

The *Signum* of Some Otherness
David Jones and a Eucharistic Theory of Art
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1. From Analogy to Sacrament: Jones's Evolving Theory of Art

In February 1972, David Jones wrote to Rene Hague, his friend of over forty-five years, expressing his doubts as to whether people really understood what he was trying to convey in his essays:

At Westminster Art School in 1919 –1920 before I'd even heard of Maritain, etc. I used to say . . . that I thought the *theory* of Post Impressionism, that a painting or what not being a thing and not some impression of something, was analogous to what the Catholic Church maintained in her dogma of the Mass. They thought I was absolutely cracked (especially the Catholic ones!). Well since those days I've tried to get that analogy across . . . – but no, they won't bite. (*DJP*, CD1/15)¹

Over the years, Hague and Jones had often discussed “the obsession with ‘technocracy,’ the ‘utile,’ . . . ‘man-the-artist,’ man the sign of ‘sacrament -maker,’ and so on.” This time, though, Hague seemed to disagree with Jones regarding his central contention that the making of art is analogous to what the Roman Catholic Church asserts occurs at the Mass with the Eucharist, particularly since, as he wrote to Hague, “you had never raised the issue before.” (*DJP*, CD1/15)

It was not the analogy itself to which Hague objected. Hague's unease arose from what he felt was Jones' misapplication of the Eucharistic theology of Maurice de la Taille, the Jesuit theologian, to art. Hague was particularly troubled by Jones' use of de la Taille's phrase “He placed Himself in the order of signs” to encapsulate the analogy “between the artificer and the High Priest at the Cenacle,” an analogy that Hague felt “is at times taken to . . . extremes” (*DGC*, 233). While Hague claimed that “D's emphasis on the sacramental nature of man's making may

¹ I am indebted to the Trustees of the David Jones Estate for permission to cite from David Jones' unpublished letters, essays and drafts. Principal holdings consulted are located in *The David Jones Archive* at the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth. (*DJP*)The letters to Jim Ede are located at Kettle's Yard, Cambridge. (*KY*)The Burns Library at Boston College also has extensive holdings, notably the typescript copy to the essay on Hitler. The Lauinger Library at Georgetown University (*LA*) has, among other papers, Jones' notes regarding his treatment at Bowden House while under the care of Dr. Crichton Miller.

lead to a blurring of the difference between the sacramental and the sacrament “(*DJP*, *CD* 1/15) by some readers and critics, what actually seemed to worry Hague was that although Jones said he spoke “by analogy,” Jones would often still insist that the relationship was somewhat closer than a mere analogy.²

To date, Jones’ essays and letters have been little studied. For the most part, the essays in *Epoch and Artist* and *The Dying Gaul*³ are seen as occasional writings informed by Jones’s experience in the trenches of World War I, his Catholicism, his Welsh heritage, and his vocation as an artist and poet. His reflections on the modern world are often considered derivative of Christopher Dawson and Oswald Spengler, while his exploration on art and religion are viewed simply as an odd amalgam of Jacque Maritain, Maurice de la Taille, Eric Gill and Roger Fry. Such views are understandable. The essays in *Epoch and Artist* initially appeared in a variety of rather different publications and examined a wide range of seemingly unrelated subjects. The individual essays were equally problematic and for a similar reason. T.S. Eliot’s comments to Jones on *Art in Relation to War and Our Present Circumstances* apply to most of his essays:

This seems to me quite a considerable work and full of good things. My only complaint, and it is what makes the work in its present form very difficult reading, is that you have put too many things into it. A good deal might no doubt be done by effecting transitions which would lead the reader gently from one point to the next but I do think you have tried to put into one essay what is really the material for a book. (19 August 1943, *DJP*, *CT* 1/2)

However, when we view Jones’s writings as an extended meditation on the nature of art, on man as maker, and on the making of art in a contemporary civilization, and we include the still-unpublished essays and letters, a fuller and far more complex picture emerges. We find an individual who over forty years outlined a provocative theory on art and culture that offers a counter to the megalopolitan civilization of technic and utility that Jones, influenced by Oswald Spengler’s *Man and Technic* and *The Decline of the West*, saw everywhere about him. We find a thinker who, discovering a similarity between Art and the Catholic Eucharist, explored and

² Kathleen Henderson Staudt was one of the first critics of David Jones to explore the incarnational nature of his work in her essay *Incarnation Reconsidered: The Poem as Sacramental Act in The Anathemata of David Jones*, *Contemporary Literature*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (Spring, 1985), pp. 1-25.

³ *Epoch and Artist*, published in 1959, is the only collection of Jones’s essays that appeared while he was alive. *The Dying Gaul* is a collection of unpublished essays, some of which had achieved their final form and some of which were organized by Harman Grisewood from Jones’s numerous rough drafts.

developed the implications of that similarity, to the point where the relationship was more metaphor than simile. Finally, we find an artist whose theoretical growth had a direct impact on the shape and structure of his poetry to the point where *The Anathemata* can be seen as Jones' attempt to achieve anamnesis through an act of transubstantiation. The Catholic art students who knew him in 1920 thought him "absolutely cracked" and Rene Hague had serious reservations regarding Jones' analogy. They might have had very good reason, at least from an orthodox theological perspective.

Jones's aesthetic developed over three stages. The first started at the Westminster Art School in 1919 where he studied art on returning from World War I, and continued under Eric Gill's direction at Ditchling in Sussex and later at Capel y ffyn in Wales.⁴ The second took place during the 1930s when he was writing *In Parenthesis* and a member of what Elizabeth Ward designated the Chelsea Group.⁵ The third occurred in the 1940s when he finally started to formulate a specifically Eucharistic aesthetic at the same time that he was constructing *The Anathemata: fragments of an attempted writing*. Through all three stages, though, there were always the same interwoven strands: Post-Impressionist theory, Catholic theology, and a deep concern with the current civilizational conditions and their impact on art.

At Westminster he was first introduced to Roger Fry and Post-Impressionist theory while studying under Bernard Meninsky. At Ditchling under the guidance of Eric Gill, he first read Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics*, Aquinas' *Summa Theologica*, and, crucially, Maritain's *Art and Scholasticism* in a translation by Father John O'Connor⁶ with an introduction by Eric Gill.

⁴ Ditchling was the arts community founded by the sculptor Eric Gill under Dominican guidance, Distributist economic and political principles, and the English Arts and Crafts Movement's approach to art. Capel y ffyn was the farm in the Black Mountains of Wales to which Gill, his family and David Jones moved in 1925 as a result of a dispute between Eric Gill and Hillary Pepler, one of the co-founders of Ditchling.

⁵ Elizabeth Ward, *David Jones Mythmaker* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1983) 42-57.

⁶ Jacques Maritain, *The Philosophy of Art*. Trans. John O'Connor. Introduction by Eric Gill. Ditchling Sussex: St. Dominic's Press, n.d. (1923). It was to Father John O'Connor that the final continuation of *The Anathemata* was to be dedicated, under the title *The Kensington Mass*, although even from the earliest drafts the model for the priest at the Mass was Father O'Connor. Likewise, the earliest observer of that Mass seems to have been, if not David Jones, an artist who, like Jones,

. . . cripples his eye at lense under small
pool of light, crabbed, beat, with a
cobbler's hunch on him, in small hours, with
steel point manoeuvring the bright copper
disc under gas flare or candle flame in
small hours in small urban upper room

His concern over the cultural climate – while informed by Eric Gill, by the Distributism of Vincent McNabb, and by Hilaire Belloc – finally came from his own experience of the war itself and the post-war conditions he saw everywhere. In those first years, he developed a set of premises from which he never wavered and whose far-ranging implications he would explore until the end of his life.

In a letter written in 1945 to *The Times*, Jones claimed that the re-orientation caused by Post-Impressionist theory was “*profound*,” and “carried with it the idea. . . that a picture must be a thing with its own way of life – that the goodness or vitality of a picture depended upon its own formal vitality – that the registering of the appearance of nature must no longer dominate the artist “(*DJP*, *CF2/19*). A work of art was not ‘about’ something; it was, he wrote, “a ‘thing’ having abstract qualities by which it coheres and without which it can be said not to exist” (Jones, *H&P* 20). Roger Fry had maintained that artists “do not seek to imitate form but to create form. . . to make images [that]. . . aim not at illusion but at reality” through their “logical structure “ and ”unity of texture,”⁷ but Fry spoke only of Post-Impressionist painters. Jones extended this principal not only to all visual art works, but to all the arts.

In a letter from January 9, 1973, David Jones wrote to Rene Hague that when “these Roger Fry Bloomsbury boys” said that “a work was

a ‘thing’ in itself with its life deriving from a juxtaposition of forms . . . it was an attempt to assert the principle that a work to have *realitas* must have an informing principle, rather as the theologians say the ‘soul’ is the form of the body.’ (*DJP*, *CD1/15*)

Used by Aquinas in *Question 76: The Union of Body and Soul, Article 7, Reply to objection 3* of the *Summa*,⁸ the phrase “the soul is the form of the body” points to the second strand in Jones’s thought. As defined by Jones, a work of art is a ‘thing’ in its own right with its own ‘being,’ its own *realitas*; but it also has an “informing principle” that gives it that *realitas*. A work of art, as he wrote in *History and Pre-History*, is “a ‘thing’ having abstract qualities by which it coheres and without which it can be said not to exist,” but while it is a thing in and of

where he makes the image, works into the material the word. (*DJP*, *LA* 1.3/ *MS* 2)

⁷ Roger Fry, *Vision and Design*, New York: Meridian Books, 1956. 239.

⁸ Jones was first given a copy of *The Summa Theologica* in 1923 by Reginald Lawton.

itself it is also a thing that “shows forth something”⁹. As a thing in itself, a work of art need not be representational; as a work of art that “shows forth something,” it is necessarily “re-presentational,” and to Jones the hyphenated “re-presentational” was a crucial distinction. In other words the work of art is both itself as a “thing,” and it is a sign of something else, a symbol. Paradoxically, what the object “shows forth” - what it is a sign of - is its “informing principle,” the very thing that gives it *realitas*, being. As Jones would come to conclude, a work of art is a sign of itself, and thus both the sign and thing signified.

While Post-Impressionism liberated art from its traditional obligation to mimetic representation, Jones’ reading of Aristotle, Aquinas and Maritain freed both the artist and the object from moral considerations. In *Art and Scholasticism*, Maritain distinguishes between *doing* and *making*, a point derived from Aristotle’s distinction between *praxis* and *poiesis*. Jones’s copy of the *Nichomachean Ethics* bears witness both to the closeness of his reading of Aristotle and to Maritain’s influence not only on David Jones directly but on Jones’ reading of Aristotle. In his copy of the *Nichomachean Ethics*, in Chapter IV, *Of Art*, Jones has written *praxis* and *poiesis* in the margin, and then replaced the translator’s “practical habit” and “productive habit” with his own “making and “doing.” Throughout the chapter Jones has crossed out “practice” and written in “doing” each time that it appears.

It was specifically the distinction between *making* and *doing* that freed the making of art and the made object from moral considerations. Maritain’s *doing* concerned the right reason of things done, or, similarly, the right use of a particular thing. As such, *doing* a thing was concerned with an end other than the act itself. As for the work of art, when allied with *doing*, the object that results is seen as a means to an end rather than an end in and of itself. If one follows Maritain and David Jones’ reading of Maritain, *doing* fell under the “Realm of Prudentia,” Morals. In contrast the act of *making* was considered “not in relation to the use” but “purely *in relation to things produced* or to the work or to the work taken by itself” (Maritain, 7). For Jones, as Thomas Dilworth writes, “making is governed by *Ars* and is always amoral.” (Dilworth *RDJ* 45). In a letter written to *The Times* in December 1945, Jones seems to go even further writing that

⁹ David Jones, “History and Pre-History,” *Dock Leaves* 5:16, Spring 1955, p. 20.

the artist *qua* artist must know no conscience except with regard to the formal perfection of the work on hand, and there his ‘conscience’ must be of the most scrupulous kind or his works will go to the dogs. (*DJP*, CF2/19)

The distinction between *making* and *doing* led to at least three tenets central to the development of Jones’ aesthetic and owe as much to Eric Gill’s reading of Maritain as to Maritain’s writing of Maritain. If human action is one of two types, *making* and *doing*, and if art is concerned solely with the act of making and the object made, not only is art separated from morals, but “it is indifferent to” utilitarian considerations.¹⁰ There were two implications to this, one concerning the object made and the other concerning the human. A work of art, according to Jones, as a work of art has no necessary end other than its own being. It is, in the utilitarian sense, use-less. The second concerned the act of making. If all other human action is *doing*, and thus in the realm of *Prudentia*, then, in Eric Gill’s phrase, making art is “Man’s one intransitive activity.” Just as the art object itself has no end other than its own being, making art – as an activity – has no end other than the making of the work of art. As with his appropriation of Frye, though, Jones would significantly extend Gill’s idea, concluding that not only is art “man’s one intransitive activity” but that the making of such objects that have no utilitarian purpose is limited to humans. As Jones’s would come to conclude in the 1930s, if making art is the one activity limited to humans, then making art is the one activity that defines what it means to be human.

A work of art, though, is also a sign and “shows forth.” This would seem to contradict its non-utilitarian purpose. Here Post-Impressionist theory met not Maritain, but Eucharistic theology. A work of art is both a thing and a sign, but it is a sign of its “informing principle, its *realitas*.” It is then both sign and thing signified, a phrase that Rene Hague distrusted even more than he was concerned over Jones’s appropriation of de la Taille’s “He Placed himself in the order of signs.” While preparing *The Roman Quarry*, Rene Hague found a sheet that opened the sequence with the lines “They say he is both sign and/ thing signified” which he found “theologically daunting” and “an apparent absurdity.” Hague cut it from the text, writing that “I’ve written about that elsewhere – I think,” and adding that “it’s a phrase picked up and

¹⁰ In O’Connor’s translation of Maritain, we find the lines “No matter about the good or evil of the subject, its needs or its conveniences; it enjoys being and sees that alone.” In his private copy, David Jones has underlined “No matter about” and substituted “It is indifferent to.”

misused by expounders of D.J” (*RQ*, 218).¹¹ Hague had written about it to Harman Grisewood in the same note where he was puzzling through Jones’s version of de la Taille, asking “how can anything be both the sign and thing signified?” While Jones was aware of de la Taille’s work in an abbreviated form from about 1923, the greater implication of de la Taille’s theories and the subsequent development of Jones’ view of the work of art as “both sign and/ thing signified,” would only start to come into focus in the early 1940s, at the same time that he was writing the poetic sequence from which Hague cut the lines and just before he would undertake the massive reconstruction of his project that would become *The Anathemata*.

There was one other distinction between *making* and *doing*. In his introduction to O’Connor’s translation of Maritain, Eric Gill writes,

of no factory article can it be said that such and such a man *made* it – the most that can be said is that the article is the result of a number of men *doing* what they were told. (iii).

This was simply one indication that something was profoundly wrong with the post-war culture, that a futile bareness was evident everywhere. Jones saw it affecting all aspects of life, from his own sexual “inhibitions,”¹² to talking a Saturday stroll in Kent in 1928:

The whole place destroyed by villas and ‘arterial’ roads – ghastly. There is no love in this new civilization, or at least perhaps I’m blind to it. . . . – it leaves the soul hungry and thirsty and I think like loving a celluloid doll. (*KY*, L6.1977, August 13, 1928)

On October 22nd, 1929, David Jones wrote a letter to Captain St. Luke declining to join an association of Catholic artists. This is Jones’ earliest written statement on art and here he outlines a position equal parts Maritain and Gill. He claims at the outset that “Man is artist in view of his being a *human being* not in virtue of his being a *Baptised human being*”

¹¹ *The Roman Quarry* is the principal work in *The Roman Quarry and other sequences*, the 1980 edition of sequences constructed from the over-1300 sheets of manuscripts found amongst David Jones papers at the time of his death. The collection was edited by Rene Hague with the assistance of Harman Grisewood who saw the edition to publication on Hague’s death. As I have written elsewhere, Rene Hague cut the line with disastrous results for the collection. In context of David Jones’ thought, however, the poetic line in question appears in a long work written between 1941 and 1943, the same time that Jones introduces a specifically Eucharistic terminology influenced by, if not borrowed from, Maurice de la Taille.

¹² David Jones makes essentially the same point in the notes he made regarding his session with Dr. Crichton Miller while at Bowden House. (*GL*, Box 5/ Folder 28).

(*DJP,CF1/18*).¹³ In his invitation, Captain St. Luke had apparently said that Jones's pictures had "Catholic principles behind them," and in response, Jones wrote "as far as there is any virtue in any picture it obviously has behind it a Catholic principle" but that was a far cry from "consciously applying Catholic principles. . . . any good landscape, portrait or what you will has behind [it] those same principles," adding "so has any man playing tennis well, or any young woman putting on a hat intelligently, with due regard to the end in view." At this point, he writes the "Realm of Art [is] distinguished from that of Prudence" and the term catholic "as ordinarily understood" has quite a different meaning in each. While the Church teaches "much that concerns the moral order: as to art she has simply nothing to tell Mankind." The debt to Maritain is obvious and Jones notes that there is "the obvious connection between the science of aesthetics and the various systems of philosophy made use of by the Church" and that "one is naturally interested in the working out of the principles of Maritain and his followers."

A central idea in the letter is that "the domain of Making is man's natural domain, regenerate or unregenerate," and then Jones adds that in "a certain sense we must forget that we are Catholics when we are making pictures or pots or whatever it is we make; we must be just human beings doing what is the normal human thing." The Church can no more guide us in "how to make a picture," he writes, "than it can tell a sparrow how to make a nest." Making in this sense is a fundamental human activity. In saying that a society dedicated to examining aesthetics and theology is one thing, but "that's a very different game from putting into one huge sack all the Roman Catholics who paint, carve, make chairs, make vestments, make pots," Eric Gill enters. As Jones would write in 1935 to Jim Ede, it was from Eric Gill that "the unity of all made things became clear" (*KYL47.1977/6*).

As regards the Catholic Church, the letter to Captain St. Luke makes clear that the Church's relationship to art is the same as any other institution's connection: "The Church just takes what she can get of the arts of man for her own purpose good, bad, or appallingly bad, as the case maybe. - That's just history." The Church "can of course, in the case of the human works modify, influence, in some respects perhaps enrich, and stimulate. Sometimes the reverse I suppose. It cuts both ways." Ultimately, the art available to the Church is conditioned by the culture of the times. As to "the present Renaissance of painting in Europe,"

¹³ In file *CD2/8* there are a number of rough drafts to this letter. All citations of this letter that follow are from the cited file location.

If . . . the Church can use something for her own purpose, that will be very interesting, but she cannot very well do so unless it becomes the prevailing impulse of a whole people; and then she will do so because there will be nothing else to use.
(*DJP*, CF1/18)

By the end of the 1920s, Jones had started to develop his concept of what a work of art is; what kinds of actions humans have always performed and what type of action making art is; and finally that making art was in some way analogous to the Catholic Eucharist. All symbol making, though, now occurred in “a wasteland.” As to the implications of his ideas or that they might all be interrelated, of this, he had only “the beginnings of an awareness.”¹⁴

If the letter to Captain St. Luke is Jones’ first attempt to explain his position on art, the second is an important artistic “autobiography” from September 5, 1935 written for Jim Ede¹⁵ who was at the time preparing a talk on Jones. Again, there is a continued emphasis on the “thingness” of a work of art and that “a picture no less than a candelabra or a hay-wain must be a ‘thing’ with its own life and way of living.” It is the “‘thingness’ of a painting,’ he writes, ‘that has rather been my sheet anchor in times of bewilderment – that is, at all times.’” This thingness is, he writes, an issue of joining form and content which is “dependent on its own due proportion, proportion due to its own being” (*KYL*.47/1977/6).

In many ways, he writes, the Catholic Church’s

insistence on the reality of matter and spirit that both are real and both good
weds form and content and demands that in each particular the general should
shine forth and that without the particular there can be no general for us men.
(*KYL*.47.1977/6)

This commitment to “content” is first a commitment to matter, and, Jones writes,

¹⁴ David Jones, *Looking Back at the Thirties*, *The London Magazine*, April 1965, 48.

¹⁵ In 1943, H.S. Ede wrote an article on David Jones for *Horizon*, Volume VIII, No. 44 (August 1943). Much of it, including all direct citations from David Jones, was based, he wrote, on notes David Jones had written to him “many years ago” (126). In my article, I cite from the original letter dated September 5, 1935 on which Ede’s article is based. Ede is important in examining Jones’s theories for a number of reasons. One of David Jones’ oldest friends, Ede, like David Jones, was a former serviceman who, on returning from the War, studied art at the Slade. In 1921, he became the assistant curator at the Tate Gallery, a position he held until 1936 when he moved to Tangiers. The only non-Catholic among the four correspondents whose letters from David Jones comprise the letters in *Dai Greatcoat*, the letters to Jim Ede are the ones where David Jones is most insistent that while he says he is speaking by analogy, “it really is the same thing.” It is also in his correspondence with Ede that he first introduces a specifically Eucharistic language.

the successful work of art is one where no ingredient of creation is lost, where no item on the list in the Benedicite Omnia Opera Dominum is denied or forgotten. . . it is important to be anthropomorphic, to deal in and through things we understand as men. (*KYL*.47.1977/10)

One has to know that “a beef-steak is neither more nor less ‘mystical’ than a diaphanous cloud.” One must be, he says, “incarnational,” a term he uses here for the first time in his writing.

But if the artist must “deny nothing,” the artist also, “must integrate everything” and this concerns form. As he would later write, “the principle that ‘form’ and ‘content’ should be so fused as to be indivisible . . . is a principle of the first importance” (*DJP*, *CT*1/4). Only in that fusion of form and content, he would later tell Peter Orr, does

the unific whole shows forth, re-presents, re-calls, incants, evokes, is the *signum* of some otherness, and indeed, in some sense *is* what is signified under whatever the media used. (*DJP*, *CD* 1/11)

Creating that fusion and achieving that form was most often described by Jones in terms taken from carpentry and stone work: the artist was concerned with “a proper fit,” with “joining,” with “juxtaposition.” He himself worked with “fragments.” He would later say, borrowing from the Welsh bards, that poetry is “the carpentry of song” (*E&A* 29). The artist as a maker was concerned with

How to make a whole of diverse parts, contain in each part the whole, yet how to make each part depend on each other part. How to make something which 'being lifted up,' signifies in all its parts such and such a reality under such and such forms. (*DJP*, *CF* 1/5)

In this artistic autobiography, however, Jones first links Post-Impressionist theory with Eucharist doctrine:

I learned a thing, at least by analogy, from the Doctrinal Definition of the substantial Presence in the Sacramental Bread. Thenceforth, a tree in a painting or a tree in an embroidery must not be only a ‘re-presenting’ only of a tree of sap and thrusting wood – it must *really* be ‘a tree’ under the species of paint, or needlework, or whatever. (*KY* 47.1977/6)

Again though, as in the 1929 letter, he insists that

[no] amount of philosophical or metaphysical definition will aid *one wit*,
necessarily, the painting of a picture . . . the ability to paint a good picture does not
come through philosophy or religion in any direct manner at all. (*KY* 47.1977/7)

Rather, “they could only have indeed a damaging effect on the making of things if thought of as providing some theory to work by.” Theory could not tell the artist what to do; it could only help the artist think about the why and the how of what the artist is attempting to make. In David Jones’s case, such reflection stimulated by theory, lead him in the mid-1940s to entirely rethink what he was attempting as regards the poetic project on which he was then engaged. It led him to dismantle an almost-complete long poem and use its fragments in the construction of *The Anathemata*.

When Jones wrote this letter to Jim Ede, he had just completed *In Parenthesis* although the *Preface* had not yet been written. Writing to Rene Hague in 1973, he said that he “began [*In Parenthesis*] . . . with no other idea than to find out . . . in what fashion these problems of ‘form’ and ‘content’ cropped up in this totally different media of written words.” As he wrote in his *Preface*,

I have only tried to make a shape in words, using as data the complex of sights and sounds, hopes apprehensions, smells, things exterior and interior, the landscapes and paraphernalia of that singular time and of those particular men. (*IP*, X)

Throughout the *Preface*, he discusses the issue of form and content, raising the question of what matter is available within the current civilization. Speaking of one aspect of the content of *In Parenthesis*, the ‘paraphernalia,’ he writes

It would be interesting to know how we shall ennoble our new media as we have already ennobled and made significant our old – candle-light, fire-light, Cups, Wands and Swords, to choose at random. (*IP* XIV)

A letter to Jim Ede from June of 1935 regarding Christopher Dawson’s reaction to *In Parenthesis* illuminates the issue:

I showed Dawson my printed bit of book. . . He seems to think that all modern efforts at creative work, by being cut off from “our cultural tradition” are in the void. . . we all know the difficulties – are they insurmountable that’s what it comes to – I shall cling, however vainly, [to the idea] that if you make a living thing with words that really corresponds to something you have really perceived . . . then some chap

somewhere at some time will understand and it's worthwhile and first class and prime "in the void" or no (*DJP, CD 1/17*).

Not only was one cut off from "our cultural tradition" but the matter, "the paraphernalia," was different, less human. As he wrote in his *Preface*, "We feel a Rubicon has been passed between striking with a hand weapon as men used to do and loosing poison from the sky as we do ourselves." (*IP XIV*).¹⁶This is a concern that becomes more pronounced in the 1940s. In a letter intended for *The Catholic Herald* written in late 1942, Jones wrote that

the main characteristics of our age and its products are obvious to all: the standardization, the mass-productions, the particular kind of organization – the characteristics of the mechanized 'world-state.' (*DJP, CF 2/26*)

and in *Art and Democracy*, also written in the winter of 1942-1943, Jones confronts the issue of "the main characteristics of our age and its products." In *Art and Democracy* he also explicitly confronts Oswald Spengler. As one looks at the essays beginning with the 1941 *Religion and the Muses*, with its concern with "the world of utility and technics" and in its claim that "the technician divides to rule," we find that Spengler's writings outline "the dilemma" even as his philosophy embodies it.

Jones opens *Art and Democracy* by citing Spengler's definition of the human "as a weapon-using carnivore," (*E&A*, 85) and Spengler is his opponent throughout. In that essay, Jones first sets the gratuity of art – in essence, its use-lessness - against the utility of technics, claiming that the gratuitous is the *sine qua non* of art. While *Art and Democracy* is the first time that Jones uses the term in an essay, he initially used the term in his artistic autobiography for Jim Ede in 1935 where, speaking of the Church, he wrote

She asserts against the moralists that God made and sustains the whole show *gratuitously*. It is the gratuitous quality, its less or greater presence that makes a painting good or bad (*KY 47.1977/6*)

To return to *Art and Democracy*, Jones writes that "you may say animals, too, are makers; they too make things: the beaver, the ant and notably the spider. . . and the bee" (*E&A* 87). He then counters with his illustration of the beaver

If we could catch the beaver placing never so small a twig gratuitously we could make his dam into a font, for he would be patent of baptism – the whole 'sign

world' would be open to him, he would know sacrament and would have a true culture, for a culture is nothing but a sign. (*E&A* 88)

His examples are identical to those Spengler uses in *Man and Technic* in a section Jones highlighted where Spengler writes, "Bees, termites, beavers build wonderful structures. Ants know agriculture" concluding that "Man achieves nothing that is not achievable by life as a whole."¹⁷

In 1967 Jones claimed in a letter to Harman Grisewood that "though I owe so much to *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* and *Der Mensch und die Technik* I did not read them until 1941, in Sheffield's Terrace," (*DJP*, CD 2/7) a recollection seemingly supported by a letter dated February 26, 1942 where he writes "I'm immersed in Spengler, I'm battling with him. He's so right, and, as I think, also so wrong" (*DGC* 115) On the face of it, it seems that Jones borrowed the illustration from Spengler and created his symbol-making beaver to refute him, using the concept of gratuity, first mentioned in 1935, to counter Spenglerian utility. Where Spengler said "Man achieves nothing that is not achievable by life as a whole," Jones responded with art, sign, symbol, sacrament, raising "man's one intransitive activity" from Gill to the status of the one act that defines the human: the making of gratuitous objects that are both things in themselves and signs of something else.

In fact, it appears that he had developed his position on gratuity and set it against Spenglerian utility and technics well before 1941. He also, apparently, had a symbol-making beaver. In 1932, *Form in Modern Poetry* by Herbert Read appeared as the eleventh issue of *Essays in Order*, a series edited by Christopher Dawson and Tom Burns. Burns, who disagreed with some of Read's contentions, wrote, with Read's permission, an introduction that in its views shares similarities to Jones's approach. Considering that Dawson, Jones and Burns were all members of the same circle of friends and that they formed an informal Chelsea Group, as Elizabeth Ward dubbed then it is not surprising they would share many positions. In one passage of his introduction, Burns writes

The capacity for gratuitous making, which is the essence of poetry, is the great mark of humanity: catch a beaver building his dam *according to his own tastes*,

¹⁷ Oswald Spengler, *Man and Technic*, George Allen and Unwin, translated by C.F. Atkinson: London, 1932. 29

not instinctively, and he is ripe for baptism – he has a rational soul! Where there is confusion about making (and poetry is in the highest form of making) there is confusion about man. (VIII).

While it seems that Jones had taken the image of the beaver, if not the idea of gratuity, directly from Burns' introduction, in Jones' copy of *Form in Modern Poetry* given to him by Burns, Burns has written "with much love to the author of lines 22 – 24 on page VIII from the very shy author of the others. Tom All Saints Day 1932." Lines 22-24 are the lines cited above. *Man and Technics* written 1931, appeared in English in 1932 which suggests that Jones read and responded to *Man and Technic* when it came out.

David Jones claimed that "what truly determines the changes or developments in *any* artist's work is some new or more developed perception relating to the formal problems of his art." (*E&A*, 29). Jones's confrontation with *Man and Technics* in 1932 led to "such a developed perception." How will the artist "ennoble our new media as we have already ennobled and made significant our old" when "the mass-productions" of the "the mechanized 'world-state,'" have been emptied of all creatureliness," when "all is doing, and there is no making." What Jones found in Spengler's *Man and Technic* was not only one of the causes of the wasteland, but also one with critical implications for making art. As Spengler wrote,

All things organic are dying in the grip of organization. . . . Civilization itself has become a machine that does or tries to do, everything in natural fashion. . . . Our technical thinking must have its actualization" (47- 48).

David Jones wrote that "In the 1930s there was I think a feeling that a liaison with the whole past of man-the-artist was still possible however 'contemporary' the images employed" (Jones, *LBT* 53). In *In Parenthesis*, David Jones had asked "how we shall," not "can we still." By 1939 he was far less certain as evidenced by *The Book of Balaam's Ass* where the Zone is Spengler's world of technics, and the artist is now, as he wrote in a letter of Dec. 20th, 1945, "working in a civilization gone in catastrophic decline and at the tag end of what was once a culture" (*CF* 2/19).

In *Past and Present* David Jones claimed that

man-the- artist, finds himself willy-nilly, unintegrated with the present civilizational phase. . . . there have been civilizational phases when this was less marked and . . . true culture-phases when . . . man-the-artist was as integral to the

pattern as is man-the-mechanic or managerial man to our pattern today.”
(*E&A*,140).

The fundamental task of all artists “from Lascaux to the present” had been – and continues to be - to create signs that are valid not only in themselves but valid for a culture. If a work “showed forth something,” it showed it forth to the members of a culture who recognized that artifact as a sign of that artifact’s informing principle. The current civilizational conditions – the loss of creatureliness in the objects of the present, and the Break which alienated a society from its own past - had changed the circumstances under which the artist worked, particularly as to what content, or matter, was available. As a result of changed conditions in the present, the artist in the present was implicitly charged with two tasks. The first was to ask the question “Why the Land is Waste,” a theme Jones repeatedly evoked beginning with *In Parenthesis* and in the unpublished *Hitler* essay of 1939, on through the essays of the 1940s starting with *Art in Relation to War*, yet again in *The Anathemata*, and on until the end of his life. The second was to act as a rememberer for that culture. Writing in an application for a Bollingen Award in 1959, David Jones said that “in our present megalopolitan technocracy the artist must still remain a ‘rememberer,’ but in the present, the poet is not only “a rememberer” but also “a sort of Boethius, who has been nicknamed ‘The Bridge’ because he carried forward into an altogether metamorphosed world certain of the fading oracles.” When asked to answer “to what end does my work proceed,” Jones wrote, “perhaps it is in the maintenance of some single plank in some sort of bridge” (*DG* 17)

Man and Technics and later *The Decline of the West* clarified for Jones one of the fundamental reasons as to “Why the Land is waste.” Spengler’s *The Decline of the West* provided a system and a terminology Jones would find poetically useful, but *Man and Technics* presented an underlying philosophy and a view of the human that Jones opposed but feared was coming to pass. Spengler’s *Man and Technic* was a powerful influence on David Jones, and Spengler’s presence can be felt in Jones’s essays beginning with the still-unpublished *Hitler* essay of 1939 with its talk of “money versus the sword.” It became more evident throughout the essays of the 1940s: *Religion and the Muses*, *Art and Democracy*, *The Myth of Arthur* and *Wales and the Visual Arts*. Spengler’s thought pervades Jones’s essays and letters, even as Jones

attempts to counter it. To recall what he wrote in 1941, "I'm immersed in Spengler, I'm battling with him. He's so right, and, as I think, also so wrong."¹⁸

While Spengler's writings helped explain to Jones "Why the Land was Waste," Spengler grounded his work in a model of the human being that was antithetical to all that Jones held to be true. Similarly while Spengler at first provided a useful scaffold for Jones's poetic project, eventually that scaffolding proved limiting, preventing Jones from acting as rememberer. Just as in 1932 Jones was first introduced to Spengler, even if only by way of conversation with Tom Burns, only to have that turn into his "battle" in the 1940s, so also David Jones was re-introduced to a system in 1934 that would in the 1940s come to serve as the countermeasure to Spengler. In 1934, Jones was given a copy of Maurice de la Taille's study of the Mass and Eucharistic theology, *Mysterium Fidei* which had only recently been translated from Latin. Just as Spengler offered an answer as to why the land was waste, de la Taille offered a means for the poet to act as the rememberer. Although Jones claimed to have been familiar with de la Taille's thesis since Ditchling it was only from the winter of 1942 on that he began to use a specifically Eucharistic terminology in his writings. Maurice de la Taille's Eucharistic theology – and later the work of Gregory Dix – offered Jones a terminology and a system to examine what kind of art

¹⁸As I mentioned, though, there was also Spengler's system with its theory of cultural phases, system of morphologies, and a terminology taken from *The Decline of the West* which influenced the poetic project on which Jones was engaged between 1938 and 1945. David Jones's project not only eventually led to *The Anthemata* but also served as the "quarry" from which all of the poems in *The Sleeping Lord and other fragments* were cut. The project began with *The Book of Balaam's Ass*, a truncated version of which appears in *The Sleeping Lord and other fragments* and an extended, although edited, version of which appears in *The Roman Quarry and Other Sequences*. It then moved into a second stage where it consisted of three long conversations that temporally moved from the Cenacle to the Passion: the first involved Judas, Caiaphas and the guards sent to arrest Christ; the second concerned Roman soldiers on the Walls of the Antonia during the middle night watch on Holy Thursday; and the third had to do with an older Roman officer posted to Jerusalem, his daughter and a young subaltern at dinner at the time of the crucifixion. The third stage constructed between 1943 and late 1945 consisted of a series of meditations on Celtic culture which were inserted into the middle of the conversation on the Walls. The fourth stage undertaken sometime in early 1946 led to the construction of *The Anthemata* from his *fragments of an attempted writing*. In that project's second stage written between 1940 and 1943, Spengler's system provided Jones's project with a scaffolding akin to Joyce's use of Vico in *Finnegans Wake*. For an extended analysis of the first three stages, see my articles *On the Traverse of the Wall: The Lost, Long Poem of David Jones*" in the *Journal of Modern Literature*. XIX: 1 (Summer 1994): 31-53; and *Mapping the Labyrinth: The Ur-Anthemata of David Jones*" in *Renascence*. LI: 4 (Summer 1999). 253-280.

might restore the wasteland, or failing that, to preserve the cultural deposits in this “cultural December” (*E&A* 106).¹⁹

2. Anamnesis and Transubstantiation in the Shaping of the *Anthemata*

Jones’s Eucharistic ethic developed in part from his belief that “for the artist . . . the ‘past’ is very much what the thing called ‘nature’ is to him. . . something which he uses when he ‘shows forth,’ ‘recalls,’ ‘re-presents’” (*E&A* 138). But as he continues in *Past and Present*, The Break affected not only the paraphernalia but the current civilization’s relationship to its past:

We have seen that a past is valid for a present. But in our present. . . a metamorphosis has occurred affecting the liasons with the past. It is precisely this situation which was my abiding dilemma during the writing of the whole of *The Anthemata*. (*E&A* 139)

In *In Parenthesis* these two artistic tasks - the asking of the question and the act of remembering - had worked in tandem. A memorial to the men of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers and to “the enemy front fighters who shared our pains,” the work also charged the reader to ask the question: “You ought to ask: Why, / what is this / what’s the meaning of this” (Jones, *IP* 84). In asking the question, *In Parenthesis* became the memorial to those men.

There were, though, potential problems. “Asking the question” could easily turn the work of art into a Jeremiad at the expense of “remembering.” Rather than “asking the question,” the work could become didactic, propagandistic, moralizing, a charge Jones had leveled against the Pre-Raphaelites.²⁰ Similarly, there was the problem as to the nature of “remembering.” Eucharistic terminology directly enters Jones’s essays and letters beginning in the winter of

¹⁹ David Jones was familiar with the outline of the work while still at Ditchling through Father Vincent McNabb who “was violent in his denunciation of it” (*CD*/2/5). Elizabeth Ward has pointed out de la Taille’s thesis was available as early as 1923 in *Catholic Faith in the Holy Eucharist*, a collection of papers edited by Cuthbert Lattey (Ward, 71). While Jones would have been familiar with an outline of de la Taille’s work soon after it was published in Latin and was probably familiar with de la Taille’s essay in Lattey’s collection, the extent of the structural influence of de la Taille’s work on *The Anthemata* would have required a far surer understanding on Jones’s part than a simple summary would provide. It is most likely that Jones came to know de la Taille’s work in greater depth through his discussions with Father Martin D’Arcy in the 1930s. A Jesuit philosopher at Campion Hall, Oxford whose his first book, *The Mass and the Redemption*, published in 1926, was an explication of de la Taille’s thesis, D’Arcy was one of the leading Catholic public intellectuals of the time and a friend of Eric Gill.

²⁰Between 1940 and 1943 Jones’s visual art underwent a significant change, as evidenced by such works as *The Mother of the West* and *Aphrodite in Aulis*.

1942-43 when two terms are introduced. One term concerns fusing form and content-transubstantiation; the other refers to remembrance - anamnesis.

In *Art in Relation to War*, David Jones says that in the present,

We are faced with the hard to express question of 'symbol.' Our age, the age of technical perfection, of function, of material efficiently directed towards a material end, is of its nature unsymbolic, or anti-symbolic, or rather its 'technics' are its 'symbols.' Now the artist, one way or another, deals in symbols, as far as his content is concerned, he deals, obscurely it may be, obliquely, in however hidden a fashion, with things that are lifted up, carried about, adored. He is, at bottom and always, an inveterate believer in "transubstantiations" of some sort.

The sign must *be* the thing signified under the forms of his particular art (*DG* 136)

The age in which we live is an age of utility, and that presents a problem to the artist who deals with "with things lifted up, carried about, adored." Here Jones's language is similar to that which he will later use in the *Preface to The Anathemata*. It is a language reminiscent of his fusion of Post-Impressionist Theory and Scholasticism, and it is a language that Hague would find disturbing: "The sign must *be* the thing signified under the forms of his particular art." The artist is "an inveterate believer in 'transubstantiations'."

In March 1943, Jones wrote to Jim Ede that "*between ourselves*, I have always felt that the statement of transubstantiation has, apart from *its particular theological application*, a singularly important & central meaning with respect to the 'arts' in general." (*DJP*, *CT* 5/3) Going on, he distinguishes consubstantiation from transubstantiation, writing that transubstantiation "is a principle which all good artists accept unconsciously, whoever they are, to whatever civilization they belong." The term also enters his poetry around the same time when we find the Tribune, the Spenglerian fact man, saying in what will later be extracted for *The Tribune's Visitation*,

It's not the brotherhood of the field or the Lares of a remembered hearth or the consecrated wands bending in the fertile light to transubstantiate for child-man the material vents and flows of nature into the breasts and milk of the goddess.

(*SL* 50)

Interestingly the term also appears in two other essays of the time: *The Myth of Arthur* where Jones writes about the role of the scholar in relationship to "genuine myth" which is

To conserve, to develop, to bring together, to make significant for the present what the past holds, without dilution or any deleting, but rather by understanding and transubstantiating the material. (*E&A* 243).

and *The Arthurian Legend* from 1948 where he writes, again evoking the still-to-be written *Preface* to the then- being-constructed *Anathemata*, “What the artist lifts up must have a kind of transubstantiated actual-ness. Our images, not only our ideas, must be valid *now*” (*E&A* 210).

The problem, as he says in *Art in Relation to War*, concerns

What kind of ‘bread’ is available to [the artist] when he presumes to ‘show again under other forms’ the eternal things, and art is nothing if it fails in this. He is not always convinced that the matter available to him is ‘valid matter’” (*DG* 136-7).

In the instances where Jones uses the term, he is concerned with what matter is available to the artist when the matter of the present has been robbed of “creatureliness” and when the matter of the past is in danger of being lost or misconceived.

In using the term transubstantiation, David Jones was employing a sacramental term that referred to only one sacrament. While sacraments employ matter – baptism, water; extreme unction, oils - only the Eucharist involves an act of transubstantiation whereby the matter of the bread and wine through being subjected to the words of the Eucharistic rite are transubstantiated into the immediate presence of the Body and Blood, only the appearances of bread and wine remaining. The matter, though, must be valid, and the form must effect that transubstantiation. If one is an artist, the question is twofold: what matter – whether the paraphernalia of the present, the matter of the past deposits, or both - is still valid in the present civilization; and what form will be efficacious, transubstantiating that matter so that “the sign [will] *be* the thing signified under the forms of his particular art” with only the accidents or appearances of wood, stone, paint, words, or whatever medium employed, remaining.

That David Jones saw art in this manner is evident from his illustration of the process in describing Hogarth’s *Shrimp Girl* in *Art and Sacrament* where in a draft version he writes that it shows forth, re-calls, and strictly within the conditions of a given art, re-represents under another mode such and such a reality. That is, it is an objective thing contrived of various materials so ordered by Hogarth’s muse as to be an anamnesis of a body-mind-soul complex, hither to show forth under the form of a street-vendor’s mortal flesh seen under the English light and in Lord knows what

grim and destined to dereliction but now secured for us under another species no longer conveyed by the term 'representation' but owing to the working of what we call 'the abstract' that thing itself, in realitas" (*DJP, LE 1/17*).

While he then says that he is speaking "by analogy," he concludes in this draft version by saying that the artifact is a "reality we can go and feed on and enjoy in the National Gallery, provided we have the right disposition." (*E&A 174/ DJP, LE 1/17*). To achieve such an anamnesis the matter had to be transubstantiated and the artist had to make a shape.

At the same time that David Jones was concerned with integrating his content and form, and he was introducing the term transubstantiation, he was also completely reshaping the vast poetic project he had begun in 1938-39. His language underwent a remarkable change, becoming far more allusive and dense. He shifted from narrative development to construction by insertion and then construction by fragment as he attempted to include more and ever more resonant material.²¹ Similarly, his essays and letters insist on a desire to contain a whole world in an enclosed space. As he would later write to Anerin Talifan Davies

I have the feeling of wanting to include 'everything' - 'the whole' in such works as I've tried to make . . . I mean the entirety or totality in a little place or space . . . of a picture, a poem or what you will, we want to be able to say - something which the whole world cannot comprehend or hold has been enclosed, within the strict confines of any. . . of the 'carpentries of song' that chaps have done and do (*LF 82*).

²¹ Again, this is material I have explored elsewhere. However, a letter he wrote to Saunders Lewis in which he describes the state of his project just before he undertook *The Anathemata* is instructive. It contained, he said

wedges of stuff about the Roman thing, or at least the Roman army, a good deal about the Crucifixion or rather the conditions surrounding the Crucifixion, the soldiers and also the fragments concerning Judas, and the Jewish authorities a bit. Also things concerning Britain - or Roman Britain, especially a complex passage of some length about Wales and the Roman thing in Wales, a certain amount anent Arthur (inevitably). On balance largely concerned with conversations of grousing Roman soldiers (Celts) doing duty on the Wall of Jerusalem. (Jones, *TL 20*).

There were two reasons he dismantled the work. One was that, as he told Lewis, he found that he wanted to use the material less "realistically" [so] as to make the work more evocative and recalling - with more overtones and undertones "(*TL 20*). The second was that he was unable to "forge the connecting links" among the parts and the project "would not come together" (*TL 20*).

This desire to include more and more material – to enclose “within the strict confines” of a work of art “something which the whole world cannot comprehend or hold” – first began to manifest itself in the early 1940s. While it can be seen in his visual art and is manifested in the introduction of Celtic material into his project, it is equally apparent in a letter to *The Catholic Herald*, written at the same time that he was first introducing Eucharistic terms into his essays, dated November 29, 1942. Here he discusses the complex interplay of Jewish, Greek, Roman, Germanic and Celtic cultures that resulted in Western culture:

In our case, the ‘choice’ was the Mediterranean culture or fusion of cultures: To Israel were the promises made. To the Greco-Roman world (‘To Cannibals and Trojan Greeks’ as genius has stated it) was granted the privilege of giving modes and forms and shapes and instruments by which those Judaic promises were made available under forms native to themselves. Consequently, the North and West accepted, or were compelled to accept, those Judaeic revelations under those Mediterranean forms and translated them into terms of a Christian art by virtue of imagination. The extremely complex historical result is “our world,” a world of imagination and affection within a pomerium which circuits Kells, Byzantium, Hippo, Upsala. It remains our world even in these global days. (*DJP, CF 2/27*)

David Jones wrote in *Art and Democracy* that “a culture is nothing but a sign” (*E&A*, 88), but in order to give a shape and form to his project, he had to find a sign that would embody and contain that culture. It was at this time that he found such a sign that he felt still had a requisite “nowness,” even if endangered, while also being a sign that not only arose from the complex process outlined in the letter above but also simultaneously manifested the very deposits that Jones felt were in danger of being lost. Saunders Lewis once remarked to David Jones in a phrase that Jones was fond of citing that “the Mass made sense of everything.” While the Mass might have “made sense of everything,” it did not contain everything. In Jones’s reading, however, the Eucharist as enacted according to the Roman rite did. This determined both the shape and the construction of *The Anathemata*.

What led him to the Eucharist began with his argument with Spengler, and the marginalia in his copy of *The Decline of the West* provides insight into that debate. One issue to which Jones keeps returning in his essays, his letters, and much of his art is a fear of loss: the loss of meaning, the loss of tradition, the loss of what it means to be human in this new age of technics.

While reading Spengler, Jones began his meditations on history and on a society's recognition of its own historicity. Borrowing from Spengler, he came to believe that historical consciousness is a hallmark of a late civilization. With such consciousness, a society becomes aware that a gap exists between what is and what was. In effect, a society becomes alienated from itself, its beliefs, its traditions. This process, in turn, was heightened by changes in technology which in turn had specific implications for the artist. As he wrote to Harman Grisewood in 1967, still thinking on this,

Oswald Spengler says that having a sense of history is always the mark of a late civilization, and I'm sure he's right about that. . . . When I looked at 'old masters' and noted that they painted incidents from Old and New Testaments in the extant detail of the costumes, etc. of the 14th, 15th, 16th of whatever century they lived in and did so without any sense of incongruity, it was my first apprehension of *The Break*. (*DJP*, CD 2/7)

In reading *The Decline of the West*, Jones came across the lines: "let a man be either a hero or saint. In between lies not wisdom but banality" (Spengler, *DW* 84). To this Jones responded in the margins "there is the third condition of the great artists detached from 'the world as history,' but not in the same mode as the saint, not 'making history' like the hero." The artist lives in the present but a present composed of the accumulated past, a past that continues into the present through its presence in art. An individual work of art both relied on that continuity for its validity and was itself a part of the continuing process. Each discrete work of art continued the process by adding itself to the corporate body of accumulated cultural meanings, symbols, and signs that formed a culture.

Civilizational conditions had fractured cultural continuity and when Spengler wrote "culture and civilization – the living body of a soul and the mummy of it" Jones responded in the margins of his copy of *The Decline of the West*,

If this is true and I think it is, it seems to follow that 'man' will be nostalgic and wretched in any 'civilization' – yet S. urges in the introduction and elsewhere that one is a third rate person if one has "nostalgia for a culture" (*DW*, 353).

In a civilization, the artist, who works with an accumulated past, is necessarily nostalgic for what is lost.. In fact, as Jones wrote in a draft of *Past and Present*, "there can be no sign-making without nostalgia. . . . A nostalgia of sorts is a pre-requisite to any unitive act" (*DJP*, LE1/13).

The problem was the term “nostalgia.” Ultimately, nostalgia might act as a motive for an artist, but as a term, it countered what he was trying to describe. Rather than art being a sign of immediate presence and continuity, an art grounded in nostalgia would present art as a sign of absence, of loss. The term indirectly acquiesced to Spengler.

In his Bollingen application, Jones, as I noted, compares the modern artist to the Bard in that both are rememberers. The modern artist, though, is also a Boethius. The Bard remembers so cultural memory will not be lost. The modern artist remembers so that what has “been lost or willfully set aside in the preoccupations of our intense technological phase” can be recovered, or conserved or carried forward. Still, even the act of remembering, at least as it is normally construed, implies the absence of the thing remembered. It was through his reading of de la Taille and later Gregory Dix that Jones found his final term and a shape that would allow him to counter Spengler and to reassert the primacy of a work of art as a thing in itself and a sign of itself: anamnesis. It was a term that he claimed “can and in my view should be applied to works of various form in that they seek to re-present under this or that mode an existing reality” (**DG** 220). Jones relied on Gregory Dix’s definition of anamnesis, which as he said in *The Anathemata*,

is not quite easy to represent accurately in English, words like “remembrance” or “memorial” having for us a connotation of something absent which is only mentally recollected. But in the scriptures of both the Old and New Testament, anamnesis and its cognate verb have a sense of re-calling before God an event in the past so that it becomes *here and now operative by its effect*. (**A**, 206).

In the Catholic tradition, the term applies only to the Eucharist where bread and wine – matter – are subject to form – transforming them into the substantial Presence of the Body and Blood. Beginning in the mid-1940s and after, David Jones used that term to describe the effect of the work of art. Even if he did so only by analogy, it was provocative to say the least. In a letter dated May 28th, 1974, David Jones wrote to Rene Hague where he spoke of the term anamnesis, saying that neither English’s *in memory of me* nor Latin’s *in memoriam* have “the strength and clarity of meaning and implication of the Greek *anamnesis*“ adding “My thing about de la Taille’s thesis *was and is* that he gave a clear and comprehensible shape to what is proposed by the Church for our acceptance” (**DJP**, CD 1/15) He also gave David Jones a clear and comprehensible shape for *The Anathemata*. In *History and Pre-History*, David Jones places *The*

Anthemata in the context of anamnesis when he writes, though speaking of one of his calix paintings, that

there is a sense in which I regard this water-colour which I have just completed as belonging implicitly to the same world of commemoration and anamnesis as that to which *The Anthemata* belongs, though here the apparent subject-matter is no more than some flowers in a glass *calix*. (21)

Jones wrote in a note to *The Fatigue*, that de la Taille's work

provided what seemed to me an aesthetic wholeness, a comprehensible, almost tangible unity to various propositions of our religion touching upon the relationship between the Mass, Calvary and the Supper. (*SL* 36)

The question, though, was whether *anamnesis*, a purely Eucharistic concept, could actually offer a shape for David Jones's project.

Jones opens *The Anthemata* with a priest in the present at the moment of Consecration "making this thing other" (*A* 49/ *LA* 1.3/ *MS* 1).²² After the consecration is initiated through the *Quam Oblationem*, the work moves back in time to the preparations for the Last Supper, beginning with the lines "where a few are, gathered in high-room/ and one, gone out," (*A* 51/ *DJP*, *LA* 1.3/ *MS* 5) and continuing to the lines

in the prepared high-room
he implements inside time and late in time under forms in-
delibly marked by locale and incidence, deliberations made
out of time, before all oreogenesis
on this hill
at a time's turn
not on any hill
but on this hill. (*A* 53/*LA* 1.3/*MS* 5).

²² The citations for the manuscripts are complex, due to Jones's insertional method which created multiple paginations for the same sheet. The first notation, *A* is the published page; the second is the manuscript file location; the third and all subsequent are Jones's manuscript paginations. Citations of file location are *LA* 1.3 for the original frame, *LA* 1.8 which was the state of the text when it was sent to the typist in 1949, *LA* 1.9 which included the first addition after the typist's version. In what follows, I do not mean to minimize the complexity of the insertions. Within a basic insertion, particularly where one section was inserted into another, there was often a high level of revision and Jones in at least two places composed hinge material to effect transitions.

From the Holy Thursday Supper *The Anthemata* then moves to the celebration of the hills, then further back in time “Twenty millennia (and what millennia more?) / Since he became/ man master-of plastic” (A59/ LA 1.8/MS 5F/MS 10A) and back to “a hundred thousand equinoxes /(less or more)/ since they cupped the ritual stones/ for the faithful departed)” (A 61/LA 1.8/MS 11/ MS13). Over the course of the work, *The Anthemata* will slowly return first to the Cenacle and then to the consecration in London. The work ends with the following lines:

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
 riding the Axile Tree? (A 243/ LA 1.3/ MS 7).

In examining the conclusion, Thomas Dilworth considers the final four lines and the actions of Christ on Holy Thursday and on Good Friday:

The poem ends with two questions redolent of those which conclude the grail quest, heal the maimed king and restore the Waste Land. What precisely did ‘he do other’ at the Supper? What did ‘he do yet other’ on the cross, the ‘Axile Tree’ round which the world turns. Upon these questions depends the health of western culture. (*Reading* 176).

Kathleen Staudt commenting on the ending emphasizes the actions of the priest in the present:

The key words in this passage are obviously “he does”; and what “he does” is presented as an open and continuing action, not a closed, final, or apocalyptic one. The ending of *The Anthemata* insists that there is something constant in the gestures of offering that Christ, priest, and poet have made and make “at all times,” regardless of the products of that gesture. By celebrating the continuing vigor of the poetic gesture demonstrates what might be called the central tenet of Jones’s sacramental poetics. (*ATC* 81-82).

While this is the conclusion to *The Anthemata*, before this passage closed *The Anthemata*, it introduced the original project that “would not come together” due to Jones’s

inability to “forge the connecting links.” As Dilworth first discovered, David Jones began with a passage on the Mass that takes place in the present at the moment of consecration. This passage which, he notes, Jones had extracted from some other work, was then split at the moment of consecration, after which Jones constructed the rest of *The Anthemata* from the outside in.²³ Jones’s splitting of the consecration in the present provided the structural space into which he could place those events of which the Consecration was an anamnesis - the Cenacle and the Crucifixion, the “garnished supper” and the “Axile Tree” - and which, as part of that anamnesis, included itself, the Consecration at the Mass.

The split passage consisted of the Consecration and the Cenacle, but it was not simply the Consecration and the Cenacle that had to be integrated into his work and re-called through *The Anthemata*. *The Anthemata* was an attempt to create an anamnesis of the entirety of western culture that culminated in that moment in London as that rite was experienced by one observer. Thus, the Sacrifice of the Cross, too, had to be integrated into his work. Similarly, while the consecration is a continuation of Christ at the Last Supper, that Passover supper was performed “under forms indelibly marked by locale and incidence” (*A 53/LA 1.3/ MS 5*). Likewise, without the very particular political and civilizational conditions of Rome, the Sacrifice of the Cross could not have happened as it did. What those conditions were and how they came about, too, had to be included. Compounding the problem even further, while the priest in London does what “is done in many places [and] after the modes of what has always been done” (*A 243/LA 1.3/ MS 7*) he does so according to local rites and “under modes and patterns altogether theirs” (*A 49/LA1.3/MS 1*). If Jones’s work would “deny nothing” and “include everything,” how those modes and patterns came to be “altogether theirs” in wartime London also needed to be gathered into the work. To return to his letter to *The Catholic Herald*, that “extremely complex historical” process, the result of which is “‘our world,’ a world of imagination and affection within a pomerium which circuits Kells, Byzantium, Hippo, Upsala” and that “remains our world even in these global days,” had to be integrated. It was a world that to David Jones, finds its highest expression in the Mass, not through theological validation, but simply insofar as the Mass is the continuing sign of how western culture came to be.

²³ In what is the most comprehensive study of David Jones’s poetry to appear, *The Shape of Meaning in the work of David Jones* (University of Toronto Press, 1988), Thomas Dilworth outlines the complex chiasmic structure of *The Anthemata* in detail. I am much indebted to his work.

Finally, though, there is the observer at that Mass in wartime London. As much as the Roman soldiers at Golgotha were “accidentally involved,” and the priest in London performs a Mass whose shape is a result of accidents of history, Jones’s observer is subject to accidents of his own. As Jones wrote, the “fragments that compose this book [consist of] . . . matters of all sorts which. . . are apt to stir in my mind at any time and as often as not ‘in the time of the Mass’” (A 31), and he claimed that

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. (A 9)

Under such circumstances, “one is,” he noted, “trying to make a shape out of the very things out of which one is oneself made” (A 10).

When Jones uses the word “accident” his use does not imply chance, the unplanned, or the unintentional. Accidents in philosophy refer to the traits of an object which, being otherwise, would not have altered the object’s substance. A white ball has the accident – the trait - of whiteness. It is not a trait that affects the ball’s substance. The term has special bearing on the Eucharist, and the transubstantiation in particular. As regards the Eucharist, wheat and grapes are the matter of the Eucharist, given form as bread and wine. In the act of Eucharistic transubstantiation, bread and wine are transformed into the Body and Blood. Before that act, bread and wine have the substance of bread and wine. In that act of transubstantiation, the substance is now that of the Body and Blood, only the accidents – the outward appearance of bread and wine – remaining.

When asked “What is this writing about,” Jones writes “it is about ‘one’s own ‘thing’ . . . which *res* is . . . unavoidably part and parcel of the Western Christian *res*.” Jones is, he says, “of this Island” which makes him “necessarily insular.” He has been conditioned by being “a Londoner, of Welsh and English parentage, of Protestant upbringing, of Catholic subscription.” These are, he says, his “biographical accidents.” Those accidents could have been different and he would still have been human; however, it is these “accidents” that have made the particular material, the deposits, “available” to him. It is these accidents, he says, that “are responsible for most of the content and have had an overruling effect upon the form of this writing” (A 11).

The question still remains, though, as to how the purely theological concept of anamnesis could offer a shape that would allow David Jones to make a sign whereby all of the accidents

leading up to that one moment at a Mass in wartime London as experienced by “a Londoner, of Welsh and English parentage, of Protestant upbringing, of Catholic subscription” could be “enclosed within the strict confines” of *The Anthemata; fragments of an attempted writing* and thus make that “thing” - which is a sign of the very signs of which it is made - “*here and now operative by its effect.*” Maurice de la Taille offered that shape.

According to Maurice de la Taille,

There were not two distinct and complete sacrifices offered by Christ, one in the Cenacle, the other on Calvary. There was a sacrifice at the Last Supper, but it was the sacrifice of Redemption; and there was a sacrifice on the Cross, but it was the selfsame sacrifice continued and completed. The Supper and the Cross made up one complete sacrifice. (232)

For de la Taille, this sacrifice continues into the present in the Eucharist, and thus the Cenacle, Cross, and Eucharist form one act and one moment and it is this that effects an anamnesis. The Cenacle anticipates the Sacrifice of the Cross while the Eucharist continues it, and both do so through what was, at least in Jones’ reading, the quintessential artistic act – “making this thing other” (A 49/LA1.3/MS 1). If separating that passage from the work that originally followed and then fracturing that first “fragment” created that space, the order of the fragments and their location in his text determined the final shape. All of the first fragments used in the construction of *The Anthemata, fragments of an attempted writing* were extracted from the earlier work that “would not come together.” The Mass frame consisted of The Consecration and The Cenacle. The Sacrifice of the Cross now had to be included.

Jones introduced his first insertion between the lines “on this hill/ at a time’s turn/ not on any hill/ but on this hill ” (A 53/LA 1.3/MS 5) and “On Ariel Hill, on Sion tumulus/On Uru mound, in Salem cenacle/ in the white Beth-El” (A 242/LA1.3/MS 6). This first insertion was a twenty sheet dramatic sequence (labeled 5A through 5T in manuscript) introduced between sheets 5 and 6 of his Mass passage. The inserted passage moved from the Cenacle through the Garden and to the Crucifixion of Christ and had originally been part of the project written between 1940 and 1943 when it was still a dramatic conversation. In using that fragment as his first insertion, Jones structurally embedded the Sacrifice of the Cross as seen from the point of view of Roman soldiers “accidentally” involved in the Crucifixion within the evocation of the

preparations for Last Supper which, in turn, was enclosed within the Eucharist taking place in wartime London.

Jones had, in other words, started to re-construct his project loosely modeled on Maurice de la Taille's exploration of how the Eucharistic act in the present, The Cenacle of Holy Thursday and the Sacrifice of the Cross on Good Friday together effected an anamnesis. This insertion was followed by three other insertions drawn from his earlier project, and then followed by Jones's composition of new material. The second insertion of approximately thirty-four sheets, was again taken from his Roman conversation, and in it he outlined the "accidents" of how Rome, going back to its mythic origins, had come to be in that place at that time.

David Jones now had his exterior Consecration frame and his Cenacle frame within that, followed by his first two strata with the second nested in the first and both enclosed within the Cenacle which was itself enclosed by the Consecration. *The Anathemata* consisted of its opening lines to the end of the bracketed material of *Rite and Foretime*²⁴ fourteen pages of *Middle-Sea and Lear-Sea*²⁵, most of *Keel, Ram, Stauros*,²⁶ eight pages of *Mabinog's Liturgy*,²⁷ and twelve pages *Sherthursday and Venus Day*.²⁸ When minor additions, such as hinge material to effect transitions or small embellishments, were added, David Jones had a manuscript of approximately 76 sheets.²⁹

In his letter to *The Catholic Herald* in late 1942 David Jones had written of "the Mediterranean culture or fusion of cultures" - the Jewish, the Greco-Roman, the Germanic, the Celtic - the "extremely complex historical result" of which is "our world." Just as the Cenacle was enacted "inside time and late in time under forms indelibly marked by locale and incidence" (*A 53/LA 1.3/MS 5*), so also the Mass in London is enacted "under modes and patterns altogether theirs," (*A 49/LA 1.3/ MS 1*) as it, too, occurs, "so late in time" (*A 50/ LA 1.3/MS 3*). Those local rites arose from the fusion of cultures that Jones speaks of in his letter to *The Catholic Herald*.

²⁴ *A 49/LA 1.3/ MS1 through A 59/LA 1.3/MS 5F and MS 10A*

²⁵ *A 84/ LA 1.8/ MS F1 through A 97/LA 1.8/MS 5F22/MS 39.*

²⁶ *A 171/LA 1.8/MS 5F22A/MS 38/MS 91 through A 182/ LA 1.8/MS 5F33/MS 51/ MS109.*

²⁷ *A 185/LA 1.8 /MS 5G /MS 54/MS112 through A 193/ LA 1.8/MS 5L/ MS 62/ MS 120*

²⁸ *A 224/LA 1.8 /MS 5M/ MS 63/MS144 through A 232/LA 1.8/ MS 5T/MS 71/MS 155 and A 241/LA 1.3/ MS 6/MS 62/ MS 165 through A 243/LA1.3/MS 7/MS 166.*

²⁹ In the *Preface* to *The Anathemata* Jones wrote that "what is now sheet 166 of my written MS has at different times been sheet 75 and sheet 7" (*A 15*). What he neglected to note was that sheet 7/75/166 was always the final sheet. It was 75 after the first repagination and then 166 after the second repagination when it was sent to the typist in 1949.

In the next stratum – the third major insertion that consisted of approximately thirty-eight manuscript sheets - Jones, drawing on the records of voyages to Britain from Pytheas to Othere³⁰ and drawing from the Matter of Britain, explored the fusion of Celtic, Greco- Roman, and Germanic cultures that formed Britain and with it how that Consecration in London came to be.³¹

Jones continued to introduce more and more “fragments,” as he juxtaposed one fragment against another, polishing and refining the pieces so that there would be a proper fit. His last two major insertions were introduced only after he had sent his typed manuscript to Fabers in 1949. One was a sequence of eleven sheets in typescript that completed *Middle-Sea and Lear Sea* from pages 99 through 108. The last, probing at the earliest levels of the human making of signs and drawing from G.R. Levy’s *The Gate of Horn*, consists of twenty-two sheets in typescript. Moving from “What from this one’s cranial data” (A 61 /9) to “I am your Bread” (A 82/ 9V), this final insertion “invites, bids, us to recall/when we make the recalling of him / daily, at the Stone” (A 81/ 9U) all those earliest makers “WHOSE WORKS FOLLOW THEM” for “He would lose, not any one/ from among them./ Of all those given him/ he would lose none” (A 65/ 9F).

If we follow the shape of de la Taille’s thesis of how an anamnesis at the Mass is effected and then follow Jones’ fragments, we find that de la Taille offered a clear and comprehensible and exact order to *The Anathemata*. If we follow Jones’s aesthetic theory and its slow evolution from a vague sense that what is made at the Mass and what is made by the artist are of

³⁰ I am deeply indebted to Dr. Kirsty Black who first noted David Jones’s use of Othere in her paper delivered at the *Archive Fervour/Archive Further: Literature, Archives, and Literary Archives* Conference held in Aberystwyth, Wales on July 10th, 2009.

³¹ There were two insertions made at this point. The material of the first insertion was written between Spring 1943 and late 1945–early 1946 with the bulk of it from 1945. An insertion of twenty three sheets labeled 37A through 37 Q, it went from the lines “Did he hold his course” (A 97/LA 1.8/MS 37A/MS 40) to “And did he call it/ The Deadman” on (A 98/LA 1.8/MS 37A1/MS 41) after which it continued again with “Did he strike soundings off Vecta Insula” (A 110/LA 1.8/MS 37B/43) in *Angle-Land* and moved through *Redriff* and to “the greatest burh in nordlands” in *The Lady of the Pool* (A 124/LA 1.8/MS 37P/MS 60). It then went to the opening line of *Keel, Ram, Stauros* and ended with “graveled his philology/in Cronos-meer (A 170-71/ LA 1.8/ MS 37Q3/MS 89-90). The second insertion of fifteen sheets is harder to date as to composition; however, it, too, was inserted into the text before the text was sent to the typist in 1949. This was labeled 62 A through 62 Ω and begins with “Had she been on Ida mountains” (A 194/LA 1.8/MS 62A/MS 122) and moves to “innate bias of the heresiarchs of Britain” (A 205/ LA1.8/MS 62 J/MS 131). It then continues with “If much of this is fancy fed” (A 215/LA1.8 /MS 62K/MS 136) and concludes with “before all time Minerva is sprung from the head of Jove” (A 221/ LA1.8/MS 62Ω/142).

the same kind, and his slow meander through Frye and Gill and Maritain and de la Taille, we discover that Jones did not merely consider art a subclass of sacrament, but rather that the Eucharist, in Jones's view, is itself a work of art that validates all other works of art throughout time as *signa*. If we follow how those meanders informed his own art we finally come to an anamnesis of the Eucharist as enacted in London in wartime by "the cult man in Pellam's land" at the "sagging end and chapter's close" of Western culture. Though done "under modes and patterns altogether theirs," it contains a "world of imagination and affection" enclosed "within a pomerium." If we attend to David Jones, we find that "his groping syntax shapes" for us our past, as it is "here and now operative by its effects" in and through *The Anthemata*.

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