

COMING HOME TO THE WORLD

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THE TYPICAL SETTING for a poem by D. G. Jones, in 1953 or 1973, is some rural place in the Canadian Shield at that time of year when it is still winter but perhaps beginning to be spring. The difference between the 1953 poem and the 1973 poem lies in where the poet is situated. In the earlier poems Jones is the interpreter of the landscape. In the later ones he is part of the landscape. It is as difficult as that. To put it another way: during his early career he seemed faced with a dispute — shall he be “realistic” or “mythic”? Later he succeeded in discarding both poses, in favour of being actual. He learned to listen to his own body, the music it was (forced) to make in its environment, and there is the body of his later work, as beautifully trim as any we have heard in this country.

Jones has a reputation as an “intellectual” poet, though I have never seen that any critic has delineated that notion. Certainly he has always distinguished himself from the majority of Canadian lyric poets writing in English, they who are satisfied to tell you how they are feeling right now about some occasional perception. Jones has always wanted to know that, plus: what does it mean? In that he is more like our major poet, Margaret Avison, save that he does not have the Christian faith to go with the fine ear and curious mind. In fact a consecutive reading of his work reveals that he has always been looking for a world-view that would seem sensible given his perceptions and emotions. In this paper I hope to find the features of his work that will show his progress from intelligence noetic to intelligence heuristic.

We move backward, through our carried-over European mind, that male slayer and conqueror, to the actual New World, found behind transparent eyes. Peculiarly, for a man with a Welsh name, or not so peculiarly, Jones embodies the spirit of the Anglo-Saxon poet in a strange wintery land, the first morning

outside Eden. For that was the European Eden, not so much a garden as a garrison, where the animals were paraded in front of you and you were allowed to name them and subject them to your use. The consistent development and improvement of Jones' writing has come about as the words seeped through the walls, as the man became resolved to living the rest of his life in his own wilderness, himself as explorer, with memories, maybe, of "home". He has come through the struggle to free his mind's eye from his mind, to the job of minding the poem, which has its own life, no matter what you name it.

Much of the struggle had to do with the methods of learning. Jones decided courageously to acknowledge his traditions, both as Wasp and as Canadian poet. (Many of us didn't even know that there was such a thing as a tradition of Canadian poetry.) Jones read the past, and one can find traces of loyalty to those other men who signed their initials to their poems — D. C. Scott, F. R. Scott, A. J. M. Smith, E. J. Pratt. In his first book, *Frost on the Sun* (1957), you may find this echo of (Charles) G. D. Roberts:

Of sluttish waves that sidle and lick
With insolent ease the indolent rock

which is meant to copy the sound of the water, but more obviously resembles Roberts' humanizing and abstracting of nature.

That first book, collecting the work of a poet who was also a university literature student, exhibits the early lines of the conflict in Jones' poetics. In the introductory poem, "John Marin" (which must have been written later than most of the book), the poet announces that he wants to make poems as particular and interdependent as the rest of nature; that is, not poems *about* nature, but poems to take their place *in* nature — as William Carlos Williams said, not to copy nature but to imitate nature. So the poem begins with a smart identification of strophe with plant and bird, themselves difficult to separate:

Do poems too have backbones:
stalks of syntax on which sway
the dark
 red
 or blue images —
a flock of red-wings
 swaying in the alders —

(though he subsequently messes this up a little by retreating into a simile that undoes that natural knitting, "their common passion".) Compare some lines

written in 1970, where the urgency to fabricate metaphor has been overcome, and the poet simply submits to his own functioning in the place and poem:

I am led into the winter air
 by certain nameless twigs, as bare
 as we are. I would find
 them also in our mouths.

(*Canadian Forum*, June 1972)

You see there the twigs *are* certain, they do not have to be broken down to nature to advantage undressed.

But in the first book we are met by the Popery (pot-pourri) of syllabics, iambics, prescribed stanza-structures, etc. They are competent as those things go as late as the fifties, but the things said are often the directors of the things observed there, the latter becoming *exempla*, or the fibre of an extended metaphor. Sonnets, rondels, the plungings of a student poet trying to say something serious — you must give him that. He gets observably more interesting as the forms assert themselves over the structures — in that way Jones became a most serious and worthwhile demonstration of the great leap forward in postwar Canadian literature.

There is a great deal of energy being exercised in that first book, so much being tried out, so much desire on the young poet's part to meet, perhaps, the cosmos, especially the portents in its immediate manifestations, birds, the sun, snow. Hoping to be equal to the real itself, Jones brings to the poetry-making act all the tricks of poem-writing. He is performing them — lay a Greek name on the landscape here, a simile there, a couplet beside that. But the poem, not the poet, is made to live in that scene. We can see him equally walking away from it. But I remember reading *Frost on the Sun* in the late fifties and saying that Jones had opened up the fist of the prescriptive poets. The book itself was an *agon*. He knew what he wanted to do, to speak of nature without words. Even in the trussed-up poems he spoke of principles he was only later to enact:

the bones of animals are luminous and dry —
 perceived as clearly as the sharpest stone

— just like the later poems, where the heaps of chosen adjectives were left behind.

It is a curious (subjective?) thing that you can *feel* Jones' mind moving more than you can most poets', and thus you can feel the difference between the tangled lines that try to feed rime-schemes, and the others that attempt to re-enact

perceptions. In a poem such as “The Phoebe” you are made to feel the poem trying to trace mind-perceptions in verse prosody, as the subject bird is said to have its body and area wed to “configuration of the mind.” In “Northern Water Thrush” the birds trace “the old/ calligraphy of living things,” destroyed every human year.

The sun, too, is an image for human intelligence, and it appears over and over, usually a winter sun (the one found in Ontario and Quebec), appearing in a haze, muted, falling, a lighter grey than the surrounding grey. It is an intelligence that clearly has sufficient power, but that is fuzzed by local weather conditions. If there is frost on the sun, and we are under its nutrient, what are we to make of that picture? Are we at the stage where the sun is beginning to melt the frost, or where the sun is being cooled? The centre of Jones’ work tries to resolve the dialectic between that pessimism and that hope. The influence of Robert Frost can be guessed at here, and the worlds of the two poets are not all that far apart, vestiges of Puritan New England and U.E.L. Canada. The reader can’t help noticing that in these early poems Jones views nature from and in his solitude:

It is not love reveals the world
Or lays one naked with the earth,
It is aloneness when all loves are laid to bed
And in the uncompanioned darkness every star
Submits her abstract maidenhead.

That poem refers to Paul Klee, but also to *Frost on the Sun*. Other people are not found in this book. But in the later poems they are, and Jones then calls on love to reveal the world:

I would have you smile, and see the sun
arrested, rest among your bones

(“The Birdhouse,” 1972)

The early loneliness outside of Eden is met by an earth, nature that endures, and Jones consistently shows it enduring despite men’s depredations. It is certainly not the monster nature of Margaret Atwood’s *Survival*, but an observable reminder that the power is there, that it does not need to assert itself at men’s expense, that the rock doesn’t change simply because a man sees Hermes in the rock. The city may be a monument or graveyard of stones but the snow falls on it as on the pre-cambrian rock.

In his best moments during the early period, Jones approaches that power with the modesty he learned from the Imagists, a decision he brings to great grace in *Phrases from Orpheus*. "The Lilypad" is a poem as lovely as its subject, that rides with the water and never cleaves it. Sometimes one thinks of Souster's keen eyes in the middle of the gritty metropolis:

... a table and a kitchen chair,
zinc tubs
 a broken basket filled with snow
make of this half-lot a
 disreputable paradise within
the machined residential row

This can be Eden nor is it out of us.

And maybe the late-winter, early-spring poem, "Thaw", is the most important poem in the book, not for the poet (it is of pretty conservative art) but for the man/poet. The image is lovely, little, tentative, the small sign of large unseen (e)motion, the Wasp condition, its problem and beautiful strength:

When the snow melts to the ground
 leaving between hillocks of snow
many little pools where
 green grass and dead leaves grow,
the currents which run from pool down to pool
 are too slight to be seen,
yet they ripple the pools as though
 all earth were trembling in its frame.

IF IT MAY BE SAID that *Frost on the Sun* was the book of a student, it may be said that *The Sun is Axeman* (1961) is the book of a teacher. It contains some of the best poems from the first book, and some of its problems in poetics. But importantly, it shows a desire on Jones' part to compose longer poems, to get beyond the lyric, and beyond the stasis imposed by presentation of a mind willing only to reflect upon a universe. By this time, 1961, Jones sounded to these western ears as if balanced between British and American influences, the former somehow connected with his loyalty to Smith, Scott, etc., the latter revealed in his (mis)quotation of William Carlos Williams.

The English connection, with the voice of Auden somehow heard along the line, seems to have produced two essentially "academic" features: the fact that

so many poems work upon extended metaphors, and the pose of the detached sensibility. The former might be found in the contorted conceits that the description and complicated rime scheming manufacture in "Blue Jay in Haliburton" ("Everywhere some small design/ Erupts, and the profusion foals/ Chaos on the mind"). The latter is obvious in these Audenish lines about a small Ontario village:

Yet houses and the bridge
Are well kept up: the boys and girls
Are not too lonely, I suppose . . .

The result is that despite the place names the places often do not appear Canadian, or more importantly, do not sound as if they had contributed to the composition of the poet's blood and bones. "The Return" is a neat 1780 poem about the Gaspé. "The River: North of Guelph" (inviting comparison, naturally, with Purdy's "Country North of Belleville") is an exercise in syllabics, wherein gentle Wordsworth is found, so odd in the Canadian landscape. Perhaps the best example of the detached and academic poem is "Antibes: Variations on a Theme", wherein abstract noun-phrases lie dead where one wants to find verbs or where the lyric with its unlikely verbs sags into reflection, a reflex of the cortex wanting to respect itself. Often the abundant similes are used to connect the natural scene with the Hellenic one in the teacher-poet's head, leaving in our museum a picture of the academic back home on the family farm.

The problem, of course, is Jones' decision to appear as observer, to keep himself hidden from any eyes looking back. It is an unhappy mode invented by critics and poets in the period 1918-1945, when it became horribly easy to be hurt on exposure. It unfortunately met the Anglo mind like an epipsyche, and gave us the neo-neo-augustans in Britain and the New Criticism in the U.S.A. In Canada a little later we heard and rewarded the genteel mystified despair of poets such as Wilfred Watson and Douglas Le Pan. I think that Jones instinctively distrusted the mode but found that he had to punch his way out of its bag with its gloves on his hands. Moments of clarity and actuality are shared when he is not concerned with sustaining a metaphor or structure.

In referring to nature at this time his favourite abstract noun is "candour." It is the quality of nature most worth imitating. Referentially, the implications are radical — they lead to acceptance of a fatherless universe, to what Jones calls "a friendly/ Nothingness", and they lead to agreement that one's death will be nothing new under that axeman, the "old, redundant sun".

But what of candour in the making of a poem? The word means glowing pure white, like the sun, and would seem to ask in a poem for virginal incandescence. Al Purdy noticed in a review that Jones' sensibility seemed innocent. Then what is he doing presenting the persona of a man who may reflect on the cosmos with a mirror of codified antiquity? He is a poem, unseen inside a "poet," and the latter writes a "realistic" piece called "Teenagers", tamping it with the mythic tombstone line, "Dragon's teeth across the land". The piece succinctly illustrates the agon I mentioned earlier, the false alternatives of "realism" and "myth-making". The poem inside appears as the everpresent sun reflects from an undeniably authentic and happenstance mirror (also appearing as a final image) in the aforementioned "The River: North of Guelph". For two pages Jones has related his mind with the very small river, but we remain suspicious because of certain British-anthology language. However, the brilliance of Jones' later breakthrough is foreshone in the found image at the end of the poem:

A tin
funnel,
pitched into the middle of the stream,
catches the light
and sends it back

Say what you like about the metaphorical opportunism of the object found in the water — I am convinced that the poet did not throw it in.

In the notes on Jones in *15 Canadian Poets* (1970) Gary Geddes and Phyllis Bruce say that in *Axeman* the poet found metaphors that are "organic, drawing the reader toward, rather than away from, the subject". Except for the word "organic" I would agree, though I would say that our attention is more rewarded here by observing the discoveries than the results. "For Françoise Adnet" is a justly well-received poem, a lovely study that looks forward to the sculptural confidence found in *Phrases from Orpheus*. In it the poet has found the form that gives that desired candour to the formality of presence he always felt he must have. The poem is not simply still-life, not simply domestic — the actuality of the images of vegetables, daughter, kitchen, opens the universe to the reader's senses, and thus to his imagination. "For once things are what they are. . . ."

Two pages later a "Poem for Good Friday" asserts the natural winter/spring landscape against Christian metaphor, that theft of the senses that can be so easily allowed. An irony lurks around the poem, but the poem does announce a primacy of perception over interpretive myth-counting. It is significant that in

these poems Jones lets it be known that he would like to avail himself of the painter's aptitude. I am reminded of what Henri Michaux wrote on seeing his first Carribbean port:

Only painters can get much out of that first moment of contact with a strange place. Drawing, colour is everything, and this suggests itself then and there. This pâté of God-knows-what, well, that's nature — but objects, no, not a one! It is only after mature, detailed inspection from different points of view that you come up with a name. A name is an object which you have detached.

(Ecuador, 1970)

Of course one cannot detach anything from nature without detaching oneself from most of the rest. That is the lesson that Jones was learning as well. In *Butterfly on Rock* he mentions more than once Robert Frost's statement that we must give ourselves to the land in order to receive its gifts. I think that Jones goes further on that implication, believing that one *becomes* the land and *vice-versa*. In an eight-section poem called "Snow Buntings" the birds become confused with earth, snow, stones, flowers, wood, grain, grass and seeds. The poet is addressing a sculptor, in whose participatory mind the confusion should take action. The message, finally, is to imitate, not to copy, nature:

You must lie down in the dark
 In the naked fields.
 You must think of the birds
 And make them as you will.

Such imitation calls not for surrender but for integrity of the person within integration with the rest of nature.

Just so the earth is seen to respond to a wintery April sun in "Standing in the April Noon". And, significantly, actual people appear in this letter-poem. In fact, that is how Jones finds a way to break out of the frozen ground, to compose poems addressed to people, those world's actors who never showed up in the first book. A tentative opening to them is made in another important poem, "Soliloquy to Absent Friends". (To conjure personal history again, I remember remarking that it seemed the most important poem in the startling anthology, *Poetry* 62.) It begins with an admission of the drear winter soul, and resolves that, as Margaret Avison puts it, "Nobody stuffs the world in at your eyes./ The optic heart must venture: a jail-break/ And re-creation."

Geddes and Bruce say that in *Axeman* "a hostile nature is presented, one that is stunted and barren, mute and unsympathetic." But I think that they are

extrapolating from their experiences of other Canadian poets (see Atwood's "position two" in *Survival*). I would prefer to accept Jones' term, the "friendly/Nothingness". In the poem at hand, addressed to "Micheline" and "Quixote", there are five sections arranged as an ode. In section I we have an image of the (mind as) leafless fall, the farmland grown meaner, consumed for this year. In section II the poet calls for a dropping of large vain campaigns, for patience of one's perceptions, quoting Williams' red wheelbarrow and agreeing that so much depends upon it. Section III speaks of love for small hopeless things, the root retails that hold us from drifting in the abyss. Section IV is a Wordsworth imitation, a homely pastorelle about humans who join for warmth in a (temporarily) frozen land. Section V ends:

Let us be bare,
 Let us be poor,
 such poverty makes honest souls,
 and solitude is capital for love.
 Out of that silent contemplation of the trees,
 amid the vast candour of the snows,
 rich in loneliness, will come
 drenched in sunlight, as from empty seas,
 myriad wings and leaves — as though our tongues
 grew green with language and informed a world.

That synthesis and re-creation thus called for make the theme demonstrated in the art of Jones' most recent poems. So the poet's imitation of nature then will call for winter patience, the promise of an uttered spring, faith and works totally depending on the primacy of perception, the world and language as Merleau-Ponty describes them, not as the tool-makers would use them.

BUT IT IS NOT EASY to make that jail-break, to step out of the mind-forged garrison. In fact the way out is no door or gate — it is a tunnel, deep underground, through the permafrost, through the alienated Anglo psyche, oh yes, through the museum he and his ancestors have gathered down there. That's the voyage Jones makes painfully in *Phrases from Orpheus*. It is a hole once dug for Lazarus, Odysseus, and Jesus, part of whose sufferings had to be the stories that must be told, the dark dreams that must be turned into song.

The story was hinted at in a spooky poem in *Axeman*, "Little Night Journey", in which the soul meets and becomes the Hadean boatman-fisherman in moody

cloud night. While the vocabulary is detached, the rhythm and rimes give power to the "statement" that real (underworld) life begins when the day's commerce and reason lie down to die awhile. One is finally not convinced, because the poet stays awake, using the simile, he is *like* Lazarus, at this point describing, finding literary parallels to the psychic underworld experience, the mind still maintaining that it is only a resemblance observable through conscious thought *about* its shadow self. But Jones does speak of having the experience prior to the poem, through which "the fisherman glides, my soul in his eyes." The subconscious may be alive in the landscape. The soul vampirically becomes one with the soul-fisher. It is such a scary dream that the poet insists on the conscious mind's control of the poem. Later he dares go back to sleep, to give himself even to that strange new land outside Eden.

And inside Adam. I mean for God's sake, Adam's sojourn outside paradise is Odysseus' trip or Orphic chase through Hades. The main thing that makes it possible to survive, to find any surcease, is connection with other people, the old Hemingway theme. *Phrases from Orpheus* is blessed with an unusually good dust jacket note, where we are prepared for poems evoking "affection for particular people and things and for the creative power of life that demands the death and passing of those things." We are prepared to meet the theme of "one's isolation, or imprisonment within the self, when confronted with the difficulties of communication and communion and with death." And there is a hint of Jones' jailbreak, the assertion that "time and change are the essence not the enemy of life." It is for the thought and work on these matters, as well as for the very fine craftsmanship of the verse, that I find this to be one of the best books of poetry yet made in this country.

One can't help feeling gratified to find that once again here the clear attention to voice as the base for form opens for the reader a clear vision of the materials and thought presented. A naked strophe takes its place in the field beside a sunlit rock. The particulars of the verse imitate human speech, and speech *is* nature, to advantage undressed if you like. I am suggesting that Jones' welcoming of life (his argument, what it *means*, etc.) depends upon the bright (candid) sharp profile of his line and stanza in these poems — I don't think that anyone could read them aloud and be confounded by the voice that is articulated. It is the clarity of Yeats, Pound, and Williams, the music of the human voice that makes the sun rise in the morning.

Part of the advance is made by the class of the language. Academic inversions and circumlocutions are dropped in favour of highly vocal exclamations that

remind one of Williams — “What a ruckus!” Authentic personal slang finds its way in now, and brings the poems home, so that after the poet refers to a “two-bit creek,” one feels with him “a new respect for/ Metals, rare-earth, salt.” But most of the advance is in the integrity of the syllable, line and stanza, particulars that respond to the rhythms of a voice, part feeling, and once into print, part ideogrammatic.

Jones demonstrates the advance in his craft early in the book, in an exercise-poem called “Animals” — are they animals or poets? — and the reader is hereby instructed to read it aloud, to learn to read the rest of the book, to hear in his ear the great purchase and leverage on natural metaphor that the poet holds with his punctuation, for instance, including the cadences.

So slight a thing as
a new poem can
move mountains.

There is a faith that is so much more poetry’s province than any old description of a mountain.

Yes, he finds, you can still take the cosmos as your subject, but not as your equal or counterpart, as the earlier poems tried to do — rather as your place of action, of actuality, or yourself as its place of action:

And so
all things
Deliquesce, arrange, and rearrange in field.

So he says in “Mr Wilson, the World,” another “poetics” poem addressed to an artist. One may enter the act of re-arranging and thus enter the process of world and the role of artist, such a thing more engaging for the reader than the cool detachment seen earlier. Look how Mr. Wilson’s music is made from mineral, vegetable and animal (all moved by spirit breath):

Enough if Mr. Wilson’s pleased, if brass, if reeds,
If skins of animals and steel
Strings

Translate his birdtracks into sound . . .

Birdtracks, indeed. That is so much more the real, making or finding of metaphor in the world, than bipolar similes that *use* the world. “To *imitate* the *process* and to *apprehend*/ The ephemeral substantiality of things. Enough,” says one artist

to the other. (*Italics mine.*) He is the Orphic artist, in his loneliness singing to enact his attachment to all the mutable world:

Have a sense of the void through which pours,
 Molecular, vertebrate, cellular, on wind or in wave,
 The host whom the lovers inherit — of that solitude

 In which there cohere
 All things.

It is a beautifully crowded solitude.

It is Adam's acceptance of the void that has become, with love, world. In "The Perishing Bird," another of the poet's more familiar lyrics, we find a refutation of Yeats' "Sailing to Byzantium." Jones says that Yeats' timeless natureless refuge is a hell, a place where only the mind is alive, the senses and body emotions dead, a hell more dreadful than the dread of death. He chooses the wild bees over the golden bees, and though it is sad, places himself in death's kingdom, where one may have a place for feelings, so one may feel at least sad. Jones is a romantic all right, but not a Platonic yearner — who would want to get back into Eden when all your dying friends are out here? This earth is his certain death, and it calls up love. "To enjoy what we must suffer" is to make songs such as does the perishing bird, the mind in time, Orpheus' haunt.

So Jones does explore the earth of the exile in these poems, but we are all exiles, that is a portion of our friendships. He speaks of loss and isolation, but also of how to do something with them, not over them. If there is an Orpheus there must be a Eurydice, if an Adam an Eve. She appears now, as the poems attempt to find flowers growing among the pre-cambrian rocks. In fact, in "View from my Window"

The hillside has been hidden
 And the stones
 Come up out of the snow
 Like flowers.

There is a lovely image, ambiguously optimistic and ironic (don't choose one) as in the resolution of the title poem, which we will come to.

So the items of nature are no longer pathetic, but joined and celebrated. That change, as it involves the poet and his poems, is the source or energy of hope, or at least hope of reconciliation. The poems are still set in winter and before hovering spring, but now "We shall survive/ And we shall walk/ Somehow into

summer.” Somehow — there’s resolution and qualification in that word. The earlier poet Jones was, with his detachment and brainy irony, an idealistic, and a stoic. Now he is a stoic, but he says “I thought there were limits to this falling away,/ This emptiness. I was wrong.” His poetry is now a part of that process, not its opposite, not its dreamy redemption. Poems are not finite, but constantly metamorphose themselves. They are not signs of the poet’s control over (his) nature; being inside nature, they are process:

The spirit is thirsty, drinks
When we least are aware

And the words beginning the following love poem to an Eve may speak for the poet or the poem:

I have nothing to give you but a place to stand.
I will be nature and uncritical.
You may walk in me and be alone.

The songs of Orpheus are not sung against fate, but like those of Jones’ admired birds, part of the cosmos’ motion. It is good to recall that Orpheus may not look back, and that while Eden’s Adam was given the animals to use or dominate, Orpheus was given the grace to call them to his circle, to be among them. It is by this grace that he stands for the coming of a man into adulthood, where death and the rest of life are realized, the new home. “For Robert Duncan” speaks of a circle of music makers, Duncan, Louis Zukofsky, Zukofsky’s son the violinist, and Jones. The musicians are

making private worlds public and
digesting the public
privately — making them real

— that is, not describing them.

Reviewing the book in *The Canadian Forum* (August 1968), Douglas Barbour wrote of Jones’ “proper poetic objectivity”. Proper the poems may be, if we go to the root of the word, but objective they are not, no more than is Orpheus’ lyre-plucking simply a comment on the morning’s beauty. Barbour also says (I am paying attention to his review because I think that it represents a wider mis-hearing of Orphic Jones) “His words are never chosen for their sound value alone: they are all there to serve the meaning as well.” Just about every term of that sentence is off the mark. Barbour’s positing of choice and the two channels of sound and meaning just don’t apply to Orpheus. In him is the best example

of meaning as the action of sound. Here is the world of actuality, not simply reality, not only truth, not those observations of the rich tourist from Eden.

That safe garden is scorched in "To Eve in Bitterness". The poet says now he is not Adam but the Angel who must bitterly destroy Eden. But in his bitterness he is a poet, whose ghost is the memory of the garden, Orpheus' forbidden path which can't be retraced, and whose muse is the spirit, the breath of Eve, the garden's last creation, now mortal. She is an earthly, not a heavenly muse. The singer is Orpheus, not Apollo. Even the sun, Jones' old favourite, is now imaged as a moving woman. They are the motion of the world, not its equal. In speaking to his love in "En guise d'Orphée", the poet does not say he will make verses that try to equal her beauty, but that while she walks into the morning "like a girl/ From a long illness",

There my song
Shall burst upon you like the god.

In the title poem the Orpheus we see is largely the Orpheus in the underworld, but the story's tension holds the promise of the musician in his forest. The underworld is that adult winter-knowledge of his own life, the present and its future, face forward. The poem must be, then, large, not simply lyric. It is sixteen pages long, Jones' longest to this time. It is a strophic poem wherein all contiguous thought may be gathered to present sthenic ambiguities of hope and suffering that must be lived and projected, not "objectively" observed and reflected upon. The various margins of the strophes set two or four story lines in the same suite of rooms (stanzas), providing metaphor more authentic than your pushy similes. It is a shuffled ode, one might say. Read aloud, the poem does make Orphic music, the tones clearly leading all thought. It is rather arcane (and thus properly the subject of a separate essay), and one is led to believe it by the care of the musical notation, not to be bamboozled but to be, literally, charmed. Read, for instance, page 58:

The distant
sirens, crying in the street
an accident?

a wire

bird whistles in the wood
I hear
Sirius calling, or

beyond

I ask
 a question of the dog
 past Cerberus
 beyond death's bark

(Such beautiful puns join with the music in making real metaphor.) The theme might be easily passed off as the adult admission and examination of solitude and mortality. The voyage of Orpheus takes place in the sub-sidereal underworld of lovers made mortal by their fervour, so "death . . . is but a door/ open/ to love, makes/ love dear." The ambiguity earlier spoken of is made inescapably active and present because it is not clever or described. At the end the use of two margins, through which we hear two voices mimetically dependent on one another, says that the poet's love is and is not alive in the afterdeath.

But that poem's depths cannot be walked in this quick critical journey. It is deep, and has song at its centre, as Carlyle said all deep things do. It is the depth, to shift a metaphor, of nakedness. When you want to speak of the surfaces of things, people or feelings, you exert detached rational control over your materials, like Pope dressing nature to (your) advantage, leading the very birds into your limed fitting room. As in his earlier poems, in this book Jones records many images of rural nature — seasons, weather, soil, growth. But now there are so many images of nature denuded, bare branch, stone, the great naked Canadian Shield that does not provide welcoming habitat for furze or figure of speech. Feelings, like signs of life, must be tenacious and carefully searched for, "deep in the silence/ Which is continuous sound."

The image of nakedness has special emotional meaning for someone writing out of the Anglo puritan and academic backgrounds. It bespeaks strong and once-infibulated desire. But it is the way to join rather than observe the earth: "This is the nakedness that I would share," says Jones of the late-winter rural scene. It calls for re-creation, bare earth, empty page. In "The Stream Exposed With all its Stones", one of his best-known poems, the main image is what the puritan secretly knows, that there is an "underworld" of dancing activity beneath the serene snow:

I tell you
 Nakedness is a disguise: the white
 Is dark below.

— but that realization comes only with disrobing. Eve's potential would never have been guessed at within the garden.

BUTTERFLY ON ROCK (1970) can tell us much of the place that Jones the poet has come to by the end of the sixties. At the same time as the book is the most convincing symbolic reading of our literature we have seen recently, it states in prose many of the principles the poet has come to as his own due to the Orphic voyage.

Paramount among these is the replacement of the ego. It once peered over the battlements of the stockade — now it is looking for an explorer's way across the uncharted continent. It must first work its way through the insecurity it feels when inherited lines are rubbed out. Jones speaks of that experience for the early Canadian poet (and often for the more recent one), of his "sense of exile, of being estranged from the land and divided within oneself." For American parallels see William Carlos Williams' *In the American Grain*.

Jones makes use of Frye's picture of the garrison of culture *vs.* the hostile land, and gives the sense that he has learnt to identify with the savages who were seen not as inhabitants but as representatives of that unwelcoming surround. One must, he says, learn to let the wilderness in — that is the only way that the mind-forged prison can be escaped. Such is the preoccupation of Eastern Canadian writers and critics in this age, and Jones is still writing within the tradition, though at its vanguard. That tradition includes the sentiment of Robert Frost suggested earlier, the desired realization "not only that the land is ours, but that we are the land's." Jones adds that the re-settled poet has to leave his garrison of Mediterranean words and listen in the seeming silence, where he will hear a voice he will discover to be that of his own poems, and that "the voice that demands to be heard is the voice of the land." For cross-reference read Earle Birney's poem, "Way to the West".

It is not surprising, then, to note that the word "courage" has become as important to Jones as the word "candour" once was. It is the courage of Adam, "not the courage to resist so much as the courage to accept, not the courage to defy but the courage to affirm, to love, and celebrate a world that sooner or later demands of them the sacrifice of their lives. Only within such an affirmation can man discover his identity and community with the rest of nature." The emphasis is on heart and discovery, thus mortality — and such realization calls for its representation in the form of the verse. Jones' verse becomes, around this time, open and vocal, responsible and vulnerable to changes in the weather, exterior or interior.

In *Butterfly on Rock* Jones says that Canadian literature has always been the

story of Adam and Eve because the land seemed such an outside-of-Eden experience. The U.S.A. may have been seen at one time as a new Eden for a lot of reborn Adams, but Virginia does not have the snowy Canadian Shield as its backbone. Whereas the early Canadian writers, such as Susanna Moodie, might look back upon England as lost Eden, the later generations had no such dreams to fog their landscapes, or they should not have. Proteus is awake. The Ark has landed. "The land is both condition and reflection, both mirror and fact." It is no use trying to make it into a New England (see James Reaney's "The Avon River above Stratford, Ontario") or to try to impose on it an ideal order. Jones decries "the impulse to impose upon nature, upon the life of the land as upon human life, an ideal order." The implications for a poetics are clear: no 18th century English verse forms for Northern Ontario, or — don't dress your loved one like Ariadne, for the frost will freeze her diaphanous gown to her blue body.

Adam had to accept both the world and his mortality. The necessary courage is the courage to live without "conquering" nature, knowing one's human limitations in a huge and maybe frightening, and finite, world. For Jones the courage seems to involve the necessity of fear and bitterness, the possibilities that were unsuccessfully avoided by the stance of detachment at one time. He admires, in the writings of other people, a sense of joy that has come *through* suffering connected with death and its message concerning our own. Acceptance of death and acceptance of Eve and the children, that is the "double hook" of birth. For man the "first days of Creation . . . of naming and discovering" come after the gates are closed behind him, for the poet as for the father of our line, a "jailbreak and re-creation."

THE POEMS written since *Phrases from Orpheus* are songs of a man who is once again above ground and now at home there. The lines and stanzas are more thoroughly integral, fully used, than ever before, and they are shaped by the poet's full physical faculties, as inevitably authentic as the inter-reactions of wind and tree-stand.

The scenes are still generally winter, or the last days of winter, but now winter rimes with the rest of the year and not allegorically with poet's gloom:

The climate of the flesh
is temperate here
though we look out on a winter world

(*Canadian Forum*, June 1972)

I have already mentioned the ending of this poem ("Also") :

I am led into the winter air
 by certain nameless twigs, as bare
 as we are. I would find

 them also in our mouths.

The synthetic connection of self with nature makes homely the ambiguity found in the Orpheus poems. The twigs are naked, yes, but at the same time they are the part of the tree that will do spring's job, announce the re-creation. The mouths, passages of sustenance and poetry, were mentioned in "A Brief to the People," written a year earlier :

O let our mouths
 against the silence open
 into silence
 we can share and be

(*Canadian Forum*, June 1972)

I believe that the poet means that last phrase, "share and be", to speak of process, of cause. "As a mouth I serve," said Layton, but in his poem he became the spokesman of nature. I think that Jones' position has appeared past that two-part image of the world. It is a placement of himself, his love, his poem, *in* nature, *as* nature.

This means that the poem cannot be ripped off like birch bark. "The Route Out" (in *Made in Canada*, 1969) is a good example of a poem whose rime grows rather than being laid on, as it was in the early poems. It is now the fabric rather than the cut of the fabric. The poet and/or the land is singing, neither explaining nor explained, that is never laid out flat for us, none of that position for rapine as dear to the dirty mind. I mean even in a poem such as "Fiat Lux" (*Arts Canada*), in which ancient Greek stone is the primary material, the unnamed mythic life is enate, it grows from the elements.

Jones' birds are still here too, but now they speak for themselves. In fact, in an unpublished poem called "Winter Walk," they teach language to the composer, who walks along a horizon

perhaps to discover
 the language of a few birds, the shape
 of our breath, a relation

 uncentred

— that is, not the mute cosmos centred in the poet or his exhalation. The fragments of birdsong and smoke wraith are part of “one song/ an endless/ prothalamium” suggested in another poem, and Jones now clearly sees the poems as similar particles, not end-stopped observations on life.

There are lots of people in these new poems. They are addressed in title and poem; they are simply in the world. The snow now has signs of people in it, their tracks that mess up a perfect quatrain and let us follow — who is to say that their steps are not ours as we put our feet into them? Jones is no longer the idealist. He is at home now. In fact the house has become a very important image. He is living there, with other people, no longer a spectre on the rise of the landscape. In “To Tory” (*Made in Canada*), a poem addressed to his sleeping daughter, the world’s terror is shut out as abstract, while spring makes itself known concretely to those inside:

The world
continues on its wobbly course
and water drips
in the fireplace — spring
announcing itself

The house resembles personal lifetime (and poetry life) in a nice poem called “For this House” (*Canadian Forum*, June 1972). It is a neat presentation of Jones’ double feeling — that the house will not endure through all weather’s time, but that in it a person can make his own nature’s season, grow green sprouts in February:

I am relieved
that no house lasts

But I am glad
that this house stands
and in the snow

preserves the order of green plants
your hands sleeping now
let go

The poem grows, it can not be broken into passages of argument. It grows and changes as time’s seasons do. Jones has learned to love to live in his time as he has come similarly to his space.

The house is where one lives in the world. It is no garrison — spring is seen and heard inside, coming down the chimney into its hearth and heart. In “A

Garland of Milne" (*Quarry*, Summer 1967) Jones writes of the painter who is associated with the region of woods north of Peterborough where Jones grew up:

He was at home, sitting
with the small birds around him
gathering seeds . . .

The poet says the painter gathered seeds and "let the trees stand," no garrison-builder, he. "Who flies with the whirlwind is at rest." Who seeks to defy it is a fool and a bad artist. Interestingly, Milne is shown as placing some wildflowers in a pickle jar, perhaps to sketch them. It is an image that shows this reader three things that Jones feels close to. The painter was at home with the joining of the natural and the homely. He did not pretend to leave nature as its "gods" demanded. He would have the flowers in that simple used jar whether he was going to draw them or not. It is an image of relaxed formality that is Jones' own province.

Jones' poetics are probably most overtly presented in an unpublished poem called "Dance for One Leg", which looks at a picture of a man with a cast on his leg. A broken leg is natural, and the mending is natural, and it can be not imposed but co-operated with by the plaster's imitation of bone. The poem begins:

Not to be driven, above all
by oneself
to improvise
as fields
forget the glacier and the driven plough
and move like milk.

Then the poem moves to children dancing, to a finding that

a break is an occasion
to discover love

(how often the word "discover," to make naked, appears in these poems) to this ending:

They dance
the tall man with a cast
dances
thus, together

as estranged bones knit, as fields
invested in the driven snow
forget themselves
become one flesh.

At home in the flesh, at home in the land, at home in the number one, after all the enumeration in Eden and on the Ark has become only rumoured history. D. G. Jones is proof that there is a tradition of English-Canadian poetry, and that the tradition is going to be here.

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