the Third Reich but the cultural criticism offered by David Jones implicitly rejects Spengler’s fatalism.

Jones follows Spengler insofar as he sees in the neo-Gothic architecture of his modern church a dwindling romanticism looking helplessly back at authentic Gothic building. The modern era cannot escape from the mechanical repetition of forms typical of post-Industrial capitalism:

(Ossific, trussed with ferric rods, the failing numina of column and entablature, the genii of spire and triforium, like great rivals met when all is done, nod recognition across
Hague notes that this description gestures toward the architectural foundations of the West by alluding to Classical ("column and entablature") and Gothic ("spire and triforium") building (16), but the modern church is merely an imitative reproduction of these styles. The distinction between the modern and historical periods thus evoked corresponds to Spengler's contrast between vital "culture" and derivative "civilization". Jones complained to Hague in 1973 that this dichotomy "is a much neglected notion":

In a "culture" the "utile" and the "extra-utile" are, to this degree or that, married, inter-meddled, the maiden called "sign" or "sacrament" is not by any means wholly "forlorn" [...]. In a "civilization" the tendency is for the deep things of a true culture-phase to lose their signification, and while the outward forms may to some extent be observed or even, for imperialistic aims, deliberately "revived", yet the "utile" is in fact all that matters. (qtd. in Hague Commentary18)

What redeems this deadened and deadening civilisation in the poem is the presence of those worshippers "who will life" and the priest performing the Mass. Catholicism, as an expression of the sacramental nature Jones sees as innate in humanity, challenges modernity's reduction of human life to mechanical economic production. Jones has no illusions about the marginal status of the priest in modern society, analogous to the alienation of the artist: "The cult-man stands alone in Pellam's land: more precariously than he knows he guards the signa" (Ana 50).

Behind Jones's engagement with Spengler on the subject of Gothic architecture lies the Victorian medievalism exemplified by John Ruskin. For example, the "living
floriations” identified by David Jones as a salient feature of Gothic architecture echo Ruskin’s observations on Gothic ornament in *The Stones of Venice*:

In that careful distinction of species, and richness of delicate and undisturbed organization, which characterize the Gothic design, there is the history of rural and thoughtful life, influenced by habitual tenderness, and devoted to subtle inquiry; and every discriminating and delicate touch of the chisel, as it rounds the petal or guides the branch, is a prophecy of the development of the entire body of the natural sciences, beginning with that of medicine, of the recovery of literature, and the establishment of the most necessary principles of domestic wisdom and national peace. (104)

Building cannot be isolated from the society that produces it, and just as Ruskin identifies Gothic architecture with the intellectual achievements of scholasticism – both are characterised by the Aristotelian “careful distinction of species” – so David Jones identifies the neo-Gothic as embodying industrial modes of production in its derivative features, the “cramped repeats of their dead selves” (*Ana* 49). The early twentieth-century art critic Wilhelm Worringer, whose work stands at the source of Modernism when the reaction against Victorianism was new, similarly takes the nineteenth century to task for its appropriation of Gothic form: “As there was no longer any spiritual relation to the transcendental will to form, Gothic was only cherished for its structural and decorative values; and as restoration or as new construction that bare, lifeless, sober Gothic was created, which seems to have been conceived by a calculating machine instead of by the spirit” (*Form* 109).
Oswald Spengler, in contrast to Ruskin and Jones, sees the Gothic style as literally springing out of the northern European soil. Spengler’s dense style does not lend itself well to brief quotation, so I quote this passage in full:

The character of the Faustian cathedral is that of the forest. The mighty elevation of the nave above the flanking aisles, in contrast to the flat roof of the basilica; the transformation of the columns, which with base and capital had been set as self-contained individuals in space, into pillars and clustered-pillars that grow up out of the earth and spread on high into an infinite subdivision and interlacing of lines and branches; the giant windows by which the wall is dissolved and the interior filled with mysterious light – these are the architectural actualizing of a world-feeling that had found the first of all its symbols in the high forest of the Northern plains, the deciduous forest with its mysterious tracery, its whispering of ever-mobile foliage over men’s heads, its branches straining through the trunks to be free of earth. Think of Romanesque ornamentation and its deep affinity to the sense of the woods. The endless, lonely, twilight wood became and remained the secret wistfulness in all Western building forms, so that when the form-energy of the style died down – in late Gothic as in closing Baroque – the controlled abstract line-language resolved itself immediately into naturalistic branches, shoots, twigs and leaves. (I: 396)

Whereas Ruskin and Jones situate the Gothic in a historically determined cultural and economic environment, Spengler sees it as a fated expression of Faustian “world-feeling” rather than as a consciously achieved expression of faith and community. Ruskin praises
the Gothic for its naturalism, but Spengler characterises the Gothic as nature itself. In
Spengler’s proto-fascist aesthetic, the artist becomes an unconscious instrument of the
Germanic soul, an irrationalist view of art deeply at odds with Jones’s entirely rational
Thomism.

Jones reveals his rational and incarnational aesthetic in his lines lamenting the
passing of early Greek sculpture. Its like will not be seen for many centuries,

Not again
till the *splendor formarum*
when, under West-light
the Word is made stone. (*Ana* 93)

Wilhelm Worringer similarly sees in Gothic architecture an analogy with scholastic
philosophy, both expressing the same “will to form”:

It was not the result of thought, but the abstract process of the movement
of the result of thought, which bred in the scholastic that intellectual
ecstasy which stupefied and liberated him, – in the same way as the
abstract process of movement in the line, which he made visible in
ornament, or in the same way as the abstract process of movement in the
energies of stone, which he made visible in architecture. (*Form* 171)³

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³ The classic study of this relationship is Erwin Panofsky’s *Gothic Architecture and
Scholasticism* (1951). Panofsky argues that “Like the High Scholastic *Summa*, the High
Gothic cathedral aimed, first of all, at ‘totality’ and therefore tended to approximate, by
synthesis as well as elimination, one perfect and final solution …” (44).
Worringer's "abstract process of movement" here corresponds to Hopkins's conception of "instress", which Walford Davies characterises as "the active energy that binds parts to the 'inscape' as a whole", while "inscape" is "distinctive pattern, the relationship between parts that creates the integrity of the whole" (Hopkins, Poetry and Prose xxxvii-viii).

Like Ruskin and Worringer, Jones explicitly links Gothic ornamentation with scholastic philosophy, but by using the Latin terms, he foregrounds the otherness of medieval culture while offering textual mediation in that culture's own language. The reader may recognise that otherness, whether by incomprehension or by catching the allusion, but must consciously engage the text to understand it. It presupposes a reader ready to meet imaginatively the challenges of Jones's poetry and so participate in the creation of meaning. This recognition of both artist and reader as rational creatures is diametrically opposed to Spengler's view of art as an organic expression of the racial unconscious.

Jones in his note comments that he borrows Thomist vocabulary "to use it analogously and in a non-philosophical, everyday sense and in the plural of those visible 'forms' of artworks, which, after all, derive their outward 'splendour' from the forma, i.e. the unseen informing principle, referred to in the technical language of the definition" (Ana 43 n.1). He acknowledges the unseen, but insists on its presence in the contactual and tactile, not in some ethereal "world-feeling" as Spengler would have it. Authentic Christian mysticism is by necessity incarnational, growing out of humanity's bodily existence. Jones's poetry suggests that "the Word is made stone" when artists achieve meaningful form in their art, but this art is always the product of intellect and physical labour working in unison, not the spontaneous manifestation of a racial Soul.
The spiritual unity of the Middle Ages, in Ruskin’s and Jones’s view, made possible communal cultural achievements which, in modern times, give way to the fragmentary accomplishments of individual artists relegated to the margins of society. For Ruskin and Jones, medieval cultures evolve out of the close relationship between peoples and the land they inhabit, forming an organic society. This “history of rural and thoughtful life,” as Ruskin calls it, grows out of generations of sedentary existence. Spengler comments on the essential rootedness of the medieval social order: “While Priesthood is microcosmic and animal-like, Nobility is cosmic and plantlike (hence its profound connexion with the land). It is itself a plant, strongly rooted in the soil, established on the soil – in this, as in so many other respects, a supreme peasantry” (I: 343). Jones recognises, however, that societies do not spring from the soil, but are historically established through patterns of settlement and conquest. In “Rite and Foretime”, he shows how the culture of early medieval Britain is shaped by the contingencies of geological formation and the historical movement of peoples, as we shall see.

In *The Anathémata* as a whole, Jones’s medievalism formulates itself as a binary between culture and place, with woman as a mediating term. This thematic structure is a strongly marked feature of all of Jones’s later writing, most explicitly seen in “The Tutelar of the Place” from *The Sleeping Lord*. We have also seen it as the triad of Roman roads, Britain, and Helen of the Hosts, alluded to in Dai’s Boast. Woman as mediatrix is a pre-feminist representation, deeply rooted in the structure of traditional patriarchal families, and in Roman Catholicism, where Mary is approached as mediatrix between the sinner and God. In pre-Vatican II Catholicism, however, Mary was seen as more than mediatrix; as co-redeemer, she shares in Christ’s Redemption of humanity. Jones’s
representations of the feminine offer both mediation and redemption, as does Anna Livia Plurabelle in *Finnegans Wake*, and like Joyce, Jones celebrates feminine otherness in itself and as an abiding source of cultural and spiritual renewal (see Staudt, *Turn of a Civilization*, Chapter 7 for an exploration of “Feminine Presences in *The Anathemata*”).

Narrating an ancient sea voyage from Greece to Britain in Part II, “Middle-Sea and Lear-Sea”, David Jones asks if “the Delectable Korê” can be archetypally identified with the powerful and dangerous women of western culture and history, such as Eleanor of Aquitaine and Gwenhwyfar:

- is she Elenê Argive
- or is she transalpine Eleanore
- or our Gwenhwyfar (*Ana* 92)

Jones is tentatively suggesting the possibility of an archetypal western femininity enduring from Classical times through the Middle Ages and beyond. The beauty of the Korê is not found again until the High Middle Ages, and the statuary of Gothic cathedrals:

- Not again, not now again
- till on west-portals
- in Gallia Lugdunensis

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4 Hague writes of Eleanor that “her appearance here is justified by the magic that surrounded her in the eyes of those poets of whom one cannot be sure whether they were in love with the Holy Land, Helen of Troy or the Duchess of Aquitaine” (105). Thomas Dilworth suggests that Jones may also have had in mind Eleanor, wife of the last Llewelyn (*SM* 187).
when the Faustian lent is come
and West-wood springs anew
(and Christ the thrust of it!)
and loud sings West-cuckoo
(Polyamnia, how shrill!)
will you see her like
if then. (Ana 92)

Thomas Dilworth identifies the “portal” as “the Portail Royal of Chartres Cathedral, one which David Jones visited in 1933 with Eric Gill” (SM 188). Jones explains “Faustian lent” in relation to Spengler’s cyclical history, which as we have seen identifies the Middle Ages with dawn and springtime, when the west’s “young and trembling soul, heavy with misgivings,” reveals itself in Gothic splendour. Spengler too puts women at the centre of medieval art and piety:

The whole panorama of early Gothic mankind is pervaded by something maternal, something caring and patient, and Germanic-Catholic Christianity – when it had ripened into full consciousness of itself and in one impulse settled its sacraments and created its Gothic Style – placed not the suffering Redeemer but the suffering Mother in the centre of its world picture. (I: 267; italics Spengler’s)

Jones is more inclusive, characterising medieval Christendom as “Celto-Latin-Germanic-Western Christian culture” (Ana 92, n. 4) and not limiting feminine power to motherhood, but he shares Spengler’s sense of the feminine as typifying the cultural achievement of the Middle Ages. Spengler notes that in the middle of the thirteenth
century, "in the great epic of statuary in Reims Cathedral, the principal place in the centre of the main porch, which in the cathedrals of Paris and Amiens was still that of Christ, was assigned to the Madonna," a moment of triumph for the feminine in the western imagination (267-8).

3.2 Site and Culture

Balancing this archetypal femininity in Jones’s poetry is the figure of the hero, central for establishing a community in a given place. In considering the relationship between site and culture in North Wales, he presents its geological formation in relation to its later settlers, led by Cunedda Wledig:

Long, long, long before
(fifty thousands of winter calends?
fifty thousand calends of Maia before?)
the Lord Cunedda
conditor noster

filius Æterni, son of Padarn Red

Pexa, son of Tacitus, came south over the same terrain and by way of the terrain-gaps then modified or determined: for the viae are not independent of geology: that his hobnailed foederati, his twelve cantred-naming sons and himself, the loricated leader in his gaffer’s purple, might scrape from their issue caligae the mud of Forth into Conwy. (Ana 71)
Cunedda is a culture hero and founder of the Welsh nation, a conqueror analogous to that celebrated by St John Perse in his *Anabasis*; but whereas St John Perse’s Conqueror imposes his will regardless of landscape, the rugged geography of North Wales determines the route of the Roman roads followed by Cunedda’s army, whose fifth-century conquest established territorial boundaries still in effect today. Cunedda is a liminal figure, looking back to the Roman Empire and forward to the medieval Wales whose territorial princes claimed descent from him. Jones identifies his followers as “hobnailed *foederati*”, a tribal army under Roman authority, in the poet’s imagination wearing the legions’ *caligae*. He is also *gwr y gogledd*, a “man of the north”, hence his bringing “mud of Forth into Conwy”. J.E. Lloyd, citing Sir John Rhys, notes that Cunedda’s epithet, *gwledig*, may be “a Brythonic rendering of ‘dux’ and ‘comes’”, suggesting that he may have held an official post at the end of Roman Britain (99-100).

The image recalls Jones’s commentary on Aneirin’s imagery in *Y Gododdin*: “Perhaps he had ancestral memories of the garrison at the Wall; of the changing guard of the hobnailed Roman infantry” (191). Significantly, Lloyd connects Cunedda with Hadrian’s Wall (100). In *The Anathémata*, the “ancient unity” of Roman Britain is seen dispersing along the contours of the Welsh landscape, foregrounding the geological determinants of Welsh culture as much as the historical.

The Celtic and Roman origins of medieval Wales (and by implication, the whole of Britain south of the Tweed) are expressed as a physical birth:

*Combroges bore us:*

*tottering, experienced, crux-signed*

*old Roma*
the yet efficient mid-wife of us. (*Ana* 70-1)

Hague draws attention to Eliot's "Highbury bore me" (*Waste Land* 293) as Jones's source, and praises his concision: "The debt of Britain to Rome could not be expressed with greater concentration" (*Commentary* 68). Both Combroges, the tribe after whom the Cymry (the Welsh) are named, and Rome itself are gendered as female, and the birthing metaphor challenges Spengler's vegetative metaphor of social and cultural development. By using a birthing metaphor, Jones also suggests that women have played a crucial role not only as mothers, but in the active transmission of cultural values, more than merely passive victims of patriarchal history. Whereas Spengler's vegetative model of culture eliminates the mother altogether, Jones celebrates our maternal origins through metaphorical language linking history, culture, and the female body.

Jones returns to an exploration of the relationship between landscape and culture in situating the legend of Tristan and Iseult in the geological formation of the Cornish peninsula, alluding to the horse-king's *insulae*

to blanch

main and Ushant (*Ana* 97-8)

Mark (cf. Welsh *march*, "horse") was King over the Scilly islands. René Hague calls these lines "an admirable elegance" and insightfully remarks that "the rush of tides blanches the mainland of Brittany and the island of Ushant; but 'blanch' may also be taken as an adjective – white – and so represent Iseult Blanchmains ('main' too having a double meaning)" (*Commentary* 115). The particular phrasings of "west over Mark's main towards where Trystan's sands run out to land's last end" also "have a special
poignancy when we recall Tristan's last end when, as his 'sands were running out', Iseult Blanchmains deceived him, and he turned his face to the wall and died" (Ana 98; Hague Commentary 116). The strategy of evoking legend through geological features is more obviously pursued by Jones in his reclaiming of the Arthurian legend through identification with the terrain of Britain in "The Sleeping Lord", but here again Jones re-establishes the material origins of medieval romance by relating the Tristan legend to its land of origin. Jones implicitly recognises the tendency of romance to foreground fantasy at the expense of reality (we have seen his criticism of Spenser), diminishing its potentially revolutionary content. Thus the Matter of Britain is potentially an affirmation of a native British identity, but appropriated by the Anglo-Norman conquerors it becomes merely an exotic vehicle for their own erotic and martial preoccupations. In Jones's poetry, the geological reality of Britain is recognised as the material basis for the cultural legacy that would transform European literature from a heroic to a romantic one. Before the Norman Conquest creates new channels of cultural transmission, however, yet another cultural complex is introduced into Britain: that of the Anglo-Saxon peoples. In "Angle-Land", Jones explores the relationship between the Anglo-Saxons, the native Britons, and the land they must divide between them.

3.3 Angle-Land

"Angle-Land" narrates the change of eastern Britain into England during the early Dark Ages, a process foregrounded in the section's title. Jones presents the Anglo-Saxon migrations as the formation of a new unity between England and Germany, displacing the old unity between Britain and Rome that endures so powerfully in the literature of
medieval Wales (see "The Dream of Macsen Wledig", included in The Mabinogion, ed. Jones and Jones). This section is as much about the displacement and exile of the native British, soon to be called Welsh, as it is about the Anglo-Saxon settlements. Given that Jones worked on The Anathémata's manuscript draughts during the 1940's, the themes of British-German relations and displacement implicitly address the European trauma of World War II. With the exception of the ecological concerns addressed in "The Sleeping Lord", perhaps nowhere else in Jones's work is the present so clearly reflected by the past. Jones alludes to the war in the section's concluding lines as "the fratricides / of the latter day", and in the moving allusion to the brothers in Malory II, 18, who slew each other unawares:

(O Balin O Balan!

how blood you both

the Brudersee

toward the last phase

of our dear West.) (Ana 115)

René Hague recalls that the story of the two brothers was a favourite with Eric Gill, who often read it aloud at Capel-y-ffin (David Jones 26). The Spenglerian language is particularly relevant here, both for its apocalyptic tone, and for a specific passage which has gone unnoticed in relation to these lines. Writing in the aftermath of the Great War, Spengler cynically comments on the inability of different cultures to achieve cultural unity: "The attempt of Alexander the Great to fuse Greeks and Persians together was a complete failure, and we have recently had experience of the real strength of Anglo-Germanic community of feeling" (1: 159). Jones experienced the modern failure first
hand, and significantly concluded the dedication of In Parenthesis "TO THE ENEMY / FRONT FIGHTERS WHO-shared OUR / PAINS AGAINST WHOM WE FOUND / OURSELVES BY MISADVENTURE". Where Spengler is cynical, however, Jones is elegiac, alluding to a specific era when the "Anglo-Germanic community of feeling" was an historical reality, based on language, kinship, and immigration. Spengler's analogy between Greeks/Persians and English/Germans is a false one, and Jones is careful to ground his lamented community of feeling in the actual past, foregrounding the origins of the English as a Germanic people. Once again, an "ancient unity" is pointedly contrasted with the violent fragmentation of modernity.

The act of naming translates our perceptions of an objectifiable world into culture, and is a crucial act for situating a community in a particular geographical site. The Anglo-Saxon settlement of Britain at the beginning of the Middle Ages washed away an all but irrecoverable layer of names, and offered new ones in their place. Jones recognises the complexity of this process, the interdependence of naming and settlement, asking

How many poles

of their broad Angle hidage

to the small scattered plots, to the lightly furrowed erwau,

that once did quilt Boudicca's royal gwely? (Ana 111)

An erw is an acre of land, and gwely includes the sense of communal property. The English hidage is a palimpsest over older forms of land-division and community, but also over older ways of naming those divisions, and the rich histories they evoke. The persistence of the British people and language in Wales means, for Jones, that the
palimpsest never wholly obscures the older layer of culture, which endures “like Merlin complaining under his big rock” (IP xi). England is haunted by ancient ghosts of people and language.

This vision finds poetic expression in the densely macaronic passage on St. Guthlac, a Saxon anchorite who heard Welsh spoken in the wilderness and thought it the speech of demons. The passage requires linguistic attentiveness and has naturally attracted critical commentary. Jonathan Miles observes that Jones’s use of macaronics “becomes so much a part of the text because it presents active ingredients which dramatize the interplay of cultural components” (Backgrounds 46). Commenting on the compound neologisms used by Paul Celan, the poet and classicist Anne Carson asks, “Why are neologisms disturbing? If we cannot construe them, they raise troubling questions about our own linguistic mastery. We say ‘coinages’ because they disrupt the economic equilibrium of words and things that we prided ourselves on maintaining” (134). This is precisely the challenge posed by Jones’s own macaronic and neologistic style. Explaining his motivations in this passage from a letter to Desmond Chute, Jones writes

You see, ‘townsman gone wold-men’ & ‘citizen gone outlaw’ do not evoke the extraordinary mix-up of the break-up of the phenomenally mixed mess-up of Celtic, Teutonic & Latin elements in the Britain of the early dark ages which I was trying to express. The fractured & fused forms, the hyphenated words such as ‘dinas-man’ and (p.112) ‘Crowland-
"diawliaidd" etc. were merely an attempt to get something of this historic situation. It had to be halting, broken, and Babel-like, I think. (IN 33-4)

This explanation is valuable as an account of Jones’s poetic goals – to express or get something of a particular historical situation. He significantly does not claim to represent the past, but instead suggests his poetry is an attempt to express the past in language. This conception of language as fundamentally expressive and poetic, rather than mimetic, places Jones’s writing within the Modernism which emerged from nineteenth-century Symbolism, alongside that of Yeats, Eliot, Pound, and, especially, Joyce. Characteristically, however, Jones emphasises the materiality of the printed word as a point of departure for poetic meaning – an Aristotelian kind of Symbolism in marked contrast with the Platonic Symbolism of Yeats, which attempts to evoke a priori forms in the reader’s mind through a fallen language redeemed by the poet’s imaginative power. Meaning in Jones’s poetry works upward from the ground of language, rather than downward from the realm of Platonic Ideas. “We proceed from the known to the unknown,” in the words of Aquinas often quoted by Jones himself. His macaronic style, using words that are in themselves “something of this historic situation”, materially embeds that situation in its own language on the page. I want to consider now how Jones expresses “the Britain of the early dark ages” through style, perhaps the most elusive aspect of his medievalism.

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5 Dinas (Welsh) = fort, refuge, or city; diawliaidd (Welsh) = devils. Note how the polysemic word dinas itself seems to give a history of the transition between urban life and defensive war.
St Guthlac’s encounter with the Welsh other is primarily an encounter with linguistic otherness, which David Jones renders through the juxtaposition of English, German, French and Welsh words.

Past where the ancra-man, deeping his holy rule
in the fiendish marsh

at the Geisterstunde

on Calangaeaf night

heard the bogle-baragouinage. (Ana 112)

The Anglo-Saxon world is initially evoked by the use of “ancra-man” instead of the more modern “anchorite”, using the Old English word for anchor and adding “man”. In fact, the masculine Old English noun would be ancor, and Jones presumably chose the neuter form because it conveys a stronger sense of linguistic distance. Alternatively, Jones may have abbreviated the Old English (and Old Irish) word for anchorite, anchara, itself an abbreviation from the Latin anchoreta, which has one syllable less than its Greek original, anakhóretes.6 Hague identifies the word’s origin as “O.E., but, we may observe, through the Latin anchoreta”, which doesn’t account for Jones’s variation (Commentary 137) “Anchorite” thus carries multiple linguistic and cultural associations, but these are masked by its relative familiarity. Jones’s use of “ancra” opens up many etymological doors and potential cultural associations. Given the maritime symbolism that infuses The Anathémata, it is perhaps surprising that no-one has commented on the commonplace sense of “anchor”. St Guthlac is, in a sense, an anchor laid down in the British

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wilderness by the new Anglo-Saxon culture, which has charted the coastline by boat earlier in "Angle-Land".

Guthlac's "holy rule" contrasts with the "fiendish marsh", a phrase which conjures up the world of Beowulf and its attendant horrors which furnish the imaginative background of the saint's culture. This world of horror is further evoked by the German word Geisterstunde, "witching hour" or more literally "ghosts' hour", a word expressing the superstitions of the Germanic homeland of the Anglo-Saxon peoples. "Culangaeaf" - Winter Calends, November 1 - situates Guthlac's experience also in time, during a pagan holiday soon to be Christianised as All Saints' Day; in conjunction with Geisterstunde, it also suggests the originally pagan festival of Hallowe'en. The name is Welsh, but includes the Latin-derived calan (<Kalendae, the first day of the month) and the Welsh word for winter, gaeaf. In its marking of time, the word echoes the Roman civilisation now vanished from Britain. The transformation of Kalendae into calan symbolises the absorption of Roman elements into an inchoate Celtic culture, a theme crucial for the lines which follow. Jones describes Guthlac's perception of the Welsh language as a "bogle-baragouinage", from the French word baragouin, meaning gibberish. Hague cites the OED for the word's "possible Breton origin" (Commentary 138); according to the OED, the most likely origin for baragouin is the Breton bara (bread) + gwin (wine). "Bogle" itself is possibly derived from the Welsh bwg, meaning terror, or bwgwl, meaning ghost, making Jones's macaronic compound a fitting expression of the "Babel-like" scenario he envisions.

The hermit’s nightmarish imaginings are particularised as Jones conveys the process by which the Romano-British become Welsh, a process which his macaronic style is ideally suited to express. As so often in Jones’s poetry, the process of transformation is presented as a series of questions. Guthlac wonders if he hears

Crowland-diawliaidd

Wealisc-man lingo speaking?

or Britto-Romani gone diaboli?

or Romanity gone Wealisc? (Ana 112)

*Diawliaidd* is a derivation from *diaboli*, devils, and the juxtaposition of the two words expresses the interrelationship between native British and Latin cultures in the early Dark Ages. *Wealisc* is the Anglo-Saxon word for the native Britons, a word ironically meaning “foreigner” and the root of “Welsh” (cf. the continental “Walloon”, originally a Germanic designation for the surviving Gallo-Roman aristocracy). Crowland, in the Fens, was the site of Guthlac’s hermitage, later the site of a monastery (Attwater and John 169).

In the face of Anglo-Saxon encroachment, the displaced Britons have taken to the wilderness. This displacement is reflected in the transformation of Roman names:

Is Marianus wild Meirion?

Is Sylvánus

Urbigéna’s son? (Ana 112)

The modern Welsh county of Meirionedd ultimately derives its name from the Roman Marianus, in legend a son of Cunedda Wledig. Urbigena, “city-born”, is the Latinate name of a king memorialised in Welsh tradition as Urien Rheged (Malory’s “King
Rience"), who ruled over the kingdom of Rheged in Cumbria and was praised in the sixth-century poems of Taliesin. Sylvanus was not literally Urbigena's son, but the Latin for forest suggests the historical change which saw the Britons go from being at least partly urbanised to entirely rural within a few generations; as Hague puts it, "in the general disorder, the Romanised town-dwellers have been forced back into a life of hunted and hunter" (Ana 138). This theme underlies the lines which follow, and culminate in the passage's striking conclusion:

From the fora [Latin: forum = marketplace]

to the forests.

Out from gens Romulum [Latin: gens Romulorum = Roman people]

into the Weal-kin [Anglo-Saxon: Wealas = foreigner/Roman]

dinas-man gone aethwlad [Welsh: dinas = city; aethwlad = banished]

cives gone wold-men [Latin: civis = citizen]

... from Lindum to London

bridges broken down. (Ana 113)

The image of “bridges broken down” echoes the contemporary world of London during the Blitz, when Jones’s own father had to be evacuated from his bomb-damaged home. Although an expression of the collapse of Roman Britain, these lines clearly embed an apocalyptic sense of modern Britain’s historical experience during the Second World War, when physical and cultural survival was by no means certain. Thomas Dilworth,
however, points out that the allusion to *Finnegans Wake* suggested by the image of Britons “come away to the Wake” (*Ana* 112) “implies imminent cultural revival” (*SM* 185).

Jones agonised over the diction of this passage, particularly the form *gens Romulum*, which he defended as an abbreviation of the technically correct *gens Romulorum*, but ultimately kept for its sound-value within the passage, pedantry giving way to poesis, as it were. In the letter to Desmond Chute quoted earlier, David Jones discusses his decision to use a neologism, *Weal-kin*, arguing that if had used the Old English *Wealcyn*,

it would have just been a straight A.S. word taken from any Anglo-Saxon document, a dead word, a student’s word, but by hyphenating *Weal* with ‘kin’, the word can be made to take on a certain life, because we still use the word ‘kin’ and can’t see it without thinking of ‘kith’, whereas *cyn* is remote, & anyway I believe is pronounced ‘kune’ or something like it. (*IN* 113-4)

Similarly, Jones dismisses the alternative possibility of writing “Welsh folk”, which would have conveyed “a rather bogus, or ‘poetic’ or dated feeling” (114). The challenge Jones places before himself is how to make the remote past alive for the present by using equally remote diction, and his strategy is to juxtapose words and word elements to create new formations that embody Pound’s dictum to “MAKE IT NEW”.

The medievalist Christopher Dawson thought *The Anathé mata* “in some ways used the English language rather as the 6th Cent. Celts used Latin” (*IN* 46). Specifically, Dawson writes to Jones that the Celts “made new words because they liked the sound of
them, whereas with you it is a question of increasing the density & meaning. Yet all the same there is a resemblance and I think it would be easy to establish stylistic parallels between Hisperic Latin and Davidic English" (qtd. in IN 46). A similar comparison is made by Umberto Eco in relation to Joyce’s verbal experiments in *Finnegans Wake*. Eco sees in the Hisperic texts “onomatopoeic descriptions … which Joyce would have been overjoyed to have written” (*Chaosmos* 80). Jones himself describes his macaronic art in his “Preface”, noting that “certain words, terms and occasionally phrases from the Welsh and Latin languages and a great many concepts and motifs of Welsh and Romanic provenance have become part of the writer’s Realien, within a kind of Cockney setting” (*Ana* 11). Although Dawson’s comments have been quoted before, no-one has followed up on his remarkable critical insight. I would like, briefly, to explore some common features of Jones’s style and Hisperic Latin to show how both use macaronics to evoke the naming power of language.

The *Hisperica Famina* is a collection of sixth and seventh century Irish Latin writings extremely influential in early Irish letters. What is unique about the Hisperic style is its use of a macaronic vocabulary derived from Hebrew, Greek, and Gaelic, combined with correct Latin syntax. A poem known as the *Lorica of Laidcenn* demonstrates this stylistic technique:

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Gigram ceph(a)le  cum iāris et conas
patham liz(a)nam  sennas atque michinas,
cladum carsum    madianum talias
bathma exugiam    atque binas idumas
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(Deliver) my skull, head with hair, and eyes,
mouth (?), tongue, teeth, and nostrils (?),
neck, breast, side, and limbs,
joints, fat, and two hands. (Herren 80-1)

In the first line alone, gigra is the Hebrew for “skull”, cephale and conas Greek for
“head” and “eyes” (Sidwell 72). The “stylistic parallels between Hisperic Latin and
Davidic English” lie in the juxtaposition of words from several languages in syntactically
correct sentences, but go beyond this technique. Both this quotation from the Lorica of
Laidcenn and the St. Guthlac passage in The Anathémata use macaronics principally as a
means of naming – the foreign words are overwhelmingly nouns. The use of foreign
names in an apotropaic prayer such as the Lorica of Laidcenn is perhaps attributable to a
belief in the spiritual power of Hebrew and Greek as the languages of the Old and New
Testaments – that is, one protects the body part by naming it in a holy language. A
similar conception of language underlies Symbolism, with its belief in a correspondence
between symbol (or name) and object. As a Thomist, Jones accepts the possibility of
evoking universal categories of experience in language, rejecting the claims of Duns
Scotus (see Pickstock 130-1). The Scotist insistence that experience and language
construct categories of knowledge is advanced more radically in our own time, with
emphasis on language, by structuralist and post-structuralist thinkers, from Lévi-Strauss
to Derrida. Jones’s belief in the power of macaronic language to “express” a particular
“historic situation” is grounded, contra Derrida, in a metaphysics of presence, a faith that
language can give expression to historical reality, even if it can never exhaust it. The
Lorica of Laidcenn and The Anathémata both use language to “raise a valid sign” through
the act of naming. Jones’s apotropaic use of language finds its culmination in “The Lady
of the Pool”, where the sacred sites of London are lovingly named by a poet writing amidst the bombing of the Second World War.

3.4 The Lady of the Pool

After kaleidoscoping forward in time to the nineteenth century in “Redriff”, The Anathémata returns to the Middle Ages in section five, “The Lady of the Pool.” Where “Angle-Land” explores the origins of medieval Britain, “The Lady of the Pool” is set at the very end of the Middle Ages, reflecting Jones’s interest in ends and beginnings, an interest we have seen in his sense of an authentic Wales beginning with Cunedda Wledig and ending with Llewelyn ap Gruffudd (E&A 41-2).8 “The Lady of the Pool” also shifts in space to the other pole of Jones’s imaginative geography, the city of London. Criticism of “The Lady of the Pool”, generally recognised as the poem’s central and aesthetically strongest section, has focussed on the figure of Elen Monica as a female voice analogous to Joyce’s Molly Bloom and Anna Livia Plurabelle (Dilworth SM 227). Jones’s medievalism in this section manifests itself as an evocation of late medieval London, and it is this aspect of “The Lady of the Pool” that I wish to consider here.

Thomas Dilworth observes that for Jones the medieval city is a place “in which man lives a complete symbolic life, in touch with metaphysical values and with the historic and anthropological substrata that are contained in the tradition of the city” (Dilworth “City” 346).

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8 Cf. Eliot’s similar pre-occupation in East Coker: “In my beginning is my end” (1), also the motto of Mary, Queen of Scots: Ma fin est mon commencement.
In a letter to Desmond Chute (March 12, 1953), Jones explains that the symbolic value of Elen Monica (“an amalgam of many figures – from a waterside tart of sorts to the tutelary figure of London”) depends on her historical situation “toward the end of the middle ages”:

For one thing she had to represent to some extent the British sea thing which rose only after the end of the 15\textsuperscript{th} Cent., so that the figure had to combine the Hogarthian, Turneresque, even Dickensian worlds with the Catholic world of ‘Dick Whittington’, Chaucer, Langland, Geoffrey of Monmouth’s Trojan-London myth, and so on & so on. (Dai 69-70)

Thomas Dilworth suggests a more precise date “in September sometime between 1451 and 1465, the years of John Whethamstede’s second term as abbot of St Albans”, based upon Elen’s identification of the abbot as her contemporary, now in his second term, on page 153 (SM 164). This date squares with the approximate dating given by Jones in a letter to Saunders Lewis, where he writes that “it had to be after 1282 & after 1400-16, but before those damned Tudors & really there was only the 15\textsuperscript{th} left” (qtd. in Miles Backgrounds 71). Jones elevates this very late medieval London into a symbolic city that extends backward and forward in time to include all Jones considers essential for an archetypal vision of London. Like his Wales, Jones’s London is primarily mythological, and so eludes the constraints of historical time. Eliot’s “Unreal City” in The Waste Land is a London overdetermined by the historical forces of modernity, but Jones’s London is an enduring myth that includes within itself all of the city’s historical and cultural developments. Unlike many modernist myths – including Jones’s Wales – this London is not static, but as kinetic and sprawling as the city itself. The “mythic method” Jones
employs is closer to Joyce’s in *Finnegans Wake* than in *Ulysses*, even though “The Lady of the Pool” and *Ulysses* both convey a vibrant sense of urban life (Jones in fact never read *Ulysses*). His inclusion in “Rite and Fore-Time” of an inscription depicting Joyce’s “Northmens thing made southfolks place” from *Finnegans Wake* suggests that he wanted readers to recognise that he shared Joyce’s artistic goals throughout *The Anathémata*, and he expressed disappointment that reviewers instead affiliated his long poem with Pound’s *Cantos*, a text he had not even read (IN 23).

“Geoffrey of Monmouth’s Trojan-London myth” is set out in his twelfth-century *Historia Regum Britanniae*. According to Geoffrey, Brutus, great-grandson of Aeneas and first king of the Britons, “came at length to the river Thames, walked up and down its banks and so chose a site suited to his purpose. There he built his city and called it Troia Nova. It was known by this name for long ages after, but finally by a corruption of the word it came to be called Trinovantum” (73-4). The factual basis of this myth lies in the ancient tribal name of the Trinobantes, whom Caesar’s *De Bello Gallico* situates in the region of the Thames, “prope firmissima earum regionum civitas” (V. 20; 259). Geoffrey of Monmouth derives the name of London, or “Kaer Lud” (Welsh *Caer Lludd*), from a legendary brother of Cassivelaunus named Lud, and this legend is repeated by Stowe in his *Survey* (Geoffrey of Monmouth 74; Stowe 3). MacKillop’s *Dictionary of Celtic Mythology* distinguishes between three figures named Lludd, one the son of Beli Mawr who appears in the medieval tale *Cyfranc Lludd a Llefelys*, another the fairy king also known as Nudd, and finally the legendary founder of London, “whose name is also commemorated in the name Ludgate Hill”; the relationship between these figures is not clear (266).
"The Lady of the Pool" begins with an allusion to Lud, as a captain steers his ship into the haven of London’s harbour:

Did he meet Lud at the Fleet Gate? did he count the top-trees in the anchored forest of Llefelys under the White Mount? (Ana 124)

In the legend of *Lludd and Llefeyleys*, Lludd is the son of Beli the Great, and inherits “the kingdom of the Island of Britain” upon his father’s death (Jones and Jones 75). Lludd “rebuilt the walls of London and girt it about with innumerable towers; and after that he bade the citizens build houses within it, so that there might not be in the kingdoms houses of such splendour as would be therein” (Jones and Jones 75). Despite MacKillop's reservations, the redactor of *Lludd and Llefeyleys* unhesitatingly identifies this Lludd as the eponymous improver of London: “And though he had many castles and cities he loved this one more than any; and he dwelt in it the greatest part of the year, and on that account it was called Caer Lludd, and at last Caer Lundein” (Jones and Jones 75). The Welsh legend does not make mention of Geoffrey’s Brutus or his city of Troia Nova, but does provide further etymological commentary: “it was after the coming of foreign folk thereto that it was called Lundein, or otherwise Lwndrys”, the latter being a fair attempt to render the French *Londres* in Welsh orthography (Jones 75). In the legend, Lludd’s brother Llefelys leads a vast fleet to England from France; although Jones in his note locates “the assembling of vessels in the Pool of London”, this detail is lacking in the actual tale (Ana 124, n.1). The image of an “anchored forest” is particularly suggestive in light of the identification of ships with the tree of the Cross in “Keel, Ram, and Stauros”. In Welsh tradition, the White Mount figures as the burial place of Bran’s apotropaic head,
alluded to on page 130 as "the blesséd guardian head", a play on Bran's Welsh epithet, *bendegeid*, meaning "blessed".

There follows a large white space on the page before the text resumes its questioning, and the space symbolically enacts the unbridgeable gap between myth and history as Jones moves imaginatively from mythological to historical time in the late Middle Ages. He asks of the captain:

Did ever he walk the twenty-six wards of the city, within
and extra, did he cast his nautic eye on her
clere and lusty kell
in the troia'd lanes of the city? (Ana 124)

Jones in his note identifies his allusion to the poem attributed to William Dunbar, "In Honour of the City of London": "Fair be thy wives, right lovesom white and small / Clere be thy virgins, lusty under kells" (46-7). *Kellis*, plural of *kell*, is "a woman's headdress" (Dunbar 256), and Hague claims it is the same word as *caul* (*Commentary* 158). The poem also alludes to London's Trojan origins: "Gladdith anon, thou lusty Troy Novaunt, / Citie that some tyme cleped was New Troy" (9-10), echoed in Jones's allusion to "the troia'd lanes of the city". Although we have crossed the divide from myth to history, the depiction of medieval London is shot through with allusions to its mythic origins, expressing a medieval consciousness that has not completely severed its links with older, mythic forms of consciousness.

The conclusion of the section's opening lines, before Elen Monica begins her monologue, introduces other constituent elements of medieval London, the Saxon and Norse, as well as alluding to Geoffrey's history:
And was it a month or less from the septimal month,
and did he hear, seemingly intuned in *East-Seaxna*-nasal

(whose nestle-cock *polis* but theirs knows the sweet
gag and in what *urbs* would he hear it if not in Belin’s
*oppidum*, the greatest *burh* in nordlands?) (*Ana* 124)

Jones identifies Elen’s cockney with its predecessor in “*East-Seaxna*-nasal”, recognising that the spoken word bears traces of its linguistic history, however unconscious the speaker might be of those traces.⁹ Chaucer’s Prioress similarly “Entuned in hir nose ful semely” when she spoke French (*General Prologue* 123). Hague remarks that London is a “‘nestle-cock polis,’ because a child who was suckled for longer than normal was a ‘nestle-cock’, and the name was applied to the soft-bred townsman” (*Commentary* 158). He further glosses “*polis* for the Greek origin (Troy), *urbs* (for the Roman), *oppidum* (as being more suitable to towns other than Rome), *burh* (for the Anglo-Saxon)” (*Commentary* 158). Geoffrey of Monmouth writes that “In the town of Trinovantum Belinus caused to be constructed a gateway of extraordinary workmanship, which in his time the citizens called Billingsgate, from his own name” (100). Geoffrey here may also be a surrogate for the Anglo-Norman dimension of London’s past; Jones harboured an intense dislike for the Normans, referring to them as “panzer gangs”, and his Middle Ages are notably spotty between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries, despite his enthusiasm for Llewelyn ap Gruffudd and the Scholastics (qtd. in Hague, *Commentary*

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⁹ One thinks of the unique features of Canadian English as spoken in the Maritimes and Ontario, such as the upper palatal glide (as in “out” and “ice”), a faint echo of the Scots spoken by so many of our earliest settlers.
16). Even the marauding Vikings fair better in Jones than his accursed Normans: “the greatest burh in the nordlands”, as Jones’s note tells us, alludes to The Ragnar Lodbrok Saga: “Lundunaborg which is the greatest and most famous burh in all the northern lands” (Ana 124, n. 4). In a few lines, using some of the macaronic techniques discussed earlier, Jones thus presents the origins of London in myth and as historically determined by Britons, Romans, Saxons, Vikings, and Normans. I would argue that Jones’s sense of London as formed by many peoples over time, a theme developed throughout “The Lady of the Pool”, opens the way for an imaginative vision of London as a multicultural city from its beginnings to the diversity of the present day.

The figure of Elen Monica has several medieval precursors, the most prominent being Chaucer’s Wife of Bath (Dilworth SM 227), to which I would add others such as the Widow in Dunbar’s “Twa Married Wemen and the Wedo”, and John Skelton’s “Mannerly Margery”. Harold Bloom’s comments on the Wife of Bath serve well as an aesthetic judgement of Elen Monica: “What is awesome about the wife is her endless zest and vitality: sexual, verbal, polemical” (Western Canon 108). This vitality is demonstrated in her opening lines, where she calls to passers-by to buy her lavender:

*Who’ll buy my prime lavendula*

*I cry my introit in a Dirige-time*

*Come buy for summer weeds, threnodic stalks*

*For in Jane’s ditch Jack soon shall white his earliesr rime.* (Ana 125)

Elen’s call situates her monologue in a medieval setting through its macaronic use of Latin (*lavendula, introit, Dirige*), which in the second line is the Latin of the medieval Church (*Dirige* is “the opening word of the first antiphon at Matins in the Office for the
dead" (Hague Commentary 158)). By identifying her call with the introit at Mass, Elen explicitly suggests an analogy between her monologue and Catholic liturgy. Her use of Latin diction also sets up a linguistic mystery – how would a fifteenth-century lavender seller know Latin? – which the subsequent monologue resolves by revealing Elen’s love affair with an Oxford clerk, an affair presaged by the Wife of Bath’s marriage to the clerk Jankyn. This affair also explains Elen’s knowledge of the word “threnodic”, which identifies her lavender with lamentation, here a dirge for the passing of the seasons (Hague Commentary 158). The final line evokes the eroticism of vernacular ballads, an eroticism also explored by Yeats through the figure of Crazy Jane in his Words for Music Perhaps.

Jones evokes the world of late medieval London primarily through Elen’s catalogue of churches, based in part on the sixteenth-century Survey of London by John Stowee, which opens and closes her monologue. The catalogue maps London’s spiritual and terrestrial geography, foregrounding the relationship between site and the sacred lost to the modern world. Elen lists the churches at the beginning of her monologue (Ana 126-8). 10 Her allusions to these churches and cockney variations on their names express

10 They are: St Mary, Whitechapel; St Bride’s, Fleet Street; All Hallows, London Wall; St Martin’s, Cheapside; St Michael, Cornhill; St Mary-at-Hill, Romeland; Mary le Bow; Mary Aldermary; St Paul’s; St Stephen-super-Wallbrook; St Mary Woolnoth, Langbourn Ward; St Mary Staining; St Mary Pellipar. As Elen’s monologue reaches its end, the list resumes with St Peter-upon-Cornhill; All Hallows, Barking-by-the-Tower; St Peter ad Vienula, Tower of London; St John, White Tower; Crutched Friars, Aldgate; Holy Trinity, Aldgate (160-3). The final church mentioned is that of Elen’s baptism St
the existential reality of late medieval Catholicism, and its permeation of the whole of society.

Elen's verbal *jouissance* is readily appreciable even though Jones's notes are necessary to recognise the churches to which she alludes:

> From the Two Sticks an' a' Apple to Bride o' the Shandies' Well over the Fleet; from Hallows-on-Wall to the keel-haws; from the ditch without the Vicinal Gate to Lud's hill; within and extra the fending circuit, both banks the wide and demarking middle-brook that waters, from the midst of he street of it, our twin-hilled Urbs. At Martin *miles* in the Pomarary (where the Roman pippins grow) at winged Marmor *miles*, gilt-lorica'd on his wheat-hill, stick-ing the Laidly Worm as threats to coil us all. *(Ana 127)*

This vision of medieval London is an apotropaic one, emphasising the city's spiritual defences in the form of its many churches, and its military and geographical defences in the city's other features. It is significant that near the end of her monologue Elen Monica proclaims the Londoner's pride that "THIS BOROUGH WERE NEVER FORCED", an exclamation given added weight in the years of reconstruction following World War II *(Ana 163)*. Elen's role as a guardian spirit is suggested by her stonemason lover's identification of her with Flora Dea, the protective goddess of ancient Rome *(Ana 131)*. The apotropaic aspect of these lines is also suggested by Jones's use of "gilt-lorica'd";

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Augustine Papey, Algate (167). She omits to mention St. Magnus Martyr, famously mentioned in Eliot's *The Waste Land*.  

lorica is Latin for breastplate, but also a medieval prayer for protection, as in the Lorica of Laidcenn considered earlier. This desire for enclosure, perhaps ultimately rooted in Jones’s agoraphobia, finds moving expression in “The Tutelar of the Place”:

In all times of Gleichschaltung, in the days of the central economies, set up the hedges of illusion around some remnant of us, twine the wattles of mist, white-wall a Gwydion hedge like a fog on the bryniau

against the commissioners (SL 63)

Given that “The Lady of the Pool” sequence was written during the Second World War, Jones’s naming of London’s spiritual and material defences acts as an apotropaic prayer, as the naming of body parts does in the Lorica of Laidcenn.

Another significant aspect of these lines is their allusions to Rome and to Roman London, which appears as a palimpsest just visible through the contours of London in the Middle Ages. The Roman background of medieval Europe obsessed Jones, and we have seen how even a Dark Age heroic poem like Y Gododdin could evoke for him “the changing guard of the hobnailed Roman infantry” (IP 191). In “The Lady of the Pool”, this palimpsest is further suggested by the lettering printed opposite page 127, which Jones has designed to resemble a rubbing made over a stone inscription, reading “ROMA CAPUT / ORBIS SPLEN / DOR SPES AV / REA ROMA”. The reader’s visual field is haunted by a just-visible impression of Rome’s faded glory, just as medieval London’s Vicinal Gate and “Roman pippins” in the orchard echo its Roman past. There are wider cultural implications to this effect. Given the appropriation of Roman symbolism by the Nazis and Fascists, the allusions to Rome also point to a common cultural origin for the
western civilisation shared by Britain and its continental adversaries, a strategy parallel to that used by Jones to suggest the common Germanic heritage of England and Germany at the conclusion of “Angle-Land”. Jones thus problematises the West’s cultural origins in the martial and exploitative civilisation of ancient Rome, implicating Britain in an ideological formation more comfortably attributed to Germany and Italy. This dimension of Jones’s work has been misunderstood, by Elizabeth Ward, for example, as proto-fascist, but a poem such as “The Tribune’s Visitation” makes clear his distaste for Roman brutality. Roman civilisation appears paradoxically in Jones’s work, as the cruel instrument of the Crucifixion that made Redemption possible\(^\text{11}\), and as the imperial power whose exploitative conquests made possible the spread of Christianity throughout Europe.

Elen Monica’s mapping of London in space is thus paralleled by a mapping in time, by drawing attention to those features of the city which derive from earlier layers of culture. In Elen’s imagination, as in London’s physical features, Roman and medieval aspects are contemporary, rendering the city’s past synchronic and mythic for modern readers. Jones comments on the synchronic dimension of London’s mythology in a note on the statues of Gog and Magog which once adorned the Guildhall, noting that “As with the individual psyche, collective myth cares nothing for discrepancies of time or circumstance” (\textit{Ana} 168, n.1). London’s historical development also finds expression in the city’s spiritual development, as Elen points out the continuities between the paganism

\(^{11}\) Significantly, and perhaps surprisingly for a Catholic of his generation, Jones nowhere assigns blame for the Crucifixion on the Jews; it is always the Roman Empire that bears responsibility, albeit a responsibility shared by all humanity.
of ancient London and the Christianity of its medieval successor (Dilworth SM 225). It will be noticed that in the list of Churches given above that Mary figures most prominently among them. Elen Monica draws attention to the pagan precursors of Mary, those mother goddesses whose cults provided a foundation for medieval devotion the Virgin:

At the Lady-at-Hill

above Romeland’s wharf-lanes

at the Great Mother’s newer chapelle

at New Heva’s Old Crepel.

(Chthonic matres under the croft:

springan a Maye’s Aves to clerestories.

Delphi in sub-crypt:

luce flowers to steeple.) (Ana 127)

The “luce flowers” offered up as anathémata to the goddesses anticipate the lilies (fleur-de-lys) sacred to Mary in Christian iconography. At St. Paul’s, medieval ritual offers another link to the site’s pagan past:

so Iuppiter me succour!

they do garland them with Roman roses and do have stitched on their zoomorphic apparels and vest ’em gay for Artemis.

When is brought in her stag to be pierced,

when is bowed his meek head between the porch and the altar, when is blowed his sweet death at the great door, on the day before the calends o’Quintilis. (Ana 127)
This passage, and Jones’s explanatory note, derive from John Stowe’s sixteenth-century *Survey of London* (Hague 163; but see Dilworth *SM* 385, n. 14 for an important correction to Hague’s account). Stowe relates that in 1316, when workmen began foundations for a new chapel on the south side of St Paul’s, “there were found more than a hundred scalps of oxen or kine”, and that this discovery “confirmed greatly the opinion of those which have reported that of old time there had been a temple of Jupiter, and that there was daily sacrifice of beasts” (298).

More bizarre is the custom related by Stowe of the semi-annual sacrifice of deer at the church. According to Stowe, Edward I in 1274 granted lands in Essex to the Dean of St Paul’s, on condition that “he would ever, upon the feast day of the Conversion of St. Paul in winter, give unto them a good doe, seasonable and sweet, and upon the feast of the commemoration of St. Paul in the summer, a good buck, and offer the same upon the high altar” (298). Stowe seems to imply that this custom was instituted by Edward I, but Jones clearly interprets it as a continuation of pagan practice, specifically identifying it with the cult of Artemis. Stowe gives an account of the ritual:

> Now what I have heard by report, and have partly seen, it followeth. On the feast day of the commemoration of St. Paul, the buck being brought up to the steps of the high altar in Paul’s church, at the hour of procession, the dean and chapter being apparelled in copes and vestments, with garlands of roses on their heads, they sent the body of the buck to baking, and had the head fixed on a pole, borne before the cross in their procession, until they issued out of the west door, where the keeper that brought it blew...
the death of the buck, and then the horners that were about the city presently answered him in like manner... (299)

The “zoomorphic apparels” are also reported by Stowe, who describes “two special suits of vestments, the one embroidered with bucks, the other with does”, for exclusive use in these rites (299). In Jones’s vision of sacred history, this ritual is not as incongruous as it might at first appear, as old sites and old rites are redeemed by being re-consecrated to the Virgin Mary and her divine Son. Artemis anticipates Mary in her chastity. Even explicitly pagan practices participate in the Redemption insofar as they make an offering to the Divine, although Jones, following Maurice De La Taille, believed that the Crucifixion made further blood sacrifice unnecessary.

Between the two catalogues of churches, Jones makes a wide variety of allusions to medieval literature and history. Among the more significant are Elen’s account of the transformation of the figures of Celtic legend into the material of European vernacular romance. In “Rite and Fore-Time”, Jones situates figures such as Trystan and Mark in the evolving British landscape as a way of exploring the interface between culture and geography. Elen Monica gives an account of the various figures by whom a Welsh captain swears, and in doing so enacts the same process of translation which occurred centuries earlier between Welsh and Norman cultures:

By Tylows and Bynows unvouched of the Curia, by fitz
Nut the Welsh fairy, by the holy pillar of a Lacy or a
Lizzy or some such, by the rigmaroled wonders of a most phenomenal beast called the Troit or such like, by a’ elf-sheen woman contrived of sweet posies, by Arthur Duke of
the Britains, his three Gaynores and his pernel beside, by
Gildas the Wise and by Wild Merlin, by the marvel thorn of
Orcop and by the four fay-fetched flowers that be said to
blow where ever a’ Olwen walks in Wales (Ana 152)

"Tylow", "Bynow" and "fitz Nut" are Anglicisations of Saints Teilo and Beuno, and the
mysterious Edern map Nudd, who appears in Anglo-Norman form as Ider fitz Nut (Ana
152, n.1 and 2). Elen appropriates the Welshman's cultural heritage for her own
monologue, just as the Anglo-Normans appropriated it centuries earlier for their own
entertainment. Like them, Elen is unconscious of the deeper significance of these names,
such as the bardic triad rehearsing the identities of Arthur's three Gwenhwyfars
(Bromwich Trioedd 154). Like Elen's catalogue of churches, many of these items will
not be familiar to a modern audience, and Jones's notes to this passage occupy more
space on the page than the poetic text itself. Unlike the conventional epic list, which
alludes to cultural elements recognisable by its intended audience, the Modernist epic list
foregrounds its own arbitrariness in relation to its modern readers. David Jones is not
simply drawing attention to cultural losses; his lists and allusions are themselves poetic
acts of recovery.

The Welsh captain also swears by Geoffrey of Monmouth, "now deemed the most
incontinent liar on record" (Ana 152). Elen’s allusion to John of Whethamstede, who
dismissed Geoffrey's histories as utterly fabulous, problematises London's mythic
identity as Troy Novaunt. Jones recognises that the value of myth lies not in its historical
veracity, but in its construction of identity. London's Trojan origins are not invalid
because unfactual; rather, the Trojan myth is significant for bringing London's cultural
identity within a wider western identity founded in Virgil and Homer. Geoffrey's "lies" have greater cultural importance than the factual origins of London as a settlement among the Trinobantes, and "the most incontinent liar on record" is not so easily dismissed. *The Anathémata* is itself a testament to the enduring poetic force of the *matière de Bretagne*. This cultural complex is balanced, however, by the Latin Christian inheritance common to the west as a whole. Among the most representative texts of this inheritance for Jones is the early medieval hymn, *Vexilla Regis*. To conclude this chapter, I will discuss the significance of this hymn for Jones's poetry, looking specifically at his adaptation of it in "The Lady of the Pool".

3.5 *Vexilla Regis*

*The Anathémata* is a poem centred on the Mass. As it progresses, its liturgical allusions and allusions to the events of the Passion accumulate greater significance. One of the most moving and important is the lyric account of the events of Holy Week on pages 157-8. It evokes the piety of the medieval world not only by its placement in "The Lady of the Pool", but also because it is made out of several medieval texts, the most important being *Vexilla Regis*. This hymn was written by Bishop Venantius Fortunatus c. 600, for a procession in honour of the arrival of a Relic of the True Cross in Poitiers. Christopher Dawson writes that the two hymns of Fortunatus, *Vexilla Regis* and *Pange Lingua*, "gave their author the right to the title of the first medieval poet" (*Medieval

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Essays 167). *Vexilla Regis* was brought into the liturgy for Good Friday in the early Middle Ages, and retained until the 1950’s. Protesting its banishment to Vespers in 1958, David Jones wrote to the *Tablet* that “it is with the theology of the events of Good Friday that *Vexilla Regis* is indissolubly bound up in our minds” (*E&A* 260). Unlike most modern liturgists, Jones also saw the poem’s enormous cultural value and intrinsic artistic merit:

> There are works, few in number and not, necessarily, well-known, that can be made only in a given cultural phase, but which, once made, have a unique validity for all the subsequent phases of that culture. I think this could be argued for the Anglo-Saxon ‘Dream of the Rood’. I am certain it is true of the *Vexilla Regis*, and that is why we have an instinctive sense of its belonging to us, that we must not lose it. (*E&A* 260)

*Vexilla Regis* inspired passages in *The Anathémata* and *The Sleeping Lord* (27), as well as one of Jones’s most impressive paintings, titled after the hymn. It is a crucial text in his imaginative life.

The significance of Venantius Fortunatus for David Jones lies not only in his evocation of early medieval Europe, but in his imaginative redemption of that world. The opening verse of the hymn presents an image of royal standards advancing on the cross:

- *Vexilla regis prodeunt,*  
  *The standards of the King advance,*
- *fulgit crucis mysterium,*  
  *the cross shines in its mystery,*
- *quo carne carnis conditor*  
  *in the flesh, the maker of flesh*
- *suspensus est patibulo*  
  *is hung upon the gallows.*
Jones sees in these opening lines the evocation of an entire epoch:

His concept of the advancing *vexilla*, which provides not only a concrete poetic image but the poem's initial thrust, is even more poignant when we recall that the actual *vexilla* Fortunatus [sic] saw with his physical eyes were standards, imitative of a past imperium, but in fact now carried before petty Merovingian dynasts at fratricidal wars of loot. Such was the sordid violence from which the poet gave the Liturgy this enduring image of banners. It is the sort of thing that poets are for; to redeem is part of their job. (E&A 261)

The poetry of Venantius suggests to Jones a Roman order disintegrating into tribal chaos, virtually the same situation he finds expressed in *Y Gododdin*. More important is Jones's sense of poetry as a kind of imaginative redemption of the world. The image of "fratricidal wars" (amply documented by Gregory of Tours) suggests the image of Balin and Balan which Jones uses to characterise the two world wars of modern times. Post-imperial epochs are frighteningly similar in their violence and cultural upheaval, Jones seems to suggest. Art and Redemption remain constant possibilities, however, and when the two are joined, even the darkest epoch can produce an artefact of enduring beauty such as *Vexilla Regis*.

Elen Monica's meditation on the Crucifixion begins with an echo of Venantius's hymn:

*On the ste'lyard on the Hill*
weighed against our man-geld

between March and April

when bough begins to yield

and West-wood springs new. *(Ana 157)*

David Jones directs our attention to *Vexilla Regis*, verse 5 (6 in Reydellet’s edition):

Beata cuius brachiis

pretium pependit saeculi.

Statera facta est corporis,

praedam tulitque Tartati. *(21-4, Reydellet 58)*

Jones translates this in his note as “‘Blessed tree on the branches of which hung the world’s ransom. It became the steelyard (statera) on which the body was weighed. And he bore off the spoil of Tartarus’ *(Tulitque praedam tartari.)’” *(157, n.2)*. The final line is paraphrased by Elen as “he won Tartary” *(Ana 157)*. David Blamires observes that in both hymn and poem, “the use of the word ‘Tartary’ instead of ‘hell’ is particularly interesting in linking the Christian idea with the concepts of Greek and Roman mythology” *(Artist and Writer 157)*. Venantius does this again in verse 8 *(Reydellet)*, where he describes the balm which pours forth from Christ on the Cross as conquering the nectar of the pagan gods: “Fundis aroma cortice, / uincis sapore nectare” *(29-30)*. Typologically, pagan nectar anticipates and is succeeded by the blood and water shed by Christ. Imagery derived from the pagan Roman world infuses the hymn, creating a kind of cultural palimpsest which must have deeply appealed to David Jones. A steelyard is “a kind of balance with short arm to take the thing weighed and long graduated arm along which a weight is moved till it balances this” *(Concise Oxford Dictionary 1041)*,
although *statera* can have the wider sense of “scales”; Reydellet translates *statera* into French as “balance”. This image is lost in the popular Anglican version of the hymn by J.M. Neale, which renders this verse as

On whose dear arms so widely flung
The weight of this world’s ransom hung,
The price of humankind to pay,
And spoil the spoiler of his prey.

Jones acknowledges that Neale’s version is poetic, but asks “can it be said to evoke for us what is evoked by Fortunatus [sic], that man of the dying Roman world, born and bred in Ostrogothic Italy, and living in Frankish Gaul?” (*E&A* 261). Meanings and cultural associations are inevitably lost in the process of translation.

David Jones regards the image of the *statera* as absolutely crucial to Fortunatus’s image of the Crucifixion: “For him the terrible transom-beam of the instrument of our Manumission is seen as a Roman steelyard exactly weighing the price” (*E&A* 261). The image of the *arbor crucis* finds a counterpoint in the Roman *statera*. Reydellet’s insightful and sensitive commentary on verse 5 illuminates Jones’s own interpretation:

“L’arbre de la Croix peut évoquer l’image d’une balance romaine. Cette image de la balance éveille, à son tour, l’idée de la rançon – rédemption –, le poids d’or versé pour le rachat de l’homme, c’est-à-dire le corps du Christ” (58, n. 40). This sense of the Crucifixion ransoming mankind and purchasing redemption finds expression in Elen Monica’s image of Christ “weighed against our man-geld”. Jones has elaborated Venantius’s image of the *statera* and considered what the Sacrifice is “weighed against” – human sin. “Man-geld” is a half-translation of the Anglo-Saxon *wergeld*, a form of
compensation or honour-price, and perhaps evokes the Anglo-Saxon *Dream of the Rood*, where the poet prays for the friendship of Christ,

\begin{verbatim}
se ðe her on eorðan  aer þrowode
on þam gealgtreowe  for guman synnum (Mitchell and Robinson 247)
\end{verbatim}

Jones identifies the source of “between March and April / when bough begins to yield” as the medieval poem *Alisoun* (‘Bytuene Mershe ant Averil / When spray biginneth to spring.’ (Ana 157, n.2), but the bough image also evokes the *arbor crucis*. Easter marks the time when “West-wood springs new”(157), a line virtually identical with that on page 92, “West-wood springs anew”, where the seasonal imagery is used to represent the flowering of medieval Christendom. Both the moment of Redemption and the culture of the High Middle Ages represent kinds of rebirth, and it is this sense of the possibility of rebirth that distinguishes Jones’s historical vision from Spengler’s and which animates the best of Jones’s poetry with a linguistic vitality as great as that of any modern poet writing in English.
Chapter IV
What Says His Mabinogi?: The Anathématas II

The language and imagery of Vexilla Regis translate the Crucifixion into the cultural context of Dark Age Europe, and David Jones undertakes a similar process of translation in Part VI of The Anathématas, "Mabinog's Liturgy". Initially, however, he vividly renders an iconic portrait of Gwenhwyfar (Guinevere) at Midnight Mass which expands outward to reveal the world of early medieval Britain. Through the dialogue of three British witches, we see how the Annunciation and Nativity might have been received by resistant pagans on the fringes of Britain. Christianity has taken root in a remote corner of Europe, and Jones imaginatively explores the cultural transformations it provokes. After considering the importance of a work of Welsh scholarship, W.J. Gruffydd's Math Vap Mathonwy, for Jones's identification of Christ as hero in a Celtic context, I will offer a reading of the Gwenhwyfar passage foregrounding Jones's representation of early medieval Europe. I will also contrast his portrayal of Gwenhwyfar with that of William Morris, whose "The Defense of Guinevere" offers a similarly sympathetic portrait of the Queen, and to which Jones at times seems to consciously respond. My discussion will then consider the interpretation of the life of Christ offered by the three witches, before concluding with Jones's presentation of Christ as hero in the poem's final section, "Shere-Thursday and Venus-Day."

4.1 Mabinog's Liturgy

For David Jones, the ancient liturgy makes an anamnesis, a remembrance, not only of the Last Supper, but of significant phases in the history of the Church, which
symbolises the spiritual odyssey of all humanity. The streamlined, vernacular liturgy of
the post-Vatican II era seemed to him a capitulation to the utile tendencies of our
technocratic age. Liturgical reformers dismissed as accretions many texts, such as
*Vexilla Regis* and *Dies Irae*, which Jones regarded as commemorating the Church’s
voyage through time. Gregorian chant, revived early in the century by Pope Pius X, was
similarly banished. On a visit with Jones in June 1971, William Blissett records that he
spoke “bitterly and profanely” of the liturgical changes (*LC* 71). The Mass he loved was
the medieval Roman rite, standardised at the Council of Trent during the sixteenth
century and observed by the Catholic Church until the Second Vatican Council, which
met from 1962-5. The traditional Mass, for Jones, is a universal usage that includes the
particular through local variations in custom; hence his anguish at the imposition of the
vernacular Novus Ordo Mass in 1969, which eliminated linguistic universality from the
life of the Church. As Jonathan Miles observes, “Jones believed that Latin was the
binding element of European tradition, a belief which prompted his anxiety about the
liturgical reforms of the 1950s. In a draft of a letter to Dom Theodore Bailey, Jones
described these as ‘one aspect… of the “decline of the west”’” (Miles *Backgrounds* 45).
The interaction between Latin and vernacular European cultures is an enduring theme of
Jones’s poetry, and a central part of “Mabinog’s Liturgy,” Part VI of *The Anathémata*.

“Mabinog’s Liturgy” explores the relationship between local culture and the
universality of the Gospel, translating the narrative of Christ’s birth into the cultural
context of early medieval Britain. This is part of a larger imaginative project that
includes the painting “Y Cyfarchiad i Fair”, which depicts the Annunciation to a Welsh
Mary enclosed by a wattle fence. It is primarily a Christmas poem, like Dunbar’s “On
Christ’s Nativitie” or Milton’s “Hymn on the Morning of Christ’s Nativity”, the latter of which David Jones’s father read to the family on Christmas morning. Jones focuses on the figures of Mary and the infant Jesus, continuing The Anathémata’s exploration of archetypal femininity in its excursus on Gwenhwyfar, the Welsh Guinevere. The central conceit of this section is Jones’s identification of the story of Jesus as a type of hero-tale, specifically a mabinogi, which W.J. Gruffydd defines as “a tale of a hero’s youth” (324). Gruffydd’s study, Math Vab Mathonwy (1928), which Jones owned, is as crucial to “Mabinog’s Liturgy” as From Ritual to Romance is to Eliot’s The Waste Land, and its neglect by commentators is perhaps responsible for the critical reservations usually expressed about this section of The Anathémata. Math Vab Mathonwy explores the mythological origins of the Four Branches of the Mabinogi, and takes its title from the fourth tale.

In Gruffydd’s interpretation, the original form of the Four Branches of the Mabinogi can be restored by a comparison with Irish analogies:

Irish heroic tales, of which a large number has been preserved, are divided into different categories according to their subject, or according to what incident in the hero’s life they deal with. In time, these types of stories became standardised, and acquired names of their own. The Compert related the circumstances in the lives of his parents which led to his birth; the Macgnimarta dealt with his youthful exploits, the Aided with his death. If he had been expelled or imprisoned, his story was an Indarba; if he went on a voyage, it was an Imrám, and so on. In studying the Four Branches of the Mabinogi, I have gradually come to the conclusion that
Pryderi's life was, according to the Irish pattern, divided somewhat on those principles. (324)

There are some major difficulties with Gruffydd's analysis, such as the fact that while Pryderi features as a character in the mabinogi of Pwyll, Manawydan, and Math, he is only briefly mentioned in Branwen. Gruffydd argues, however, for the original unity of the Four Branches, a unity gradually broken by the accumulation of extraneous motifs within the tales: "The term mabinogi means a tale of a hero's youth, and the term cainc ['branch'] supposes that the mabinogi is one whole, dealing with the life of one hero, but divided into different episodes called 'branches,' which are themselves complete" (324). Gruffydd offers his tentative reconstruction of the original form of the Four Branches:

The basis of the whole four [mabinogi] was the Life of Pryderi in four branches, namely:

(1) Compert. The Conception and Birth of Pryderi.

(2) Macgnimarta. The Youthful Exploits of Pryderi.

(3) Indarba. The Imprisonment of Pryderi.

(4) Aided. The Death of Pryderi. (328)

Most contemporary criticism of The Mabinogion explores the tales "as they stand" (Sioned Davies 81) rather than speculate on their earlier forms, but Gruffydd's search for origins and ancient unities in the tales would have resonated in the imagination of David Jones, who approached his Welsh heritage in a similar spirit.

In the appendix to Math Vab Mathonwy, Gruffydd presents several analogues for the tale of The King and his Prophesied Death, which in its Irish form he sees underlying the Mabinogi of Math. Among these analogies is the account of the birth of Jesus in
Matthew, which must have suggested to Jones the idea of the Gospel as a type of 
mabinogi (373). Gruffydd includes an outline of the birth of Jesus which clearly offers 
an analogy for the Irish Compert:

The account in the Gospel according to Matthew of the birth of Jesus may be summarised as follows:

(1) From Abraham, through King David, the genealogy is given of 
Joseph "the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born." The old Syriac, 
and according to Nestle, the archetype of some codices read:
"Joseph, to whom Mary was plighted as a maiden, begat Jesus."

(2) There were ancient prophecies that a Messiah would arise from the 
seed of David to deliver Israel from its oppressors.

(3) The King of the country, Herod, inquires of the Wise Men about 
the birth of the Child, pretending that he, like them wishes to go and 
worship him.

(4) The Wise Men disobey Herod, who orders all the male children in 
the country to be killed.

(5) Joseph takes his son to Egypt to conceal him.

(6) It should be noted that the Messiah's name is part of the prophecy.

(373)

In the original sense of mabinogi, a tale of youth, the term would seem to correspond 
most closely with the Irish Macgnimarta. Gruffydd notes that by the time the Four 
Branches of the Mabinogi were written down, "mabinogi which first denoted 'enfances' 
had lost its stricter sense and had been extended from the history of a hero's youth to that
of his whole life” (325-6). It is in this later, extended sense that the Gospel narrative may be considered as “mabinogi Iesu Grist”.

Jones does not offer readers a cymricized life of Jesus in “Mabinog’s Liturgy”, but rather a polyphonic and intertextual hymn for Christmas; the mabinogi Iesu Grist is assumed rather than given. The section opens by situating Christ’s Passion in relation to Celtic and Roman history, foregrounding the relationship between the Crucifixion and its historical moment in the West. Jones anticipates the splendour of Camelot evoked in the Gwenhwyfar passage in his allusion to Britain at the time of the Passion

Upwards of two hundred and fifty years

since West-raum seekers

brought La Tène to Thames-side.

Caratacus a growing son.

Belgic romanophils

already half toga’d

in Camulodunum

but keep, as yet, their trousers on.

Amminius yet our creature? (Ana 185)

The Camulodunum of the Belgae became the Camelot of Arthurian romance, and this allusion suggests a cultural continuity between the romanizing Belgae and Arthur as the last successful defender of Christian-Roman civilization in Britain.\(^1\) The Romanizing tendencies of the Belgae eased the imposition of Roman civilization that came in the

\(^1\) On the Belgae as early conveyors of Roman civilization to Britain, see Collingwood and Meyers, *Roman Britain and the English Settlements* (27 ff.).
wake of conquest, and this civilisation in turn allowed for Christianity to arrive in Britain through the usual channels of the Empire. This sense of triumphant historical process is qualified, however, by the tragic figure of Caratacus (in Welsh tradition, Caradoc), also evoked in the Preface to *In Parenthesis*. The doomed leader of a Celtic resistance, foreshadowing Jones’s beloved Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, is a type of figure characterised by Jones as the Dying Gaul in his essay of that name, one also recognised by Joyce in “Farseeingetherich and Poulaw\(l\)woman Carachthercuss and his Ann Van Vogt” (*Wake* 54). Vercingetorix, heroic leader of the Gauls, is “far-seeing” because he, like Caratacus, recognised that political disunity would be the doom of the Celtic peoples, as it proved in Gaul and Britain in ancient times, and in Wales and Ireland\(^2\) during the Middle Ages. Like Joyce’s, Jones’s sense of history foregrounds defeat and suffering to redress modernity’s preoccupation with progress, and as necessary for humanity’s spiritual renewal.

4.2 Gwenhwyfar.

Jones’s description of Gwenhwyfar at Midnight Mass (*Ana* 195-205) has been justly celebrated by critics for its exquisite lyricism, and its opulent imagery reveals the painter’s capacity for visual splendour. Thomas Dilworth praises this passage as the poem’s lyrical pinnacle: “Verbally and symbolically, the description of Gwenhwyfar is beautiful and powerful to depths of reverberation which poetry seldom reaches. If she is numinous, so is the language that depicts her” (*SM* 234). This lyrical set-piece is,

\(^2\)“Ann Van Vogt” = Anna + Shan Van Vogt, a Gaelic personification of Ireland as the Poor Old Woman (MacKillop 339).
however, present in the poem as a point of comparison with the even greater beauty of the Virgin Mary:

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 (Ana 195)

The “Day-star o’ the Harbour” alludes to the liturgical hymn *Ave Maris Stella*, which addresses Mary as “Star of the Sea”, and which is traditionally associated with nautical enterprises, being recognised, for example, by Louis XIII as the official hymn of the maritime colony of Acadia. In Catholic artistic tradition, Mary’s celestial beauty is unimaginable, always greater than that which any conception of ordinary human beauty can encompass. The beauty of Gwenhwyfar is an *analogue* for, but can never approach, that of “the Lady of Heaven” (194), but Mary’s beauty is a metaphor for goodness. Jones in his note to this passage quotes from Lady Guest’s translation of the medieval Welsh romance, *The Lady of the Fountain*: “…more lovely than Gwenhwyfar the wife of Arthur, when she has appeared loveliest at the Offering, on the day of the Nativity or at the feast of Easter” (Ana 195, note 3). In the Welsh romance, Kynon addresses the court of Arthur in response to the king’s request to be entertained with a tale. Kynon relates that he entered a marvellous Castle, where he “saw four and twenty damsels, embroidering satin by the window” (Guest 152). It is these damsels who Kynon claims
surpass Gwenhwyfar in beauty. Jones takes Kynon’s boast and applies it to Mary, whose beauty of necessity excels even that of the Castle maidens.

The romance’s image of Gwenhwyfar “when she appeared loveliest at the Offering, on the day of the Nativity” provides Jones with the central image for this passage. Commenting on Jones’s indifference to Dante and his ethereal Beatrice, Kathleen Henderson Staudt writes that “this queen is the ‘stunner’ that Beatrice is not. His language identifies her human beauty with the archetypal power and attractiveness of the earth, especially of the island of Britain.” (141) In contrast with Mary, Gwenhwyfar is an adulterous queen, her beauty tainted by original sin and by her violation of the sixth commandment. As art, the Gwenhwyfar passage undoubtedly achieves “the shining out of form over the well-proportioned parts of matter”, but the splendour of the poetry should not blind us to Jones’s artistic and spiritual purpose (Maritain, *Philosophy* 35). His description of Gwenhwyfar is of her outer form only, with an emphasis on status and rich apparel. Dilworth points out that the word “gilt”, repeated three times during this descriptive passage, “evokes its homonym and suggests that her conscience causes ‘the toil within’” (SM 230; *Ana* 197). Her actions, however, show humility and piety. Jones leaves Gwenhwyfar’s inner state an open question, but if anything redeems her in this passage, it is not her physical beauty, but rather her attendance at Midnight Mass. In doing so, she demonstrates her assent to Mary’s *fiat*, and so participates in the mystery of the Incarnation. This is the major contrast between this portrayal of Gwenhwyfar and Jones’s representation of her, nude and languorous, in his painting “Guenever”, where a Christ-like Lancelot enters the Queen’s chamber through a window (see Miles and Shiel
254-5). Both portrayals, however, explore the tension between sexual desire and religious devotion.

Jones is careful to situate the Gwenhwyfar passage “in the time of the Mass”, but whereas the action (if that is the right word) of The Anathémata as a whole takes place during the time of any Mass, Gwenhwyfar attends Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve. As we shall see, the passage reproduces some themes of the whole poem in miniature, as “Dai’s Boast” does for In Parenthesis. Jones evokes the cultural milieu of early medieval Britain by reckoning Christmas Eve as “three nights after the solstice-night, the sun in the Goat, in the second moon after Calangaef” (Ana 195). “Calangaef” is November 1, Winter-calends (Ana 195, n.4). Gwenhwyfar attends Mass

    with the carried lights
    that are ordinary to her before her and the many plygain-
    lights special to this night about her; the yntred sung, the
    synaxis done, at the beginning of The Offering proper,
    when they light the offertory-light that burns solitary on the
    epistle side; standing within the screen (for she was the wife
    of the Bear of the Island) and toward the lighted board (Ana 195-6)

Jones identifies plygain (lit. “dawn”) as an old Welsh custom of lighting candles and singing carols on Christmas (Ana 195, n.5), and it thus serves to situate the Mass by allusion to a local usage of great antiquity. Similarly, yntred for introit (the chant sung after the priest has censed the altar, varying according to the proper Mass of the day3) suggests a ritual so deeply rooted in the culture as to contribute a word to the vernacular

3 In the Novus Ordo Mass, the Introit is now the “Entrance Antiphon”.
tongue. "Synaxis" is the name given to all of the Mass preceding the Offertory Prayer, including the Liturgy of the Word. René Hague notes that "the single candle, lit at the Offertory, survives in the Dominican rite, though not in the Tridentine. D. was familiar with the practice, which E[ric] G[ill] maintained in the chapel at Pigotts" (Commentary 215-6). Jones suggests the rhythms of liturgical language with "the yntred sung, the synaxis done, at the beginning of The Offering proper", recalling as it does "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" from the Lord’s Prayer.

The strong female presence of Gwenhwyfar lends a Joycean echo to these lines as well, recalling Anna Livia Plurabelle’s "her singtime sung, her rill be run, unhemmed as it is uneven!", though Anna Livia’s unhemmed, uneven rill is in marked contrast to the exquisitely tailored artifice of the Queen’s clothing (Joyce, Wake 104).

"The Offering", as Jones’s note points out, is strictly speaking the beginning of the Mass itself, in Welsh called Yr Offeren. Thus Guest’s translation of Yr Offeren as "The Offering" rather than as "The Mass" is not idiomatic English, but felicitously suggests poetic possibilities to Jones. In the Tridentine Mass, which codified the essentially medieval Roman Rite, the Offertory marks the beginning of the Eucharistic Liturgy, and immediately follows the Profession of Faith, in which the Nicene Creed is recited to conclude the Liturgy of the Word.4 The Liturgy of the Word includes readings

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4 The Novus Ordo Mass does away with the Offertory Chant altogether, and the Profession of Faith (which was formerly always the Nicene Creed, but which is now frequently the simpler Apostle’s Creed) is followed by petitions, known as the Prayers of the Faithful, to conclude the Liturgy of the Word. The psalm which contributes the Offertory Chant in the Tridentine Mass is in the Novus Ordo now read or sung in full,
from the Old Testament, the Epistles, and the Gospels; in ancient times, all who wished could attend, but only the baptised could stay for the Eucharistic Liturgy. The Offertory Chant was originally intended “to accompany the procession of the faithful bringing their offerings of bread and wine to the altar” (Layman’s 857). The Offertory Chant for Midnight Mass urges us to “Bid heaven rejoice and earth exult in the presence of the Lord. For he has come” (“Laetentur caeli, et exsultet terra ante faciem Domini: quoniam venit”) (Layman’s 71). By situating Gwenhwyfar at this moment in the Mass, Jones obliquely suggests the possibility of her spiritual awakening; in spite of her adultery, at this moment in the liturgical year, Gwenhwyfar may yet be receptive to the promise of Redemption brought by the Infant Jesus.

Jones is also careful to situate Gwenhwyfar in her relationship to Arthur’s court. On “Bear of the Island” as an epithet for Arthur, Jones in his note directs our attention to the thirteenth-gloss on a MS of Nennius, which reads: ‘Arthur, translated into Latin, means ursus horribilis.’ There is also the exceedingly obscure passage in Gildas where he calls some ruler Ursus, the Bear. There seems every reason for rejecting the suggestion that Gildas here refers to Arthur;

sandwiched between the first and second readings. This is known as the Responsorial Psalm, in which the congregation recites a Response in between the psalm’s verses, typically sung by the church cantor (or read by a lector), a lay person. In the Novus Ordo Mass, the Liturgy of the Eucharist begins with the Preparation of the Gifts (the bread and wine intended for Consecration), which in the Tridentine Rite follows the Offertory. In both Novus Ordo and Tridentine Rites, the Prayer Over the Gifts is followed by the Canon of the Mass, which varies considerably in the different Rites.
but it may be noted that in Old Celtic the word for bear was artos, modern Welsh, arth. (Ana 196, n.1)

Jones is fascinated by linguistic connections and continuities of all kinds, but here uses this epithet as a means of invoking the “ancient unity” of Romano-British culture, and its persistence in the texture of the Welsh language itself. The connection may not be at all obvious from the phrase “Bear of the Island” on its own, but Jones’s note is a good example of the way he uses notes to provide readers of the poem with information while stimulating them to make those imaginative links Jones himself offers in the poetry. The Anathémata constantly challenges readers to expand the boundaries of their own knowledge, and to engage imaginatively and analogically with all aspects of human culture.

The “Secret” (or “Prayer Over the Gifts”, which immediately follows the Offertory Prayers) at Midnight Mass reads: “Accepta tibi sit, Domine, quae sumus, hodiernae festivitatis oblatio: ut, tua gratia largiente, per haec sacrosancta commercia, in illius inveniamur forma, in quo tecum est nostra substantia.” (“May the oblation of this day’s festivity, we pray Thee, Lord, find acceptance with Thee; that, by the bounty of Thy grace, we may, through this sacred intercourse, be found made like unto him in Whom our substance is united with Thee”) (Lasance 139-40). Jones describes, in sensuous detail, the richness of the Queen’s apparel and its material origin in trade and manufacture, offering a poetic expression of the economy of early medieval Europe. Gwenhwyfar’s splendour thus becomes an offering before the altar of all the riches and artefacture the West has to offer at the beginning of the Middle Ages – another example of anathémata within the poem. There is a sense, too, that in kneeling at the altar on
Christmas Eve, Gwenhwyfar is offering herself up as well, and so occupies a liminal state between sin and redemption. Jones's description of her body reminds readers of humanity's creation in the image of God, "the defeasible and defected image of him who alone imagined and ornated us, made fast of flesh her favours, braced bright, sternal and vertbral, to the graced bones bound" (Ana 196). According to the Concise Oxford English Dictionary, "defeasible" carries the sense "capable of annulment, liable to forfeiture," an oblique allusion to Gwenhwyfar's adultery, but more generally to the Fall occasioned by original sin. Nonetheless, this moral imperfection still allows something of the Creator's radiance to shine through Gwenhwyfar's beauty, which Jones conveys in language echoing Hopkins's poetry, specifically The Wreck of the Deutschland's "Thou hast bound bones and veins in me, fastened me flesh" (Poetical Works 119; 5). The moral precariousness of Gwenhwyfar is suggested by the lines which follow in Hopkins's poem: "And almost unmade, what with dread / Thy doing" (Poetical Works 119; 6-7).

One of the most beautiful descriptions in the Gwenhwyfar passage is that of the Queen's hair, in which Jones shows the contribution of British ore and workmanship to her appearance, while hinting at her moral taint, as in the passage quoted above. Thomas Dilworth sees in the descriptive movement "from top to toe" an adherence to the "amplificatio per descriptionem of medieval ars poeticae" (SM 229):

If her gilt, unbound

(for she was consort of a regulus) and falling to below her

sacral bone, was pale as standing North Humber barley-corn,

here, held back in the lunula of Doleucothi gold, it was

paler than understalks of barley, held in the sickle's lunula.
So that the pale gilt where it was by nature palest, together
with the pale river-gold where it most received the pallid
candle-sheen, rimmed the crescent whiteness where it was
whitest.

Or, was there already silver to the gilt? (196-7)

The syntax of this passage echoes a phrase in *Finnegans Wake*: “if she is older now than her teeth she has hair that is younger than thIGHNE, my dear!” (101-2). Joyce’s description of Anna Livia Plurabelle, with its *if* construction and emphasis on hair and aging, provides Jones with a syntactical pattern and basic imagery, which he elaborately tailors to fit the Queen’s sublime beauty. Commenting on Jones’s use of *regulus*, René Hague reminds readers “that this Gwenhwyfar is also Geoffrey of Monmouth’s Guinevere, i.e. to think of her as Roman rather than Malory-Arthurian” (*Commentary* 216). The simile comparing Gwenhwyfar’s hair with the “standing North Humber barley-corn” identifies her with the harvest, while “the lunula of Doleucothi gold” suggest an association with the moon as well as with the gold of Caermarthenshire, where the Doleucothi mines are today a tourist attraction.

In his poem “The Defence of Guenevere”, William Morris portrays Guenevere urging the knights who accuse her to “wonder how the light is falling so / Within my moving tresses” (235-6); the hair on Jones’s Gwenhwyfar similarly receives “the pallid candle-sheen”. The self-descriptive passage in Morris’s poem (lines 223-41) provides a suggestive analogue and point of contrast for Jones’s own description of the Queen, and both poets emphasise the Queen’s beauty and moral vulnerability. “Or, was there already silver to the gilt?” suggests that Gwenhwyfar’s beauty may be tainted, in part an illusion
created by the ornate splendour of her costume. The silver hair which suggests age or
trying experience is paralleled in Morris’s poem by the description of Guenevere’s eyes,
which are “Wept all away to grey” (225). By balancing rich description and pointed
question, Jones is able to maintain an ambiguous tone toward Gwenhwyfar without
diminishing his descriptive power, also an achievement of Morris’s poem. While none of
Morris’s books appear in the catalogue of Jones’s library, it is quite possible that he knew
the Pre-Raphaelite poem, given his literate Victorian family and art-school training.
Jones mentions Morris in relation to Eric Gill, writing that Gill “was a true master in the
sense that William Morris was a master; indeed with Morris he had much affinity” (E&A
297), showing familiarity with his Victorian precursor, albeit as a craftsman rather than a
poet. (Morris’s one surviving oil painting is of Jane Morris elaborately dressed as an
Arthurian heroine, but scholars debate whether she is supposed to be Guenevere or La
Belle Iseult).

The allusion to Northumberland in the passage quoted above has biographical and
Arthurian significance; while staying at Rock, Jones wrote that nearby “Alnwick is
probably ’Joyous Gard’ where Sir Launcelot had his castle and was buried” (qtd. in Miles
and Shiel 175). These moon associations accumulate with the repetition of “pale”, and
images of “the sickle’s lunula” and the candle-light reflecting off Gwenhwyfar’s hair
which “rimmed the crescent whiteness where it was whitest”. The Queen’s semi-divine
identification with moon and harvest is tempered by the concluding question, which
suggests the traditional lunar attributes of change and inconstancy, a further allusion to
Gwenhwyfar’s adultery. Gwenhwyfar’s sexual dalliance is never directly alluded to, but
only obliquely suggested, reflecting its status as an “open secret” at Arthur’s court: “as
for gathering knots of may – why not talk of maidenheads?” (197). Hague glosses “knots of may” as “nosegays or breast-knots of hawthorn, white or red”; in European mythology, the hawthorn is “the tree of enforced chastity” (Commentary 217; Graves, White Goddess 175). Although “the judgmatic smokes of autumn seemed remote” to those attending Midnight Mass, the reference to future judgement reminds readers that the splendour and fellowship of Camelot is destined to collapse in the wake of adultery and treachery.

Jones explores the central tension between Gwenhwyfar’s near-celestial beauty and her ambiguous moral state in the next passage:

Within this arc, as near, as far off, as singular, as the whitest of the Seven Wanderers, of exorbitant smoothness, yet puckered a little, because of the extreme altitude of her station, for she was the spouse of the Director of Toil, and, because of the toil within,

her temples gleamed

among the carried lights hard-contoured as Luna’s rim,
when in our latitudes in winter time, she at her third phase, casts her shadow so short that the out-patrol moves with confidence, so near the zenith she journeys. (Ana 197)

Gwenhwyfar’s temples pucker, a physical characteristic, like silvering hair, that may suggest premature ageing, in this case due to both the burden of queenship and to “the toil within” (Ana 197). The light glistening from her temples is likened, like that of her hair, to the shining crescent moon – “Luna’s rim”, a verbal echo of the “lunula” above.
The lunar analogy culminates in the final sentence of this part of the Gwenhwyfar passage:

If as Selenê in highness
so in influence then as Helenê too: by her lunations the
neapings and floodings, because of her the stress and drag. (Ana 197)

If Gwenhwyfar’s beauty and majesty suggest the moon-goddess Selenê, then her influence and inconstancy suggest Helenê. Helen in the western tradition is the archetype of female inconstancy, and blamed for the Trojan War. Gwenhwyfar is an analogous figure in the sense that her dalliance with Launcelot caused the rift in Arthur’s court which ultimately led to the tragedy of Camlann (Hague, Commentary 217), what Jones characterises as “the more basic and political theme” obfuscated by the motifs of courtly romance (Ana 128, n.1). By emphasising her “highness” and “the extreme altitude of her station”, however, Jones opens the question of the Queen’s culpability: to what extent did the remoteness of Gwenhwyfar’s position expose her to irresistible temptation? Jones presents her as a lonely, even isolated figure, adored at a distance by her subjects, and his language elicits pity rather than condemnation; he is not throwing verbal stones at an adulteress, but rather hinting at the inscrutability of the human heart and the deceptive nature of appearances.

The lunar passage is followed by a line based upon the address made by the Bishop of Canterbury to Mordred (Malory XXI, i), but here enigmatically put into Mordred’s own mouth:

...for she was the king our uncle’s wedlocked wife and he our father and we his sister’s son. (Ana 198)
This allusion to Arthur’s incestuous begetting of Mordred on Morgan La Fay hints at the dark sexual politics underlying Camelot, and the horror of Mordred’s designs upon Gwenhwyfar. Jones includes this sinister line as yet another means of getting behind the popular, romanticised Arthurian world to its remote historical origins. In his note, Jones suggests that the story of Mordred “represents the tradition of a power-struggle in Britain between the _dux_, Artorius, and a group of his _equites_, during the forty years or so of peace that followed the halt of the Anglo-Saxon barbarians at the siege of Badon Hill” (*Ana* 198, n.1). Although Jones’s observations are interesting, the effect of this line in the poem is to heighten the dramatic tension of the Arthurian setting, and to emphasise the precariousness of the Queen’s position. David Blamires remarks that the sudden juxtaposition of this line “is justified by its association of the fateful marriage of Guinevere and Mordred with the abduction of Helen, whose name begins the sequence.” (*Artist and Writer* 140)

Jones hints at Gwenhwyfar’s status as a potential victim in his comparison of her graceful neck to that of a deer, turning so swiftly it eludes the gaze of the huntsmen, though not that of the forest hermit. The “poised neck” of the silent deer contrasts with the description of Guenevere’s throat given by William Morris: “Yea also at my full heart’s strong command, / See through my long throat how the words go up / In ripples to my mouth” (230-1). The deer comparison follows on Jones’s likening of her skin to Parian marble,

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still as a megalith, and as
numinous:
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yet, as limber to turn
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as the poised neck at the forest-fence
between find and view
too quick, even for the eyes of the gillies of Arthur, but seen
of the forest-ancraman (he had but one eye)
between decade and Gloria. (Ana 198)

Gwenhwyfar’s likeness to megalith and deer identify her with the most ancient levels of
British culture and with the island’s fauna as well. “Numinous” is a fitting adjective for a
woman who gathers to herself the qualities of harvest, moon, megalith, and deer. At the
level of metaphor, she belongs to the archetypal feminine divinity that permeates the
poem, commemorated, for example, by “the Willendorf stone” in “Rite and Fore-Time”
(Ana 59). In the context of Christmas, the deer metaphor suggests an allusion to the old
English carol, “The Holly and the Ivy”, with its primeval imagery of “The rising of the
sun / And the running of the deer”. The deer image also recalls the allusion in “The Lady
of the Pool” to the deer sacrifice performed at St. Paul’s church in London as late as the
sixteenth century. The hermit’s “one eye” which perceives Gwenhwyfar-as-deer is the
eye of the spirit, and Thomas Dilworth has identified the source of this image in Matthew
6:22: “The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body
shall be full of light” (KJV) (SM 230). “Arthur’s gillies” see only with the bodily eye,
and are therefore blind to the numinous presence of Gwenhwyfar. This openness to the
numinous is shared by hermit and poet, for whom Gwenhwyfar plays Muse, but not by
the huntsmen, who seek only the utile objective of the kill. In any case, the imagery of
forest and hermit extends the vision of Arthurian Britain outside the church into the
wilderness, evoking the woodland world of Malory.
The next several pages (*Ana* 198-201) situate Gwenhwyfar’s rich apparel in the context of a fantastic early medieval economy. Jones describes the Queen’s buskins, where the supple Andalusian buck-skin, freighted from Córdoba, cased her insteps (for all the transmarine negotiatiors, prospectors, company-floaters and *mer-catores* laded and carried for her) covering all but the lower eyelet-rings and thong-tags and other furnishings of polar ivory (*Ana* 199)

Far from presenting an ethereal, aestheticised vision of the Middle Ages, Jones emphasises the economic activity which allows Gwenhwyfar the luxury she enjoys. Though certainly not a Marxist, Jones does not shy away from the economic basis of medieval, or of modern, life. In a 1940 letter to Tom Burns, Jones writes, “‘economics’ are as important as Marx said – he merely truncated the hierarchy of Being” (qtd. in *SM* 75). Cordoban leather has long been prized as a luxury item, and Jones may have had in mind the Middle English word *cordwain*, or, more likely, the Welsh word *cordwal* or *cordwan* (Cordoban leather), which appears in *Manawydan Vab Llyr*, the Third Branch of *The Mabinogion* (*Williams Pedeur Keinc* 54).

“Manawydan himself” appears as a “cruising old wicing” who obtains the exotic items for the Queen. Although Manawydan does not appear as a trader in *The Mabinogion*, J. E. Lloyd mentions “the wizard pilot and merchant, Manawyddan son of Llyr” in his *History of Wales* as an enduring figure in Welsh folk-lore (1: 122). He is counted one of the Three Golden Shoemakers of the Isle of Britain in the Triads, and his name is considered cognate with Manannán mac Lir, the Irish sea-god. It is this tentative
oceanic connection which inspires Jones to construct a fantasy of early medieval trade and exploration in the northern oceans, where Manawydan

on the whale-path, but four

and half degrees of latitude without the arctic parallel, two hundred and twenty nautical miles south-east by south of Islont with Thor’s Fairy-Haven Isles looming on his starboard beam about six Gaulish leagues, alone and by himself – except for his mór-forwyn⁵ mates – running free with the wind on the starboard side, carried away and handsomely, the rare dexter tooth of the living bull narwhal that bluff-nosed the southwester nose-ender with spiralled ivories lancing the bright spume scud.

The cruising old wicing! (Ana 199)

Jones again transforms Joycean syntax and motif, specifically the voyage narrated in Anna Livia Plurabelle: “In a gabbard he barqued it, the boat of life, from the harbourless Ivernikan Okean, till he spied the loom of his landfall and he loosed two croakers from under his tilt, the gran Phenician rover”; Joyce here comically alludes to “the drowned Phoenician sailor” in Eliot’s The Waste Land (Joyce, Wake 197; Eliot, Collected Poems 64, line 47). The mixture of British, Scandinavian, and Gaulish elements in the Jones passage emphasises the rôle played by maritime trade in bringing the cultures of northern Europe into closer contact with each other. This kind of cultural cross-fertilisation through trade is a recurrent theme in The Anathëmata, figuring prominently, as we have

⁵ mór-forwyn: mermaid.
seen, in "The Lady of the Pool". Jones's positive view of commerce and cultural mixing is a distinguishing feature of his Modernist vision, contrasting as it does with the suspicion of international trade (often associated with anti-Semitism) found in the work of Ezra Pound. Trade, for Jones, is a means through which cultures enrich each other through the exchange of unique goods and new ideas. It only acquires negative connotations when it is associated with the exploitative power of empire, and unique, locally produced goods are replaced by the standardised items of mass production. The narwhal horn sought by Manawydan was considered a great rarity in medieval Europe, where it was believed to belong to the fabled unicorn.

Manawydan's journey attempts to re-constitute another "ancient unity", one which does not figure prominently in Jones's work and which is largely speculative - namely, the relationship between early medieval Britain and Scandinavia. Time is a fluid thing in The Anathémata, but if Manawydan's journey is contemporary with the historical Arthur (5th-6th centuries A.D.), then it pre-dates the Vikings by several hundred years. Is Jones the historiographer suggesting a benign Scandinavia that only turned to piracy with the collapse of political order in northern Europe? Might Jones be hinting that Arthur brought a peace to Britain that extended outward to affect the more northerly peoples? These can only be tentative interpretations, because as background Jones only cites a highly speculative theory that situates Welsh culture in relation to Scandinavia (Ana 200, n.2). This shaky historical foundation leads Jones to express Manawydan's journey as hearsay ("This he averred...") and as rhetorical question (Ana 200-1). Entertaining as a seaman's yarn, this passage is not as successful, I think, as the more precisely rendered sea-journeys related elsewhere in the poem, nor as the condensed account given on page
199, quoted above. As we have seen in Dai Greatcoat’s boast from *In Parenthesis*, Jones is able to evoke and breathe life into an ancient, if generally unfamiliar, tradition; however, there is less he can do with the phantasm of a “Welsh-Scandinavian complex”, which is not tradition but theory.

Perhaps the aspect of Manawydan’s journey most relevant to this exploration of “Mabinog’s Liturgy” is Jones’s parenthetical comment on Manawydan’s voyage to Norway:

(To add a bit *more*

to his old *mabinogion*?

Will he Latin that *too*

to get some Passion into his Infancy?

By the Mabon!! he will

when he runes the Croglith,

in all the the white bangors

of the islands of the sea

where there is salt

on the Stone within the *pared.*) (*Ana* 200-1)

The sense of these lines seems to be that Manawydan makes his voyage to add to his youthful exploits, but these are assimilated to the exploits of Christ in the second question, which may superficially be interpreted as asking “will he dignify his sufferings by putting them into Latin, to complement the account of his youth?” Hague offers a slightly different paraphrase:
will he express *mabinogion* (tale of infancy, and so tale of Christ’s nativity) in Latin, and so, by learning first of the Nativity proceed to the Passion? This he will do when he reads (‘runes’, learns the mystery of) the ‘Lesson of the Cross’ (the Passion), as it is sung in all Christian churches. (*Commentary* 218)

The concluding sentence is perhaps best paraphrased as “By the Son! he will when he reads the Lesson of the Cross in all the island churches, where there is salt on the altar”.

The non-sequitur is only apparent; here, as with sea-captains elsewhere in the poem, “the cruising old *wicing*” is typologically assimilated to Christ, who in turn is represented by the priests saying Good Friday Mass “in all the white bangors / of the islands of the sea”⁶ (*Ana* 201). The density of these lines tends to be overlooked, but some unpacking reveals their intimate relationship to the central complex of imagery and theme in *The Anathémata*. Jones also reveals his own understanding of the word *mabinogi* in his footnote to these lines. He accepts the older interpretation of the term as describing the materials mastered by “a tyro-bard”, as well as its possible connection with the mysterious Maponos, a British deity whose temples cluster around Hadrian’s wall in northern Britain and in scattered locations elsewhere (see Collingwood and Meyers 265).

Significantly for the central conceit of “Mabinog’s Liturgy”, Jones defines *mabinog* as “a tale of infancy as in the tale called *Mabinogi Iesu Crist*” (*Ana* 200, n.5).

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⁶ See Hague, *Commentary* 218-20 for a detailed exploration of Jones’s use of *bangor* in its original sense of (wattled) enclosure, wattling being a crucial symbol in the poet’s imagination.
The concluding paragraph on Manawydan’s voyage questions its veracity, and speculates whether the narwhal horn was rather made “from fungus by Virgil’s art in Merlin’s Maridunum”, or more prosaically traded “ready-made-up, in Bristol? He might have done either, the old conjuror!” (Ana 201). This attention to the tale’s own fictionality (seen also in the epigraph beginning “IT WAS A DARK AND STORMY NIGHT…”) anticipates a strategy common in post-modern poetry, seen, for example, in John Ashbery’s popular poem “The Instruction Manual”. Jones moves on to allude to Gwenhwyfar’s great, if tainted, beauty. The beauty of her face is described only as “whatever strong enchantment lay between forehead and chin”, and although “We are not concerned with portraiture, it can be inferred that of her eyes, one was blemish’d” (Ana 201, 202). Enchantment, like its equivalent in Welsh, hud, has mainly negative connotations in Arthurian legends, associated primarily with Morgan La Fay. The “blemish’d” eye suggests moral taint, although it is another strange eye-image, and not one that obviously refers to any specific passage in Arthurian romance; Aphrodite was said to be the more beautiful for the slight cast of one eye. At the risk of reading too much into the image, I would relate it to the one eye of the hermit and suggest that it is Gwenhwyfar’s spiritual eye that is blemished by her adultery.

7 Ashbery’s use of the unusual word “anathematist” in his long prose-poem “The System” (Selected Poems 125) suggests an acquaintance with Jones’s poem, and although critical of the anathematist’s methods, the American poet’s contemplation of an alternate history underlying our daily experience of reality touches on themes central to Jones’s own poetic vision.
The catalogue of Gwenhwyfar's raiment continues on pages 202-3, and includes Dalmatic, undergown, vest, and *lacerna* (chasuble) in royal purple, decorated with a bee-design and bordered with British wildcat-fur. Central to this descriptive passage is the way in which Gwenhwyfar’s clothing connects her with the fading Roman world, and with other cultures in Europe. Commenting on the Queen’s use of imperial purple and the bee symbol, imperial emblems of Byzantium, Jones exclaims, “Ischyros and all his Basils! what will they say of that at Caer Gustennin”? Arthur’s court thus embodies the ancient Roman dignity in Britain. Gwenhwyfar’s use of the bee was perhaps suggested to Jones by its adoption by the Frankish monarchs. He again calls into question the status of Gwenhwyfar’s inner life, comparing her to “a leaning column” upon which her clothing rests, shielding “the breathing marble” (*Ana* 201). This goes beyond some such expression as having alabaster skin; it suggests a stony and impervious beauty at odds with the call, in the Offertory Chant, to rejoice at the arrival of Christ.

Jones directs the reader’s attention away from Gwenhwyfar and toward the altar by following the Queen’s own subtle gesture as she leans in preparation for the Canon of the Mass:

So, wholly super-pellissed of British wild-woods, the chrys-elephantine column (native the warm blood in the blue veins that vein the hidden marble, the lifted abacus of native gold) leaned, and toward the Stone. (*Ana* 203)

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8 Constantinople, seat of the Eastern Roman Emperors.

Gwenhwyfar is troped as a decorated marble column, but even her splendour submits before the humble stone of the altar. The altar itself appears as a decorated stone:

And on and over the stone

the spread board-cloths and on this three-fold linen the

central rectangle of finest linen and on the spread-out part

of this linen the up-standing calix that the drawn-over

laundered folds drape white. (*Ana* 203)

Jones skilfully stages this scene so as to present the carefully prepared altar as a counterpoint to the ornamented Queen, but he is too subtle to make this a stark contrast between secular and sacred; Gwenhwyfar’s beauty reflects the divine, and the altar includes bounty of both earth and human hands. The juxtaposition of Queen and calix suggests an image from Morris’s poem, where Guenevere holds a chalice: “in my hand // The shadow lies like wine within a cup / Of marvellously colour’d gold” (232-4); in *The Anathémata*, this wine-like shadow is transubstantiated into the wine of the Eucharist, and the golden cup is moved to the altar.

Just as Jones places Gwenhwyfar’s royal array in the context of an early medieval economy, so he situates the gifts for the altar in the existential world of work, politics, and weather:

And before the palled cup

the open dish and on the shallow dish and in the wide bowl

of the stemmed cup

---

10 Traditionally, the altar in Roman Catholic churches is made of stone and contains relics of the saint to whom the church is dedicated.
the three waiting munera:

Of Ceres

from the reserve-granaria

(for Elbe-men

blacken with red fire the east wheat-belt, and nothing through

from Loidis, and elsewhere the situation is obscure and

Nials gathering hostages gather also the white sign, and then

three successive years of rotten harvest). (Ana 203-4)

This consciousness of history, and of the tentative power of language to evoke the historical world, are typical of Jones’s Modernism, and are two preoccupations he shares with Joyce. “Nials gathering hostages” is a construction worthy of Joyce, potentially meaning “Nial is gathering hostages” or an adjectival construction referring to “Nial’s hostages, who are gathering (or perhaps ‘being gathered’)

), with an echo of the expression “gathering storms”. More generally, the expression alludes to the gathering storm of barbarian raids and invasions, which in sixth century Britain were from the pagan Irish as well as the Saxons, threatening to overrun the Isle of the Mighty. The specific allusion, as Jones tells is in his note, is to an Irish raider, Nial of the Nine Hostages, the legendary abductor of the British-born St Patrick (Ana 204, n.2). James Joyce parodically alludes to this same figure with “Mrs. Niall of the Nine Corsages”, and to Patrick’s subsequent conversion of Ireland: “Lean neath stone pine the pastor lies with his crook; young pricket by pricket’s sister nibbleth on returned viridities; amaid her rocking grasses the herb trinity shams lowness; skyp is evergrey” (Wake 96, 14).

Whereas Joyce darkly alludes to St Patrick’s use of the shamrock to explain the Holy
Trinity, Jones is more concerned with exploring the historical determinants of the saint’s mission. In both James Joyce’s and Dylan Thomas’s writing, sound and rhetoric often threaten to overwhelm sense. Jones, with his tentative use of Joycean word-play, is a more lucid artist than either Joyce or Thomas, never stretching his poetic and rhetorical forms beyond the point where sense can be communicated, though perhaps seldom attaining the verbal jouissance of Joyce’s somnambulant reveries or Thomas’s somatic ecstasies. Criticism has only begun to explore Jones’s creative response to the *Wake*, which goes beyond emulating Joyce’s punning, allusive style towards an understanding of how his work can permanently change our relationship to language and the past.

Nial of the Nine Hostages is not the only thing which comes to Britain across the Irish Sea. The gift “Of Liber” (a Roman god of fertility and wine) also arrives “perhaps from over the Sleeve” (*Ana 204*), where it would doubtless have been imported from Spain. Jones thus hints at the complex relationship between Ireland and Britain in the early Middle Ages, a relationship which included both piracy and trade. Jones imagines the wine from Ireland mingling with the waters of Britain, which

quick by high valleys, or

meandering slow and

by the wide, loamed ways, by sallowed way

sign the whole anatomy of Britain

with his valid sign

(out to where the nereids

bring in the shoal-gift: also Him, in sign). (*Ana 204*)
Bread, wine, water, fish: these symbols of Christ are encompassed by Maurice de la Taille’s enigmatic phrase, “He placed himself in the order of signs”, which David Jones uses as epigraph to *Epoch and Artist*. In Jones’s poetic vision, Christ participates in, and is anticipated by, the cultural signs that, in Derrida’s expression, “always already” condition human response, signs which humankind has raised to signify its relationship with Creation. The geophysical features of Britain, the shaping of which Jones celebrates in “Rite and Fore-Time”, in themselves anticipate both Incarnation and the Christian Britain embodied by Arthur’s court, but need to be recognised by a “valid sign” to be made meaningful; the “valid sign” is one which both recognises the presence of the divine and is able to communicate that presence to a receptive audience, an operation impossible in Derrida’s own anti-metaphysic. This theme permeates Jones’s writings, most movingly in the fragment “A, a, a, Domine Deus”, where the search for the divine presence ends in frustration, in a recognition of absence: “my hands found the glazed work unrefined and the terrible crystal a stage-paste...*Eia, Domine Deus*” (*SL 9*). In “Mabinog’s Liturgy”, however, the mode is comic, and the “civilizational phase” of the early Middle Ages allows a sense of the numinous to shine through “the whole anatomy of Britain” (*Ana* 204). The waters’ “meandering slow” reflects the hesitant but purposeful meandering of the Roman liturgy itself.

In response to the rich economic, political, and cultural associations evoked by this stone altar in an early British church,

No wonder

the proud column

leaned
to such a board
even before the Magian handling and the Apollinian word
that shall make of the waiting creatures, in the vessels on the
board-cloths over the Stone, his body who said, DO THIS
for my Anamnesis.
By whom also this column was.
He whose fore-type said, in the Two Lands

I AM BARLEY. *(Ana 204-5)*

Gwenhwyfar’s leaning is reflected in the leaning typography, while Jones’s “Magian handling and the Apollinian word” show at once his debt to, and swerve away from, Oswald Spengler. In *The Decline of the West*, *Magian* refers, roughly, to the cultures of the Near East, including the Jews, while *Apollinian* describes the Classical world. In Spengler’s thought, cultures are absolutely distinct, but through a process he describes as “pseudo-morphosis”, they may acquire the superficial characteristics of an alien culture, with inevitably negative results. For example, the Byzantines for Spengler are as Magian as the Arabs or Persians, but through pseudo-morphosis have inherited many Apollinian trappings from the Roman world *(1:209-12).* Jones appropriates Spengler’s terms while subverting his thesis, showing how “Magian” ritual combines with “Apollinian” language to form the Christian liturgy. Whereas Spengler presents history as a contest between antithetical cultures as they rise and fall, Jones demonstrates that cultural synthesis is crucial for all significant human achievement. In this regard, Jones is much closer to the position taken by his friend Christopher Dawson, who views cultural evolution as dependent on the interaction between cultures. Dawson’s *The Making of Europe* *(1933)*,
for example, demonstrates how the various Classical, Christian, Germanic, and Celtic cultures came together to form Europe in the early Middle Ages (see, e.g., 79-80). As we have seen, the Gwenhwyfar passage itself foregrounds the complex relationships between early medieval Britain and its neighbours, and Jones shows their artefacture present at the altar as the Queen’s raiment.

In the final paragraph of the Gwenhwyfar passage, the implied comparison between Queen and altar reaches its culmination. Here, Gwenhwyfar’s earthly beauty poses a potential threat to the piety of the noblemen attending Mass:

> It was fortunate for the innate *bonneddigion* of Britain that when at the prayer *Qui pridie* she was bound as they to raise her face, she as they, faced the one way, or else when the lifted Signa shone they had mistaken the object of their Latria; to add to the taint of the Diocese of Britain an impulse more eccentric from the New Mandate than is the innate bias of the heresiarchs of Britain. (*Ana* 205)

In Morris’s poem, Guenevere commands the knights to gaze upon her, saying “look you up” (234); here, Jones acknowledges the temptation to look at the Queen’s beauty, but directs the court’s gaze toward “the lifted Signa”. J. E. Lloyd describes the position of the *bonneddig* in early Welsh society as that of a free-born member of the extended kin-group known as the *cenedl*. Upon reaching the age of fourteen,

> His independence was secured by the provision that he was now to come into possession of his rightful share of family goods; he might then choose his career, might enter the royal service in some capacity, might tempt
fortune in some distant land, might settle in a house of his own on some corner of the family land and join in the cultivation of the patrimony under his father’s direction. Such was the position of the “bonheddig cynwynol,” “the gentleman born,” the scion of a free stock ... (1: 289)

Just as he is careful to show the economic basis of early medieval life, so Jones alludes to the rigidly hierarchical structure of early Welsh society. Jones translates the adjective cynwynol as “innate” in his note, and the phrase “innate Combroges” appears in “The Hunt” to describe the warrior aristocracy of Dark Age Britain (Ana 204, n.3; SL 66). By using the Welsh word boneddigion, Jones at once foregrounds the otherness of Welsh society while re-claiming the Arthurian tradition for that very culture.

The liturgical and theological allusions are perhaps more crucial than the historical resonances of this passage, touching as they do on the central action of the Mass. The prayer Qui pridie introduces the Consecration in the Tridentine Rite, after which the Host is raised for worship.11 Dom Gaspar Lefebvre O.S.B., in How to Understand the Mass, a book in Jones’s possession, explains the theological significance of this prayer:

__________________________
11 "Qui pridie quam pateretur, accepit panem in sanctas ac venerabiles manus suas; et elevatis oculis in caelum, ad te Deum Patrem suum omnipotentem, tibi gratias agens, bene dixit, fregit, deditque discipulis suis, dicens : Accipite et manducate ex hoc omnes : Hoc est enim Corpus Meum." ("Who, on the day before he suffered, took bread in his holy and venerable hands and, having lifted up His eyes to heaven, to Thee, God, His almighty Father, giving thanks to Thee, blessed it ☩, broke it, and gave it to His disciples, saying : Take ye and eat ye all of this: For this is My Body") (Lasance 780).
At the Last Supper, supreme High Priest according to the order of Melchisedech, He took bread [...] and changed its substance into the substance of His Body. Then, at the end of the repast, He took wine, and transubstantiated it also, but this time into His Blood to signify by this sacrificial rite, which foreshadowed His death on the Cross, that He was offering His life "in remissionem peccatorum" ["for the remission (forgiveness) of sins"] (77) Although the doctrine of transubstantiation was not formulated until the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 (McBrien 826), it is considered to have been effected by Christ at the Last Supper, and at all subsequent acts of Consecration. Insofar as the men of Britain are able to avert their eyes from the allurements of Gwenhwyfar and concentrate on the raised Host, they witness the transformation of bread into the divine Body, a miracle also witnessed by Gwenhwyfar herself, and imaginatively by all readers of the poem. The "raised Signa" redeems the potentially dangerous beauty of Gwenhwyfar as she joins with all who have ever raised anathémata in bearing witness to the divine.

The "taint of the Diocese of Britain" and the "innate bias of the heresiarchs of Britain" suggest two possible historical situations in the early British Church. Most obviously, it refers to the tenacity of the Celtic Church in clinging to an older dating of Easter and ancient form of tonsure, a situation unresolved until the Synod of Whitby in 644. Joyce alludes to this crisis in the figure of "a particularist prebendary pondering on the roman easter, the tonsure question and greek uniates" (Wake 43). Hague suggests that the "taint" refers more gravely to the heresy of Pelagius, a fifth-century British churchman who denied the doctrine of Original Sin (Commentary 222). Although this
heresy may lurk in the background, the last traces of Pelagianism were stamped out by St Germanus of Auxerre in the mid fifth century (Attwater and John 156). The “New Mandate”, from which Maundy Thursday derives its name, is from John 13:34 (“Mandatum novum do vobis: ut diligatis invicem, sicut dilexi vos”), and Hague suggests that “We may take the ‘new mandate’ in a more general way, to mean the New Testament or Covenant” (Commentary 222).

4.3 “What says his mabinogi?”

With the conclusion of the Gwenhwyfar passage, the setting shifts away to remoter parts of the Island, still on Christmas Eve, when even livestock and wolves are said to kneel (Ana 206). Those mysterious hold-outs from paganism whom we call witches are similarly moved to offer a conciliatory gesture toward the new religion:

If these are but grannies’ tales
maybe that on this night
the nine crones of Glevum in Britannia Prima, and the three
heath-hags that do and do and do
north of the Bodotria
in a wild beyond the Agger Antoninini
and all the many sisters of Afagddu
that practise transaccidentiation from Sabrina Sea
to Dindaethwy
in Mona Insula
tell their aves
unreversed. (*Ana* 206-7)

These practitioners of black magic are themselves touched by the Nativity, seeing in the figure of Mary one whose sanctity inspires them to say their Christian prayers “unreversed”, specifically the *Ave Maria* – if only on this one night. Paganism has not yet given way to Christianity in the more isolated regions of Britain, but Jones foregrounds the potential for conversion in this single act of piety. He playfully draws attention to the artifice of this conceit by oblique allusions to witches in literature. The “nine crones of Glevum” are slain by Arthur in the Welsh prose romance *Peredur*, the “heath hags” from “north of the Bodotria” are the witches in Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*, while Agfaddu is the hideous son of the witch Ceridwen in the Welsh tale of *Taliesin*.

“Transaccidentiation”, as René Hague observes, is “used appropriately of transformation by sorcery, in a context (the Mass) of transubstantiation”; the term refers to something taking on the external (“accidental”) characteristics of something else, while remaining substantially the same (*Commentary* 223). In other words, the power of witchcraft is limited to altering appearances, in contrast with the miracle of transubstantiation, in which substance is transformed, while accident may remain the same (Christ’s Body still *appears* to be bread). Just as these witches are all textual constructions, Jones implies, so his witches should be seen as explicitly literary. The witches’ dialogue is, quite literally, made up of other texts, reflecting Jones’s densely allusive style.

The central conceit of “Mabinog’s Liturgy” finds expression in the witches’ conversation:

*What says his mabinogi?*

*Son of Mair, wife of jobbing carpenter*
in via nascitur

lapped in hay, parvule. (207)

Jones used this text for one of his painted inscriptions, suggesting it occupies a crucial place in his re-imagining of the events of the Nativity. We have seen how W.J. Gruffydd presents a summary of the birth of Christ as a hero-tale in relation to his discussion of Math Vab Mathonwy. Here, the witch refers to the Gospel as a mabinogi, a tale of youth, as Jones playfully speculates how Christianity might have been assimilated into the early culture of Britain. The Latin “in via nascitur” is not, as one might expect, taken from the Gospels in the Vulgate, but from “the Homily of St Gregory, Pope, said at matins for Christmas Day”, foregrounding the liturgy itself as a means of transmission for Latin Christianity (Ana 207, n.2). The witch then asks

But what does his Boast say?

Alpha es et O

that which

the whole world cannot hold.

Atheling to the heaven-king.

Shepherd of Greekland.

Harrower of Annwn.

Freer of the Waters.

Chief Physician and
dux et pontifex

Gwledig Nefoedd and

Walda of every land
The boast is a crucial feature of *In Parenthesis*, as we have seen, and here Jesus’ boast reveals His identity as God. Commentators have noted the various literary echoes of the titles attributed to Christ in these lines, but equally relevant is the way Jones evokes the many strands making up early medieval Europe – the Germanic, Byzantine, Celtic, and Latin cultures, as well as the convergence of pagan ritual, classical science, and Roman discipline in the cultural and intellectual forms of European Christendom. Christianity brings spiritual and cultural unity to the ancient world, and “Mabinog’s Liturgy” explores this process as it evolves in Britain.

As the witches shift their discourse to the subject of Mary, Jones’s language becomes more opaque. Medieval Britain is suggested primarily through Welsh diction, and the specific time evoked is problematised by an allusion to Edward II as “Edwart o Segeint” and William the Conqueror as “Gwilim Domesday”, both figures several centuries later than Gwenhwyfar; the juxtaposition of several centuries at once is a typically Joycean technique in *Finnegans Wake*. Jones’s poetry is often at its weakest when the contactual gives way to the abstract, as it does during the candle-bearer’s speculations in “The Sleeping Lord”, and in the witches’ theological understanding, however pleasing in itself: “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” (*Ana* 214). The sentence is thematically important, however, and ties in with Gwenhwyfar’s own “fiat” at Midnight Mass. Jones forcefully reiterates the instrumental role of women in human salvation, and celebrates a specifically feminine spirituality.
which is not limited to women only: *Fiat* – let it be – is the expression of any individual’s assent to the divine. It is a central theme of *The Anathémeta*.

Jones more effectively uses his macaronic and allusive technique to situate Mary within the existing culture of early medieval Britain, just as Christ is troped as hero of his own *mabinogi*:

This is the night

when the second official

wearing his best orphrey’d jacket, must sing from his *Liber Mandatorium* (which is the New Mandate) the beginning of

the *mabinogi* of the Maban the Pantocrator, the true and eternal Maponos, and of ... Rhiannon of the bird throats.

was it? Spouse of the Lord of Faëry? Matrona of the Calumniations, seven winters at the horse-block telling her own

*mabinogi* of detraction?

Modron our mother?

*Ein mam hawddgar?*

Truly!

that we must now call MAIR. (*Ana* 216-7)

Modron and Maban / Maponos are pagan British divinities, mother and child, and therefore prefigure the Christian Madonna and Child, but even Rhiannon (< Rigantona, Great Mother), the euhemerized horse-goddess and calumniated fairy-bride in *Pwyll Penduic Dyuet*, finds typological fulfilment in Mary who, as Mair, is assimilated into the ancient culture of Britain. This process is depicted pictorially by Jones in "*Y Cyfarchiad*
Fair”, where she is surrounded by birds suggesting the Birds of Rhiannon, an owl evoking the transformed Blodeuwedd, and white flowers recalling those which sprung up wherever Olwen walked (Miles and Shiel 239).

4.4 Conclusion: Sherthursdae and Venus Day

Jones’s presentation of Christ as hero of His own mabinogi expands outward in the poem’s final section to include heroes of all cultures, but particularly the Latin, Germanic, and Celtic cultures that constitute Europe as an ethno-cultural entity. This outward movement is analogous to that of In Parenthesis, which expands from a cultural centre in the Welsh traddodiad to include a common European heritage, as we have seen. The archetypal myth of Goddess and Hero is fulfilled by Mary and Christ:

He that was her son

is now her lover

signed with the quest-sign

at the down-rusher’s ford.

Bough-bearer, harrower

torrent-drinker, restitutor. (Ana 224)

In a 1970 letter to René Hague, Jones writes “I suppose all my stuff has on the whole been central round the Queen of Heaven and cult hero – son and spouse” (Dai 227). He plays here on the traditional identification of Christ as the bridegroom of the Church, while “the quest-sign / at the down-rusher’s ford” alludes to Jesus’ baptism in the river Jordan. The questing knights of medieval romance, Aeneas as bearer of the Golden Bough, Christ as Harrower of Hell, prophesied Messiah, and restorer of the Waste Land
are all evoked in these few lines. Robert Graves charts similar mythopoeic territory in

_The White Goddess_ and in poems such as “To Juan at the Winter Solstice”:

> There’s one story and one story only
> That will prove worth your telling,

Whether as learned bard or gifted child (_Complete Poems_ 150)

Whereas Graves treats all myths as variants of a single, originary myth centred on the
White Goddess, Jones regards the multiplicity of myth as a demonstration of humanity’s
capacity for making signs, which are fulfilled but not invalidated by the Incarnation.12

With its abundance of hero-tales and romances, the literature of the Middle Ages
provide Jones with many examples of archetypal heroism. He compares Jesus in Mary’s
womb to the interred Arthur:

> His members in-folded
> like the hidden lords in the West-tumuli
> for the nine dark calends gone (_Ana_ 225),

anticipating the Arthur of “The Sleeping Lord”. More central than Arthur is the figure of
Peredur, the Welsh Percival, to whom Christ is compared in the following lines: “Grown
in stature / he frees the waters”. Jones summarises Peredur’s career in his footnote: “He
goes on his quest, frees and restores the Wasteland: the streams flow again, marriages are
consummated and the earth fructifies” (_Ana_ 225, n. 2). David Blamires characterises

12 Graves never understood Jones’s poetry, dismissing _In Parenthesis_ as “a synthetic
work” which “for all its endearing Welshness, led him [Jones] into an effect of literary
ambition” (_In Broken Images_ 308); for his part, David Jones regarded _The White Goddess_
as “useless because of its lack of documentation” (Blissett, _LC_ 70).
Peredur as "the saviour hero of the Maimed King and the Waste Land in the Welsh story that corresponds to the legend of the Grail in its better-known versions by Chrétien de Troyes, Wolfram von Eschenbach and Sir Thomas Malory" (Artist and Writer 146).

Jones's description of Peredur's career owes more to Jesse Weston than to the medieval tale *Peredur son of Efrawg*, which provides Jones with the image of

Her Peredur

vagrant-born, earth-fostered

acquainted with the uninhabited sites.

His woodland play is done, he has seen the

questing *milites*, he would be a *miles* too. (Ana 225)

After Peredur's father is slain, his mother

took counsel with herself to flee with her son into a desert and a

wilderness, and to quit inhabited parts. Never a one took she in her

company save women and boys, and meek contented folk who were

incapable of combats or wars, and for whom such would be unseemly.

Never a one would dare mention steeds or arms in a place where her son

might overhear, lest he set his heart upon them. And every day the boy

would go to the long forest to play and to throw holly darts. (Jones and

Jones 152)

One day, Peredur sees some knights passing by, and although his mother persuades him they are angels, he discovers the truth the next day and is determined to become a knight (Jones and Jones 152-3). A scriptural parallel to this maternal disapproval and childhood
sense of vocation is Jesus’ preaching to the doctors of the law (Luke 2:41-50), which in a sense marks the beginning of His own quest in this world.

Jones situates the Passion and Crucifixion in the historically-constituted culture of Roman Palestine,

according to the disciplina of this peculiar people in accord with the intentions of all peoples and kindreds et gentium, cenhedloedd, und Völker that dance by garnished Baum or anointed stone. (Ana 241-2)

The universal significance of the Passion is effected through the local traditions of Jerusalem, but thereby accomplishes something for “all peoples / and kindreds”. Jones evokes the cultural mosaic of Europe macaronically, by invoking “gentium, cenhedloedd, und Völker” to represent the Latin, Celtic, and Germanic peoples. “Together these three elements, broadly speaking, compose ‘the West’: we are Germans, Latins, Celts and can apprehend only in a Latin, Germanic and Celtic fashion” (Ana 241, n. 2). In other words, our perceptions are, in part at least, culturally determined: “Gentes other from us, of other culture-groups, of other bloods and environments, have no doubt equally significant and warm images” (Ana 241, n.2). Jones’s observations also suggest Eliot’s understanding of “a common element in European culture, an interrelated history of thought and feeling
and behaviour, an interchange of arts and of ideas" (*Christianity and Culture* 197). The universal significance of the Crucifixion can only be experienced in the West through cultural forms which have evolved in the west itself. This is one of the reasons Jones was so distressed at the demise of the Roman Rite, the Latin of which forms part of Europe’s corporate inheritance: “It’s a terrible thought that the language of the West, of the Western liturgy, and inevitably the Roman chant, might become virtually extinct” (*Dai* 209). Thirty years after this virtual extinction actually took place, there are signs once again of liturgical renewal in the Church; as Elen Monica says, “You never know, captain: / What’s under works up” (Ana 164).

I would like to conclude this discussion of *The Anathêmata* by quoting its final lines, which gather together many of the themes I have looked at, and which draw their inspiration from another great poem of the Middle Ages, “The Dream of the Rood”, which depicts Christ as a warrior hanging “uppe on þarn eaxlgespanne” (Mitchell and Robinson 242):

He does what is done in many places
what he does other
he does after the mode
of what has always been done.
What did he do other
recumbent at the garnished supper?
What did he do yet other
tiding the Axile Tree? (Ana 243)
The feasts, sacrifices, and heroic deeds of all cultures are thus fulfilled at the Last Supper and on Calvary; by participating in the cultural practices of one people, Christ redeems culture itself, enabling it to become a means of salvation through the transmission of the Gospel and the Eucharist. For David Jones, the Middle Ages tell the story of that transmission and its triumph in the west, and for that reason occupy a central place in the vision of European culture explored in *The Anathématata.*
Chapter V

Fragments of the Past: The Sleeping Lord and The Roman Quarry

If The Anathëmata presents the Middle Ages in significant relation to western culture as a whole, Jones’s later published fragments draw upon particular medieval texts or aspects of the Middle Ages to explore more specific cultural concerns, such as the significance of Arthurian myth for modern Britain. I will begin by looking at how the Middle Ages are anticipated in Jones’s Roman poems, focussing on the prefatory lyric to “The Fatigue” entitled “GWANWYN YN Y LLWYN” and its negotiation with classical and medieval Latin culture. My discussion of Jones’s Arthurian poems, “The Hunt” and “The Sleeping Lord”, will start by considering William Blake as the central precursor for his visionary interpretation of the Matter of Britain, drawing upon Harold Bloom’s theory of poetic influence to chart a previously unexplored relationship between Modernism and Romanticism. Northrop Frye’s reading of Blakean symbolism will also be shown to have important implications for understanding the figure of Arthur in Jones’s poetry. My purpose here is to situate the imaginative achievement of David Jones within a wider tradition of English poetry, just as in earlier chapters I related his use of language and the past to the Modernism of Finnegans Wake. I will then return to a strategy used in previous chapters, looking at how Jones engages with his medieval material, particularly the early Welsh tale, “Culhwch and Olwen”, before concluding my discussion of these poems with an exploration of how they historicise Arthur within the heroic society of early medieval Britain. Moving on to Jones’s seldom-discussed Mass poems, collected in The Roman Quarry (1982), my analysis will centre on the tragic figure of Launcelot as an embodiment of failed erotic and spiritual desire, a frustration of the secular and religious
impulses of the Middle Ages. Finally, I will examine the importance of medieval culture for Jones’s critique of modernity in *The Book of Balaam’s Ass*.

5.1 **The Roman Poems: Dreaming the Middle Ages.**

The Roman poems that open *The Sleeping Lord and other fragments* (1974) hint at the culture of medieval Christendom that is destined to replace the civilisation of Imperial Rome. In “The Dream of Private Clitus”, Clitus relates how he and his Celtic companion Lugo were “bivouacked” in the Forest of Teutoberg, the forms of which anticipate the medieval cathedral:

> And where we lay it was as if we lay in a kind of peristyle, builded of the tall trees, deep within the shadowy labyrinth of those woods. Long corridors of arches stretched all ways. Smooth, straight boles those trees had, and no low growth with the sward between each as it were like a pavement. And it was as if the rounded arches of our basilicas were suddenly to bestir themselves and the genius of each column to exert itself and reach across toward the numen of the column opposite. For all is thrusting and directional in the labyrinth of those parts and each swaying limb of each tree struggles for mastery, high up. (*SL* 16)

Clitus goes on to observe that “the mingling of their contesting boughs seemed to / make pointed arches” (*SL* 16). A peristyle is a series of columns surrounding a temple, and Clitus’s description of the woods depicts both ancient forest and pagan temple as fore-
types of Christian architecture. This is seen most clearly in the image of the basilica, which functioned in ancient Rome as a public building for trade and law-courts, but was sacralised by Christians as a place of worship.

The identification of Gothic form with the forest is a well-established one. Spengler, as we have seen in chapter two, identifies Gothic form as a spontaneous expression of the northern soul (1: 396), but John Ruskin sees it as an expression of the naturalism of medieval man, tracing the development of Gothic architecture under the forest’s gentle tutelage: “the stony pillar grew slender and the vaulted roof grew light, till they had wreathed themselves into the semblance of the summer woods at their fairest …” (104). For Ruskin, Spengler, and Jones, the shape of the northern forests prefigures that of the cathedral; however, Ruskin’s naturalism, Spengler’s Teutonic mysticism, and Jones’s typology represent three very different responses to this understanding of Gothic form.

Struggling to describe his experience of the Sublime beneath the Teutoberg branches, Clitus asks his auditors to imagine “the rounded arches / of our basilicas” awakening, “and the genius / of each column to exert itself and reach across toward the numen / of the column opposite” (SL 16). This image of stone infused with divine life at the cusp of the Christian era finds its opposite at the possible end of that era, in the modern church described at the opening of The Anathémata:

(Ossific, trussed with ferric rods, the failing numina
of column and entablature, the genii of spire and triforium,
like great rivals met when all is done, nod recognition across
the cramped repeats of their dead selves.) (SL 49)
Where once each numen could “exert itself and reach” toward the numen opposite, now in diminished form each can only “nod recognition”, a token gesture acknowledging spiritual failure. For Clitus, however, the imagination has only begun to apprehend those forms which will come to their fruition more than a millennia in the future; the cultural spring-time of the Middle Ages has not even begun.

The astonishing lyric fragment that prefaces “The Fatigue” has not been fully appreciated. It juxtaposes several passages from medieval Latin literature, and offers a fine example of Jones’s skill at verbal *bricolage*. René Hague sees in the poem “a direct succession, Homer, Ennius, Vergil, Fortunatus with the ‘Dream of the Rood’, Aquinas, David” (*David Jones* 74). The lyric is short enough to reprint in its entirety:

GWANWYN YN Y LLWYN

ARBOUR AXED FROM ARBOUR-SIDE

THAT NOW STRIPT

IS MORE ARRAYED

MORE THAN IN THE SILVAN RIDE

WHEN TO PIERCE THE GREEN

AND TANGLED TENEbraE

COMES APOLLO’S RAY

SEE WHAT SHEEN THE LOPPED BOUGHS

NOW LIFT HIGH

... FRONDE, FLORE, GERMINE

O CRUX AVE

AVE VEXILLUM (*SL* 27)
Jones’s capitalisation of the text gives it the appearance of an inscription, and identifies it with the painted inscriptions he made in the 1950’s and 60’s, which similarly juxtapose texts in several languages to create a rich visual and textual field. Christine Pagnoulle has identified the first line (“spring in the grove”) as a quotation from the modern Welsh hymn “Tydi, a roddaist”, which Jones links with The Dream of the Rood as a poem with a “similar intensity of feeling” (Pagnoulle 39; SL 32, n.1). “ARBOUR” and “ARBOUR-SIDE” echo the arbor of two hymns of Venantius Fortunatus, Crux Fidelis and Vexilla Regis, alluded to directly in the concluding Latin lines of Jones’s poem.1 In Crux Fidelis, the cross is described as “Arbor una nobilis” (22) – “Tree unique and noble”, while Vexilla Regis alludes to the cross as “Arbor decora et fulgida” – “Tree adorned and shining” (17). “ARRAYED” translates “ornata” in Vexilla Regis, line 18: “Ornata regis purpura” – “Arrayed in the purple of a king”. “TENEBRAE” – “darkness, shadows” (from “Tenebrae factae sunt” – “There was darkness” (cf. Matthew 28:45; Mark 15:33; Luke 23:44) – formed part of the Good Friday liturgy, a particularly significant association here as Holy Week was also the liturgical context for the two hymns of Venantius Fortunatus. The image of Apollo’s ray shining into the shadows of the forest typologically suggests the Resurrection: “The shades are conquered by the sun, or Son, and their tangle reduced to simplicity ... like the liturgical Tenebrae they are dispelled by the radiance of Christ’s resurrection” (Pagnoulle 40). “LOPPED BOUGHS” appear throughout Jones’s poetry and painting, always with the suggestion of a mysterious violence which here most logically alludes to the Crucifixion.

1 An excellent recording of both hymns may be found in the album Mysteria: Gregorian Chants (1994) by the vocal ensemble Chanticleer.
The final three lines of the poem are quotations from the two hymns of Venantius Fortunatus. "Flore, fronde, germine" – “Flower, leaf, bud” – is part of the haunting first verse of Crux fidelis, identifying the body of Christ as the flowering of the tree of the Cross. This verse is repeated several times as a refrain, and this line in particular is likely to echo in the listener’s memory. It is juxtaposed against “O CRUX AVE”, “O Cross, Hail”, which is followed in Vexilla Regis by “spes unica”, “unique hope”, two words which shadow the fragmented quotation, and which also suggest a seasonal hope for spring, which in Jones’s poetry is identified with the Middle Ages, when “West-wood springs anew” (Ana 92). The lyric fragment can be read as a prayer anticipatory of medieval Christendom, prefacing a poem which offers a Roman perspective on the Crucifixion. “FLORE, FRONDE, GERMINHE” expresses the potential for spiritual and cultural renewal promised by the Cross, and fulfilled in the culture of the Middle Ages. The poem’s concluding line, “AVE VEXILLA”, “Hail banners”, is Jones’s own construction, one which “associates the Roman military order with the Christian mystery” (Pagnouolle 40), as Venantius Fortunatus himself does in Vexilla Regis. “GWANWYN YN Y LLWYN” is a richly suggestive poem, and an important contribution to Jones’s evolving interpretation for the modern world of the West’s spiritual and cultural roots.

“The Fatigue” itself contains several important medieval allusions. The Roman soldiers have yet to be assigned to the fatigue duty in which Christ will be crucified; Jones tropes the crucifixion as hanging “the gleaming Trophy / on the Dreaming Tree” (32), which Jones in his note identifies as an allusion (though it does not suggest any specific line or image) to The Dream of the Rood, a poem he regards as surpassing “any subsequent English poem about the Passion” (32, n.1). This allusive strategy, which we
might call proleptic allusion, where poetic personae allude to cultural artefacts far in the future from their own time, is the same as that employed in “The Dream of Private Clitus”, when Clitus imagines the forest in terms that anticipate the Gothic cathedral. The precursor of this technique is Aeneid VI, where Anchises reveals the future to Aeneas. Jones’s juxtaposition of future and past also has affinities with Eliot’s Four Quartets, particularly “Burnt Norton”:

Time present and time past
Are both perhaps present in time future
And time future contained in time past. (Collected Poems 189)

Jones’s typological reading of history means he cannot accept the conclusion that “If all time is eternally present / All time is unredeemable” (Collected Poems 189); his own position is closer to that of the conclusion of “Burnt Norton”, I:

Time past and time future
What might have been and what has been
Point to one end, which is always present. (Collected Poems 190)

This end is the spiritual goal toward which all humanity is moving, and is typologically present throughout history. For Jones, the eternal permeates the temporal, offering a promise of renewal even in the darkest moments of history. The Roman Empire contains the seeds of its own destruction, seeds which will blossom in the springtime of the Middle Ages.

The relationship between Modernism and Romanticism in poetry is necessarily a problematic one. Modernist poets such as T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound aimed to purge poetry of a debilitated, sentimental Romanticism that still characterised most poetry in English during the first two decades of the twentieth century. Nonetheless, the early Modernists had to consciously wean themselves from the poetry of the nineteenth century, and criticism has come to acknowledge inner continuities between the poetry of the two centuries. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, Jerome McGann persuasively argues that “Pound helped to bring forth a new avant-garde by marrying what we now call ‘modernism’ to the writing of the late nineteenth century” (19). We have already explored some possible links between Jones’s writings and those of the Pre-Raphaelites, particularly William Morris. I want to now consider the Arthurian aspect of Jones’s medievalism in relation to an earlier, visionary Romanticism.

The authentic precursor of David Jones’s Arthurian poems is William Blake’s visionary account of the British king, sketched in his Descriptive Catalogue entry for a painting (now lost) entitled The Ancient Britons. Jones himself cites this account in an endnote to In Parenthesis (198, n.36) and in his essay “The Myth of Arthur” (E&A 212), but its full significance for his poetry has not been explored. Blake describes his painting thus:

*In the last Battle of King Arthur, only three Britons escaped; these were the Strongest Man, the Beautifullest Man, and the Ugliest Man; these three marched through the field unsubdued, as Gods, and the Sun of Britain set, but shall arise again with tenfold spendor when Arthur shall*
awake from sleep, and resume his dominion over earth and ocean.

(Keynes ed. 109; Blake’s italics)

The three escaping Britons, who “marched through the field unsubdued, as Gods” appear in ironically diminished form as Squib Lucifer, Pick-em-up Shenkin, and Ducky Austin in Jones’s The Book of Balaam’s Ass; Blake may have discovered the Three Survivors of Camlann in The Ancient Laws of Cambria (1803), also Jones’s source (Dilworth, SM 392-3). More crucially, Blake identifies Arthur with the “Sun of Britain”, which “shall arise again with tenfold splendor” when he awakens. Jones also links Arthur with the sun in writing of his own relationship with Arthurian myth: “When one was a child, Arthur was a figure in a fairy tale; a little bit later he became the hero in a Solar Myth, and later again his romance-cycle disclosed origins in a Vegetation ritual” (E&A 200).

Nineteenth-century scholars like Matthew Arnold and Sir John Rhys identified Arthur as a Solar Hero, but under the influence of Sir James Frazer, vegetation myth displaced solar myth as the preferred mode of interpretation, as in Jessie Weston’s From Ritual to Romance. Thomas Dilworth sees in the morning setting of “The Hunt” a mythic significance derived from Arthur’s character as Solar Hero (SM 325).

In the essay following the description of his painting, Blake writes that the Ancient Britons “were overwhelmed by brutal arms, all but a small remnant” (109). This sentence is echoed in Jones’s poem “The Tutelar of the Place”, where the Celtic speaker prays

In all times of Gleichschaltung, in the days of the central economies, set up the hedges of illusion around some remnant of us, twine the wattles of mist, white-web a Gwydion-hedge
like fog on the *bryniau*

against the commissioners² (*SL* 63)

These lines, with their theme of hiding “some remnant” of the Britons, also echo Blake’s *Jerusalem*, Plate 83, 59-60: “Place the Tribes of Llewellyn in America for a hiding place:
/
Till sweet Jerusalem emanates again into Eternity” (604).³ Whereas Blake’s Welsh tribes await the emanation of “sweet Jerusalem”, the Celtic speaker in “The Tutelar of the Place” prays for the “Womb of the Lamb spoiler of the Ram” (*SL* 64). Both the Lamb and Jerusalem’s emanation offer deliverance from oppression, and find typological fulfilment in Christ’s redemption of humanity.

In Blake’s view, the Arthurian myth now belongs especially to the artist: “The British Antiquities are now in the Artist’s hands; all his visionary contemplations, relating to his own country and its ancient glory, when it was, as it again shall be, the source of learning and inspiration” (109). This vision of the artist as guardian of his culture’s traditions is mirrored by the priest at the beginning of *The Anathémata*, with a fitting Arthurian allusion: “The cult-man stands alone in Pellam’s land: more

² Gwydion is the shape-shifting magician who, in *Math vab Mathonwy*, uses his magic to win a name and arms for Llew Llaw Gyffes, and fashions for him a bride out of flowers, Blodeuwedd. *Bryniau* = hills, mountains; plural of *bryn*.

³ Blake’s commentators seem not to have recognized the poet’s allusion to the Welsh legend of Prince Madoc, who allegedly sailed to America with his followers in the late Middle Ages; stories of Welsh-speaking native tribes descended from Madoc’s people persisted well into the nineteenth century, influencing the Welsh settlement of Patagonia, to which Blake may also be alluding.
precariously than he knows he guards the *signa*" (*Ana* 50). Jones sadly observes that "it cannot be said that the Arthur saga has any great place in the consciousness of the mass of our countrymen" (*E&A* 215). The artist alone is keeper of the "British Antiquities", a role recognised by the Priest of the Household in "The Sleeping Lord", where hecatalogues the antiquities preserved by the Bard of the Household (*SL* 82-5). Blakehimself provides a precursor catalogue of ancient British lore:

> Arthur was the name for the constellation Arcturus, or Boötes, the keeper of the North Pole. And all the fables of Arthur and his round table; of the warlike naked Britons; of Merlin; of Arthur's conquest of the whole world; of his death, or sleep, and promise to return again; of the Druid monuments or temples; of the pavements of Watling-street; of London stone; of the caverns in Cornwall, Wales, Derbyshire, and Scotland; of the Giants of Ireland and Britain; of the elemental beings called by us by the general name of Fairies; and of these three who escaped, namely Beauty, Strength, and Ugliness. (109-10)

Blake's list includes cosmic myth, literature, pseudo-history, topographical legend, and folk-tale: the full range of Arthurian myth explored by David Jones in "The Myth of Arthur", which emphasises its complexity: "Its composite weave is its essential characteristic, and its hues change under the changing lights, and we tire the eyes of the mind regarding it" (*E&A* 232).\(^4\)

\(^4\) Cf. "A, a, a, Domine Deus": "I have tired the eyes of the mind / regarding the colours and lights" (9).
In "The Sleeping Lord", the Priest of the Household "makes memento" during Mass, recalling all the saints, monks, and leaders who have gone before him (SL 79-82), before cataloguing the shadowy figures remembered by the bards. Although he has doubts about bardic lore, "their disciplina was other than his and this he knew for certain that whatever else they were, they were men who loved the things of the Island, and so did he" (SL 82). As in Blake's catalogue of British mysteries, the Priest's bardic catalogue mixes myth, legend, and history:

Then there was Blessed Bran of whom the tale-tellers tell a most wondrous tale and the names of men more prosaic but more credible to him: Paternus of the Red Pexa, Cunedda Wledig the Conditor and, far more recent and green in the memory, the Count Ambrosius Aurelianus that men call Emrys Wledig, associated, by some, with the eastern defences called the Maritime Tract and Aircol Hir and his line, protectores of Demetia in the west ... and many, many, many more whose bones lie under the green mounds of the Island (84)

John Terpstra observes that "The entire history of a people parades by in the mind of a man whose office it is to remember these things" (100). The list extends well onto the next page, but this selection is sufficient to show the Priest's range of legendary knowledge, from the mythological Bran the Blessed to the semi-historical leaders of the Romano-British past and their geographical associations. Michel Foucault, speaking of the fantastic lists offered in the fiction of Jorge Luis Borges, asks "Where else could they be juxtaposed except in the non-place of language? Yet, although language can spread
them before us, it can do so only in an unthinkable space” (*Order of Things* xvi-ii).

Blake and Jones both evoke a specifically poetic form of knowledge that compensates for this “unthinkable space”, and which reveals (or hints at) the symbolic meaning of Britain’s early history, while exploring its significance for the contemporary world.

William Blake’s visionary medievalism absorbs history into myth and prophecy. His account of the historical Arthur quickly dissolves into bardic revelation: “in the reign of that British Prince, who lived in the fifth century, there were remains of those naked Heroes in the Welch Mountains; they are there now, Gray saw them in the person of his bard on Snowdon; there they dwell in naked simplicity; happy is he who can see and converse with them above the shadows of generation and death” (110). David Jones begins his essay “The Myth of Arthur” with a quotation from this mythologising passage, “The stories of Arthur are the acts of Albion”, but leaves out the remainder of Blake’s sentence, “applied to a Prince of the fifth century, who conquered Europe, and held the Empire of the world in the dark age, which the Romans never again recovered” (110). For Blake, private symbolism and public history merge indistinguishably.

In Chapter Two, we saw how Jones’s and Spengler’s vision of the High Middle Ages centred on the feminine, both in its veneration of Mary and in the codes of courtly love. Northrop Frye discerns a similar strain in Blake’s thought:

Blake accepts not Geoffrey’s literal account of the conquest of the Roman Empire by Arthur, but the symbolic meaning of that account; that in the Dark Ages Northern and Teutonic races, with their prophetess-worship which later developed into the Court of Love, overthrew the Roman
Empire and established the Madonna-cult of the Roman Church. (*Fearful Symmetry* 142)

Jones is more careful than Blake to distinguish myth from history. The quotation from Blake “can be taken as the text to much that I would try to say in this essay, but not to the whole, for even his brief intuitive statement leaves a lot unimplied” (*E&A* 212).

Nonetheless, Jones’s poetry follows Blake’s dictum, giving “the historical fact in its poetical vigour so as it always happens” (110). In doing so, both poets look back to Aristotle, who in his *Poetics* (9) distinguishes between the activity of the historian and that of the poet: “The difference is that one tells of what has happened, the other of the kinds of things that might happen” (43).

The most strikingly Blakean passage in Jones’s writings is the questioning identification of Arthur with the British landscape in “The Sleeping Lord” (90-4, 96). Its precursor is found in Blake’s *Milton*, Pl. 50, 35-45, where the giant Albion awakes:

London & Bath & Legions & Edinburgh

Are the four pillars of his Throne: his left foot near London

Covers the shades of Tyburn; his instep from Windsor

To Primrose Hill stretching to Highgate & Holloway

London is between his knees: its basements fourfold

His right foot stretches to the sea on Dover cliffs, his heel

On Canterbury ruins; his right hand covers lofty Wales

His left Scotland; his bosom girt with gold involves

York, Edinburgh, Durham & Carlisle & on the front

Bath, Oxford, Cambridge; Norwich; his right elbow
Leans on the Rocks of Erin’s Land, Ireland ancient nation[.]

(Bentley ed. 406)

The British Isles together form the giant Albion’s bed, as the Island of Britain itself does for Arthur in “The Sleeping Lord”, who does not yet awake:

But yet he sleeps:

when he shifts a little in his fitfull

slumber does a covering stone dislodge

and roll to Reynoldstone? (SL 94)

Blake’s Albion symbolises fallen Britain, urban, imperial, and industrial. His imaginative geography is therefore mostly confined to cities. John Terpstra observes that the sleeping lord is “a figure associated with the rise and fall of the hills of south Wales” (95). Blake’s visionary affirmation gives way in Jones to a tentative questioning:

Is the Usk a drain for his gleaming tears

who weeps for the land

who dreams his bitter dream

for the folk of the land

does Tawe clog for his sorrows

do the parallel dark-seam drainers

mingle his anguish-stream

with the scored valleys’ tilted refuse. (SL 91)

Jones’s meditation on modern Britain’s ecological degradation grounds his poetry in the here-and-now, just as Blake uses British topography to ground his own imaginative
vision of the giant Albion. In his tentative, questioning tone, however, Jones expresses a typically modernist scepticism toward the kind of visionary inspiration claimed by Blake.

Harold Bloom’s theory of influence follows Blake in identifying Milton as the Covering Cherub (cf. Genesis 3:24; Ezekiel 28:12-15; Isaiah 14:12), or Great Inhibitor, of the English poetic tradition: “He is that something that makes men victims rather than poets, a demon of discursiveness and shady continuities, a pseudo-exegete who makes writings into Scriptures” (Anxiety 35). Romantic poetry, for Bloom, derives much of its imaginative strength from an often unconscious agon with Milton. In this struggle, the post-Miltonic poet often identifies with the Satan of Paradise Lost as a figure of self-liberating imagination. Bloom’s theory is highly suggestive in considering the importance of William Blake as a precursor for David Jones’s interpretation of Arthur. In his classic study of Blake, Fearful Symmetry, Northrop Frye ambiguously identifies Arthur with both the Covering Cherub and with Satan himself. Frye cites Malory II, xi, with its “tomb of twelve kings with twelve images, each holding a candle, with Arthur above, like the Covering Cherub again, holding a drawn sword. Merlin said that when the candle went out the quest of the Sangreal (the medieval symbol of apocalypse) would be achieved” (Fearful Symmetry 141). Frye connects this passage with various zodiacal patterns in Blake’s writings, which possess “the sinister significance of the unending cycle of time” (Fearful Symmetry 141). Arthur, as Covering Cherub, is a figure symbolising our entrapment in historical time. This symbolic role seems incongruous with the Arthur of legend, but the image cited by Frye is associated with a tomb: it is Arthur sleeping in his cavern who can be identified with the Covering Cherub. Like the
achievement of the Grail, the awakening of Arthur is also a "medieval symbol of apocalypse".

Frye also identifies Arthur with Satan: "There is much to connect Arthur with Satan: we have mentioned the story in Malory which makes him the Covering Cherub, and in Malory also [V, iv] Arthur has a dream of a gilded serpent who turns out to be himself" (Fearful Symmetry 142). To the extent that Satan is the unintended hero of Paradise Lost – as he was for the Romantics – he may also be regarded as a surrogate for the Arthur of Milton's unwritten poem. If the sleeping Arthur can be identified with the Covering Cherub, a symbol of deferred imaginative apocalypse, the questing, heroic Arthur can be identified with Milton's Satan, the figure of self-liberating imagination whose search for Eden parodies the medieval romance quest. In terms of Blakean symbolism, the Arthur who appears as the Sleeping Lord in Jones's poem may be identified with the Covering Cherub, and the questing Arthur of "The Hunt" with Milton's Satan as self-liberator. Like the Satan of Paradise Lost, Book II, the Arthur of "The Hunt" is primarily leader of a war-band; Jones confessed his admiration for Book VI as containing "the best description in literature of battle as he experienced it on the western front", suggesting that Satan's role as war-leader was deeply imprinted on his imagination (SM 350).5

Jones viewed Milton's decision not to write an Arthuriad as leaving a crucial imaginative space open for subsequent poets, and humorously recognised him as the

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5 Jones himself associates Lucifer, the Morning Star, with the Covering Cherub in "The Agent", in which Judas claims "we'll take a rise / out of the Morning Star / and learn the covering Cherub / his own trade" (RQ 134).
Great Inhibitor: “Jolly glad he decided not to touch the Arthur business or it would have been scotched for good” (Blissett LC 106-7). In “The Myth of Arthur”, Jones wonders what Milton’s *Arthuriad* might have been like:

It is interesting to surmise what he would have made of the Arthurian material; he certainly would have given it enormous prestige in the minds of Englishmen, but if his tremendous poetic gifts did not redeem his dramatized theology when Satan was his central figure, it seems likely that his antipathy to the medieval synthesis would have been a disadvantage had he chosen Arthur. But his weight and power would have influenced all subsequent approaches to the material, and given it a new twist, and the associations and connotations which surround it for us today would have been proportionately different. (*E&A* 214-5)

Jones significantly misreads *Paradise Lost* in the same way as the Romantic poets, making Satan the “central figure” in Milton’s epic. In the poetics of influence charted by Harold Bloom, Jones’s turn to Arthur can be understood in part as an avoidance of the inhibiting influence of Milton through a claiming of the poetic *materia* he rejected, in which Blake’s example provides an important precursor.

*Jones is singularly unimpressed with other nineteenth-century appropriations of Arthurian myth, which he sees as a departure from the native line of Arthurian literature ending with the English Renaissance:*

*There is a native, one can perhaps say ‘English’, tradition; it is poetic and literary and has a genuine sequence: Geoffrey – Wace – Layamon, echoes in Chaucer, Malory of course, Drayton, Camden, Spenser, and almost*
Milton, who drew back from writing his *Arthuriad* and chose the theme of the Fall. (*E&A* 214)

If Milton had written his *Arthuriad*, Jones speculates, "it is unlikely we should have the *Idylls of the King* to contend with, had the formidable figure of Milton stood over the Victorian poet" (*E&A* 215). This dismissal of Tennyson is typical of modernist poets writing in English, who sought to challenge the social complacency of his verse and the public expectations of poetry it was so influential in shaping. When Jones curtly writes that "There is no need to mention Morris and the Pre-Raphaelites", however, we may suspect a certain evasiveness (215). In the previous chapter, we saw how Jones seems at times to respond to William Morris’s “The Defence of Guenevere” in *The Anathemata*, and in Chapter One I mentioned Jones’s early painting of Launcelot done in the Pre-Raphaelite style, which he absorbed thoroughly at Camberwell art school. Even in his turn to Blake, Jones follows the example of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, the first English poet to recognise Blake’s genius. In a very real sense, Blake stands as precursor to both Jones and the Pre-Raphaelite poets.

5.3 Arthur in Context: Between Myth and History

David Jones augments Blake’s mythologised Arthur with the Arthur of the Welsh *traddodiad*. Rachel Bromwich and D. Simon Evans summarise the character of this Arthur in his earliest guise:

In Wales the popular and the learned Arthur was above all else that of a defender of his country against every kind of danger, both internal and external: a slayer of giants and witches, a hunter of monstrous animals –
giant boars, a savage cat monster, a winged serpent (or dragon)—and also, as it appears from Culhwch and Preiddeu Annwn, a releaser of prisoners.

(xxviii)

Culhwch and Olwen is a tale preserved in two fourteenth-century manuscripts, the White Book of Rhydderch and the Red Book of Hergest, but which Bromwich and Evans date in its present form to c. 1100 (lxxxi-ii). David Jones first encountered the tale in the translation included in Lady Charlotte Guest's Mabinogion, but by the time he was revising the Arthurian fragments, Gwyn Jones's and Thomas Jones's more authoritative translation was available. In the tale, Culhwch's stepmother places a tynged (compulsion) upon him that he shall marry none other than Olwen, whose father is the Chief Giant Ysbaddaden. Culhwch enlists the help of his cousin Arthur, who assists by performing the tasks imposed by Ysbaddaden before Culhwch can marry his daughter. In the end, the giant is slain and Culhwch and Olwen are married. Chief among the tasks imposed on Arthur is the hunting of two monstrous boars to obtain the tusk of Ysgithrwyn Ben Beidd in order to shave Ysbaddaden, and the comb and scissors hidden between Twrch Trwyth's ears to cut the giant's hair. The hunt for the Twrch Trwyth is the central motif of David Jones's "The Hunt", but also forms a crucial part of "The Sleeping Lord". Muriel Whitaker insightfully recognises an allusion to Culhwch and Olwen in David Jones's painting "Y Cyfarchiad I Fair", which contains "representations of animals and birds that Culhwch must acquire before he can marry the Giant's

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6 James Joyce tropes Ysbaddaden Penkawr as "the Ipse ddden" in Finnegans Wake (254), one of several threatening giant forms.
daughter. His quest is an allegory of Christ's passion" (321). Arthur's hunting of the Twrch Trwyth can be similarly understood.

Before looking at Jones's adaptations of *Culhwch and Olwen*, I want to show Jones's originality in turning to this material. Matthew Arnold is the only major poet before Jones to pay it serious attention. In *The Study of Celtic Literature*, he characterises the tale as "instinct with the very breath of the primitive world" (319), and emphasises the narrator's ignorance of his source materials: "How evident, again, is the slightness of the narrator's hold upon the Twrch-Trwyth and his strange story!" (323). This is an elaboration of his general comments on Guest's *Mabinogion* as a whole:

The very first thing that strikes one, in reading the *Mabinogion*, is how evidently the mediaeval story-teller is pillaging an antiquity of which he does not fully possess the secret; he is like a peasant building his hut on the site of Halicarnassus or Ephesus; he builds, but what he builds is full of materials of which he knows not the history, or knows by a glimmering tradition merely; – stones "not of this building," but of an older architecture, greater, cunninger, more majestical. (322)

David Jones shares Arnold's sense of medieval Welsh literature as containing fragments of an earlier, more complete tradition, but is much more sensitive to the artistry with which they are deployed in the tales and poems that have survived.7

Twrch Trwyth makes its earliest appearance in another of Jones's favourite sources, the ninth-century *Historia Brittonum* attributed to Nennius, among the *mirabilia*—marvels—of Britain:

There is another wonder in the country called Builth. There is a heap of stones there, and one of the stones placed on top of the pile has the footprint of a dog on it. When he hunted Twrch Trwyth Cafal, the warrior Arthur's hound, impressed his footprint on the stone and Arthur later brought together the pile of stones, under the stone in which was his dog's footprint, and it is called Carn Cafal. Men come and take the stone in their hands for the space of a day and a night, and on the morrow it is found upon the stone pile. (Trans. Roberts 90)

Builth is an important site in Jones's imagination as the place where Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, last native Prince of Wales, was slain in 1282. Brynley Roberts notes that *Carn Cafal* most likely means "Cairn of the Horses" (90), but Nennius's account demonstrates that Arthur's legendary hunt gathered to it many topographical associations. Cafal’s major feat in *Culhwch and Olwen* is the slaying of the boar Ysgithrwyn Ben Beidd, though he is also mentioned as participating in the hunt for Twrch Trwyth (107; 110).

In his first narrative appearance in *Culhwch and Olwen*, Twrch Trwyth has "already laid waste a third part of Ireland" when Arthur despatches the shapeshifting Menw to Esgeir Oerfel to confirm that the boar possesses the comb and scissors (108). In the form of a bird, Menw attempts to remove one of the treasures but is wounded by Trwyth's bristles: "And after that Menw was never without scathe" (108). We have seen
how David Jones alludes to this passage in Part 4 of In Parenthesis, when as a result of shelling, “The ingenious Menw, despite his craft, was a sick man all his life after because of the poisons loosed” (IP 86). After performing one of the tasks imposed upon him by Ysbaddaden (the obtaining of Diwmach the Irishman’s cauldron), “Arthur gathered together what warriors there were in the Island of Britain and its three adjacent islands, and what there were in France and Brittany and Normandy and the Summer Country, and what there were of packed dogs and horses of renown”, and journeys to Ireland (109). There, Arthur and his men battle unsuccessfully with Twrch Trwyth and his seven pigs. Despite the efforts of Arthur’s Irish allies, Twrch Trwyth “laid waste one of the five provinces of Ireland” (109). Arthur’s own battle with the monstrous boar takes on mythical resonance:

The third day Arthur himself fought with him, nine nights and nine days:
he slew of the pigs but one pigling. His men asked Arthur what was the history of the swine, and he told them: ‘He was a king, and for his wickedness God transformed him into a swine.’ (109)

Arthur sends his interpreter Gwyrhyr to make entreaties to the boar, but he is dismissed by one of the pigs, who tells Gwyrhyr that they will next overrun Britain. “They set out by sea towards Wales; and Arthur and his hosts, his horses and his dogs, went aboard Prydwen8, and in the twinkling of an eye they saw them” (109). Twrch Trwyth ravages western Britain with Arthur in hot pursuit. Arthur catches up with Twrch Trwyth in Cornwall, where he obtains the comb and scissors before driving the boar into the sea:

8 Prydwen, Arthur’s ship, is the vehicle for his ill-fated quest for the cauldron of the Otherworld in the ninth-century Welsh poem, Preiddiau Annwfn.
“From that time forward, never a one has known where he went” (112). Thus ends the narrative of the hunting of Twrch Trwyth in *Culhwch and Olwen*.

Arthur's hunt for Twrch Trwyth is the subject of David Jones's poem “The Hunt”. Arthur is never named in the poem, but alluded to as

...the diademed leader

who directs the toil

whose face is furrowed

with the weight of the enterprise

the lord of the conspicuous scars whose visage is fouled with

the hog-spittle whose cheeks are fretted with the grime of the hunt-toil (SL 67)

Jones’s Arthur is not the king of English tradition, but the *dux bellorum* of Nennius. He is “diademed”, as are several warriors in *Y Gododdin* according to Edward Anwyl’s translation of *kaeawc*, the initial word of poems II-IV (Williams *Canu Aneirin* 1-2). ⁹

Jones’s choice of “diademed” is designed to convincingly portray Arthur in the same way as other Dark Age warriors are portrayed in *Y Gododdin*, affiliating him with heroic figures from the earliest strata of the Welsh *traddodiad*. This affiliation is further emphasised by his description of Arthur as one “who directs the toil”. In “Dai’s Boast”

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⁹ One of Jones’s criticisms of Kenneth Jackson’s later translation is that he gives *kaeawc* as ‘brooch’: “His insistence on translating *Kaeawc* as referring to *brooch* rather than ‘diadem’ or circlet or *talaith* [coronet] of some kind on the ground that there is no evidence that Dark Age Celts ever wore distinguishing circlets does not seem to me very convincing” (Lewis 28).
from *In Parenthesis*, Jones identifies Arthur as “The War Duke / The Director of Toil”, citing these in his notes as “Titles attributable to Arthur” (*IP* 82; 209, n. K). Despite his diademed appearance, Arthur is physically wearied by the hunt. His characterisation as a “lord of conspicuous scars” suggests an analogy with the suffering Christ, but also identifies him as an active participant in the quest for the hog, in contrast with the remote dispatcher of knights that Arthur becomes in continental romance. His face is “furrowed”, “fouled”, and “fretted”, the heavy alliteration of which suggests the scars made by “the weight of the enterprise” while evoking the *cynghanedd* – alliterative patterns of sound – of Welsh verse (*SM* 321).

The Twrch Trwyth is as elusive in the poem itself as he is in the narrative of *Culhwch and Olwen*, appearing only three times as “the hog”. He is at first obliquely alluded to as the cause of Arthur’s narrowed eyes:

If his eyes narrowed because of the stress of the hunt and because of the hog they are moist for the ruin and for love of the recumbent bodies that strew the ruin. (*SL* 67)

The ruin and “the recumbent bodies” evoke the hog’s path of destruction through Britain, a destruction elaborated in “The Sleeping Lord”, 88-90. Arthur’s love of his men contrasts starkly with his consideration of the evil which ravages his country. Jones explicitly suggests an analogy between the quest for the hog and Christ’s passion in his final mention of Twrch Trwyth in the poem’s closing lines:

...this was the Day

of the Passion of the Men of Britain

when they hunted the Hog
In Jones’s presentation of the hunt for Twrch Trwyth as “the Passion of the Men of Britain”, we can see a continuation of the imaginative project begun in “Mabinog’s Liturgy”, where the significance of Christ’s life is translated into the imaginative context of early medieval Britain.

Jones foregrounds Arthur’s hunt as an allegory of Christ’s passion through skilfully contrasting Arthur’s royal origins with the indignity he suffers during the quest:

If his embroidered habit is clearly from a palace wardrobe it is mired and rent and his bruised limbs gleam from between the rents, by reason of the excessive fury of the riding when he rode the close thicket as though it were an open launde

(indeed, was it he riding the forest-ride or was the tangled forest riding?) (SL 67)

This imagery evokes Christ’s mockery by Roman soldiers, who “stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews. And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the neck” (Matthew 27:27-30). Both Christ and Arthur have their royal bodies battered while arrayed like kings. Arthur’s “embroidered habit” evokes the ubiquitous Welsh pali, a garment of brocaded silk worn by many royal characters in the Four Branches of The Mabinogion. The concluding line anticipates the questioning identification of Arthur with the land of Britain in “The Sleeping Lord”, and tree-imagery
in Jones always evokes the Cross; *The Anathémeta* concludes with the image of Christ similarly “riding the Axile Tree” (*Ana* 243).

Trees figure prominently in “The Sleeping Lord” as objects of Twrch Trwyth’s destructive rampage in Britain. This detail is not found in *Culhwch and Olwen* itself, but forms part of the wounded tree imagery which runs throughout David Jones’s poetry and painting. This imagery is seen most movingly in his painting *Vexilla Regis*, in which the central tree is scarred by the iron nails of the cross and has had one of its branches lopped off. The wounded tree motif in “The Sleeping Lord” occurs at the end of a passage running from page 87-91, in which the historical reconstruction of Arthur’s Dark Age hall (see below) gives way to a mythic vision of Britain ravaged by Twrch Trwyth.

In *Culhwch and Olwen*, Grugyn Silver-Bristle, one of Twrch Trwyth’s pigs, threatens: “on the Morrow we will set out hence and go into Arthur’s country, and there we will do all the mischief we can” (109). The redactor has nothing more specific to say about the nature of that mischief, focusing instead on the hunt and ensuing combat. In the relevant passage in “The Sleeping Lord”, David Jones shows Arthur initially sleeping on a hillside, exhausted “from the hunt-toil” and “fain to lie down / in the hog-wasted *blaendir* [borderland]” (*SL* 87, 88). He vividly describes the monstrous boar’s destruction of human habitation:

    scorch-marks only

    where were the white dwellings:

    *stafell* of the lord of the Cantref

    *ys tywyll heno*

    shieling of the *taeog* from the bond-tref
heb dan, heb wely. (SL 88)

Twrch Trwyth’s scorching of “the white dwellings” inverts Manawydan’s beneficent visitation of “all the white bangors” in The Anathémata (200). The Welsh words can be divided into two allusive strands. The first alludes to divisions in medieval Welsh land and society. Tref, meaning “household” as well as “village”, is the basic unit of early Welsh society; cantref, “one hundred households”, is a larger unit similar to the English “hundred”; and “bond-tref” is Jones’s own coinage to indicate the household which binds the taeog, “villein, serf”, to his land. This grounds the passage in the historically constituted world of early Wales.

More crucial for Jones’s interpretation of early Wales is the second allusive strand in these lines, comprised of direct quotation from a group of ninth-century englynion (three-line stanzas, each line having roughly seven syllables) now known as “Canu Heledd”10, “in which the princess Heledd of Powys laments the death of her brother Cynddylan and the destruction of the court at Pengwern (Shrewsbury) by the Angles” (SL 88, n.4). They are among the most powerful and moving poems in Welsh literature. Jones includes the two complete lines he quotes from in his note, and provides an accurate translation:

Stavell Gyndylan ys tyyll heno

heb dan, heb wely.

‘The “hall” of Cynddylan is dark tonight, without fire without bed’ (88, n.4)

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10 The most recent edition of the “Canu Heledd” is to be found in Jenny Rowland’s Early Welsh Saga Poetry, which includes a translation of these poems, with an exhaustive and often fascinating commentary.
In "The Myth of Arthur", Jones vividly imagines the historical circumstance of the poem, when Heledd “bid her attendant maids stand in their flight and look back at the wasteland where the hall at Pengwern was flaming, its defenders newly dead” (E&A 230). These lines, for Jones, echo words

from the Roman rite of Tenebrae ‘How does the city sit solitary that was full of people!’ Such words, as with these of the princess Heledd have a permanancy and evoke a whole situation far beyond their immediate ‘meaning’ that, in my view, it is our duty to conserve them however little we ‘know’ the original languages. (SL 88, n.4).

As with Y Gododdin or Vexilla Regis, Canu Heledd, however little known, is part of the west’s cultural legacy, and “evoke a whole situation” that gives them historical as well as poetic value. Jones’s poetic achievement in these lines is to fuse the destruction of Pengwern with Twrch Trwyth’s ravaging of Britain, suggesting that both situations provide analogues for patterns of destruction throughout history.

This densely allusive passage is followed by a series of questions which introduce the motif of the wounded tree, and which make similar use of macaronics:

And the trees of the llannerch?

Why are they fallen?

What of the llwyn where the fair onnen grew and the silvery queen of the coedwig (as tough as she’s graced & slender) that whispers her secrets low to the divining hazel, and the resistant oak boughs that antler’d dark above the hornbeam? (88-9)\(^\text{11}\)

\(^{11}\) llanerch = glade; llwyn = grove; onnen = ash; coedwig = forest
By anthropomorphizing the trees, Jones conveys a strong sense of the numinousness associated with them in the Celtic imagination. The questioning also evokes the medieval *ubi sunt* genre, and, at a subliminal level, Jones's identification of soldiers with trees in *In Parenthesis* – his later poetry continues to mourn his companions in the Great War. There follows a modified quotation from Ennius, *Annals* IV, where Jones changes *securibus* to *rapacibus* because "my trees were brought down not 'by axes' but 'by tusks'" (*Ana* 89, n.1), linking this passage to the myth of Twrch Trwyth, although literally 'by tusks' would have been rendered by *dentibus*. "Not by long-hafted whetted steel axe blades" have the trees been felled, "but by the riving tusks / of the great hog" (*SL* 89). The numinous woodland is violently destroyed by Twrch Trwyth, and Jones's language implies that this is an image of the sacred violated by forces of a purely destructive evil:

It is the Boar Trwyth

that has pierced through

the stout-fibred living wood

that bears the sacral boughs of gold. (*SL* 89)

The piercing evokes Christ's crucifixion, and the redemptive nature of the cross is linked with the Golden Bough plucked by Aeneas. In itself, however, the imagery does not even hint at the possibility of redemption; as in the poem as a whole, any such notion must await the wakening of the Sleeping Lord.

Jones employs the image of a bestial rape to convey his horror at the violation of nature and the sacred, which are consistently identified in his poetry: "It is the hog that has wasted the fair *onnen* and the hornbeam and the Queen of the Woods" (*SL* 89). This
serene and generous figure from In Parenthesis is powerless before the rapacity of Twrch Trwyth, whose violence identifies him as a symbol of modernity in its worst guise. A parallel may be found in Yeats’s “rough beast” in “The Second Coming” and in the rape of Leda in “Leda and the Swan”, but where Yeats at his most Nietzschean darkly prophecies the birth of an anti-Christian era, Jones sees modernity as another Dark Age which may yet find a redeemer figure, as early Britain did in Arthur.

The passage concerning the hunt for Twrch Trwyth concludes with a summary of its destruction of the land and people of Britain

It is the great ysgithrau of the porcus Troit that have stove in the wattled walls of the white dwellings, it is he who has stamped out the seed of fire, shattered the pentan-stone within the dwellings; strewn the green leaf-bright limbs with the broken white limbs of the folk of the dwellings, so that the life-sap of the flowers of the forest mingles the dark life-sap of the fair bodies of the men who stood in the trackway of the long tusked great hog, y twrch dirfawr ysgithrog hir. (SL 90)

“Porcus Troit” is, as we have seen, Nennius’s Latinising of Twrch Trwyth, who with his tusks (ysgithrau) destroys “the wattled walls of the white dwellings”. These can only be the “white bangors” – the wattled communities of monks that transformed the society of Dark Age Britain, providing a clear image of Twrch Trwyth’s violation of the sacred, which extends to the sacredness of the family symbolised by the pentan- or hearth-stone. The image of “the flowers of the forest” covertly alludes to the Scottish song of that name, which commemorates the death of James IV, King of Scots, and his men in a
disastrous battle at Flodden; like Llywelyn, he brought unity to his people and similarly had his body brought to London. The last line of this passage, *y twrch dirfawr ysgithrog hir* ('the huge hog, long-tusked') does not appear in *Culhwch and Olwen*, and is apparently Jones’s own composition, suggesting a greater fluency in Welsh than his self-deprecating comments would indicate.

In both “The Hunt” and “The Sleeping Lord”, Jones grounds myth in history by careful allusion to the social and material culture of early medieval Britain. The first two pages of “The Hunt” (65-6) give an epic list of Arthur’s warband during the hunt for Twrch Trwyth. This list has its ultimate origin in the fantastic catalogue of Arthur’s warriors in *Culhwch and Olwen*, which includes such comic figures as “Paris King of France” and “Gwyddon the Abstruse” (Jones and Jones 87, 88). During the narrative of the hunt itself, the redactor provides supplemental lists of warriors who accompanied Arthur during specific episodes (110, 111-2). Jones seamlessly weaves together myth and history, as they are woven in Welsh tradition, by juxtaposing allusions to the careful social distinctions elaborated in the Welsh laws with allusions to the legendary figures of the Triads. He employs technical military terms from the late Roman period, *palatini* – literally meaning ‘from the palace’, and designating a military commander with locally sovereign powers, and *comitatus*, a retinue, to suggest the continuity between Roman Britain and the Celtic resurgence led by Arthur (*SL* 65).

Jones assigns “to each *comitatus* / one Penteulu”, which he translates as “Captain of the Guard” in his note, but which is literally “head of the retinue” (*SL* 65). He alludes to the root meaning of *palatini* with his image of “the firsts among equals / from the wattle[d] *palasau* [palace]” (*SL* 65). In the earlier draft of the poem printed in *The Roman
Quarry, Jones identifies T.P. Ellis's *Welsh Tribal Law and Custom in the Middle Ages* (1926) as his principle source for the distinctions of early Welsh society, and this remained his modern source of information on Welsh law (*RQ* 23, n.51). Ellis describes the Penteulu as “the principal officer” at the royal court, whose main duty was to serve as “the commanding officer of the small military force (*teulu*) of the palace, the mobile band of adherents, so characteristic of the period, upon whom ultimately depended the royal authority” (35-6). Jones identifies “the firsts among equals” as “the torqued *arglwyddi / of calamitous jealousy*” (65). *Arglwyddi* are “lords”, and in Wales this class was subject to no-one but their sovereign, equals under Welsh law jealous of their individual privileges (Ellis 25-6). Jones balances his keen historical sense with a fondness for the more legendary version of Welsh tradition contained in the Triads. The passage in parentheses on page 65 “refers to certain incidents and persons (such as Gronw the Radiant) mentioned in the Triads of the Three Faithful War-Bands and the Three Unfaithful War-Bands of the Island of Britain” (*SL* 65, n.2).

The Welsh laws provide an important gloss to a passage on page 66, where among the riders are found “The innate Combroges, by father by mother without mixed / without brok’n without mean descent”. Jones is here adapting a quotation from the Welsh laws included in Ellis:

‘An innate “bonheddig”,’ says the Venedotian Code, ‘is a person who shall be of entire Welsh origin, both by the mother and father,’ in the two

other Codes it is said that 'he is a Cymro by father and mother, without bond, without foreign, without mean descent (illedach)' (Ellis 40)'

These bonheddigon were the Welsh who enjoyed “freedom”, which meant “a definite status in society, a status involving certain duties and certain privileges, which could be acquired, according to the strict letter of the law, only by pure descent” (40). Jones then offers a poetic meditation on the significance of saraad, or insult-price, in his consideration of

all the lords from among

the co-equals and the quasi-free of limited privilege, whose insult price is unequal but whose limb price is equal for all the disproportion as to comeliness and power because the dignity belonging to the white limbs and innate in the shining members, annuls inequality of status and disallows distinctions of appearance. (66)

The “co-equals” are presumably the arglwyddi, lords, discussed above, but “the quasi-free of limited privilege” are more problematic. The Welsh laws “make no mention of any intermediary stage between freedom and unfreedom”, but Ellis notes that there were cases of unfree men freely holding land (191-2). That this is what Jones had in mind is supported by the remainder of the passage. Under the Welsh laws, a person’s saraad or honour-price varied according to their status. For example, the kings of the three ancient Welsh kingdoms of Gwynedd, Powys, and Deheubarth were entitled to one hundred cows from each cantref, a silver rod “long enough to reach from the floor to the king’s lips, when the King was seated, and as thick as his long finger”, and a large gold cup (Ellis
The process of insult and payment of an honour-price may be seen in the tale of *Branwen Uerch Llyr*, where Bran must recompense Matholwch King of Ireland for the insult he suffers when Efnessien, Bran’s brother, mutilates his horses (Jones and Jones 22-5). In contrast to the value of a person’s honour, “‘The limbs of all persons,’ say the laws, ‘are of equal worth, whether they be king or villain’” (Ellis 360). The human body is dignified in Welsh law by being recognised as innately valuable beyond social distinctions. So powerful is this dignity that David Jones can claim it “annuls inequality of status and disallows distinctions of appearance”.

Jones’s emphasis on the innate equality of all human beings as embodied creatures is somewhat overshadowed by the opposing notion of social status based on blood, a notion highly problematic in the mid-twentieth century. Jones does not help himself in his choice of diction by describing his riders as “the shining Arya” (*SL* 66). I have quoted from the medieval Welsh laws partly to show that Jones’s poetic portrayal of a Celtic warrior aristocracy is rooted in his understanding of the social realities of that society, and that the emphasis on purity of blood belongs to it and not necessarily to Jones, who himself shared a Welsh, English, and Italian heritage. I have also argued that the poetry itself valorises equality of limb-price over the grades of honour-price in its representation of Celtic society. Jones’s own explanation of his choice of “Arya” needs revisiting:

The word Arya means the noble or high-men, and has nothing whatever to do with race. Among the Sumerians, Chinese, Mongols and the Hamitic tribes of Africa, wherever there was a warrior-culture and the cult of the sky-god, the tribal king or chieftain tended to personify that god, and be
addressed by the same title. As noted by Mr. Christopher Dawson in *The Age of the Gods*, in the case of the Etruscans a whole mixed people are known to history as ‘the Lords’, merely because their female cult-figure was Turan, The Lady, and their male cult-figure Maristuran, Mars the Lord. (SL 66-7, n.5)

The problem with Jones’s explanation is that whereas the Etruscans may be “a whole mixed people”, the Welsh laws and Jones’s poem emphasise that the “innate Combroges” are of pure, unmixed descent. Etruscans can only be made congruent with Combroges if we take Jones to mean that the Combroges are an ascendant and exclusive caste, but one originally constituted by diverse peoples. Jones very likely did believe this to be the case, as the fusion of Roman and Celtic elements during the late Empire did occur in Britain, as he never tires of pointing out. Christopher Dawson’s *The Age of the Gods* shows how most advances in human culture occurred when diverse peoples came into contact with each other.

“Arya” still remains an unfortunate word choice, one not obviously Celtic in its connotations and quite impossible to dissociate from Nazi ideology in the post-war era. In conjunction with Jones’s image of “white limbs and shining members”, it is too easily associated with a type of racialism typified by Nietzsche in his distinction between the dark, aboriginal inhabitant of Europe “who was distinguished most obviously from the blond, that is Aryan, conqueror race by his color” (*Genealogy of Morals* 30). Nietzsche goes on to mention that “The Celts, by the way, were definitely a blond race”, and further identifies the Aryans as “the master race” (30-1; Nietzsche’s italics). Jones’s characterisation of the “innate Combroges” of early medieval Wales as “shining Arya”
fits in too neatly with this kind of ideology to wholly allow his own explanation to suffice. Political naivety occasionally led Jones to misjudge the ideological implications of some of his own ideas, ideas necessarily reflected in his poetry. His choice of "Arya" to describe the resurgent Celtic aristocracy of Dark Age Britain is an unhappy one, but needs to be read in its context as designating a hereditary ruling caste and not as an example of racial triumphalism.

Jones's mythologised portrayal of Arthur in "The Sleeping Lord" is balanced by an historicised portrait of him as a typical Dark Age prince. Arthur's court is introduced with the figure of the candle-bearer who, despite the storm and

what is

required and codified in the Notitia of degrees & precedence

touching the precise duties of a lord's candle-bearer and as to

where and when he must stand in the lord's neuadd, it is the most

likely thing in the world that you will, none the less, find him

here, on the open mynnydd-dir (SL 76)

The neuadd is "the timber-pillar'd hall" (SL 76), which Ellis grandly describes as a "royal palace" but which is far from the palaces of medieval romance:

The Hall, the centre of court life, consisted of three parallel rows of wooden pillars, two in each row. At a little distance from these pillars were rows of smaller pillars, the space between the larger and smaller pillars being roofed over with beams and thatch or shingle, while larger beams, similarly covered, stretched across the main pillars, roofing the centre aisle.
The side aisles were occupied by beds and were partitioned off from the main aisle by screens during the day. The main aisle was divided into two portions, the upper and the lower, separated from each other by a fire place. (Ellis 35)

Although Ellis writes that it was only under later Norman influence that the lord and his officers sat on a raised platform, Jones seats Arthur "at his board on the dais", showing the imaginative freedom with which he uses his historical sources (SL 77).

The roles of the members of a medieval Welsh court were rigidly governed by the Codes. The sixteen principal officers to the king, in the order given by the Codes, were "the Penteulu, the priest of the household, the steward, the court-judge, the chief falconer, the chief huntsman, the chief groom, the household-bard, the doctor, the page of the chamber, the silentiary, the brewer, the butler, the keeper of the door, the cook, and the candle-bearer" (Ellis 34). Jones seems to have interpreted this list as a ranking, and typically sympathises with the underdog: "what is he compared / with the Chief Huntsman let alone the Chief Falconer or the / Bard of the Household?" (SL 76). Ellis is perfunctory about the candle-bearer's duties: "the candle-bearer looked after the lighting of the palace", but Jones sees a poetic dignity in this least of positions, asking, "is he not the Light Bearer?" (Ellis 37; SL 76). His candle

flames upward

in perfection of form

like the leaf-shaped war-heads

that gleam from the long-hafted spears

of the lord's body-guard
but immeasurably greater

is the pulchritude

for the quivering gleam of it

is living light

and light

(so these clerigwyr argue)

is, in itself, a good (SL 77)

Jones anachronistically ascribes a scholastic argument to the early British churchmen, but
the goodness of light primarily recalls Genesis 1:3, “And God said, Let there be light:
and there was light” (King James Version). The member of court with the least social
status recognises a spiritual significance in his role that identifies him as a standard bearer
for the God of Creation. It is poetically apt that the candle-bearer cannot restrain himself
from exclaiming the respond “ET LUX PERPETUA LUCEAT EIS” during Mass, despite
being forbidden to speak in court (SL 87).

The passage set in the early Middle Ages is succeeded by a long, interrogative
meditation on the relationship between Sleeping Lord and landscape (90-94), before
shifting to a figure familiar in Jones’s poetry, the man detailed for all-night sentry duty.
This time, he is a soldier guarding a castle. Jones’s language identifies him with the
Tommies of the Great War, as he is wakened from his doze “in the crenelled traverse-bay
/ of the outer bailey wall” (SL 94). Macaronics allow Jones to express the cultural
situation of the Marches, situating the action in

the castell these Engl-Ffrancwyr
call in their lingua la Haie Taillé
that the Saeson other ranks
call the Hay
(which place in the tongue of the men of the land,
Y Gelli Gandryll, or, for short, Y Gelli) (SL 94)

Welsh, French, and English collide in this border region between three cultures, with the lonely "lingua" suggesting the Latin culture shared in common, but obscured by mutual animosity. The English here appear as the rank-and-file troops indifferently serving their Norman masters. Jones links the passage stylistically to the rest of the poem by using the interrogative mood, presenting this scene as a hypothetical one:

Does he cock his weather-ear, enquiringly
lest what’s on the west wind
from over beyond the rising contours
may signify that in the broken
tir y blanau [borderlands]
these broken dregs of Troea
yet again muster? (E&A 95)

In his essay "The Myth of Arthur", Jones notes that the events following the death of Llywelyn in 1282 were "a rubbing-in of the final passing of the imperium from the impoverished 'dregs of the Trojans' to the surcoated, powerfully harnessed de facto inheritors." (E&A 231). The poet wonders if the sentinel wakes his "drowsing mate", and although they are reluctant to awaken the chain of command, "you never know, mate" (SL 95). The howling may be only wind, or fairies, but it may be a more substantial threat: "No wiseman's son born do know / not in these whoreson March-lands / of this
in the event, the Sleeping lord does not yet awaken, and the poet can only wonder when the land will be renewed:

Does the land wait the sleeping lord

or is the wasted land

that very lord who sleeps? (96)

It is a question that must remain unanswered. The awakening of Arthur remains an imaginative possibility infusing and haunting the British landscape, “like Merlin complaining under his big rock” (IP xi).

In the two Arthurian fragments published in The Sleeping Lord, David Jones explores the relationship between history and myth, recognising a mythical significance in history while acknowledging the historical contingency of myth. The historical figure of Arthur is mythologised into a culture-hero in early Welsh tradition, but this mythologising is made possible by the historical conditions of early medieval Britain, when Celtic societies emerged out of Roman Britannia to fight the Saxon invaders. Jones’s contribution to Arthurian literature is rooted not only in ancient Welsh tradition, but also in that strain of British Romanticism given unique expression in the writings of William Blake. As the latent continuities between Romanticism and Modernism become more apparent, the poetry of David Jones can be more fully appreciated as a major contribution to Post-Enlightenment British poetry. The allusiveness and formal inventiveness of the Arthurian fragments are typically Modernist, but Jones’s vision of a mythical Britain whose longed-for awakening will restore vital culture is clearly in the Romantic tradition.
5.4 The Mass Poems

Jones's three poems on the Mass, "The Kensington Mass", "Cailleach", and "The Grail Mass", are meditations on the spiritual and cultural significance of the old Roman Rite. As the priest says "sanctorum tuorum, quorum reliquiae HIC SUNT" ("your saints, whose relics these are"), he kisses the altar, where saints' relics are traditionally interred; the poem's speaker reflects that this fundamentally human gesture would be no different were it made greeting Helen of Troy by kissing her hem, or the long tunica

our own Elen of the Army-paths

whose outward splendour of form

was informed by an instress

of great noblesse. (RQ 89)

Elen Luyddawg is the object of Emperor Maxen's desire in the medieval Welsh tale, The Dream of Maxen Wledig. As we have seen, she appears many times in Jones's writings, as a mediating figure between Celtic and Roman cultures in Britain. Jones uses both the language of the Scholastics ("splendour of form") and of Hopkins ("informed by an instress") to give expression to her beauty, which reveals her inner quality of "great noblesse". The Scholastic philosophy of Duns Scotus lies behind Hopkins's "instress", which Franco Marucci identifies with Scotus's confuse cognoscere, "a direct perception of the real, a form of knowledge that makes one immediately enter into contact with it" (182). Jones's juxtaposition of Thomist and Scotist ideas is a good indicator of his

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13 "The Kensington Mass" was originally published by Agenda Editions in 1975, and is also included with "Cailleach" and "The Grail Mass" in The Roman Quarry (1982).
eclectic approach to philosophy, drawing upon what is useful for his art rather than conforming to a particular system.

The figure of Elen, "for whom the Imperator / could not eat nor sleep / nor ride out with his comites & duces", introduces a lengthy passage (90-92), in which Maxen finally rides out with his companions, proclaiming "Tomorrow it is our desire to follow the chase and take / whatever fortune the numina of the grove may grant us" (RQ 90). In the Welsh tale, Maxen despatches his men to find the maiden of whom he has dreamed (Jones and Jones 70); after they locate Elen in Britain, Maxen and his host journey to and conquer the island. Jones slows down the tale's narrative time by giving a lyric account of the Emperor's departure from Rome and journey into Gaul (a journey analogous to Arthur's forest-ride in "The Hunt"), where a rooster's crowing leads Jones to remember the "third crow" which marks Peter's betrayal of Jesus:

Down the meander and crooked labyrinth of time and maze of history, or historia intermeddled with potent and light-giving, life-giving, cult-making mythos we hear as yet that third crow dawn crow of dolour as clear as we hear the echoing blast from Roncesvalles and with it, of necessity the straight, exact, rational and true 'Sirs, you are set for sorrow'. (RQ 92)
This is a crucial passage in Jones's writings because it reveals his understanding of history as a labyrinth "intermeddled" with myth. For Jones, history is not "a pattern / Of timeless moments", as it is for Eliot in "Little Gidding" (*Collected Poems* 222). Reading history typologically, as Jones does, allows for a recognition of Eliot's "intersection of the timeless moment" in "cult-making mythos", but this is a spiritually privileged moment such as the Incarnation and its foretypes in Jewish and pagan religion (*Collected Poems* 215). Providential history, the history of "timeless moments", is distinguished from ordinary history, the "crooked labyrinth of time" which humanity must usually endure without understanding its significance or larger pattern. In rare moments of insight, we may glimpse the pattern of the labyrinth from the outside, but usually we struggle through its dark passages from within.¹⁴ Eliot's version of the *via negativa* in "East Coker" is suggestive here: "In order to arrive at what you do not know / You must go by the way of ignorance" (*Collected Poems* 201). For Jones, it is in this struggle that the "potent and light-giving, life-giving, cult-making mythos" can offer a thread to follow through "the maze of history".

The two medieval allusions which conclude this passage demonstrate Jones's typological reading of history. The crowing of a "Gallic rooster" recalls "that third crow" by which Peter recognised his betrayal of Jesus; this leads us to "hear / the echoing blast / from Roncesvalles" (*RQ* 92). Roland's blast on Olifant comes too late to save his own life, but in announcing his own defeat it also announces the dire consequences of

¹⁴ See Penelope Reed Doob, *The Idea of the Labyrinth from Classical Antiquity through the Middle Ages*, p. 57 and pp. 82-3 for a discussion of the labyrinth as journey through ignorance to knowledge.
Ganelon’s betrayal of the French, typologically identified with Peter’s (and, by implication, Judas’s) betrayal of Christ: “‘Sirs, you are set for sorrow’” (RQ 92). In the Middle Ages, typological readings of history were conventional, and it is significant that Jones turns to medieval legend for his exempla. According to Erich Auerbach, in the medieval view of history, “every occurrence, in all its everyday reality, is simultaneously a part in a world-historical context through which each part is related to every other” (156). As we have seen, Jones approaches the past in precisely this way.

The concluding passages of both “Cailleach” and “The Grail Mass” introduce a figure with great personal and cultural significance for David Jones: Sir Launcelot. Launcelot in Jones’s work is perpetually the man of sorrows, torn between an impossible love and his duty to Arthur. “The Grail Mass” conclusion is a lyrically condensed version of the mostly prose passage in “Cailleach”. René Hague has identified the origins of this passage in Malory, Book XVII, Chapter 15, where Launcelot encounters the Grail for the only time. Jones’s haunting passage moves seamlessly from external description to inner monologue:

In the North Porch West-wave Launcelot, his long, straight, heavy, well-tempered iron sword-blade drawn ready in his fist-grip held just below the quillons – he assessed the ageing timber as requiring no hilt-work, no great sword-play, – of course any man can err in judging to a nicety even in affairs within his own competence and here I’m on familiar ground – let’s see, in any case I have further ways, God knows, but time now short indeed and I must be
Launcelot here is a desperate figure, forcing his way into the mysteries of the Mass. In Malory's account, Launcelot "enforced him mickle to undo the door"; but is stopped by a voice from within that seems to say "Joy and honour be to the Father of Heaven" (XVII, 15). The knight falls upon his knees and prays to be shown a vision of the Grail; the chamber door opens, and while witnessing a blinding light, Launcelot is warned to depart and "he withdrew him heavily".

Jones radically departs from Malory's version at this point in the narrative. His Lancelot hacks his way into the chamber:

   His Aryan pommel at the first stroke gapes the aged timber. It chances to fracture the pine-wood panel to which has been tacked the Notices of the Week, this parchment is ripped, so that what does not fall with its nails to the flooring, floats in dusty air. This he regrets, due to the violence of his advent, but the splendour he saw within gave not a second's time but for instant action. (RQ 104)

Lancelot's "Aryan pommel" identifies him as a member of the Celtic warrior-aristocracy we have seen in "The Hunt", uneasily and violently meeting the "Notices of the Week", an intrusion of modern banality into his heroic world. This confrontation between an Aryan heroic ethos and bourgeois religion has disturbing implications, echoing as it does a conventional fascist opposition between ancient heroism and modern complacency. But Jones's perspective on the Aryan knight is self-critical and ironic; Launcelot is a figure of failed desire, of a heroic ethos denied its value and reward. His assault on the
commonplace and violent intrusion on the sacred demonstrate his unswerving commitment to a heroic view of life, but he is ultimately denied the Grail.

I am always deeply moved by Jones’s depictions of Launcelot, and I believe the knight’s emotional power derives from his passionate, contradictory character in Jones’s writings and paintings. In the 1940 painting Guenever, Launcelot again appears as an intruder, entering the languorous queen’s chamber through a window. He is an adulterer paradoxically marked by stigmata on hands and feet, a paradox reproduced by the juxtaposition of Guenevere’s nude and inviting body against an altar in the background. Launcelot’s erotic and spiritual desires, equally passionate, can never be reconciled.

In the “Cailleach” fragment, Jones rejoins Malory’s narrative when Launcelot enters the chamber to assist a deacon at Mass. Malory writes that

it seemed to Launcelot that above the priest’s hands were the three men, whereof the two put the youngest by likeness between the priest’s hands; and so he lift it up right high, and it seemed to show so to the people. And then Launcelot marvelled not a little, for him thought the priest was so greatly charged of the figure that him seemed that he should fall to the earth. (XVII, 15)

Jones significantly omits all reference to Launcelot’s vision, obliquely relating the knight’s reflection: “I would be not worth my mailed coat did I not aid the venerable man surcharged with that great weight” (104). The fragment concludes with Launcelot’s prayer, and it too is a failure. He prays not for “any amelioration of what is adjudged me, on the in favilla [judgement] day, as David and the Sibyl have it”, alluding to the medieval hymn, Dies Irae, which also provides the epigraph to The Anathémata, “TESTE
DAVID CUM SYBILLA" (*RQ* 105; *Ana* 49). Launcelot prays merely “to aid the venerable man surcharged with that great weight, and it is but for that brief moment I ask it” (*RQ* 105). After repeating his desire for “no cancellation of what’s adjudged me”, he recognises that what he asks is impossible:

No, I see that it may not be,
not even though the gladius-pierced
Mother of Mercy,
besought her Eternal Son, the
Fount of Pity, the Gwledig Nef, [Lord of Heaven]

(*per quem omnia*) (*RQ* 105)

What is particularly fascinating about this fragment is that Jones assigns a specific cause for the inner defect that renders Launcelot unable to participate in the Grail Mass: “for not all the dire and piteous necessity of one / moment’s grace can I extend my charity to that bastard / Mordred” (*RQ* 105). The inability to forgive, part of the heroic ethos of revenge, prohibits Launcelot from witnessing the sacred mysteries of the Grail. This interpretation is, as far as I know, unique to Jones, and one can only regret that he was unable to develop this theme, another startlingly original rewriting of the Arthurian legend. The passage breaks off with an identification of Mordred with “Morcant, who, given the passing space / of a few centuries will slay at Traeth Mawr the Lord Urien, / the stay of Rheged, and the last hope of the Brythinaunt” (*RQ* 105). The theme of betrayal is typologically projected throughout Celtic history, encompassing the 6th century king, Urien Rheged, defender of the North British against the Saxons, and patron of the early poet, Taliesin.
The version of this passage which concludes "The Grail Mass" demonstrates the considerable revisions Jones would make in trying to bring his fragments to a more satisfactorily finished form:

In the north porch

Lake-wave Lawnslot

beats against that

damaged pine

his quillon'd cleddyf-hilt

fractures the notices for the week (RQ 110)

The first thing to notice is that each consecutive image or motion is now sharply focussed in its own line on the page, slowing the pace of the reader's eye and allowing the scene to unfold gradually in the imagination. The pacing contrasts with the presumed rapidity of Launcelot's beating on the door, which in the earlier prose version is presented as a single stroke. Each line's relative isolation mirrors the spiritual isolation of Launcelot (now Anglicized as "Lawnslot") as he crudely breaks in on the mysteries. Jones has eliminated connectives and punctuation to present the scene in a paratactic style recalling that of La Chanson de Roland (see Erich Auerbach, Mimesis, Chapter 5). This style heightens the contrast between heroic-age knight and modern "notices of the week", which now appear in a sentence parodying heroic-age syntax instead of in modern discursive prose. The "Aryan pommel" has given way to "cleddyf-hilt"; the Welsh word for "sword" renders Launcelot a more authentically Celtic warrior, and loses the ideological connotations of "Aryan".
Jones’s relates Launcelot’s intentions through the simple, but effective, use of the phrase “he would”, continuing in a paratactic style:

he would see
right through that chamber door
he would be
where the Cyrenean deacon
leans inward
to relieve the weight
he too would aid the venerable man
surcharged with that great weight. (RQ 110)

Launcelot’s “would” acquires ironic meaning for readers familiar with Malory, emphasizing the gap between the knight’s desires and his ability to attain them. As a figure of frustration and failure, Launcelot embodies Jones’s sense of western cultural decline in the modern age; as a figure torn by conflicting human passions, he is one of Jones’s most compelling creations.

5.5 “A bloody lie turned gallantly romantical”: *The Book of Balaam’s Ass.*

The philosopher Josef Pieper, in *Leisure: the Basis of Culture*, characterises the bourgeois sensibility as a wilful blindness in which “a man accepts his environment defined as is by the immediate needs of life, so completely and finally, that things happening cannot any longer become transparent” (97). Jones is deeply concerned with transparency, in both his poetry and painting, and his expressive, symbolic language aims to reveal the numinous shining through the ordinary. In *The Book of Balaam’s Ass*, Jones
identifies poetic language with the Middle Ages, contrasting it with the narrowly mimetic language characteristic of the modern era. Transparency and numinousness are discounted entirely by the woman who speaks on page 193 of *The Book of Balaam's Ass*, in the fuller version published in *The Roman Quarry*. For her, reality is appearance, and only mimetic discourse can give expression to this reality. Jones's style of war narrative is treated, at best, as a somewhat tedious joke:

Tilly Vally Mr Pistol that's a pretty tale. La! on my body — tell that, sir, below stairs. Gauffer it well and troupe it fine, pad it out to impressive proportions, grace it from the Ancients. Gee! I do like a bloody lie turned gallantly romantical, fantastical, glossed by the old gang from the foundations of the world. Press every allusion into your Ambrosian racket, ransack the sacred canon and have by heart the sweet Tudor magician gather your sanctions and weave your allegories, roseate your lenses, serve up the bitter dregs in silver-gilt, bless it before and behind and swamp it with baptismal and continual dew (*RQ* 193)

Jones parodies the conventional, modern sensibility that rejects any discourse that is non-instrumental and non-mimetic. For this sensibility, such discourse can never be anything more than "a bloody lie". For Jones, all language is primarily metaphorical. Even after peeling back the layer of allusion, he falls back on metaphor to express the carnage left by war:

*Gentlemen, I will remove the hat. You will observe the*
golden lily flowers powdered to drape a million and a half
disembowelled yeanlings. \((RQ\ 193)\)

The process of revealing the unadorned truth is itself a metaphorical removing of the hat,
and the dead soldiers are immediately troped as "yeanlings", young lambs or kids.

Language here can only trope reality, not construct a one-to-one correspondence between
word and world. The truth turns out to be textual, but Jones's language foregrounds its
metaphorical nature and does not claim to present objective facts beyond the number of
war-dead. The woman to whom this response is directed demands a plain account of the
facts without understanding the metaphorical nature of language itself. This exchange is,
in part, a sophisticated reflection on the nature of language that anticipates post-modern
theories concerning the self-referential nature of the text.

The criticism of *poiesis* offered before the war narrative is answered by a
criticism of narrow *mimesis* at the war narrative's conclusion, conveying a sense of the
poem's circularity:

> In each slow turning of each fold in the miserable garment
> of our sorrow you would show a mockery and grim futility,
> where lice for woven beauties crawl. You would show ape-
> heads for fair princes when they lift their beavers up, and
> Geraldine's terrible paps for a sweet queen's embroidered
> bodice, and leprous wood to crumble in our trusting fists
> -- as illusory as that fungus-barter which Gwydion's magic
> made (when he effected the rising of the south to obtain
> for his brother the bed he was after.) \((RQ\ 202)\)
Reduced to appearances, life is “a mockery and grim futility”. In Northrop Frye’s terms, Mrs Balaam’s vision of life is demonic, revealing “the world that desire totally rejects: the world of the nightmare and the scapegoat, of bondage and pain and confusion; the world as it is before the human imagination begins to work on it” (Anatomy 147).

Human imagination is the means through which the artist participates in redemption by giving expression to man’s sacramental nature.

Realism in the modern sense enters the western cultural tradition with the Renaissance, and its realistic portrayal of individual men and women displaces the typical figures of medieval romance. Man, specifically the Renaissance prince, displaces God as the centre of the western cultural universe. Near the end of the poem, in a daring cultural analysis, Jones contrasts the pageantry of the Renaissance court with the popular drama of the Middle Ages:

Comus is worth a masque – yet that salvific mummery they used day by day (make ditcher’s son and Colin Clout parrot their holy rigmaroles or carol:

nay, ivy, nay

or on her special day

sing

Levedy quene of Paradys

Electa

mayde milde, moder es effecta)

masqued more the delight and depth for us, staged the happy fault, could sing about the Golden Tree, more than
blind makers tell in cool translucent numbers. *(RQ 206)*

The medieval mystery play, with its uncanny blend of local dialect and church Latin, gives expression to the faith of an entire community, celebrating the mystery of salvation. The everyman of medieval drama is a typical figure with whom everyone in the crowd can identify. In contrast, *Comus* addresses only a courtly audience, which it flatters with classical allusion and “cool translucent numbers” that express an order as much political as aesthetic. Jones’s allusion to Colin Clout is also pointed; Clout figures in a rough-and-tumble poem by John Skelton, from which he is appropriated by Spenser for *The Shepheardes Calendar* and *Colin Clout Comes Home Again*. The idealized, pastoral swain is removed from the world of the “ditcher’s son and Colin Clout” who participate in the “salvific mummeries” of the mystery play. Jones’s enthusiasm for the mystery play may be traced to *The Chester Play of Deluge*, which he illustrated with engravings in the 1920’s.

René Hague recognised that Jones’s defence of medieval culture in *The Book of Balaam’s Ass* is, in part, directed against Marxism, specifically as practised by Stalin. On the reverse of one of his manuscript pages, Jones wrote the name “Bukharin”, the name of the man who famously dissented from Stalin’s collectivisation of the Russian peasantry. Jones parodies the Marxist vision of proletarian revolt in terms borrowed medieval scholasticism, contemplating what a cow might think of man were it capable of reason:

> Could she blink a thought-maze back, there would be

a Dialectical incoming for you!

*Lords of Creation, hierarchy of use and delectation,*
rational souls, convenient syllogistic cornering of memory and will, and dumb beasts perishing as poor brute-bodies must – She’ld make a Balaam of you to narrow your path, she’ld drag you down on Christmas night into an appropriate attitude till your arse reflected the nine Choirs shining. (RQ 189)

Jones paradoxically chastises us for treating animals as no more than “poor brute-bodies” even as he recognises the absurdity of sentimentalising animal creation. Could she revolt, the cow would “make your exploiting governance wither away all right” (189). This parody of Marxist discourse implies a criticism of Marxism, that its vision of human beings as “proletarians” is ultimately a diminishment of our full humanity. Jones would have agreed with Josef Pieper’s definition of the proletarian as one “who is fettered to the process of work” (37). Only the leisure which allows human beings to engage in non-utilitarian practices, such as art and sacrament, can enable the fulfilment of human potential. Jones satirises Marx’s criticism of “the idiocy of rural life” with his image of the cow’s horns “like to the bifurcated steel that found their flowered groins of the noblesse fair game after the long idiocy of agriculture” (RQ 274; 189), that is, the Middle Ages, a period which guaranteed leisure in the observance of Sunday and many feast-days throughout the calendar year.

The dominant literary mode of the Middle Ages is romance, and it is also crucial in the poetry of David Jones. Northrop Frye notes that “romance is the nearest of all literary forms to the wish-fulfilment dream, and for that reason it has socially a curiously paradoxical role” (Anatomy 186). On the one hand, the ruling class uses romance to
affirm their status, and “the virtuous heroes and beautiful heroines represent the ideals and the villains the threats to their ascendancy” (186). On the other hand, “there is a genuinely ‘proletarian’ element in romance too, which is never satisfied with its various incarnations,” and which reappears regardless of social conditions (186). The critical voices in *The Book of Balaam’s Ass* see romance as primarily a veil drawn over unpleasant but inescapable facts:

Lime-wash over the tar-brush there’s a dear – cistern the
waters of Camelot to lave your lousy linen. Ploegsteert is
Broceliande, these twain indeed are oned. (*RQ* 193)

Romance is here cynically dismissed as a façade, but in the war narrative which follows, Jones shows its power as a pattern that can reveal “a shape and a significance” in contemporary events (*Eliot Selected Prose* 177). Jones here emphasises the enduring, changeable nature of romance, although it is here viewed from an ironic perspective. The assault on the Mill is an ironic, failed romance quest, and Jones introduces his narrative as such: “Here we have the windmill. There you see the advancing hero” (*RQ* 193). Thomas Dilworth observes that Jones’s language tropes the men as “so many Don Quixotes” (*SM* 349). Unlike the Knight of the Sad Countenance, however, the soldiers have no illusions – they know that their quest is doomed, and it is this knowledge that renders their assault ironic. The violation of the idealised friendships of romance also reveals the irony of this particular quest.

The heroic and romance literature of the Middle Ages consistently provides Jones with models of male companionship, a type of companionship subverted and destroyed by the brutal conditions on the western front:
Not a rock to cleft for, not a spare drift of soil for the living pounds of all their poor bodies drowned in the dun sea. For:

Corporal Oliver of No. 1, nor for

Corporal Amis and

Lance Corporal Amile of No. 2 nor for Corporal Balin and his incompatible mess-mate Corporal Snout (there was a marriage and there was a balls-up, they tore No. 3 in a faction again and often). (RQ 194)

Oliver appears without Roland, Balin without Balan. This passage echoes Jones’s comments on the changing conditions of warfare in his Preface to In Parenthesis:

The wholesale slaughter of the later years, the conscripted levies filling the gaps in every file of four, knocked the bottom out of the intimate, continuing, domestic life of small contingents of men, within whose structure Roland could find, and, for a reasonable while, enjoy, his Oliver.

(IP ix)

In The Book of Balaam’s Ass, death and misfortune have conspired to separate friends and brothers even before the assault on the Mill. The incompatible mess-mates, Balin and Snout, suggest that the “wholesale slaughter” has diminished the soldierly capacity for friendship. Only the companions Amis and Amile appear together, but those familiar with the romance will know that Amile faces the horrific task of killing his children to heal his brother’s leprosy. The children are eventually restored through divine intervention, an intervention utterly absent from the assault on the Mill: “where is His
tempering for our bare back and sides, where / is provided the escape on that open plain?" (RQ 196).

The epic catalogue of soldiers’ names, many of which allude to figures from medieval English and Welsh literature, has been thoroughly commented on by Thomas Dilworth, who bases his annotations on a list compiled by William Blissett with Jones’s help in the 1970’s (SM 347-51; LC 138). But Jones also alludes to medieval traditions by adapting the language of Lady Charlotte Guest’s Mabinogion in his narration of the failed attack on the Mill. Alluding to an earlier assault by the Irish, the narrator sardonically comments: “And as there was no help for the men of Ireland so there was no help for the men of Britain” (RQ 197). This phrasing echoes the tale of “Branwen the Daughter of Llyr”, where the men of Ireland and the men of Britain destroy each other in brutal combat. The style of the triads is inherent to the tales, and is parodied by Jones. In “Manawydan the Son of Llyr”, Manawydan makes shoes with golden clasps “and therefore he was called one of the three makers of Gold shoes”; similarly, Lucifer escapes death through his demonic agility, “that is the reason why he was called one of the three who escaped from the diversion before the Mill” (Guest 52; RQ 198). Such verbal resonances heighten the irony of the events narrated, and reveal the latent tensions involved in translating the experience of modern warfare into the cultural context established in Jones’s late Victorian childhood.

With the exception of Lucifer, Shenkins, and Austin, the quest for the Mill ends in more than failure: it ends in death; it is not, however, a death without the possibility of redemption. The Book of Balaam’s Ass replicates the medieval cultural economy by placing God at its centre through the elaborate litany made by the dying soldiers.
Thomas Dilworth has identified this as a sacred counterpart to the secular listing of soldier’s names (SM 347). Both lists resemble a litany, a prayer in which saints or divine qualities are named in order to invoke their power and protection. Speaking of the “comprehensive enumerations of saints” included in liturgical prayer, the philosopher Catherine Pickstock observes that the “oral listing, which specifies particular names carefully selected to suit the requirements of a particular context, testifies to the liturgical stress on the restoration of individuality and personhood” (199-200). By naming the many soldiers killed, Jones restores individuality and personhood to the war dead, too easily made into statistics, as are “the 6,000 mental cases still under observation” (RQ 191). The soldier’s dying cries, which begin by invoking mothers and sweethearts, are “particular names carefully selected” by each of the dying men. Particularity is a crucial quality of prayer. In “The Tutelar of the Place,” Jones writes “Tellus of the myriad names answers to but one name”, the name which has local meaning: “she’s a rare one for locality” (SL 59). The soldiers call upon

some creature of their own kind by name, as on:

gentle Margaret, on

Gwenfrewi, on Ermintrude

on Babs or Belisaunt

on Aunt Birch on

Ned

on George on

greasy Joan. (RQ 199)
That Margaret and Gwenfrewi are also the names of saints reminds us that they, too, are particular and individual human beings. It is out of this list that the litany expands outward to become a polyphonic prayer to "the unknown God" (RQ 201). If this litany is surprising from the mouths of dying men, we should perhaps recall Jones's comment in his Preface to In Parenthesis, where he writes that "the 'Bugger! Bugger' of a man detailed, had often about it the 'Fiat! Fiat' of the Saints" (IP xii).

The litany concludes with the cry of Dai Meyrick, who calls out "his dolorous anaphora, like the cry of a wounded hare, on Magons and Maponus, because his mother was of the line of Caw of North Britain and her love was beyond the Wall with the men of the north" (RQ 201). Magons (<mab) is the son of the mother goddess Matrona; Maponus is another British deity worshipped especially in the vicinity of Hadrian's Wall. Dai Meyrick's genealogy has not been commented on before, but it is significant in its context. The genealogy of Caw of North Britain was one of the "saintly" genealogies in Welsh tradition, and included St Gildas, author of De excidio Britanniae. Gildas famously blames the ruin of Britain on the Island's depopulation, paralleled in the poem by the destruction of British soldiers fighting on the continent. This genealogy belongs, significantly, to Dai Meyrick's mother, making her inherited saintliness an analogy for the fervent prayer of Ducky Austin's mother. The soldiers' litany thus fittingly concludes with an image of maternal sanctity.

The failed quest to take the Mill is paralleled by the confession of spiritual failure which concludes The Book of Balaam's Ass. Spiritual quest parallels martial quest throughout the poem. Soldiers and poet alike have exhausted their spiritual resources, and can only pray for an influx of divine presence. The Zone of modernity, like the
"open plain" before the Mill, corresponds to the wasteland of medieval romance. Faced with the spectacle of modernity, the poet can only confess his inability to find the spiritual: "I have howled at the foot of the glass tower. I took hold of her glistening rods and travailed for her adamant surfaces" (RQ 211). This passage is more effectively concluded in the fragment published as "A, a, a, Domine Deus", where the poet cries out his despair in the words of Jeremiah: "Eia, Domine Deus" (SL 9). His cry is analogous to that of the soldiers, who cry out to "the unknown God". The internalised quest for meaning and presence finds expression in prayer, but Jones stops short of affirming that our prayers are answered. In this sense, too, The Book of Balaam's Ass is a modern poem.

Jones's turn to expressive language, metaphor, and allusion represents a self-conscious rejection of straight-forward mimesis as a literary mode capable of conveying the trauma of the Great War. In turning away from mimesis, Jones opens up his writing to pre-mimetic modes of discourse, such as myth and romance. Such modes can only be employed ironically by a twentieth-century writer if his or her work is to have the contemporaneity Jones valued so highly. The Book of Balaam's Ass discovers modernity to be a kind of tragedy, in which the means for renewal, including prayer, seem ineffective. It is only with The Anathémata that Jones will achieve a comic vision of the quest fulfilled, where even failure is seen under the sign of the Crucifixion.
Conclusion

In the final pages of "The Myth of Arthur", David Jones reminds us of an aspect of the early Middle Ages often obscured in his poetry by the defeat of Celtic Britain. He notes that "the same period that knew these ruinous events witnessed also the combined phenomena of Celtic monastic, eremetic and peregrinatory enthusiasm" (254). With the ruin of Britain, Christianity spread to Ireland and revitalized the whole of Europe.

"These men (and women) of the wattled enclosures (bangorau) and the naïve codes of penance seem to have combined a Pauline zeal for the Gospel with a fanaticism like that of the Thebaid. There seems also to have been a consciousness of the beauty of the created world not always found in ascetics" (254). These men and women are recalled by the Priest of the Household in "The Sleeping Lord" as

Athletes of God, who in the waste-lands & deep wilds of the
Island and on the spray-swept skerries and desolate insulae where
the white-pinioned sea-birds nest, had sought out places of
retreat and had made the White Oblations for the living and the
dead in those solitudes, in the habitat of wolves and wild-cat and
such like creatures of the Logos (by whom all creatures are that
are) ... (79)

Turning away from the violent and disintegrating society around them, the Celtic saints encountered creation and returned with a mission of spiritual and cultural renewal. A.M. Allchin sees in "the communion of saints" a crucial dimension of Welsh tradition, one which "links with the sense of the unity of tradition, of the presence of the past, which runs through the whole" (66). The poetry of David Jones offers us another link in that
tradition, an imaginative link to the renewal of western civilization in the early Middle Ages, and an opening to the possibility of renewal in our own time.

That such a renewal is urgently necessary is forcefully argued by Alasdair MacIntyre. He concludes *After Virtue* with a reflection on the significance of the early Middle Ages for today. Acknowledging that historical parallels need to be made cautiously, he nonetheless argues that western culture has reached a stage analogous to that remote period, “when men and women of good will turned aside from the task of shoring up the Roman *imperium* and ceased to identify the continuation of civility and moral community with the maintenance of that *imperium*” (263). Instead, these men and women sought to achieve “the construction of new forms of community within which the moral life could be sustained so that both morality and civility might survive the coming ages of barbarism and darkness” (263). The success of this movement on the shores of western Britain is celebrated throughout the poetry of David Jones. In spite of the contemporary moral and political darkness that threatens the very possibility of achieving a civil society, MacIntyre suggests that history offers us reason to be cautiously optimistic:

if the tradition of the virtues was able to survive the horrors of the last dark ages, we are not entirely without grounds for hope. This time however the barbarians are not waiting beyond the frontiers; they have already been governing us for quite some time. And it is our lack of consciousness of this that constitutes part of our predicament. We are waiting not for a Godot, but for another – doubtless very different – St. Benedict. (263)
MacIntyre's cultural analysis, however controversial, corroborates that of David Jones, who similarly saw the modern west as suffering a grave cultural decline. As an analogy for the present, Jones's vision of the early Middle Ages offers a startling interpretation of the contemporary world. By connecting us with a similar period of cultural upheaval, his poetry also shows us that renewal always remains a possibility. As Elen Monica reminds us, "You never know, captain: / What's under works up" (Ana 164). The impulses which revitalized the moribund Europe of late antiquity may yet work their way up and stimulate another significant cultural revival in our own time. It is to this possible revival that David Jones's poetry points the way.
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