

David Jones

Key words

Wales : idea : depiction

Cymru : syniad : disgrifiad

Key thinkers : David Jones, Ann Price
Owen, Owen Sheers

Painter, engraver, and writer

Peintiwyr, ysgythrwr, ac awdur

Wales : Cymru

- Father
 - Capel y ffin
 - Historical references in his poems
-
- Tad
 - Capel y ffin
 - Cyfieiriadau hanesyddol yn ei barddoniaeth

Occasionally an Artists life and life events are integral to the understanding of their Art. David Jones is one such artist.

**Weithiau, mae bywyd a digwyddiadau bywyd arlunydd yn rhan annatod o'r ddealltwriaeth o'u Celf.
Mae hyn sicr yn wir a'r arlunydd David Jones.**

Jones was a painter, engraver, and writer, born at Brockley, Kent; (now a suburb of South East London) (The Guild of St Joseph and St Dominic, n.d.).

His father, a printer, was Welsh, and his mother was English. He studied in London at Camberwell School of Art, 1909–15, and then after serving in France with the Royal Welch Fusiliers, studied at Westminster School of Art, 1919–22. (Owen, 2018)

- Roedd Jones yn beintwr, ysgythrwr, ac awdur, ganwyd yn Brockley, Kent; (bellach yn faestref yn Ne-ddwyrain Llundain) (The Guild of St Joseph and St Dominic, n.d.).
- Roedd ei dad yn argraffydd, o Gymru, a'i fam yn Saesnes. Astudiodd yn Llundain yn Ysgol Gelf Camberwell, 1909-15, ac yna ar ôl gwasanaethu yn Ffrainc gyda'r Ffiwsilwyr Brenhinol Cymreig, astudiodd yn Ysgol Gelf San Steffan, 1919-22. (Owen, 2018)

1921: Received into the Roman Catholic Church

1922: Joined Eric Gill's Guild of St Joseph and St Dominic at Ditchling (Sussex), initially as apprentice carpenter; taught wood engraving by Desmond Chute, (Miles, 2017)

1921: Derbyniwyd i'r Eglwys Gatholig Rufeinig

1922: Ymunodd ag Urdd yr arlunydd Eric Gill; St Joseph a St Dominic yn Ditchling (Sussex), yn gyntaf fel prentis saer; Dysgodd sut i wneud engrafiad pren gan Desmond Chute (Miles, 2017)

1924: Gill moved to Capel-y-ffin; engaged to Gill's daughter Petra. Jones lived partly at home with parents in London, partly at Capel-y-ffin and partly with the Benedictine monks on Caldey Island.

1927: Petra Gill broke off their engagement; Jones moved back to London, where he lived with his parents and was accepted into the Society of Wood Engravers. (Miles, 2017)

1924: Roedd Jones yn byw yn rhannol gyda rhieni yn Llundain, yn rhannol yng Nghapel-y-ffin (Cymdeithas Eric Gill) ac yn rhannol â'r mynachod Benedictiad ar Ynys Caldey. Dyweddiodd â merch Gill, Petra

1927: Gwanhaodd wrth Petra Gill; Symudodd Jones yn ôl i Lundain, lle bu'n byw gyda'i rieni ac fe'i derbyniwyd i Gymdeithas Engrafwyr pren. (Miles, 2017)

Capel-y-Ffin, a former monastery, was a continuation of Gill's craft community at Ditchling in Sussex [where Jones had lived], but in the far more remote and dramatic surroundings of the Black Mountains in Wales. (Miles, 2018)

Parhad o gymuned grefft Gill yn Ditchling, Sussex, [lle bu Jones yn byw] oedd Capel-y-ffin, cyn mynachlog, mewn ardal anghysbell, dramatig y Mynyddoedd Duon yng Nghymru. (Miles, 2018)



Fig 1. David Jones (1926) *Y Twmpa*

Fig 2 David Jones
(1924)
The Garden Enclosed

David Jones (1924)
The Garden



After he was received into the Roman Catholic church in 1921, Jones went to live with the artist Eric Gill and his family. The two figures in this picture represent Jones, and Gill's daughter Petra. The picture was painted to mark their engagement in June 1924, when Petra was not quite eighteen. The title alludes to the Song of Solomon, chapter 4, v.12 'A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse'. An enclosed garden is also frequently used as a symbol for the virginity of the Virgin Mary. The geese, sacred to the classical goddess Juno and associated with young girls, flee from the embracing couple, alarmed by their passion. The doll on the ground may symbolise lost childhood.

Gallery label, October 1999

For Jones, the four years of the community in Capel-y-ffin was an affirmation of his Welsh heritage and Catholicism. It offered escape from his wartime experiences and a cultural homecoming, and it was among the most productive periods of his career, with numerous paintings and engravings inspired by the surrounding landscape. It was also the place where he fell in and out of love with Gill's daughter, Petra. Significantly he never lived in Wales again, and never married. (Miles 2018)

I Jones, roedd y pedair blynedd yn byw yn y gymuned yng Nghapel-y-ffin yn gadarnhad o'i dreftadaeth Gymreig a'i Babyddiaeth. Roedd yn gyfle iddo ddianc o'i brofiadau yn ystod y rhyfel ac i ymgysylltu a'i gartref diwylliannol, roedd y cyfnod yma ymhlith y mwyaf cynhyrchiol o'i yrfa, gyda nifer o beintiadau ac engrafiadau a ysbrydolwyd gan y dirwedd o'i amgylch. Dyma hefyd y lle y syrthiodd i mewn ac allan o gariad gyda merch Gill, Petra. Yn arwyddocaol, ni fu erioed yn byw yng Nghymru eto, a ni briododd. (Miles 2018)

Fig 3 David Jones (c.1945–59)
Sketch of '*Dewi Sant*'

Jones (c.1945–59)
Braslun '*Dewi Sant*'



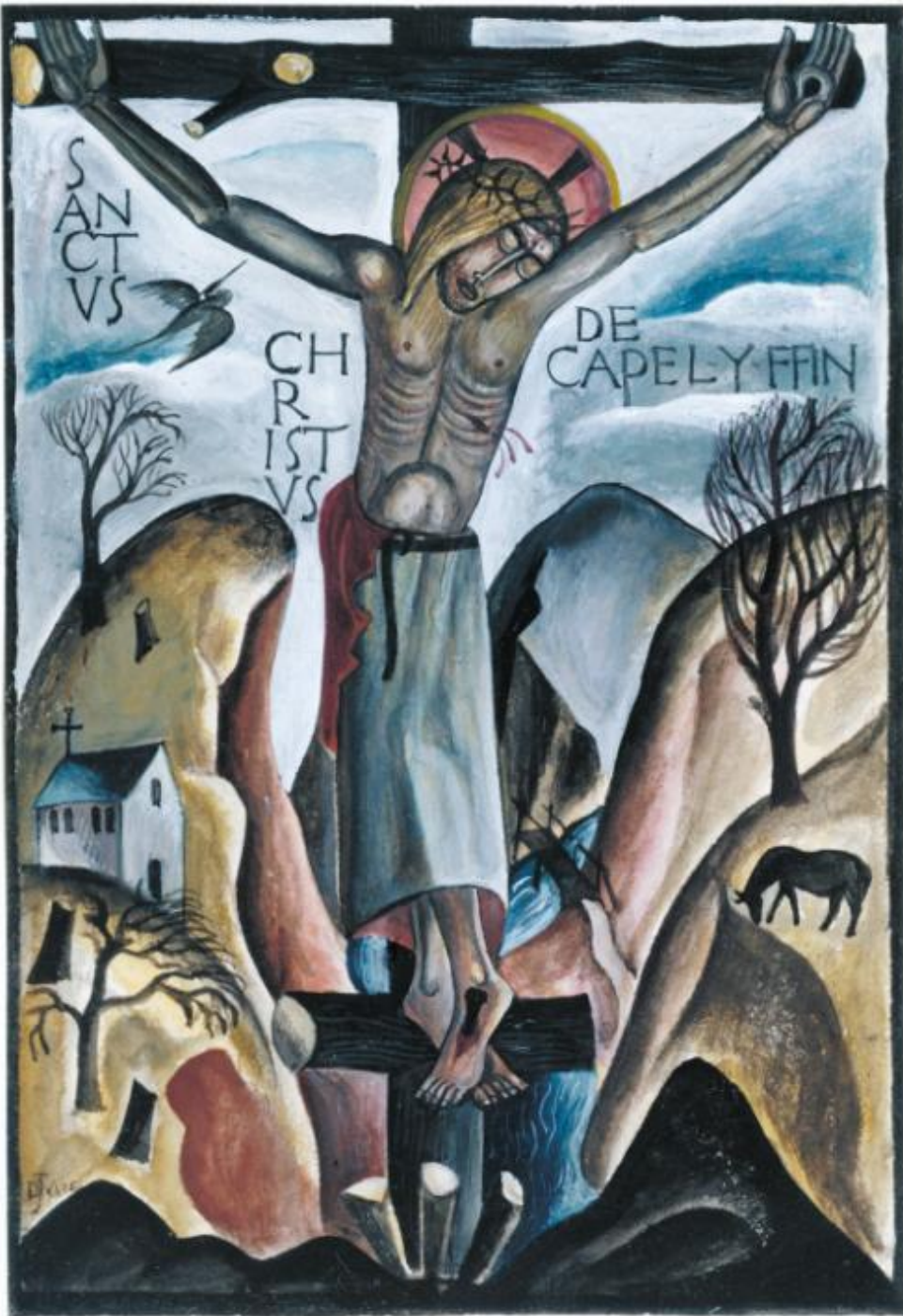


Fig 4 Jones (1925) *Sanctus Christus de Capel-y-ffin*

Capel-y-ffin was the former monastery in the Monmouthshire Black Mountains where Eric Gill and his family moved in August 1924. David Jones first visited them there the following December, and the building at the left of this drawing loosely resembles the monastery,

<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/jones-sanctus-christus-de-capel-y-ffin-t03677>

Idea : Syniad

- Paintings
- Transparency
- Approach to chaos
- Freedom
- The viewer needs to pause take time look at the painting and to read the painting
- Delicate and a kind of Shyness in them
- Balance between form and chaos in which the form seems to come alive and to move

Dillworth (2017)



Fig 5 David Jones (1931) *Petra im Rosenhag*

Petra daughter of Eric Gills
who Jones was engaged to
be married to whilst at Capel
y Ffin



Fig 6 Jones (1926) *The book of Jonah* page 7



GEIRIAU Y PREGETH-WR MAB DAFYDD
FRENIN YR HWN OEDD YN IERUSALEM

GWAGEDD O WAGEDD

medd y Pregeth-wr, gwagedd o wagedd, gwagedd yw'r
cwbl. Pa fodd sydd i ddyn o'i holl lafur, a gymmeryd efe
dann yr haul. Un genhedlaeth a aiff ymmaith, a chenbedl-
aeth arall a ddaw; ond y ddaiar a saif byth. Yr haul hefyd a
gyfjd, a'r haul a fachloda, ac a dynn i'w le, lle y mae yn codi.
Efe a aiff i'r deheu, ac a amgylcha i'r gogledd; y mae'r gwynn
yn myned oddi amgylch, ac yn dychwelyd yn ei gwmpas.
Yr holl afonydd a tédant i'r môr, ac etto nid yw'r môr yn
llawn; i ba le bynnac y rhêdo'r afonydd oddi yno y dychwel-
ant eu waith. Pôb peth sydd yn llawn blinder, ni ddichon
neb ei ddechrau; ni chaiff y llygad ddigon o edrych, na'r glust o
wrandio. Y peth a fu a fydd, a'r peth a wnaed a wnêir, ac nid
oes dim newydd dani yr haul. A oes dim y gellir dywedyd,
edrych ar hwn, dymma beth newydd: canys efe fu yn yr hen
amser o'n blaen ni. Nid oes goffa am y pethau gynt, ac ni
bydd coffa am y pethau a ddaw yn ôl, gan y rhai a ddaw ar
eu holl hwym. ✠ Myfi y Pregeth-wr oeddwn frenin Israel yn
Ierusalem: Ac a roddais fy mryd ar geisio, ac ar chwilio am
ddoethineb, am bôb peth a wnaed tann y nefoedd: dymma
drafael ffin a roddes Duw ar senbion dynnion i ynguro ynddi.
Mi a welais yr holl weithredoedd y rhai sydd tann haul, ac
uele y rhai hynny ôl ydynt wagedd a gorthrymder yspryd.

Fig 7 Jones (1927) *Llyfr y pregeth-wr. (Ecclesiastes)*

For this more abstract scriptural text, a volume commissioned by the Welsh Davies sisters and published in the same year as the Golden Cockerel's Deluge, Jones provides a single engraving, as frontispiece. Printed and bound by their Gregynog Press, this is a particularly rare book, as only 25 copies were printed

Depiction : Disgrifiad

- Poetry
 - Inscriptions / calligraphy
-
- Barddoniaeth
 - ysgrifau / caligraffi

Jones's poetry is difficult. It might help the reader as he reads the two hundred pages of *In Parenthesis* is to view it through two lenses. One lens is Celtic with its historical, mythological and linguistic tints. As you look notice the shadows, or echoes, of an earlier poetry by the sixth- century war poet Aneirin who documented the Thermopylae-like defeat of the Gododdin tribe by a superior Saxon force. There are echoes from the Mabinogi too especially with that magical cauldron that rejuvenated the fallen. The second lens is Christian, especially Roman Catholic, or rather, 'Catholic'. Both lenses are connected by the central motif of 'rebirth' bridging these two important traditions.

Nathan Llywelyn Munday (2014)

In Parenthesis

'This writing has to do with some things I saw,
felt, and was part of' Jones (1937) – preface to *In
Parenthesis*

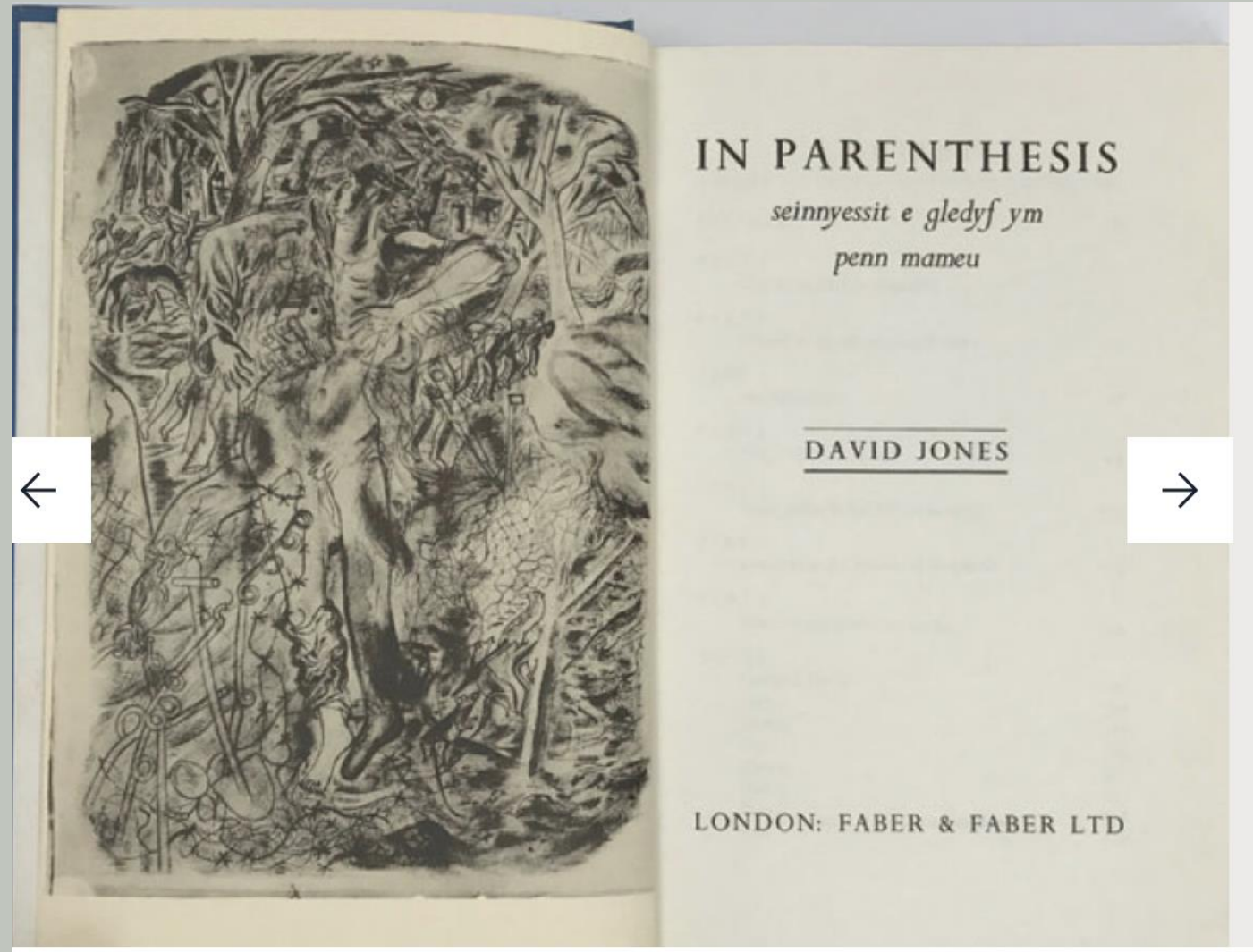
- Epic War poem – WW1 Published in 1937
- Follows the movements of the Welsh fusiliers on the front line
- Ending with the battle of the Somme and the assault at Mametz Wood where 1,000 Welsh men lost their lives, Jones survived.
- The prose – poem is partly autobiographical - English Private John Ball (Jones) narrates.
- In Parenthesis draws from history – Arthurian legends y Gododdin and it draws on the fact that other men in History have been to war.
- In parenthesis gives you a strong idea about what daily life in the trenches of WW1 was better than any other text. Tim Kendall (2013)
- 4000 missing, killed or injured (National Library of Wales and Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales, n.d.)



Fig 8 David Jones (1937) *Frontispiece for In Parenthesis*, [pencil, ink & watercolour} (Left)

©Estate of David Jones

Fig 9 In book below







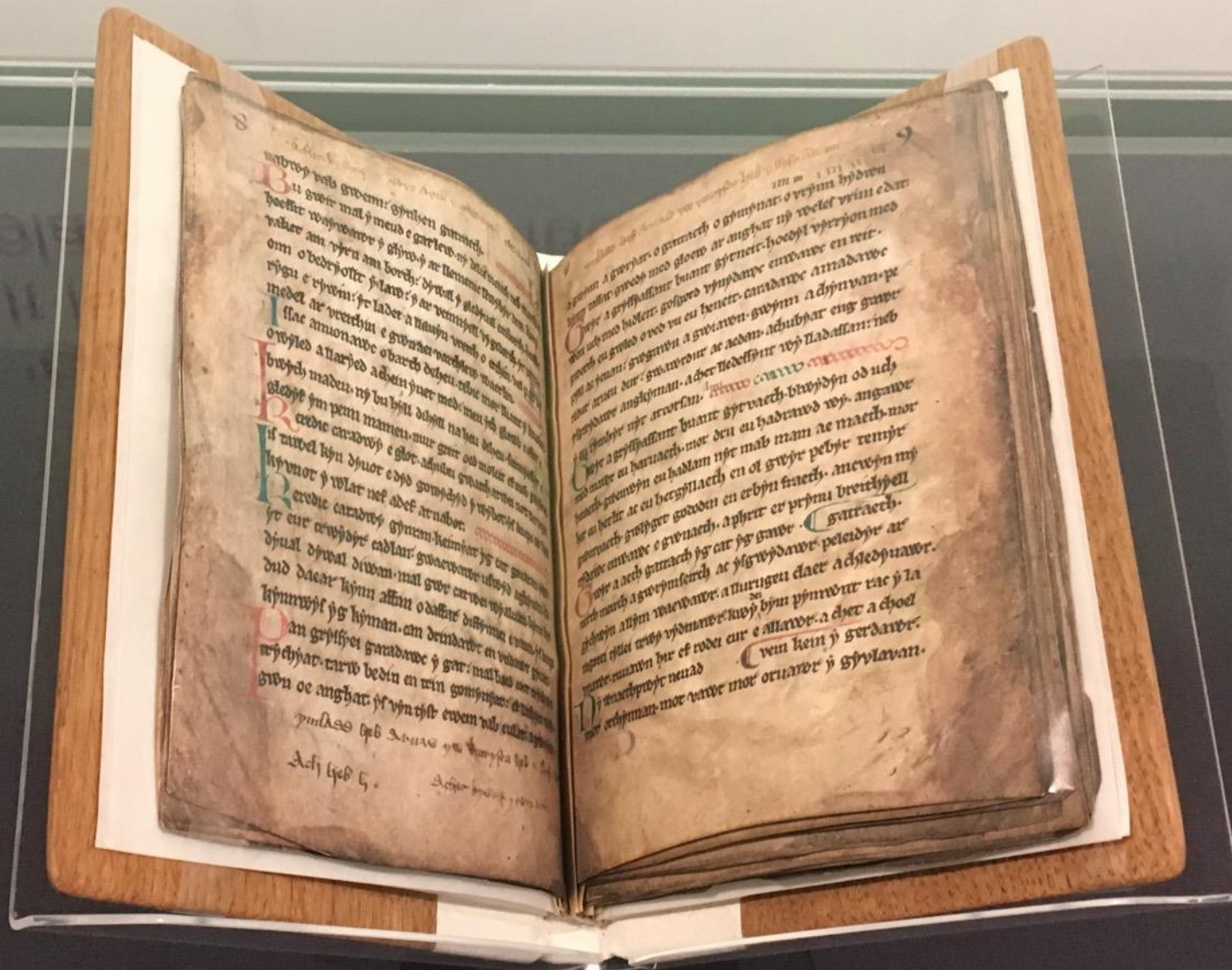


Fig 10 *Llyfr Aneurin*
Late 13th century
Contains *Y Gododdin*

(National Library of Wales/
Llyfrgell Genedlaethol
Cymru)

- ‘Welsh bards describing themselves as carpenters of song... Jones would later describe In Parenthesis as an attempt to make a shape in words’ Sheers (2016)



Fig 11 Aled Rhys Hughes (2016) *Live shells and detonators are unearthed by tree roots as army boots are nestled between tree trunks above [photograph] (Cymru Fyw, 2016)*



Fig 13. Aled Rhys Hughes (2016) *A shell stays wedged in a tree, a century after the battle took place* [photograph] (Cymru Fyw, 2016)



Mae'n bosib nad oes neb yn adnabod coedwig Mametz, lle lladdwyd 4000 o filwyr Cymru, cystal â'r ffotograffydd Aled Rhys Hughes.

Bues i mewn 'na tua 50 o weithie i gyd a ddes i ar draws tua chwech baner draig goch wedi eu hoelio i'r coed. Oedd bob un, oni bai am un, wedi bod 'na am flynyddoedd mawr ac maen nhw fel petaen nhw wedi tyfu i mewn i'r coed, neu'r coed wedi eu cymryd nhw i mewn.

Fig 14. Aled Rhys Hughes (2016) *Welsh dragon Flag on tree* [photograph] (*Cymru Fyw*, 2016)

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/cymrufyw/36725113>

Depiction or idea / disgrifiad neu syniad

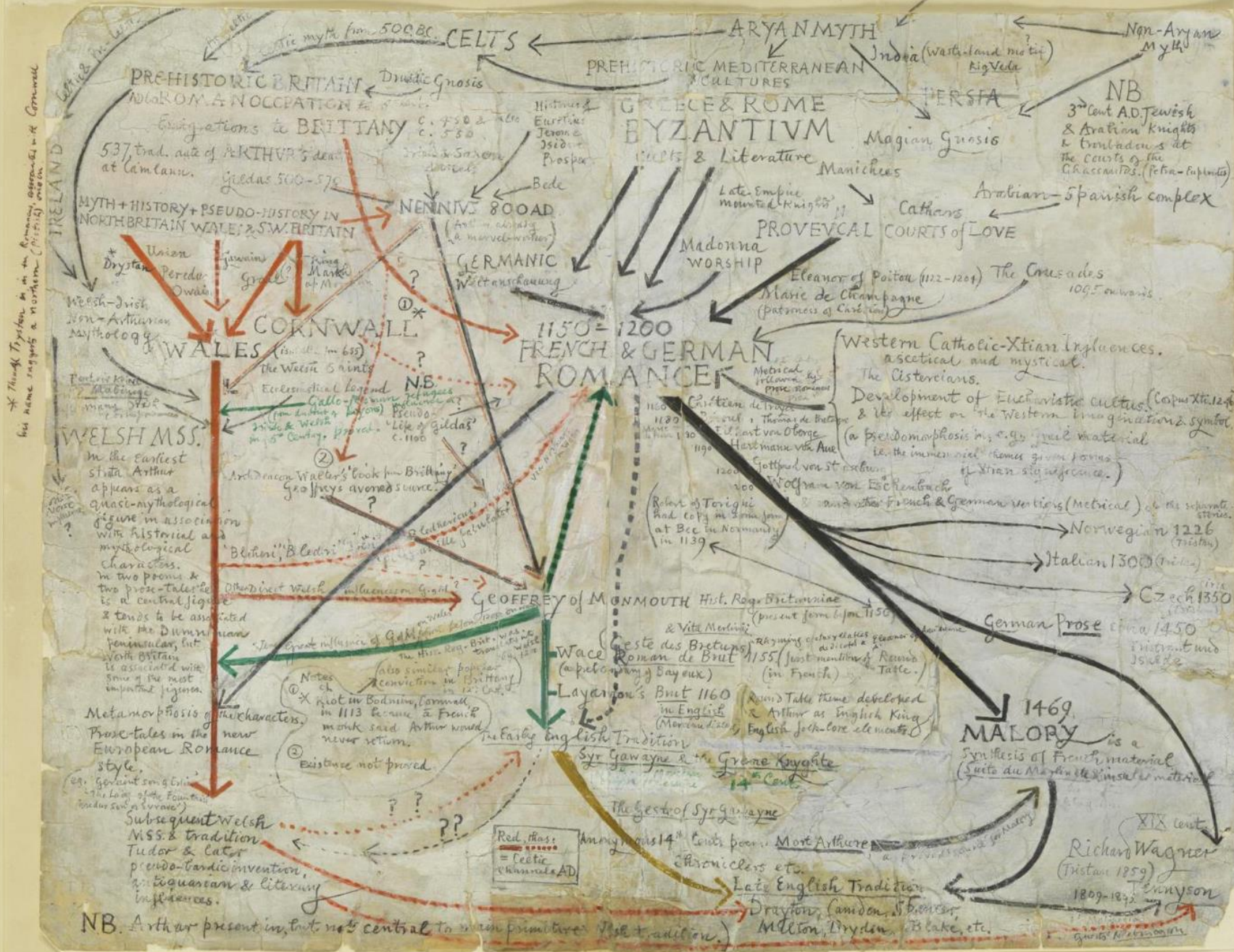
- Juxtaposed Welsh and Latin
- Jones didn't want the viewer to read the text but wanted the viewer to see them – A visual experience
- He invented the painted inscription as an art form

Dillworth (2017)

his mother was: like dew
DVM·MEDIVM·
SILENTIVM·
TENERENT·OMNIA·
ET·NOX·IN·SVO·CVRSV·
MEDIVM·ITER·HABERET·
OMNIPOTENS·SERMO·
TVVS·DNE·DE·CAELIS·
A·REGALIBVS·
SEDIBVS·Venit·
IN·FESTO·NATIVITATIS·DOMINI· MCM LII

Fig 15.

David Jones (1952)
Dum medium silentium
[calligraphy,
Water-colour, ink and
gouache]
[http://collections.vam.ac.uk
/item/O1304672/dum-
medium-silentium-
calligraphy-1952-
calligraphy-david-jones/](http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O1304672/dum-medium-silentium-calligraphy-1952-calligraphy-david-jones/)



‘Why then was this strange, shy, lonely man one of the greatest and most influential Welsh artists of the twentieth century? It is, I believe, because he identified so passionately with the idea of Wales, and of the importance of its language and culture to the shared experience of Britain over the last two thousand years. Jones was part of Wales's growing political and cultural consciousness during the 1950s and 1960s (a friend and correspondent was Saunders Lewis, a co-founder of Plaid Cymru)’ Oliver Fairclough (2013)

Images/ Delweddau

Fig 1. David Jones (1926) *Y Twmpa* [Water colour] Y Gaer Cultural Hub (Museum, Art Gallery & Library) Powys

Fig 2. David Jones (1924) *The Garden Enclosed* [Oil painting on Wood] Available at: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/jones-the-garden-enclosed-t02013> (Accessed: 20 October 2026)

Fig 3 David Jones (c.1945–59) Sketch of 'Dewi Sant' [Graphite on paper]. Available at: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/archive/items/tga-8222-1-74b/jones-sketch-of-dewi-sant> (Accessed: 20 October 2026)

Fig 4 Jones (1925) *Sanctus Christus de Capel-y-ffin* [Gouache and pencil on paper] Available at: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/jones-sanctus-christus-de-capel-y-ffin-t03677> (Accessed: 20 October 2026)

Fig 5 David Jones (1931) *Petra im Rosenhag* [watercolour gouache & pencil on paper] Amgueddfa Cymru- Museum Wales. Available at: <https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/petra-im-rosenhag-335211> (Accessed: 20 October 2026)

Fig 6 David Jones (1926) *The book of Jonah* page 7. Berkshire: Golden Cockerel Press.

Fig 7 David Jones (1927) *Llyfr y pregeth-wr. 9Ecclesiastes0* . Wales: Gregynog Press.

Fig 8 David Jones (1937) *Frontispiece for In Parenthesis*, [pencil, ink & watercolour] National Museum Cardiff

Fig 9. David Jones (1937) *In Parenthesis* London: Faber and Faber Ltd

Fig 10. *Llyfr Aneurin* (Late 13th century) National Library of Wales/ Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru) [photo Beynon 2018]

Fig 11. Aled Rhys Hughes (2016) *Live shells and detonators are unearthed by tree roots as army boots are nestled between tree trunks above* [photograph] (Cymru Fyw, 2016) Available at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/cymrufyw/36725113> (Accessed: 20 October 2026)

Fig 12. Aled Rhys Hughes (2016) A shell stays wedged in a tree, a century after the battle took place [photograph] Cymru Fyw, 2016 Available at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/cymrufyw/36725113> (Accessed: 20 October 2026)

Fig 13. Aled Rhys Hughes (2016) A shell stays wedged in a tree, a century after the battle took place

[photograph] Cymru Fyw, 2016 Available at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/cymrufyw/36725113> (Accessed: 20 October 2026)

Fig 14. Aled Rhys Hughes (2016) *Welsh dragon Flag on tree* [photograph Cymru Fyw, 2016 Available at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/cymrufyw/36725113> (Accessed: 20 October 2026)

Fig 15. David Jones (1952) *Dum medium silentium* [calligraphy, Water-colour, ink and gouache] Available at: <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O1304672/dum-medium-silentium-calligraphy-1952-calligraphy-david-jones/> (Accessed: 20 October 2026)

Fig 16. David Jones (1943) *Chart of sources for Arthurian legends* Also known as *Map of themes in the artist's mind* [Graphite text with ink on paper] Available at: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/archive/items/tga-8222-1-68/jones-chart-of-sources-for-arthurian-legends> (Accessed: 20 October 2026)

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