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***DAVID JONES' THE ANATHEMATA:  
IS MODERN EPIC POSSIBLE?***

**Keywords:** *genre, epic, modernity, modernism, fragmentation*

**Abstract:** *The epic poem is a problematic genre in the modern era, and might be regarded as having ceased to thrive in Western Literature since the Renaissance. Attempts have been made in criticism to assert that the genre of the epic poem has been replaced by the novel, a genre representative of the modern world view. In this article I shall discuss the reasons for the modern era being a sterile period for the genre of the epic poem. I shall suggest that modern thought is characterised by a scepticism and fragmentariness inconsistent with the cosmic vision which the full epic seeks to express. Traditional epics portray a cosmos in which natural and supernatural realms interact with each other, and modern writers rarely clearly portray the coexistence and interaction of two such realms. The Anglo-Welsh modernist poet and painter David Jones, however, wrote as one of his two main literary works The Anthemata, a long poem which is epic in scope and theme, while embodying at the same time a modern fragmentariness. That he is able to attempt and, arguably, succeed in presenting an epic vision during the time of high modernism is due, I shall argue, to his adherence to a pre-modern world view (including an evocation of natural and supernatural realms and their interaction), adapting it, however, to modern circumstances. I shall endeavour to show how The Anthemata embodies a full cosmic vision, in the traditional epic fashion, while the author is also able to incorporate elements reflective of modern conditions into the form of his text.*