

THE PRIMARY VISION

A Study of the Work of

LAURA (RIDING) JACKSON

by

MARK JACOBS

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Summary

The Primary Vision is an attempt to reach an understanding of the work of Laura (Riding) Jackson, long considered by the majority of critics as 'obscure', and to demonstrate the effect of her work on and place in contemporary literature. Part One examines Mrs. Jackson's prose up to the late 1930s. It begins with A Survey Of Modernist Poetry, considered as pertinent to her developing thought rather than that of Robert Graves, followed by an examination of the critical work and stories, and concludes with the three volumes of Epilogue, edited and massively contributed to by her. This prepares the ground for the study in Part Two of Mrs. Jackson's poems, her central preoccupation in these years. It seeks to demonstrate how her poems are, with especial reference to her Collected Poems (1938), a clear and literal record of the discovery that the practise of poetry locks knowledge of the nature of truth within its inhibiting processes, and how this led Mrs. Jackson to the renunciation of poetry. Part Three looks at the period from the appearance of Collected Poems to the present, during which time Mrs. Jackson devoted her time to the study of language, and, with her husband, the writing of a book on the nature of language. First are examined the reasons for Mrs. Jackson's renunciation of poetry, to be found in articles and essays published since 1940, and her recent book, The Telling. Then consideration is given to why her renunciation was necessary for the writing of The Telling, and how this book takes as its

(Summary continued)

ground an area of thought always implicit in the promise of poetry but incapable of fulfilment until poetry has been left behind. Finally, the Appendix demonstrates how various critical treatments of Mrs. Jackson and her work, in contexts of the work of Robert Graves, have manifestly failed to give a just account of it and its relation with his work.

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A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T S

My warmest thanks and my gratitude go to Laura (Riding) Jackson for her guidance on biographical matters, her sending me material otherwise difficult of access, and her infinite patience in answering questions; to Mr. Alan Clark, Mrs. Jackson's bibliographer, for the loan of important books, xerexes of early printed poems and essays, permission to use our joint essay as an appendix, and for bibliographical help; and to Mr. G.S. Fraser, my supervisor at Leicester University, for his critical help and for his time spent in energetic discussion with me. Above all, my heart-felt thanks to my wife, Barbara, for her hand in correction and criticism.

PART ONE:

THE EARLY PROSE

CHAPTER 1

A Survey Of Modernist Poetry

Laura (Riding) Jackson was born in New York City on 16th January, 1901. Her father, Nathaniel Reichenthal, had emigrated from Austria while still in his teens, and was a tailor by trade, possessed of a lively and witty urbane mind. His business interests, we are told, in Twentieth Century Authors, varied greatly, and, though remaining undaunted, he was consistently unsuccessful. He was a fastidiously honest man, "of such an honesty that my mother used to raise her eyes in near-incomprehension" in describing the limits to which he would go,¹ and possessed much faith in political solutions of an idealistic nature. Her mother was born in downtown Manhattan, a mixture of plain American country stock and upper-class Dutch. There was a sister, seven years older than herself, who trained as a singer, and a brother eleven years younger.

Mrs. Jackson's primary school life was unsettled due to movements caused by her father's business interests; but her secondary schooling was spent securely at the Girls' High School, Brooklyn, where she received a thorough grounding in education, especially in English grammar, syntax and punctuation, and Latin and French. Later, it is evident, these were to serve her well. In 1922, she went to the University of Cornell, where she studied general arts, with the benefit of three scholarships, and there met and married Louis Gottschalk, a

1 A Letter Of Varied Comentary with a Postscript, by Laura (Riding) Jackson, submitted to the Modern Language Association (U.S.A.) seminar, 'Laura Riding and Robert Graves', December, 1974.

history instructor. It was at Cornell that she began writing poems and soon after had some accepted for publication by the now famous magazine, The Fugitive (April, 1922 to December, 1925), of Nashville, Tennessee, which awarded her a \$100 prize and made her an honorary member. She did not complete her degree at Cornell, her husband taking a post at the University of Illinois, but she continued to study. In 1925 she and her husband were divorced.

During 1925 she lived in New York, working at writing, and publishing poems. Here she met Hart Crane, with whom there was friendship, and, briefly, Edmund Wilson, but in general she did not like the literary ambitiousness of the New York literary scene. Meanwhile, Robert Graves, who had been shown her poems in The Fugitive, had begun a correspondence with her, and invited her over to England. In December, 1925, she left for Europe, to spend the next thirteen years there.

Early in that year, she went with Graves and his family to Egypt, where Graves had a lecturing post at Cairo University, but after about six months they returned to England to live in Islip, Oxfordshire, where she and Graves rented a cottage, which she named 'World's End', as a work place. Later, in 1927, Graves's wife, Nancy Nicholson, took a cottage in the north of England and lived there with the children, while she and Graves rented a flat in London close to the Thames at Hammersmith. They also bought a barge where Nancy Nicholson and the children would stay from time to time. It was here, in St. Peter's Square, 1927, that she, with Graves's help, began the Seizin Press. During this period, A Survey of Modernist Poetry was written, and was published in 1927 by William Heinemann.

This book, from Mrs. Jackson's point of view, has had a history of mistreatment since it first appeared. It has

been consistently but totally incorrectly described as having been written by Robert Graves, with Laura Riding, as she was then called, either nowhere in sight or, depressingly, tacked on as an after-thought as: "...by Robert Graves (with Laura Riding)". It has been thus, with rare exceptions, that the order of names has appeared throughout long years of critical review and mention in reputable and non-reputable books, quarterly journals and newspapers. The most notable case of this, perhaps, is Professor William Empson who, when his book on ambiguity was published, the idea of which originated in A Survey, acknowledged it as source material as being by Graves alone; and, even when the authors pointed out his 'mistake', grudgingly acceded to the request that her name be included on a corrections slip in the next reprint. A much more horrifying case is that of Robert Graves himself who, in The Common Asphodel, under his authorship, quoted from A Survey, making unauthorised alterations to the text, and referred to the book as, in general assumption, his, the authorship status of Mrs. Jackson being reduced to "with Laura Riding" in small print. This "by Robert Graves (with Laura Riding)" has since become the standard reference in books such as The Oxford Companion To English Literature. This disgraceful treatment of Mrs. Jackson by Graves has a long and involved history which springs from an obsession of his to expunge her from his literary record so that his work will deceive readers into believing that his ideas are his own.¹

1 For a fuller account of this see 'Some Autobiographical Corrections Of Literary History' by Laura (Riding) Jackson; Denver Quarterly, Volume 8, Number 4, Winter, 1974. Also 'Focus On Robert Graves', Modern Language Association (U.S.A.) where an article by Michael Kirkham ('Robert Graves's Debt To Laura Riding')² and one by Mark Jacobs with a supplementary note by Alan Clark (Critical Misreading Anthony Thwaite on Laura (Riding) Jackson') appear. This now appears below in revised form as an Appendix. See below p.

Two or three generations of readers, by this sleight-of-hand reversal of the two authors' names, have been deceived into thinking that A Survey falls under the general govern^{or}ship of Robert Graves: that it is to be accounted one of his books, that the lion's share in the book is his. It is not. It is hers. The correct and veritably accurate record of the authors' names is as it is to be found on the spine and on the title-page of the book: 'Laura Riding and Robert Graves'. It is she, not Graves, who laid down the principles of analysis around which the book revolves, including the analysis of Shakespeare's sonnet which Empson first seized upon to exploit for his Seven Types Of Ambiguity. It is she who, unprejudiced, calm, succinct, investigates and orders the energetic and conflicting state of modernist poetry. It is she, in bestowing order upon the to-ing and fro-ing of the various emergent poets and poet-groups, who succeeds in locating the only possible path of poetic continuation, if poetry was to do more than merely maintain its dignity. And it was she, in her rapidly following critical books, who developed and extended the principles and the discoveries made in A Survey, carrying them with her through her writing career, not to be regurgitated, merely, tiredly as occasion might seem to warrant, but as active and living principles from which to travel forward to new hinterlands of discovery.

This is as true of the other collaborative ventures of the two authors. A Pamphlet Against Anthologies is based on principles formulated by Mrs. Jackson and livingly adopted and developed by her. The Seizin Press was founded by her on her editorial principles; and Epilogue, that hefty magazine of the Thirties produced by Seizin Press, was founded and editorially guided -- massively so -- under her distinctive hand.

It is necessary, so much ignorance there is on this subject, so many half-truths and lies, to insist upon the intellectual and workaday practical effort which Mrs. Jackson injected into these ventures in order to set the literary record, disordered, one-sided and prejudiced as it is, straight; so that if I say, as I do, that Mrs. Jackson says this and this in A Survey, it has literal force and may not be interpreted as to the effect 'Well, of course, it was really Graves who wrote or said that....' or 'She learned that from Robert Graves'. Mrs. Jackson had nothing to learn from Robert Graves, and the trouble with Graves was (and is) that he learned nothing from Mrs. Jackson -- he only took.

Graves plays no part in this dissertation except that thought of him must be cleared from the way where, as it does here, his presence creates muddle. Much of the substance of what Graves has appropriated from Mrs. Jackson's work, with quotations and refutations, may be found in the articles mentioned in the footnote on page 7. Here, though, are two examples to give an indication of grossness of wrongdoing by Graves in Mrs. Jackson's regard.

In The Common Asphodel and in the Penguin edition of The Crowning Privilege (1959), both by Robert Graves, will be found an essay entitled 'Nietsche'. This essay is by Mrs. Jackson. Its original appearance was in Epilogue I, Autumn, 1935 (pp.113-125) where it falls under the general heading 'Germany' and forms one of three essays, each initialled by its author. The three authors are Laura Riding, John Cullen, and Madeleine Vara. The essay on Nietsche is followed by the initials 'M.V.' -- Madeleine Vara -- which was the pseudonym of Laura Riding. The identification of this

pseudonym was authorized by Mrs. Jackson in Michael Kirkham's 'Robert Graves's Debt to Laura Riding' (see above, footnote, page 7). To present twice, as one's own, an essay by another is a clear example, among many possible, of Gravesian appropriation.

My second example is the most recent I can find. In July, 1975, the quarterly magazine The Malahat Review¹ devoted all of its 188 pages to a celebration of 'The Eightieth Birthday of Robert Graves'. This magazine, according to its own self-lauding lights, has been highly praised by leading authorities in all parts of the globe where English is a subject for critical study. There are so many possible examples, out of upwards of twenty adulatory essays and personal recollections by critics and writers of some standing, that might be chosen as instances of critical irresponsibility, that to be drawn into the debate would involve a year's hard work of constructive correction. One essay will have to suffice for the present as typifying the others. On Page 73 is an essay by Anthony Kerrigan entitled; in a manner fully descriptive of its contents, 'Brief Account Of The Foreign Displacement, Movements, and Whereabouts of the Seizin/Albion Press'. There is no mention in this account of The Seizin Press of Laura Riding's role as its founder, and there is no mention of Laura Riding at all except to recall her 'description' of the Seizin. The only mention of ownership is shrouded in the curious phrase, "the Seizin printer-publishers" who transported the press "to Mallorca", and this is already put at disadvantage by the opening sentence in the phrase ".....the Seizin Press was acquired in England....." By whom? The reader is forced, by the very

1 The Malahat Review edited by Robin Skelton and William David Thomas, University of Victoria, Canada. Number 35, July, 1975, 188 pp. plus silkscreen portrait of Graves.

nature of the format of this issue, to think of Robert Graves. This is further ensured in the second paragraph which begins, "Robert Graves remembers disposing of the press to a...." Should that not be enough, Laura Riding is given the final coup de grâce in the closing paragraph, one which, knowing something of the facts, can be seen for what it is:

The Seizin Albion is not "For Sale" (by the way). But. "Freedom" is a key word in the dictionary definition of "seizin". Supposing that a committee was formed and funded to retrieve it, house it on this same Robert-Gravesian island, and put it to work ... on, say, seizin-ist or seizin-ish broadsheets/broadsides...?

Youthful or enthusiastic ignorance? The essay is signed as having come from "Palma de Mallorca, Winter, 1975"!

These two examples will be sufficient to warn against the kind of influence exerted by Graves, as well as his duplicity, where Laura (Riding) Jackson is concerned. I am only too aware of the tendency among Gravesian critics and readers to see 'Laura Riding' as an acolyte who followed Graves from England to Majorca until eventually he was relieved of her presence. So far has this taken hold of people's minds (any book on Graves or in which he figures provides evidence) that one would think, as is the intention, that she did not and does not exist except as a passing influence.

The stressing of these aspects of the collaborative ventures of Mrs. Jackson and Mr. Graves is unfortunate but necessary if it is to be seen that the collaborations are of more importance in her work than in his. Mr. Graves, in his later criticism, such as the Oxford lectures, often repeats, with only slight embroidering, the contents of these early books. His animadversions against poets such as Eliot, Pound and Yeats, for example, are only modified versions of what is said of these authors in A Survey and Pamphlet Against

Anthologies. Mr. Graves stopped there. Even his principles of criticism are taken from there. Mrs. Jackson, however, did not rest there but took what was there forward with her in a process of developing clarification and ordering of the issues. So, in A Survey Of Modernist Poetry, the main issue is taken up in her next book, Contemporaries And Snobs. And if we are to understand her work, we must first understand the principles she laid down in A Survey of Modernist Poetry.

A Survey is precisely what its title says. It is not a history or an evaluation of one poet as opposed to another, or even an evaluation of one kind of poetry as opposed to another, with urgings to the reader to take this or that side. It is completely unprejudiced on any side. Its subject is the terrain of contemporary poetry, as much as it was possible to survey, in order to discover why it was so and what it signified, and from this to fix the location of the two authors in it. Its nature is not to praise or adversely criticise but to clarify; and what it clarifies is the root meaning of poetry and the rôle of the poet.

In order to do this, however, it first had to establish the authenticity of modernist poetry against the increasing attacks made upon it by what it terms the 'plain reader', among whose numbers may be found the critic who is also a reader. There was, and to a certain extent there still is, a surprising amount of antagonism towards modernist poets such as T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, E.E. Cummings, Wallace Stevens, Marianne Moore and others. Only towards Eliot can it safely be said that this antagonism has to a large extent died away. To the modernist poetry reader of the 1920's, poetry of this kind must, obviously, have appeared obscure to the point of perversity. The question A Survey seeks an answer to is,

what reason can be found for the obscurity of modernist poetry?

Criticism has had a relatively brief career in the history of letters. The rise of criticism and the poets' critical consciousness began, say the authors, as poetry became less and less of a universal subject, in which was embraced all other subjects, and was forced to justify its existence. Gradually the subjects which once belonged to poetry, such as history, psychology, moral philosophy -- things which were held in poetry's mantle to be delivered to the reading or listening public -- were wrought into specialist fields to be made professionally respectable. People no longer went to poetry for advice but to the experts. In this climate poetry had to shake itself up, had to prove itself also respectable, also expert.

The 'Conclusion' to A Survey, written by Mrs. Jackson and later included, in revised form, in Contemporaries And Snobs, puts the point admirably:

The greatest difficulty is obviously to define 'poetry as a whole' from the point of view of a temporary personal consciousness -- that of the poet or reader -- attempting to connect itself with a long-term impersonal consciousness, an evolving professional sense. Yet it is easier to do this now than formerly, since poetry, which was once an all-embracing human activity, has been narrowed down by the specialization of other general activities, such as religion and the arts and sciences, into a technical branch of culture of the most limited kind. It has been changed from a 'humanity' into an 'art'; it has attempted to discipline itself with a professionalized criticism which was not needed in the time of the balladists or in primitive societies where poetry went hand in hand with magical religion. Modern civilization seems to demand that the poet should justify himself not only by writing poems but furthermore by proving with each poem the contemporary legitimacy of poetry itself -- the professional authority of the term 'poet' in fact. And though in a few rare cases the poet may succeed even now in writing by nature without historical or professional effort, he is in general too conscious of the forced professionalization of poetry to be able to avoid justifying himself and his work professionally, that is, critically, as a point of honour. Yet if he does admit poetry to be only one of the specialized, professionalized activities of his period, like music, painting, radiology, aerostatics, the cinema, modern tennis or morbid psychology, he must see it as a very small patch

on the time-chart, a mere dot; because society allows less and less space for poetry in its organization. The only way that this dot on the time-chart can provide itself with artificial dignity and space is through historical depth; if its significance in a particular period is no greater than the size of a dot on the period's time-chart, then to make itself an authoritative expression of this period it must extend this dot into the past, it must make a historical straight line of it. Poetry becomes the tradition of poetry.

(A Survey p. 260)

Criticism arose in order to justify poetry as more and more of its functions were taken over. From being the only comprehensive humanity, poetry gradually and increasingly had to prove to the public that it had any function at all, and criticism stepped in to save the day. It bestowed upon poetry a respectable history and tradition, establishing its period character; it interpreted the meaning of poetry and explained its craft; pointed to the 'values' of poetry, how it is good, bad, false, true, aesthetic or vulgar. In a word, it gave poetry back to itself.

We have here a good example of both the nature and mode of Mrs. Jackson's thought, and if we seek its level we find it to be a primary one. Her question is not about the history and development of criticism but whence arose criticism and why. And her answer is not, Here is the history of the development of criticism, but, Here is the reason for criticism, why it came to be. Criticism came to the defence of poetry when poetry was under attack. Poetry has been under attack from Renaissance times onwards, and, since Chaucer, rationalisations, 'defences', apologies and manifestoes of various kinds have been common. Poetry lost ground as its functions were removed from it. From being the storehouse of accumulated wisdom to which all other wisdoms deferred, it became, as other areas of knowledge grew professionally expert, a suspect humanity, an art, only. In order to become respectable it

had to justify its existence, and when criticism, in the persons of poets themselves to begin with, offered it a tradition, a history of period differences, a methodology of technique (no longer craft), a scale of values determining good from bad, poetry readily accepted. Poetry could now justify itself by pointing to its long past. This Mrs. Jackson saw clearly.

The problem was, however, particularly in the modernist poetry of the twentieth century, that the poet was now saddled with criticism. He could no longer be a 'born' poet, writing from the human centre, but, if he was to win acceptance in any quarter, must show himself professionally aware of what is and is not good poetry:

The tradition of poetry, or rather of the art of poetry, then, is the formal organization which the modernist poet finds himself serving as an affiliated member. He must not only have a personal capacity for poetry; that is merely an apprentice certificate. He must also have a master's sense of the historical experience of poetry - of its past functions and usefulness, its present fitness and possibilities. He must have a science of 'values' of poetry, a scale of bad and good, false and true, ephemeral and lasting; a theory of the tradition of poetry in which successive period-poetries are historically judged either favourably or unfavourably and in which his own period-poetry is carefully adjusted to satisfy the values which the tradition is believed to be continuously evolving. As this tradition is seen as a logical historical development, these values, in their most recent statement, are considered, if observed, sufficient to produce the proper poetic expression of the age. So the poet has no longer to make adjustment to his social environment, as the hero-celebrating bard of the Beowulf time or the religious poet of ancient Egypt had, but critical adjustments to a special tradition of poetic values; and to his own period only an indirect adjustment through the past, the past seen as the poetry of the past narrowing down to the poetry of the present.

(A Survey p.261-2)

This is the point towards which A Survey of Modernist Poetry moves, the principles which govern its direction. The inference which may be drawn from this passage is that modernist poetry is removed from the person, the heart of the poet, the very

essence of the human perceiver, and is written from the professional viewpoint, so that "poetry becomes so sophisticated that it seems to know at last how it should be written and written at the very moment" (p.263). The modernist poem makes the question of acceptance by a future generation redundant, so sharp is its awareness of what it should be and what it should not be. A critical consciousness is all that is required. It might seem that this would free poets to write well, in that it shows them clearly how not to write badly:

But on the contrary it hampers them with the consideration of all the poets who have ever written or may be writing or may ever write -- not only in the English language but in all languages of the world under every possible social organization. It invents a communal poetic mind which sits over the individual poet whenever he writes; it binds him with the necessity of writing correctly in extension of the tradition, the world-tradition of poetry; and so makes poetry an even narrower period activity than it is forced to be by outside influences.

(A Survey p.264)

Criticism instead of helping is a tyranny. The force of its arguments are negative: what not to do. It cannot aid the poet by showing what ought to be done.

What Mrs. Jackson is attempting to do is to place poetry back with the poet instead of leaving it in the hands of criticism. To comprehend life, which is everything there is, it must be confronted directly, and not be squinted at through the blinkers of sociology, psychology, economic determinism, science or religion. These are part perceptions, while what is needed for truth is whole perception. Poetry, though she later rejects it, offered, once critical tyranny had been removed, this wholeness of perception because it was not enslaved in the various branches of learning, promising instead direct communication:

A strong distinction must be drawn between poetry as something developing through civilization and as

something developing organically by itself -- not a minor branch of human endeavour but a complete and separate form of energy which is neither more nor less in the twentieth century A.D. than in the tenth century B.C., nor a different kind of energy now from what it was in Homeric times, but merely lodged in different, or other, persons.

(A Survey p.163)

Poetry has two faces, the one civilized, the other purely itself. It is this second kind of poetry which is true poetry, which develops "organically by itself" and which must be distinguished from false civilized poetry, which is poetry written according to the dictates of civilization, criticism, the plain reader. Thus, a passage which may at first appear to overstate the case against modernist poetry's slavish adherence to critical fiat, takes on deeper perspective:

Cock-a-hoop scientists like Mr. J.B.S. Haldane write that 'not until our poets are once more drawn from the educated classes (I speak as a scientist), will they appeal to the average man by showing him the beauty in his own life'. There are poets who take this challenge seriously and even resume Tennyson's curriculum where he left off. Alfred Noyes, although neither mature nor serious, has written a long narrative poem The Torch Bearers to celebrate the progress of science from its beginnings to its present days. Patronizing of modern musical theory appears in the poetry of W.J. Turner, of modern painting theory in that of Edith Sitwell and Sacheverell Sitwell, of psychological theory in that of Herbert Read and Archibald Macleish, of modern sex-engrossment in that of D.H. Lawrence, of philosophical theory in that of Conrad Aikin and T.S. Eliot, of encyclopaedic learning in that of Marianne Moore and T.S. Eliot -- and so on and so on. This reaction inspires not only an emulative display of modernist learning and subjects, but also a cultivation of fine-writing to prove that this generation can beat the most cunning Elizabethan, Romantic Revivalist or Victorian at his own game. The task it sets itself is to be advanced and yet elegant: mere low-browness being considered too primitive a reaction.

(A Survey p.168)

It comes as something of a surprise to see Lawrence, Eliot and even Moore in that list, and yet it is perfectly correct, as the authors proceed to demonstrate. All these are keeping one step ahead of civilization by showing their expertness, as

Eliot did, in the classics, anthropology, philosophy. This is not being merely of one's age, but being in advance of one's age. Eliot was not writing poetry, he was writing intelligent, advanced poetry, where the essence of the poem itself was overlaid by selfconscious critical sophistication. "Compare," says Mrs. Jackson in her 'Conclusion', "the highly organized nature of Mr. Eliot's criticism in its present stage with the gradual disintegration of his poetry since The Waste Land"(p.267).

Throughout A Survey it is shown how critical consciousness in the poet hampers the writing of poems. The difference between Cummings and Shakespeare, for example, is that Cummings' apparently eccentric typography is designed to protect him from having his poems read in any other way than that in which he wrote them. His punctuation and presentation ensure that that is exactly the way they will appear at any future date. The example they choose as an obscure poem, and it still serves today, is an early E.E. Cummings' poem, 'Sunset':

stinging
gold swarms
upon the spires
silver

 chants the litanies the
great bells are ringing with rose
the lewd fat bells
 and a tall

wind
is dragging
the
sea

with

dream

-5

After discussing the poem at length, the authors offer the following as an example of how Cummings might have written his poem had he written the poem in the way his detractors

wanted him to:

SUNSET PIECE

After reading Rémy De Gourmont

White foam and vesper wind embrace.
 The salt air stings my dazzled face
 And sunset flecks the silvery seas
 With glints of gold like swarms of bees
 And lifts tall dreaming spires of light
 To the imaginary sight,
 So that I hear loud mellow bells
 Swinging as each great wave swells,
 Wafting God's perfumes on the breeze,
 And chanting of sweet litanies
 Where jovial monks are on their knees,
 Bell-paunched and lifting glutton eyes
 To windows rosy as these skies.

And this slow wind - how can my dreams forget --
 Dragging the waters like a fishing-net.

As they point out, this version is full of clichés and echoes from other well-known poets, so that "Cummings was bound to write the poem as he did in order to prevent it from becoming what we have made it." The point is that Cummings is not writing a 'new' poem -- he is avoiding writing an old poem. What is in play in 'Sunset' is not the poetic faculty but the critical faculty. Its author is not critically aware of how to write a poem, which is something criticism could not and cannot provide, but only aware of how not to write a poem. This active critical consciousness, the authors establish, is the predominant feature of modernist poetry, its over-riding concern: how not to make the mistakes of the past. And this to the extent, too, that T.S. Eliot was bent on improving the poetry of the past. Cummings' poem, the authors demonstrate, is no more nor less 'difficult' than Shakespeare's Sonnet 129, only it is 'difficult' for different reasons. He is protecting himself from the strong tendency of readers and anthologists and critics alike to make a poem 'clearer' by 'correcting' its punctuation and arrangement -

the fate which befell Shakespeare's Sonnet 129. Cummings is forced to write the poem 'Sunset' the way he did because he is critically aware of the likelihood of its being tampered with. His concern is with self-protection against the audience. Shakespeare's concern, however, was with the poem alone, and because of this his poem is, in fact, more complex than Cummings's:

By giving typography an active part to play he (Cummings) makes his poems fixed and accurate in a way that Shakespeare's are not. In doing this he loses the fluidity Shakespeare got by not cramping his poems with heavy punctuation and by placing more trust in the plain reader -- by leaving more to his imagination than he seems to have deserved.

(A Survey p.75)

Shakespeare, free of the concern of an audience, puts all his concentration into the poem: "The modernist poet handles the problem by trying to get the most out of his audience" (p.78).

When complaints are levelled, then, at the work of such poets as T.S.Eliot, it is not an attempt to establish whether it is good or bad but to demonstrate the restrictions criticism, and the critical consciousness, has placed upon poetry, forcing poetry to be other than poetry pure. What A Survey seeks to show is the crippling effect that criticism has, in its accumulated wisdom, upon modernist poets where it is allowed more than its fair share of consciousness in the making of a poem. For all their apparently adverse comments on T.S. Eliot and Edith Sitwell, adverse at least in the sense of pointing out their shortcomings, the authors can still say that "the confusion of the modern poetic scene is increased by the failure of even the specialized poetry-reading public to distinguish genuine poetry like a not inconsiderable part of Messrs. Eliot, Cummings and Miss

Sitwell..." (p.201).

Yet even criticism itself was not altogether a bad thing, as Mrs. Jackson points out in her 'Conclusion'. Poetry did need sharpening, did need the dross cut away, did need freeing from its staleness, its worn out poeticisms, and in this sense poetry was alive and vibrant, more so than it had been for years. It was only too much criticism that was at fault, and this was the general tendency of the time:

There has been, we see, a short and very concentrated period of carefully disciplined and self-conscious poetry. It has been followed by a pause, an embarrassed pause after an arduous and erudite stock-taking. The next stage is not clear. But it is not impossible that there will be a resumption of less eccentric, less strained, more critically unconscious poetry, purified however by this experience of historical effort. In the period just passing no new era was begun. A climax was merely reached in criticism by a combination of sophistication and a desire for a new enlightened primitiveness. Wherever attempts at sheer newness in poetry were made they merely ended in dead movements. Yet the new feeling in criticism did achieve something. It is true in the more extreme cases that by turning into a critical philosophization of itself, poetry ceased to be poetry: it became poetically introspective philosophy. But this was perhaps necessary before poetry could be normal without being vulgar, and deal naturally with truth without being trite.

(A Survey p.265)

So the effect of criticism was to constrict poetry and yet, at the same time, by eliminating the faults of the past, it was possible that it would make way for a new kind of poetry, one which would not be trite as it had been in the past, nor vulgar as it was during the modernist period. The poet neither had to belong to a group or movement, such as the Imagists or Georgians, in order to be noticed, nor did he have to be eccentrically individualistic. "Never, indeed, has it been possible for a poet to remain unknown with so little discredit and dishonour as at the present time"(222).

Mrs. Jackson, in order to "deal naturally with truth",

freed herself from the need to write down to the plain reader on whose behalf criticism functioned. She did not neglect or ignore criticism, or the necessary part that the critical faculties played in the accomplishment of the poem, but it was to play a lesser part in her poem-making, coming after the poem and not before it or with it. The poem now, for her, was freed to its own and its author's devices. There was no longer the need to justify her poetry to an audience: criticism continued to do that on behalf of the poet. Nor was there any necessity to make her poetry acceptable, either by adorning it with 'beauty', or by startling the audience with contemporary 'reality', or by being part of a movement, or espousing the causes of philosophy, politics, religion or any of the specialist fields. The poet could, indeed, without loss of dignity, devote herself to the poem.

What is the nature of this poetry which is free to deal naturally with the problem of truth without the trammels of criticism? The answer to this question is the reason why Mrs. Jackson's poetry baffled and continues to baffle its readers, and in it, also, lie the beginnings of her journey towards her breaking with poetry. Modernist poetry and the poetry of today is bound by a criticism which demands of it that it will amuse, delight, confound, shock or startle the poetry-reading public, and if it does none of these things, if it is neither instructive nor lyrically moving nor anything else, it will, as a matter of course, be dismissed by criticism as abstract, philosophical, obscure, or some such term of abuse, each of which at some time or another Mrs. Jackson has been called. T.S. Eliot is philosophical and literarily snobbish. D.H. Lawrence is sex-engrossed. Wallace Stevens

is sophisticatedly frivolous. We might update this to include W.H. Auden who is political, Sylvia Plath who is selfconsciously realistic, Thom Gunn who is metaphysical. One could extend the list indefinitely without suggesting that there is no genuine poetry to be found in these authors, only that the poem, the poems of poetry, is not a first cause. Such poetry does not advance but is of the poetic/critical tradition: the tradition expects it to be what it is. Each of these poets looks back to the tradition to find the poetic rôle confirmed there. Where the poetic rôle has no precedent, no category from which it may be derived, it is refused the blessing of criticism until such time as it may be incorporated in the tradition.

The charge, in A Survey, that criticism bears down too hard upon the poet in his responsibility to the poem is subtle and complex; and each chapter seeks, in different ways, to demonstrate this, moving from consideration of the plain reader's difficulty with modernist poetry to 'dead movements', civilization, variety and humour. Examples taken from eminent poets (then as now) are given liberally to show the disadvantages which poetry suffers by too much consciousness of critical dictum. How to write poems divested of critical theorem, poems which would be true to themselves yet which would not repeat the mistakes of the past -- indeed, which would not repeat the past since repetition would be to stand still -- was the path Mrs. Jackson took; and a study of what she says, in A Survey, as to how this poetry may come to be is invaluable in understanding her procedures, as well as, incidentally, aiding understanding of her thesis that criticism was (and is) damaging, blighting the poetic endeavour wherever it dominates.

A/ Mrs. Jackson wished to free poetry to itself, and this she did by first removing the critical dead-weight from around its neck. Poems which were genuine, and poets who were genuine, she saw, were soon overlaid by the critical consciousness. Even the lyric, perhaps the one form of poetry most likely to remain uncorrupted, becomes corrupted in attuning itself to the reading-public, producing a fine effect rather than being, simply, fine. This is the point she and Graves made when they gambolled, in Pamphlet Against Anthologies,¹ through Yeats's 'Lake Isle Of Innisfree', a poem written with one eye on what is expected of it by popular anthologies, rather than a poem ruggedly and determinedly itself.

The function of criticism is to justify to its readers the desirability of poetry as a natural part of life. At its least it acts as "a deterrent against the production of old-fashioned trash", and at the most it is "an ironic criticism of false literary survivals".² But whatever its virtues, it is not able to suggest to the poet a method of writing pure poetry. Pure poetry, or better, the pure poem, is one freed from all false associations. It is neither political nor religious nor scientific. It does not look up to accommodate the reading-public, nor is it written according to a programme or manifesto such as the various 'movements' provided. It is written according to the conviction that a poem is a form of energy as pure as, and quite separate from, all other forms of energy, and that its aim is, the area in which it strives to

A/ 1 Pamphlet Against Anthologies by Laura Riding and Robert Graves. Jonathan Cape, 1928. Pp. 96-102 a/

2 A Survey, p. 110.

be is, quite simply, truth. Instead of allowing criticism to tell the poet how a poem should not be written, the poet was free now, for the first time, to encourage the poem "to do things, even queer things, by itself":

The poet pledges himself to take them seriously on the principle that the poem, being a new and serious form of life in comparison with himself, has more to teach him than he it. It is a popular superstition that the poet is a child. It is not the poet but the poem: the most that the poet can do is to be a wise, experimenting parent.

(A Survey, p.125)

This kind of poem is free even of the personality itself of the poet (and the idea of personality in poetry, "which is its style" say the authors on the previous page to the above quotation, is one which is promulgated by criticism on the basis: There has always been personality in poetry, therefore there will always be...). This analogy of the poet as parent and the poem as child is used again two pages later:

It is this delicate and watchful withdrawal of the author's will at the right moments which gives the poem or the child an independent form.

(A Survey, p.127)

Instead of writing a poem to a preconceived method, instead of making a poem acceptably (which means 'publicly acceptable') good (by avoiding past errors), and instead of starting to write a 'genuine' poem and then, in a rush of critical consciousness, corrupting it, the authors see the poem as quite independent of the author, who acts as a medium rather than a maker. Free from criticism's constraint, the poet can experiment, though wisely:

Experiment, however, may be interpreted in two ways. In the first sense it is a delicate and constantly alert state of expectancy directed towards the discovery of something of which some slight clue has been given; and system in it means only the constant shifting and adjustment of the experimenter as the unknown thing becomes more and more known: system is the readiness to change system. The important thing in the whole process is the initial clue, or, in old-fashioned

language, the inspiration. The real scientist should have an equal power of genius with the poet, with the difference that the scientist is inspired to discover things which already are (his results are facts), while the poet is inspired to discover things which are made by his discovery of them (his results are not statements about things already known to exist, or knowledge, but truths, things which existed before only as potential truth). Experiment in this second sense is the use of a system for its own sake and brings about, whether in science or poetry, no results but those possible to the system.

(A Survey, pp.125-126)

This is what the authors mean when they say that the poem is a "new and mysterious form of life" in comparison with the poet. Like a child, the poem is born and its growth may either be stunted or perverted if, in the course of its growth, it is either over-rigorously disciplined or entirely undisciplined. Modernist poetry, apart from a handful of genuine poems, went from one extreme to the other. The genuine poems which do exist, exist as written by genius, in spite of criticism. But genius is extremely rare, in parents as well as poets; and one can no more ensure that the right poem will find its right genius than that the right child will find the right parent:

All that can be done is to encourage an attitude toward the poem and the child which shall provide for the independence of either in proportion to its power of independence.

(A Survey p. 128)

Both of these things -- that poetry must be free of the demands made upon it by criticism, and that the poem must be considered as a separate form of energy, separate even from the poet -- Mrs. Jackson saw clearly. This was the only possible next stage of poetry after the modernist stage had passed, as it was passing even then. That stage has not passed, of course. The poetry appearing at this time of writing is the same modernist poetry as then. It

has neither evolved nor advanced but has remained, to all intents and purposes, hypnotised by the very same problems, becoming only more extreme in its attempts to get through. Two generations of readers of A Survey, and imitators (and there are more of them than is commonly supposed) of Mrs. Jackson's work in general, have failed to grasp the potential there offered: the potential of a poem to be uncompromisingly nothing less than an ever-new discovery, and therefore, creation, of truth. Wherever this potential is burdened by critical precepts, by the historical consciousness of what is, and is not, acceptable, and therefore burdened by history itself, it becomes the past repeating itself endlessly, advancing nowhere. If truth is to be made known, if it is to be allowed to come to be, then there must be minds capable of allowing it to come to be by apprehending it in its immediacy, without traffic in critical dogma. As will become clear, the human mind is capable of comprehending all the truth there is -- all-truth -- by recourse to nothing other than itself and the language of itself which is the universal reference position of itself. For Mrs. Jackson at that time, it was the poem and the words of the poem.

The poem is not about something, it is something. The more a poem is about something, the more it can be reduced to a prose-version of itself, the less of a poem it is. A poem is a poem. When it is split into its constituent parts, ideas, metre, rhyme, it is no longer a poem but a collection of its parts. Gertrude Stein's famous rose fails to be a rose when considered as a collection of scientific parts: a rose is only a rose when it is a rose. The same is true of a genuine poem. Where a poem yields itself to being divided into constituent parts it is a bad poem, not a genuine poem.

A bad poem, in fact, is never written except as constituent parts, unlike the genuine poem which is written as a whole. A genuine poem cannot be split without damaging its meaning. Critics of poetry, while they feel bound because of the nature of their profession to break poetry into its parts, generally apologise for this disservice. The more uncompromising a poem is, the less it will yield to such treatment, until at last, with the genuine poem, the critic will be forced to return to that and that alone in order to confirm or enlarge his understanding of it:

Now to tell what a poem is about in "so many words" is to reduce the poem to so many words, to leave out all that the reader cannot at the moment understand in order to give him the satisfaction of feeling that he is understanding it. If it were possible to give the complete force of a poem in a prose summary, then there would be no excuse for writing the poem: the 'so many words' are, to the last punctuation-mark, the poem itself. Where such a prose summary does render the poem in its entirety, except for rhymes and other external dressings, the poem cannot have been a complete one; and indeed a great deal of what passes for poetry is the rewriting of the prose summary of a hypothetical poem in poetical language.

(A Survey, pp.139-140)

The authors give as an example of a poem which can be turned into prose Ezra Pound's 'The Ballad Of The Goodly Fere'. This poem, they say, is an "illustration of the prose-idea poeticalized" (p.140), and they proceed to demonstrate this by giving their prose-version:

"It would be false to identify the Christ of the sentimentalists with the Christ of the Gospels. So far from being a weak or effeminate character He strikes us as a very manly man, and His disciples, fishermen and others, must have revered Him for His manly qualities as much as for His spiritual teaching. His action in driving the money-changers from the Temple with a scourge of cords is a proof of this. So is His courageous action when confronted by the soldiers of the High Priest sent to arrest Him - He mockingly enquired why they had not dared arrest Him previously when He walked about freely in the city of Jerusalem"

(A Survey, p.141)

This is, I think, a fair version of Pound's poem. It does not attempt to pick up some of the emotional phrasing of the poem, such as the first two lines:

Ha' we lost the goodliest fere o' all
For the priests and the gallows tree?

The archaic use of 'goodliest' and the exactitude of 'gallows tree', with its possible reference to The Golden Bough and the sacrificial pine-tree, convey emotional urgency which the authors' prose-version ignores. But, as will be seen, this is not necessary to the point they are making, that the ideas of 'The Goodly Fere' can be expressed in prose.

The poem they choose to contrast with this is 'The Rugged Black Of Anger' by Laura Riding (as she was then), chosen as an example of a modernist poem which a critic, having "allowed it the customary two-minute reading", might call obscure. They print the first eighteen lines:

The rugged black of anger
Has an uncertain smile-border.
The transition from one kind to another
May be love between neighbour and neighbour;
Or natural death; or discontinuance
Because so small is space,
The extent of kind must be expressed otherwise;
Or loss of kind when proof of no uniqueness
Strikes the broadening edge and discourages.
Therefore and therefore all things have experience
Of ending and of meeting,
And of ending, that much being
As grows faint of self and withers
When more is the intenser self
That is another or nothing.
And therefore smiles, when least smiling --
The gift of nature to necessity¹
When relenting grows involuntary.

The reaction to this, say the authors, will be "either one of 'blank incomprehension'" or one of "antagonism due to the impression the poem gives of being didactic"(p.139). From

1 Later published in Poems: A Joking Word by Laura Riding, Cape, 1930; and Collected Poems London and New York, 1938.

my own reading of the poem over several years, I would say that the reader will find the two opening lines clear enough, memorably so, and after a little more reading, even the first four or five lines, but then the poem seems to grow dim, not developing in a familiar way. But more: demonstrably, the poem does not lend itself to prose-treatment,¹ and that is the point. One can get so far and then no further. For example, here is my own attempt: 'When a person is very angry there often comes a point at which anger turns into a smile, perhaps at the ridiculousness of the situation. The cause might be love between neighbour and neighbour, in that fond regard for a neighbour checks excessive anger and makes one aware how trifling, in comparison with the fondness for each other, the thing which caused the anger is. It could be frustration at the unpreventable death of a thing, an animal or person. Or, it might be caused by the natural limit of anger which, at a certain point, finds relief in smiling because the extent of one emotion (of kind), or the extent of one thing and another or one person and another, or one house and another (etcetera), all of which are 'kinds', has a limit which, if it oversteps that limit, becomes something else, in this case smiling. Or, again, when anger finds itself in confrontation with anger (when it finds itself not unique), it must shrink because it would be pointless to continue. But it is not only anger which has this limit -- everything has a limit until and unless it becomes something else, something it is not.' This prose-version takes us up to line eleven. Apart from sheer length in comparison with

1. For a discussion of this poem, see the section on poetry below, 'Part Two: The Poetry', p. 181 ff

the poem, there are several points it does not explain, as well as several things it appears to explain but in fact doesn't. For instance, does 'natural death' in the poem really mean 'unpreventable death'? All death is 'natural' in the strict sense. Or does 'natural death' refer to the 'death' of the anger when it turns to smiling? Could it not mean precisely what it says, 'natural death' without implicit reference to anger or persons, simply 'natural death' itself, a universal state? And how does one explain 'so small is space'? Does the author mean that the emotion of anger occupies such a small space among the other emotions that when it reaches its limit it becomes discontinuous, becomes a smile, or that the universe we live in is really smaller than we suppose, or perhaps both of these?

Whether the prose-version of the poem offered above helps or hinders in the understanding of the poem, it is obvious that the poem does not lend itself to the kind of prose-version given by the authors of Ezra Pound's poem. Pound's poem is based on a given story, a series of related events or facts. Two things make this story poetic: firstly, the use of archaic words and expressions in the traditional ballad style; secondly, the story itself in which is folded the mystery of there being more to it than appears. The second quality is seized upon by Pound who interprets it, against received tradition, as the manliness of Jesus. But the poem is still a story. Mrs. Jackson's poem is not a story, nor is it an idea about a story. Her poem begins with an elementary and observable phenomenon: that anger may, and often does, turn to smiling. This is not a story or an idea, but a single fact unrelated to, not in series with, any other fact. From this fact, this inspiration it might

be called, follow a number of observations, each based on the one before as well as on the original inspiration, extending the original experience (that anger turns to smiling) to the universal reference-frame of 'all things':

Therefore and therefore all things have experience
Of ending and of meeting,

taking the initial observation to its furthest and widest possible implications.

The essential difference -- and it is a crucial one in the understanding of the nature of Mrs. Jackson's poems -- between Mr. Pound's poem and Mrs. Jackson's poem, and between Mrs. Jackson's poem and the prose-version of it I have given, is the difference of sentiment. To take Ezra Pound's poem first. The use there of archaic diction, metaphor and simile is the poet's way of putting across an important idea which might otherwise seem unpalatable to the reader: that Jesus was a man not of meekness but action. What is uppermost in 'The Goodly Fere' is Pound's personality disguising the real force of what he is saying, which is: that virtuous ends require violent means:

No capon priest was the Goodly Fere
But a man o' men was he.

Pound is appealing to what the authors call "sentiments more proper to the left wing of the Y.M.C.A." (p.141). The importance of what he is saying, he knows, and his readers know, is, when it is not overlaid by technique, forceful. He is, in fact, deliberately obscuring his idea, weakening its force, by couching it in a poeticised language which lends it familiarity. One accepts the familiarity of language (simply because it is archaic) and the familiarity of the setting (the story of Christ), ipso facto, one accepts the idea, though without fully realising its logical force.

Similarly, the prose-version of 'The Rugged Black Of Anger' which I offer attempts to sentimentalise the poem by placing it in terms readily understood. The first thing I did was to suggest the presence in the poem of a 'person', and, by implication, that this person has a 'neighbour'. This is extended by the introduction of terms, taking their cue from this interpretation, such as 'fond regard', 'fondness', 'frustration', 'relief', 'confrontation'. My attempt is to give the poem an everyday location, a recognizable location, to make the poem acceptable, familiar -- I am trying to find in the poem a common core of experience. Now, it is true, the poem begins with the 'common core of experience', but, as we have seen, it moves out of this common core, after the first two lines, to consideration of universal 'kinds' and their relationship with other 'kinds' within the limitations of 'space'. The poem is able to develop freely in this way precisely because it does not introduce sentimental associations of the kind I introduced in the prose-version. Mrs. Jackson's poem develops freely from concentration upon the quality, anger, the quality, smile-border. There is no setting for these qualities to lie at rest in, so the reader's attention is not misdirected to, say, a person or persons, but is made to follow the primary substance of the poem. At the same time, her own attention is freed from the obligation to, as it were, build a picture, so that the development of the poem is its own development, the author passively awaiting further development, her presence unseen and unfelt, only interfering if it is in danger of getting out of hand.

Leaving aside questions of obscurity and learned references, the main complaint of the plain reader against modernist poetry is precisely the author's absence in it as

a protector against the ghosts which haunt the mind. It is also the complaint laid against Mrs. Jackson's poetry by critics which leads to the frequent charge of obscurity (or metaphysical or abstract -- it is all the same). Instead of comforting the reader with archaic diction, or giving the poem an actual 'real life' setting, to which the reader may respond, thereby missing the cruciality of the poem's meaning, she gives only the meaning; and the reader, finding no comfort in the poem, flees from it, throwing 'obscure' over his shoulder to protect himself. As the authors say earlier:

This is why the plain reader feels so baulked by it (genuine modernist poetry): he must enter into that matter without expecting a cipher-code to the meaning. Therefore the modernist poet does not have to talk about the use of images 'to render particulars exactly', since the poem does not give a rendering of a poetical picture or idea existing outside the poem, but presents the literal substance of poetry, a newly created thought activity: the poem has the character of a creature by itself.

(A Survey, p.118)

And, speaking in the context of 'style' a little further on:

(The genuine modernist poet) does not have to describe or docket himself for the reader, because the important part of poetry is now not the personality of the poet as embodied in a poem, which is its style, but the personality of the poem itself, that is, its quality of independence from both the reader and the poet, once the poet has separated it from his personality by making it complete -- a new and self-explanatory creature.

(A Survey, p.124)

In making a prose-version of the poem, then, the reader is attempting to replace the missing personality of the poet in order to shield himself from the poem's actual meaning. His view of the poem is that it doesn't really mean what it means, it means something else, some prose-idea merely poeticalised. This is only to say that the plain reader believes, as everyone believes, that poetry is merely an extension of, merely a prettier way of expressing, the historical world:

Poetry is seen first of all as supplying an elegance and

refinement which must of necessity be neglected in practical experience. Common affairs are not genteel; and so poetry has generally ('been') expected to feed an upper class hunger in man for nobility: poetry is the high polish of civilization. The next general demand thus made on poetry is that it should be romantically imbued with progressiveness, that it should act as a superior touter for civilization.

(A Survey, p.161)

There has, of course, been much genuine poetry of all ages, but it has been genuine despite civilization not because of it, and it has broken through the crippling weight of traditional formalism only by the natural genius of the author. But there has also been, preponderately, too much poetry of the other, time-serving kind, the spokesman-of-the-age kind. Modernist poetry, with its "hard, matter-of-fact skeleton of poetic logic"(p.112), where the sentimental personality of the poet is left out, brought this to a head: its tendency was towards freeing the poem from its dependence upon civilization. No longer did it have to draw upon the civilized resources of society for its inspiration, borrowing from society the prose which it dressed up and returned to it for recognition as poetry. Poetry could at last be itself. Instead of feeling itself forced to serve the time-spirit it was wholly free, wholly new, capable of direct and immediate communication with the universe, not as it is historically aligned but as it is in actuality now: where there is no intervention of bias of any kind, historical, religious, scientific, critical, then the perceiving mind may bring forth truth and put the chaotic world to order.

It is from these principles that Mrs. Jackson wrote her poetry. It is not a system but the "readiness to change system"(above, p.25), to shift and adjust the control of the mind over language in order to allow the poem to come into

being. There are no pre-conceived notions of form, metre, style (personality), or critical precepts, governing the poem's meanings -- meanings which may, indeed, even contradict each other. A poem like 'The Rugged Black Of Anger' is difficult in the sense that the reader is not accustomed to reading this kind of poem, nor able to follow its meanings without the traditional props and crutches to be found in poetry. Readers of poetry have been for long educated in the weaknesses of poetry, not in the strengths. Shakespeare's Sonnet 129 is a prime example of a poem which has had its meanings tidied up by successive editors simply because generations of readers have been too frightened to accept that it means what it means. So, too, with anthologies, as the authors point out in their second collaboration, A Pamphlet Against Anthologies.¹ Anthology poems are not chosen for their genuineness but for their immediate comprehensibility. Readers and makers of anthologies flatter themselves into thinking they understand poetry, whereas, in fact, they understand only the frills and adornments, missing completely the genuine meanings of poetry. The reader is expected only to exclaim over the beauties of birds, beasts and flowers, not over poetry, genuine poetry, which is lost in the surrounding overgrowth of popular poetry.

Mrs. Jackson's poem is not a popular poem (though it might be if readers were allowed, and critics allowed themselves, to come to poetry without prejudice, raising themselves from obeisance to 'the tradition'). It may not be turned into a prose sentimentality, nor read other than for what it is, for it does not lie just within the borders of comprehension but

1 A Pamphlet Against Anthologies by Laura Riding and Robert Graves. Cape (London), 1928.

pushes comprehension further and further out, revealing meanings hitherto hidden from sight by the poet's sense of there being something to reveal -- a strong, sturdy, honest sense that there is a further reality in life not yet attained: the pulse which allowed humanity to rise to its feet and bring intellectual order where none existed before. In her poem,

...anger means just anger, smile-border just smile-border. So much do they mean just what they are that the rest of the poem is developed from their being just what they are: anger, anger; smile-border, the smiling border of anger which apparently separates it from some other kind, or concept, whose border, separating it from anger might equally be called an 'anger-border'. What are we to do, then, since the poem really seems to mean what it says? All we can do is to let it interpret itself, without introducing any new associations or, if possible, any new words.

The rugged black of anger
Has an uncertain smile-border.
The transition from one kind to another,
As from anger, rugged black,
To what lies across its smile-border,
May be love between neighbour and neighbour
(Love between neighbouring kind and kind);
Or natural death (death of one
Though not of the other); or discontinuance
(Discontinuance of kind,
As anger no more anger)
Because so small is space
(So small the space for kind and kind and kind),
The extent of kind must be expressed otherwise
(The extent of kind beyond its border
Is end of kind, because space is so small
There is not room enough for all
Kinds: anger angrier has to be
Expressed otherwise than by anger
So by an uncertain smile-border);

(A Survey, p.147)

As the authors say, this may not make the poem clear, but it does make it clearer. Nor does it make the poem what it is not, as the prose-version does. The necessary discipline is to leave the poem intact. When the attempt is made to put it into prose, all the reader is really doing is confessing the

feeling of discomfort with the poem, and then writing the prose-version in order to place the poem in traditional, acceptable categories of thinking. In doing this, the element of newness, the possibility of new thought, is destroyed, and the reader deludes himself into thinking that he is safe and nothing more is wanted of him. Unwilling to take the risk, he sinks back into apathy with nothing accomplished.

One must understand too that poetry moves actively, more than any other professional field, in the area of truth. It is not history or psychology or politics, for these fields of study are already in professional hands, which is where they should be. It is not even art, for artists have much more material at their disposal, are much less constricted by their medium, than poets. Nor is it merely emotion, though emotion, in the form of feeling, and even psychology and politics, may be a part of poetry, but incidental to, not the mainspring of, poetry. A poet is a poet not by any specialised knowledge of a particular field of study but by the personal (human) conviction that there is something more to be known, that there is a final reality to be achieved, not through knowledge based on facts which exist or have existed, but through direct and immediate apprehension of the universe, the poet being of the universe, co-equal with it. The fuller expression of this will be found in Mrs. Jackson's developing thought up until 1940, and in her recent work, though with the poet-rôle abandoned. The groundwork for this later development, however, may certainly be found in A Survey. For example, a positive identification is made in the quotation given above (p.17) between poetry and truth (as opposed to the scientist, who discovers facts, the poet discovers "truths, things which existed before only as potential truth"). Another example

which helps to clear the way for understanding occurs in the following quotation:

Modernist, indeed, should describe a quality in poetry which has nothing to do with the date or with responding to civilization. Poetry to which modernist in this sense could be fully applied would derive its excellence neither from its reacting against civilization, by satiric or actual primitivism; nor from its proved ability to keep up with or keep ahead of civilization. It would not, however, ignore its contemporaneous universe, for the reason that it would not be stupid and that it would have a sense of humour -- the most intelligent attitude towards history is not to take one's own date too seriously. There would occur evidences of time in such poetry; but always its modernism would lie in its independence, in its relying on none of the traditional devices of poetry-making in the past nor on any of the artificial effects to be got by using the atmosphere of contemporary life and knowledge to startle or to give reality.

(A Survey, p. 180)

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This makes, I think, a rather crucial point which might be usefully expanded, for here the poet is seen as, literally, outside time while still of time. He is not tied, that is, to the time-spirit, the Zeitgeist, as it is called in Contemporaries And Snobs, but is absolutely free to see the universe and give it expression as it is now. His dealings with the universe are strictly at first-hand, unencumbered by the necessity to defer to specialised fields of knowledge and the dead weight of history: everything there is to know is there before the eyes. The modernist poet who attempts to be 'up to date' is really vying with civilization, is elaborately snobbish and superior in the attempt to justify his existence. The genuine modernist poet -- the genuine poet -- is not concerned with the age, in either keeping up with it, ahead of it or behind it, but simply in being himself, taking it for granted that he is of the age without becoming slavish to it. The genuine poet is free of time in this sense.

CHAPTER 2

Snobs And Anarchists

By 1928, Mrs. Jackson had published five books and two collaborations with Robert Graves. Three of her five books were poetry: The Close Chaplet in 1926; Voltaire: A Biographical Fantasy in 1927; and Love As Love, Death As Death in 1928 (the first of the Seizin Press books). The other two remaining books were Contemporaries And Snobs and Anarchism Is Not Enough both of which appeared in 1928.

Contemporaries And Snobs is divided into three sections: 1. 'Poetry & The Literary Universe'; 2. 'T.E. Hulme, The New Barbarism, & Gertrude Stein'; 3. 'The Facts In The Case Of Monsieur Poe'. It is the first essay which welds together with astounding intellectual strength of prose the main principles of A Survey Of Modernist Poetry. From the very first paragraph the resolute and unyielding tone is set:

There is a sense of life so real that it becomes the sense of something more real than life. Spatial and temporal sequences can only partially express it. It introduces a principle of selection into the undifferentiating quantitative appetite and thus changes accidental emotional forms into deliberate intellectual forms: animal experiences related by time and space into human experiences related in infinite degrees of kind. It is the meaning at work in what has no meaning; it is, at its clearest, poetry.

Throughout A Survey it is observable that what is said of modernist poetry, modernist poets and the functioning of criticism has a wider application than the subject-matter might suggest. The function of criticism, in providing a tradition and the values or scales of good and bad which go with the tradition can be seen as operative, not only in poetry but, in any field of human study. The study of history and

philosophy, for example, work upon the same principle as that of criticism: the ordering of the past into coherent patterns of thought intended to give meaning to the present. If we understand the causes of the Industrial Revolution and its effects, then we can understand our present condition. If we understand how philosophy has affected our thought, then we should know what to do next. Criticism acts upon the same principle. By setting canonical standards in the process of selecting which authors should and should not be included, what is vulgar and not vulgar, criticism and the educated poet align with the past in order to set the future, even if that alignment takes the form of reaction, as the modernists reacted against the nineteenth-century, or Wordsworth against the eighteenth. Nobody had seen until Mrs. Jackson and, though in a quite different way, Gertrude Stein, that the 'tradition' was unnecessary to poetry, and that the poet was utterly free to act at first-hand with truth. Her thought saw the principle of poetry as at the forefront of human affairs. And more, it saw poetry as the standard in all human affairs, the standard by which all else may be judged and ordered. Hence this first paragraph in Contemporaries And Snobs. Poetry, to Mrs. Jackson, was not a mere art, or an amusing if instructive pastime, but the active principle of human meaning within the universe. It is the "principle of selection" which changes "accidental and emotional forms", unthinking, unintellectual life, into "deliberate intellectual forms". This is the principle which governs humanity. Before humankind, with all that that word entails, there was only 'life'. There was no meaning other than partial meaning, loose and chaotic. Human beings distinguish this meaning, have a heightened sense of it, so that their meaninglessness takes on meaning as they turn to

intellectual endeavour, which at the same time gives meaning to all else. This "sense of life" is "at its clearest, poetry".

It is this kind of writing which, failing to grasp it, Roy Fuller called "elusive generalisations".¹ Like other critics, because Mr. Fuller fails to understand Mrs. Jackson's work, he in effect dismisses her as obscure ("so much unwillingness to keep on a sensible level of intelligibility" are his actual words). And, in a telling phrase, he regrets "that her character forbade her to make the concessions to blarney, to play-acting, to exaggerated masks that, after all, must be made by even the greatest poets", for instance, "Mr. Yeats". Mr. Fuller misses the point, and as a critic-poet he is the plain reader. Such a paragraph as the one above quoted is a 'universalisation', not a generalisation. May it not safely be said, at this point, that Mrs. Jackson's work ever has at its forefront not the 'blarney' of poetry but the advancement of humanity, its further and further understanding of itself, and its universe and poetry as it proved a means to this?

The prose of Contemporaries And Snobs is casually harder than that of A Survey. It takes up the main principles which I have outlined but does not linger in the frequently amusing illustrations of a critically hidebound poetry. Instead, it reaches straight into the heart of the subject with one quick confident sentence after another. On the subject of modernist writing, for example:

What is all current literary modernism but the will to extract the literary sense of the age from the Zeitgeist at any cost to creative independence? The readiness to resort to any contemporary fetish rather than to the poetic person? To strengthen its argument this snobbism

1 'The White Goddess'. The Review, edited by Ian Hamilton. Number 23, September-November, 1970, p.5.

may use all the unfortunate examples in poetry of reliance on the person: they are the moral lesson to which it does not even need to point. The fortunate examples it does not explain as reliance on the person but as authorized literature.

(Contemporaries p.11)

As much as an appeal, this is a judgement delivered from the position worked for in A Survey in which the authors demonstrated, chapter after chapter, example upon example, that poetry was in the deadening grip of a social correctness fostered by criticism. This is not a 'generalisation' but a statement issuing directly from hard-won experience.

ex In A Survey the authors were trying to understand the contemporary problems of poetry from the middle-ground, and were therefore careful not to pass judgements. They were themselves poets in the period of which they were writing, and before judgements could be made they had to get that period behind them, had to be able to see it in clear perspective. Having got the perspective right, one of them at least, Mrs. Jackson, did not seek to extend the perspective into the next period but to demolish it and rid the literary world of periods and perspectives altogether. From this standpoint she was able to summarise her findings and attempt, successfully on her own *e* part, to restore to poetry one essential missing element -- the poet.

For the poet, she saw, had actually been dismissed from office by criticism. He was there, of course, in person, and still wrote the poetry, but the poetry was of the age, not of the person. Some genuine poetry, it is true, did leak through criticism's conspiratorial network of influence, but it was drowned in the ocean of critical tide. The obvious and simple fact is that, to be accepted as a poet, the poet has to write poems which are acceptable, and what is and is not acceptable

is a decision taken at critical headquarters. Even modernist poetry at its most difficult has to be acceptable in this sense. E.E. Cummings, for instance, perhaps still the most unacceptable of acceptable poets (criticism still has difficulty even now in finding him a place in the hierarchy), although his poems appear quite eccentric (a 'freebooter' A Survey calls him), still wrote his poems on subjects, such as sunset, love, progress, which were drawn from civilized experience -- which were, at bottom, prosaic. Unless the poet can face obscurity and the dignity it offers, poetry must continue to convince the plain reader, and society through the plain reader, that it, poetry, is a harmless occupation, giving back to the people only what it takes from the people with a little authority added:

In the end the 'literary' sense comes to be the authority-to-write which the poet is supposed to receive, through criticism, from the age that he lives in. It is not even in each age a new literary sense, but merely a tradition revised and brought up to date. More and more the poet has been made to conform to literature instead of literature to the poet -- literature being the name given by criticism to works inspired by or obedient to criticism. Less and less is the poet permitted to rely on personal authority.

(Contemporaries, p.10)

This applies, of course, not just to poetry but to all human affairs, though poetry was fortunate in that, if it wanted, it was free of bondage. But poetry, like everything else, did not want to be free, preferring the safety of being counted a respectable member of society. Its poets, therefore, turned their backs upon themselves. Rather than appear eccentrically individualistic and rely solely on self, be wholly self-reliant, they wrote from positions which criticism had already ratified as acceptable, such as classicism or romanticism, or a reaction to either of these, or they took up positions which criticism, from its study of the past, held were legitimate if poetry were

to continue. Any position would do as long as it had precedent, as long, that is, as it did not rely upon the personal eccentricity of the poet:

The presence of excessive criticism in a time is a sign that it fears its own literature; and over-zealous critics are the agents of a compromise between poetry and society. They keep peace by forcing poetry to hide its personal criminalities behind the privilege-walls of literary tradition; they apply pressure only to poetry in the making, never to society. The gospel of contemporaneity is an expression of the mob-fear of the organized society of time against those incorruptible individuals who might reveal life to be an anarchy whose only order is a blind persistence. In the energy of this persistence occur intense flashes, the poetry or lightning of sense. The mob, looking on, reads an official code of revelation. Otherwise it must admit the mind of man to dwell in man; which would be as troublesome as fire in the brain and as shameful as thunder in the stomach.

(Contemporaries, p.17)

Mrs. Jackson here seizes upon the crux of contemporary despair. Civilization does not advance, it only progresses. There is more of everything -- material comforts, education, sanitation -- all the facilities of modern civilization. But there is no advance: the human mind progresses with civilization but it itself does not advance. The mind is no more at peace with itself, or with others, now, than it was a thousand years ago, because it has given itself into the safe-keeping of civilization, has made itself a part of civilization, instead of civilization a part of it. Only poetry is capable of advance because at its clearest it creates "deliberate intellectual forms" through which the mind can advance. Poetry is the sense of life which is so real that it creates order where before there were only emotional forms living in accidental proximity. Civilization comes to be because of this real sense of life, of "something more real than life", but, not being at its clearest (not having poetry's force), it results not in

real advance but progress. When human self-reliance is given over to blind faith in the progress of civilization, real advance is made impossible. Only faith in self, in individual selves, can resolve the human quandry phrased in the question 'Is this all? Is there not something more?', a question which, in its desperation, must be answered. This forms an important aspect, as will be seen, of Mrs. Jackson's more recent work.

But, as civilization progresses, it comes to be an end in itself. Any progress is made on its behalf, and it considers all else as dependent upon it. Eccentricity is banished unless it is an eccentricity which serves its progress; and in its extreme form, this eccentricity is the "sense of life so real that it becomes the sense of something more real than life" -- poetry. In the past,

The poet was not a person but the spokesman of his age, a mechanical recorder of time. But time is only criticism and a poet is supposed to have to do with poetry. Poetry is not contemporary poetry. It is not philosophy. It is not even literature. As between literature and life, it is closer to life. But life invents time rather than poetry, a sanctimonious comment on itself, a selflessness. Poetry invents itself. It is nearly a repudiation of life, a selfness. Unless it is this, it is a comment on a comment, sterile scholasticism.

(Contemporaries, p.14)

Its energy is not dependent upon the social aggregate; the social aggregate is dependent upon its energy. Without its energy, life would be an "undifferentiating quantative appetite". It, as it were, enshrines the principles of life: the human need, which animal life possesses only to a degree (the degree of not being human), to know something more. It is this active principle which distinguishes poetry, as advance, from civilization, as progress. The problem has been that poetry has always been seen as a part of, the handmaiden of, civilization, existing only to run errands:

This common misapplication of poetry to supplementary offices is the result of a confusion between an intelligence that we may call concrete, because it regards everything as potentially comprehensible and measurable, and the poetic intelligence, which is an accurate sensation of the unknown, an inspired comprehension of the unknowable. The concrete intelligence suffers from the illusion of knowledge since it does not recognize a degree in knowledge at which all its laws and implements cease to operate and at which another order of intelligence enters. It is at this degree that the poetic intelligence begins, an illuminating ignorance in which everything is more than certain, that is, absolute because purely problematical. The degree, which is one of clarity, is pre-supposed in the poet, whatever the condition of knowledge may be at his time, however far knowledge may be from the knowledge limit. The poetic intelligence is a fixed proportion, the concrete intelligence a relative one.
(Contemporaries, p.19-20)

We might add a gloss, perhaps, on this, from 'The Rugged Black Of Anger':

Because so small is space
 The extent of kind must be expressed otherwise.....

Everything, to the concrete intelligence, is knowable. It cannot recognize that there is something beyond itself unknowable, unknown, which cannot be reached by the instruments it has fashioned for its knowledge-seeking. The concrete intelligence only discovers that which is knowable, possible. With the impossible it does not bother but treats it as outside its field of reference.

Unfortunately, however, poetry has also left the impossible to others in its desire to be as contemporaneous as the concrete intelligence, but there are now no others left. Religion goes as far as God in the unknowable, but any further would be blasphemy; philosophy as far as an absolute system of logic in which a theoretical reality inheres, but its ideal perfection is forced to leave out the independent, individualistic and eccentric human sense of life. There were only two possible courses left to poetry in the modernist period for its self-justification. It could either rely, as it had for long

relied, on its tradition of beauty and truth, nobility, dignity, its sense of the sublime and the tragic; or it could become up-to-date, making itself as obscure, as intelligent and learned and scientific as the concrete intelligence. In the first, at least, there was the erratic personality and the possibility of pure energy, pure poetry: real truth and beauty, real dignity, real nobility. In the second, the personality was eclipsed in favour of literary correctness. Rather than have the poet seen as some kind of vulgar tribal shaman, it would have him perfectly merged with the time, not even now the spokesman of the age but the age itself. Society (the concrete intelligence) need no longer make room for poetry, sentimentally, as an art which had a tradition of honour in its calling. But it would have to respect, even feel a certain awe for, a subject which was esoterically beyond it, though which it might catch up with if it tried hard enough. Modernist poetry is written by poets in competition with the age. It is "Aristotelianism, or neo-realism"(p.108) rather than Platonism which governs the critical method of modernist poetry. The personality of the poet is spurned in such a scheme because he is liable to failure and ignominy, which ignores the fact that he is also liable to grand success. At least, the argument runs, in modernist poetry there can be no failure, and the corollary to this is conveniently forgotten: neither can there be success.

In pure, or genuine, or true poetry, there are two realities: the poet and the poem. In false poetry, one of these two predominates. So, for example, there is religious, political or philosophical poetry in which the poet's contemporary beliefs control the poem. On the other hand, there is the poetry which is seen as an end in itself, as with much

modernist poetry, where the personality, the beliefs and contemporaneousness of the poet are omitted from the poem. This second kind of reality, of the poem as a thing in itself apart from the poet, might be musical or pictorial or just scissors-and-paste poetry, but its only design is to have an effect on the reader. It, in fact, disposes of the problem of the poet who is left out altogether:

The history of this theory lies between Poe, in whom it was an amateur's attempt to defend the independence of the poem on the grounds of its mere pleasure-reality, and Paul Valéry and other musico-poeticians, who further develop the pleasure-reality theory by transferring the centre of the poem from its origin in the poet to its conclusion in the reader.

(Contemporaries, p.59)

Where the first of the realities, the poet, predominates, there is weak poetry, and where the second, the poem, predominates, there is false poetry. Pure poetry lies in the reconciliation between the two, where the poet is not the victim of the contemporary mind, but simply a poet, and the poem is not stripped of the contemporary mind and made into an effect, but simply a poem. Where the poet predominates sentimentally, as it were, or the poem technically, there is only weak or false poetry. To distinguish pure poetry from weak or false poetry we should look to

those inner circumstances which make up the poetic mind and which the poem is the means of externalizing, as the poetic mind is the means of externalizing the poem, which hitherto existed only unto itself. In this mutuality lies the real clue to the double reality of the poem, its truth as a poem, its truthfulness as a demonstration of the poet's mind. For we have now come to the point where it is permissible to talk of the poetic mind as the poet's mind, and of the poet's mind as the only contemporary mind possible in the poem, its incidental reality. The poem itself is supreme, above persons; judging rather than judged; keeping criticism at a respectful distance; it is even able to make a reader of its author. It comes to be because an individual mind is clear enough to perceive it and then to become its instrument.

(Contemporaries, p.60)

These points are subtle, difficult to grasp, if only

because they have never been grasped before; but once understood, the general course of Mrs. Jackson's work becomes clear. The points are subtle because no one has yet been able to see that the critical tradition of poetry is, so to speak, a convenient fiction invented by criticism, both to prevent the disappearance of poetry, and to protect the reading public against the impact poetry would make if the reader, including the critic, was educated properly in poem-reading. If the poet is free from servility to the idols criticism has erected, and the Zeitgeist, and the 'concrete intelligence', then he is free to allow the poem to come to be without prejudice, free to observe, with complete accuracy, what is. This is why the poem is already 'there', waiting to come into existence as an accurate record of the unknown. The poem is not invented or even created in this sense (the more invented the less a poem); it is simply 'there', and the poet, sensing it, becomes its recording instrument, watchful, helping where necessary and standing back where necessary, but not consciously governed by criticism or Zeitgeistian education. To consider the poem thus is not to be obscurely obsessed by a minor study of life, but to recognize what it is to be human in a world both human and not-human, where poetry is the clearest impulse towards clarity, towards ordering the world through vision, absolute vision, of it as it is. The questions which poetry (poems, the poem), raises, and the answers it provides, go quite beyond what superficially appears to be the bounds of poetry, possessing an ordering and clarifying significance for everything, so that the poem is 'supreme', the sense of life so real that it continually enlarges the understanding of the unknowable, and complete reality, unhindered by the prejudice of history (for what was and what will be are no more than, and no less than, what is).

The books which immediately follow Contemporaries And Snobs and A Survey have behind them the principles established there, and implement those principles variously, sometimes in ways which seem exceedingly bizarre when read without the benefit of hindsight, sometimes exceedingly clear, frequently developing new thought-lines. Thus, A Pamphlet Against Anthologies (1928) is straightforward, moving on directly from A Survey; while Anarchism Is Not Enough (1928) is more puzzling in some parts; and Experts Are Puzzled (1930), as the title suggests, more puzzling still. But if the principles so far outlined are understood, then a general unity of purpose emerges, so that, what at first appears enigmatic, takes on a beautiful clarity which both establishes the previous thought and takes it to its logical conclusions, and adds a great deal more.

Anarchism Is Not Enough and Experts Are Puzzled, superficially at least, have several things in common. They both consist of fifteen to twenty shortish pieces, some in the form of brief essays, some as longer essays, and some are stories. There is some prefiguring, it might be said, in the earlier book of the later book, though to go any further than saying this would be an injustice to the second book, Experts. Both, however, begin with an essay which, though it is differently aspected in each case, deals with the same elements, elements which come directly out of A Survey and Contemporaries And Snobs, though whereas there they were tied to the essential subject, poetry, here they are released to their general level of implication. This becomes increasingly true of Mrs. Jackson's work from this point forward. The basis of her thought lies in poetry, but the understanding gained reaches out everywhere to thought-activity which is not specifically literary, until, as with the Epilogue volumes of the mid-1930's, the subjects become supra-

literary, from politics to philosophy to religion, though always with poetry as the standard.

The first prose-piece of Anarchism Is Not Enough is called 'The Myth'. It deals with the question of history, of the accumulative tradition, and the place of the individual as acting in opposition to it:

When the baby is born there is no place to put it: it is born, it will in time die, therefore there is no sense in enlarging the world by so many miles and minutes for its accommodation. A temporary scaffolding is set up for it, an altar to ephemerality -- a permanent altar to ephemerality. This altar is the Myth. The object of the Myth is to give happiness: to help the baby pretend that what is ephemeral is permanent. It does not matter if in the course of time he discovers that all is ephemeral: so long as he can go on pretending that it is permanent he is happy.

As it is not one baby but all babies which are laid upon this altar, it becomes the religious duty of each to keep on pretending for the sake of all the others, not for himself. Gradually, when the baby grows and learns why he has been placed on the altar, he finds that he is not particularly interested in carrying on the pretence, that happiness and unhappiness are merely an irregular succession and grouping of moments in him between his birth and his death. Yet he continues to support the Myth for others' sake, and others continue to support it for his. The stronger grows the inward conviction of the futility of the Myth, the stronger grows the outward unity and form of the Myth. It becomes the universal sense of duty, the ethics of abstract neighbourliness. It is the repository for whatever one does without knowing why; it makes itself the why. Once given this function through universal misunderstanding, it persists in its reality with the perseverance of a ghost and continues to demand sacrifices. It is indifferent what form or system is given to it from this period to that, so long as it be given a form and a system by which it may absorb and digest every possible activity; and the grown-up babies satisfy it by presenting their offerings as systematized parts of a systematized whole.

(Anarchism, p.9-10)

Poetry, she continues, "is essentially not of the Myth":

It is all the truth it knows, that is, it knows nothing. It is the art of not living. It has no system, harmony, form, public significance or sense of duty.

(Anarchism, p.11)

The Myth, it can be seen, is the 'concrete intelligence' and the 'ethics' of the Myth is all that goes towards giving it the appearance of permanence -- its history, arts, sciences, social

structure, codes of behaviour and so on. These protect it from the knowledge of its ephemerality, or, as Contemporaries And Snobs put it, a life which is "an anarchy whose only order is a blind persistence". When the baby is born it is incorporated in the Myth and as it grows it readily accepts it as affording protection from the knowledge that it is otherwise ephemeral. The Myth, Mrs. Jackson continues, "is the art of living"(p.10), the art, that is, of making what is ephemeral seem permanent, the human self-protection against the time-spirit. It is so secure, so easy, to belong to the Myth, which continues because it is not challenged, and so seemingly impossible to shrug it off, as irrelevant, in the knowledge that each individual is alone with the unknowable. Poetry can succeed because "Whatever language it uses it makes up as it goes and immediately forgets"(p.11). It finds no comfort in the Myth, in perpetuating the history and tradition and forms of life, which is to go nowhere while seeming to go everywhere, but only in redeeming itself from anarchy, making itself not "ephemerally permanent but permanently ephemeral"(p.11). The Myth is knowledge, accumulative and tyrannic knowledge; to be outside the Myth is to perceive truth in its immediacy of its being there, vision unblinkered by knowledge.

Experts Are Puzzled begins with the same theme, though here the Myth becomes 'the legacy':

Experts are puzzled by the legacy for the purpose of the handing down of which we seem to exist successively and respectively. We seem to exist to correct, in proper order, the minute derangements caused in the legacy by our existence. We on whom it is temporarily bestowed find it strange and make it familiar and then find ourselves strange. The legacy has been handed on and we are left behind, strangers of a fixed old age. We stop here while the legacy passes on to the eternal puzzlement of experts.

(Experts, p.14)

The legacy, the Myth, is a greedy animal. We appear to exist

in order to perpetuate it, ourselves subsidiary to it, forgetting that it was invented as a convenience for us. It has become so monstrous that we spend all our time in understanding it, but when it is understood, we discover that we ourselves are still left to discover, but by then, of course, it is rather late and the problem rather large, so we yield our places to others who will continue in the legacy:

Who are the experts? They are of the legacy, which is puzzled in its experts. What is the legacy? It is the ever-young continuance of puzzlement, the refuse of a fixed old age. We more and more establish its bewildered, expert familiarity with itself for the purpose of establishing which we seem to exist and are left behind, strangers of a fixed old age. For the purpose of being left behind we are left behind, disinherited, thank God, and not puzzled.

(Experts, p.14)

The tragedy is that the true individual self is in conflict with the collective-self, the concrete intelligence, as the "poet is in single-handed conflict with the time-community"(Contemporaries, p.16). The individual self, with other selves, creates the concrete intelligence as protection from the unknowable, the time-spirit, death and destruction, but the concrete intelligence comes to appear an all-in-all, an absolute, in which its advance, not the self's, is made to seem all-important. And so enormous does it become as it feeds upon itself that no one thinks to contradict it. It is automatically assumed that the purpose of self is to feed its store of increasing knowledge, to be an instrument of it. All the knowledge-forms only serve to increase its appetite for more. Self, actual self, is left behind, neglected and exposed upon the unnatural hillside of the concrete intelligence. For Mrs. Jackson, poetry was the means to rescue the self from its continual dying agony so that it could face the knowledge-world unpuzzled, putting everything in its place from the vantage of the unextinguishable human self, to recompose the world and let

it lie in peace. By seeing the expertness of the experts as relative to the human self, each could be placed in order of importance with none more important than the self, the poetic self, because this entailed the clearest sense of life. This, as we shall see, required no compendious knowledge, no necessity to out-expert the experts, only the courage to face and begin the work.

The style or diction of 'The Myth', and the title-piece 'Experts Are Puzzled', is in both cases deliberately 'loose' (the meaning itself being quite compact). Both have, almost, the air of a myth set down in modern form -- they are almost, it could be said, poetic, though the language itself is not poetic. A possible reason for this is that the author could incorporate more this way than would have been possible in the prosaicalness of an essay with all its limitations. Hence it is not quite correct to refer to these two pieces, and other such pieces in both books, as 'essays'. They are, rather, the best way to make statements not tied to the necessity of proving themselves, while at the same time being as gentle and good-humoured as it is possible to be in the circumstances. Perhaps an accurate description of this slightly elusive quality is to call it a sense of fun, and it is this which permits the statement of each piece to seek all its levels of implication.

In another essay, 'The Corpus', in Anarchism Is Not Enough, the same statement is made but this time in straightforward essayistic terms, the sense of fun dropped for a moment, and the two pieces already quoted, and this essay, confirm and reaffirm each other:

The first condition was chaos. The logical consequence of chaos was order. In so far as it derived from chaos it was non-conscious, but in so far as it was order, it had an increasing tendency to become conscious. It therefore may be said to have had a mind of which it

was unconscious in its various evolutionary forms until the mind developed to a point where it in turn separated from order and invented the self. The occasion of the self was a stage in the most anarchic evolutionary form, man, coeval with the general transformation of chaos into a universe. A consciousness of consciousness arose and at the same time divided between order, in which mind was the spirit of cohesion, and the individual, in whom mind was the spirit of separation. In the ensuing opposition between these two, order yielded to the individual by allowing him to call it a universe, but triumphed over him since, by naming it, the individual made the universe his society and therefore his religion. Order was the natural enemy of the individual mind. To conciliate it order appealed to the individual mind for sanction. This sanction, the original social contract, was not between man and man, but between man and the universe as men, or society. Although the sanction was given on the basis of natural instinct, or the non-conscious identity of man and the universe, society has always claimed authority over conscious thought and purpose. In incorporating the man it attempts to incorporate the mind and in turn to give the mind its sanction through the sanction which it first had from the man: it constitutes itself the parent past and the mind present memory of it.

(Anarchism, p.27-28)

Here, in this first paragraph, is an explanation of the universe made without benefit or sanction of either religion or science. It at first seems baffling: so much apparent didacticism (certainty), so much force of logic. And yet, it is only a (brilliant) rationalization of the thought which has preceded it. It does not need to be lent authority to possess authority. If we break it down a little, perhaps we can see more of what she is saying. That the world was chaos in its materialization is, I imagine, indisputable, and also that it developed towards order (if only by the process of elimination of the weakest). Chaos is non-conscious, while order suggest a "tendency" to become conscious, which in turn suggests a kind of mind -- not a human mind, just a mind -- a mind which is part chaos, part order until it separates from order to become self. From this self is born humankind. Now humankind is anarchic because it is individual self, struggling to assert self and be set free from both chaos and order. It is aware of self and aware of

chaos and order, and there is naturally an ensuing conflict, increased because while it is consciously self it is also aware that it is a part of chaos and a part of resultant order. Self (consciousness of consciousness), chaos, order, all part of the same thing and yet all separate. Self, which is anarchic, is in conflict with order, is moving out of order. If it becomes order again it ceases being self, ceases being consciousness. The only possibility of removing and resolving the conflict between these two is by man's incorporation of order (the universe) in the consciousness, but in so doing humankind makes the universe its society, and thus sacrifices anarchic self because it has returned self to order. Society is but the old order with which humankind was, in its origins, in a state of conflict. It has proved nothing except the superiority of order over consciousness, and this, in the progress of civilization, is what it continues to prove, to confirm.

The world, the universe, when we look at it, accords with this primary explanation. Whether someone is just different, or, like the poet, eccentrically alive, there is a concerted attempt by society to incorporate that person, or what that person makes, in order to confirm, not the person, but society. This only brings humanity to a continuous standstill. It can get no further than a society which is merely order, so that what started to develop, the acute personal sense of self, consciousness itself becoming more and more conscious, more and more final, more and more real, is in fact thwarted and frustrated. There is no possible advance this way except in the hopeless sense of self-perpetuation. The start was made, from chaos to order to consciousness -- and there it stopped except as the continuing reaffirmation of itself, in social guise, as group

consciousness as opposed to self-consciousness. The individual mind complete in itself is rare. It is the poetic mind which lives in spite of society, not because of it, and its advances are deliberately misread by the public which is uneducated by criticism into believing that the poem does not really mean what it says, that the heart of the poem, its meaning, may be ignored in favour of the adornments -- the prettiness, the tropes, the pleasing and beguiling imagery. Because this poetic mind is so rare, "the fiction of a group mind has been maintained to impose the will of the weak-minded upon the strong-minded, the myth of common origin being used as the charter of the majority"(p.29).

Both the individual mind and the group mind are engaged in a pursuit which may be described as mind-making or, simply, truth. The object of group truth is group-confirmation and perpetuation; while individual truth has no object other than discovering itself and involves neither proofs nor priests. In order, however, to win any acceptance it must translate itself into group truth, it must accommodate itself to the fact-curriculum of the group.

(Anarchism,p.30)

Here, to put it in the terms of A Survey, can be seen the plain reader (the group mind), the modernist poet (the individual mind which seeks its inspiration and sanction from the group mind), and the genuine poet (who is neither the group mind nor seeks inspiration and sanction from it, but who possesses a sense of life so real that he is continually creating new forms of thought). The impossibility of describing this third, genuine mind, is implied in the following passage:

The occurrence of a supply independent of Corpus demands, its possibility of presence, is a question that the social limitations of our critical language prevent us from raising with any degree of humane intelligibility.

(Anarchism,p.31)

It is as a result of this difficulty, the difficulty of defining the genuine self, that, I think, the work which follows

(leaving to one side the poetry) from Anarchism Is Not Enough onwards to the late 1930s divides into two definable forms or modes: the essayistic work, of which an example has just been given, and the 'story' pieces, as exemplified in 'The Myth' and 'Experts Are Puzzled'. So, for example, Anarchism Is Not Enough is a combination of straight essays and rather baffling (at first) 'stories'. Experts Are Puzzled develops the 'story' quality to a point at which it grows bewildering at times, and this is further taken up in Mrs. Jackson's collection of stories, Progress Of Stories. The essay work, meanwhile, is continued in the volumes of Epilogue. The essay mode, which she also uses in her very large book, The World And Ourselves (1938)¹, takes the form of what she was later to call 'summary'. The 'story' mode has the quality of fairy-tale while avoiding its whimsy and sentiment, and accumulatively indicates areas of experience and reality otherwise unapproachable, critically beyond 'humane intelligibility', and yet as real as the reality of conventional narrative. Other work, such as the Four Unposted Letters To Catherine (Paris, 1930) may fall somewhere between the two.

In the essay 'Jocasta' in Anarchism Is Not Enough, the three kinds of mind, the group mind, the mind which is individual but takes its sanction from the group mind, and the independent mind (or it may be useful to use A Survey's terms: the plain reader, the modernist poet and the genuine poet), are taken a stage further towards definition, though the terms are changed. Instead of referring to the three qualities of mind as in 'The Corpus' and A Survey, Mrs. Jackson uses three corres-

1 The World And Ourselves by Laura Riding. Chatto and Windus, 1938. "This represents the fourth volume of the literary series Epilogue." See page facing title-page.

ponding terms: the collective-real, the individual-real, and the unreal. The first, the collective-real, is represented by ^{Oswald} ~~Otto~~ Spengler; the second, the individual-real, by Wyndham Lewis; the third, the unreal, is pure self.

A passage from 'The Corpus' gives a clue to the direction of 'Jocasta'. Speaking of the way in which society as the majority concrete intelligence comes to ^{be} _^ the raison d'être of life, Mrs. Jackson says:

The tyranny by which this majority can enforce its will may be either democratic or oligarchic. The only difference is that in the first case, provided that the democracy is a true democracy (which it very rarely is), the group mind is so effecient that it acts despotically as one man; in the second case the group mind is less effecient and, by a process of blind selection, the most characteristic of the weak-minded become the perverse instruments of unity.

(Anarchism, p.29)

Spengler represents the true democratic rule, Lewis the oligarchic. Or we might say that Spengler represents the tyrannic group-mind of collective-realism, while Lewis represents the modernist snob-mind of the individual-realist. Now, Mrs. Jackson's sympathies, to a point, are with Lewis, for at least he is all for the individual and is therefore to a degree right, whereas Spengler, who as a collectivist is against the individual, is clearly wrong:

To be right is to be incorruptibly individual. To be wrong is to be righteously collective. Herr Spengler is a collectivist: he believes in the absorption of the unreal (right) individual in a collective reality (History or Romance) -- by which the individual becomes functionally (as opposed to morphologically) really-real. Mr. Lewis is an individualist in so far as he is opposed to organized functional reality. But he is unable to face the final conclusion of individualism: that the individual is morphologically as well as functionally unreal, and that herein alone (in this double withdrawal from both nature and human society, or history) can he be right. How does Mr. Lewis come to believe in the morphological reality of the individual? By devoting himself so violently to revealing the sham of historical action in art -- the unreality of functional reality -- that he creates by implication a real which, since it cannot exist in historical romance (society), which is all sham, must

exist in non-historical romance (nature).

(Anarchism, p.43)

Spengler is obviously wrong in that as a collectivist he has no room for the individual -- a despotic democracy acting as one man -- and therefore no possibility of advance. Lewis is obviously right in that he attacks what is obviously wrong. But the individualism he opposes to Spengler's collectivism is based on analogy with nature: man as a free animal as opposed to man as a collective species. He is so busy attacking Spengleristic tyranny that he cannot see there is a third possibility, the individual-unreal, which is attached neither to society nor to nature:

Mr. Lewis attacks the principle which is to Herr Spengler the right of his wrong. He attacks the reality of the collective-real. But in doing so he opposes to it an individual real. The collective-real is man in touch with man. The individual-real is man in touch with the natural in him, in touch with nature. Neither Herr Spengler nor Mr. Lewis dares face the individual-unreal: both believe in unity and integration, Herr Spengler in the unity and integration of history, Mr. Lewis in the unity and integration of natural as opposed to historical existence. 'I am for the physical world,' Mr. Lewis says. (Anarchism, p.44-45)

What Mrs. Jackson is saying, in this extremely subtle, extremely profound essay, is that there are not just two types of reality but three, and that it is this third which is all-important. The first reality, represented in the work of Spengler, insists that mankind is a collective group and that its ultimate goal is the perfection of itself, both materially and in living harmoniously together. This is wrong because reality cannot be lodged in the collective mind, which is capable only of self-perpetuation, not thought, but only in the individual mind. The second reality can see this, and is therefore right, as Lewis is right, in opposing to it the individual mind. But it, too, is wrong in seeking the unity of mankind. While Spengler sees unity as social unity, as man and man, Lewis sees

unity as natural, instinctive unity, of man with the animal man or natural free (anarchic) man. What Lewis would do is replace Spengler's system of democracy with his own system of oligarchy. Both arrive at their positions through analogy with nature, Spengler's as an improvement on the group or 'pack' feature of nature, Lewis's as a return to the individual, acting anarchically but in natural harmony -- the survival of the fittest.

These two received notions together form the story of mankind and provide its apparently eternal conflict of democracy versus oligarchy, democratic tyranny versus oligarchic tyranny, all other political notions, and notions which are not necessarily political in the strict sense, being derived from one of these two, or an uneasy combination of the two heading for one extreme or the other. The individual, that is, is either collectively-minded or individually-minded, social unity countering natural unity, and natural unity countering social unity. Both are the concrete intelligence because both think that unity must be served by the individual. Both think of themselves as providing the way to human perfection, the final reality, the absolute.

Both are wrong. There is a third reality which Mrs. Jackson calls unreality because 'reality' has been appropriated by the other two, whereas the unreality to which she refers is the real reality. This unreality is not based upon an equivalence between it and nature, as are the collective-real and the individual-real:

Man, as he becomes more man, becomes less nature. He becomes unreal. He loses homogeneity as a species. He lives unto himself not as a species but as an individual. He is lost as far as nature is concerned, but as he is separated from nature, this does not matter. He is in himself, he is unreal, he is secure.

(Anarchism, p.64)

Spengler believes in analogy with nature. He would "construct

by analogy an ideal homogeneity, a history, a reality of time". He would not urge a return to nature but, by analogy, would construct an ideal nature, removed from nature but parallel to it: the history of man is a parallel to the history (evolution) of nature. Lewis, perceiving this to be wrong because history, unlike nature, has to be invented, formulated, and therefore any conclusions drawn from it will be fictional conclusions, prefers to return direct to nature to draw his conclusions; but Mrs. Jackson writes:

Analogies of the individual with nature will become less and less exact as man becomes more and more removed from nature. But it is at any rate true that these analogies will hold as long as it will be possible to make them. Analogies of the individual with history will, on the other hand, become more and more exact, since they are invented rather than discovered analogies, analogies maintained by a system of representational cohesion. Historical analogy thus stands for the tyranny of democracy, while physical analogy stands for a Toryish anarchy -- the direct communication of a few individuals with the physical world without the intervention of the symbolic species. I think that anarchism is very nice; but I do not think that anarchism is enough.

(Anarchism, p.67-68)

Thus the concrete intelligence, the tyranny of democracy, more and more confirms its rightness because it is based on a tradition, a history which it has invented for itself. The more it confirms its history, the more right it is. The individual-real, by comparison, looks increasingly sloppy and sentimental, hence its snobbish attempt, as with modernist poetry, to make itself appear more real, more hard-headed, more learned and obscure, than the collective-real democracy, otherwise it would be counted out. The individual-real is a more tenable position than the collective-real in that it recognizes the individual as the only important reality possible. But instead of concentrating upon nourishing this reality, it attacks what it sees as wrong, the collective-real, in the hope of replacing its system with another system, equally based upon analogy with

nature, equally wrong ('-- replacing democratic historic unity with oligarchic natural unity:')

The only position relevant to the individual is the unreal, and it is relevant because it is not a position but the individual himself. The individual-real is more indulgent of the individual-unreal than any other philosophical position; but this is a disadvantage rather than advantage to the unreal, since it actually means an encroachment upon, a parody of the unreal by the individual-real. It is about this encroachment and parody as it takes place in literature that I am really concerned. To put it simply, the unreal to me is poetry. The individual-real is a sensuous enactment of the unreal opposing a sort of personally cultivated physical collectivity to the metaphysical mass-cultivated collectivity of the collective-real. So the individual real is a plagiarizing of the unreal which makes the opposition between itself and the collective-real seem that of poetic to realistic instead of (as it really is) that of superior to inferior realistic; the real, personally guaranteed real-stuff to a philosophical, mass-magicked real-stuff. The result in literature is a realistic poeticizing of prose (Virginia Woolf or any 'good' writer) that competes with poetry, forcing it to make itself more poetic if it would count at all. Thus both the 'best' prose and the 'best' poetry are the most 'poetic'; and make the unreal, mere poetry, look obscure and shabby. And what have we, of all this effort? Sitwellian connoisseurship in beauty and fashion, adult Eliotry proving how individually realistic the childish, mass-magicked real-stuff can be if sufficiently documented, ambitious personal absolutes proving how real their unreal is, Steinian and Einsteinian intercourse between history and science, Joycean release of man of time in man of nature (collective-real in individual-real), cultured primitivism, cultured individualism, vulgar (revolutionary) collectivism, fastidious (anarchic) collectivism -- it is all one: nostalgic, lascivious, masculine, Oedipean embrace of the real mother-body by the unreal son-mind.

(Anarchism, p.69-70)

The individual's unique and personal self, which is unreal, is grasped by Lewis, but instead of turning his attention to that, he manifests it in terms of the real, not a better real than Spengler's, only more progressive, more snobbishly superior. Instead of consolidating the unreal by insisting upon its paramount matter-of-fact truth, he weakens it by battenning upon its purity and then turning it to other ends, ends which are competing in the real world. Like Spengler, he is trafficking in the world of factual content, knowledge; the "Oedipean embrace of the real mother-body," the true reality,

by the mind hungry to know it, the "unreal son-mind" which refuses to acknowledge that it is unreal.

And the result of this is 'good' writing, fine writing, superior writing, or, if you like, modernistic writing which actively destroys any sense of the unreal self. The reader or critic

himself presumably a pattern of reality, experiences a shock from meeting another pattern which is commandingly different and hypnotizes him into a rearrangement of the elements of which he is composed -- the 'esthetic' emotion is here a recombination of personality.

(Anarchism, p.98)

This aesthetic overcoming of one personality by another is "false and escapist", and exposure to this kind of work results in erosion of the unreal pure self. Before such a work, sense of real self is destroyed. Instead of leaving the unreal self alone, this fine, superior Woolf-Eliot-Joyce writing professes a knowledge of it (which is the genuine element in modernist writing) but, by embellishment, adornment, trickery, physical reality, imagery, it places the unreal firmly back in the real. "All this delicacy of style," says Mrs. Jackson, speaking of Virginia Woolf's To The Lighthouse, "is the expression of an academic but nevertheless vulgar indelicacy of thought, a sort of Royal Academy nudeness, a squeamish, fine-writing lifting of the curtains of privacy"(p.47).

The unreal is poetry, which is not concerned with attacking the reader's sense of pure reality. It leaves the reader alone; it gets on with being what it is and does not traffic in reality:

The material with which an author works is not reality but what he is able to disentangle from reality: in other words I think the identity is rather of purity and unreality. An author must first of all have a sure apprehension of what is self in him, what is new, fresh, not history, synthesis, reality. In every person there is the possibility of a small, pure, new, unreal portion which is, without reference to personality in the popular, social sense, self.

(Anarchism, p.96)

If the author can isolate this unreal self, suspending all thought which is entailed in the synthetic real world of the concrete intelligence, then "a 'thing,' a work, occurs, it is discharged from the individual, it is self; not his self, but self"(p.97). And if this thing, this work, is not discharged, "it is immediately reabsorbed in that composite accident of reality by which he is known to others as a person."

The experience...of a critic confronted with an 'unreal' work, would, I believe, be this: if it were a thing of pure, isolated self, he could not perceive it except with what was pure, isolated self in him. He would be forced for the moment to discard what was real in him; he might, by means of the thing, succeed in discharging self: the operation of the thing on him would have an analytic effect separating in him the pure from the impure, protecting him for the moment from the 'esthetic emotion' with which in fact he generally reacts to everything.

(Anarchism,p.98)

The pure self in a work stimulates the pure self of the perceiver.

'Jocasta' is a long, intricately subtle essay, bringing in as incidental evidence authors such as Virginia Woolf, Rebecca West (as an example of plain, honest and vulgar collective-real writing), Roger Fry, I.A. Richards, Herbert Read, as well as covering the significance in modern writing of criticism, neo-realism, politics in the general sense, psychology and psychoanalysis. Its scope of reference is thus extraordinarily wide and varied. It is beautifully clear, not difficult or obscure or generalizing. The tremendous difficulty which a reader may experience in reading it is not Mrs. Jackson's but the reader's; for such a reader (and I hazard that this applies to nearly all readers), standing firmly in the time-world of the collective- and individual-real, the effort to comprehend the third reality, the pure unreality of self, is only accomplished with difficulty unless the reader is prepared to let go of the time-world. Old habits die hard, and

what is absolutely new takes time to adjust to. In Mrs. Jackson's case, though I think it must inevitably come about, it may take longer. For what she proposes, though it is new in that it has not before been formulated, is as old as man himself; but he has protected himself, by conspiring with the universe to create the comforting concrete intelligence against it, because it involves the huge risk of the unknown, new terrors which make old ghosts look like friendly shadows: a convulsive movement from the self-verifying known to the unknown, to nothing less than truth.

The unreal self which Mrs. Jackson identified brings history to a close. To remain in history amounts to "sterile scholasticism": fact piled upon fact, knowledge upon knowledge, stretching to infinity; fact verifying knowledge, knowledge verifying history, and history verifying itself. This is the real nightmare, if it were but known: the terror in every fairy-tale, the shiver of every poem which touches upon it -- the genuine core of any writing which manages to break through, however briefly, the horror of the time-spirit.

But to bring history, time itself, to a close, is not to forget that there is a world, and that one is contemporaneous with it. What Mrs. Jackson recognized was the essential contradiction in the duality of the mind, On one side stood the world, actual reality, and on the other, self, unreal pure self. The collective-realist and the individual-realist -- indeed, we can say with safety now, mankind itself -- see perfection as the unreal self merging with or identical with the concrete intelligence: self and society as somehow combined in absolute unity. Mrs. Jackson broke these two apart and showed the (unreal) self as moving away from the world, not towards it, seeking perfection in itself. Only in self's perfectedness

would reality, the universe, become perfect. Society is only nature refined, civilized, brought up to date. Self moves -- if it were allowed, that is -- in a straight line away from nature and civilization. The good of the whole depends on its good, not it on the good of the whole. Because she was able to see clearly the distinction between the two, her work tends to fall into the two categories I have described, the one literal (essayistic), the other 'storying'. For in this contradictory duality of mind, of pure self and world-reality, the one does not cancel the other out, nor do the two merge. By recognizing the supreme importance of self as a separate energy, deriving from the universe but pursuing its own end, ultimate reality, she was able to treat of the two separately: self in her poetry and stories, the world, in the sense of society, in her prose, but shaped and informed by her sense of self. In her poetry and stories she took truth as far as she was able, remembering that she later found poetry failed her; while in her essays she bestowed a clear order of values on what she saw about her by using poetry as the standard for all else. By maintaining this duality between self and society, and its seeming contradiction, she is able to treat life, life, that is, as the "individual's relations with his fellows"(p.118), as impersonal, abstract, and not as composed of personalities, while life with self could remain pure:

...the unsocial, ascetic concentration of self on self, the analytic intensification of personality to a state of unreality, makes personality a pure, not diffuse, a restrained and completely private activity. Where personality was of this nature, all synthetic, public, real life would be impersonal and formal -- it would have manners for the sake of communicative ease, not for the sake of concealing or discovering, or suppressing or standardizing personality. Real life, I mean, as an abstract, general life would be happier so than as a concrete synthesis of personalities. It would not be a source of physical nourishment for personality.

(Anarchism, p.119)

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When the duality is confused and mingled there is strife. When the duality is maintained and kept distinct there is self and the world, separately, with self participating in the world for the sake of "communicative ease".

The reason that poetry could be a standard for all else is that the poem embodies an advanced consciousness of life. The poem is not reality nor a reflection of reality. If it were, it would be synthetic, composing itself of forms which already exist -- history. It is analytic, composing itself of what is not yet in existence:

Synthetic entities are imitative, communicative, provocative of association: their keynote is organized social sanity. Analytic entities are original, disassociative, and provocative of dissociation: their keynote is organized personal insanity.

(Anarchism, p.115)

Life with self is the most important human activity, is, indeed, the 'being' of human being. Poetry, as an advanced degree of self, concentrates itself in this most important of all areas of being human, human being, the very area of truth. It is not science, history or religion, all of which take as the most important human area the group consciousness, group salvation, from which each derives its sanction, its authority to operate. Poetry needs no such sanction. It requires only the individual capable of perceiving truth at its clearest, reducing all authority to a status relative to the individual.

The poem may appear synthetic, that is, sociable, made from social custom, because it consists of words, the social means of communication. But its apparent socialness is impersonal, abstract, like the formal gestures of dancing, while the purity of its meaning is like personal, eccentric walking:

Now as to poems and reality. A poem is an advanced degree of self, as reality is an advanced degree of social life. The poem dances the dance of reality, but with such perfect artificiality that the dance, from very perfection, cancels itself and leaves, as far as reality is concerned,

Nothing. But as far as the poem is concerned, Nothing is a dancer walking the ruins; character, by the ascetic nature of its energy, surviving gesture. This ascetism is the creative formality of the poem. Its critical formality is its original deadly participation in the dance. Where we find no critical formality the poem represents diffusion of self in the literary, synthetic self of reality; wantonness of gesture; sentimental corruption of character; tedious extension of reality beyond decent limits of sociality; instead of the dance, an orgy of improprieties. Where we find only critical formality, there is the same moral laxity, but concealed under a squeamish disciplinary veneer; the difference between 'romantic' and 'classical' merely.
(Anarchism, pp. 119-120)

And this is the difference, we might add, between Mrs. Jackson's poetry and that of most ^{of,} _^ if not all, her contemporaries. Yeats's 'Inisfree' may serve as an example of a poem lacking critical formality; Eliot's 'The Waste Land' as one consisting of critical formality only. If the "wantonness of gesture" were stripped from the first, and the "squeamish disciplinary veneer" from the second, in each there may exist the possibility of a genuine poem.

CHAPTER 3

The Puzzled Expert

Experts Are Puzzled was published by Jonathon Cape in 1930. By this time, the Seizin Press, which Mrs. Jackson with the help of Robert Graves had set up in 1927, had begun producing its beautifully designed books, the first of which, Love As Love, Death As Death, a limited edition of Mrs. Jackson's poems, appeared in 1928. In the same year that Experts Are Puzzled appeared, three other books of her poetry were published: Poems: A Joking Word (Cape); Twenty Poems Less (Paris: Hours Press); and Though Gently (Seizin Press, by then in Deya, Majorca). Four Unposted Letters To Catherine (Hours Press) was also published.

The emphasis in Mrs. Jackson's work so far has been of a nature which might be called 'finalistic' in that she saw that the human intelligence had arrived at a point of exhaustion, and that there was, in merely going on with human intelligence, no possibility of something new coming into existence. It only repeated itself, producing more and more of the same, verifying itself endlessly. In the continuation of this scheme of things, only monotony, she saw, was possible, with no apparent movement towards a final order of reality except what was implicit in the disintegration of everything around her. Everywhere, it must have seemed, things were happening, but in a highly disorganized and chaotic fashion, as with modernist poetry, happening either in reaction to time (history) or as a continuation of it. This is the record of the twentieth-century, full of movements, of advances and retreats upon differing stages of absolutist thought. Mrs. Jackson's work brings this

uncertainty into the light, examines its underlying causes, and shifts it forward. But such a shift necessitates a radical change in thought-direction, a shift outside of time itself: a complete break with time in order to free herself to new directions.

The depth, intensity of feeling and of humour, the visionary quality characteristic of Mrs. Jackson's work so far, suggests the possibility of attendant personal strain. It was partly this, perhaps, which led to her fall from the first-floor window of a house in Hammersmith into the basement, in 1929, which resulted in her breaking her back. It may have been as a result of this, too, that she and Robert Graves sought a new working-base, travelling first to France, to stay near Gertrude Stein, and choosing, finally, Deya, Majorca. Here a house was built for her and Graves, and she began perhaps her most prolific writing-period.

Evidence of strain and the subsequent release from strain might be found in Experts Are Puzzled. 'Mademoiselle Comet', for example, manifests an exuberant joy:

We, then, having complete power, removed all the amusements that did not amuse us. We were then at least not hopelessly not amused. We inculcated in ourselves an amusability not qualified by standards developed from amusements that failed to amuse. Our standards, that is, were impossibly high.

(Experts, p.15)

This piece, when read in isolation without any understanding of Mrs. Jackson's work and of its direction, is, to echo the title, extremely puzzling. It is intentionally loose in the delineation of its figures, its meanings, and to place too strict an interpretation upon it limits its outward stretch. But if, for a moment, Mademoiselle Comet is understood as a figure representing the quality of the unreal pointed to in 'Jocasta',

that is to say, pure self, self released to truth without the encumbrance of time or history or society, then 'Mademoiselle Comet' becomes clearer:

And yet we were not hopeless. We were ascetically humorous, in fact. And so when Mademoiselle Comet came among us we were somewhat at a loss. For Mademoiselle Comet was a really professional entertainer. She came from where she came to make us look.

But Mademoiselle Comet was different. We could not help looking. But she more than amused. She was a perfect oddity. The fact that she was entertaining had no psychological connection with the fact that we were watching her. She was a creature pure pleasure. She was a phenomenon; whose humorous slant did not sympathetically attack us; being a slant of independence, not comedy. Her long bright hair was dead. She could not be loved.

(Experts, p.15-16)

History, time, society, "her long bright hair", is dead, passed; and, it may be, the personality itself, the personal history of oneself caught up in time's embrace, is dead. Mademoiselle Comet, figuring in a kind of story-myth, is truth, which is independent and which, when translated into words, remains independent, in that it is not translateable in society's terms, both it and its recorder remaining independent of each other, the second only the instrument of the first. Mademoiselle Comet, like the poem, to use again Mrs. Jackson's words in Contemporaries And Snobs, "is supreme, above persons; judging rather than judged; keeping criticism at a respectful distance" (see above, p.49). Or she might be seen as the "advanced degree of self".

In 'Mademoiselle Comet' there is a feeling of sheer joy mixed with a sense of absolute fun. In a later piece in the book, 'Obsession', a sense of the underlying strain shows itself, I think:

I never yesterday as I intended wrote the poem of rage, to say wild Laura, her my not corruptible gentleness: which is not to change, and cruelly-kindly, as long as I can last (and them), to make this gift of unchangeability to that which changes, this gift of annihilation

to make which I take upon myself the pain of permanence -- short permanence, long annihilation, short pain, long pleasure.

(Experts, p.95)

and:

The game which is no game is up, the real business is at hand. What real business? Real business is how Science says business. The business. What business? Am I a mystic? No, I am not a mystic, I am Laura. What business? Laura. How can Laura be a business? How can she not? Complete obsession. Never before, now at last. Until now, delusion of completeness, unavowed delusion. Now, complete obsession, avowed completeness, now Laura.
(Experts, p.107)

But, in general, the tendency of Experts Are Puzzled is to break beyond strain in seeking to occupy the area of the unreal which otherwise, in prose-descriptions of it, is impossible. The 'stories' appear fanciful, even unintelligible, but their movement is further and further outwards, attempting to take the reader, and the author with the reader, to an area of experience not generally thought of as actually existing.

In order to accomplish this, Mrs. Jackson does not use the logical procedures of the narrative form, which is tied to reality. Her 'stories', that is, are not stories in the traditional sense. Traditional stories are a re-ordering of reality: they make what is large and diffuse (life), compact, knowable, by reducing the scene to the scope of the story, leaving out or merely adumbrating particulars which might slow the pace. (James Joyce demonstrates the writer's frustration with reality, but in allowing it to disintegrate he is destructive, not creating anything new but seeking to show language as the mirror of reality as meaningless.) Mrs. Jackson is not attempting to capture reality in the accepted sense but to show its limitations and, at the same time, get beyond it.

On the dust-wrapper of Experts Are Puzzled appears the following description:

The title of this book is that of the first of the prose pieces of which it is composed. But it is a title in more than this merely formal sense. It is a conclusion concerning the fundamental limitations of human intelligence, and this is a book about intelligence. And yet it is not a dogmatic conclusion. Indeed, the purpose of the book, in so far as so moderate a book may be said to have a purpose -- is to see how far an unpuzzled intelligence may go without disrespect to experts, and how far it can keep within the agreed limitations without violence to its obsessions. Miss Banquett, or the Populating of Cosmania, is the most elaborate experiment in gentleness in the book.

Although the 'stories' of which Experts is mainly composed appear, like 'Mademoiselle Comet', to have an air of mythicity, they are in fact complementary to the essays in the same way that the essays are complementary to the 'stories'. The stories, that is, begin at the level of the essays, enfolding in themselves what has been formulated there, but this is then shaken loose, so that the stories are able to reach out to seek new levels of thought which in essay-form would be unintelligible.

So, in 'Miss Banquett', perhaps the most puzzling of the pieces, it can be seen that the first few introductory pages are centred in Mrs. Jackson's previous thinking in the various books discussed so far. But it is not just a repetition of what is found there, rather, it is new advance resulting from what is found there: a deeper and, perhaps, more personally understood insight. But the force of 'Miss Banquett' lies in the sense of crisis it creates in the reader: an acute sense of discomfort brought on by the rational need to make sense of the piece, and the growing knowledge that there is both sense and no-sense to be made out of it. The reader may, I think, only accompany the author in her exploring, may go so far in sense, but will gradually discover that intelligence is left behind. Towards the end of the piece, the warning is given:

Whenever you may conceive this to have taken place, it is not then. However you may plot her, she is otherwise. She is not anything you think. She is not. She is beyond herself, beyond fear, beyond desire, beyond hate or love of fear and of desire, beyond hate of love and love, beyond love of hate and love, beyond finality, continuously beyond the continuum which was her experience of finality, and which was Cosmania. How did she do this? She did not do this. She is not. No more may be said. And even this is false in whatever way you may conceive it. Is this not rash? What of beauty? She is not. What of beauty?

(Experts, p.91)

The pace of the words themselves, here, bespeak a sense of urgency, and accompanying this, a feeling of exultation, too.

Miss Banquett, the heroine of the piece, may be followed in her journeying up to a certain point, and then she moves beyond critical accountability. But where the critical intelligence stops, Miss Banquett continues, the sense of her, beyond story, occupying that portion of the mind which is otherwise inaccessible. It may be useful to think of her, perhaps, as self located in unreality, in the really real.

Miss Banquett is on a voyage and is then shipwrecked. She undertook the voyage, we are told, "because she was beautiful, not for a holiday". In her own world she was known to be beautiful, and in that world, to be something, you had to be known as that something. When she finds herself cast upon an unknown shore, she sets out to inform the inhabitants of her beauty, but although she searches for seven days, she finds none. And so she "recasts" her seven days in her mind, perhaps in her memory, and creates a world in which to live so that the memory of her beauty will not be forgotten:

And so began the populating of Cosmania by Miss Banquett. Everything happened in the most methodical manner possible, because this was not the ordering of things already existent and disordered, in which case their original disorder would have lingered in the violence with which it was necessary to impose order; but it was such an ordering of things as amounted to a bringing of them into existence; it was an arrangement of them not according to their existence but rather their non-existence -- not according to their disorder but rather according

to how they came into her head. Or, that is, she brought them to her instead of herself to them; she was beautiful through will not through reality.

(Experts, pp.50-51)

We have already seen something of how the mind may order matter, as opposed to matter being allowed to order the mind, in Mrs. Jackson's view of the poet as an instrument of the poem rather than as the instrument of the concrete intelligence. Miss Banquett's procedure is not dissimilar. The order she creates is methodical because things are created "according to how they came into her head."

...From waning memory she squeezed a here and a there.

There was all uncertainty and disorder. There was the world of knowledge, which out of hearsay, or uncertainty, made facts, which were gossip reported in the language of truth. There was all uncertainty and disorder so extreme that it seemed an arrangement of certainty and order -- since certainty and order themselves were unknown.

Here was the world of self, that is, the world of Miss Banquett, which she made out of fear or uncertainty. And there was this difference between the world of self and the world of knowledge: that the latter was only an endless prolongation of uncertainty, while the former was a prolongation of fear of uncertainty. On this difference hinges the whole story.

(Experts, pp.51-52)

Uncertainty is the knowledge-world; fear of uncertainty is a step in consciousness beyond the knowledge-world into the world of self, the world of (self-created) order which is yet frustrated by the fear of uncertainty since certainty "is instantaneously without preamble."

Miss Banquett creates her world in six days and rests on the seventh. She creates Earth, orderly growth, Day and Night, the planets, birds, fish, plants, animals and humans. Humans are created in order to be sensible of her beauty, animals to be "dear by innocence of it."

Miss Banquett's world was now all around her. The rest was leisure to examine it and to find in it prolonged proof of her beauty, which was as far as she could go in thought. Day and Night, Land and Water and the Heavens - these were only memory-foundations; and the planted things, the swimming things and the flying things were

only signs of her pride; and the brute creatures were insensible to her beauty; and the things of the seventh day were as nothing. These were the implication of her beauty. But she had a people, and these were its open emphaticness. They were the citizens of her thought, and she was to them the thought of their citizenship. And she went among them.

(Experts, pp. 54-55)

It might be here that Miss Banquett is a mixture of reality and unreality, human in her reality, inhuman in her desire for unreality, in her being, in fact, part unreality. To put it another way, she is absolute reality and at the same time she is the human desire for absolute reality. For, it must follow, if absolute reality exists, as it must if only because humanity desires it, then we are part absolute reality itself. Miss Banquett might be seen both as absolute reality and the human aspect counted a part of absolute reality in its desire for it, with no division between pure self and pure reality (except, perhaps, man's inability to understand the dualism of the mind). Her beauty is absolute reality, her world a reflection of it, and she is part of both: her people "were the citizens of her thought, and she was to them the thought of their citizenship."

Miss Banquett then goes among her people, seven kinds, or types, in all. The first are naked black people who "represent the dark, thoughtless and peaceful side of my beauty." They live in a world of abundance and do not speak. They will live, she tells their priest, whom she has married, as long as they are kept by him "bemused by my beauty", which, the priest tells her, is as long as she wishes. Then she visits her yellow people, who are "somewhat historically sun-bright". These represent the "hard, fastidiousness" of her beauty, its "selfish but abstract preoccupation with itself." They hate each other, and also her, with a "shrewd courtesy". When she marries one of them, a "mandarin", the others attack him for

being "yellower and sharper and brighter than themselves" which was "impossible".

She then falls asleep to awake alone, with the yellow people and their country "removed from her." A change seems to occur in her at this point. There is nothing remarkable, she insists to herself, in awakening alone:

For by a god-like effort of will she was indeed alone, and by a human phrasing of her state she was alone with herself in a world of her own where all was as she pleased and therefore in order in no matter what order and therefore not remarkable. Here Miss Banquett has supplanted the knowledge of her beauty, which was only knowledge, with her beauty itself, which was she -- and therefore not remarkable. She had refined her mind from the confusing largeness of a world of others to a size which permitted her to carry it all in her own head. From which it followed that she was in complete control of everything in this now smaller compass but more manageable verisimilitude.

(Experts, p.62)

She has taken the step, it might be said, beyond knowledge of (uncertainty of) reality into reality.

She visits five other groups of people, each progressively more bizarre, but each, in the description given of them, seeming to move mythically and historically forward in time. The third group are "cloudy" and she blows amongst them as a "monster woman-cloud"; the fourth are tawny-faced people of the snow who are always cold; the fifth are authors, "blue in the face", and nearest to her in their calling; the sixth are white, who number twelve in all; and the seventh are the fire-people, each one a "fire-self, a burning vegetation." A story is related of Miss Banquett's dealings with each of the groups. So, the tawny-faced people, all women, are cold, and Miss Banquett provides them with bears as mates to keep them warm. And when she visits the authors, she bestows upon them prizes of coins, on one side of each is Miss Banquett's cypher with the legend 'Continuez', and the reverse side left blank:

So they were generally fluent but not separately conclusive; they did not make hay with Miss Banquett's beauty, but on the contrary delayed it in a kind of worshipful bad weather which they called their art and for which she rewarded them with prizes. And they were blue-in-the-face from indefatigable regret, which in the extremer stages of suppressed exhaustion was called genius.

(Experts, p. 72)

The good humour of this passage is a key-note of the story as a whole.

Miss Banquett then looks back over what has been achieved in her journeys to the seven kinds of people and her creation of the world. Having supplanted uncertainty (knowledge) with the fear of uncertainty, and this in turn with herself, Miss Banquett sees that she has "imagined more certainly than knowing", but she has not been able to be her own beauty "more certainly than imagining". In fact, by prolonging the "death of uncertainty" she has postponed certainty which "is instantaneously without preamble." She has the knowledge of certainty, that is, but she has also carried with her uncertainty, the world itself, perhaps, which she has created as testament to her beauty. She has not been able completely to separate herself from her created world, and the only way in which she can be utterly her beauty is by not being part of it. With this realisation upon her, there follows a summarizing passage:

At these words the air filled with countless images of Miss Banquett, all like and yet all different. And the likeness between them gradually faded. And the differentness between them gradually took a single form, a sameness of Miss Banquett that spread destructively through Cosmania and eventually to Miss Banquett herself. Then power left her, and fear, and desire. The world of knowledge, in which she had had beautiful weakness, was gone, and now the world of self, too, in which she had had beautiful strength, was gone, and there was nothing but a simplicity which was Miss Banquett and beauty and nothing and nowhere. Her husbands, in whom she had married herself to her world, were gone also, with her heart, which had been merely the central technicality of self-infatuation. The spell was broken. What was Miss

Banquett now?

(Experts, pp. 83-84)

Several things are happening here. Instead of there being a tendency towards sameness, a sympathetic relation between everything, everything becomes differentiated, but in this very differentness is "single form." This is the third stage of Miss Banquett's quest, and must be seen as the final stage. Now she is beyond the need to see the reflection of her worth in the world of humankind - the first stage. Then came her awakening to an awareness of self, the possession of self, though self as seen differently in each of her alliances to the various groups. Now she examines this self, seeking its true nature, its certainty. By noting the "differentness" of each self, as each was reflected in the world of Cosmania, and allowing the "likeness" to fade away, self's singleness of form emerges. A parallel to this might be seen in Mrs. Jackson's own career. She too moves from seeing writing as bound up with society, in A Survey of Modernist Poetry, then as the expression of self in poetry, and finally as a movement beyond poetry to a simplicity of direct communication which is the telling of self emerging through the real discovery of self in which there is certainty. Miss Banquett's examination of self makes her see that it is the differences in the images of herself which produce the individuality and simplicity of true self. In excising the images of herself, that is, the reflections of her beauty in Cosmania (all the same since it is the same beauty, all different since seen from different vantages), and through allowing the likeness to disappear and the differentness to focus into single form, Miss Banquett is able to lose the part-self produced by

conformity. First she comes from the knowledge-world where all is uncertainty, though it might have the appearance of certainty, and in which all live in a state of uncertainty. Then she has fear of uncertainty, which is a movement towards desiring certainty, and so she creates Cosmania, which might be called the world of fear-of-uncertainty. But uncertainty and fear of uncertainty cannot produce certainty which is "instantaneously without preamble." The movement into certainty destroys everything, even Cosmania, so that Miss Banquett is nothing but herself, which is everything and nothing, variety and singleness:

For by a will-less effort of will she was alone, alone with alone. Not remarkable, since she was not. She was alone, beautiful, unimaginable, distinct and silent -- mind outside her head, nowhere, beauty nowhere, nameless, not beautiful Miss Banquett, powerless, she was not, powerful, she was not. Inside her head, going on, curious: what is Miss Banquett now? Seven histories, seven hundred, world of self, familiar face beautiful inside her head: her question. Outside her head, her no-answer answer.

(Experts, p.85)

There is now, even, no longer certainty "because she was at an end" (p.86), and there is only "completeness." To others she remains outwardly the same, and inwardly there is memory, which is the same, the same Miss Banquett, but also she is nowhere, "mind outside her head", beautiful and not beautiful, powerless and powerful, each not even a cancellation of the other but a mergence.

What, then, is Miss Banquett? We cannot know exactly because she is nothing, that is, everything:

Where was Miss Banquett? Past others, past herself. Not beautiful Miss Banquett. Not an immortal. Great danger. Leave her. She is not. She makes not. She

perhaps does not laugh. Perfect actress. Perfect sincerity. Impossible. Begin another story. She will give you only a continuous story's end. She is complete. The ball divides: one-half is the ball as large as ever, the other is Miss Banquett, whole. She is not. And she is complete. Not remarkable, since she is not. But illogical. For logic is the patience to tell; and only seven histories have been told towards the continuous story's end.

(Experts, p.84)

Miss Banquett is her beauty. We might call this beauty simply 'reality', complete reality. But although this might be part of the truth, it is not all truth, for the word 'beauty', as it is intended, covers a great deal more: the actual desire itself of Miss Banquett to be her beauty; the fact that she both is and is not her beauty; the uncertainty and the fear of uncertainty of her beauty; the memory of her beauty; the reflection of her beauty in the world she creates. And much else. To tie the story down, dogmatically, to one meaning or another, is to do an essential harm to it. Somehow, one must allow oneself to become the story, to be carried up with it, gently allowing all its meanings to become one. To search for specific meaning, meanings, to make the 'story' into a story, creates an overwhelming frustration. The story is not assimilable in this way. And yet, that something important is happening is never beyond doubt. In this, the story wears both a smiling and a serious look:

What is blindness, what is sight? Blindness is not seeing, sight is seeing. But sight is also not seeing, sight is blindness, sight is seeing not seeing. Miss Banquett sees not sees. Or supply a different word. I do not mean what men call destiny and women call death. I mean particularly Miss Banquett, or particularly equally someone. If you say God, this is right, but you are wrong. I mean particularly Miss Banquett not Miss God, or particularly equally someone. I mean particularly seeing not seeing. This does not look, is not beautiful,

does not show, does not see. It cannot be known, it cannot be ignored. I mean particularly Miss Banquett seeing not seeing. Or.

(Experts, pp.90-91)

The tone in this passage, and towards the end generally, is full of urgency -- an urgency which would repudiate the label 'mystic'. Mrs. Jackson tries hard to make the reader 'see': to see, perhaps, that story (fiction) irreparably reduces reality to fiction, but that 'story' (Miss Banquett) may be reality as long as reality is not reduced. To see, perhaps, that to draw upon reality is only to repeat reality in patterns, while to be reality, to let it become one, is to move further and further into reality. To see, perhaps, that Miss Banquett begins in the world and becomes reality, and that this is possible. That one is both reality and not reality, and that to sharpen the reality in oneself allows one to become reality. To see that someone, or anyone, or Miss Banquett is the 'distinction' it is possible to draw around reality and therefore is reality:

An island is all round an island. An island is round the outside of an island. From one side of an island across to the other is from outside to outside; but also from inside to outside; and also from outside to inside. From one side of an island across to another is from inside to inside. An island is all round the inside and outside of an island. And so with open; and so with closed; and so with beautiful; and so with not beautiful; and so with Miss Banquett; and so with Miss Banquett. That is, it is not possible to lie; that is, only roundness is possible. Where, then, is distinction? Distinction is in the circle which it is possible to draw round roundness. Though it is not possible to lie because of roundness, it is possible because of roundness to draw a circle. What then of the circle? Miss Banquett then of the circle. Or particularly equally someone. And further? Nothing except, since it is not possible to lie; except distinction; is not but Miss Banquett is not; is since Miss Banquett; is not is. Or you. Or I. Or which. Which circle. This roundness.

(Experts, p.92)

There can be no doubt as to the seriousness of this. (It again calls to mind the lines "The rugged black of anger/
Has an uncertain smile border./The transition from one kind to another..." where the subject is also the nature of distinction between "kind and kind".) There may be doubt as to its meaning. It appears to mean, to put it into different words, that each thing has an identity and the identification is to be made by drawing a circle round whatever it is. This circle does not change the identity of what is within but distinguishes it from other identities, both like and unlike. The distinction creates complete identity which separates the one thing from the next. To give something identity is to recognize its peculiar and particular identity. When everything is given identity, each separate in itself, then everything is made a part of reality and reality is made a part of everything. The important thing is that the distinction must be made between one thing and another, and it seems to be the function of Miss Banquett ("Or you. Or I") to be this distinction, this circle, this roundness. In the words of the poem which prefaces Experts Are Puzzled:

I wish it were possible to speak more decisively.
But truly I have nothing more to suggest
Than a more painstaking romance of perception --
Which would at least remove the need for an apology
To the world at large and in particular the German nation
For the failure of a definite programme to appear
From which to learn what to do next and after.

(From Automancy by Lilith Outcome)

(Experts, p.7)

"A painstaking romance of perception" is one which does not reduce human life to a barbaric whole, as the concrete

intelligence, as Science, does in its attempt to make life humanly same, possessed by a unified coherency it does not, in reality, possess. There can be no "definite programme" reducing all to the level of sameness.

'Miss Banquett' finishes, or rather does not finish, by bringing the story full circle with the entrance of the author:

'Enough, then,' said Miss Banquett. 'Leave me what is left.'

'Are you quite sure,' I asked, 'that I have gone far enough?'

'Yes,' she answered. 'There is nothing more.'

'It is the end of me,' I said.

'But of me also,' she answered.

'But that is different,' I said. 'It is I who stop, not you. What afterwards for me?'

'Afterwards as before. You shall go on where you left off.'

'Where did I leave off?'

'Where I began,' she said.

(Experts, p.93)

And so Miss Banquett has preceded the author, and the story's continuous end continues with the author making the voyage herself, but with this difference: while Miss Banquett undertook the voyage "because she was beautiful," the author undertakes it "for a holiday." This keeps clear in the reader's mind the distinction between fiction and truth, Miss Banquett and Mrs Jackson, story and 'story'. 'Miss Banquett' is an imaginative thrust ahead until the heroine fills all gaps; Mrs Jackson, having to fill the gaps actually and not imaginatively, follows her, but differently.

One experiences, in varying degrees, the same qualities of humour, fancy and wonderment which exist in 'Miss Banquett' in the whole of Experts Are Puzzled. It is not an easy book. One constantly returns to a passage to puzzle over it. It is

not a book which can be put to one side as finished; its meanings seemingly, and even actually, are inexhaustible. One senses, in part, knows, in part, feels in part, the book's importance, its position in things of most importance. Passages lift themselves up from the page to be confronted, as in this, from 'Molly Barleywater' (pp.21-23), a shortish piece:

I remember the last conversation I had with you. You said 'All is variety, and variety at its fullest opposes to itself a oneness which, because it is in opposition to variety, is outside of it. We are endowed with variety. We may attain oneness.' 'And you would add, I suppose,' I suggested, 'that men are in variety, women in oneness.' 'Yes,' she said. 'Variety is the male making, oneness is the female consistency of the making. Oneness is the progressive suspense that forces the making perpetually to repeat itself, arriving at and recoiling again and again from oneness.'

And a little further on:

'And what of beauty?' I asked. 'Beauty', she answered, 'is to truth as hate is to love. In the presence of any difficulty of analysis, "beautiful" springs to the mouth instead of "true".'

'And what of hate?' I asked. Now Molly's daughter Samson, a clever bald little girl, had entered the room just before I put this question, and so she naturally answered it. 'Hate is easily a thing,' she said. 'My daughter is very articritical,' Molly said.

'A remarkable child,' I commented. 'And what is your articritical method?' I asked little Samson herself. She replied: 'When I look at something I see all. To arrive at an opinion I therefore compare what I look at with what I see.'

One should not, by being distracted by the humour here, miss the importance of the point being made by Samson.

In Progress of Stories,¹ a collection of short stories by Mrs. Jackson published five years after the appearance of Experts Are Puzzled, she speaks in the Preface of stories as being "probable truths which are not demonstrably true: stories are guesswork." And a little further on:

¹ Progress of Stories by Laura Riding. Deya, Majorca: Seizin Press and London: Constable, 1935.

A story-teller must, like a truth-teller, make discoveries. The only difference between them is that the story-teller must let his discoveries remain obscure, while the truth-teller must make his discoveries plain. I have written these seven stories [the first seven stories of the book], then, for the discipline which story-telling lays upon one's truth-telling instincts. My function as a writer is not story-telling but truth-telling: to make things plain.

(Progress, p.8)

There is an identification, then, that may be made between the aims of stories and the aims of speaking the truth, although the two remain separate: one is truth, the other is "probable" truth and based on "guesswork". We have seen something of the nature of this guesswork in 'Miss Banquett' and have felt something of the force of its truth and something of the force of its stopping short of truth, or, at least, a certain frustration at its inadequacy in becoming overt truth. The difference, I think, between Progress of Stories and Experts Are Puzzled is one of serenity: the second is a very active book, making daring thrusts at truth, though in a most good-humoured way; while the first makes a gradual ascent, beginning with the most trivial material and ending with the most important material.

Progress Of Stories (which also includes 'Miss Banquett') has its material arranged in stages to make it easier for the reader to follow. As it says, it is a progress of stories. It is divided into five sections, not including the preface: 'Stories Of Lives' which, as the Preface says, "deals with unequivocally unimportant material" and which contains seven stories; 'Stories Of Ideas', which "deal with material of diluted importance" and contains two stories, one of which is 'Miss Banquett'; 'Nearly True Stories', in which what is

said is "indeed the truth except for what is missing" and contains four stories; the fourth section contains only one story, 'A Crown For Hans Anderson,' which is a kind of waiting period as well as a reward for Hans Anderson's patience; and the fifth is simply entitled 'More Stories.' The 'progress' to which the title refers is not of action, character or plot, nor even that of ideas in the sense of, say, a philosophic movement forward, but quite simply that of story -- the quality of story, or the element 'story' in stories. As the useful note on the dust-wrapper informs us:

It is the communication of such a story-feeling that has been the author's object, rather than, merely, to ring fictional changes on ordinary events and people. Stories are sometimes more than the strange incidents and characters that compose them: they represent, more essentially, a feeling of curiosity and expectation which we must suppress in our daily prearranged lives, and which the conventional material of stories satisfies only temporarily. The concern has been to clarify this feeling progressively, as having an importance on its own account -- besides being a means of distraction; to show it as a kind of emotional experience of ideas and phenomena beyond common intellectual grasp.

To convey this sense of story, the author begins on a mundane level, with simple narrative, characters and plot, but gradually moves to more difficult areas, until, in the third section of stories, one is hard put to say quite what is going on. Then, there is some considerable relaxation with the beautiful 'Hans Anderson' of the fourth section; and at the end come, simply, 'More Stories.' The progression forward, then, moves from the straightforward, almost (though never quite) conventional narrative base, to stories which give emphasis

either to plot or to character but not both at the same time, and then to the truly complex 'A Last Lesson In Geography', where there is neither character nor plot to speak of (but an abundance of humour), and finally to the last two sections which, from the traditional viewpoint, are not 'stories' at all but 'story' pure and simple, the author very close to the surface -- as it were, storying.

'Stories Of Lives' is simply that. It works on a mundane level of understanding of how people live plainly and straightforwardly without romanticizing. So, the first story of this section, called 'Socialist Pleasures', tells of a Socialist father and his daughter Fanny, who is also a socialist, and begins with a picnic. Then, Fanny goes to university, becomes a professional psychologist in education, has her ears pierced, and eventually becomes a dancer. The only strangeness in the story is the apparent discrepancy between Fanny's being a serious socialist on the one hand, and indulging herself in wearing exotic costumes and becoming a dancer on the other. It is amusing; it is also a little unsettling. But the story makes nothing of significance out of these two aspects, relating them in a matter-of-fact way, and the reader recognizes the matter-of-fact disparity as common enough, but, still, a little unsettling. The other stories are equally as amusing and entertaining and equally as mundane, though, again, one feels the slight sense of paradox in each. 'Daisy And Venison', for example, is a story about Daisy, who lives by herself, and Venison, who, without invitation or introduction, comes to live with her. Venison writes stories and sends them to a publisher with a note

explaining: "I am sending you a lot of stories in a dog-basket. It opens by pressing the lock. Yours respectfully, Venison Bride." While Venison writes stories, Daisy, with hardly a murmur of complaint, looks after and cares for her, until she realises that Venison is wanting to "start something new", upon which Daisy leaves the house, leaving Venison some money, and grows "into a very economical, very old woman and forgot all about Venison." These stories are quite real in the sense that they have 'characters', 'action' and are recognizably of the world, but they are also quite unreal in that they are continually moving away from their base, as with Fanny's exotic costumes and dancing, and Daisy's store of gold, left in a hole by her father for her welfare. These stories are, the author says in the Preface, written for a "certain relaxation of hostility in those who read them with some previous prejudice against my truth-telling technique." One continually waits for things to happen, some incident to crystallize into drama, but though something is always on the verge of happening, it does so, as it were, off the page, indicated rather than spoken, like a conversation among several people with what is important lingering under the surface.

The second set of stories, 'Stories of Ideas', as well as Miss Banquett, contains 'Reality As Port Huntlady', which is the first of the two. 'Reality As Port Huntlady' continues, to a certain extent, where 'Stories of Lives', the first section, leaves off, though it is on the whole slightly more unsettling. People go to live in Port Huntlady because, so it appears to them, it offers something more than their ordinary lives can supply, some kind of reality, but, of course, they take their

reality with them, and so nothing ever quite happens in Port Hunt lady or to themselves. After running through a list of things that might have happened to the characters in the story, the author concludes:

So we might go on, were there not perfect understanding between us about the futility of trying to give more meaning to certain things than they have -- things that attach themselves like hollow parasites to the really important things and that yet -- can we deny it -- interest us perhaps more than the really important things? And even because -- can we not admit it here -- they demand of us just that sympathy for wasted time that we would not otherwise know how to express, unless by wasting time ourselves?

(Progress, p.159)

After this follows 'Miss Banquett' which, the Preface says, "may seem a more poetic, and therefore more flattering personification of ourselves than Lady Porthunt lady; but this is only because we shaped her when the conversation was in full swing, and we were still disappointed that it was not going any better."

In 'Nearly True Stories' occur the most delightful stories in the book, of a fairy-tale quality yet which constantly turn upon thought at its most wise. In 'A Fairy Tale For Older People,' for example, there is Frances Cat, who is not necessarily a cat, who finds herself in the forest of the Indescribable Witch. She constantly wonders who the Indescribable Witch is, but just as constantly forgets to wonder. A great many things happen to Frances Cat which are both strange and yet not strange within the context of the story as a whole. For instance, there is a ball of light and golden weather grains, a mirror which is not a mirror, and bits of coloured paper which turn into insects. But again and again the story touches upon areas of thought which make the reader conscious that something is happening, areas of thought

which we have met before in Mrs. Jackson's work:

Or if this new world of hers had come about entirely through deception, she herself was the deceived one. And how could she deceive herself? Only invalids deceived themselves; and she had always enjoyed perfect health. And was it, indeed, a new world? There could be no doubts about its being a different world, but who but herself was responsible for the difference, the changing over from that world to this? And wasn't it a changing back rather than a changing over? The question was, which was the original world, her original world, the right world, the real world? She had certainly lived in that world ever since she could remember, but was she any the less alive now, and what was memory? Memory was fear. Yes, it was quite true: in that world she had been afraid of something -- death. That is why she had lived. Was she dead now? In a way she was. What was death? It was being what one really was. What was life? It was running away from oneself. It was being not quite oneself -- merely humouring certain whims. Well, what had been the result of her merely humouring certain whims -- what had she been when she was being not quite herself? Had she any whims of her own to humour? Well, perhaps she had just one: a whim to put things off. And the result had been -- it now seemed to her that she had been -- a cat!

(Progress, pp.258-9)

Part of the aim of Progress of Stories is to show that what is important is continually deferred, that consciousness of there being something of great importance is made to sleep by continuous preoccupation with the trivial. This is the underlying theme behind the first stories in the book which deal with 'trivial' material: to show that, even where the material is trivial, there is a consciousness of there being something more. And as the book progresses, this consciousness of there being something more is increasingly clarified. The material itself, the stuff of which the stories are made, is not allowed to overshadow this consciousness. It is allowed to keep its essential triviality of subject-matter, to which Mrs. Jackson devotes careful and detailed attention, so that it does not bludgeon the reader's sensibilities. Instead of being required to make room in the sensibilities for grand

passion, grand tragedy, grand comedy, at which to gasp, gape or wonder, the reader is only required to become more conscious of consciousness, more aware that there is something more -- that there is, indeed, the Indescribable Witch:

For the whole problem of the Indescribable Witch, and what a Something is, is really the whole problem: "What happens in the end?" You can't get it into your heads that in the end nothing happens -- nothing more. You keep waiting for a Something, forgetting over and over again that it can never be. You die, well enough; you become a Nothing. But you can't help hoping that a Nothing is really a Something. And so you become a Something, since if you are a Nothing you can be whatever you like. You become the Indescribable Witch -- she who knew from the very beginning that in the end nothing more happens. Yes, in spite of yourselves you will little by little get it into your heads. And so, in a way, there is an end of that.

(Progress, p.268)

How to be Something before it is too late is the problem, which is no problem if one only looks, not with big eyes, which are the eyes of the world, the eyes one is educated into looking with, but with small eyes with which Hans Andersen "saw the different thing":

The four winds were not sizeless monsters: each was no bigger than a man. Nothing of the earth-world was any bigger than a man and a man was small.

. (Progress, p.303)

'A Last Lesson In Geography' takes the reader to the core of the book's thematic concern: the principle of story. Of all the stories, it at first seems the most strange -- stranger, even, than 'Miss Banquett' in some ways -- and the most obdurate in yielding its meaning; but set in the context of the whole of Mrs. Jackson's work so far, it clears, and the reader becomes aware of a simplicity of humour which is overwhelming. Its main character, or figure, is named Tooth,

who, though only a part of the body, is actually the whole of the body -- Nail, Hair, Bone, Mouth, each of which is a separate character as well, though all combine to become representative of the figure, man:

As he [Tooth] did this, he was not only Tooth, but Teeth. And the rest of the strong men came up close behind: first the Right Hand, then the Left Hand, each with its Nails, and, last of all, Hair. They joined themselves to him, so that he was not only a body, but the body. Every part of the body went with another part. Hand went with Mouth, and, since Mouth was only a hollow, there were two Hands -- one to be Hand, the other to represent Mouth. And there were Arms and Legs, and Stomach and Brain. And as Stomach was only a hollow, Brain was also Brains, to represent Stomach.

(Progress, p.280-1)

The world, the author explains, is divided into two sorts of people, the weak people, who are numerous, and the strong people, who may be numbered, and Tooth is one of the strong people. The weak people say that the earth is round, but the strong people, though they agree with the weak people for the sake of convenience, know that this is not so. Only the sky, in which the weak people live, is round:

Following the sky we could never do more than get back to where we started from, for the sky is round. It falls in, having no strength of its own. It falls in upon the earth -- but that is no reason for calling the earth round. What is the sky? The sky is the minds of the weak people, those who don't want to go anywhere. And the earth is the minds of the strong people.

(Progress, p.269)

The weak people are always in "a confused state of mind" and because they knew this, and because they didn't like it, they said: "We are poor confused creatures, but this is because we are not God, Who alone knows about everything." (p.274) The weak people, that is, are those who are content, who do not ask questions but leave the resolution to the

question which they form as human beings to something above themselves, or, like the future, beyond themselves. Because they were not yet ready to set out anywhere, the strong people yielded to the weak people. They were waiting, we are told, for a First One:

And before they could choose a First One it was necessary for everyone to be well acquainted with everyone else. It was necessary to thrash out all disagreements and develop a common point of view about things, so that any one of them might, without discredit to the others, become a First One -- it being a matter of expediency who was actually chosen. But there can be difficulties which one person is capable of dealing with better than another from accidental advantages of position. This is expediency. In expediency there are no petty personal considerations, only the general good.

(Progress, pp 271-2)

And so Tooth is chosen, not for any particular reason other than that he is at the right place at the right time:

Why he should have been the First One, and not someone else, was simply a question of geography. At a certain point the earth went straight on. Exactly where this point was could only be revealed after all the strong people had each taken a fixed position -- any fixed position; then one of them would find that his position moved.

(Progress, p.272)

But Tooth does not actually go anywhere, does not move himself, but takes advantage of "an energy not his own." That is, he is moving but he is not moving himself. It is something else that gives him movement, and this something else is the energy of "she", who is a spirit. This is the crux of the story. Tooth's forward moving-stillness is an energy which is hers, not his:

His motion was still motion. The earth that he was moving on was really flat. It had an end. Its beginning was the strong people. Its end was an energy not his own, nor the energy of any of the other strong people. Its end must be a woman. The strong people

were all men. The weak people were men and women mixed.

(Progress, p.273)

Tooth's journey is to meet her. She represents, I think, the goal mankind desires: ultimate reality. The reason that she is a woman (and not a god or goddess, or a snake, or whatever) is that she is, simply, not-man. This being a world of wholly male invention, it is natural justice that what he desires most but cannot seem to get is woman (as will be seen later, though, woman is more than a mere cypher or symbol, and carries with her aspects of final reality more fundamental than this would suggest.) She embodies "spirit", as Tooth, as his name suggests, embodies flesh and blood. As one of the strong people, Tooth has always known that there is something more than ordinary life, something more to come, some end which is not an end, and which continually urges the thinking mind forward -- the "principle of selection" of Contemporaries And Snobs. Tooth, as one of the strong people, always wants to know what there is next, what there is to come, and, simply because he can ask this question, there is something to come. The weak people do not ask the question:

There was, in fact, no question. They just said 'God' instead of asking questions, and this was supposed to make everything right for the moment; and for the moment it did. The strong people, on the other hand, did ask questions; this is what having wills meant. And all their questions resolved themselves into one question; any particular question amounted to asking "What next?" and all the questions resolved themselves into the single question, "What last of all?"

(Progress, pp.274-5)

For the weak people, "she did not come into the question", whereas for the strong people "she naturally did come into the question; for she was last of all."

This need to question is the principle of elemental story and constitutes the need for story, why there is story.

Tooth and the strong people do not know that at the end of the story is she (though they may sense it), nor do they know what the end of the story is. It is not, anyway, quite what might be expected:

"I suppose this is the end of the earth," Tooth said in a tone that showed that, no matter how surprised he felt at her being there, he felt no surprise at his being there. "Yes," she answered placidly, "this is where things are done, once and for always. I've done all my work already." He looked about sceptically, for he could not see any signs of work. It was only a place, and an empty place. There wasn't even nature there. They were standing on something, but it wasn't even rubble. It was plain that he did not take seriously the idea of her having done any work.

(Progress, p.275)

Man, that is, cannot think that she has anything to do with the end of his story. But she is not offended, and tells him to stand where she is standing, to look. She then disappears, and he finds himself, because of the energy of her disappearance, standing where she had been. He does not move, that is, but is moved by her energy of disappearance, as, similarly, "he had arrived at the end of the earth by the energy of her appearance at a point that had previously been, as far as he was concerned, anywhere." (pp.275-6). This might be put another way by saying that it was not until he had noticed her that he was able to move: he has the will to move, but the energy of movement is hers. Standing where she was, he can now see the situation clearly:

He saw the earth, a point round which a world had been built, a point that was only the beginning of the earth but which the weak people had made into a whole -- a beginning and an end and therefore a round earth. He saw the beginning of the earth and how its end was not the same as its beginning, but another point: the earth, in fact, was a stretch of time.

(Progress, p.276)

For the weak people, the world is the beginning and end, like the concrete intelligence, and is therefore round. To the strong people, the earth is only a beginning, the end being another point. The earth is only a place to set out from -- "a stretch of time" -- which is, in fact, nowhere or anywhere. It is a beginning, merely. The weak people, not realising this, take it as an end as well. The strong people take it as a nowhere from which to go to somewhere. The earth is "the strong people themselves one after the other, making a bridge between nowhere and somewhere -- anywhere." (p.276). Under this bridge, which is the earth, the strong people, and a stretch of time, flows water which "was the woman herself accompanying the strong people from nowhere to somewhere." She is, her spirit as energy is, the progress and quality of story towards which man advances and for which he is insatiably hungry, but which he yet postpones.

As soon as he realizes all this, Tooth begins to knit together as a body all the other strong people. He becomes Teeth, Nails, Hands, Fingers, Hair, Bone, and, finally, Flesh. The significance of this is that these various parts of the body, the strong people, are all numbered, they are a known quantity, whereas, on the other hand, the weak people are not numbered -- the strong people know, that is, who they are and may therefore start the journey forward, Because the weak people do not know who they are but act as a mass, believing themselves to be all there is apart from God, they are content, leaving the question of 'what next' to God or the future, and do not understand that there is a journey to make. Only the strong people (who might be thought of as individually

unreal), know that there is yet further to go. Not until there are sufficient strong people can the journey be undertaken, each verifying the other, each showing that there is somewhere to go to, so that there is no mistake, or that, if there is a mistake, the reason for the mistake is known, so that the direction, too, is known, and known to be the same direction. As soon as the number of the strong people is known, and the First One has set out and seen the somewhere, the rest of the strong people follow to become one body:

And as the strong people became one body, the body, it grew as big as the woman who was a spirit. And she was now not only a spirit but the spirit. She was the spirit of the body. She was inside the body now, deeper than Bone. Apparently the body, under the leadership of Tooth, had put its Hands on her, and driven its Nails into her, and eaten her! Or rather, she had fed herself to the body, carrying out the last condition of the humorous love-pact between them. There was nothing now but the body, and the spirit deep, deep inside it, deeper inside than Bone. It was she who spoke for body as a whole, since Bone was, as a matter of fact, quite dumb.

(Progress, p.282)

The body driving its Nails into her (tooth and nail!) is man's will to get to somewhere somehow; while her feeding herself to the body is her beneficence, ^maccommodating herself ^{e/m} to be the equal of man. As soon as body and spirit are one, the earth, which was the bridge the strong people made, disappears along with the sky and the weak people, and even the strong people, though the body of the strong people stays "because the spirit was inside it" (p.283).

The reason for the name 'Tooth' is that the body has the same number of parts as Teeth, that is, thirty-two. This shows the number of the strong people, giving the number of strong people concrete identity. But it also divides up into the five senses by which the spirit of she is known:

But thirty-two was the living length of the body. This was the number of the earth, of the will of the strong people doubled to its utmost strength. The first doubling was the breaking into two of one, which was really the number of her. And there were five doublings before the will must fail. For after the fifth doubling fast come the millions; and in the millions fast is it zero again, and slowly one again. But five was the number of the senses. Five times the body knew itself. The body increased through its five knowledges from none to thirty-two. Beyond this was the knowledge of her, whom the body could not know singly and who could not be known but singly. And since the body could not know her singly, she came inside it, deep, deep inside, to the depth of five; and the body knew her in its five knowledges singly.

(Progress, p.283)

So, through the body, she is sensed in five ways: hearing, touching, seeing ("The third knowledge was the seeing of her, a spirit like eyes, to see whom is only to see with"(p.284), then not smell but the "quick inhalation and exhalation of her", and, finally, tasting, "like a spirit swallowed." With the knowledge of the fifth sense, she changes from a spirit to the spirit, not only inside the body but everywhere:

The body was somewhere, but she was everywhere. It was her body, and she went everywhere with it; but at any point it was only somewhere, while at any point she was everywhere. Alas, the strong people -- she was the body now. And this was the beginning of the sixth sense, the sense of speech, which the strong people had previously enjoyed only as a weakness borrowed from the weak people -- a sense suffered rather than enjoyed, a sense of the impossible, which in the weak people meant stuttering notions of immortality, and in the strong people, up to now, only a terrible crying out sometimes with a pain they didn't feel. Nor was it so much the sixth sense as the nth sense -- a sense of death. Alas, the strong people -- they were dead now. She was the body now and the body had but one sense now, the sense of speech. One sense only had the body now, and one knowledge: to speak, and to know that the words it spoke were only broken meanings of the word that she spoke -- even as at any point the body was only somewhere, while at any point she was everywhere. You ask me, "What is this word?" It is a word not to say but to know. It is a word that as a

number is one in its nth multiple of oneness, or none in its oneth multiple of everythingness.

(Progress, pp. 284-5)

This is what Tooth has finally achieved. With the five senses he has knowledge of the woman-spirit, can sense that there is a spirit to know. But only when the knowledge, gained through the five senses, reaches its fullest, does the spirit of her enter him, and there comes to be a sixth sense, speech -- the speaking of her. This speaking of her is story, is why one goes to story, and then another and another. But as yet the story is many different stories. There is no word to say and hardly a word to know.

The narrative breaks off at this point and the author speaks directly to the reader. "You see," she says, "how it is all a matter of the humour of the thing." We have learned that the earth is not round, and that nothing is quite so inaccurate as numbers:

But we have got on, have we not? We have allowed the strong people to exist for a certain time (as was our object, and as they were destined to), and shown how close they came to the truth, in so perpetuating themselves. We have also shown that they could not come so close as actually to be the truth. The truth is a world which lasts forever, and the strong people do certainly exist for a certain time. But to exist for a certain time in a world which lasts for ever can only mean to be somewhere -- here or there or there -- in it; only she is everywhere in it. And here, we must admit, we have gone a little too far in our lesson.

(Progress, p. 286)

It is impossible, she continues, to say "in so many words how we stand":

We learn to smile at what cannot, for all our delicacy, be put into so many words. I suppose we have put it into some words; but strictly among ourselves, we know that we have not said more than that it is a smiling

matter. We only know that the relation between him and her is based on a mutual sense of humour. We cannot but know that a relation exists between them at all; we cannot but know this if we know about her.

(Progress, p.286)

And we smile, "not quite sure what we are smiling at." (p.287)

We are smiling, that is, at a shared knowledge which cannot quite be put into words:

But beyond this? To go on smiling, and to feel not merely that we do not altogether understand, but that, in effect, we do not altogether exist, that, in effect, only she altogether exists, that only the truth altogether knows -- in which we cannot give ourselves a perfect lesson, since we as a whole do not altogether exist?

(Progress, p.287)

Many years later, in 1965, 'A Last Lesson In Geography' was reprinted in Art And Literature, 6, and, loyal to readers and to the story, "more of the facts of the story" by then having come into her possession, Mrs. Jackson takes the story a little further, as though continuing it. Eventually, she says, "it became harder and harder to be playful in learning the lessons remaining to be learned." All the lessons learned were, she discovered, relative to one another, "so that one ended up knowing the reality only in part, only in this way and that way, never in the whole." The closer the story got to reality, the more need there is to know, and "there is only one way to know the reality, and that is to be it."

Now, the She of Us who is such an important character in this story was, of course, for all her being the Token of the whole in our midst, relative to the He of Us who is such an important character of our story. The relativity of the He of Us to the She of Us as the Token of the whole, or Messenger of reality, is the essence of the story as far as it was taken. There was left to tell how it further went, and first

as to the obverse relativeness: how, when the He of Us at last reacted to the She of Us as the Token of the whole (and not as the Token of Himself), and accepted reality's Message at Her hand (instead of going on being the Messenger of Himself to Himself), She gradually became less and less She -- even as He was becoming less and less He. And thereupon She and He gradually became I and I, I, I ... Whereupon, I, I, I, I, ... began to rise to its infinite power We.

Just when we become We is of one parcel with the question, just when one becomes I. It is for You -- which is the same as small letter we -- to give the answer. There is only one way to know the reality in the whole, and that is to be it, and ~~the~~ only one way to be the reality, and that is to speak it. The finish of the story must be left for you to tell.

(Art And Literature, pp. 42-3)

This changes the emphasis of the story. From there being no words in the story identifiable with the "word she spoke" ("It is a word not to say but to know"), in this later view, in order to know reality in the whole, the reader is urged to be it, and further urged that, the only way to be reality is to speak it. This is the later position from which The Telling came to be written.

Chapter 4

The Final Values

Experts Are Puzzled, Progress Of Stories and some parts of Anarchism Is Not Enough may well leave the reader puzzled. That something has been going on is undeniable, but quite what that something is cannot be put, seemingly, into so many words. There is a tremendous amount of thought, some of which is plain when the directions are taken from Mrs. Jackson's earlier thought, some of which is new, sitting the reader back on his heels to think carefully before continuing, some of which is strange, as with 'Miss Banquett', or the most 'difficult' of the stories in Progress Of Stories, 'A Last Lesson In Geography' (difficult, perhaps, because it is the most obdurate in the face of the desire to hurry). But one must remember that Mrs. Jackson did not stop there. She went on and on trying to bring that something into actuality, uncluttering its meaning so that it could be seen. I think she achieved a tremendous amount of uncluttering in her stories, bringing to the reader consciousness of the presence of a reality not generally thought of as existing, and with such a good humour that one cannot help smiling with her at the sheer simplicity and, at the same time, the sheer complexity of what she is saying. But the point of what she was saying could ^{not} be put in 'so many words' because to put it in so many words betokens an end, an end to the story, which is what has always been looked for, and, as she made clear through Frances Cat, "in the end nothing happens."

What becomes clear in what might be called the straightforward, more overt prose, which runs side by side with her stories and her poems, is that a position has been gained of utmost clarity of thought. It is a temptation to try to connect the stories and the prose, and, of course, they are connected in the sense that they come from the same mind. But I think they are connected in what I earlier termed a complementary sense, in that the one illuminates the other, rather than in the sense that one explains the other, or fills in the gaps of the other (for there are no gaps, as such, in either). The difference between them is one of stance; and the sameness is one of subject. As the Preface to Progress Of Stories puts it, the subject never changes for there is one subject, only, "and it is impossible to change it." The difference is that, in the stories, author and reader are joined in looking at an unexpected face of reality, while in the straightforward prose the author is pointing out the nature of reality as it might be seen.

I am thinking mainly of the four volumes of the large magazine, Epilogue: A Critical Summary, which Mrs. Jackson edited, with Robert Graves as Assistant Editor (later Associate Editor), between 1935 and 1938¹. These contain in convenient form Mrs. Jackson's views on the widest possible number of subjects, continuing with and applying rationally the principles she formulated in A Survey, Contemporaries And Snobs, and Anarchism Is Not Enough, while also drawing upon her experience

1 Epilogue: A Critical Summary, edited by Laura Riding. Deya, Majorca: Seizin Press, and London: Constable, 1935, 1946, 1937, 1938. The fourth volume was called The World And Ourselves and was of book-format, Mrs. Jackson the writer, with letter-contributions from others. The name 'Madeleine Vara' in Epilogue was a pseudonym of Mrs. Jackson (See Appendix, p. 13). Footnote below).

in poetry and stories. The essays range through crime, the romantic poets, politics and poetry, philosophy and poetry, the nature of reality, God, art and advertising and a great deal more. She published much else at this time as well -- a collection of letters with an editorial postscript, several novels, another collaborative work (this time with Harry Kemp), a translation with Graves, a pamphlet, and the continuing poetry -- all of which is important. But the Epilogue volumes, in their compass and overt nature, provide sufficient focus for study in understanding most, if not all, of her thinking to that point, around 1940, when she saw that she had gone as far as she could with poetry, and that to go on meant leaving it behind.

Epilogue was a thick, hard-cover magazine of poems, essays, stories, homiletic studies, criticism and art. In this format there were three volumes; the fourth, The World And Ourselves, was a special "inquiry into the state of the world today in relation to ourselves", as the introductory note tells us, and was published in 1938. There was to be a fifth volume but this did not appear, and Mrs. Jackson returned to America in 1939, Graves and Alan Hodge, a contributor to Epilogue, going with her to assist her in the writing of a book on language. (They not long after returned and began work on a book of their own, The Reader Over Your Shoulder, which was published in 1943.) Mrs. Jackson not only edited Epilogue but contributed to it massively. For example, in the first volume, leaving aside poems, while the other contributors averaged two essays each, out of

fourteen articles, she actually wrote six, either under her own name or that of her pseudonym (Madeleine Vara), and had the greater part in co-authorship in another two. Her contributions to the next two volumes increase, if anything. But not only this, her role as editor was crucial, as the 'Preliminaries' to the first volume indicate, and involved her in a great deal of editorial writing-activity, not merely in terms of proof-reading of corrections but in direct assistance given to contributors:

No one should merely 'submit' material to us: we are not interested in writing which is sent to us because its author would like to see it in print. Contributions must be the result of collaborative arrangement. Our activity is collaborative, and there can be no collaboration without an adjustment of interest to a central theme.

(Epilogue 1, p.4)

The marks of this collaboration are everywhere evident, unmistakably, in the ideas of the various contributors. Their work remains their own, but their prose inexorably moves towards Mrs. Jackson's "central theme", either collaboratively, or in footnotes, or in direct editorial guidance. Other 'direct' material, such as stories, poems, paintings, photographs, is reproduced only if it accords with the central theme.

This central theme is given in the sentence which immediately follows the quotation above:

Our central theme is a time-surviving truth, and a final unity of values in this truth.

In the last paragraph of 'Preliminaries'(p.5), this is extended:

We do not expound opinions but report, besides what has happened (been thought), a single event possible after

everything has happened: a determination of values. And we are not 'literary' except in that we regard words as the most authoritative indexes of value, since they are at once the most specific and the most sensitive instruments of thought; we have no professional prejudice in favour of words as an aesthetic medium. In deciding on any text offered to us we shall be concerned not with its 'literary' merits but with its active sensitiveness to value. What is value? We do not say that this or that is value; we do not hold an opinion about value. An opinion is a special view defensively held against other views. We have no special view. We affirm only the existence of value. We affirm a necessary final law of relation; and in saying that we affirm it we mean that it is a law in immediate effect rather than a law we should like to be brought into effect. We affirm a consciousness of the immediate effectiveness of value, as the consciousness of an event. And our purpose is to create in others a cognizance, if not a consciousness, of this event; to release it to all its implications, and thus to achieve what has never yet been achieved and could not be achieved until now -- a vivid reality of thought.

(Epilogue 1, p.5)

It could not be achieved until now, since history had not exhausted itself until now. Now, history was over. People might continue to live in history, might continue to feed the voracious appetite of history in its guise of being society; but as such, people were living historically; they were not in reality alive. All that was left to do now was to order and give values to history, to make a 'critical summary' of it, and reduce its clutter, and in doing so achieve "a vivid reality of thought." This was no longer a specifically 'literary' concern. All through Mrs. Jackson's work the tendency was to become extra-literary, so that what she said on poetry, both generally and in the contemporary setting, was relevant not to itself alone but to the widest contexts of the processes of thought. Poetry was not merely 'poetry' but the acutest 'sense' of life, thought at its highest degree of consciousness; and what was true of what had happened in

poetry was also true of the world. In this sense, poetry is a governing standard: the human desire to know truth fully. What she said of poetry and its historical subservience to the plain reader was equally true of any other functioning of the human mind, whether science, religion, philosophy, art of whatever, with this difference: that poetry was continually in a state of conflict between serving the plain reader, who in his person represents the concrete intelligence, and serving itself, that is, its desire to free itself from the concrete intelligence and move into truth. It does not matter for the moment whether that is achievable -- that is the desire. Other human pursuits do not have this desire. Their only desire is to serve man or, as in religion, to help man to serve man by serving God. Their authority derives from society, and they are given that authority only as long as they can be seen to serve society. When something attacks society, as poetry, genuine poetry, does, it is immediately made to conform or disappear, or it is 'tidied up', as successive editors 'tidied up' Shakespeare, so that it is made acceptable. Poetry in this sense is not a 'literary' standard but the final standard by which to measure all other standards. This is the function of poetry in Epilogue. Sometimes in an essay it is not ostensibly present, but the principal governing standard determining the values of any given essay-subject is derived from Mrs. Jackson's understanding of poetry.

Poetry is not 'literary.' Literature is literary, a continuance of the tradition of literature. Poetry is not a continuance but an abrupt, unauthorized new beginning every

time a poem is written. Most writing is literary, written from the bowels of the literary tradition in order to justify its continuance. It may be collective-real or individual-real, but either way the reality is that of the group, of confirming the existence of the group. It can get no further than either flattering the group that it is all vulgarly, romantically together, or that it is all romantically, aristocratically together -- as long as the reader can identify with it, it doesn't matter (which is no more than to say that as long as it is literature it doesn't matter.) Poetry isn't literature and it does matter. Genuine poetry matters so much that, because it cannot be beaten into submission, it is ignored. Poetry is words, the "most authoritative indexes of value." It does not rely on literature or society for its inspiration but on the personal integrity of the poet to recognize truth and allow it to take shape on the page with as little interference as possible. Truth in the poem is the truth of the world as it actually is, not as it was -- 'as it was' is literature.

The point is succinctly made in the second essay in Epilogue 1, 'Poems and Poets':¹

Question -- Will you now redefine the notion of poetry and the notion of criticism you have been jointly developing here in a way to show how the notion of judgement is divided between them; and whether judgement is to be understood as a peculiar property of poetry, or of criticism. And will you clarify the difference between the relation of the critic, and that of the poet, to poetry?

Answer -- Poetry is the only absolute to which comparative reference can be made; the only absolute

1 The questions were not put to Mrs. Jackson by a particular person, though a note in parenthesis at the end of the essay says: "Some of the problems dealt with in this study were originally suggested by Mr. J. Bronowski in private correspondence." (p.156.)

which is not an abstraction. It is the basis of all comparison, the unique standard governing likeness. When a person says 'I like that,' he is using the notion of poetry as a sentimental model: the thing has likeness -- it belongs somewhere within a range of interest centred in himself. The notion of poetry is the notion of an implicit identity of all distinctions in a final standard of relation. That which does not imply standard can have no reality as distinction: it is freakish. Judgement is the force of interest with which the pole of identity is magnetized. By means of judgement, the difference is endowed with coherence; judgement is at once the agent of unity and of diversity.

(Epilogue 1, pp.151-2)

The poem is a recognition of a final standard of relation of which the poet is the medium. Sensing, in the initial 'inspiration', an energy which presses to come into being, the poet, free of the impurities of dogma, allows the poem to form, withdrawing himself as much as possible. The resulting poem is an utterly new perception written in direct recognition and anticipation of there being a final absolute truth where all is resolved: poetry. Poems are written facing towards poetry. They "anticipate (use as cause), in the form of human instances, the final event into which poetry accumulates through literary postponement":

Poetry, the ideal end of the literary continuum, is an end; that is, it must happen otherwise than merely as poems, which are the temporal rendering of poetry. This explanation employs the idea of immediacy in a way that avoids possibilities of falsification: to describe actual finality.

(Epilogue 1, p.150)

Mrs. Jackson saw poetry as unique in its extraordinary promise of a final standard of relation, its being the final standard in its being the highest possible standard and the most free motivation towards truth possible to humanity. Because the poet could recognize the urgency of final relation and give

it form in the poem, in its final form as poetry, this must be the standard by which to give positive coherency (values) to thought. In establishing these values there would be a "vivid reality of thought".

In 'Preliminaries' Mrs. Jackson sets out the principles which guide Epilogue towards a vivid reality of thought. The writing in Epilogue begins where there is most confusion: ideas. Ideas, she explains, are emotionally based and guided by historical ends, unlike wisdom, which is not emotionally determined but which might be called "recognitions of truth."

An idea is a short-cut in thought motivated by historical ends; however reasonable it may seem, it obscures truth because it expresses only that part of it which it is at the moment convenient to know. Ideas, though elements of thought, whose function it is to discover truth, pervert truth in expressing it; the sum of ideas is not wisdom but confusion. Ideas can be only historically true, by their subservience to historical ends. We must be aware of these ends in defining ideas, for it is as agents of history, not of truth, that they have reality: as agents of truth they have an equivocal reality. Thus we can clarify a standard of reality -- by making thought seek its level in the range from historical to absolute reality.

(Epilogue 1, p.1)

These are the principles which govern and determine the direction of Mrs. Jackson's first essay, 'The Idea Of God', in Epilogue 1, and examination of that helps to understand what she means.

The essay begins with eight questions put by an Epilogue contributor, Thomas Matthews, who begins with the most obvious question, "Does God exist?". His other questions include: "What is God's relation to Man? Does the Devil exist? When men say they 'know' God, 'see' God, 'serve' God, what do they mean?" The historically conscious mind would, perhaps, turn to biblical exegesis, or, to the conviction that the world is

so 'wonderful' something must have created it, or even, perhaps, the converse. All three types of response would be historically based and would be expressed in terms of what it is 'convenient to know' at the time. Mrs. Jackson answers the question in terms of its elementals:

'God' is the name given to the most 'important' human idea. In English, as in other languages, the original sense of the word is obscure. But the character of the name is the same in all languages: it is a question. 'God' is the question 'Is there something more important than, something besides, Man?' Man would like to feel self-sufficient, yet he feels dependent. 'God' states the discrepancy between what man would like to feel about himself and what he actually feels; but equally it represents his attempt to make a compromise between what he would like to feel and what he actually feels. In 'God' he chooses those meanings for the 'something else' which interfere least with what he would like to feel about himself. Man says to himself 'I like feeling the lord of my world, and yet I cannot help feeling that it is not altogether my world.' He feels that there is something else, but he does not know it. To know something one must identify oneself with it; and the result of identifying oneself with it is the discovery of one's precise relation to it. Man has a repugnance toward knowing what he cannot possess. He cannot possess the something else; therefore he does not know it. He places the something else at a distance where it cannot offend his feelings. He does not try to know it, only to understand it -- to know it with his feelings. But in making this removal a sense of guilt remains. Perhaps he has done something untrue -- something which will ultimately be held against him?

(Epilogue 1, p.6-7)

This does not question the assumption that God exists or argue with the traditionally received notion of God. What it seeks is the value of 'God' to man. 'God' is in inverted commas because Mrs. Jackson is not assuming actual God to exist or not exist but as a reality in the mind. 'God' is, as a word, an authoritative index of value.

Man propitiates the something else, 'God', by placing it at a distance and seeking to understand it, not by identifying himself with it, and thus removes from himself the sense of

'discrepancy', the fault lying not so much in him as in it.

Mrs. Jackson then moves logically if startlingly to the point that woman signifies the same discrepancy:

Woman is something other than man. She is the contradictory being by whom man attempts both to identify himself with the something else, and to exorcise it; and she apparently yields to the contradiction. But she is not in herself contradictory; she is the answer to man's contradictory behaviour towards the something else, which is both insulting and propitiatory. She is the answer to the question 'Does God exist?'

Man's behaviour, that is, towards the something else is a contradictory mixture of propitiation and the desire not to know it, not to identify himself with it, placing it outside himself so that it does not interfere with his sense of lordship.

His behaviour towards women is the same:

Man does not willingly think about woman; when he does, the result is either obscene (irreverent) or sentimental (guilty). He interprets her behaviour either as endearingly submissive complaisance or as devilishly inhuman caprice. But man's most constant conclusion about woman is that she is something not to be understood.

(Epilogue 1, p.7)

Man, in order to exist comfortably with woman, must treat her both obscenely, as an object for his sexual intentions and sentimentally, as a culturally depicted mystery.¹ She is familiar to him in sex and he sentimentally familiarizes himself

1 For a fuller discussion of the man-woman relation, see 'The Damned Thing', Anarchism Is Not Enough, pp.187-208 where man is seen as sexually subjectively engrossed: "Man himself is unreal. On woman he gets physical reality. She is his nature, the realistic enlargement of his own small sexual apparatus. She is the morphological supplement of his phallus." (p.200) And: "The male mind is conventional because the male body is a mere convention. The female body is unconventional because it is individualistic: man gets somewhat socially and vaguely just children, woman gets personally and precisely a child. The female mind is therefore unconventional because it

with her in marriage, social intimacy, art, while she is also something not himself and therefore treated as trivial, intuitive, capricious, weak. He does not see that she is not a great artist, philosopher, scientist simply because these inventions are his, not hers. Man's behaviour towards woman is the same as his behaviour towards God, and she therefore provides the answer to the question 'Does God exist?' She "constitutes for man complete experience." (p.15)

This is not to identify woman with God. God remains outside of man as the something else of which he is afraid, eluding final comprehension. Woman provides the same focus for thought for man in that she is also a mystery, also not himself, and is therefore the provider of complete experience. Man cannot accomplish this, however, unless and until he ceases to be a subjective being, stops attempting to understand subjectively, and begins to understand objectively instead. Mrs. Jackson explains this in terms of feeling. There are, she says, two kinds of feeling: subjective feeling where man feels convinced of something, as much ^{as} to say 'I feel this or that', and objective feeling where what is felt is outside man, beyond his subjective control, so that he is affected strongly by it without knowing what it is or being able to incorporate it in his understanding. Objective feeling is a threat to man's sense of being totally real. Whatever man does he cannot hide from himself that there is something else, something which

is individualistic, that is, because woman is physically an individual to a degree which man is not. Therefore man is intellectual, woman is intuitional: man is unconquerable monotony, woman conquerable variety" (p.207)

is not him, and this is manifest to him in the person of woman as well as God. He cannot tolerate the objective fact of woman but must try to make her a subjective fact. But the most he can do is to treat her obscenely, as merely a lesser part of himself, and, with mystical reverence, as an accessible something else, as in propitiation God is accessible.

Because man cultivates subjective feeling at the expense of objective feeling to the total suppression of the objective, he cannot be more than himself, more than the total sum of his subjective mind. This denial of anything but himself is the ultimate futility, but he cannot see a way out of it. For the futility to stop, and for man to be more than himself, his subjectivity must be replaced by objectivity:

The subjective and the objective cannot exist relatedly in the same subjective period of the human mind: the objective cannot be incorporated in the subjective. But when the mind stops the objective succeeds; and only through the objective can the subjective be ordered and determined. In feeling objectively man is admitting the something else; and when the admission is made by him, in his highest degree of self-consciousness, at his limit of subjective power, he is saved from the suicidalism of mere consciousness, mere life as an end in itself. In stopping he is asking a question about himself instead of making affirmations; he is asking a question about his affirmations. Primitive man's personal existence was a dumb question. He required no answer because he made no challenging affirmations about what he must not want, must not do. Civilized man's personal existence consists of challenging affirmations. And the civilized state of the mind is one of futile imaginariness unless it admits an end of consciousness: unless it anticipates a state in which the very affirmations of man's consciousness become a question seeking an answer.

(Epilogue 1, pp 16-17)

To get beyond the futility of himself man must stop attempting to incorporate the something else (everything which is not man) in his understanding. What is behind this attempt is the

desire to be the something else as well as himself, to be everything, all things. This desire is rooted in the knowledge that he is not everything, that there is something else. Man's egoistic despair is that he cannot tolerate the knowledge that there exists anything separate from himself: that he and he alone must be the lord of the universe.

This is impossible, and woman is the impossibility which confronts man. No matter which way he turns he cannot get round her. Whether he views her as obscene or sentimental, he cannot escape the conclusion that she is there, like God, part of himself and yet different from himself:

Woman constitutes for man complete experience. In her the two kinds of feeling are provided for and they may operate without interference one by the other. She yields to subjective feeling, but in so doing defends against human understanding that aspect of her which is accessible only to objective feeling. But the more intelligent man becomes, the more repugnant does objective, non-intelligent feeling become: the more insistently does he interpret woman as an element of himself, entirely adaptable to his understanding.

(Epilogue 1, p.15)

Man sees this objective quality in woman as a mystery, whether as a flaw or as a strength, and through his reverence for her he believes he can identify himself with the something else. This is why modern literature is "womanish" mysticism which is "most naively propagandized by D. H. Lawrence, and most cynically by James Joyce" (p.23). But woman is not accessible in this subjective way. She remains different, a source of constant irritation to man's self-preoccupation:

Women are not really comfortable in wearing human personality. They may feel all the human sympathies, be humanly knowing and efficient -- but they do not feel comfortable. No matter how actively they assume traditional male roles, they are always something 'different':

they are women. And, indeed, they only feel comfortable as something different. They were able to endure historical nullity as human forces because they were not human forces. The cloak of benevolent complaisance was a disguise under which they could always feel privately 'different', comfortable, fundamentally unreal in what they were 'doing' from the human point of view.

(Epilogue 1, p.23)

The only way for man to cease from futility is to desist from subjective pre-occupation and relate himself objectively to the something else. Primitive man was a part of the mystery. Everything he did to sustain himself in life was accompanied by an act of propitiation. He could be subjective towards it, in that it provided him with the wherewithal to live, and objective in that he did not try to make it his own. Practicality and propitiation were one and the same. But as he grew more civilized, so he placed the something else at a distance from himself and called it 'God'. Ambitiously, he "cleared a time-line of progress for his consciousness" (p.8). By calling the mystery 'God', he both freed himself from it and yet kept it where it was humanly amenable. The more civilized his advance, the further he placed God from himself and the more he felt he had conquered the mystery: subjectively man could dupe himself into the belief that there never had been a mystery other than himself. But he never quite succeeded, for there was always that irritating source of otherness, woman, the direct challenge which he could only seek to nullify by obscenity and reverence. To see God, therefore, man need only see woman, who constitutes for man "complete experience."

The historical progress of mankind is based on the distinction man makes between himself and the something else. The distinction, which Mrs. Jackson calls the "first distinction" (p.39), is his emotional attitude towards whatever is not

himself. Whatever is not himself contains the something else, and in order to conquer it man places it in his understanding in the attempt to make himself free of it, independent of it, so that eventually he sees nothing else but himself. He does not realise that freeing himself from it will not make it disappear: he will always know vaguely of its existence, he will always want to be it, to possess the final "vivid reality of thought." But instead of being it, which is both himself and not himself, man continues in the subjectively chosen direction away from it, seemingly more and more free, being more and more all the mystery there is. He refuses to see that the something else will not go away, that he is not independent of it, and that his only possible relation with it is one of identity, permitting, as it were, himself to be it and it to be himself. He cannot understand, because he is subjective and not objective, that it has something to say to him as well as he to it, and that the saying is the same (for there is only one subject.) If he were able to do this, he would move into final truth, for the first distinction forced on man is "the irritating quantitative distinction between himself and what is not himself", and therefore the final distinction must be the creation of order out of this, must bring into being a total reconciliation:

And the final distinction must be an ordering, standardizing distinction -- the first distinction as that which obtains ultimately and to which other distinctions must relate. But if man's first distinction is translated into the sentimental possibility of being different from himself, quantitatively greater, 'better', freer from his given limitations, then he is his own finality -- a tragic or comic finality according to the duration he so conceives himself to enjoy; and the secondary distinctions of his consciousness degenerate into

tragic or comic jargon. Thus contemporary humanistic finalities move either in the comic or tragic direction. The comic and the tragic both express man's temptation to assert himself as finality: either because, any other finality escaping him, he feels that he must round out the human drama with a mock-finality, or because he feels that if he does not assert himself as finality, another kind of finality will cut short his egotistic fancies -- as the contemporary tragic mood is one of egotistic suicidalism.

(Epilogue 1, p.39-40)

The governing principle behind 'The Idea Of God' is the knowledge attained by Mrs. Jackson in her study of poetry. In order for man to be objective he must be free of the constraints of history, and of the society which history creates, as well as free of himself. For history, society, is only himself writ large as a group protection from the something else and, at the same time, an assertion of himself as the only mystery there is: a brutal denial that there is anything but himself. But man has reached a stage of exhaustion with himself. He is stuck on the stage with no more lines to say while the audience still expects something more. To get off the stage he must see the falsity of his position, and that all the lines worth saying have been said. To go on repeating the old theme is to move nowhere. To give the old lines a new twist is only to be comic or tragic. The only way for him to bring about a reconciliation between himself and that which is not himself, that which seems beyond him, is to throw off his protective mantle and step forward purely as himself, not enjoined in the false protective reality of the past but enjoined in the immediate reality which is the final reality sitting in judgement upon him, waiting for him to come of age. That he must come of age is inevitable, for this is the one possible

direction of the first distinction (the emotional attitude centred in the difference between man and the something else.) As Mrs. Jackson said in Experts Are Puzzled, variety opposes to itself oneness: "We are endowed with variety. We may attain oneness."

That poetry in Epilogue is the practical standard by which other subjects might be related is also obvious from the essay-titles, such as 'Philosophy And Poetry', 'Politics And Poetry', 'Humour and Poetry As Related Themes.' By taking poetry as the ultimate standard by which other disciplines could be coherently ordered, Mrs. Jackson showed the final values poetry offered. Poetry as an end can be seen to be that area of thought the allegiance of which is to truth. Its end is not pleasure, philosophy, politics, religion, nor is the poem an end in itself or a 'poem-absolute.' These and other fields are specialized fields with particular ends. In 'Philosophy And Poetry' (in which she collaborated with Alan Hodge), the distinction, for example, between philosophy and poetry is made clear:

The results of poetry are poems; of philosophy 'views'. A poem cannot exist, 'hold together', unless it unites its elements so firmly that they remain united: it attempts to unite only what can be permanently associated. It is for this reason that a poem seems to cover a narrower field or have a smaller content than a philosophical view. A philosophical view joins many elements in loose, temporary association, achieving not unity, that is to say permanent and appropriate association, but a verbal moderation of their contradictoriness. The result in poetry is a result for the elements dealt with in the poem; in philosophy for the state of mind of the person who holds the philosophical view. The object of a philosophical view is to achieve equanimity in the face of confusion: this is why its material is 'larger' than that of poetry, which deals only with material that has a clearly indicated potentiality of unification.

Philosophy deals always with an inherited disorganized universe, and the philosophic view represents an act of possession of this historical totality: the organizing force of philosophy is of a proprietary nature. Poetry deals with a purified universe, and the poem represents an act of communication between chosen elements: the organizing force of poetry is of a critical nature.

(Epilogue II, pp 148, 149)

Philosophy is concerned with the "human attitude" in that it disciplines knowledge "to contemporary standards of intellectual ease" (p.149). The philosopher does not accept that what is other than himself can be integrated with the human without violence to either. The philosopher is concerned with bestowing order on strangeness for the sake of human ease, forcing it to come to terms with the human. His instrument for this is logic. Philosophy is to be seen as a desire for ease accomplished by forcing what is strange to be humanly familiar. Poetry commits no such violence against what is strange (the something else): it senses what has potential unity and by the disciplining away of the will allows it to take place. All poems look forward to perfect unity in the accumulation of poetry. Philosophy is synthetic: it assembles from history, or the self which is in history, that which accords to history in the contemporary setting. What in philosophy is not in accordance with the human is left out. Poetry, in that it operates in the immediacy of thought, leaves nothing out. Everything is 'there.' Whatever the circumstances, all the material of knowledge is available at any given time. Philosophy has to seek out material and then arrange it:

Truth has order; permanent, intrinsic coherence.

Philosophy has logic: temporary, 'created' coherence. Poetry confers a benefit of order on material that lends itself to order; philosophy imposes logic on recalcitrant material.

(Epilogue II, p.150)

In this sense, poetry co-operates with material, while philosophy is antagonistic to it. The poet unites material which is ready for unity; the philosopher unites any material, ready or not, and his terms are those that "merely match the material" (p.152). Poetry, in its co-operation with the material, becomes the material.

Philosophy tries to swallow reality. But there must be, always, much which is left out, so that its successes are partial successes. This is why one philosophy succeeds another, while in poetry there is no succession but a sense of timelessness. Philosophy

exists always in controversy, a series of partial achievements which are seized upon, tested and rejected in turn. Poems, it is true, are also subject to tests, but it is poetry which makes them, and as of all poems together; in philosophy one system tests another -- there is no general standard philosophy. Philosophy thus begins with confusion and ends in it; it achieves no cumulative entirety, as poetry, by means of poems does.

(Epilogue II, p.154)

This is because poems do not deal with dead, inert historical matter but co-operate with immediate matter -- immediate self in the immediate now -- to make immediate and lasting truth. Poetry thus has entire scope, while philosophy, because its method is induction, has only partial scope: the material is made to fit the perceptive temperament of the philosopher. It tries to give effect to order but necessarily distorts it in making it fit the temperament, which is why it begins and

ends in confusion. It does not see potential order in the material it views, only disorder which must have logic imposed upon it. It refuses to recognize

the complex processes of organization that have been gradually changing the given chaotic universe into a significantly ordered arrangement.

(Epilogue II, p.156)

In refusing to recognize the highly complex nature of this movement towards significant order, philosophy concentrates upon disorder and attempts to wrench it, via logic, into a system of simplified order. Poetry observes the disorder but also the impulsion towards significant order, and its function is to assist order to come into being.

Poems anticipate final order. Philosophy, in attempting to align order with the human temperament, distorts it. Its aim is not to seek a relation with order but to impose the will upon what it sees as disorder, subordinating what is outside to what is inside. For the poet, there is no inside and outside, only truth. Poetry "associates things by every possible mechanism of association, testing their associability in extent, degree of intensity and permanence." The more thorough the test, the more genuine the poem, the more value it possesses:

A poem consists of a number of elements each of which is significant by its connexion with the others: by the interdependent illuminations. The elements connected may derive from the world of temporal experience, but the conditions of connexion are in poetry. And there is no scientific way of classifying these connexions: one can only say that they are poetic connexions -- which means that there exists a single illumination for all the elements represented in the poem. But this illumination is not merely the product of these interacting connexions. In every poem there is present, by the poet, a force of singleness informed with a sense

of congruent variety. This force answers a potentiality of unity in the elements and is identical with them, in the poem, to the point where they can no further speak as one. It is thus, by poem on poem, that a unity intricately aware of the limitations and substance of its terrain is built up: that unity comes to be identical with the sense of unity.

(Epilogue II, p.159)

Perhaps this might be put another way by saying that the poet's force of singleness is his unreal self aware of the existence all around of variety which is moving towards order. The unreal self demands, insists upon, unity, and, sensing the congruence of variety, identifies itself with the potential unity of variety by sensing the associability of the elements and bringing them together as far as possible, beyond which point it is not possible to go.

The difference between the philosopher and the poet is the difference of their relation with reality. Philosophy admits no relation with reality but sees it as a disorder requiring the systematic ordering of logic. Poetry co-operates with reality, actively seeks relation with it in order to allow its potential coherence to emerge. In 'From A Private Correspondence On Reality' in Epilogue III, Mrs. Jackson defines the nature of reality and explains poetry's relation to it. But before turning to this, it is illuminating to place side by side with her thought on philosophy her thought on science, and the difference between that and religion, in 'The Idea Of God.'

Thomas Matthews had asked: "What is God's relation to Space? To Time?" (Epilogue I, p.31), and Mrs. Jackson replied that this brings up the "scientific aspects of the general

problem with which we have been dealing -- the problem of human lesserness." Religion, she explains, gets round the problem of the temporal nature of man by making time a futurized eternity in which a place exists for man. Man may die, may lose his portion of reality in death, but a safe place is provided futuristically. It is space which confirms man in his future expectations: "Space stands for Godhead -- universality -- achieved by man; time, for the preservation of the human 'I' in this extension" (p.32.) Space, or we might say, the universe, is the domain of God from its lowest spiritual point to its highest, and it may be identified as a "safeguarded relaxation of energy backwards," while time is "the safeguarded extension of energy forward," both seeking to confirm man's sense of "accomplished temporal extension." In religion, the eternal reality of man is assured and confirmed by space and time.

For science, however, the solution to the problem that human lesserness presents is different. The scientist is not interested in placing the human 'I' in ideal contexts but tries to "reduce the human 'I' to a degree of extension that excludes all dubious 'other' degrees -- degrees difficult to sustain":

His object is to determine the least duration man can be sure of, and not as the freakish, remarkable 'I', but as the least 'I', the common human factor. Instead of the large, generalized human type 'God', there is a particularized, immediately discoverable and enactable type that is not even called 'human'-- because this involves a temptation to synthesis and God-making. 'Simply', the scientist tries to determine, 'what is the most common individual form?' And the answer is the atom, or whatever the atom can be made to split up into irreducibly. Then there is not 'I' manifold, but 'I'

and 'I' and 'I' as an infinite repetition of the common type. And at the same time the problem of universality is solved; for the strict economy of energy by which existence is an infinite repetition of the most trivial degree of existence conceivable excludes the notion of extent of consciousness -- in excluding the notion of sustenance of consciousness. The scientific individual computes its existence only against its own nothingness -- not against an ideal duration and scope of existence.

(Epilogue I, pp.32-33)

Science is not concerned, that is, with seeing the universe as the relation of one thing with another (values), but with seeking to determine the one common identifiable form of one thing and another -- succession, not relation:

Science dislikes the burden of compatibility. It makes distinctions with the object of proving the unreality of any principle of relation: it seeks an absolute of distinction, a quality that brings variant forms into mechanical interassociation without organizing them into 'meanings'. The scientist says, 'Man is the absolute equivalent of himself. Man has no relations with anything but himself: he has relativity not relation.'

(Epilogue I, p.33)

In science there is neither space nor time, only repetition. Each moment, each position, is the same as the one preceding and the one following. For the scientist, the burden of proof of human existence falls upon the lowest possible common denominator, the smallest possible 'thing', to which the human 'I' may refer back. In this universe there is no room for ultimate reality of thought, only behaviour, each 'thing' acting independently of the next though identical with the next: a variation of sameness:

The individual is merely one of a succession of identical events all happening at once. There is variation in that there is a first number of the succession and, say, a thousandth; but it would be impossible to say which was the first and which was the thousandth -- one could start counting anywhere, and from one to a

thousand would only mean that the counting had numbered a thousand identical events. Change (time) and position (space) are both cancelled as descriptive notions. The succession might be described in terms of change, or equally in terms of position; but the description would have to qualify itself by explaining that the change was not really change nor the position really position.

(Epilogue I, p.33)

The scientist resolves the problem of human lesserness by placing it in infinity, a multiple repetition, where it offers a counter-security against the dangers of man's "ambition to justify himself to a final value." In science he may be "the smallest possible, safest self, rather than the largest possible, noblest self" (p.35,ff). If religion arises from the human need to place self securely in the universe, giving certainty of stability (space) and certainty of the future (time), then science is no less motivated by the same need. But instead of space and time being seen as extensions of man, ensuring him a place in reality, in science space-time is self-cancelling, as the hyphen indicates, and man is computed instead against the nothingness of his origins, without extent of consciousness, safe in the arms of infinity from being too little or too much. Instead of 'meanings', man is offered himself as a succession of events. The theory of relativity, for instance, actively destroys relation, and offers only infinity. Science resolves the problem of human lesserness, the human 'I', by the reduction of everything to atoms, or molecules, or whatever. Nothing is expected of atoms except possibly behavioural variation but consisting of a sameness. It takes man back to his origins, his childhood:

And so the old historical universe cheers itself up by saying, 'I was once young, once I started: no one can

take that away from me.' The scientific universe is man's cheering memory of his beginnings translated into a perdurable infant universe.

(Epilogue I p.35)

The universe which Mrs. Jackson sees is quite different. 'From A Private Correspondence On Reality' in Epilogue III begins with several paragraphs defining the nature of reality, followed by questions seeking further elucidation put by Robert Graves. Everything, Mrs. Jackson says, is verified by the "flavour of permanence in things known to be impermanent":

There is nothing in experience altogether without this flavour; it is impossible for anything to be, no matter how short its life or insubstantial its structure, unless it is in some respects 'real'.

(Epilogue III, p.107)

But things or people which suggest reality are not reality itself -- they only indicate reality. In their separate existences they, as it were, only reflect reality. Reality itself is something else:

Reality is the finally real existence by which the existence of comparatively real things or beings derives. Everything which suggests the existence of reality by a flavour of permanence, no matter how impermanent it be: everything which has a relative permanence. Reality has an absolute permanence.

(Epilogue III, p.107)

To have experience of things and people is not to experience reality itself. Reality has "a more crucial flavour--the entire flavour of the all-real". Its permanence is its "resemblance to the universal identity which pervades all existence":

Its sufficiency is its effort to be -- the strength of its desire to 'belong'; its resemblance is the grace with which it accepts its own relativeness in the totality to which it desires to be.

(Epilogue III, p.7-8)

The all-real may only be experienced by leaving behind the "lesser human realities." Humanity, so far in its history, has looked forward to a final state of consciousness, but has made the possibility of this achievement "conditional upon the survival of the lesser human realities." These lesser realities have, as we have seen, reached a point of exhaustion, or as Mrs. Jackson says further on (p.118), a "spiritual stasis":

And I say this now as an immediate injunction: meaning that the lesser realities have now been articulated in their possible numbers and that the human mind is on the verge of the greater reality. If reality itself is not now experienced, experience itself will vanish: for it always implied such an ultimate experience. This is the time of all dangers and all securities. Men have often prophesied that on such and such a day the world would end. And the world has said, 'By what signs do you know this, by what right do you ask our belief in your reading of them?' My signs are no phenomena, but all phenomena, that I see them arrested between disintegration and integration; and my right is that, from being outside of them, so to see them, I have gone among them and suffered their paralysis.

(Epilogue III, p.108)

One must risk the test, she says, of leaving the lesser human realities behind, "for to him who dispenses with a greater there can be no lesser."

The personal authority of this statement is questioned by Robert Graves who says, "there does remain, if not for me, at least for others, the question of practical authority: how is one to be sure that what you say is so?" (p.110). Mrs. Jackson points out that authority is not something the "composite public bestow on others without limit." A government may govern, but it is not given "the authority to pronounce

upon literature or art or science" (p.111). So mathematicians or philosophers may be authorities in their fields, but "there exists a strong self-protective instinct against admitting more than a single specific capacity in any one person, or more than a single set of virtues." But there is, she continues, a capacity which "transcends the specialized field and is present, with other capacities which have similarly transcended their particular boundaries, in a final generality: there is, that is to say, such a generality to be present in," and the specialist who transcends the field of his endeavour may be called a "poet", as his field is "poetry":

Poetry is not an extension from other fields: it expresses no beyond, but entirely itself. And its truths therefore are not practically applicable, as religious truths are -- they are not moral truths...

If the scope assumed is an absolute scope, then the truths are spoken in a poetic sense; which means that behind whatever is said is a consciousness of what is left unsaid, and an implication of ideal completeness, by the discontent with which the single statement is uttered. A characteristic quality of the poetic statement is this dissatisfaction with itself: it is the most that can be said in such and such a context, or in such and such circumstances, but it is not sufficient to all contexts and to all circumstances. There is a striking and unexpected rhetorical difference between the religious and the poetic statement -- an odour of self-sufficiency in the one, a glow of relativeness in the other through which can be felt a burning insistence on more.

(Epilogue III, p.114)

One must return again, here, to understand more fully what Mrs. Jackson means, to that first opening paragraph of Contemporaries And Snobs where she speaks of that sense of life so real which is, "at its clearest, poetry." Poetry is not a specialized field but this sense of life, and anyone who possesses this sense of life is able to make a poetic statement

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no matter what the field is. Poetry is its most direct expression, working from the immediate knowledge of this sense of life; but others working within specialized fields may transcend the boundaries of their fields and dwell in the poetic. And one must stress that this sense and this transcendence is pure, untrammelled by history, without thought of society -- pure self, pure, genuine poetry. Its insistence is that there is something more.

The authority with which Mrs. Jackson speaks, then, is not a personal appeal arising from a conviction about held ideas or opinions. The authority is that which needs no authority and which is given no authority: poetry. Poetry is the immediate sense of life which is aware that there is more, and the poetic mind has

a sensitiveness to the existence of the perfect more (or 'the greater reality') that differentiates the poetic mind from other minds. All poetic minds are alike in this sensitiveness. They differ in the quantity of 'moreness' they can make explicit, but all indicate moreness; they differ only in energy. You ask me a question about my 'authority', and my answer is that the term is not appropriate here: because the kind of statement that I am making -- and you are making -- is poetic.

(Epilogue III, p.115)

The poetic statement is clear of impurities, its energy inhuman and without personalistic accent. It is the recognition that the merely personal (self-satisfaction) is not all there is, that there is 'more'. Those poetic minds which know this 'more' are able to verify the existence of 'more' while recognizing its necessary incompleteness -- incomplete until all is more. The poetic mind has no axe to grind, no fervour of propaganda. It recognizes that there is a "perfect more (or 'the greater reality')" and makes it explicit. The only difference between

herself and others is the quantity of energy, that "there is in me, you feel, an unusually concentrated energy of moreness" (p.115). She possesses this, she explains, because her energy is not "diffused" by "humanistic considerations." Her energy is herself, concentrated in herself, not spread among the social energies, and she says what she says "is in answer to a cumulative appeal to an energy, energies, like my own." It is,

besides being my own response, part of something that is happening of itself: a self-assertion of reality at a certain point in time which, however temporal it may seem, automatically evokes a sane finality of statement that has a tinge of insanity about it.

(Epilogue III, p.116)

History, that is, has exhausted itself and the world has come to an end. Science may still proclaim the future, children still be born, and nothing may appear to have happened. But the world has reached a point of spiritual stasis where phenomena are "arrested between disintegration and integration", where everything appears to be happening and yet the spiritual exhaustion of the world shows that nothing is happening:

And this stasis is a deadlock until a movement is found which shall replace the lost power of temporal progression with a power that I can only call, in this context, the power of attention. For while the stasis represents the reaching of an utmost degree of activity of consciousness, the conclusions of the human mind are at this point contradictory and indecisive - more contradictory and indecisive than ever before; and because, while they are the results of mental activity in its most profuse condition, they do not compose a unique, a finally integrated result. The effective sum of the world's experience, as recorded by this static moment, is profusion of experience, but not reality. And yet reality is 'there'; at a distance, however, not to be traversed by the dynamics of the will -- namely, by time. The old habit of continuance

created the scientific future; but this is a self-induced, mechanical illusion. The possible continuance now is not by the will, only by a power of attention: what 'more' there is to be experienced -- the moreness which is just fallen short of -- can only be experienced by a deliberate receptivity towards the inevitable whole. For the whole is incompletely accessible if the human mind depends on volition alone. Of what use has this long life of time been if it has not at least taught the final limitations of the will that instigated and furthered it?

(Epilogue III, p.118)

How can one say more except to say 'Is this not so?' To bring in the question of her personal authority is necessary, for one may not be insensitive to the demands of others for proof, but there is no one to give such authority. There is only the 'proof' of the poetic mind, the self-reliance as defined in Contemporaries And Snobs and elsewhere, which recognizes as its authority the supreme sense of life which at its highest is poetry. To replace the word 'authority' with the word 'energy' fits exactly when the whole of Mrs. Jackson's work is brought into view. Evident everywhere in her thought is the straining towards the "perfect more", the "greater reality." And the appropriateness of what she says in her work, the test, is the final correspondence between thought and sense:

The compulsion behind my pursuit of the complete immediate perception is no more than the compulsion of my senses to measure the time in which I say what I say against the finalistic accent of my thought. And the result is an ever-decreasing space between the time of my mind and the time of my senses: there is practically no space between them except that which I create, constantly, to satisfy myself that I am not in conspiracy with myself. My mind and my senses are as it were accidentally alive in the same time; my actual perception of the world and my evaluations in thought tally immediately, without private connivance.

(Epilogue III, p.119)

The "finalistic accent" of her thought is the knowledge of the existence of there being something more; the greater reality, which is to be achieved, must be achieved if the human mind is to lie at peace and yet at the same time continue. And this is to be achieved by the power of attention, the "deliberate receptivity towards the inevitable whole," or, perhaps, as Lilith Outcome put it in Experts Are Puzzled, "a more painstaking romance of perception", where the romantic element is self and the perception is of the "inevitable whole," inevitable because the human mind makes it inevitable.

We are now able to begin to understand the significance of self, and the significance of reality, and their relation. Robert Graves asks Mrs. Jackson what death is, and she replies that it is "a simple thing to think about" (p.125). People, she says, instinctively believe in death, whereas they quickly become confused when they think about reality and are "easily led into abstraction and disbelief." Life leads towards reality, while death is "the dissolution of the experimental, tentative appearance of totality which life involuntarily acquires." Life, that is, gives human acquaintance with reality, makes the human 'real'; but reality is something more than this a "rhythm of human acquaintance with reality." Things exist, possess reality, and we are ourselves 'things', but we are not all things, we do not possess total reality. Death is the "cancellation of the fallacies to which life tempts us to adhere." Life gives the appearance, the illusion of reality, while death takes the illusion away. It is this succession of life and death which is "our original and essential equipment for knowledge":

The more we think -- which is to say the less we rely on the loose, instinctive life-and-death rhythm to redeem us from error and chaos -- the more do the life-power and the death-power approach simultaneity. Our assertions become more and more qualified by the death-negative; and it is as this immediacy of thought, this cancellation of temporal delay, that death figures so insistently in poems. The simultaneous combination of the death-accent with the life-accent makes the voice of the mind something besides an instrument of personal utterance: it becomes capable of carrying extra-personal inflections, of expressing general as well as personal truths. Life is the exercise of consciousness in individual contexts; death is the critical phase of consciousness - the nullification of the merely individualistic meanings. To know that the truth of any act or utterance is qualified by the degree to which it is entailed in the peculiar circumstances giving rise to it, that its application is limited by the nature of the field to which it is designed to apply: this is death. Criticism is death.

When death figures in poems, it has critical force: the poet is actualizing death, bringing it into the consciousness deliberately so that life becomes more real and less temporal. But 'more real' does not mean more individualistic, or more human, but less, for the consciousness of death "cancels itself as a historical incident", making the, as it were, physically real, the individualistic and personalistic nature of man, of no consequence, so that the poem attains universality:

A consciousness tempered with death -- a critically purified consciousness -- is already beyond contradictory physical existence; it has drained the self from the temporal material by which it asserted itself against other selves. The self now stands neither in life nor in death, but in reality. In life it exists by a strength of opposition to other selves. In death all that is contradictory passes into non-existence. In reality the self emerges with infallible accuracy as a demonstration of the ~~the~~ existence not of itself but of reality.

(Epilogue III, p.126)

Life is temporal, a surface acquaintance with a reality which gives the appearance of order but which is really force of circumstance, while death nullifies that temporality, placing self in reality. By standing between the two, by tempering the consciousness of life with the consciousness of death, man stops being individualistic and becomes instead a demonstration of reality -- stops, that is, in the words of 'The Idea Of God', being subjective and becomes objective:

For this is how reality is to be experienced: by letting reality be oneself. And this is what I meant by the power of attention: the lending of one's consciousness -- one's minutely sensitive apparatus of perception -- to the absolute generality in which we are more deeply entailed than in our local circumstances. When we think, we are refining our consciousness to this end.

(Epilogue III, p.126)

It is only through recognition and acknowledgement of this "absolute generality" that reality can be known, and where there is no recognition there is mere being, which is brutish and trivial:

b/ But the right to exist at all depends on a primary act of acknowledgement: on the articulation of reality, above the articulation of self. If we fail to achieve this primary act, because our private purpose steals our private energy, our right to exist becomes corrupted with vital fallacies, with temporal delusions. Certainly: people die. They are reabsorbed into undefined somethingness -- mother somethingness; or, if you like, father nothingness. But if we give ourselves death -- if we think death -- then we acquire a self-redeeming aptitude for reality.

(Epilogue III, p.127)

It is the falsity of self that it believes itself to be all there is, as the expression of this falsity is society which is believed to be an end in itself. Man is not a social animal, nor a natural animal, but a being whose redemption from chance and chaos is the movement from that "undifferent-

iating quantitative appetite" into the creation of "deliberate intellectual forms" the ratification of which is the perfect coincidence between the mind and the senses. He is anarchic, while anarchism is not enough. Man has so far known little other than his "local, vital self," a self which, in the end, is unsatisfactory since it cannot be all. There must always be the something else which, to be known, means relinquishing the subjective, self-pre-occupied, self-ish self so that the movement of the universe from chaos to order may be accomplished -- and a new beginning made:

... how can we speak with awe of nothingness, if by somethingness we mean only self-existence? There is no one who whimpers at the notion of nothingness who means more by it than the disappearance of his local, vital self. Fundamental somethingness is not proved or disproved by what becomes of each of us, personally. It is the implicit source from which our individual existence derives; and indeed we disappear, and to petty nothingness, if we do not belabour ourselves, without mercy to our individualistic obdurances, until we are the passionately flexible instruments by which fundamental somethingness is transformed from an implicit to an explicit reality.

(Epilogue III, p.127)

The local and vital personal sense of reality thrives in pitting itself against other personal realities, and against reality as a whole, personal reality being a mere portion of the general reality. Poetry recognizes reality to be more than this and annihilates the local self, placing in its stead final, absolute reality. Everything which exists partakes, is evocative of, if only acquiescently, this greater reality. And the more the death-accent is present, the more evocative it is, the more insistent is the questioning of reality:

And if we think death, we make ourselves an instrument for the answering of the question about reality we personally constitute. We experience reality to the degree to which we are at once a question about reality and its answer; to the degree, further, to which the question that we constitute supplements, confirms or intensifies other answers.

(Epilogue III, p.128)

We are total experience of reality inasmuch as our existence implies and confirms the whole scope of reality. Once such a scope of reality is made actual, there is complete order, complete and final reality. Beyond this, says Mrs. Jackson (p.128), we may not go, for the rest "is something to happen rather than to write about: to write about, I mean, as something happening rather than as a critical prospect of experience."

PART TWO

THE POEMS

Chapter 1

Mythically And Immediately

As a poet, Mrs. Jackson gives a sense of sharp relief against the background of contemporary poetry, then as now. Her commitment to poetry did not waver. While T. S. Eliot celebrated the demise of poetry, ordering it rigorously with a highly developed critical self-consciousness, while W. H. Auden placed poetry in the political arena, and Edith Sitwell placed it in the world of art, and everywhere there was the freakishness and flashing of word-technique, Mrs. Jackson, unselfconsciously and without hurry, devoted herself to the writing of poems free from the dogmatism of contemporary criticism. Although she always worked and collaborated with others where she could, enormously generous of her thought and time, nevertheless, her achievement in freeing poetry from the suffocating constrictions of the plain reader -- from the constrictions of criticism, history, society, the world itself -- so that it was able to be nothing but itself, seeking to evoke the experience of final truth, final reality of thought, was an unprecedented accomplishment of single-handed effort. The period after the 1914-18 war was alive with experiment, the poetry of Eliot, Cummings, Marianne Moore, W. B. Yeats, Frost, the 'Fugitives', Pound, the various movements and manifestos, dazzling and benumbing the poetry-reading public and seemingly gathering to itself a great energy of new life

and undreamed of respect; while on the prose side came the work of Gertrude Stein, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, D. H. Lawrence, the philosophical criticism of T. E. Hulme, and the psychological criticism of I. A. Richards.

Against this varied background, Mrs. Jackson expounded the values implicit in the name 'poetry' as final values: the immediately achievable ultimate reality of thought. It could be achieved because the world had come to an end; history and mankind could at last grow up. Intellectually, the world had arrived at a stage where every new discovery was an anti-climax foreshadowed by all the earlier discoveries: there was nothing new to know, only more of the same. Physically, the world was well provided for, even though the means of distribution were wrong. It was time, she saw, for a final ordering.

The Epilogue volumes comprise the ordering of final values, and the standard by which to judge all else was poetry. Religion, art, science, philosophy, even reality itself, were measured against this one standard, and the confusion which had accreted around each one was cleared away, so that each could stand in uncluttered relation to the next. Poetry was able to do this because it was the least professionalized, the most eccentrically human, and its only area of concern was truth. All its former responsibilities had been taken over by the other professions. It no longer had to deliver religion, philosophy, science, or art to the world, but could at last concentrate upon what it had always wanted to concentrate upon: a final saying, a final knowing -- ultimate truth. Mankind had created a history, a general and a critical history, which was merely a reflection of his contemporary

desires at any given moment, and which bolstered up his assertion of himself as an absolute, an end unto himself, with nothing but himself to be known. Once the historical (collective real) and the physical (individual real) analogues of man were shown as false, then the individual was freed to truth, and poetry, as the highest expression of truth, was therefore the ultimate measuring-rule, the value-creating standard. Poetry dealt directly with reality, with ^{out} the intervention of the various branches of knowledge, creating its own values as it went, but values which were consistent as the poetic mind faced consistently towards the highest aspiration -- the rendering of whole reality.

But, Mrs. Jackson was to see that poetry failed, that it led to a point of continual acquiescence in what is humanly secure, self-advancing rather than truth-advancing. In its craft, its technique, it, too, turned away from truth's finality, falling and relapsing upon itself, upon the sense of what it is humanly comfortable to know: the consciously ordained circumscription with which humanity restricts itself for fear of what is other than human. Poetry defeats the very promise of going further that it gives. She saw that to go further it was necessary to break with poetry, to go beyond poetry to reach what it could never reach in its essential self-love. To go beyond the apparent bounds of thought, she saw that it is essential to crack open the illusion poetry gives of being the most advanced way to truth; for while poetry assumes the mantle of truth-giving as its vital prerogative, everyone else applauds and does nothing,

and truth is no one's prerogative. But although this knowledge of the limitation of poetry should not be far from the reading of her poems of the years up to 1938, when her collected poems, which contain the last poems she wrote, were published, it does not diminish the real and actual accomplishment of her work during this time. Her work within the field of poetry (for it may now be called a field, jostling among the other fields for place) still ranks as the highest, and her poems are a record of the taking of poetry to its furthest limit.

Mrs. Jackson began writing poetry at Cornell. The earliest published poem of hers that I can discover was 'Dimensions', which appeared in The Fugitive, Volume 2, August-September 1923(p.124), under her former married name, Laura Riding Gottschalk, and which qualified for the magazine's Nashville Prize¹. Her first collection of poetry, The Close Chaplet, again under her former name, was published in 1926 by Hogarth Press (London) and Adelphi (New York), and thereafter she published volumes of her poems regularly until 1938 when her Collected Poems appeared. Because Collected Poems is the mature consideration by Mrs. Jackson of her poetic development, this will necessarily be the main text for study

1 The Fugitive, Nashville, Tennessee, April 1922-December 1925. The editors named in Vol. 1, No.2, were: Walter Clyde Curry, Sidney Mtttron Hirsch, John Crowe Ransom, Donald Davidson, Stanley Johnson, Alec B. Stevenson, James M. Frank, Merrill Moore, and Allen Tate. In absentia: William Yandell Elliott and William Frierson. The whole of The Fugitive was reprinted by Peter Smith, Gloucester, Mass. U.S.A., 1967,

but it is instructive first to look at one or two of her earliest poems, and to note there the distinctiveness which characterizes her poetic career throughout.

'Dimensions' did not win the Nashville Prize, but in the following December issue of The Fugitive it was "commended for its quality of originality." She was awarded the prize later, in the December, 1924 issue, and the editorial comments again pick up the word 'originality':

The Nashville Prize of \$100, offered by the Associated Retailers of Nashville, is awarded to Laura Riding Gottschalk, of Louisville, Kentucky. In the minds of the members of the group, who were the judges of the award, the poetry of Mrs. Gottschalk stands out as the discovery of the year, and they deem it a privilege to be first in calling attention to the work of a young writer who is coming forward as a new figure in American poetry. With a diverse play of imagination she combines in her poetry a sound intellectuality and a keen irony which give her work a substance not often found in current American poetry. Her poetry is philosophical in trend, yet not divorced from life, but generally tense with emotion and concerned with profound issues. Furthermore, she has developed her own idiom of expression, -- an idiom which manifests itself in a variety of forms, conventional or unconventional, and gives her poetry the stamp of an original personality.

(The Fugitive, Vol. III, Nos. 5 and 6,
December 1924, p. 130)

Much later, W. H. Auden was to call Mrs. Jackson's poetry 'philosophical', and after him Stephen Spender among others, and it is interesting to note this early occurrence of the word in 1924 coupled with the emphasis on 'original'. It sums up, generally, the common reaction to her work, while it also serves to show a quality in her poetry present from the earliest to the latest, though its implications, as will be seen, are misleading. This quality is present in 'Dimensions', which I quote in full:

Measure me for a burial
 That my low stone may neatly say
 In a precise, Euclidean way
 How I am three-dimensional.

Yet can life be so thin and small?
 Measure me in time. But time is strange
 And still and knows no rule or change
 But death and death is nothing at all.

Measure me by beauty.
 But beauty is death's earliest name
 For life, and life's first dying, a flame
 That glimmers, an amaranth that will fade
 And fade again in death's dim shade.

Measure me not by beauty, that fears strife.
 For beauty makes peace with death, buying
 Dishonour and eternal dying
 That she may keep outliving life.

Measure me then by love -- yet, no,
 For I remember times when she
 Sought her own measurements in me,
 But fled, afraid I might foreshow
 How broad I was myself and tall
 And deep and many-measured, moving
 My scale upon her and thus proving
 That both of us were nothing at all.

Measure me by myself
 And not by time or love or space
 Or beauty. Give me this last grace:
 That I may be on my low stone
 A gage unto myself alone.
 I would not have these old faiths fall
 To prove that I was nothing at all.

It is not difficult to see why the editors of The Fugitive should see this poem, with its slightly metaphysical air, published when Mrs. Jackson was twenty-two, as worthy of inclusion in their pages. It possesses, to apply their own words, "a sound intellectuality and a keen irony" and is "generally tense with emotion". But I believe it possesses something more than this, and this something more is characterized by two, possibly more, shifts of emphasis. The first is a shift away from imagination. The poem has imagination,

in the central idea of the burial and the stone, but it does not stay lingeringly in a circumstantial description of, say, a grave, but moves immediately into the "intellectuality" of

In a precise, Euclidean way
How I am three-dimensional.

Now, most 'well-known', that is, popular poetry, is to be seen as operating in the area of imaginative description, with the meaning of the poem held tautly in its embrace, unvocalized but 'there', whether implicitly or explicitly. The reader does not have to be told, for example, that in Yeats' 'Wild Swans At Coole' the swans are something more to the poet than a mere description, indeed, that the wild swans are, in some way, Yeats himself, though in quite what way may seem intangible. Poetry makes this connection possible by the poet's close identification with the object of the poem, not necessarily an elaborate description, but an exact description dictated according to the perception of the poet, so that the object of the poem is made to carry significant overtones -- made to carry, that is, symbolic or metaphoric implications which by itself it (the object) would not carry but which are 'there' by the poet's presence. This descriptive quality is the 'flesh' of the poem, and its presence, when faithfully rendered, indicates the inner self of the poem. In 'Dimensions', however, we can see that the descriptive quality is minimal, and, I hazard, because it is minimal, readers of it, not being given what they expect of poetry, not being given what they have educated themselves into expecting, will go no further with it except, perhaps, to say

that it is a little obscure or difficult to follow.

The shift away from the potential imaginative aspects of the poem leads to a shift towards the intellectual statement of the poem. Instead of imaginative exactitude or elaboration, the reader is given, in effect, a gradational understanding of three qualities conventionally thought of as 'important', each of which is rejected in turn -- time, beauty and love. Time is strange, infinite, inhuman. Only death may change it and death is literally "nothing". Beauty is a way of outliving death, but in a dim, not real way, having eternity bestowed upon it only after it has died, a memory rather than a fact. And finally there is love, which has proved itself unequal, the poet discovering, in three memorable and moving lines,

How broad I was myself and tall
And deep and man-measured, moving
My scale upon her...

intimating that love was constrained, unable to see her in the fullness of her nature. These three qualities, then, are not adequate to make up the self, are only "three-dimensional", and the only possible measure for herself, the poet says, is herself, and she would be remembered that way rather than by "these old faiths", which, should they fall, would prove that she "was nothing at all."

I would not argue that 'Dimensions' is one of the best of Mrs. Jackson's poems, but I would argue that it has disciplined imagination, a depth of coherency, combined with feeling, a strong sense of clear diction, sensitivity to rhythm and rhythmical change, and, above all, lucidity in the face of a subject which is difficult to control. But even beyond this, perhaps, the author in it has a clear knowledge

by the end of the poem, carefully worked for, of the reality of her person within the complexities of the poem, with the reality of the elements of the poem. Her voice is as real as the poem is real. The poem is precise in its meanings, its logical progression, and the sum of the poem is the precision of the author in identification with it. Her presence in the poem is undeniable, and yet she does not interfere with its movement, make it a vehicle for personality, but keeps her attention firmly centred on the poem itself.

Mrs. Jackson's poems appeared regularly in The Fugitive henceforth, and from the March, 1925 issue, until December, 1925 when The Fugitive came to an end, her name appears with the other members of the group which constituted the editorial masthead of the magazine, and she is warmly received as "a regular and participating member of the Fugitive group" (p.31)¹. In February, 1924, three poems appeared, one of which was 'The Quids', later reprinted in Collected Poems (1938) and in several anthology collections. 'The Quids' is a good early example of the intellectual and always feeling nature of Mrs. Jackson's poems, and helps to explain, also, why her poetry is so often described in terms more appropriate to philosophy. Here is the first

¹ Louise Cowan in her book The Fugitive Group : A Literary History, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Press, 1954, p.184, states "Her [Mrs Jackson's] representation in the December [1924] issue was generous, as it was to be in all the 1925 numbers. Nevertheless, in her connection with the magazine, she functioned only as a contributor, not as a real member", Donald Davidson, in his introduction to the 1967 Peter Smith reprint quotes this passage as "correct", and refers to Mrs.

part:

The little quids, the million quids,
 The everywhere, everything, always quids,
 The atoms of the Monoton --
 Each turned three essences where it stood
 And ground a gisty dust from its neighbors' edges
 Until a powdery thoughtfall stormed in and out,
 The cerebation of a slippery quid enterprise.
 Each quid stirred.
 The united quids
 Waved through a sinuous decision.

The quids, that had never done anything before
 But be, be, be, be,
 The quids resolved to predicate
 And dissipate in a little grammar.

Oh, the Monoton didn't care,
 For whatever they did --
 The Monoton's contributing quids --
 The Monoton would always remain the same.

The Monoton is the well-head of life from which the quids derive their being. It remains unchanging while the quids move from primitive being into thinking, progressing from mere subjective being to subject - "predicate" being, and so, progressing from that into "grammar", "dissipate" their former subject-only-being into subject-and-object grammaring, their primitive unity splitting into separate units, each unit aware of its neighbour and its derivation: divided into distinct entities which yet retain, and perhaps divided on account of, knowledge of the other entities. Each of these quids is in essence exactly the same, but they

Turned inside on themselves
 And came out all dressed,

Jackson as "a kind of honorary member" (p.iii). A little later (p.v), he points out that twenty-seven of her poems were published by The Fugitive, "a quantity well up to the group-member average." Why, then, does he approve Louise Cowan's remark that her representation was "generous", and that she "functioned only as a contributor, not as a real member"? This goes against the facts as plainly displayed in the pages of The Fugitive

Each similar quid of the inward same,
 Each similar quid dressed in a different way --
 The quid's idea of a holiday.

It is difficult to resist the tendency to explain this in human terms, and, although it detracts somewhat from the poem's (in this respect) uncommitted framework, it does, I think, little harm. If the quids are thought of as humans, then it is clear how they turn inside on themselves and come out dressed differently, whether the dress be literally dress or language, or perhaps personality and similar diluted aspects of the human self. The 'inside' to which they turn is possibly the nature of their being coupled with the knowledge that they are, somehow, derived from a source, the Monoton. Their holiday is the gaiety of the distinction between itself and its source each is able to explore. But:

The quids could never tell what was happening.
 But the Monoton felt itself differently the same
 In its different parts.
 The silly quids upon their rambling exercise
 Never knew, could never tell
 What their pleasure was about,
 What their carnival was like,
 Being in, being in, being always in
 Where they never could get out
 Of the everywhere, everything, always in,
 To derive themselves from the Monoton.

The quids, to put it another way, never thought to look anywhere else but themselves, their inside, and so, unlike the Monoton, never knew why they were doing what they were doing, what they felt themselves compelled to do. They are, we might

and one must assume that Cowan and Davidson dismissed the evidence before their eyes for reasons which might only be guessed at. Mrs. Jackson touches on this in relation to other matters in her essay 'Some Autobiographical Corrections of Literary History' in the Winter, 1974 issue of The Denver Quarterly.

say, wholly subjective beings, and as such can go no further than themselves.

But I know, with a quid inside of me.
But I know what a quid's disguise is like,
Being one myself,
The gymnastic device
That a quid puts on for exercise.

And so should the trees,
And so should the worms,
And so should you,
And all the other predicates,
And all the other accessories
Of the quid's masquerade.

There is something more important, then, than the quid's masquerade. That is all holiday spirit, all show. There is an essential sameness to know of each quid: "To derive themselves from the Monoton." This is something they are aware of, something which, indeed, provides their quidishness, but they cannot understand it.

In Experts Are Puzzled, Molly Barleywater is asked what beauty is. Beauty, she replies, "is to truth as hate is to love. In the presence of any difficulty of analysis, 'beautiful' springs to the mouth instead of 'true'". 'The Quids' is a true poem, and its trueness lies in the direct clarity of its meaning striking against the reader's sensibilities. It is not a satire, nor is it philosophical. It is not even intellectual. It is a poem. There are concessions to beauty such as the neat 'gisty', the sympathetic, punning liaison of 'thoughtfall' with 'thoughtful', and the consistency of the quid-imagery as 'slippery', 'sinuous', 'squirming', sharply offset by the contrast with 'cerebration', 'predicate' and 'grammar'. The tone is gentle, reasonable, with a hint of laughter, but laughter at the sad unnecessary

of it all, not cruel laughter; and there is even sadness in the last two verses, further dispelling any notion of satirical purpose. (These two verses are omitted in the collected poem, suggesting their concessional nature and irrelevancy as Mrs. Jackson moved towards the later poems.) As a poem, it is assuredly a something and not a something else -- satire, philosophy, or whatever. It is real; it is original in the best sense.

'The Quids' is an early foreshadowing of her later work. The tone is there time and time again, not only in the poems but in the stories, too ('The Quids' irresistibly reminds one of 'Miss Banquett', a story-world in which both Monoton and quids might well feel at home, though Miss Banquett herself seems neither, separately, though possibly she is something of both with something further added). The diction is strong, clear, combining plainness and odd word-pairings ('slippery cerebrations'), and the always rhythmically sharp phrasing. But in the content itself, in the actual meaning of the poem, can be seen the beginnings of a way of looking at things which is Mrs. Jackson's particular way, of seeing whole and clear, complex and simple, particular and universal.

Another poem, 'Druida', which appeared in The Fugitive in June, 1925, and was again reprinted in the collected poems, is also remarkable, like 'The Quids', both in itself and in that it provides an instance of Mrs. Jackson's continuity of thought:

Above Druida, below Druida,
Round Druida when she loved
The earth and air,
The grass and clouds,
Were golden, were laden,

Not with love -- oh less ethereal
 Her radiation --
 But with him heavily.

Her truce of him was timeless.
 Her space of him was edgeless.
 But the man heard the minute strike,
 Marked the spot he stood upon.
 When a leaf fell, when the minute struck,
 When a star stopped, when the plot was drawn,
 The man called farewell to Druida.

The archaic feminized 'Druid-a' suggests an ancient and lasting wisdom placed in the person of the female and lends an air of timelessness to the setting of the poem. That the name is derived from a male name suggests that she is neither male nor female, but something of both, while 'her' emphasizes her oppositional role to man. The oppositional nature of their roles is further suggested by his love, which is ethereal, and hers which is not: her concern is him, while his concern is love. The nature of her love is one which is solely preoccupied with him, while he catalogues the progress of his feelings by observation of the minutiae of the world around him, the universe - the subjective experience of love as opposed to her benign, almost casual, objective love. 'Heavily' is premonitional of his subjective preoccupation, translating the casualness of her love into physical experience. The man thinks this experience is natural to himself, a part of himself, not the result of her, and so, instead of turning to her, he turns to the world newly made visible to him, newly enhanced, as though it were something in him that enhanced it. This, he thinks, is his proper concern, the world, with the physical hardness of love in it, and Druida as a part of the world, not as the cause of his vision of it. And so he marks, plots, spaces, records what he sees, and says farewell

to Druida:

A hundred huts heard the cry.
 The heavy earth, the heavy air,
 Lightened, melted.
 The man was gone.
 Druida laughed.
 Touched the precious places of transfiguration,
 The head, the heart,
 The earth, the air,
 Felt only four fiery substances
 That burned not but crackled and echoed
 With sparkling departing.
 Follow him, follow him,
 A hundred sisters said.

In his preoccupation with the world, the man disappears from
 Druida in the sense that her essential nature, her "less
 ethereal" radiation, is free of him. His presence is no longer
 a burning presence to her, but crackles and sparkles comfort-
 ably in departing. She is free of his insistence, his heavy
 demands. The head, heart, air and earth are a part of him,
 not her, though the cause of his seeing them is her loving
 presence. And while Druida is the primary figuration, her
 one hundred sisters are, if not her earthly aspect, we might
 say the female principle, its numberedness represented by the
 notional 'one hundred'. Druida herself is "timeless" and
 "edgeless" (not 'ageless' but connoting something more than
 this); the sisters simply there, her myriad person:

Druida followed.
 Not to bless him, not to curse him,
 Not to bring back the bridegroom,
 But to pass him like a blind bird
 As if heaven were ahead.

She follows him, she follows him,
 A hundred sisters said,
 Standing at their doors while the man fled by
 And Druida smiled along.

Druida found the sky.
 Earth was no more native,
 Love was an alienation of the dust,

Man but a lover not love,
 Woman but a form of faith,
 Yet enduring in a heaven of earthly recantations.

She has passed him, she has passed him,
 A hundred sisters cried.
 And the man turned back.
 And a hundred passions welcomed him
 In a hundred huts.

The irony at the end is quite perfect. After Druida has passed the man and, recanting the earth, finds the sky, man turns back to her but finds only the hundred sisters and their passion.

Druida is, I think, true reality, the 'something else', as it is defined in 'The Idea Of God', which man can find, if he wishes, in woman. But man turns his back on Druida: she is there but he chooses elsewhere for his looking. Woman, being identifiable with his own nature, seemingly a part of his nature, does not appear to him as sufficiently significant, and he forgets that if she seems not to take an active part in his world, it is because it is his world, his invention or fiction. Literally, man created his world. But he did not create it with a view to including woman. The tradition of the male world is to express male attitudes, with female attitudes counting for little, if anything at all. She is at most recognized as the mysterious figure rocking the cradle -- which is both an acknowledgement of her and a diminishing of her as a living force. As Mrs. Jackson says in 'The Damned Thing' in Anarchism Is Not Enough(p.205), speaking in the context of art as an "academic sex", it is "foolish to point out that there have been very few great women artists: why should one look for women artists at all in male art?" To man, woman is at once too individual and too

much a part of him for him to take her seriously, or, on the other hand, to ignore her. As an individual (and all women are individuals), constantly challenging his sense of himself as self-sufficient, she is a vital irritation; as an adjunct to his nature, she does not seem capable of providing answers to his questions. In essence, this is the female mystery, one to which man turns, as to the hundred sisters, again and again, perplexedly, satisfying himself sexually that she is no more than he thinks, in order to resume, as quickly as possible, his quiddish holiday. Woman aids and abets man in this folly. She is the passive critic of his actions. She provides an answer to man's problem of what else there is to know besides himself, but, for man, her answer is no answer, one "not to be traversed by the dynamics of the will" (see above p.140), an answer which is, to him, inadequate since alien to his experience. And so *Druida* is always ahead of him, as Miss Banquett is always just ahead, always patient, a "form of faith" for both of them, waiting for man to cease from his pre-occupied busy-ness and become her equal.

In '*Druida*', the conventional forms of image, rhythm, cadence and emphasis are respected, are, indeed, expertly controlled¹, but what is of first importance in the poem is not the conventional aspect. If we think of the work of other

1 In his book on Robert Graves, Swifter Than Reason (1963), Douglas Day makes the extraordinary assertion that Mrs. Jackson lacks "verbal discipline and rhythmic pattern of any kind" (p.120). (Though he is specifically referring to 'The Rugged Black Of Anger'(!), he uses it as a representative example of her poems in general). Similarly, in their History Of American Poetry (New York) 1946, Horace Gregory and Marya Zaturenska speak of her lack of "verbal discipline, and the presence of an ear that could guide the rhythmical progress of a

poets writing at the same time as Mrs. Jackson (E. E. Cummings, Marianne Moore, Wallace Stevens, T. S. Eliot, any of the 'Fugitives', W. B. Yeats), we perceive an immediate difference and a crucial one: Mrs. Jackson is not decorating the poem. To her, the poem is a 'thing', but it is not an 'art-thing'; it does not rely for its impact on the delicacy or the muscularity of imagery, of broad or minutely particularized description. Its force lies in its meaning, its laying bare truth or truths. It does not evoke a place, a scene, or even an experience in the ordinary personal sense. Her poems are things which see and things by which to see, and their central concern is with vision. The words in the poem do not add to the poem but to the thing seen. One thinks, for the purpose of contrast, of the poems of Emily Dickinson, each one of which represents a challenge to the surface reality of what she sees and an assertion against it. Her power is first to evoke and then to question the things she sees, the things which seem to possess relation. Mrs. Jackson's poems stop neither at surface reality nor at questioning, nor at implied counter-assertion. Her interest is not in the power of the poem to evoke what is known as reality (that flavour which things impart) but in the actualization of reality: primary meaning in its most unadorned state. 'Druida' is not a poem 'about' something: it is something. It is not, for instance, 'about' a man and a woman but is an uncovering of the meaning of the relation between the man and the woman as the universally same meaning, a meaning so fundamental that it establishes itself as unchallengeable truth.

poem"(p.381). The evidence refutes such charges. It is interesting that none of these writers has anything intelligent to say of Mrs. Jackson's poetry.

Mrs. Jackson's poems are extraordinary not merely in their rhythmical compulsions, cadences, phrasing, but in what they say. Craftsmanship acts as an adjunct to meaning and does not distract from the core or take over from the poems: it introduces emphasis where it is absolutely essential and not where it is pretty or dramatic. And, throughout, their tone is one of gentleness, as in 'Druida', imbued with a knowledge which carries them beyond partisan rhetoric or the then contemporary, fashionable despair, and even beyond the often foolish, if preferable, false optimism of the times. Her critics have often claimed that she is 'obscure' (calling her philosophical is another way of calling her obscure) or 'difficult' (obscure) or 'powerful' or 'feminist' (obscure, obscure). Her poems do, indeed, present the reader with a difficulty: the reader. Few readers, among whom are to be counted critics, have been able to see that what her poems demand above all is purity of interest, an interest which has voided from it all prejudice, all thought which is not proper to poetry itself. Very few readers are capable of going to poetry with minds entirely free from considerations which are other than poetic, and, judging by the public record, in Mrs. Jackson's case, there have been only a few, including Robert Fitzgerald, the American scholar, poet and translator of Homer, and her husband, Schuyler B. Jackson, and apart from these a handful of people who have been able to sense her importance and have courageously attempted to define what they see there. The reason for this failure in her readers is, in a way, quite simple: readers approach her poems expecting to find what they have always found in poetry, or expecting, at

most, if they are forewarned, something only slightly in advance of what they have always known. They expect, that is, some emotional core, some startling imagery, a breathless unexpected patterning of words which allows an old subject to be seen in a new light; they expect pathos and sympathy, anger and despair; and perhaps above all they expect to find themselves, in all their nobility and suffering, their grandness and littleness, reflected in the dramatic centre of each poem. The reader expects, that is, some affirmation from the poem that he or she possesses some dignified reality, that there is a common core of emotionally based experience which unites humanity, ~~and~~ in which all share to some degree, and in which all are equal.

It would be wrong to suggest that Mrs. Jackson's poems lack in this regard, but it exists in incidental relation to the poem, not as its primary functioning, the human self of the poem, not the actual meaning of the poem, which is the poem itself. The human self is present in both 'The Quids' and 'Druida' as evidenced by what I have called the 'tone', but in both there is something more than self which takes the poem beyond the localized experience of self. The human self is the formal reality of the poem, while the creative self is the residue left when the formal reality is removed. This residue is pure self, the unreal self which destroys the surface, the immediately apparent reality, in order to identify itself with the absolute reality. This is what makes the reader's experience of her poems difficult, and it is plain that the difficulty is not hers but the poetic education from which the reader comes. Mrs. Jackson is quite aware of this,

more than the, we might say, normal or ordinary aspirations of poets. The poetry in Collected Poems is a record of this achievement and at the same time a record of the failure of poetry to fulfil its extraordinary promise of potential 'truth telling'. Gradually the poems grow into the realization by the poet that she can get no further in poetry than poems, and that poems are not enough. The parts into which Collected Poems is divided give an indication of the failure of poetry, moving from 'Poems of Mythical Occasion', most of which were written in America, to 'Poems of Immediate Occasion', mostly written in England, to 'Poems of Final Occasion', from her period in Majorca, and then to 'Poems Continual', written either in Majorca or in the several different places she lived in after the Spanish Civil War broke out. The fifth and final part, 'Histories', contains three long poems each of which is essentially different in character from the main body of her poems, while each adds, separately, another dimension.

The first poems¹ in the book are a series under the sub-title 'Forgotten Girlhood' and deal, playfully and fancifully, with the origins of the author, not autobiographically, but as one emerging into thought. In the first poem of the series, 'Into Laddery Street' (p.1), the capitalized "Old Trouble" may be thought of as akin to the Monoton in 'The Quids':

The stove was grey, the coal was gone.
In and out of the same room
One went, one came.
One turned into nothing.

¹ All future page-number references will be to Collected Poems unless otherwise stated.

One turned into whatever
Turns into children.

But remember the coal was gone.
Old Trouble carried her down
To her cellar where the rags were warm.

And turned her sooner
Than had her mother
Into one of the Laddery children,
And called her Lida
For short and for long,
For long, for long.

The name of the street, Laddery, suggests society, and the rung by rung climbing either up the ladder of ambition or towards death, and the fact that "the coal was gone" suggests its bleakness of prospect. Fortunately for Lida, there is the strong sense of Old Trouble, the nagging sense or premonition that there is something more, and she is carried down to the warm rags. The next poem, 'In Laddery Street Herself', questions the nature of this something more:

I am hands
And face
And feet
And things inside of me
That I can't see.

What knows in me?
Is it only something inside
That I can't see?

In her growing-up there is something more, she knows, though she is uncertain what it is. Gradually, however, as she matures, she at least is certain that there is "something inside", though she appears to be confused as to what it is, and what she herself is, in the world of people, as though she has an instinct for life, which is strong, but is confused between what it, the instinct, is, and what life is. Eventually, therefore, Old Trouble dies and goes "Into the great

rag-bag." This line is taken from the poem 'Towards The Corner', the title suggesting Lida's movement towards maturer thought; and the next poem is 'Around The Corner', where she is seen in the company of other children, enjoying herself:

Home Sparkey, home Dodo, home Henry, home Gring.
With Dodo I kiss.
With Henry and Gring
I go walking and talking.
With Sparkey I sing.

But her fun is spoiled by "Mother Damnable", who seems to take the place of Old Trouble, though as an authoritarian figure:

But don't call Mother Damnable names.
The names will come back
At the end of a nine-tailed Damnable Strap.
Mother Damnable, Mother Damnable,
Good Mother Damnable.

And Mother Damnable chases them off for their "disgraceful" behaviour. Lida seems, in fact, to have neglected Old Trouble in the new guise of Mother Damnable and in her innocence is chastised. Her next phase is to fall in love and to think that "Love's the only thing", but this is only a "hobby-horse" and Lida remains intact, a "Lost lady with question-marks/All over her nose". She retains, that is, the spirit of questioning, even though her next episode, ominously called 'All The Way Back', sees her married to "Bill Bubble." Fortunately for Lida, however:

Have you heard about Bubble?
He was called away
To fight for his country
And got stuck in the chimney.
Then hey, Lida, away
On a hobby left over from Yesterday.

And so Lida is saved, off again to be herself, and to understand that faults, whether her own or of other making, are "perfect-

ion's faults,/And only perfection matters."

'Forgotten Childhood' is written with great simplicity of rhythm and words but moves on an undercurrent of meaning. It establishes the author's sense of herself as someone beginning and moving along a certain path, ordering her early experiences in a lively but not autobiographically factual way in the conventional sense of the word. It is a 'forgotten' childhood, the details omitted and the picture drawn in broad sweeps of the pen. The occasion is 'mythical', in the words of the section's sub-title.

But to say of the poems of the first section that they are mythical is not to say they are not actual. They are more actual, perhaps, than poems which might dwell upon detail. For what they record are the movements and discoveries of the author, not in physical descriptions or in terms of experience-description, but in terms of self and what self can make known. The poems are released from the burden of personality, and what takes place in them is the advance of pure self into hitherto unknown areas of thinking. 'How Blind And Bright' (p.11), for example, like 'Druida', with an ease which appears the essence of simplicity, flows into the knowledge of what it means to see with the eyes, literally, and the difference it has made and makes:

Light, visibility of light,
Sun, visibility of sun.
Light, sun and seeing,
Visibility of men.

How blind is bright!
How blind is bright!

Eyes looking out for eyes
Meet only seeing, in common faith,
Visibility and brightness.

The visibility which the light creates is the world towards which men look, is the male domain of seeing and being. Men are inevitably drawn to this world, stepping from self into it, creating all things under the sun quite literally. This bright seeing is really blindness, in that they leave self behind, but they take comfort in the "common faith" that all are as one, that all see in the same way. Even the darkness of night holds no solution:

Night, invisibility of light,
No sun, invisibility of sun,
Eyes in eyes sheltered,
Night, night and night.
All light, all fire, all eyes,
Wrapt in one conference of doubt.

The eyes are still looking, seeking out other eyes, and, even though forced to doubt, they are collectively secure "Wrapt in one conference of doubt", the doubt as to whether they are real and whether the visible world, and themselves as a part of the visible world, is all there is to know. And so the eyes create fire to keep the world and the other eyes visible, that the sense of togetherness might dispel the fear of the knowledge of isolation. The poem then puts the alternative:

Eyes not looking out for eyes
Look inward and meet sight
In common loneliness,
Invisibility and darkness.

How bright is blind!
How bright is blind!

There might be common loneliness, invisibility and darkness in this looking inwards, but at least there is real sight, at least this is the real place to start from in its acknowledgement of individual isolation and human lesserness. Once

the step has been made there is sight, and though it might appear blindness, it is only a blindness to the visible world, a turning away from the visible world in order to see truly. This is why these final lines are imbued with sadness at the pain facing those who "look inward" but is then rounded off by the celebratory repetition of the last two lines, reversing the "How blind is bright!" of the opening.

One of the peculiar qualities of 'How Blind And Bright' is the imaging of eyes, disembodied, as it were, under the visibility of light and oddly cat-like at night. This quality of imaging is a marked feature in Mrs. Jackson's poems but is present not by a fanciful imagination but by a literalness in the use of words.

It is to be seen clearly, for example, in 'Pride Of Head' (p.10):

If it were set anywhere else but so,
 Rolling in its private exact socket
 Like the sun set in a joint on a mountain...
 But here, nodding and blowing on my neck,
 Of no precedent in nature
 Or the beauties of architecture,
 Flying my hair like a field of corn
 Chance-sown on the neglected side of a hill,
 My head is at the top of me
 Where I live mostly and most of the time,
 Where my face turns an inner look
 On what's outside of me
 And meets the challenge of other things
 Haughtily, by being what it is.

From this place of pride,
 Gem of the larger, lazy continent just under it,
 I, the idol of the head,
 An autocrat sitting with my purposes crossed under me,
 Watch and worry benignly over the rest,
 Send all the streams of sense running down
 To explore the savage half-awakened land,
 Tremendous continent of this tiny isle,
 And civilize it as well as they can.

This is quite unforced. It has in it the quality which painting took from poetry and called 'surrealist', but whereas in painting the effect of conjoining dissimilar visual imagery is to shock, here, in the proper setting of language in which words have a figurative diversity, the effect is natural and unforced, accuracy, not shock. In poetry, the head does nod (or twist, lean, lift, bow, shake, blow, fly), without disruption to sense, since the words in a poem are or should be continually new and fresh, made so by their new and fresh conjunction with other words, and continually advance new thought. This is the potential of poetry. In 'Afternoon' (p.34), it is seen even more clearly:

The fever of afternoon
Is called afternoon,
Old sleep uptorn,
Not yet time for night-time,
No other name, for no names
In the afternoon but afternoon.

Love tries to speak but sounds
So close in its own ear.
The clock-ticks hear
The clock-ticks ticking back.
The fever fills where throats show,
But nothing in these horrors moves to swallow
While thirst trails afternoon
To husky sunset.

Evening appears with mouths
When afternoon can talk.
Supper and bed open and close
And love makes thinking dark.
More afternoons divide the night,
New sleep uptorn,
Wakeful suspension between dream and dream --
We never knew how long.
The sun is late by hours of soon and soon --
Then comes the quick fever, called day.
But the slow fever is called afternoon.

In what is a poem on a seemingly conventional subject, the animalization occurring in the middle section takes on

sinister proportions of horrors of throats. swollen, swallowing, fever-filled, reinforced by the languour of the rhythm, long vowels and heavy, falling cadences, taking the meaning of the poem beyond its conventional setting.

In this poem and in 'Pride Of Head' it is the meaning which finally draws the reader's attention. In 'Pride Of Head', for example, the chances are that the reader will have a surface impression of the subject-matter of the poem, of what the poem is 'about', but will possibly miss the significance of the lines:

Where my face turns an inner look
On what's outside of me
And meets the challenge of other things
Haughtily, by being what it is.

And possibly that of "I, the idol of my head". But this is the point upon which the poem turns. In a more conventional poem, the subject of the poem would have rested at the Adamish dichotomy of mind and body and the sense of conflict between the two. In Mrs. Jackson's poem, there is no conflict. She is quite certain where she stands. The body is a "savage, half-awakened land,/Tremendous continent" over which "I, the idol of the head" worries benignly. But this 'I' is a distinct entity, an 'idol', functioning, called into existence, by its conjunction with the body, and it is not all there is of the mind. There is also the face "which turns an inner look" which governs the 'I' while at the same time is complete in itself, a distinct intellectual quality of more substantiality and permanency than the 'I'.

The poem 'Afternoon' presents a more complicated problem. The subject of the poem is afternoon and the problem of def-

inition of this part of the day. Unlike the other periods of the day, it does not have a name unique to it. Morning, evening and night are particular names for particular periods of the day, but afternoon is only 'after' the 'noon', and its characterization in the poem is 'fever', suggestive of confusion of the senses and accompanying fear. Because of this, it has "No other name...but afternoon" since a proper name could not be attached to it. It is not like evening "which appears with mouths", a period in the day of relaxation of energy: nor like night when "love makes thinking dark", where the feverishness of afternoon disappears in not thinking, though it may be disturbed by dreams which are identified with 'afternoons' in "More afternoons divide the night". Nor is it like "the quick fever, called day", a time of activity, a bustling period in which there is a desire to get as much done as possible. The essence of afternoon is "slow fever", filled with the intimacy of sounds, such as the clock ticking, where the mind is torn between the desire to speak and the impossibility of speaking, 'speaking' used here as something true, contrasted with the evening "talk", a gossip form of communication. In the afternoon there is a feverish awareness, a heightened though irritable sensibility of life, a period of time in which the mind is aware that something ought to be happening and nothing does, a sense of timelessness and a corresponding sense of frustration. Yet nothing is being done. Everything is waiting and not waiting, as the feverish throats show, and "nothing in these horrors moves to swallow" in order to quench the "thirst" for something to occur, only the waiting for evening to

to appear when the pent-up fever of afternoon can be released in mere talk, and this to be followed by night and then day once more. The only time of day which is fruitful is night, which, between the afternoonish dreams, is a "wakeful suspension", meaning that at night, one is closest to oneself, though, ironically, asleep.

'Afternoon' is a poem to be highly prized. It is quite perfect. When read and read again, it does not lose its force but discovers new levels of understanding each time. It is able to do this because, although it is centred on particulars, it moves into universals, uncovering an area of thought which is true for all, and not just true for its author. The experience it is based on is common enough, the languour of afternoon; but its implications move ever outwards from its base, suggestive of far more than just afternoon. Life, too, is the afternoon, feverish, waiting, putting off, the consciousness urging that there is something to be known, while life, in its easiness, postpones the event, "We never knew how long." It holds in itself a mirror of the waiting world, impatient of the sun's visibility, always "late by hours of soon and soon", and turning its back continually upon itself. Speaking of this poem in particular, in a recent review of Mrs. Jackson's Selected Poems, Professor Michael Kirkham¹, who has published a book on Robert Graves, said:

What I shall say of this poem is characteristic of many of her poems. Its plot has three parts: first a cryptic

¹ 'Laura Riding's Poems' by Michael Kirkham. The Cambridge Quarterly, Spring, 1971: Vol. 5, Number 3, pp.302-308.

statement of the thought, using the basic elements of the poem's imagery -- like a closed bud; then a gradual unfolding of the thought's intricacies; finally, in the last three lines, a rounding-back to the original general statement, further reduced to its essentials and set in a life-context of the widest coverage. The imagery is not really metaphorical: it provides, rather, particular instances of a general reality, and word and thought are more nearly identical. It is as though the poet has set out to convince us that one word, 'afternoon', contains the central experience of the poem, seen within a certain order of meanings and values: preliminary statements are made with the word; there follow demonstrations of its sense-range; and, finally the word is used in a logical formulation that makes it -- packed now with all it can say -- identical with that experience. The imagery is the poem, the poem's thought. Its introduction is direct, not oblique; correspondences are laid out plainly if concisely. It startles by all it manages to say, and by the subtlety by which it exposes the internal relations of the whole thought.

And a little further on:

In 'Afternoon', the tight line, tight in rhythm and logic, the words circling back on themselves, in the process of clarifying the internal relations of the thought, give us the choking, claustal quality of the experience -- and the need to break its spell.

Her concern with experience, he says, is "moral, and in its scope, and largeness of caring, religious." It is pleasing to find oneself in full accord with the intensity of this tribute to Mrs. Jackson and its accurate insight. 'Afternoon' contains within its grasp everything possible to a poem and something more: the actual uncovering of truth, which is an integral part of the 'process' (Professor Kirkham's word) of the poem as it rises through the initial experience, at once an intellectual and a passionately feeling advance of thought into the area of truth.

'Afternoon' is concentratedly intricate. Each word of each line is fused with the next word and line, the sense playing backwards and forwards illuminatingly. But even after saying so much of what the poem is 'about', the reader is left

with the sense of not having said all there is to say. In the translation from poem into prose there is left behind a residue of poetic statement which resists attempts to extricate it from the whole, demanding, eventually, that the poem be left in its entirety for fullest possible comprehension. There is something more durable, tougher, pure in the poem which prose cannot, finally, render. To say what the poem is 'about' is to give a description of its physical conditions, only. Even the account given of the meaning of the poem is physical since understanding the meaning means releasing oneself from the poem's integrative energy because one is fatigued by the poem's insistence. In any account of a poem, whether of its craft or its meaning, the reader is adjusting the poem to his or her standards of intellectual understanding. The more the poem is integrated, the greater the sense of discomfort the reader feels in giving an account of it: there is always something more -- the integrative reality of the poem itself. The poem is not only craft and meaning but a facing towards and a participation in final reality, absolute reality; and this is a poetic quality not open to other demands of proof. In rendering a description of its physical aspects, only one side of the poem is given, the other side being the poem itself. As Mrs. Jackson said in Contemporaries And Snobs (pp.34-35)

The end of poetry is not to create a physical condition which shall give pleasure to the mind. It appeals to an energy in which no distinction exists between physical and mental conditions. It does not massage, soothe, excite or entertain this energy in any way. It is this energy in a form of extraordinary strength and intactness. Poetry is therefore not concentrated

on an audience but on itself and only produces satisfaction in the sense that wherever this energy exists in a sufficient degree of strength and intactness it will be encouraged by poetry in further concentration of itself. Poetry appeals only to poetry and begets nothing but poetry.

The poem does not attack the reader but calls forth a poetic response which matches the poem in intactness and strength. The reader of such a poem would say 'How true', rather than 'How beautiful'. This energy is the sense of that real portion of self every human being possesses without recourse to history, the concrete intelligence, time or other knowledge areas.

It is for this reason that the majestic 'The Rugged Black Of Anger', which is the final poem of the first section of Collected Poems, must be left to interpret itself with as little interference as possible, as was argued by the authors of A Survey Of Modernist Poetry. In its compass it represents the difference between poetry and prose even more clearly, perhaps, than 'Afternoon', and of course comment may be made on its physically representative qualities. But time and time again one returns to this poem invigorated by the knowledge that it is plainly itself, will not allow itself to be anything else than what it is -- and in this, I venture, it is one among many of the most remarkable poems to have been written:

The rugged black of anger
Has an uncertain smile-border.
The transition from one kind to another
May be love between neighbour and neighbour;
Or natural death; or discontinuance
Because, so small is space,
The extent of kind must be expressed otherwise;
Or loss of kind when proof of no uniqueness
Confutes the broadening edge and discourages.

Therefore and therefore all things have experience
Of ending and of meeting,

And of ending that much more
 As self grows faint of self-dissolving
 When more is the intenser self
 That is another too, or nothing.
 And therefore smiles come of least smiling --
 The gift of nature to necessity
 When relenting grows involuntary.

This is the account of peace,
 Why the rugged black of anger
 Has an uncertain smile-border,
 Why crashing glass does not announce
 The monstrous petal-advance of flowers,
 Why singleness of heart endures
 The mind coupled with other creatures.
 Room for no more than love in such dim passages
 Where between kinds lie only
 Their own uncertain edges.

This such precise division of space
 Leaves nothing for walls, nothing but
 Weakening of place, gentleness.
 The blacker anger, blacker the less
 As anger greater, angrier grows;
 And least where most,
 Where anger and anger meet as two
 And share one smile-border
 To remain so.

The generous inclusiveness of this poem repays frequent visits until the reader finally feels an honoured guest. And yet to give an account of what is there, in all its complexity, is to recognize the process of simplification involved in matching it with one's own sensibilities and rendering that in terms comprehensible to a third party. The poem is a whole, a complete entity, and response to it must be equally whole and complete. At most, one might give clues to a possible reading; but, at best, these will mislead.

It is possible to observe, for example, that the first two lines of the poem begin, in the words of the Preface to Collected Poems (p.xvii), on "the most elementary plane of understanding", the movement from intense anger to involuntary smiling, which is a fairly commonplace occurrence. But the poem does not proceed to give or describe an actual instance

of this experience as witnessed or imagined but moves, in the third line, to an isolation of the experience to its most elementary state as 'kind'. By isolating it to 'kind', its application becomes immediately universal, so that in line 7 the generalization "The extent of kind must be expressed otherwise" becomes not merely possible but true. Everything has limit beyond which it cannot go unless it becomes something else. It can become something else because there are no "walls", only "weakening of place". The crashing of glass does not "announce" the growth of flowers: flowering adapts to the restriction of glass, "the gift of nature to necessity". This is both "the account of peace" and the account of love. Peace lies between the softening uncertain edges of one anger confronted by another, as love results as a possibility when one kind (of person) is confronted by another kind (of person) -- there are no "walls" between kinds, only "dim passages", uncertain edges, weakenings of place, where there is "Room for no more than love", suggesting that neither peace nor love is sufficient.

The poem is 'about' identity, how and why everything, each thing, has identity. Everything has identity because "so small is space." How everything has identity is either through staying within its limits, or moving beyond those limits to become something else, or by disappearing ("natural death") as "self grows faint of self-dissolving" when it is confronted by the "intenser self/That is another too, or nothing." But though each thing has a force of singleness or uniqueness, each kind has a border which it shares with other kinds. Thus, there may be anger in opposition to anger, but

between them lies the smile-border, though in each kind it is "uncertain." And so there is both unique identity and merging (two angers, one smiling), as there can be, similarly, both "mind coupled with other creatures" and the unique identity of the "singleness of heart." One remains the same while recognizing that there is a point, a border, of mergence with others. The problem is that this point or border is uncertain. It is a weakness, a relenting, a gift of nature, rather than something positive, and cannot be, as it were, held or maintained -- it is not a deliberate form. The last stanza suggests that only where the identities are maintained can there be certainty. Where there is anger maintained against anger, then the smile-border may "remain so," may become fixed and known. And so the more concentration there is upon identity, the more possibility, the more certainty there is of establishing sameness, of variety becoming one, in opposition to variety and outside of it, as Molly Barleywater says. The poem answers the problem of singleness of identity and the multiplicity of sameness and how the two may be reconciled.

But the poem is not confined to actual persons. It reaches out to "Therefore and therefore all things have experience/Of ending and of meeting," and one is aware, in 'explaining' it, of reducing its total meaning. The poem may begin in visual imagery, visual imagination of anger and smiling, but it quickly moves from this precise instance to an equally precise reality of universal proportion. The poem is not written from the point of view of what 'I' might observe but from what 'we' know, have human knowledge of: not as a

part of experience but as the human experience. This is a crucial point. Poetry is not a method for understanding but a way to know. The poem is written by the author allowing herself to be reality, to be the instrument of it, and it is reality which shapes the poem, not the author. And this reality, with the poet in it, cannot be wrong, for it is what, in the universe, is pressing to be associated and come into being at any given moment. It is the function of poetry to assist things to come into existence and give them form in the poem. This is the history of the mind, the huge obstacle to its full realization being man's insistence on placing reality in society as minds, collectively instead of individually. Man, as a subjective being, must understand (feel) reality, and therefore creates the correlative reality to himself, society, placing reality not in himself but outside himself where it can be 'known' in the sense of conquered. He cannot see that to know reality he must be it. 'The Rugged Black Of Anger' is reality, its elements moving into association the permanency of which is attested to by the inability of the poet-reader to break the poem down into its constituent parts. One may not argue with the poem on one's own terms since the terms are entirely new -- the only terms are the terms of the poem -- and therefore entirely true. What is the poem about? It is not 'about' anything. It is. And to know what it is one must experience the whole of the poem, meeting it with the force of purity it demands.

Because the poet is the instrument of the poem, not its maker, the words seem to generate themselves, each word precisely sympathetic to the next and the next. This is true,

in a sense. But the distinction to be made between this poem and the poem which is seen as an absolute in itself is that, in this poem, word and reality are one. It is not words which generate themselves but reality through words and reality in words. The poet who sees the poem as an absolute is overly preoccupied, as E. E. Cummings was, with critical perfection, denying the future, in his careful use of typography, the possibility of changing his meanings, but at a cost to his creativity. In 'The Rugged Black of Anger' the critical and creative aspects are balanced. It contains, in equal strength, critical and creative formality, both carefully disciplined to interfere as little as possible with the poem as it comes into being. The poem is neither creatively (romantically) nor critically (classically) dominated. These two faculties assist the poem but do not dictate what it will be. It is not the words which generate each other, but the poem which generates the words which generate each other.

The poem is not a story, an idea, or facts, but "meaning at work in what has no meaning" (Contemporaries And Snobs, p.1), each time creating new intellectual forms, new experiences. The difference between new forms and old forms is demonstrated in a poem in the next section, 'Poems Of Immediate Occasion', called 'Footfalling' (p.82):

A modulation is that footfalling.
 It says and does not say.
 When not walking it is not saying.
 When saying it is not walking.
 When walking it is not saying.
 Between the step and alternation
 Breathes the hush of modulation
 Which tars all roads
 To confiding heels and soles and tiptoes.
 Deep from the rostrum of the promenade



The echo-tongued mouth of motion
 Rolls its voice,
 And the large throat is heard to tremble
 While the footfalls shuffle.

It says and does not say.
 When the going is gone
 There is only fancy.
 Every thought sounds like a footfall,
 Till a thought like a boot kicks down the wall.

The 'modulation' is the alternating noise and silence of the stepping foot -- noise ("saying") and silence ("not saying"). The saying is the confiding contact of shoe with the road, the noise resulting from shoe and road. At the precise moment of contact with the road, the shoe is not actually in motion and is therefore both saying and not saying. And when the shoe is in motion, swinging to the next step, it is silent. But the road is the same road, tarring shoes to it, perhaps a familiar road with familiar shoes. There is no significance in thought, which is the same as the modulation of footfalling, until thought "like a boot kicks down the wall." The wall is the obstacle ahead which would cause the footfalls to shuffle to a halt. In the silence when the voice or the foot stops "saying", there is only "fancy", suggesting bemusement or vacancy of real thought, until the sound or the voice begins again. Intangibly, in the rhythms and falling cadences, is suggested a certain weariness with the "modulation" and the "echo-tongued mouth" which irritatingly "trembles." To get beyond this, the author suggests there must be the booting power of thought, kicking down all barriers to it. The poem itself is the thought.

'Poems Of Mythical Occasion' were, on the whole, speculatively timeless, tending not to be fixed to a particu-

lar thing in a particular moment but trying in their scope to reach backwards or to suspend time. Many of the titles, such as 'The Quids', 'Lucrece And Nara', 'Goat And Amalthea', 'Helen's Burning' and 'Helen's Faces', indicate thought setting itself at a distance from its direct subject in order to give the fullest possible account (as in 'The Quids'). In 'Poems Of Immediate Occasion' the poems are, as in 'Footfalling', rooted in immediate experience but raise this immediacy to a level of thought which encompasses all experience. The poems comment on both the present (which is really the past) and the immediate (what is happening as opposed to what has happened). The poem 'Ding-Donging' (p.96) is similar to 'Footfalling' in this:

With old hours all belfry heads
 Are filled, as with thoughts.
 With old hours ring the new hours
 Between their bells.
 And this hour-long ding-donging
 So much employs the hour-long silences,
 That bells hang thinking when not striking,
 When striking think of nothing.
 Chimes of forgotten hours  
 More and more are played
 While bells stare into space,
 And more and more space wears
 A look of having heard
 But hearing not:
 Forgotten hours chime louder
 In the meantime, as if always,
 And spread ding-donging back
 More and more to yesterdays.

The imagery is familiar and immediate, but again there is the sudden yet naturally executed shift into thought, made way for in the very first line here with "belfry heads." Inside the 'heads' ring the bells, and then, hanging silently, the echoing of their ringing continues. Before the echoes have died down, the "new hours" are rung, so that old and new

exist side by side, so much preoccupying the mind that, even when they have ceased, they seem to be thinking, and when they begin once more, think of nothing. Both the bells and mind are of one accord, the imagery of the first including the second perfectly naturally.

In the latter half of the poem, the sound of the bells seems to ring on "More and more" even though the bells are still, like the mind remembering. In the mind, as in the bells, there is an ancient chord which calls the attention to it as something of central importance. And because of the knowledge of the importance, the vacancy, the hostility, perhaps, of space seems as though it should take on meaning, is somehow more friendly, while, in fact, it continues blankly, "hearing not". And so the mind-bells chime louder and more insistently, ignoring the blankness of space and insisting on the presence of deeper, older memories, but "When striking think of nothing", so suggesting the tyranny of the old over the new, thought as arising from history and returning to history instead of advancing. Alternatively, the last four lines might suggest the maturing sense of origins which have been forgotten, a knowledge of original purpose dimly remembered but which persists.

The poem is not so much an idea as a process of thought itself: the bells are identifiable as thought, and the poem is identifiable as bells and thought. In, for example, the two lines --

That bells hang thinking when not striking,
When striking think of nothing --

the slowness of the first line, broken by the hesitancy of

'hang' and the caesura after 'thinking', matches the sense of the line exactly, while the quick, throwaway flatness of the second line accords perfectly with the sense of 'striking' and the emphaticness of the conclusive irony. Sound echoes sense, but sense equally echoes sound, the movement of the first line making the second inevitable, as though there were nothing more natural than that bells should think of nothing when striking, which is indeed natural in the context of the poem.

Like 'Footfalling' and 'The Rugged Black Of Anger', the perfect, matter-of-fact balance of meaning in 'Ding-Dong-ing' forbids didactic interpretation. The poem means something, but it does not fall heavily upon one idea as opposed to another. The poem makes its own meaning as it goes along, a new, not a preconceived meaning, concerning the nature of thought as something happening rather than something to happen. The poem is not political, religious or philosophic; it doesn't even 'draw' from Mrs. Jackson's 'theories' in her other work: her other work, if anything, draws from the poems, from what is discovered in the poems (or, to put it a better way, what is uncovered by the poems).

Other poems which demonstrate Mrs. Jackson's sureness of touch and exhibit the qualities of the 'immediacy' of the section's title might be found in 'Echoes', made up of twenty-six numbered poems (p.80)

- 6 -

If there are heroes anywhere
Unarm them quickly and give them
Medals and fine burials
And history to look back on
As weathermen point with pride to rain.

- 11 -

'I shall mend it,' I say,
Whenever something breaks,
'By tying the beginning to the end.'
Then with my hands washed clean
And fingers piano-playing
And arms bare to go elbow-in,
I come to an empty table always.
The broken pieces do not wait
On rolling up of sleeves.
I come in late always
Saying, 'I shall mend it.'

Small, cautionary poems, these, of moral value, but reaching out towards a wider compass of meaning as well as showing the poet's ability with words. Or there is 'All Nothing, Nothing' (p.100)¹, a long poem which, in its form, is similar to 'Footfalling' and 'Ding-Donging', having as its starting point the immediately observable, but which rises to an agonized pitch. Here are the opening lines:

The standing-stillness,
The from foot-to-foot,
Is no real illness,
Is no true fever,
Is no deep shiver;
The slow impatience
Is no sly conscience;
The covered cough bodes nothing,
Nor the covered laugh,
Nor the eye-to-eye shifting
Of the foot-to-foot lifting,
Nor the hands under-over,
Nor the neck and the waist
Twisting loose and then tight,
Right, left and right,
Nor the mind up and down
The long body column
With a know-not-why passion
And a can't-stop motion:
All nothing, nothing.

1 'All Nothing, Nothing' is one of several plagiarized by W. H. Auden.

They will not walk away, which "were a disgrace":

For none may walk away --
Who go, they stay,
And this is plain
In being general.

Nor are they pretending yet, with their "Silly-faces/And love
of ghastliness", which would be a "troublesome/Hypocrisy";

No, the twisting does not turn,
The stamping does not steam,
Nor the impatience burn,
Nor the tossing hearts scream,
Nor the bones fall apart
By the tossing of the heart,
Nor the heads roll off
With laugh-cough, laugh-cough,
Nor the backs crack with terror ...

Nothing stirs in this "stirring and standstill" except,
perhaps, the "sweltering and shivering/Between one minute
and the next". Nothing arises from the feverishness of move-
ment except more concealment of the distress felt at trying
to be natural, which only serves to increase the sense of
being ill-at-ease, and all is the result of the "least
purposeful/Possible purpose." That is to say, there is a pur-
pose, but it is irresolute, even to the point of denying
purpose.

'All Nothing, Nothing' is a powerfully accomplished
poem of great force and strength which, with the other poems
I have quoted, rank with the best poems of this century, and,
if taken in the general scope of the collected poems, are better. But
Mrs. Jackson was never one to rest at accomplishment in this con-
ventional sense of being as good as or better than her contemp-
oraries. Her eye is always on the page, on the words, always
trying to do more there, not disregarding of the public, but
not weakening the force of what she has to say by writing down
to it. Everywhere her work is imbued with tenderness for her

fellows, but one which is concerned that they should stand up straight -- at once a great compassion and a great severity towards them. All the poems quoted above combine these two qualities.

Another quality evident in 'All Nothing, Nothing', and elsewhere in 'Poems Of Immediate Occasion', is urgency, directed, on the surface at least, at people, herself included among them, in general. It is true that Mrs. Jackson is, as a writer, the most painstaking, never hurrying her subject, never impatient with it. But there is a presence in these poems of the knowledge that there is further to go, a contained excitedness in which the author leans forward. This excitedness is in part created by the insistence of the rhyme and half-rhyme, which, as the lines lengthen, becomes more emphatic. In 'Life-Size Is Too Large' (p.80), there is also a sense of this urgency.

To the microscopy of thinking small
 (To have room enough to think at all)
 I said, 'Cramped mirror, faithful constriction,
 Break, be as large as I.'

Then I heard little leaves in my ears rustling
 And a little wind like a leaf blowing
 My mind into a corner of my mind,
 Where wind over empty ground went blowing
 And a large dwarf picked and picked up nothing.

There seems to be here both desire and warning: a desire for wholeness of vision, and a warning against ambition. In 'Celebration Of Failure' (p.135), the lesson seems to have been taken to heart:

Through pain the land of pain,
 Through tender exiguity,
 Through cruel self-suspicion:

Thus came I to this inch of wholeness.

It was a promise.
After pain, I said,
An inch will be what never a boasted mile.

And haughty judgement,
That frowned upon a faultless plan,
Now smiles upon this crippled execution,
And my dashed beauty praises me.

This seems to be one of the few moments in Mrs. Jackson's writing when reference is made to autobiographical incident, but one ought not to be misled by that. The poem records a movement from doubt to certainty, from "self-suspicion", through "judgement" to poised confidence that her "dashed beauty praises" her. Instead of reaching for too much in her "faultless plan", upon which her haughty judgement throws doubt, she accepts the value of an inch as being better than a mile, as holding more potential, and her ambition is discarded, a "crippled execution".

'Celebration Of Failure' closes serenely enough, but between this and 'Life-Size Is Too Large' (between, that is, page 80 and page 135) are a number of poems taut with feeling. The long 'Elegy In A Spider's Web', for instance, on page 86, is full of intensity. Here is the beginning:

What to say when the spider
Say when the spider what
When the spider the spider what
The spider does what
Does does dies does it not
Not live and then not
Legs legs then none
When the spider does dies
Death spider death
Or not the spider or
What to say when
To say always
Death always
The dying of always
To alive or dead

What to say when I
 When I or the spider
 No I and I what
 Does what does dies...

The elegiac quality of rumination is there, but tightened by the insistence of the questioning. This ^{is} built up for over a hundred lines, the concentration upon death, the spider and the 'I' seeking out the possible associations and meanings, moving by the change of a vowel from 'does' to 'dies', or in a shift of emphasis from 'I' to the lower-case 'i' of the echoic 'genii', small, bedevilled and misplaced. How, asks the poem, are these related in time:

What to say when the spider
 When I say
 When I or the spider
 Dead or alive the dying of
 Who cannot cease to know
 Who in death who I
 The spider who when
 What to say when
 Who cannot cease
 Who cannot
 Cannot cease
 Cease
 Cannot
 The spider
 Death
 I
 We
 The genii...

And what is to be done about the knowing:

The knowing always
 Who these this space
 Before after here
 Life now my face
 The face love the
 The legs real when
 What time death always
 What to say then
 What time the spider

A seeming nightmare runs with the lines. In death the spider is mere legs, and yet the human 'I' knows an "always" while being in the spider's web of the title. The poem, I think

Poses the question 'What?' and looks for the precise answer.

The poems generally in this section share, I think, a dividedness of waiting and wholeness. They arise from the poet's circumstances rooted in everyday experience but move beyond that experience, extending its appearance into an all-time reality in the poem. The author is unsure of completion, aware of the division of being all too human, inextricably a part of the world and subject to its pressures, and desiring a wholeness of knowing, of vision, passionately looked for but not yet achieved. The poem 'Nearly' seems to bear this out (p.116):

Nearly expressed obscurity
That never was yet but always
Was to be next and next when
The lapse of to-morrow into yesterday
Should be repaired at least till now,
At least till now, till yesterday --
Nearly recaptured chaos
That truth, as for a second time,
Has not yet risen or fallen to --
What news? And which?
You that never were yet
Or I that never am until?

The obscurity, the haunting memory of something more, is not yet, has not yet been accomplished, and until it is, she is never. The author is waiting, and the cause of the waiting is the lack of reconciliation between herself as of the world, and herself as not of the world. There seems to be not a conflict but a consciousness of the two as separate, and this makes for a disparity. On the one side there is some doubt, while on the other is a sure, dignified certainty. There is the plea for wholeness, for example, in 'Come, Words, Away' (p.137), in which the following extract falls towards the end (irresistibly calling to mind, in its use of 'telling', the later, post-1940 work):

But never shall truth circle so
 Till words prove language is
 How words come from far sound away
 Through stages of immensity's small
 Centering the utter telling
 In truth's first soundlessness.

Rather than plea, perhaps, this is a demand for the words
 to come, the author satisfied with nothing less:

I am a conscience of you
 Not to be held unanswered past
 The perfect number of betrayal.

The words are not there yet, but in the knowledge that they
are, that they exist, they can be made to come.

Though there is this feeling of waiting, there is
 also, beside it, the alternation of certainty. She has learned
 much. She knows what is false and what leads nowhere. She
 shows her contempt of the self-renewing man-made world,
 for example, in the epigrammatic 'Finally' (p.110):

Finally bigness turned into the sun.
 Hotter and hotter then made man.
 Bigness reduced itself to someone:
 The little giant with the big mind,
 The sage who finally.

The big dunce with the little sieve
 Whose passion is to sift and sift
 Until triumphant he can stand
 With an empty sieve in his hand.

She can see that this world is ended, and she notes its passing
 in the adjacent poem, 'World's End':

The tympanum is worn thin.
 The iris is become transparent.
 The sense has overlasted.
 Sense itself is transparent.
 Speed has caught up with speed.
 Earth rounds out earth.
 The mind puts the mind by.
 Clear spectacle: where is the eye?

All is lost, no danger
 Forces the heroic hand.
 No bodies in bodies stand

Oppositely. The complete world
 Is likeness in every corner.
 The names of contrast fall
 Into the widening centre.
 A dry sea extends the universal.

No suit and no denial
 Disturb the general proof.
 Logic has logic, they remain
 Locked in each other's arms,
 Or were otherwise insane,
 With all lost and nothing to prove
 That even nothing can live through love.

She sees this quite as a matter of fact. Mankind's world has exhausted itself of possibilities, even though it might linger on for a while, and in its place is a different world the values of which are of the mind, and therefore cannot be disputed or overthrown by logic. These values derive from exactly the same base man started from, the gap between his consciousness of himself and everything else about and around him, from which base he proceeded to build him a world the centre of which was himself, until he was all, himself and everything else. It is not by chance that the person to challenge this is a woman, and that her values are formed not by the desire to dominate but to reconcile the consciousness of self and the consciousness of reality. In this way, opposites are cancelled and the "complete world/Is likeness in every corner."

Because of the certain knowledge of what is wrong and the waiting for something more (the conviction of something more, until this point known but not known in finality), the poems are polarized. It was possibly the strain of this which prompted the note of horror and anguish of 'Throe Of Apocalypse' (p.122):

And in that shrill antithesis of calm
 The goaded brain is struck with ague,
 By a full moon of waste sublimely sweats.

Relent not, divine hatred,
 In this convulsive prime.
 You are enchanted against death
 By that you are but death
 And nothing but death can love or know.
 Nor yet can mourn, except by mocking,
 Crushed zeal, tired verse, bruised decoration,
 Or any agony of blemish --
 Except by vengeful imitation.

This is uttered as though through clenched teeth, a real pain which is permitted to overflow. At the core, I should say, it is emotional, which is rare in Mrs. Jackson's poetry. Everywhere there is the strongest feeling in her work, but its nature is that of passion, passionate concern and compassionate worry, but never emotion for its own sake. It seems a desperate poem.

It is possible that the cause of this desperation was also the cause of Mrs. Jackson's attempt to kill herself when she fell from the third-storey window of her flat in Hammersmith to the basement area below and broke her back. I have no wish to make much of this as an incident. But it does seem relevant at this point as it impinges upon, as it is linked to the poems. For, although the dating of poems may never be certain, the poem which follows ~~certainly~~ seems to refer to this incident, and in it occurs a ~~certain~~ resolution of great strength which the poems that follow seem to bear out in their consistency. The poem is called 'Re-joice, Liars' (p.130). The date of Mrs. Jackson's fall was April 29, 1929, and this poem first appeared in Poems: A Joking Word, page 153, published by Jonathan Cape in 1930. Though

its title there is 'Rejoice, Simple', it does not differ substantially from the later version in Collected Poems :

Rejoice, the witch of truth has perished
Of her own will --
Falling to earth humanly
And rising in petty pain.

It was the last grandeur,
When the witch crashed
And had a mortal laming.

And quick heart turned to blood
Those fires of speculation
Where she burned long and coldly.

Away, flattery, she has lost pride.
Away, book-love, she has a body.
Away, body-love, she has a death
To be born into, an end to make
Of that eternity and grandeur
In which a legend pines till it comes true --
When fawning devil boasts belief
And the witch, for her own honour,
Takes on substance, shedding phantomness.

This is somehow conclusive, somehow an end has been made, as a dividedness come together. A line from a later poem might almost be a comment on this: "Whole is by breaking and by mending." The poetry becomes more direct now, more self-intense, tending to a greater length and more careful searching for meaning, if that is possible. Outwardly, in the poetic forms and imagery, the change is not great. But at the heart of the poems there lies the conviction of no more change.

Chapter 2

Finally And Continually

Yes, there has been an interval
 Generally described as death.
 Thank you, I am now as I was.
 Perhaps you are not really interested,
 Since it was really only a brief illness.
 But I think it right to tell you
 That nothing worse can happen now --
 It was the worst, and thank you.
 Then follows the old routine
 Of being, thank you, not ill.
 Perhaps indeed, like God,
 You had better be going,
 Instead of tears, a bored expression,
 It having been made clear to you
 That no more news will come from me
 Than that I am, as usual, not ill.
 Think of me, if you like, as dead,
 And no description following.

This is from 'Then Follows' (p.174), in the section 'Poems Of Final Occasion.' It is very clear and very simple: the poet has gone. She will always be there, polite, caring, concerned, with no outward visible change. There is still love, anger, feeling, the poems still startle and flash, but, most definitely, there has been a final resolve, a final dedication of herself, and hardly, even, a dedication - more an inevitable fulfilment, prefigured in many of the earlier poems:

This resolve: with trouble's brow
 To forswear trouble and keep
 A surface innocence and sleep
 To smooth the mirror
 With never, never,
 And now, now.

('An Ageless Brow', p.72). But this was a conscious resolve, a future promise. Before the promise became fact, something had to happen, and what happened was cataclysmic. In the

poem 'And I', (p.156), the third poem in 'Poems Of Final Occasion', she looks back upon herself, and forward again to what she is now, to see what remains to be done:

And I,
And do I ask,
How long this pain?
Do I not show myself in every way
To be happy in what most ravages?

When I have grown old in these delights,
Then usedness and not exclaiming
May well seem unenthusiasm.
But now, in what am I remiss?
Wherein do I prefer
The better to the worse?

I will tell you.
There is a passing fault in her:
To be mild in my very fury.
And 'Beloved' she is called,
And pain I hunt alone
While she hangs back to smile,
Letting flattery crowd her round --
As if I hunted insult not true love.

But how may I be hated
Unto true love's all of me?
I will tell you.
The fury will grow into calm
As I grow into her
And, smiling always,
She looks serenely on her death-struggle,
Having looked serenely on mine.

Here was the division, the 'my' and the 'her', with 'her' seemingly betraying the 'my', making it appear to others what it was not, allowing flattery to crowd round, implying an attraction to it. It is not, however, a question of how to keep self pure -- not only this, at least -- but how she might become accurately and precisely herself for others, too, how she might present in her person a singleness from which she and anyone else might learn, which she any anyone else could not mistake for what it is not. If this is clear, in its singleness, then all else would follow. Others could not

mistake her, and she could not mistake herself. Thus it is that she might be "hated/Unto true love's all of me." Self and the other self, 'her', are cancelled out in the death-struggle, so that no discrepancy exists. 'Her' is schooled into 'my' which has already, as the deeper part of herself, undergone the death-struggle and become whole (or, the same thing, Nothing). 'Her' persisted, rose in 'petty pain', had only a 'mortal laming'. Now both will be reconciled in cancellation. This is not a psychological description, but an account of the division in every self, between the self that watches and the self watched: one self, but two roles. One self moves away from nature, the other clings to it. The two are united in the recognition of the distinction. There is ever one subject only and Mrs. Jackson united herself to it. The result is of a practical, not a mystical or psychological nature.

It is a result, not the result -- a step forward, not a final step. Mrs. Jackson, that is, knew. There was no more room for doubt, only for work. Whatever she did, she could not be wrong. She recorded this, at about this time (1930), in 'Obsession' in Experts Are Puzzled (p.109):

Perhaps or somewhat a turn. Or more deliberately not a turn. Whatever, and the same story. At any rate, always at any rate, always the impossibility of sham because always at any rate. Of course I mean the impossibility to me, for I do not, conspire, I attend... But with Laura goes Laura, always at any rate the impossibility of sham unless Laura of Laura, which is to say ultimately. Life, progression and ultimately. Life -- endless security of endless chance. Progression -- dangerous advance of right calculation. And ultimately. Ultimately the centre from which endless security of endless chance, to which dangerous advance of right calculation, in which at any rate nowhere else Laura, always at any rate the impossibility of sham.

She is in the ultimate centre, nowhere else. She puts it another way in the poem 'The World And I' (p.198):

This is not exactly what I mean
 Any more than the sun is the sun.
 But how to mean more closely
 If the sun shines but approximately?
 What a world of awkwardness!
 What hostile implements of sense!
 Perhaps this is as close a meaning
 As perhaps becomes such knowing.
 Else I think the world and I
 Must live together as strangers and die --
 A sour love, each doubtful whether
 Was ever a thing to love the other.
 No, better for both to be nearly sure
 Each of each -- exactly where
 Exactly I and exactly the world
 Fail to meet by a moment, and a word.

With an almost unbelievable courage she took upon herself the infallibility of accuracy in recording at least the discrepancy of the world and herself, so that both might be seen exactly. This "at any rate" and no possibility of sham, for where the discrepancy is shown, that is so much knowledge gained, and with no possibility of mistake.

This is the 'final' of 'Poems Of Final Occasion': the utter commitment to final truth undertaken in the knowledge that at least this way she could not be wrong. It has all the simplicity of genius, and yet how impossible-seeming it is! Little wonder that Mrs. Jackson had to write in the Preface to Collected Poems (p.xx):

I have learned from my poems what, completely and precisely, the scope of poetry is; and any reader may learn the same. Is this to claim too much? If you feel so, it will be either because, having read my poems and gone with me as far as I go, you find that there is still much to learn about the complete and precise scope of poetry -- in which case I should agree with you; or because you are instinctively antagonized by anyone's taking upon herself voluntarily a large share of the work of the world, or of poetry. Even with the people who govern

you, there must be the pretence that the work is being urged upon them, and that it is only by the weight of mass persuasion that their natural delicacy is overcome. The most arrant dictator does not quite dare to do without this sort of pretence.

Antagonism to the large claim is generally of an animalkind, bearing no relation to evidence of capacity or to the need for someone capable of assuming a large share of the work; and a civilized pretence of delicacy is necessary where the large share is seized from animal greed -- the gluttons for work must humanize their animal greed in order to tame animal antagonism. It becomes me to do no more, in answer to any feeling you may have that I am claiming too much, than to agree with you that there is still much to learn about the complete and precise scope of poetry.

But you may, on the contrary, say that the end of learning the complete and precise scope of poetry is an insufficient poetic end. Very likely you will say this rather than the other: that such an end is dry and narrow and becomes the critic rather than the poet. To which I should reply that the study of the scope of poetry is poetry, and requires all the reasons of poetry for its pursuit. To explore reality as a whole, to be not merely somewhere but precisely somewhere in precisely everywhere: this is a study in scope, and at the same time an achievement of scope, and that level of existence which is poetry. And in order to achieve poetic scope, and poetic existence, one must have all the reasons of poetry in one's heart, as well as in one's mind the realization that there is such an end to attain.

To be "precisely somewhere in precisely everywhere" is precisely what her poems demonstrate. The scope of poetry is the ability to perform this. To achieve this scope the conviction of its possibility must spring from the heart and be matched by the realization of the mind -- the total commitment. If she appears to take on too much, that is as may be: to take on less would be to fail.

Combined with this unity of being is the consciousness of herself as a woman, and, as a woman-poet, one at work in a field wholly the province of men-poets, with women, as it were, only allowed in if their work was recognizably poetry

of the traditional kind -- that is, of the male kind, which is no more than to say it must be recognizable. She made this clear in a contribution to New Verse¹ in response to questions put to her and other poets. There were six questions, the last of which was "As a poet what distinguishes you, do you think, from an ordinary man?" One senses a trace of amusement in her reply, but she treats the question with seriousness:

As a poet, I am distinguished from ordinary men, first, in that I am a woman; second, in that as a woman I am actively and minutely aware of the fundamental distinctions in life (the distinction between man and woman being the most absolute of these) which as a poet it is my function to organize into unities. By the same rule, I am distinguished from men poets by being, as a woman, more immediate in my sense of distinction and more practical in my sense of unity by imaginative construction, futuristically. Women poets are for the most part distinguished from one another by the literary mannerisms they assume in being as-it-were-men. For poetry has been a male cult -- where the mysteries were verse-rehearsals in sublimity. Those practice days are, however, over: poetry is now a direct matter. And if women are ineffectual when they assume the rehearsal-manners of men, it is because they are spontaneous voices, if voices at all; and even men must now leave off their rehearsal-manners. Where are these other-than-male voices, without which the true-first and final performance is not a communication? I am aware of no explicit others; I say this without any personalistic pleasure in being 'alone'. But one woman goes a long way -- in any capacity.

The knowledge of herself as a woman-poet distinct from a man-poet, and of her capacity, as a woman, for unity, is frequently referred to in the poems which make up 'Poems Of Final Occasion' and 'Poems Continual.' In 'The Biography Of A Myth' (p.188)

¹ 'Answers To An Enquiry', New Verse, 11, October, 1934, pp.3-5. Reprinted by Kraus Reprint Corporation, New York, 1966.

for instance, which also recalls 'Miss Banquett', woman is seen first in her traditional role as something less than man, and then as she actually is. At first, the "showing of herself was foolish,/And to fools." As someone "singing high" and "delivering beauty", she is seen as on a stage:

Then they went home, grinning at otherness,
And she to lour in shame, out of which night
She rose unseen, absent in counted presence:
The one more wanting from the swollen streets
And overpeopled books and commonrooms.

The "shame" which is the "night" forces the issue, so that she knows herself for what she truly is. Knowing that she is not what "they" think she is, she waits:

... 'She whom they did not see though saw
Myself now am, hidden all away in her
Inward from her confiding mouth and face
To deep discretion, this other-person mind.'

Although she has a face and mouth, worshipped by others, the real part of her "grew dead" and "Invisibly she spoke, mutely she walked--/Known of but unknown, an imminence deferred." History has proven to lead nowhere and "following fails." Man may have looked for her, may even have thought he found her, but this is only an "earthly voice and posture":

A world of death after a world of time comes,
But history goes no further than history --
The final scene reads dim, its sense senseless.
And mythically she haunts, a proven truth
So long she is no measured, proven seeming,
But, soon as real, to vanish of being real,
And beyond passion as beyond seeming dwell.
For they who loved and reasoned long and fine
Meant only to contrive with shortest arts
An afterwards to hold tomorrow off...

She is mythically true, the something else deferred. But, like 'Miss Banquett', she cannot be known or understood in any sense until she is known on her own ground, until the subjective

'passion' stops: she, as the experience identifiable with the something else, of God, may only be understood objectively, which involves such an utter change of direction of traditional thought-habit as to be hardly conceivable by man. As soon as she is made 'real', she vanishes, for in the world's sense of the word 'real' she is not real. When mankind attempts to grasp the truth of her, as in legend or story or poetry, dimly apprehending that without her there is no finality of thought, their apprehension of her being a "proven truth" of the fact of her, she goes, for she cannot be understood in that way, the way of history. There is only "an afterwards to hold to-morrow off", as God is they desire her as a fulfilled prediction of their own, as though incorporated in their dreams, and no allowance given for her separate reality.

Much later, in 1972, Mrs. Jackson, in a poetry-reading given at Harvard¹, was to say of her figuring of women in her poems:

My use was literal on a large scale. I meant the common identity, woman, of women. I conceived of women under this identity as agency of the intrinsic unity-nature of being, and knew myself as of the personality of woman -- as of this identity; and I endeavoured to make poems include expressly the sense of this as it was actively present in me.

So, in the poem 'After Smiling' (p.196), she records her resolution, as one knowing herself as of the personality of

1 From a transcript of a recording made for a Harvard poetry reading on January 18, 1972, a copy of which Mrs. Jackson sent to the author. Copyright restricted to this dissertation.

women, to be true to her nature in opposition to the nature of man:

Now not to smile again.
Those years of softening
To this one and to that one
Because the body has a meaning
Of defeat and dread unless
It advertises cheerfulness --
Those years of life-feigning are done.

Now is my smile pursed smooth
Into a stillest anger on
All flesh convivial
To my convivial flesh
Like scattered selves of me
Insisting right of scatteredness
And homed identity both --
As if by smiling promised.

Man, world, beloved even!
To be I, that other I than you,
Dearer than self to you by test
Of pride-shattering desire,
Needs more than coveting
And minding me I was once woman,
Of such and such complaisance.

She will no longer play the part mankind forced upon her and which she strategically accepted. The time has come to be what she is, what mankind, in its legendary accounts of her, and the "pride-shattering" consequences of his encounters with her, had always shown her to be, but the full knowing of which had been delayed again and again: she would be herself, but a self quite unimaginable to man as man is wont to imagine her. She must face man in opposition now, not in conflict with him, but as one who stands apart in absolute difference, as a fulfilment of herself and an incidental challenge to him, because he has:

... grown to greed immortal
Of contradiction, to be the else
You made kinged state against,
To be more world, kingdom of not-you.

By thinking himself all there is, himself and the something else, by making the concrete intelligence an absolute, man gives her no alternative, as she is identifiable with the something else, but to be herself, to refuse man her complacency in this, his last tyrannically ambitious objective, for otherwise she would be, like everything else, subjugated to being merely a thing in his mind, subject to his understanding of it. By withdrawing herself to her true self, she could create peace for herself, the possibility of peace for man, and at the same time challenge the horror of this final spiritual vanity:

Now not to smile again:
Be greeted here, having come
Like Rome to sit you down
Upon eternal Rome. Eternity

In my look, celebration
Loud in yours, we'll partner glory
And visit empire on each other
Disputedly, of which, long death, decide!

There is probably an echo here of Anthony And Cleopatra which would be an acknowledgement paid to that play as Shakespeare's coming somewhere near, however ambiguous the final scenes, understanding the force of Cleopatra as alternating between womanishness and unyielding contradiction.

The poems of 'Poems Of Final Occasion' are generally tense with feeling, sometimes angrily, as in 'The Talking World' (p.203), a long poem which ends on a note of rebuke to mankind:

But complain no more.
Look, I am gone from you,
From your immunity to death and listening.
May you forever not know nor weather cease
Wherein to die in your own colours,
With other banners flying than the black.
May you not lose the sun too soon --

Blindness and noise by which you stand
 Between yourselves and yourselves.
 May you not know how never more you were
 Than such and such mistalking,
 O talking word that says and forgets.

And again in 'Concerning Food' (p.212):

And the bones, the sceptic corpse
 That you stood up from doom-dumb stone?
 They grind the death of vanity,
 Begun in starkest long-ago,
 And have not death to think of now:
 Let them to earth again like roots torn up
 With flower along, that never dreamed of vase.

There is increasingly the effort to say more, to render her vision as clearly as possible, and in doing so the poems grow longer, the hand descending on the page more emphatically, the words hard and precise, fulfilling the earlier promise she had made to herself in 'Come, Words, Away':

I know a way, unwild we'll mercy
 And spread the largest news
 Where never a folded ear dare make
 A deaf division of entirety.

At times it was even necessary to write in 'prose' in order to break through to the reader to explain that she is not a poet in the traditional sense, as in 'Poet: A Lying Word' (p.234):

You have now come with me, I have now come with you,
 to the season that should be winter, and is not:
 we have not come back.

We have not come back: we have not come round: we have not moved. I have taken you, you have taken me, to the next and next span, and the last -- and it is the last. Stand against me then and stare well through me then. It is a wall not to be scaled and left behind like the old seasons, like the poets who were the seasons.

Stand against me then and stare well through me then. I am no poet as you have span by span leapt the high words to the next depth and season, the next season always, the last always, and the next. I am a true wall: you may but stare me through.

It is a false wall, a poet: it is a lying word.
It is a wall that closes and does not.

Her poems do not linger in time, recounting experiences, but press urgently forward in seeing and saying what is. The old time is gone. There is no more time. The reader may no longer go from one poem to another, each poem a looked-for final poem, final experience, but each a wall over which to step to the next final poem and the next, each a statistical experience in the progression of the poet's life. Her poems are immediate and final:

And the tale is no more of the going: no more a poet's tale of a going false-like to a seeing. The tale is of a seeing true-like to a knowing: there's but to stare the wall through now, well through.

Her poems are a "written edge of time", and she has accompanied the reader to "your last turn and season," but she can go no further. Now the reader is alone. If he steps across, he "Into my mouth, my eyes" shall fall, and the knowing and seeing will be hers, not his. He may only "look well through" her and "await the sight", separate but the same. In this way, death will pass like an old season, no longer to be feared but a way to learn:

Death is a very wall. The going over walls, against walls, is a dying and a learning. Death is a knowing-death. Known death is truth sighted at the halt. The name of death passes. The mouth that moves with death forgets the word.

Death accents reality: where all is death, all is reality. "Death, the final image," as she says in a slightly earlier poem 'With The Face' (187).

Other poems are full of sadness, as at a leave-taking, gentle but firm in parting. This is from 'It Is Not Sad' (p.225):

And it is not sad:
 No graves divide here the single scene
 On which my tears fall as rain
 Might upon nowhere spill, from nowhere,
 To prove the meaning natural,
 Unsudden fast succeeding
 Of the familiar by the forgotten--
 To prove me any woman once,
 Whose human griefs now gathered in
 Compose a heart as then, a sadness of
 Nothing to weep, no one to laugh with
 Of having laughed once with weeping.

This again is a fairly long poem of more than a hundred lines,
 sad at her companions, and through them the larger world,
 for staying where they are, "Like dreamers in a closed cafe/
 At their next cups--/'Until the others go.'" And so, in another
 long poem, 'Benedictory' (p.243), the next but last poem in
 'Poems Of Final Occasion':

Now comes a blessing on us,
 Close all our eyes on us
 And let us bless us thankfully
 That we have been and are not.

But:

I have seen and I am off:
 I hurry to the cause of it.
 You have seen and wait slowly
 The forgotten cause of it.

The mystery is no more a mystery. It was made a mystery
 by not looking at it, by postponing it:

You made that which could not be made.
 A way is not to be made, nor a world.
 You made no way and no world.
 You made a mystery because you made.

.....

The cause of the mystery
 Was the full sense thereof.
 You wished to see fully:
 A world is not to be held in an eye.

A world is an eye.
 An eye is not to be held in an eye.
 A way is an only way.
 It is not to be tracked through itself.

Once more this is intended literally . She had in a previous poem, 'With The Face' (p.187), referred to the nature of seeing with the eye where the world presents itself as a mirror. As a mirror goes with a face, so the world goes with the mind, but between the mind and the mirror-world is the eye. The mirror-world reassures that "strangeness is not strange", that there is nothing to be concerned about. Both mirror and world, like history, reaffirm to the individual that all is well. But when "Forebeing grows of age", when, that is, the actuality of being as it was and is emerges from the securities of such continual self-affirmation, then:

The mirror mixes with the eye.
 Soon will it be the very eye.
 Soon will the eye that was
 The very mirror be.
 Death, the final image, will shine
 Transparently not otherwise
 Than as the dark sun described
 With such faint brightnesses.

To let oneself be reality, and reality be oneself, she had said, both in Epilogue, in the correspondence on reality, and in the continuation of 'A Last Lesson In Geography.'

The sun-image is not metaphoric or symbolic. In an earlier poem, 'All Things' (p.159), she saw that the sun was an origin for mankind, that "All things once sun were" -- not a scientific fact but a poetic truth -- and that the sun and all things were "Deathless, all-instantaneous", and therefore "Death's too proud enemy." Because of this pride:

All things enjoy to watch
 The pride that could not be,
 The largeness against death -
 All things enjoy to watch this
 From death where life is
 As lasting as it little is.

The sun creates consciousness of the possibility of opposition to death. It is not a symbolic force but something which actually governs and influences the course of thought, is actually a way of seeing, as the moon, in its unpredictability, and the night which goes with the moon, presents an alternative way of seeing and thinking. These two stellar bodies are the primary directive source of thought and sight. And the sun is dominant in that it seems to hold the greater potential in holding off death. Thus, the poem continues, souls are "Like little suns away toward/Dreams of pride that could not be" -- could not be since the sun is not a state of being, is not in opposition to death, but simply deathless. It is a mistaken pride in mankind to align itself with the sun, to be sun-wise. To deny death is to deny reality. It is necessary, as another, slightly later poem, 'The Signs Of Knowledge' (p.229), puts it, to have "moon-sense". To know that you see, says the poem, there must first be two signs:

The first sign of the two signs
Shall be unlove of the sun.
The second sign of the two signs
Shall be unlife of the earth.
And the first with the second sign locked
Shall be undeath of the moon.

The sun "is an old sore, the first sore,/It is all the sores -- the sun!" Only when this lesson is learned can one "see whole":

Undeath of moon has come on you,
The moon-grail clears and wholes,
And emptiness whole-shines at eye-thought.

Sun-seeing is humanity's proud opposition to death, a turning of the back on death in the pretence that death is a lie and that life is all. To see by the moon is to relax towards death,

as the moon relaxes into night's nothingness, and so become death, with death give life the finalistic accent, forcing consciousness into that vivid reality whereby, not only is all known, but more is known of.

'The Signs Of Knowledge' is not a sad poem but one of knowledge that the world grows tired of itself and will not be much longer at arriving at the place of starting. In 'Disclaimer Of The Person' (p.251), which is the last poem in 'Poems Of Final Occasion', Mrs. Jackson knows this to be true as she knows herself, and as she knows herself to be as true as any other might be true. This poem is the final insistence (though there are yet 'Poems Continual' and 'Histories') upon herself as being no other than herself, and of there being no other path than the path which she is on (which is no path really but being -- not an ecstasy or a mysticism but a seeing true, a thinking whole in a place which is edgeless, with time, history, the world on one side, and on the other the continually and ever-new discovery and creation of final truth: truth because the constriction of time which held truth has gone, and now there can be nothing but truth, nothing but what is, as the mind brings the whole together; and final because this is the awaited for, truth's moment, final reality of thought...):

I say myself.
 The beginning was that no saying was.
 There was no beginning.
 There is an end and there was no beginning.
 There is a saying and there was no saying.
 In the beginning God did not create.
 There was no creation.
 There was no God.
 There was that I did not say.
 I did not say because I could not say.
 I could not say because I was not.

I was not because I am.
 I am because I say.
 I say myself.
 Myself is all that was not said,
 That never could be said,
 Until I said 'I say.'
 I say.
 I say myself.
 How am I now who was not,
 Yet who never was not?
 What is now?
 When is now?
 What am I?
 Who am I?
 Where is now?
 Where am I?
 I am, I never have not been,
 Words of agreement thing with thing.
 Never was there not
 Final agreement thing with thing.
 I say final agreement thing with thing.
 I say myself.

One feels, in the short lines, the repetitions, the reversals
 of syntax countering syntax, the intense conviction of the
 author. One grasps at the sense of the poem: that to say
 is to speak and to have words; to say is to know that in self
 is the origin of all things; that by saying self one is the
 origin; that thing with thing agrees as word with word agrees.
 It may help to understand Mrs. Jackson's meaning to look at
 a later B.B.C. statement of hers which appeared in the
 American Magazine Chelsea in 1962¹:

I conceive language to be the peculiar equipment
 of beings for whom being is an indivisible experience --
 a resource issuing from their nature as beings of such
 a kind. I see every languaged being as centered to a
 principle of unity of being, which is no mere social
 postulate or religious generalization but is the internal
 fact of human life; I see every language as concentric

1 'Introduction For A Broadcast'; 'Continued For Chelsea',
Chelsea, 12, September, 1962, pp.3-9.

with every other (whatever its indigenous idiosyncrasies) in its being a manifestation of human identity. I see human identity as apprehended, and exercised, through language.

Human identity comes -- to carry my theme a little further -- of being more than oneself, more than one is within the restriction of individuality. Human nature provides extensity of being: the language answers to this extensity. Where in the use of words a purity of human personality is maintained, the speaking expresses not just the forces and qualities of individual being, but those of being in the whole. Where such a purity is not maintained, the speaking is impure, is 'selfish'.

the 'Disclaimer Of ^{the} Person' is attempting to express this: the apprehension of the unity of being¹. This is a principle of cosmic scope of which human beings are the final stage in their apprehension and expression of it through words. The whole movement of the universe is towards this final agreement of thing with thing, from nothingness to somethingness, from not-being to being. And, the poem is saying, we have carried this principle with us, unspoken, since before time, since, in fact, before. Now, the poems cry, is the time to speak:

Now is final agreement thing with thing,
Which never has been not.
Now is all things one thing.
What is a thing?
It is that which, being not myself,
Is as myself in being not myself.
What is one thing?
It is all things myself
And each as myself
And none myself.
For I alone say.

1 It cannot finally express it, as poetry in general cannot express it. The continuation of the above quotation from Chelsea reads: "The poetic standard of purity is a standard exclusively of art. The speaking of purity has all the sublimated selfishness of art in it; sensuous satisfaction in the words is the given, imposed, first interest."

I alone say myself.
 I say myself only.
 There is myself to say only.

There is one thing to say only.
 There is one thing only.
 Myself is the one thing only...

I am a woman.
 A am not the sun which multiplied,
 I am the moon which singled.
 I am not the moon but a singling.
 I am I.
 I am my name.
 My name is not my name,
 It is the name of what I say.
 My name is what is said.
 I alone say.
 I alone am not I.
 I am my name.
 My name is not my name,
 My name is the name.
 The name is the one word only.
 The one word only is the one thing only.
 The one thing only is the word which says.
 The word which says is no word.
 The one word only is no word.
 The one word only is agreement
 Word with word finally.

The apparent paradoxes make complete sense. She is not the sun which seems to stand in opposition to death and which man in his multiplicity worships rather than face death, but the moon which heralds death, not life - death, the honing edge of life's reality, not life which blunts. And "single" because the moon separates fellow from fellow in the dark in which words are at once more intimate and true, each a sounding in the ear distinct and meaningful. And each word is the naming of what she says, the naming of what she is and says-- she is her name, and her name is a word which is a thing, like other things, but not alone but in agreement, thing with thing, word with word:

Never was there not
 Final agreement thing with thing.
 Agreement thing with thing is to say.

One begins to see what the 'obsession' is in the essay of that name in Experts Are Puzzled, as in the following extract (p.107, see, as well, page 144, above):

The game which is no game is up, the real business is at hand. What real business? Real business is how Science says business. The business. What business? Am I a mystic? No, I am not a mystic. I am Laura. What business? Laura. How can Laura be a business? How can she not? Complete obsession. Never before, now at last. Until now, delusion of completeness, unavowed delusion. Now, complete obsession, avowed completeness, now Laura.

The first part of the poem rhythmically insists upon the known truth, that she is herself, her name, and her name is what she says. The second part extends this, biographical, though no 'facts' are recorded, and relates how she has arrived at the certain knowledge of herself as all and yet alone, all because alone. She is a thing, a thing which she can name, and in the naming of the thing is what she is; and in that she is the name which she says, she is of the agreement of thing with thing, word with word. She, everyone, is of reality, as reality is everyone and she, as all things are everything and one thing. The word is the thing, and where there is an associability of words there is associability of things into unity, and languaged being is "centred to a principle of unity." She, like others, began with reasoning, which is suspicious of anything but fact:

Suspicion like the earth is hard
And like the earth opposes
Dense fact to the doubtable:
Which therefore like the air surrenders
Semblance to the bolder sights.
I have surrendered place
To many solid miles of brain-rote,
To the just so many matters and no more

That reason, grudging prodigal,
Allows numerous, consecutive.

In reasoning, she, the name she says, was "fanciful", not real,
standing in incidental relation to the god Reason. But
reason is of time, and time grows bored with itself, exhausts
itself in its consecutive and statistical knowledge, and so
"The natural conscience snapped in me--/And lo! I was, I am":

Into the sceptic fog that mists
Infraction from the chronic rule
Stumbles intelligence a-rage
To find the unthought wanton thought
And, self-confounding, think it.

That fog cannot be pierced by reason, the "chronic rule",
suggests both time and sickness. It may be sensed, and is
sensed, as something there, a "further which grows spatial",
extending beyond visibility, a "dark increase/Of the gregarious
light", but this divides reality into two, the known and the
unknown looked-for. And this is the division in human beings:
the known world of reason and the something else which it
knows of but refuses to face:

Thus is reality divided
Against itself, into domestic axiom
And recondite surmise;
And joins, when near to uttermost,
When plain to covert leaps,
In one extreme of here-to-here.

The leap is an extreme one, from the near, known reality
to the uttermost far reality, but joins them in a here-to-
here, making them not a one, but a duality in which both are
known. She, like others, is of both, knows of both, but
takes the crucial step from one to the other, from near to
uttermost:

At first there's daze, habit's reluctance.
Then quivers new that which long loured archaic --

the archaic memory which impels the mind to knowledge of more. And what, she asks, is this which knows? Is it the "I interior" which is pure, or the "outer stranger" which is only "truth-proud", impure?

This is I, I: the I-thing.

And a little further on:

This is that latest all-risk:
An I which mine is for the courage
No other to be, if not danger's self.

As woman, she has played both parts "Between the lover and beloved", was both herself and not herself, and knew distinctly the two parts of her nature: that which the world demands of her, and that which she is, which belongs to her archaic nature. This is the dividedness of woman, women, beset by reason and faithful to themselves. In the faith of herself, her words are her own, the complete obsession. They are not impure from being others' words, herself as others, but issue direct from self's purity, not mixed in the confused tangle of reason, "Suspicion's devilish shadow/Which the lies are made of":

If I my words am,
If the footed head which frowns them
And the handed heart which smiles them
Are the very writing, table, chair,
The paper, pen, self, taut community
Wherein enigma's orb is word-constrained,
Does myself upon the page meet,
Does the thronging firm a name
To nod my own -- witnessing
I write or am this, it is written?
What thinks the world?
Has here the time-eclipsed occasion
Grown language-present?
Or does the world demand,
And what think I?
The world in me which fleet to disavow
Ordains perpetual reiteration?
And these the words ensuing.

There can be no answer to the question, no proof, no fact, only the words ensuing in the attempt to match author, her real being, with "enigma's orb", the author's words.

Chapter 3

The Failure Of Poetry

'Disclaimer Of ^{the} Person' courageously attempts to put into a poem all that might be possible. In one sense it succeeds, in that nothing more can go into the poem: as a poem it is a magnificent achievement, the voice sustainedly speaking true within the poetic form. All that Mrs. Jackson has learned, uncovered, discovered, felt and known is within this poem at this point, and it is fittingly the final poem of 'Poems Of Final Occasion.' The commitment is fully made, and now there is only left to continue to fulfil the commitment.

But, already, there are signs, in the increasing length of the poems, but particularly in the intensity of some of the lines in which the meaning is so compacted that rhythm breaks, that the poetic form is beginning to yield to the voice. More is being said, almost, than poetry can bear and remain poetry. A little of this can be seen in 'Disclaimer Of ^{the} Person' where the subtleties of meaning must be followed very closely to be understood, both generally, throughout the poem, and in particular: lines such as, "Infraction from the chronic rule" where 'infraction' has to bear considerable weight of meaning, so much so that the preposition 'from' appears grammatically strange while being correct; and another example is "Wherein enigma's orb is word-constrained." A paraphrase of this might be that the enigma is the mystery,

the something else, and the orb is the world, so that the reading might be, 'The mystery of the world is or can be solved ("word-constrained") by language.' But it is immediately apparent what damage this does. It is not the world she is speaking of but 'enigma's orb', the mystery before the world; and not 'mystery' but the 'enigma' which is what mankind has made of the mystery, not the mystery itself; and 'orb' suggests as well something of royal, commanding persuasion, the power of authority vested in the words of self, outside self, as language, but also something which commands attention inside the head (orb). 'Word-constrained' means nothing but what it says, but it also matches perfectly the 'constraint' which 'orb', in its hard, heavy, constrained shape, suggests.

The concentration of meaning upon meaning, meaning within meaning, wrenching syntax into new meanings, pulls a poem on occasion hard round to confront itself, as, for example, in 'It Is Not Sad', part of which I have already quoted (above p.213):

In the same chairs you sit talking,
 At the same hour -- and of me
 A fondness as of none absent
 Fills your ears. But never did I sit so.
 I cry with those supposed eyes mine,
 And it is not sad, or I would laugh
 In mourning of once having laugh~~ed~~,
 Sitting with you in laughing death-talk.
 But you had not death in your hearts,
 More love only: a backwardness to keep
 Knowledge beyond the time of knowing --
 Until too late, too late always.

The ninth line ('But you had not death...') breaks the rhythm with the other lines and disrupts the reverie, acting as it were as a check upon the lyric voice. It seems deliberately

left there to do this, for the line could easily be smoothed (try 'But no death was there in your hearts', which would be not only more harmonious but more 'poetic'), but if smoothed would lose force and meaning. And then, as a final example, in 'The Signs Of Knowledge' (p.229) the lines are like broken shards of glass, where meaning shines through but cuts the hand that touches. It is both poem and meaning, where each somehow jostle against the other, enriching poetic effect yet sharpening poetic meaning:

Most world it is when quiets world
 Into a listening and a thinking on
 What world it was, into learning of
 What language in extreme
 Makes full the famished grail
 That never rose to brim
 With the world's ekèd wine.

By one sign shall you know the end,
 The rising to the destined brim,
 The last succession, the words enough.
 By one sign shall there be a world
 More like to whole-world than your world
 More like to mere-world.
 By one sign shall you first know All,
 See more than world of much contains:
 The sign of emptiness,
 An empty grail, an empty world
 Of world drained to be world-full.

The reading eye does not know where to fall at first. Then, as meaning clears in the re-reading, the poem clears. What seemed to stand too sharply from the page, as with the stressed 'ekèd', falls more naturally as the significance of the meaning emerges -- plain seriousness of meaning expressed through the nuances of poetic feeling, edged severity of word softened with meaning's clarity, the two together and yet apart. It is the separation of these two qualities which makes the poem so memorable, and at the same time indicates a degree of strain: the strain of poetic form and

poetic meaning striving for place and locked in struggle. In the final verse, which falls under the subtitle 'Rubric For The Eye' and is printed in italics, the two seem reconciled in a rising serenely of voice:

See sun-wide, world-long, air-high;
 See water-deep and earth-round.
 Then let the eye look whole-impossible,
 Look wider, longer, higher, deeper, rounder.
 Let the thought sharpen as the eye dulls.
 Let the thought see, let moon undazzle sun.
 Sun of world, moon of word,
 Eye-spilling live of eye, undeath of mind-sight --
 Moon-clearly, emptily, full grail aspeak.

But the reconciliation is a compromise. The poem ends on a note of hope and love, of loving hope, that what is urged will come to be, and also the conviction that it can be, that it is possible. This is indeed a great deal, and I believe Mrs. Jackson's poetry goes further than any other in making the possibility a fact. But the poem cannot, finally, get beyond this point: it cannot tell what there is yet to tell. In the Preface to her Selected Poems which appeared in 1970¹, in which she speaks at length on the failure of poetry, she points to poetry's "taint of complaisance" (p.14) and its possibilities of perfectedness (p.15; it is interesting to compare this with Eliot's "the pattern is the action" as a statement of opposition to his accepted concerns):

Let us think what can be learned by examining
 the pattern of perfection to which poetry conforms.
 Where is the faultiness? It is, that the perfection is

1 Selected Poems: in Five Sets by Laura Riding. - London: Faber, 1970; New York: Norton, 1973. The Preface is signed 'Laura (Riding) Jackson' and as such presents her authorial later self.

the perfection of a pattern. The address of poetry is a closed circuit. It returns to itself. It plays the part of both address and audience. Much is written on the function of the poem of producing effects on the reader or listener as its audience. But the reader or listener is drawn into the closed circuit, loses existence in the identification of address and audience. The only element in this pattern that can countervail the magnetic attraction of it to itself is a generosity in the poet laboring outwards towards the reader or listener that the poem is drawing inwards into its circuit of address. This element gives to poems a virtue above their perfection as patterned utterance, causes something of human perfection to be present in the poem. The addition, which is almost secretly made, cannot break the human faulty enclosedness of the poem in itself. But what real touches of perfection a poem may have are the gift of this element. Nor easily does the gift make itself at home there.

This might serve as a valuable comment on 'The Signs Of Knowledge', as well as many another poem of Mrs. Jackson's making, where she can be seen to be constantly striving outwards to the reader to bring the reader into the poem's scope of vision (rarely does she use the first person, the 'I' figure, in her poems without intending a broader reference of identity, either, as we have seen, to herself as partaking of the collective identity of woman, women, or to include the reader or to include humanity, herself as humanly a part.)

'Poems Continual', the next and penultimate section of the collected poems, is less intense than 'Poems Of Final Occasion' and provides a certain relief. In general, the poems are now tender and cheerful, possessing an equanimity of tone and, perhaps, a little sadness at having come so far and yet not quite far enough. Perhaps because of the relaxation of tension, one of the finest poems Mrs. Jackson has written, 'Auspice Of Jewels' (p.277), occurs in this section. It is a glorious example of her ability to see, in the little,

the large, with perfect fidelity to both. Its subject is the romantic adornment of women by man, and it sums up, in essence, how she sees the man-woman relationship, while extending beyond this to the nature of seeing, from the male viewpoint, and how it might be countered. It is a longish poem, of some sixty lines, but in order to do justice to it, I print it in full:

They have connived at those jewelled fascinations
That to our hands and arms and ears
And heads and necks and feet
And all the winding stalk
Extended the mute spell of the face.

They have endowed the whole of us
With such a solemn gleaming
As in the dark of flesh-love
But the face at first did have.
We are studded with wide brilliance
As the world with towns and cities --
The travelling look builds capitals
Where the evasive eye may rest
Safe from the too immediate lodgement.

Obscure and bright these forms
Which as the women of their lingering thought
In slow translucence we have worn.
And the silent given glitter locks us
In a not false unplainness:
Have we ourselves been sure
What steady countenance to turn them?

Until now--when this passionate neglect
Of theirs, and our twinkling reluctance,
Are like the reader and the book
Whose fingers and whose pages have confided
But whose sight and sense
Meet in a chilly time of strangeness;
And it is once more early, anxious,
And so late, it is intolerably the same
Not speaking coruscation
That both we and they made endless, dream-long,
Lest be cruel to so much love
The closer shine of waking,
And what be said sound colder
Than the ghastly love-lisp.

Until now--when to go jewelled
We must despoil the drowsy masquerade
Where gloom of silk and gold

And glossy dazed adornments
 Keep safe from flagrant realness
 The forgeries of ourselves we were--
 When to be alive as love feigned us
 We must steal death and its wan splendours
 From the women of their sighs we were.

For we are now otherwise luminous.
 The light which was spent in jewels
 Has performed upon the face
 A gradual eclipse of recognition.
 We have passed from plaintive visibility
 Into total rareness,
 And from this reunion of ourselves and them
 Under the snuffed lantern of time
 Comes an astonished flash like truth
 Or the unseen-unheard entrance of someone
 Whom eyes and ears in their dotage
 Have forgotten for dead or lost.

(And hurrying towards distracted glory,
 Gemmed lady-pageants, bells on their hearts,
 By restless knights attended
 Whose maudlin plumes and pommels
 Urge the adventure past return.)

Here is the true voice speaking clearly from the position of one who has worked hard and courageously to speak from the centre, not rancorous nor bitter, as the subject of the poem might be in other hands, but in open astonishment and happiness at the words' falling true. One can see in it, thanks to her later pointing it out as one of poetry's flaws, the "taint of complaisance" and the "closed circuit" nature of a poem, and yet, surely, this is as true and as perfect as a poem might be. The subject is old in so far as it deals with the relationship between man and woman, woman and man, and is part of the central theme of her poetry, but the meaning is once more new and fresh in bringing together the decoration of women and the decoration of the world with towns and cities as born of the same impulse, and the adornment of women as a strategic move towards safety and away from reality.

The poem's tone is inclusive. Mrs. Jackson is not speaking of herself as an isolated one among many, as one alone among many, though as far as can be seen from the published record she is alone in what she says. The poem speaks of 'we', not 'I', and I think by the use of 'we' she means that, even if she is 'alone' in what she says, what she says, as it constitutes a direct challenge, cannot be altered: once the habitual, conventional and traditional courses of thought have been challenged by a thought which is opposing and which itself cannot be challenged, then the old course of things is immediately false and will never hold the same sway as before. Truth is quiet but enduring. Once established, it cannot be altered. However 'alone' Mrs. Jackson may seem, however her thought may be in "single-handed conflict with the time-community", as Contemporaries And Snobs put it, and so much the obverse of what is conceived as traditionally acceptable, truth once stated must prevail, for where truth exists it is of such unity and strength that it cannot be split, and, in uniting truth, it is not for oneself but for all. To use 'we' and not 'I' is not a fancy nor sentiment but certainty. In establishing the nature of truth, and in retrieving it from the confusion of uses to which it has been put, Mrs. Jackson also put it within the reach of the determination of others.

Mrs. Jackson acknowledges in the next poem, 'Memories Of Mortalities' (p.280), that her path necessarily diverges from the common path. This again is written from the vantage of herself as a woman who is of the general identity woman,

women, and it traces the spiritual woman-identity as it exists in life. Beginning on a mythical note, it goes back to her origins when her mother "was a snake" and her father a fox, but the time is of "such lateness", and her birth occurs, not as at the beginning of creation, but at "lateness than Time", that is, when time, history, is at an end:

I, Spirit which at End
Greets remnant Now, to make
Beginning, in this prompt decline,
Of death's all-soon respited day,
Which, dawning infinite from death
Like night from night, encompasses
Entirety in its utter light...

Her mother is but a kind of memory, and she herself is new, a combining of spirit and mind and flesh, where flesh is the "prophet of myself", the "stuttering slow grammaring of self." She is woman come-of-age, and her mother is woman as was, containing the seeds of later woman as yet unborn. The fox her father, on the other hand, is man, preaching a philosophy of despair and cynicism, "Driving that unlaughed laughter to hard grief,/A bigot brooding," but who, in this later time, comes "into humaneness" with "smile less proud than anciently." But he is her father in that she "took a fox to father" rather than by fatherly prerogative, as though lending herself to him, pliant to his ways, but remaining separate. Between the two, snake and fox, she alternates, neither one nor the other nor yet herself, though coming into being. Then, in the third section (the first recounting the story of the snake, the second of the fox)^{she} recounts, in the words of the subtitle, her days of 'Sickness And Schooling' when a nightmare is "no nightmare, but a realness" and which in her later life is accepted, she "grown kind to pain." At school she is

taught to be conformist to the world's ways:

Oh, we have learnt.
Not one has never been to school,
Not come away a tearless devil
Whom the world has won to membership
In cordial hellishness.

The poem then seems to break upon personal ground, speaking directly from the heart of experience, but an experience shared by many, a common experience, not merely autobiographical:

I have been to school, as all.
I was apprenticed to my time
And in the craft of contemporaneity
Grew accurate, and by the rule
Of then-and-now I babbled
The abrupt opinion, shuffled
Between what was, and is
Like any nonchalant of taught experience.

'Know!' they said
And I knew.

She learned her lessons and for them received "A plaster Dante and a leather Browning", and, as a good student does, she "feigned astuteness", not in craftiness but because it was expected. But those days are gone, now. From going "like a leper in a world of lepers" and becoming "expert in equivocation", as she had been taught, she at last knew the two sides of herself, the sociable being and the immutable self. What, she wonders, will they write of her, as one who is the same as others? "They wrote nothing different, of course." And she sees that she must write her story herself:

I fell forgetful.
I had learnt to be silent
And yet to be.
I had learnt how the world speaks.
I fell forgetful of speaking.
But had I continued to say nothing,
Nothing different, I should have died:

They would have written nothing different.
 So I began to live.
 It was outrageous,
 I made mortal mistakes,
 I did not mean to live so mortally.
 But something must be written about me,
 And not by them.
 So I began those mistold confidences
 Which now read like profanity of self
 To my internal eye
 And which my critic hand erases
 As the story grows too different to speak of
 In the way the world speaks.

And so she began her own story (a story which is anyone's,
 each story the same, though each story different, and this
 without paradox), so different that it caused her to be
 called obscure by those critics who, fixed in time, were
 more obscure than she ever was. Several of the poems now
 seem to become more personal in tone and explicit in refer-
 ence, some of them speaking of love, as in 'Wishing More
 Dear' (p.309):

Can this finding your presence dear,
 And also wishing mine found dear,
 And hoarding under courtesy
 Fancied minutiae of affection--
 Can this be made somewhat of lust
 That, clamorous for loving signs,
 My heart so piously disowns
 Thought of the usual embraces?

The morning's memory of lust
 Is bashful and the naked dream
 Clothed with denial in its telling.
 What lewd unspeakable confession
 Holds up the honesty between us
 Like dream which better had been told,
 That, risking candour's horrid blush,
 I greet you with too fond a look?

The poem seems to intimate a moment of perplexity in which
 the author is waiting for, or trying to make, a resolution
 between "somewhat of lust" and "loving signs", a little appre-
 hensive that lust should cause a moment of difficulty. Why

the discrepancy, the poem asks, and the implicit answer to the question seems to be that there is no discrepancy, that love is followed by lust, and that can be quite natural (though not, the suggestion is, the other way round).

The poems in this later phase seem to become more 'homely' in a sense. That is, the voice of the author, and the scope of vision of the poems, seems to be of more intimate presence in a simple personal and domestic way. In the Harvard recording of her poems in 1972 she said:

Past the half-way mark, historically, in my poems, and up to a last phase, I am much preoccupied with the effort to make personally explicit the identity of myself poet and myself one moved to try to speak with voiced consciousness of the linguistic and human unities of speaking: I am restive insofar as this identity is only an implicit principle in my poetic speaking. There is also at work at the same time an effort to intensify in specificness the comprehensive reference I intended generally that my poems should have. The two heightened impulsions, working to bring within the poetic frame an explicitness and a specificness that it cannot contain and to which it cannot expand, produced within the poems themselves a struggle between compression and completedness of utterance.

This we have seen in such poems as 'The Signs Of Knowledge' and, particularly, 'Disclaimer Of ^{the} Person', where the need for hey specificness forms an intense struggle. Those poems have in common the desire to get herself into her words as completely as possible. In the Preface to the Selected Poems she also says:

In a book on language by my husband and myself (long in the making, still a third short of completion when he died, July 4th, 1968), we speak of poetry, and make reference to my poetic work. 'Her objective in poetry may be said to have gone beyond the poetic as a literary category and reached into the field of the general human ideal in speaking... She tried to find in poetry the key to a way of speaking that would realize this spiritual ideal...looking to an eventual

solution in poetry of the universal problem of how to make words fulfil the human being and the human being fulfil words.'

The intensity of this relaxes in 'Poems Continual' to a certain degree, the syntax of the poems less concentrated than before, so that emphasis falls on the poet's personal self as one humanly alive in what she says: not as one speaking mysteries but as one who, in shared human identity, is in the very essence of what is commonly thought of as 'mysteries'. This had always been implicitly and explicitly present in the poems, either in the general qualities of feeling, in the convictions of the heart, or in direct statement ("This is I, I: the I-thing", in 'Disclaimer Of Person', demands to be met on the personal level.) The relaxed quality of the later poems suggests that Mrs. Jackson was becoming aware that she could get no further in her ideals in poetry, while at the same time they show her to be moving towards a position where she can speak without the constrictions poetry places on speaking. Love as the theme of several of the last poems suggests her movement away from the poet-rôle which, in its privileged position, feels generously able to include all others, to a position where she includes herself as privileged to be with others in love, under love's sign. Poetry, that is, assumes a benignancy in its practitioners towards everything, but it is a benignancy which makes of poets a group which extends towards others the knowledge a poem may give, but it does not include the poet as of one with the audience of the poem : the poet speaks always from the point of vantage, bestowing knowledge upon the audience, and does not

expect the audience itself to be capable of poetic-thought. Working against Mrs. Jackson's earlier belief that the poet is disinterestedly individualistic, self-re~~li~~ant, anarchic, and that the poem was supreme, above persons, judging rather than judged, was the fact that the poem is held as an authority, if only by the audience which sits in docility awaiting its wisdom. For human beings to come to a perfect state of unity, there can be no one group which does all the thinking, or even pleading: all must be of one purpose. Poets do not urge others to think and to know, to strive with all their being to say their uttermost, but assume such thinking and knowing as a prerogative of poetry. Poet and audience might be as one in the intimacy of the poem, but the poet is always the master of ceremonies, always dictating the terms of meeting.

Something of this is Mrs. Jackson's later view of poetry which is discussed in the next section. The point is, in 'Poems Continual', there is a discernible shift as the poet moves from the ground of speaking which is professionally poetic to that which is, as she is later to characterize it, the "lay-position." In this growing consciousness of there being a stage beyond which poetry cannot pass, the poems continue, but the face that they present to the reader is one of human reassurance (as well as being, I think, one of self-reassurance), human conversability, with sense of the poet-rôle diminishing and, instead, sense of the poet as speaking from the common ground of humanity taking over. The poems continue the same, still look to putting into words what hitherto they have failed to make explicit, but the inten-

sity is weakened as she tries to find a way to make the poem more fitting. The poems are beginning to show in their personalistic mode the possibility that not poets alone but all people must bestir themselves to become aware of the possibilities of what she has already seen in her poetry, and must act with her and others, each and each, not as bystanders but participants by virtue of language, sharing alike one end.

'The Wages Of Eloquence' (p.315) suggests a recognition of this inclusion of others as having necessarily an active and not a passive purpose in being. Why, the poem asks, are we so amazed when we meet someone who fulfils all our expectations:

Or think we never then to hail,
Save in chimerical apostrophe,
The subjects of our chronic fervours:
Think we then never, none, to see
Eye-wonted what we most have affirmed?

It is a sorry rhetoric
That thus pairs the note of tribute
With the marvelling look and mind,
And calls the recognition mute
Which cannot gasp.

And we are sorry swains of parlance
If but the metaphor with ghostly face
Invites the generous word
And all must go in rational disgrace
Whom verity has made familiar.

The vision of the poem remains unchanged, but where this poem differs from the earlier poems is in the focus of attention. There is no need to be amazed by the presence of one who, in the words of the unquoted first verse, is a "taste of revelation"/To our understanding's pious palate." There must be such if she and others have thought of such,

and are these not representative of "How the swell of universal pride/Is with our social heart incorporate? The world itself, this suggests, is, in its development, a proof of the one eventuality towards which poetry points. One should not marvel if some are met who are "what we most have affirmed", for even the world itself moves, however tenuously, in the same direction.

Mrs. Jackson explicitly, time and time again, included everyone in what she wrote, whether poetry or prose. But this poem records, I think, a more immediate inclusion, a more intimate knowledge that she cannot be alone. There is just the merest hint of this in the poem, which is, in any case extremely subtle in its feelings. But it seems to be borne out by the poems which follow. 'On A New Generation' (p.316), for example, on the next page, is again on a 'homely' subject and expresses the wish that the new generation may not be the same as its parents, merely "Of advance in irresolution or perplexity", but be, instead, free of "nature" and all that that implies in Mrs. Jackson's work:

Yet the new girl more shines with herself,
And latest boy has a light in his head.
Not unlikely they will speak to each other
In a peculiar way and forget nature,
Then to fall quiet like a house no more haunted.
And in such silence may enough centuries fade
For all the loud births to be eloquently unmade.

Personal faith and optimism in love as the unifying element are the keynotes here, but a love which is beyond what is conventionally thought of as love. This love is serene and steadfast. As 'Eventual Love' (p.327) puts it, this is

The love subsequent to love,
Less than the premature desire
Though than love not less...

The old kind of love is in the past and is not to be regretted, neither for having existed at all, nor for having now disappeared:

Remember kissing: did lips truly touch?
 Or what were lips, if touching?
 And what the love, if we loved?
 If it was lips and loving, what were we?
 Let us not think of that.
 To read the greying story backwards
 Brings tears of youth from eyes already dry--
 A loss of eyes and sight, such moisture.
 Let us not look,
 Who in the aged chapters have
 An obligation to death dawning
 Of not pretending yet to have lived.

Such loving, with lips and touches, was something, but it stopped short, the self lost in the embrace and hope unfilled. It means to be everything, and is therefore not to be regretted, but it has not stepped beyond itself. Only words may do this, as a slightly earlier poem, 'How Now We Talk' (p.317), says:

Naked now are the words of anticipation,
 And stilled the heaving of invention
 By the hush of truth in communion
 With the very priests of fiction
 Who first wrote the words, and without fear
 For the final sense, or that truth might hear,
 And who now must make meaning with care
 Lest the words with the words interfere.

For what we now talk of is all true
 Or all false, since all is words, no doing to do
 Or prospect to wage or more going to go
 Or grief to be old or delight to be new.

That love and the words which serve love are now a part of history, not to be emulated in these later times, is touched on in 'The Readers' (p.331) in which:

I exhort myself.
 To love?
 A little less of it, I think,
 Would cool the anger in my grief.

The poem ends:

I do not exhort you to know.
 Even, I exhort you to go
 If staying seems more valedictory--
 The bible and the other books beneath your arms,
 Safe in your reading from all knowledge harms.

Finally, in 'When Love Becomes Words' (p.346), the two themes are brought together in a poem which is serenely sustained over seven pages, a poem which is as beautiful as anything Mrs. Jackson ever wrote, the voice clear, resonant with conviction and purpose, with sadness, as at a leave-taking, mixed with the sure knowledge that this has to be. We expect, she says, everything of each other, not in action but in words, not noisily but in quietness and repose, "Without the historic sword-flash":

And I shall say to you, 'There is needed now
 A poem upon love, to forget the kiss by
 And be more love than kiss to the lips.'
 Or, failing your heart's talkativeness,
 I shall write this spoken kiss myself,
 Imprinting it on the mouth of time
 Perhaps too finally, but slowly,
 Since execution now is prudent
 With the reflective sleep the tongue takes
 Between thought and said.

And then, in a passage which again looks forward to the time when words and the self fulfil each other, adumbrating the future course:

Thus, at last, to instruct ourselves
 In the nothing we are now doing,
 These unnatural days of inaction,
 By telling the thing in a natural tone.
 We must be brave:
 Daring the sedentary future
 With no other hope of passion than words,
 And finding what we feel in what we think,
 And finding the rebated sentiment
 For the wiser age of a once foolish deed.

We can see here, I think, the end of poetry for Mrs. Jackson.

Movement is suspended in the lines, in the way that they fall. She is waiting, waiting in an unnatural inaction, speaking of this and other things in a "natural tone" but one which is almost over-flowing with sadness in the patience of the waiting. Poetry, the poem, begins to break, and one can sense it in the tremulousness of the lines:

As to say, where I once might have risen,
Bent to a kiss like a blind wind searching
For a firm mouth to discover its own,
I now sit sociably in the chair of love,
Happy to have you or someone facing
At the distance bought by the lean of my head;
And then, if I may, go to my other room
And write of a matter touching all matters
With a compact pressure of room
Crowding the world between my elbows...

Love has not gone but it is 'sociable' now, not leaping up but calm, certain. And if there is sadness in the poem this is counterbalanced by the knowing that nothing can now go wrong, that "We cannot now but match our words/With a united nod of recognition," and, in the simplicity of a short line, "We are happy." Love came first, but like "omens" which are followed by "the thing we mean" rather than merely as an end in itself -- a kind of prelude to meaning. There might be less to "tell of later/But more to say":

Think not that I am stern
To banish now the kiss, ancient,
Or how our hands or cheeks may brush
When our thoughts have a love and a stir
Short of writable and a grace
Of not altogether verbal promptness.
To be loving is to lift the pen
And use it both, and the advance
From dumb resolve to the delight
Of finding ourselves not merely fluent
But ligatured in the embracing words
Is by the metaphor of love,
And still a cause of kiss among us,
Though kiss we do not -- or so knowingly,
The taste is lost in the taste of the thought.

Let us not think, in being so protested
 To the later language and condition,
 That we have ceased to love.
 We have ceased only to become -- and are...

We raise our eyes to greet ourselves
 With a conviction that none is absent
 Or none should be, from the domestic script of words
 That reads out welcome to all who we are.

Love can now be made "miraculous", not by the touch and the kiss
 of the body which, in its fumbling blindness, spells "disunion",
 but by:

...joining thought with thought and a next,
 Which is done not by crossing over
 But by knowing the words for what we mean.

But the words and the meaning are not finally known yet.
 To know them truly, Mrs. Jackson had to renounce poetry, not
 many years after this poem was completed, and begin anew in
 the study of language. She had taken poetry as far as it
 could go in her attempt to put into words her knowledge that
 there was further to go, further to say, but the hope which
 poetry promised was a false hope. In the end, poetry closed
 ceaselessly upon itself when it came to that very point at
 which it should have moved forward. The last but one poem
 of 'Poems Continual' is called 'Nothing So Far' (p.363) and
 records Mrs. Jackson's sense of the unfulfilled promise of
 poetry, her more-than-premonition that something, that much,
 remains to be said. It is appropriate that it should come
 almost at the end of the Collected Poems. The 'Histories',
 of which there are three ('The Vain Life Of Voltaire', first
 printed by the Hogarth Press in 1927 as Voltaire: A Biographi-
 cal Fantasy; 'Laura And Francisca', originally a limited
 edition of 200 signed copies from Seizin Press, 1928; and
 'The Life Of The Dead' with illustrations by John Aldridge,

again 200 signed copies in its first printing by Barker, London, in 1933), are placed at the end, though they pre-date the later poems of 'Poems Continual.' In the Harvard Recording, Mrs. Jackson speaks of them as "prides of the workshop, rightly so, I think -- placed diffidently apart, rightly so, I am sure." So, in a real sense, 'Nothing So Far', and its neighbour, 'Christmas, 1937', may be said to be the last of the poems, though Mrs. Jackson did not formally give up poetry until a little later. It is also placed, unaltered, at the very end of her selection of poems for Faber in 1970:

Nothing so far but moonlight
Where the mind is;
Nothing in that place, this hold,
To hold;
Only their faceless shadows to announce
Perhaps they come--
Nor even do they know
Whereto they cast them.

Yet here, all that remains
When each has been the universe:
No universe, but each, or nothing.
Here is the future swell curved round
To all that was.

What were we, then,
Before the beginning of ourselves began?
Nothing so far but strangeness
Where the moments of the mind return.
Nearly, the place was lost
In that we went to stranger places.

Nothing so far but nearly
The long familiar pang
Of never having gone;
And words below a whisper which
If tended as the graves of live men should be
May bring their names and faces home.

It makes a loving promise to itself,
Womanly, that there
More presences are promised
Than by the difficult light appear.
Nothing appears but moonlight's morning-
By which to count were as to strew
The look of day with last night's rid of moths.

It can be seen from this how perfectly the various themes of Mrs. Jackson's thought are to be found within the confines of one poem. The "faceless shadows", each of which has been the universe, continue as the 'concrete intelligence' of Contemporaries And Snobs, putting off the knowledge that, sooner or later, they must arrive "here." The questioning of, not our origins, but what there was before the being of our origin, of what it is which has shaped the universe in which humanity stands to the fore as beings of language constantly striving after perfect knowledge. And if this seeking is denied in the shaping sweep of time, no more proof is needed than the present world provides. Aliveness to this pang is the aliveness of the poetic mind in its always reaching forward, the sense of life which introduces the principle of selection in the undifferentiating quantitative appetite and creates intellectual forms -- at its highest poetry, the "words below a whisper" which, if tended properly, with the heart and all the reasons of the mind, may bring mankind, the faceless shadows, home. And, finally, the promise, "womanly" for all the reasons that Mrs. Jackson has given in the past, and which in the male-minded domain of the light of day appears difficult if not impossible, is associated unsymbolically with the clear morning of moonlight. To tell of ("count") this womanly promise by the rational light of morning, to use the terms and the 'knowledge' of the rational world, would be futile, like last night's rid of moths.

There is nothing so far and the mind waits. The promise is there, known, not a mystical experience but the mind and the

senses at one, verifying the knowledge. "I speak as if in recent knowledge", says 'Christmas, 1937':

These things are not yet tellable
In the tone of long-ago I would wish:
Christmas again confounds my mouth.

To find the tone, Mrs. Jackson left poetry behind.

P A R T I I I

T H E L A T E R P R O S E

Chapter 1

Beyond Poetry

In April, 1939, Mrs. Jackson left Europe for America, Robert Graves and Alan Hodge going with her, to begin work on a book on language. Words and their meanings had become of prime importance to her. This was already a notable feature both of her poetry and prose, in the principles governing the Seizin Press and those of the Epilogue volumes in which there are, besides the principles laid down in the introduction of Epilogue I, several pages devoted to the sympathetic associations of words in 'The Idea Of God', and an essay in Epilogue II on 'The Exercise Of English'¹. Graves and Hodge shortly returned to England, failing in their purpose to collaborate with Mrs. Jackson on the book on language, though, as I have mentioned, later produced The Reader Over Your Shoulder. In 1941, Mrs. Jackson married Schuyler B. Jackson whom she had corresponded with and met while still in Europe. He was a poet, farmer and a contributing editor of Time. Later, when Thomas Matthews, a contributor to Epilogue through whom they first came into contact, became literary editor of Time, Mr. Jackson became the poetry editor. In November, 1942, they published an article entitled 'The Latest In Synonymy' in Wilson Library Bulletin, 17, but apart from that, the occasional

1 Given on the contents page as by "Laura Riding and Robert Graves", but the essay is in two parts, each initialled by one author, hers the first part and his the second, his being an expansion upon and continuation of the working method she lays down.

appearance of her poems in several anthologies and autobiographical notes and comments in biographical dictionaries, she published nothing more until 1962, twenty years later.

This long public silence seems to me a loud one. From 1926, when her first book of poems, The Close Chaplet, appeared, until 1939 when at the age of thirty-eight her last novel, Lives Of Wives, was published, Mrs. Jackson's writing and publishing activities were tremendous, both in quantity and quality. There were thirteen books of poems, four collaborations, nine prose works and several pamphlets, two translations, the Epilogue volumes, the work which came from the Seizin Press or was contributed to other magazines, as well as the editing of a magazine called Focus, of which there were four issues, and Everybody's Letters. And the quality of all was of the highest. It is a period of the intensest hard work and dedication, both for herself and, generously so, for others with whom she worked¹. One cannot but feel that the silence which follows this is heavy with meaning.

She makes clear what happened in an autobiographical article published in the First Supplement to Twentieth Century Authors² in 1963. She tells of her time as a poet and her gradual approach to "the end of my ability to endure in a position of hope alone, with living truth a continuously

1 Apart from the obvious evidence of her hand in collaborative works and editing, Robert Graves concludes the Foreword to his Collected Poems (1938) with: "I have to thank Laura Riding for her constructive and detailed criticism of my poems in various stages of composition -- a generosity from which so many contemporary poets besides myself have benefited." (p.xxiii)

2 Twentieth Century Authors, First Supplement. Edited by

suspended activity." By this road, she says, she travelled towards the making of a dictionary, her husband reaching the same decision by a road of his own:

We knew that in the task we set ourselves (we are speaking of it jointly) we would have to break with lexicographical tradition--to what extent was not at first clear to us. Existing dictionaries and word-books define words by suggestive generalizations that correspond with the indefinite ideas of words' meanings entertained at large: we would have to define them with orderliness and exactness, holding them to the internal consistency of the language. For long, however, we found words resistant to such treatment. We did not fully understand the character of the mental operation required for definitions of the kind we wished to make until we perceived that we must liberate our minds entirely from the confused associations of usage in which the meanings of words are entangled -- and that, for us, the act of definition must involve a total reconstituting of words' meanings. Much of our work has been done upon our minds, rather than upon words directly: and we have proceeded very slowly, in consequence. We know now that slowness was inevitable, probably, was our inability to foresee this -- but we regret, nevertheless, the expectations of early completion of our work we excited during its early stages. It is still far from completion, but we must leave the matter of time to nature... Personally, we are resigned to continuing slowness and difficulty, as our portion of the mental punishment all must in one manner or another suffer for the common sin of tolerating confusion in language.

This was the problem, though another aspect of it was the difficult but imperative necessity to turn away from the practice of poetry to which she had pledged herself so utterly, and in which she put so much hope as a means to truth. Even though to poets the whole substance of poetry, and the faith in poetry, is words and their good usage, and even though Mrs. Jackson's knowledge of, and sensitivity towards

Stanley J. Kunitz and Howard Haycraft. Wilson Company, U.S.A.: 1963, (pp.482-3). This is a rewriting of her entry for the earlier edition of 1942.

words was of the keenest, still she is able to say of herself in those years that, "My words were still, however, the words of a careless tradition of speech, and their intractability as such drew me ever closer to the crux of the human problem: the question of the validity of words." Poetry could not give the answer to the question, even though "Poetry was for me a form of living, a state of being in which the redemption of human life from its deadly disorder by truth could be looked forward to" -- looked forward to, but not accomplished. The strength of her belief in poetry as a way of leading her and all others out of the human quandry and into the time of truth is evident everywhere in her work before 1940, but perhaps nowhere is the appeal to reason made so directly as in the Preface to Collected Poems. Speaking of poetry as the means to "the good existence which is immediately possible" she says (p.xxvii):

Literally I mean: our own proper immediacies are positive incidents in the good existence which is poetry. To live in, by, for the reasons of, poems is to habituate oneself to the good existence. When we are so continuously habituated that there is no temporal interruption between one poetic incident (poem) and another, then we have not merely poems -- we have poetry; we have not merely the immediacies -- we have finality. Literally.

And, quoting Francis of Assisi, she adds, "literally, literally, literally, without gloss, without gloss." Indeed, the whole of the Preface is a reasoned testament to her belief in poetry, as well as being one of the best, if not the best, accounts on record of why anyone should read poetry. Possibly, the Preface is a source of regret for Mrs. Jackson in so far as it might excite, in its eloquent clarity, zeal in the practice

of poetry; but it also imparts how strong was her devotion to it. Having, so to speak, lifted herself out of the confusions of the world into a better understanding of truth by her full-hearted and full-minded commitment to poetry, after 1940 she had to find a way to go forward which again involved the rejection of false values, but this time it was the rejection of poetry, of which she had been the most earnest practitioner.

Loyalty to poetry's flag is of the fiercest. Those who have their orientations in poetry face a severe, even a terrifying ordeal when challenged on their own ground by one of their ex-members, especially a distinguished one. However great the sense of humility, poets generally are possessed by the conviction, religious in force, that poetry, the unacknowledged legislator of the world, offers the highest attainment in human knowledge. It is not hard to understand the jolt felt by a poet when confronted with Mrs. Jackson's statement in her 'Introduction For A Broadcast' of 1962 that, "for the practice of the style of truth to become a thing of the present, poetry must become a thing of the past"¹:

How did I make the mistake of assuming that, from the art of poetry, the reality of live, personal truth could be precipitated? The time had come for someone to make the mistake. Poetry gradually appropriated the house -- the haunted but never occupied house -- that language had built for the speech of truth: the time had come for someone to put the occupancy to the test by treating it in good faith as legitimate. Through my mistake, I learned things I could not have learned, or learned so well, otherwise. I have not learned them just for myself. I see them as part of the equipment needed for our giving ourselves a new linguistic dispensation.

(Chelsea, 12, p.4)

1 'Introduction For A Broadcast'; Continued For Chelsea', Chelsea, 12, September, 1962, pp.3-9.

As she and Graves had pointed out in A Survey Of Modernist Poetry, poetry had come of age in the twentieth century and was free to be whatever it wanted to be in its liberation from its past servitude -- 2+2, they agreed with Cummings, Is5. It was time to put poetry to the test, and it failed. To find a new way forward must have involved her in a great struggle, and to relate to others what she had discovered of poetry's failure was equally arduous:

It has been hard for me to learn such things, and harder still to reconceive my working course in the light of them; and even harder to communicate what I have learned. Among my problems, when I endeavour to recount my findings, that of offence raises its head menacingly. I am aware that my animadversions on poetry will excite not only disagreement where there is esteem of poetry, but personal resentment besides, since esteem of poetry and self-esteem tend to become intertwined -- as I have reason to know. I take this problem seriously: any offence felt can be presumed a thing I would have averted, could I have done so.

(Chelsea, 12, p.5)

The long public silence, then, is little to be wondered at. It took until 1962 for her to reach the stage in her work when her view of poetry had "matured to a point at which it can usefully illuminate, and be usefully illuminated by, my poems."

Her criticism of poetry may seem sudden to the reader who chances upon these later remarks in ignorance of what preceded them, whose sceptical eye refuses the seriousness of her words in favour of his or her own devotion to poetry and its cause, and one should pause to consider those twenty years of silence -- they are not sudden but long, and the way hard won.

In Collected Poems (1938) she had said that a "poem

is an uncovering of truth of so fundamental and general a kind that no other name besides poetry is adequate except truth" (p.xviii). In the much later broadcast of 1962 she was able to say:

I have learned, for instance, that poets, to be poets, must function as if they were people who were on the inside track of linguistic expression, people endowed with the highest language powers; that, in functioning so, they not only block the discovery that everyone is on this inside track, but confuse themselves and others as to the value of their linguistic performances; that the novelties of expression achieved in poetry leave ordinary speech, and its literary counterpart, prose, sunk in their essential monotony and unaspiringness; that there is no vital connection between the verbal successes of poetry and our actual speaking needs -- they are no more than dramatic effects produced with words. I have learned that language does not lend itself naturally to the poetic style, but is warped in being fitted to it; that the only style that can yield a natural and happy use of words is the style of truth, a rule of trueness of voice and mind sustained in every morsel of one's speech; that for the practice of the style of truth to become a thing of the present, poetry must become a thing of the past.

(Chelsea, 12, pp.4-5)

The emphasis here is on the stolen glory of poets who pluck from others' mouths the need to speak and jealously carry it with them as their special function, whereas it is not theirs but belongs to all, since all are entailed in the problem of making words and meanings identical, self and word as one. The root of the problem lies in the history of poetry which has leaped from the "medicine-man mysticism of charm-speaking" to its later stages of sophistication of operating under the banner of truth. People have always assumed poets to be impartial speakers of what is true, and they go to it because there is nowhere else to go for speaking on matters more than ordinary, matters of the soul and spirit, unless it be religion, and many find religion inadequate for their needs. There seems

nowhere else to go, for "open-souled speaking", for the meeting of one with another in human immediacy of thought, but to poetry -- nowhere else, anyway, where so much is promised, so much is hoped for. Whatever poets do, however good or bad they are, they work in a hallowed tradition, one revered for its directness of communication, its lovingness, its hope, its pathos -- perhaps above all, its pathos. For poetry is of an unusual frankness of mind, speaking of things which were otherwise an embarrassment to the assorted audience which collects to listen. Even religion must be confined to a vocabularistic code of confession spoken beneath the weight of divinity. Only poetry speaks without code and without guidance, speaks with words, only, as they issue from the heart and mind. Or so it seems.

The desire to speak from the heart and the mind is in many poets -- they are poets of great seriousness and purpose. But, however strong their desire might be, they cast their words into poems, as though there were nothing but poems. And, even when writing on other matters, poetry is there, as it were, to prompt the writing hand. The problem of poetry can be seen in the linguistic nature of the poem, which is too frail a vessel to carry all its charge, and, in clinging to it, the poet, too, can be seen as willing to perpetuate its failure and continue in it:

Poetry depends too much on powers of enlarging upon and exploiting the physical features of words to allow of fulfilment of the function of language -- as I conceive language. Poetry is linguistically freakish; and it is not, in its freakishness, the natural spiritual intensity. It does not, actually, transmute our private, bodily selfhood, but borrows language graces for it from the soul. It leaves one as one was, knowing even less how to speak from one's soul.

(Chelsea, 12, p.8)

One must take to heart the seriousness of this. Mrs. Jackson might often be thought of as over-serious, and here and there, in reviews of her work, this has quite often either been said or implied. But can one be over-serious in such a subject? To learn to "speak from one's soul" is the subject of subjects, the central concern, if it be admitted, of everyone, and to be anything less than totally serious is to fail by degrees. The word 'soul' here falls without self-consciousness in the passage at a point which lifts it from muddled misconceptions. There is no personal hesitation in the employment of the word as indicating something 'there'; nor is it accompanied by the breath of clouded mystical discernment of there being something 'there'. To the writer, it is, and the backward shadow of doubt in syntax does not exist. It exists so in poetry, for the most part. The soul, our souls, might often be alluded to or spoken of in poetry, but with no clear conception of what the author means after the reading of it, however much the reader is stimulated into belief of it. Poets content themselves at the evocation, and allow their desire to know more to come to a rest, as though the evocation were enough. The poet in the poem is engrossed in flesh-making words, not with the problems of definition and explanation. Whatever knowledge teaches of what there is to further know, the poet leaves it and turns to the physically more immediate problem of the poem's shape, form, expressive felicity, newness and strangeness, shock, surprise, so that the poem-face bears, not just the mind-face of the poet, but a dramatic representation of it in an exaggerated pathos of the human self, recording dramatic instances of the smallness

of human experience instead of its linguistic largeness. This dramatic quality of poetry is the knowledge that there yet remains something to be said, while the pathos acknowledges that the poor human has done his or her best in rising to starry heights, then to fall away to the next poem. There is a sense of the impossible being attained while yet remaining unattainable, both achieved and not achieved. Mrs. Jackson speaks of this dual quality in poetry in Chelsea, 14 (January, 1964, pp.38-47), some two years later:

Indeed, truth in poetry seems capable of being both truth and not truth, that which can be there attained, but that which is substantially unattainable. The ambiguity of the sense in which truth is assumed to be native to poetry is bound up with its symbolizing the perfection that is truth (a goodness of words amounting to goodness of being) and passing for the reality, in the careless raptures of exaltation it induces.

This is the call of poetry, and around this the audience gathers, not to speak but to listen. After the poem is done, audience and poet, momentarily satisfied, pleased or otherwise with the performance, leave for home, the exaltation passed, perhaps a poem or a line or two or a phrase left in the memory -- which is a part, a large part of the irremediality of poetry, in that what it teaches is left in the memory, to be called up at moments of spiritual or emotional crisis as 'fitting', but never taken as the point of departure for one's own speaking, for speaking utterly. Both poet and audience fall mute, in the poetic spell, as each approaches the critical point of speaking, turning away from it and back to the poem with a shrug, the ideal unrealized:

Implicit in the tradition -- in the very existence -- of poetry is a dividing-line between the ideal and the realization of it. The attempt to cross the line ends in the sacrificial death of the hope of an immediate

reality of truth -- and ghostly suggestion of an ultimately immediate one. This is what has been laid out for poetry. The poet is not free to be effectual in the effort to attain the perfection of truth in the poem, though morally committed to the effort. The obstacles to effectuality are built into poetry, for it has evolved as a substitute for the reality, something to be done in token of something expected to remain undone for all practical time: the moral commitment is transformed into an aesthetic commitment having putatively an ideal equivalence to it.

(Chelsea, 14, pp.39-40)

It is this dividing-line which Mrs. Jackson reached in her own poetry: she knew the ideal but could not realise it. In most authentic poetry this ideal is at least touched upon; but it does not occur to poets that there is a way across and that poetry must be left behind in the crossing. Poets either fall silent or continue in poetry, perfecting the craft and so giving a semblance of mastery over their subject, but leaving the matter where it is. This is because the tradition of poetry, its being known as an art which deals with ultimately final things, sustains the poet in the conviction that there can be no other way, while at the same time the craft of poetry becomes an end in itself. The tradition of poetry and what is hoped for from poetry are really two separate issues in which the first dominates the second. The reason for Mrs. Jackson's ability to find the dividing-line, the breaking-point, of poetry, was that her poetry was not of the tradition, at least, not wholly of the tradition. She knew both the tradition, and she knew the promise of poetry as a living reality, and, for her, the promise far out-weighed the tradition. In looking at all times on the promise of poetry as a realisable potential, she was able to see

the falseness of the tradition from the very beginning of her career. For her, poetry was not a way to enhance life, to make the experience of life more bearable, or, in beautifying it, lend it more dignity, or a vehicle for emotion or sentiment. For her, poetry was life, leading to fulfilment. So we find her writing in The Reviewer of April, 1925 (Vol. V, No.2, pp. 1-7), in what I believe to be her first published essay, 'A Prophecy or a Plea', under her earlier married name of Laura Riding Gottschalk:

The most moving and at one^c distressing event in the life of a human being is his discovery that he is alive. From that moment to his death the fact of life is a constant white glare over him, an unsettling and shadowless sun. For darkness, for repose, for a quiet examination of the conditions of existence, for the experience of appreciation and pleasure, it is found necessary to close the eyes, to create an interior where life is a dim infiltration through the heavy curtains of the flesh into this dark room of the soul and where, so seen, through eyes reopened in a more endurable light, it appears lovely, describable. Art has become an evocation of the shadows.

What has happened? We have been blinded by life, so we turn our senses inward, against it; and the utterance of relief is made in pride, the cry of cowardice becomes the authentic act of art. The tradition of art, of poetry especially, as a catharsis, has so legitimized this process that it is almost impossible to attack it. It is not a question of proving another method more legitimate. There is no other method. For if the matter be examined more closely it will be seen that the quarrel must be made not with the way we write but with the way we live. For art is the way we live, while aesthetics, in divorcing art from life, sets the seal of approval upon the philosophy of escape. We live life by avoiding it. Art then as the strategy of this philosophy is no more than an inversion, and, as an inversion, is barren. It is not, as it should be, the conduct of life itself, but merely an abnormality of conduct.

Art is not the reflection of life but its "conduct", identifying the "ideational world of man, that begins with him, with the presumably impersonal world, that ends with him" (p.7).

Poets, she said then, are "still worshipping that old god, Experience" (p.5) but "Development comes through self-exercise, not through being hammered upon." To all such poets, "life is an unquestionable first premise of which all their wisdom is a deduction" (p.6):

But the function of the poet, of the poetic mind, is inductive rather than deductive. Life needs proving in poetry as well as in science. Philosophy is but a compromise between fact and fancy. The poet of a new spiritual activity admits neither. He, the human impulse, is the first premise. He is the potter. He is the maker of beauty, since all form originates in him, and of meaning, since he names the content. Life is create with him.

Mrs. Jackson did not look to the god, Experience, as upon a muse, but to herself, as the maker of beauty and meaning. In this she is different from poets either before her or after her, and those who cannot do without the old god call her 'obscure'. She knew the poetic tradition, and she knew it well, but she was not of it in her time as a poet. Because she was not of the tradition, and because she kept faith with the promise of poetry, she was able to bring poetry to the point beyond which it could not pass.

Nevertheless, there was one 'tradition' of poetry from which she could not move, and that was poetry itself. Whatever she did, she had to cast her words into the poetic mould. In her poems she brought the promise of poetry into the open, where it could, at last be seen. None before her had so consciously and consistently achieved this. But poetry, finally, could not give expression to what she knew was there to speak. Whatever one does in poetry, poems, one cannot get through the word-trap other than by leaving poetry behind, by ceasing to be a poet, for the poem cannot contain poetry's

own promise, which is the promise to be more, speak more than is oneself that is left in poetry's care.

This does not mean to say that Mrs. Jackson rejects her own poems and her poetic experience as worthless. In the Harvard recording she says:

A word on my feelings towards my poems. They are not either stand-offish or neutral. I honor them for their happiness in the words they are, and for their never stealing themselves from me to be strangers. We are friends as far as we went. And I did not renounce them; and, as I was their breath, they did not renounce me. For them, as for me, it is now, simply, later.

Conceivably, without her passionately held faith in poetry, she might have moved faster. But someone had to try poetry, to put it to the test as an institution which promises much. Whichever way she went, as a poet or not, she would have had to have faced poetry and the problem it presents sooner or later, to demonstrate its failure and presumption. In the Preface to her Selected Poems¹ she speaks of two exceptions to the "impossibility of anyone's functioning with consistency in the character of poet":

There is a formal consistency possible in ever-prolonged evasion of the challenge to honor with which poetry confronts its practising devotees, and there is an organic consistency up to a point, the point in consistent endeavour to meet the challenge where awareness comes (as come it must, in such endeavour) of an ultimate impossibility of meeting it and remaining a poet.

(Selected Poems, p.11-12)

Her own poems are organically consistent up to the point where she knew that poetry had reached its limit for her as she

¹ Selected Poems: In Five Sets - London: Faber, 1970; New York: Norton, 1973.

strove with the complexities of realising truth.

In the Preface to the Selected Poems, Mrs. Jackson is, to use her own words, able to make "only a meagre identification of the challenge poetry holds". She characterizes the challenge as "a discrepancy, deep-reaching, between what I call the creed and the craft of poetry -- which I might otherwise describe as its religious and ritualistic aspects":

....what compatibility can there be between the creed offering hope of a way of speaking beyond the ordinary, touching perfection, a complex perfection associable with nothing less complex than truth, and the craft tying the hope to verbal rituals that court sensuosity as if it were the judge of truth?

(Selected Poems, p.12)

The creed of poetry is given extended treatment in Chelsea, 14, where she describes it as the "Removed Ideal of Platonic bequest with which human beings have for long civilized time part nourished, part starved, themselves" (p.39). Poetry, she continues there, is the "endeavour to realize the Good," of which idea "Plato was the patron":

The idea of the Good, whatever the conventional or institutional attitudes to it be, is irremovably there, in human-being. You cannot remove it, only the attempted, the reputed, form of the Good of which it has been the inspiration. It is the pattern-of-being delineated in human nature to which we cannot cease trying to give expression -- and right expression. If you declare tabula rasa against existing institutional symbols of the Good, and gain your objective, you will not have tabula rasa for long: you will have what you consider genuine forms of the Good, or something you believe to be the Good purely. You can't get rid of the idea of the Good. Whatever you say against it is said against it as connoting this or this. There is no diabolic counterpart to it, no primary idea of evil. There is only the one primary idea, the idea of the Good; every other idea of towering stature merges into it. It must have been the First Idea... was likely co-original with language.

(Chelsea, 14, p.45)

Plato, in his time, took the intuition of Good and gave it the "practical perspective of hope" even though it was still "distant." It was, in other words, attainable and at once removed as an ideal. One can see clearly, in Plato, the practicality, in his perfect Republic, of attaining the Good, which gave to people an understanding of what the Good is in concrete terms, while at the same time he made it something to be aspired to, the "Removed Ideal." In giving the idea of the Good direct applicability, Plato revised "far-reachingly the rudimentary philosophic rationale with which religion and poetry had been endowed, in that world." Instead of being instinctive with life in its varied institutional expressions, the Good took on explicit value as an idea under the banner of which religion and poetry could make their way, drawing converts as they went:

Plato's thinking had the effect of creating, for poetry, the standard of institutional goodness: what seems by the light of the idea of the Good to be on its way to the final state is credited with the whole journey in so seeming. This is the sole intellectual principle that poetry (from its magic-making inception to its full literary maturity) has had to rest on.

(Chelsea, 14, p.46)

This "Platonic principle on which poetry rests is more than a rationale: it is a morale." Poetry is the caretaker of the Platonic idea of the Good, as it were, keeping the house habitable for future occupants, while, simultaneously, it seems to occupy the house itself, so that others think it is taken. But poetry cannot, in fact, occupy the house since the "pretension and the apparatus are incongruous with each other." Poetry seems to be so 'good' in this sense that it continues unchallenged for the most part, and what challenges are made

come generally from outside the poetic field and therefore appear to those inside the field to be irrelevant. If poetry continues in its hoped-for achievement of truth, ever falling short of it, then others as well as poets will abide, hoping (against hope) that it will perfect itself, and realisable truth will become not unlike the heavens -- something to come, but always afterwards.

The craft of poetry, and quite how it conflicts with and fails the creed, is more difficult to discuss other than in the terms of Mrs. Jackson's own poetry or her later prose. Mrs. Jackson recognizes the lack of critical precedent in this regard:

The touchstone by which to know finally what is achieved in poetry is linguistic principle: how does the poem look when fundamental standards of linguistic goodness are applied irrespectively of poetic considerations? But there is no precedent for straight linguistic scrutiny of poetic utterance. The poetic process seems too grand a thing to be judged simply as a language-process -- though it cannot be judged with rational seriousness except as that.

(Chelsea, 14, p.40)

Linguistic goodness is not a fundamental principle in any branch of human knowledge so far. Knowledge may stem from religion, science or art, and it may, generally does, aspire to goodness; but the linguistic principle, where it is present, is that of correctness, that is, good usage, not the linguistically good in words. None, except Mrs. Jackson and her husband, has seen that words, as they are identical with self, as they are capable of fulfilling the human being and the human being fulfilling them, as she says in the Selected Poems' Preface, possess a standard of goodness corresponding perfectly to the

human desire for goodness. Words are not merely instruments, cyphers or symbols: words are thought, and as such are the most intimate part of ourselves, as language is the common-pool from which we draw so as to make it ourselves in order to instruct ourselves, and ourselves it.

In 1974, in the summer issue of Denver Quarterly (Vol.9, No.2, pp.1-13), Mrs. Jackson demonstrated the failure of poetry in an essay called 'What If Not A Poem, Poems?', with a poem of her own, much anthologised (often without permission from her), called 'Lucrece And Nara', to be found in both the collected and the selected poems. The poem, which is an early one, is printed stanza by stanza with her comments falling between each one, but I quote it here, for reasons of space, in full:

Astonished stood Lucrece and Nara,
Face flat to face, one sense and smoothness.
'Love, is this face or flesh,
Love, is this you?'
One breath drew the dear lips close
And whispered,
'Nara, is there a miracle can last?'
'Lucrece, is there a simple thing can stay?'

Unnoticed as a single raindrop
Broke each dawn until
Blindness as the same day fell.
'How is the opalescence of my white hand, Nara?
Is it still pearly-cool?'
'How is the faintness of my neck, Lucrece?
Is it blood shy with warmth as always?'

Ghostly they clung and questioned
A thousand years, not yet eternal,
True to their fading,
Through their long watch defying
To make them whole, to part them.

A gentle clasp and fragrance played and hung
A thousand years and more
Around earth closely.
'Earth will be long enough,
Love has no elsewhere.'

And when earth ended, was devoured
 One shivering midsummer
 At the dissolving border,
 A sound of light was felt.
 'Nara, is it you, the dark?'
 'Lucrece, is it you, the quiet?'

In critical terms this is a good poem, its theme of love age-long in literature. The rhythms flow, the pauses occur at line-breaks naturally, and the whole is harmonious and memorable. Certain phrases and words, in their freshness, such as "the opalescence of my white hand" and a "gentle clasp and fragrance," stay in the mind when the poem is put down, and the general image of the two lovers, "Face flat to face," is clear and lingers. Generally, the poem imparts a sense of mistiness, suggestive of the particular quality of sadness, as well as, in the paradoxes of the final lines, a certain happiness, in the love which outlasts time. The reader will feel satisfied with the course the poem follows, and will leave it with a sense of there having been something experienced, some kind of end reached in the warmth of the poem's feelings, though quite what has been accomplished may, probably will, remain unclear. Possibly, there may be puzzlement at the poem's conclusion, but this will take the form of agreeable quizzical thought rather than serious challenge of the poem's verities. One accepts the prima facie experience offered, and because one accepts it, one also accepts the poetic vision of love, presented as the unifying and elevated force which brings the two figures together, holding them there through time and space.

The name 'Lucrece' is an oldish name, suggestive of literary genesis, as in 'The Rape Of Lucrece', and lends the

poem the air of literary timelessness. The name Nara, which designates the male figure of the poem, perhaps by sympathetic association with such names as 'Clara' and 'Nora', seems slightly feminine in its make-up. It could have been 'masculinised', for example, by having a hard consonant added, as in, say, 'Naracu'. However, in opposition to Lucrece, Nara is masculine enough. Perhaps the feminine form of the name is only intended to soften the harder outlines of male striving. Mrs. Jackson says of the two names (p.10) that Lucrece "is an impersonal projection of the identity of the author of the poem; it is a known name, but there is formality and distance in its use." Nara, she says, is "an anticipated, not known, being, and so the name strikes a note of mystery, with its initial 'N' -- but the other three letters give the name familiarness." This, she continues, "conforms to the personal facts."

The reality of the two figures in the poem is expressed by two qualities, with a possible third subsumable in them: there is first their physical presence, emphasised by concentration upon 'face', 'flesh', 'smoothness', 'white hand', 'pearly-cool', 'neck', 'warmth' and so on; the second is their spiritual presence, suggested by dawn being as a 'single raindrop', 'blindness', 'opalescence', and the pleasant paradoxes of the second stanza altogether, and, of course, words such as 'ghostly' and the long period of time the lovers cling together; the third quality is literary, not in the immediate sense of a given literary style, but in the general form of the story of two loves bound together eternally

until such time as earth ends. The sense of the story's literary setting places it in the context of fable, with the factual and fictive qualities which fable conveys: the eternal story which, whether it happened or not, is true. Now, and for long, these two lovers, in whatever disguise, are emblems of the enduring nature of love and the hope which love brings of transcending mortality.

The poem relates the author's knowledge of the division that exists between man and woman, in their respective physical natures, coming together in unity under the sign of love, transcending the merely physical and bodily apprehensions in a spiritual unity -- a commonplace of desire in human experience. As Mrs. Jackson tells it:

Who are Lucrece and Nara? -- whom do they represent, if anyone, in my poem-story? They are personifications of the woman-man forms of being into which, to my notion (of now as of then), Being resolves itself almost finally. The poem, with this story of Two in which human existence is tenuously idealized, presents love's part in the problem of the sexual duality of human identity. It leans towards a purification by love of the state of being Two into a state of being One -- of one person-kind, the same kind purely. Yet there is a clinging to the physical sense of the other, which is merged confusedly with the idea -- the hope -- of perfect unity: not to be, as before, each 'whole' in the mortal way of differentiated physicality.

(Denver Quarterly, pp.5-6)

The fault in the poem lies in its seeming to present a unity of two as accomplished historically in the poem, whereas, in fact, it is anchored to its physically sensuous detail, which, though it gradually becomes weaker as the poem progresses, is still the concluding point:

'Nara, is it you, the dark?'
'Lucrece, is it you, the quiet?'

The two are presented, faintly, as dark and quiet, and the

poem has not moved from its beginnings: "What have we but a tale of gradual extinction, one in which the telling is all of the perpetuation by a certain two of consciousness of each other in bodily sense extended to attenuation's finest?"

Mrs. Jackson asks. The poem poses the problem, not a particularly mystical or rare problem, and then reassuringly manages, or seems to manage, to give a satisfactory solution by the apparent fining away of the physical aspects in favour of the spiritual, but not crossing over the spiritual. Because the poem resides in the spiritual domain, speaking of a humanly important matter, the poem has an authenticity which gives it a satisfactory air, but the only solution offered is a physical solution of earth's coming to an end, which is a poetic solution imposed by the sensuosity of the craft, while the spiritual problem, which begs to be answered, is looked at from afar, as across a void. There is no room in the poem, Mrs. Jackson says, "and because it is a poem -- for a specific raising of the question that is, essentially, at issue here: what is the nature of the new unity of being, the mortal state of pining proximity, in identity, having been transcended?" (p.10). Poetry cannot map out the potential unity of being, the desired unity of all which surges beneath the language of all, because the end of poetry is poetry, not unity, the looked-for unity in it being hope-of-unity, fallen short of, or taken to the tragic length of silence, but always locked beneath poetry's tongue to give the image but not the fact.

What is the unity transcending the physical division which exists between the two lovers in the poem, what is the

finality which can be envisaged? Mrs. Jackson answers her own question both as she was a poet and as she is now:

I have ever taken to be implied in the human quality of being a pure form of being in which one is unpeculiarly. One experiences being at first, and for long, as if unendingly, in terms of sexual identity -- in terms of division; but one feels secreted in one's human nature an unpartial identity, to be by which is wholly to be. Yet the transcendence of sexuality is not by love that over and over returns being to sexuality: love itself must be lifted out of the pull of the identity-division -- and of the difficult particular moments of happiness, locked in time, that this affords..... We know, all, the feel of a purer selfhood than that in which we are seated in our man or woman bodiliness. Our very physicality gives us information about it as a state of being within thinking-distance -- teaching us how arduous has been the travel through all the pre-human conditions to the mere point where purity can be thought of. One is as if armed by bodily knowledge against treating the transcendence of the physical absolute of difference expressed in sexuality as less than nearly impossible. One learns how far comprehension must go for love to make perfect being be: the distance seems almost out of love's reach -- love's fragmentary realizations of the Perfect, imperfect in the fragmentariness, reveal how love, like comprehension, is behind and ahead of itself. Almost between what we are, and what we fail to be, we are not; and the plight doubles our sensitivities, so that we know love and love, comprehension and comprehension, being and being.

(Denver Quarterly, p.6-7)

'Lucrece And Nara' fails in the spiritual domain because the author is divided between two comprehensions of the human being as seated in an "identity-difference", which is a source of private happiness, and the desire to transcend the identity-difference "for the sake of a happiness absolutely good, untainted with self-tender reservations." Because of poetry's formal demands, and her allegiance to these as a poet, she was bound to stay divided, because poetry is ultimately humanly weak, staying within the self-tender identity-difference while comprehending the absolute good:

The lure of poetry cannot but attract human beings in whom the faculties of further comprehension and expression, the capabilities of going beyond the broken physical knowledge and statement of 'things', are exceptionally keen. But poetry necessitates a certain degree of suspension of these faculties, these capabilities: poetry imposes a bar to their total exercise, ordains an irreducible obtundity in the most important area of human thought and utterance. This area is also the peculiar haunt of philosophers and theologians, who tread there in specially marked-out roads, in which lay folk may conveniently follow, and in large part have so done -- some, however, stumbling about in proud independence, making their way there privately, incoherently. Thus, human beings are gripped in the linguistic dilemma of a potential in utmost expression divided between poetry on the one hand and philosophy and theology on the other (with political and sociological possibilities in-between that could not constitute a linguistic choice). The dilemma has never been distinctly felt; but it is the most serious human dilemma. So long as its grip remains unbroken, human beings will not comprehend what there is still to be said, and what they have still to do about and with themselves.

(Denver Quarterly, p.9)

These two statements, speaking from the linguistic ground, offer an implicit challenge to the rightness which poetry, philosophy and religion assume, each, as their own. Here, in an all-comprehensive aspiration to perfection within language-reach, from the centre of what it is to be human, Mrs. Jackson offers at once a solution, in her speaking words (words which seek to fulfil that of which she she speaks), and a way forward through the self-erected barriers of institutionalised human understanding. In her earlier work, the ground from which she spoke, as it offered hope of perfection, was poetry; now, the ground from which she speaks is language -- the ground of being.

The failure of 'Lucrece And Nara' as a poem is not a failure of poetic quality -- as a poem it is as near perfection and as far away from it as any other given poem: it is a

failure of poetry, and a failure of the poet, and all who go to poetry, as human beings entailed in the circumstances which go to make up poetry, from its first inception to its most recent civilized stage. Poetry temporises with truth as a Platonic Removed Ideal, not as something which can be made actual. As a knowledge area of human and humane consideration, it exerts a tidal-pull upon the minds of those who see similar areas of knowledge, such as philosophy and religion, as uninviting because not speaking from the independence of the human centre, not requiring whole mind and spirit and soul, free from compunctions of dogma, in their outward reaching. In that poetry functions through words, it invites complete commitment to intellect, sense, feeling, locked in one striving, and, as such, its force is as utterly felt as the religious force, and its effects are, more than possibly, far wider, if only because poetry is unofficial. Poetry commands belief:

I believed in the transcendence of the man-woman, woman-man, identity-split. I believed the ultimate of love, and of the human state itself, to be something more than a ghostly after-life, itself a shadow of the mortal. Poetry is about belief, is because of belief; the poets who do not 'believe' must assiduously imitate belief. Poetry is a means of giving belief a free immediacy of expression: there are no laws, no rules, except that belief must stay within the bounds of the poem. That is, no extravagance of taking belief -- faith put into words -- to the live proof. Not it, but the poem only, is allowed to attain completion, perfection; there may be some extravagance within the poem, but this is, strictly, for the forcefulness of the impressions it is designed to excite, to meet the demands of artistic necessity.

(Denver Quarterly, pp.11-12)

Followers and practitioners of poetry believe poetry to be more than an art, more than mere word-images or emotional experience or just plain fun. School-children breathe it in

from first to last; university faculties and departments are built upon it; books written from every conceivable ideological stance accrete around it; and poets, hallowed, are excused from normal modes of social behaviour -- even the unrecognized poet still has a full measure of pride.

The challenge to poetry is a challenge to poetry "as words: do they tell enough?" No poem, Mrs. Jackson continues, "is pure truth, no poem tells all, yet poems enjoy the status of the best that is do-able in language." During her years as a poet she discovered in her own poems the failure of poetry to reach across the divide. It is inconceivable that a poet could have done more than she did. And her answer to 'What, If Not A Poem, Poems?':

Is there not our human reality, to penetrate, comprehend beyond its broken appearance, its pieced together surface? have we not it to live further, to its redemptive meaning of One, which we anticipate in love? What less is there that can fully employ the virtue of words? If we put away our poems, we shall lose our Lucrece and Nara, and many another pair of lovers, of a beautiful unrealness, that makes us feel (while with them, in their story) we know what realness is. But we shall have our powers of comprehension, then, freed from the draw of poetry, of its benumbing enchantment. We shall have better strength for learning how to advance, by love, belovedness, into the death-proof further of ourselves. Our powers of belief, released from the beguiling entertainment of poetry, can, then, increase in unerringness -- so that, discovering our whole reality in this further, we shall be emboldened by them to own it, and to speak it.

(Denver Quarterly, p.13)

And, she adds, in her final sentence, "do we not at least somewhat know that we have delayed almost too long?"

Mrs. Jackson learned a great deal during her time as a poet, and, though she could see later that poetry could not take meaning to its furthest testing point, that is not to

say that what she learned while a poet is rejected. Far from it. The essence of her view of later time, though it includes the cessation of poetry, is not much different from that of her early time. Speaking of her recent work The Telling in the recording she made at Harvard in 1972, she says:

My meanings have not changed there, fundamentally, from what they were in my poems. But, freed from the constrictions and the imposed ingenuities of poetic word-use, and looking to language's natural devices alone for a mode of expression more faithful to one's meanings than the mode called 'ordinary', I attained there, I believe, to degrees of personal explicitness, and of specificness combined with comprehensiveness of reference, in the verbal delivery of meanings, that poetry closes out. The attractive ingenuity of poetic devices obscures the fact that they serve an eloquence that does not allow expression to exceed, much, the suggestive.

Her later views are, of course, wider in the sense of her maturer knowledge of the function of language (though her earlier views were never, as we have seen, 'narrow' in any sense of the words, but always tending to outstrip her literary concerns right from the beginning); but they are also much deeper, deeper, even, than before, because she is free from poetic considerations. So, for example, in an essay of 1963 that fell under the general heading 'The Sex Factor In Social Progress'¹ that included, in response to a questionnaire, contributions from several authors as well as herself, her view of the man-woman, woman-man relations is basically unchanged, though the account she gives of her view spans wider and deeper reaches of thought. The problem for her was always, not how woman may become the equal of

1 'The Sex Factor In Social Progress', Civiltà Delle Macchine, Anno XI, No. 4, Rome, July-August, 1963, pp.22-25. Reprinted in Chelsea, 16, March, 1965, pp.114-122.

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man, but how woman may bring into the total picture of humanity the neglected other-nature of herself, contribute something new to, not society especially, but humanity. Woman as such is not new, but what woman is, is new, in that woman has been for long left out of the total picture as merely a part, a different and lesser part, of man. Mrs. Jackson saw, sees, woman as abettor to man's purposes, but unwillingly, while remaining herself essentially intact in womanness, in her nature which is other-than-man, which represents the incomplete half of man and, at the same time, is the whole which man puts off. In the terms of Epilogue I (see above, p.120, ff.), mankind, not humanity, is the result of man's subjective nature, restricting his vision to those things in reality which are, or potentially are, a part of his nature, while woman in her objective nature is unrestricted. If woman asserted her right to equality not in social terms, which is merely to gain recognition from men, but as a being, different in identity to man, then there would be real humanity, and a considerable portion of the work to be done would be accomplished, though there be much more to follow. Speaking in Civiltà Delle Macchine of present (1963) society, Mrs. Jackson remarks:

Society, as we have society, is not an all-inclusive pattern of human functioning. It is a pattern conceived and developed by men, a vehicle and instrument of objectives and ambitions arising from out the masculine personality. Women are of it (society as we have it) in the main subordinately and in neuter numericalness despite their increased participation in its processes.

Women are, as it were, honorary members and must observe the rules. Equality, Mrs. Jackson notes, has not "quickened in women any internal development making them more capable of

contributing something new, sizable, constructive, to the total human situation." Society for men is an extension of themselves in which they can reside for part of the time. Men choose to live in it, rather than in themselves and in those matters concerning intellect, morality and spiritual affairs. To men, society is an actual thing (the 'concrete intelligence' which is an end in itself of Contemporaries And Snobs) to which they affiliate themselves and in which they can observe the practical results of their intelligence:

Contemporary civilization is a phase of a continuous experiment in the social organization of human life centered in and conditioned by masculine capabilities of social imagination. This continuum carries self-deadening limits within itself, that cannot be transcended by mere progress in the direction in which it is pointed. Political and economic revolution emanates from masculine mentality and emotionalism, works changes in society as of a membership of men, with, at best, women counted in numerically in a human total thought of as constituting "man": one cannot, by such revolution, get beyond the range of its values. Scientific and technological revolution binds its beneficiaries even more tightly to its value-milieu, which, for all its sophistication of detail, is a domain of primitive interest in the control of material actualities, one in which values of pure power, elementary mastery, rule. The domain has a natural attraction for men as seeming to offer infinite opportunity for the exercise of the intelligence without impingement on questions of general value, on the moral and spiritual intangibles: there seems perfect safety in it for moral and spiritual error -- all achievement in it seems sheer gain.

(Civilità Delle Macchine, pp.24-25)

In society, men would seem to be working for unity, seem to be striving to bring men and women as they exist in society to a perfect stage: civilization wears an imposing look when considered as progress. But:

Spiritually, the society we have is the society of men with women present only in adjunctive relation to them, not the society of men and women in reciprocal relation.

We do not have the society of human beings. For society to be that there will have to be a totally new concept of society, one that is a concept of human relationship in the large. The existing pattern of human relationship called society is pinned to a general concept of the human being as a man -- is a concept of men-to-men relationship. It is no freak of language that the human being is generalized as "man": this corresponds with the conceptual actuality.

(Civiltà Della Macchine, p.23)

All the existing institutionalized areas of thought, whether philosophy, theology or poetry, or any other, are products of the masculine mind, the deep-seated dualism of which has long been recognized (Mrs. Jackson refers to this popular concept as "ingeniously expounded" by Dr. Tillich in America) as occupying at the same time a social and a sexual world. Society is simultaneously a reflection of the male sexual ego and a vehicle by means of which he seeks perfection. Society represents the grosser instincts and the better instincts of the male self, but with the latter playing a subordinate role. Sex is the physical basis from which man worships spiritual things, and is why he refuses to go further than the comfortable limitations of himself; as it is also the basis for his subjective nature, his need to control everything that is not himself. Man's abstract nature is, in fact, a refusal to identify himself with anything, but to make anything and everything a part of himself. Woman, by contrast, is able to identify with anything because of her intrinsic nature (in the words of Anarchism Is Not Enough, a woman has a child, men have children):

Women are unitarian: they are made into divided beings in their functioning in society (as we have society), but suffer this as an injury, do not by their own design dualistically occupy a social world and a sexual world as men do. They are cosmically orientated beings

reduced by the state of men-women relations to a negative spiritual importance. The dualistic, masculine version of human nature to which society is fitted in its functioning and objectives cripples and stultifies them, as a standard of personality that does not refer to them personally.

(Civilità Delle Macchine, p.25)

Mrs. Jackson showed, in Epilogue I, that men view women in a way which is either irreverent or sentimental as they represent something which is different from themselves, either to be sexually 'known' or to be placed at a distance as not affecting them, not acting as an immediate criticism of male action; and she saw women, in the man-woman relation, as containing for men all there is to know and experience if men would only see. But she had already, earlier, seen the unitary nature of women in her essay on sex, 'The Damned Thing,' in Anarchism Is Not Enough (p.205-6):

By man's abstractness of mind is meant his personal anonymity; he is a public creature, only mathematically existent. By woman's concreteness of mind is meant the individuality (man calls it 'reality') he recognizes in her and which he attempts, under cover of love, to steal. Woman wears clothes, man wears a social uniform. Woman is individual-power (brain); man is mass-power (brawn). Therefore man, though individually a negative force, is as a unit a positive force; defeating woman as a unit since the fact that she is individually a positive force makes her collectively a negative force.

And we recall the passage from 'Molly Barleywater' in Experts Are Puzzled (p.21; and see above, p.⁸⁷) about variety and oneness, to which I now add the related paragraphs:

I remember the last conversation I had with you. You said: 'All is variety. And variety at its fullest opposes to itself a oneness which, because it is in opposition to variety, is outside of it. We are endowed with variety. We may attain oneness.' 'And you would add, I suppose,' I suggested, 'that men are in variety, women in oneness.' 'Yes,' she said. 'Variety is the male making, oneness is the female consistency of the making. Oneness is the progressive

suspense that forces the making perpetually to repeat itself, arriving at and recoiling again and again from oneness.'

'There is hostility then between the two?' I asked. 'Oh yes,' she replied, 'co-operative hostility.' 'From your earnestness and high feeling, dear Molly, I should say that you were really talking about love,' I teased. 'Indeed I am,' said Molly good-naturedly. 'For love amounts to the same thing -- partnership and suspense.' 'Tell me about it,' I said. 'Well,' she said, 'suppose love is you and me. We explore each other to the limit of exploration, we employ each other to the limit of employment, we vary each other to the limit of variety. This is partnership. It goes on and on, it is repetition, it keeps reaching a limit, beyond the limit is what? oneness, suspense. You and me becomes we, we becomes I, and I is beyond, it is suspense, oneness.'

And in a little essay-story called 'Sex, Too' (p.24), which follows 'Molly Barleywater', Mrs. Jackson said, "Women are the roundabout point, men are the roundabout way."

We are endowed with man's variety. The primary nature of woman, women, though overlaid with variety of the male making, is the need to bring into accord with the inner what is outer. Women do not need to go out of themselves to what is, but stay at their centre, bringing what is outside to what is inside. Everything, all there is of imaginative venture imposed upon the world, derives its existence, springs from, what is inside; but wandering man has little if any instinct for the unity of this, while woman knows it as a part of her being. The old story of Ulysses adventuring abroad while Penelope waited at home must revert to: 'Penelope remained with herself when Ulysses deserted her.' Women have intimate knowledge of the progressive suspense of oneness. In the historical world, all begins in variety in which and from which men ply themselves, man's nature create with variety. Woman is the principle of oneness in opposition to the variety

of man, as the emergence of being, forming itself slowly into human being, from the inchoate universe of variety, is the principle of oneness which variety opposes to itself.

In Civiltà Delle Macchine (p.25), Mrs. Jackson's later view of the man-woman relation is unchanged in its fundamental thesis, but the speaking now is outright. Where the characteristic quality of 'Molly Barleywater' is a delicious sense of fun accompanying the seriousness of meaning, veiling it a little, the quality of this later time is whole seriousness:

The essence of my view of the human situation in regard to women (that is, men and women) is that the content of the human reality (by which I mean that interrelated being which human beings have in having human nature) is of cosmic dimensions, and that only when seen in its cosmic frame -- the cosmic frame as against the frame we call "society" -- can it be comprehended and talked about as a whole. The actual relations of men and women are seeable in the cosmic setting as survivals of a play of opposite forces as old as primordial creation in beings whom the forces of universal unity claim for their own. In this setting, human beings as women show themselves to have the part of guardianship of the human reality against the divisive dispositions that prepossess human beings as men, the instinctive antagonism to the cosmic unities -- and, indeed, to the human reality itself.

The reach and feel of this is greater than that of 'Molly Barleywater' or that of the Epilogue essays. Here, one feels, there is nothing standing between herself and what she is saying. This an immediate telling without deviation from what is known to be there, and wherever the eye looks it meets confirmation. One cannot (a lesson to be learned early) categorize by subsumption the essential nature of this thought by placing it under the headings of various humane studies such as logic, philosophy, humanism, metaphysics: the quality of Mrs. Jackson's thought lies outside the boundary-

limits of categorization. It is natural that her thought should share common properties with specific categories of thinking -- it would be strange if it didn't, indeed. What Mrs. Jackson speaks of is of ancient heritage, scattered and stranded everywhere amidst historied thought. Hence, critics of her, past and present, range in their characterisations of her work across philosophical, metaphysical, mystical, humanistic, and, in carelessness or ignorance, 'abstract', 'difficult' and 'obscure' categorisations. The nub of this, whether well- or ill-intentioned, is to reduce her work to less bewildering proportions in which the reader may feel safe to venture at will without straining the will to venture outside self. Mrs. Jackson's work is bound to coincide with that of others where the focus of attention falls upon this -- the -- subject: such coincidences indicate the strength of her sanity, while the strength of her work is indicated by its uncategorisable (except on her own terms) difference. Mrs. Jackson's work, and Mrs. Jackson in her work, is devoted to the realisation and expression of whole reality as it is rooted in human being, and further than that, even, being itself, of which human being is a manifestation. One may not call this a category, nor reassemble it beneath a categorical heading, since the mind which makes categories cannot itself fall into one. This is why, in the words of A Survey Of Modernist Poetry, a poem may be anything its author chooses, even contradictory, since each poem presents a new category of thought. In a poem called 'All Things' in Collected Poems (p.159) she puts it this way:

All things that wake enjoy the sun --
All things but one --

All things except the sun --
The sun because the sun.

And in The Telling (p.32) she is to put it another way:

I do not bar the way with Incontrovertibles; there is room in what I say for going onward -- whether it be taken to mind or not. And I split Incontrovertibles barring the way, to make onward passages in them -- admitting no necessity of turning aside.

Chapter 2

The Telling

The Telling first appeared in the magazine Chelsea in May, 1967 (issue 20/21), and was republished by The Athlone Press (London) in 1972, with the additional inclusion of two specially written sections. A year later it was published in America (New York) by Harper and Row. The Telling proper consists of sixty-two numbered passages, each thematically linked, and is preceded by, first, a 'Nonce Preface' in which, "for congeniality's sake", Mrs. Jackson explains to readers of Chelsea her appearance in a magazine that, for that particular issue, was devoted to the consideration of science; and, second, a brief 'Outline' of the reason that brought The Telling into existence and in which it dwells. 'Outline' is accorded separate chapter-status on the contents-page, and I give it here in full:

Life of the human kind has been lived preponderately so far according to the needs of the self as felt to be the possession of itself. This self-claiming self is a human-faced creature, existing in the multiple form of a loose number reckonable only as 'the human aggregate.' The needs of this self issue from a diffuse greed, which is imparted from one to the other in garrulous sociality.

There is an alternative self, a human-souled being, a self conscious of ourselves who bear in manifold individualness, each single, the burden of the single sense of the manifold totality. This self is implicated in the totality as a speaking self of it, owing it words that will put the seal of the Whole upon it. On what we each may thus say depends the happiness of the Whole, and our own (every happiness of other making being destined to disappear into the shades of the predetermined nothingness of the self-claiming self, which encircle it).

All Mrs. Jackson's work, but The Telling in particular, is devoted to the giving of expression to the second 'human-souled' self; and to the first 'self-claiming self', whose needs are social, as she could bestow final values of thought upon its manifestations in social life, and did, overtly, in Epilogue. Clearly, one can again see the line of continuation from early to later thought, her recognition of human entailment in mankind as socially real, and her knowledge of humankind as personally real, each and individually, with each self as one in a totality of selves as oneness. Between the self-claiming self and the human-souled being her poems reached a division and could not cross until poetry was left behind. And, as in her poems, her earlier prose leans forward, stretching to reach final reality of thought, whether by the direct means of critical writing, or, in her stories, by identification of herself with it, placing herself in it with the fabled 'Miss Banquett' or, movingly, in 'A Crown For Hans Andersen', or else, in a matching identification of the two modes, in the novels I have been barely able to touch upon, Lives Of Wives and A Trojan Ending. In all these writings the author may be observed as moving ahead of known self to what may only be described as unknown-but-knowable -- but not totally realised, not totally made actual in thought, with word and thought identical and sustained. The fault was poetry and her belief in poetry as capable of fulfilling its promise of being the best there is in achieving whole reality of thought and word, for poetry was the standard for all her work, and she could go no further than it.

But, although there is continuation, it would be wrong now to return to her earlier characterization of the two selves, as, say, in Anarchism Is Not Enough, where the 'self-claiming self' is seen as the individual and collective-real self, and the 'human-souled being' is seen as the unreal self. There, in the case of the individual-real and collective-real self, Mrs. Jackson defined their functioning, but the unreal self she could only define as a poetic functioning. She pointed to the fact of the unreal self, as she for long pointed to it in her poetry, but her attempts to describe what she saw were circumscribed by the limitations of poetry's physical falling back upon itself, so that her meanings, despite the word 'unreal', were of physical expression. So, in 'Jocasta', she was able to say, for example:

The material with which an author works is not reality but what he is able to disentangle from reality: in other words I think the identity is rather of purity and unreality. An author must first of all have a sure apprehension of what is self in him, what is new, fresh, not history, synthesis, reality. In every person there is the possibility of a small, pure, new unreal portion which is...self.

(Anarchism Is Not Enough, p.96)

The reach of this seems far, in the newness of what she is saying, and speaking comparatively, it is far, but it is only a stone's throw in the light of her later work. She cannot escape, here, from, for example, the term 'portion', where self is an 'unreal portion.' 'Unreal', to a certain extent, cancels out the physicality of 'portion', but 'portion' still suggests something to be felt, something rather solid, and about which one may have a 'sure apprehension.' The word 'fresh' has a similar physical force. Mrs. Jackson

was speaking there of what she knew to be in herself, but she had to speak of it ~~in~~ terms of poetic metaphor. This was not wrong, but she could get no further than the immediate self. Whatever she said of the 'human-souled self' which she apprehended, and however far she pushed what she said forward, her words, snared in the loop of poetry, could not become disentangled from the immediate self. What lacked was the range of speaking and the natural intimacy of speaking. If, in a poem, for example, she spoke the word 'soul', it was an ambivalent soul: on the one hand she spoke as she knew of it, and on the other she spoke within the poetic tradition of soul as something (and this is poetry's contradiction) to be known of but not to be entered into. Soul, in poetry, is a known sentiment, an evocation, only, not an actuality, however it may be uttered from the depths of being.

The range of speaking in The Telling, ^{as} in Civilita
Delle Macchine, is of cosmic dimension. It is at once wholly familiar and, in that it steps upon new speaking-ground, strange, until the reader becomes more accustomed to the environment. It comes with no authority borrowed from fields of human studying other than what it is to be in being human: the source of Mrs. Jackson's book is her being. In passage 30, just prior to her speaking of 'Incontrovertibles' (see above, p.282), she says:

Indeed, I do not address myself to this speaking-task as one taking a next place in the procession of advisers on what-to-believe, or how-to-think, which unendingly girds in our mental ranges. And I know none before me who labor at our story seeking to be moved by no other inspiration than that which moves them to be: with all before me, as they appear in comparison, some task-master doctrine, garbed in sublimity of wearing sagacity's uniform, intervenes by their own evocation bet-

ween them and their being, so that they speak without free access to that of which they tell. Many such lordships stand athwart our speaking-paths, turning the spirit-flow from self to mind and mind to mouth out of its natural courses; and truth is thus ever at a new remove, though each turn of the way is given the name of it.

(The Telling, p.31-32)

With no other inspiration than that which moves her to be, The Telling neither waits for nor points to this or that category of knowledge as lending authority. It is of interest that, under the same classification system in different libraries, it may be located under philosophy or humanism or poetry or literature, but really it requires its own shelf with, at most, 'Be' as the inscription above. There is only one subject:

III There is something to be told about us for the telling of which we all wait. In our unwilling ignorance we hurry to listen to stories of old human life, new human life, fancied human life, avid of something to while away the time of unanswered curiosity. We know we are explainable, and not explained. Many of the lesser things concerning us have been told, but the greater things have not been told; and nothing can fill their place. Whatever we learn of what is not ourselves, but ours to know, being of our universal world, will likewise leave the emptiness an emptiness. Until the missing story of ourselves is told, nothing besides told can suffice us: we shall go on quietly craving it.

(The Telling, p.9)

The greater things of which Mrs. Jackson speaks have been commonly witnessed and recorded as recurring human phenomena of experience throughout human history, especially in branches of knowledge such as theology, poetry and philosophy, that make it their own concern. Within the ambience of greater things have coiled the storyings of religion, poetry, philosophy, even science, and all subjects which pay homage to the possibility of human perfection and yet remain at a distance from

it. This subject of greater things, and the relation to it held by the specialised areas of thought raised in acknowledgement of it, is The Telling's theme. It both traces the course of the subject as it has appeared in history to others, as well as how it appears now, today, and it tells of the subject as the author finds it in her being, and as she is able to speak of it to her best, as she puts it, 'out-speaking'.

Whatever position the individual holds to, the point at which The Telling begins, that there is yet something to be told about us "for the telling of which we all wait," cannot be denied. But in Mrs. Jackson's thought, only "the explanation of ourselves can be the explanation of such mysteries." Those who believe in one of the customary stories, "so long treasured as true," "wait for untold truth to emerge":

I41 Everywhere can be seen a waiting for words that phrase the primary sense of human-being, and with a human finality, so that the words themselves are witness to what they tell. The waiting can be seen not only in the eager inclined posture of believers. It can be seen also on the faces of disbelievers, the idolizers of the evident: they are not happy in their impatient assurance of there being no cause but uncaused circumstance, they wear the pinched look of people whose convictions make them a meagre fare. In the eyes of all (in the opaque depths in them of unacknowledged presentness to one another) are mirrored (but scarcely discerned) concourses where our souls ever secretly assemble, in expectation of events of common understanding that continually fail to occur. We wait, all, for a story of us that shall reach to where we are. We listen for our own speaking; and we hear much that seems our speaking, yet makes us strange to ourselves.

(The Telling, p.10)

In one way or another, all are waiting. Perhaps the waiting is for things which seem different: some wait for absolute

power, some for absolute clarity of thought, some for absolute knowledge, some for absolute material benefit -- the ways of waiting are many. There is no proof: Mrs. Jackson is neither trying to prove nor disprove, only to tell of what she finds, has found, both in herself and in what she sees around her. The words themselves, though they are not written with an eye to persuasion, fall, with quiet emphaticness upon the page and upon the reading-ear, and that one accepts them or not makes no difference. "Though I fail here," she says, a little later (passage 32),

I cannot utterly fail. In what I say, there is no authority to defy, refute, destroy: it is itself only. It is a start. If it fails, it will still be a start. (Not a false start: the false starts -- and I have made some -- look too eagerly ahead... and soon, then, behind, it is as if nothing had happened, no start had been made. The start I make here stays with itself... and I, with it.)

(The Telling, p.34)

The question of whether what Mrs. Jackson says is true or not is not, I think, critically resolvable. One cannot apply canons of poetic taste, nor those of philosophy or theology (as much subject to 'taste' as poetry). She is not speaking from defined areas of thought, though what she says is still open to the test of reason. In the 'Nonce Preface' to The Telling, in which she speaks of science and its critical no-nonsense stance towards that which does not yield itself to scientific proof, she says that, in whatever way The Telling is read, "it should be thought of as having been checked, not only directly for several, but indirectly for over sixty-five, years, for nonsense." (p.4) We have an advantage here, at least, in that, however many the gaps or

misunderstandings, we have a working-knowledge of the main drift of those sixty-five¹ years and are better able to see, in the backward look, how and why Mrs. Jackson came to the writing of The Telling. To know something of the work that precedes it enable us to arrive more quickly at an understanding of much of The Telling's reflections upon institutional approaches to the subject. So, for example, she speaks of history and poetry in passage 6:

The weakness of history is that it begins late and ends early. It has neither old nor new to tell, but all is diminished in it to make the brief time of our learning that we are 'human' (without yet leaning what it is to be that) seem half of eternity. Poetry leaves us otherwise lacking. The future-facing truth-telling that it promises our ears and imaginations never breaks forth from the tellers: the telling travels round and round the tellers in standstill coils, a bemusement in which tellers and listeners are lost. Teller, listener, story, become in poetry one bemusement, in which present and future seem to commingle, and the desire to tell truth and the need to hear it shrink from the touch of fulfilment in lazy unison. Poetry's numbered wording abbreviates truth to the measure of mortal premonition, which has but a midnight's reach. Poetry is a sleepmaker for that which sits up late in us listening for the footfall of the future on to-day's doorstep.

(The Telling, p.11)

Evident again is the scope of Mrs. Jackson's thought. History does not go back far enough to speak of origins; and does not come forward far enough, into a present time of being and a living in truth, to make what it says of ultimate value. It is content to deduce from factual evidence but does not venture further, contenting itself with interpreting the past according to the needs of the (almost) present. In its minutely particular and exhaustive search, history makes the brief time of humanity seem longer than it is, and speculates on the time before humanity only as it is a

place of emergence (and science takes the story further back to the primitive matter of emergence) of human beings, but does not concern itself with what is yet further back. As for philosophy:

I7I Philosophy stops time, telling its story as if from eternity. But the voice of a philosopher is always the voice of a time. A philosophy is always meant to embrace the whole of what is to tell of the being of things and beings; but the philosopher's whole is always a mortal enlargement of a mortal part. Philosophers are concerned with speaking truth for their own minds' satisfaction, first; and therefore they are both seekers of knowledge and barriers to knowledge, to themselves, learning enough to soothe the pains of ignorance but not to overcome ignorance. The more generous they are with their wisdom, the wiser they will prove to be. But their wisest words, though we preserve them, do not live: such are not the words waited for.

(The Telling, p.12)

The basis of her view of philosophy has not altered significantly from her and Alan Hodge's view in Epilogue II, where they spoke of it as "concerned less with its given material than with the human attitude, and in particular the contemporary human attitude," and that it is the "contemporary desire for intellectual ease" ('Philosophy And Poetry', p.149), though here, the words are quickened into "a mortal enlargement of a mortal part," not set in a social context, as in Epilogue, but in the limitless context of being. The important emphasis is upon philosophy as not living, not attempting to make live, the possibility of truth it sees. Its focus is truth, but not truth's actuality, whereas The Telling is written from within the actuality, having at its forefront always the possibility and, I think, inevitability, for others of truth as living fact.

Although The Telling, in some places with definite outline, and elsewhere in thematically broad sweep, is foreshadowed by the earlier work, what is evident on every page is the struggled-for freedom to speak with the natural rise and fall of spoken word. Her views on philosophy or religion may not seem substantially altered (though her view of poetry, of course, is), but they contain, now, a breathing urgency as she makes way for what she has to tell in the crucial centre of her book. So she pauses to look at philosophy or religion, gauging the distance between what she does and what they do, and then will fall a passage intimating something of what she yet has to tell and preparing the way for herself and for the reader, as in passage 11:

We have come into full possession of the human inheritance. We have ourselves all in view and all within hearing; and to see ourselves false, and give and take false reports of the intelligence of ourselves sounding in our being, is only less than perversity and perjury by minims of honest slowness to see and know and tell aright while eyes and tongues and ears and minds, still, by custom, are apt in seeing, saying, hearing, thinking, awrong. We have a time-that-does-not-count of grace in which to cease our self-belying. We shall make our extremes confront each other, our unacceptance of the untrue and our acceptance of the false-true, and compel ourselves to stand with one or the other. The choice is a foremade one, is in our words -- in words: they admit no truth but truth. But ours is the saying; and we have not yet said. Our truth waits for us as we wait for it. The time of grace has fined down into a seeming infinitude of less-and-less-time for the waiting. I think the change from this suspense of waiting-and-not-waiting will have come before it is perceived. Truth rings no bells. When we have corrected ourselves with ourselves, joined that of us which sustained us in false notions of our truth to that of us which sustained us in our waiting for our truth itself, we shall have the force of truth in us, and immediately begin to speak true. Later, we shall know that we have begun to speak true by an increased hunger for true-speaking; we shall have the whole hunger only after we have given ourselves the first taste of it.

That the world has come to an end -- not spectacularly, not with a bang, and not even with a whimper -- she explained in Epilogue and throughout her poems. She meant it then, and she means it now. But now there is in addition the moral seriousness of "perversity and perjury," the pressing concern that we "at least somewhat know that we have delayed almost too long." There is a choice to be made, either to continue in dismay at unfulfilment, or to continue to accept the 'false-true', but neither by itself will do. The words wait, and we must fit ourselves to the words and the words to ourselves. Until we can speak of our condition as beings with words which tell the whole of being, final truth's real possibility stays at a distance. Nothing less than all the words will suffice, else "we shall go on quietly craving" the missing story of ourselves. Other stories, parts of stories, in the religions, whether of Occidental or Oriental origin, or philosophy, or poetry, cannot be enough - none can go further than itself. The missing story is the human story of being, so long put off, now no longer to be put off, and the telling of it gives truth in truth of word:

1561 If you find something to tell, tell it to your truest, though that make little to tell; the truer you speak, the more you will know to tell. If your words have the intonations of religious self-persuasion to your ears, be not uneasy, either that you presume, or that you belie your rational sobriety. We have all in us something of the voice of the religions. It is the voice of our Fathers, in their part-commanding, part-beseeking, themselves, men, to find enough Good in themselves for their good: there is a certain carnal panting in the sound of it. We shall all come to speak with the pure human tone as we the more speak the story of ourselves and the story of Being as one story -- as we the more have One Truth to tell.

(The Telling, p.51)

This passage falls towards the end of The Telling, but it seems appropriate to record it here as The Telling moves into what may at first appear strange.

Passage 18 begins to prepare the way for the word 'spirit' and then 'soul', and following these, an entrance is made for speaking on matters which take her back to origins and what, even, is before origins -- the 'Before.' To speak of the spirit is not easy, Mrs. Jackson acknowledges:

The very word is hardly ours, ours in the natural instant intimacy of words and their speakers (an intimacy of speaking!) ... we are both vain of the word, and suspicious of its meanings of purer virtue, unwilling to engage ourselves mistakenly to be virtuous to a foolish extreme. But there is no possibility of mistake with virtue, no too-much of it. The spirit creates virtue out of that which it moves and, moving, makes become spirit. But virtue is only the step of transformation into spirit before the transformed is spirit; when the transformed and the transforming are indistinguishable, thought and talk of virtue are irrelevant -- virtue goes no further than short of spirit-fullness. In the word 'spirit' there is no moral tyranny, though it has old favor among us as a moral preen-word. It is the most active word we yet have among the words that report ceaseless being to our being (the word that is of all words, yes, the most quick with meaning!) It is worn meaning-thin from bold use, timid use, division between contexts of evil and contexts of goodness; but we must save it from ourselves for ourselves. For we have little enough with which to speak of life-in-the-great, which we know so far only as an immense shadow of life-in-the-small. When we speak of the spirit, and as of a reality, we speak better than we know. And, if we did not speak of it, lacking the word, our minds would tease our tongues till we did.

(The Telling, pp.22-3)

The meaning of 'spirit' is carefully established and then detached from contexts which, though familiar, blur understanding of it. Virtue, of which there cannot be too much, comes before spirit but cannot be spirit since virtue is the response to spirit, is of spirit's making. It is spirit

which finds spirit, not virtue, though virtue be antecedent to it. 'Spirit' is a word which locates in the mind awareness of there being something within ourselves and something beyond ourselves which is the same. To deny spirit is to deny the name given to that which minds, hearts and senses tell exists, and where it is denied something else is sought to take its place -- we cannot live without the spirit of the word. Everywhere it is denied is to be seen the struggle of saying it without the saying of the word. When spirit is spoken as reality, as the only word possible for that which is known to be, though not yet known, then we begin to know.

Mrs. Jackson, in isolating the meaning of spirit, gives meaning back to it -- the meaning which it, spirit, has never lost, but which, in our refusing to accord it full meaning, has been as good as lost. By facing the word, as of a reality-with-meaning inhering in the word, she defines the word-meaning-reality and, simultaneously, cleanses it of mis -use, so that the word is restored to the speaker and to its primary meaning-function. This, in passage 19, leads her to consider the word 'soul':

If we do not call our great matters 'our affairs of the spirit' we may say 'our affairs of the soul.' But spirit and soul are of different speech-vantages. With 'soul' we look to the self-awareness, the self-possessedness, that fills (must fill) being at the utmost degree of itself (else it would, at its utmost degree, resolve into everlasting death); the soul is being imbued with the instinct of everlasting life, and the grace of self to consummate it. With 'spirit' we look to that single largeness which being has in its multipleness, that sameness which all that it is has because it is, and to the coursing between near-and-narrow and far-and-wide of all-being through itself for which 'nature' is too petty a term (even!) and 'love' (even!) too ineloquent, self-bound, a word. Or, spirit and soul can be thought of as base and apex

of the living form of being, and our affairs of the soul as the culmination of our affairs of the spirit -- from which they arise ... In soul, the forces of being unite; in spirit, they spread.

(The Telling, pp.23-4)

Later, the word 'being' is capitalized as 'Being' in order to distinguish the two. Where it is 'being' it signifies 'Being' in its multiple forms, as in human beings generally. Everything that is has 'being', though in varying degrees, none other than human being able at this time to realise itself, conscious that there is being to fulfil. Humans look to the self-possessedness that fills being "at the utmost degree of itself." Mrs. Jackson greatly advances here on what she has referred to as ultimate reality, final reality, the vivid reality of thought.

Unless humans look to this self-possessedness that fills being there is nothing but everlasting death -- no way to live. It is by looking forward to this that human beings are human beings, that any conscious being is conscious being; and if humans, as the only fully conscious beings, fail, then nothing looks forward to it. And, until they know being in the full, they will pine for it. To know spirit is to begin. The only other word one could say is 'God' (passage 20), but "with 'god' we say only 'God', a name that covers over our ignorance of the way and the why of the spirit, and where and how it dwells." 'God' is the name of that which is unknown, as spirit is, but God is outside, as an agency having being in care, not ours to know but ours to believe in at a distance. To be at one with God is different from being one. Belief in spirit is not the same as knowledge of spirit, and belief

in God is to skirt the problem:

I21I We say, in part-knowledge, that the spirit is within us. But how within? Not as if the lodger, and we the vessel, but as the whole, which cannot be outside the part. How can the part know in the whole the spirit within? This is not a religious riddle to guess, or a philosophical problem to ponder, or a logical exercise to dally with, but a question to which the human self must find a livable answer, one justifying the self-exceeding meaning of 'human'. To know the spirit within in the whole we must learn what we are in the whole, and be according to that, so that we know it in ourselves. And, as this knowledge-experience seems to me, while I study my human-mind's powers and wonder at those that lie at old rest amidst its advancing busyness, memory is the key: if, first, we remember what we in the whole were before selves were, then we shall have a First Knowledge upon which to found a later sureness, a recognition in ourselves of the spirit within as an indivisibility of ourselves. I propound that we have powers of utter recall hardly used, capable of yielding us the rudiments of spiritual knowledge -- without which all we know dwindles perpetually to less-than-enough for truth's need.

I22I In every human being there is secreted a memory of a before-oneself; and, if one opens the memory, and the mind is enlarged with it, one knows a time which might be now, by one's feelings of being somehow of it. In describing the memory, I refer to what I find in me that belongs to me not in my simple present personhood but in my intricate personless identity with all that has preceded me to the farthest, timeless reach of not-me. A like identity has each of us, reclaimable by the mind in memory-form: I think I do not present a private fancy, with this declared more-than-ancient thing of memory, rather a common potentiality of imagining back to the all-antecedent reality. I believe there to be a vestige of the Before in our Now that each bears as an individual mark, but that is, yet, the same mark, the same memory.

(The Telling, pp.24-5)

One might think of numerous instances of recorded moments of this vestigial memory, caught in the very phrases of language as 'a sense of timelessness' or 'the world stood still.' Or one might look to it in poetry where, particularly in Mrs. Jackson's poetry, it is pressed upon to yield its reality. One might see it, also, as recorded in 'the being at one with

God' of religion. But such instances are experiences, are valued as experiences, and belong to the self -- the self-claiming self. They are striven after and remembered, not for what they contain of rational being, but for their body-mind ecstasy of experience (belabouring of the body often precedes such experience, not belabouring of the mind). Mrs. Jackson may be thinking of such experiences, but they hold value only as they are knowledge, only as they can be known sustainedly with the mind's reasoning powers, so that the journey there is neither one for experience, nor arrived at by accident (luck), but one of conscious intention to go yet further and stay. This is not to be confused with Freudian memory which, she says, in passage 23, traces a memory-line "from Present Confusion to an elemental Bodily Past." Freudian analysis is "psychically only body-deep!" It opposes "to the failures of spiritual analysis a physiology of thought termed 'psychic'", but its "honesty is a purposeful poverty in spiritual imagination":

I point to a memory that goes back beyond one's physical ancestors, and beyond the entire material ancestry of our bodies. Failure to capture it is but failure to pursue it with sufficient innocence: we need our purest curiosity for this remembering-enterprise.

(The Telling, pp.25-6)

The memory-line which Mrs. Jackson traces goes back before history, before the world was, before anything material existed:

I24I But, if by full memory-reach to the Before we attain a First Knowledge, this and our later knowledge will match and correct and confirm each other. Even, there is a simultaneity between new seeing of ourselves in the immediate and seeing back through ourselves to

old being. In our various-being, one-being mounts to emergence from the ordeal of Difference called 'the universe'; and this now begins to be visible to us, though but faintly. And, as a One of ourselves counters, in tremulous appearance, the ubiquitous one and one of ourselves, and the vision ghost-like bars the individual thought-way of each, our minds hark back, or will hark back, to the sheer one-being in which by our bodies measure we were as not but in which by our minds' measure we have, or shall have, mirror presence. We see, or shall see, in all-familiar One-image -- our Before! And, returning from the memory, our minds are nearly our mind; and the One of ourselves we nearly know better than ourselves ... Thus we become able to speak to one another as tellers of a living story, of the truth of which we are one another's surety. Such is the human fortune, readable in our very failures. We live a story that will not end if we begin it well. Other embodied being, besides the human, draws down upon itself an abbreviated fate; its fortune's span is a death's throw from its beginning, a reluctant life-experiment. We, human, are life, an enthusiasm, being's own love-of-being outlasting Failure -- an interminable faith in itself of the One-And-All.

(The Telling, pp.26-7)

The First Knowledge is the memory of ourselves as "we in the whole were before selves were." It is not the memory, the full memory, of Being, but the memory of ourselves before selfhood as we were in the whole when Being was all. Mrs. Jackson is not, in other words, propounding that we first remember pure Being, but ourselves as being, beings, in Being, as being began to emerge from Being, and that, in attaining this First Knowledge, we can know spirit "within in the whole" as the "indivisibility of ourselves." Then we have made the step to Being. By First Knowledge will be seen "a One of ourselves" which will counter each individual "thought-way", each separate and alone, and bring before us the One-image. Instead of each being separate, all will, by the measure of the mind, remember one-being, and will have, through mind (reason, rational thought) a mirror presence,

the Before.

Mrs Jackson is at pains to dispel any sense of mystery that her words might inspire and to stress the consciousness of that of which she speaks, that this is not something in which to place the keeping of selves, but something to know and to tell of. If it could not be told, it could not bring consciousness to its final state and the mind would remain incomplete, looking for final consciousness. The need for full consciousness in knowing ourselves utterly cannot be put off much longer. As she said in her correspondence on reality, this is the time of all dangers and all securities (Epilogue III, p.108). And yet, to speak upon this subject without, to others, the appearance of mystery or mystical experience is an extraordinarily arduous task. Some have tried to speak from within the confines of philosophy, and some have called upon science to give to their thought a veracity of word, while many others have spoken from the centre of the various religions (Mrs. Jackson makes reference to Plotinus, Teilhard de Chardin and others in the additional sections of The Telling, pointing to differences between her work and their work). Mrs. Jackson's authority to speak does not rest upon philosophy, science or religion but upon herself as human, as one among many, both as self and human-souled, and upon words and language as they express the reality of being, human being, and Being; and what she says is not a futuristic proposition, not a description of what might be, nor even a prescription for what must be, as though offering a palliative, but a telling from within, from the core of what it is to be human being, beings (not

just 'human', not just 'being', 'beings') and to fulfil that. Nothing less will do. Because she is broaching the subject, the whole story of human being, without leaning upon or borrowing from the cautiously worded thoughts that have so far constituted other approaches to the subject, her authority to speak must indeed seem, to many, to be as no authority at all. But Mrs. Jackson is not speaking to or of 'many', but all -- all being which is possessed of language and which has in its keeping the being of other forms of life which have no language, and all being as it has a debt to pay to Being. Her position is not and could not be that of a specialist authority. "When I abandoned the poet-position, I took up place in the lay-position," she says in 'Preface For A Second Reading' (p.67). Her words may appear to be difficult in their close compactedness of meanings, and her subject may also appear a difficult one, but the difficulty is in neither her nor her (our) subject, but in the opacity of thought and word which has covered the subject, refused, denied, postponed it. How to tell of this side of human being (the other side, in which our physical natures are entailed, having already been told) without mystery, without the appearance of mysticism, is one of the problems The Telling faces:

I27I Now I shall try to thin away the mystery-semblance that the notion of a memory of a time before bodily, and even material, existence, must wear, till we meet the memory in us. How can such a memory be in us? Are not all memories stored in the body? How could the body hold this memory, which is a memory of the soul-being that being all-was before physicality was engendered? The steps of my thought are these. That first was a division within the soul of being making never a mark, the parts inwardly self-same, not numberable, countable; more, this was, a doubleness

of fullness, than a division -- the parts not moving apart, only repeating each the whole soul's One in perfect simultaneous response to the other. Then, division became overt. How could this be! A flaw in Being? Yes, I think: ... the flaw that it had not been tried in any test of it! ... no other. Even perfection has need of proof -- bears within it a need to prove itself to itself; all dangers must be run for the perfect to be ever perfect. And, of all dangers those of contrariety -- that Being could in ways go counter to itself -- lead: these are the universal testers, all other dangers are but their mimics (sometimes senselessly, sometimes evilly, so.) My thought has first in view, then, a division within the soul of being like One with One identical, where One is all. Next, the division becomes overt, individuation mounts: exposed, now, the dangers of contrariety. And Being was as lost from itself in a dispersion of itself in existences, that ensued; and physical time, and the material condition, were born; and an end was made of utter soul-being. The memory we have in us of a time before physical time is the memory of this end: our memory of utter soul-being, possessed through the body's witness to what-has-occurred, is a memory of its ceasing. First we remember the Soul that was once utterly All as that which now utterly is-not. (Haunting our knowledge, it points out to us our souls). We first discover soul-being in the memory of the beginnings of bodily being, in which it ceased. (But it would form again, changed!) So goes my thought. That the subject of the creation should be so treated, without leave from the theologies or sciences or philosophies, and bereft of the benefit of narrative symbolism and the decoration of known names, and the protection of a Name of names, may seem a rash simplicity to you who read here. However, I am not endeavouring to excite belief, or regale the reading imagination, only to tell what I find to see where my thought takes me.

(The Telling, pp.29-30)

This is the longest passage in The Telling, except for the very last, and, but for the "I think," it barely pauses in its account of the creation. To know the meaning of being, Being is not, I think, either difficult or impossible within and without the provisions made for it in The Telling. Certainly, we cannot fail to know 'being' as human beings, and where there is failure in following Mrs. Jackson's vision of 'Being', it is still possible, in the imagination, the senses, the mind the heart, in the very words of thought, to know

of it, if not know it. 'Being' may not be a something which can be grasped at any moment, but, I suggest, it is known of, within the mind, as something which occurs at haphazardly rare moments, and by chance. It is something which the mind recognizes and, if not forgets, puts to one side as fortuitous unworded experience, somewhat freakish, but, as a common enough experience, I venture, always valued as being at the core of experience, provoking mind to action, but the mind never going 'there', always circling before 'there', drawn to 'there' -- sent 'there', even -- but not staying.

The crucial centre of the passage, that there was a "flaw in Being" which was perfection's test of itself, that Being "could in ways go counter to itself," and that these leading "dangers" of contrariety are the "universal testers" -- we are in the very centre of the mystery of beginnings here, a mystery which, as The Telling insists, cannot be allowed to remain a mystery, -- the mystery to which everyone bends. Mrs. Jackson is telling of what she finds in her being to 'explain' (a more adequate word than 'explain', other than 'tell', is wanting in language, hence 'the telling') the beginning of beings, being. Her ground of speaking is not new. In 'The Corpus', in Anarchism Is Not Enough (p.27, see above p. 55 and elsewhere), she had gone some way into giving an account of origins; there she had begun with 'chaos' ("The first condition was chaos. The logical consequence of chaos was order...") But in this passage of The Telling she is penetrating much further. For "the perfect to be ever perfect, all dangers must be run, and of all dangers, those of contrariety lead: these are the

universal testers and all other dangers are their mimics..." All things are tested, if only by the processes of decay. Human beings themselves are tested every minute, second, of their lives by the surrounding realities, by all that presses upon them to take away themselves from themselves in their looking towards the perfection of selves. The whole of the evolutionary struggle is itself a testing. One grasps the sense of what she is saying, the backward look confirmed by the present look. Such tests of itself as evolution are nature's mimicry of the universal testers; but behind mimicry, behind evolution, far beyond physical creation, exists a primordial struggle out of which all else was born, and the birth is the "body's witness" to perfect being's ceasing: "We first discover soul-being in the memory of the beginnings of bodily being, in which it ceased."

Here is an account of creation "without leave from the theologies or sciences or philosophies." It is, at the very least, as valid an account of origin as the biblical narration, scientific theory, or the various philosophical theories. Indeed, it sheds light on how the Bible's story of origins came into being, and why it has exerted such a powerful persuasion upon those who seek origins. In the biblical account, the eyes are inward-looking but then move outwards, to stay there and take what is inner to the outer. In philosophy there is more outer, with eyes straying further and further from inner, losing contact with that, though often deeply aware of the loss (Descartes knew the loss; Locke, with tabulae rasae, embraced outer.) Science looks at outer, in its crudest physical manifestation, seeking in

the smallest particle of life what is in the greatest, often with a strong faith in the mystery of origins. This is why the horrors and beauties of the truths of science exist side by side, separately, in the same continuum: the distinction between what is good and what is bad is not made in science. Science observes, it does not understand. It waits for things to tell it what it is (see passage 9), and refuses to see any difference between things and human beings, so that it treats human beings as things. Science disbelieves the evidence invested in its own practitioners: that they, human, in their difference from things, are the givers of "known names", and that the giving of names is directed by the internal impulse towards unity which things do not have except briefly. For science, the universe with human beings as a part is infinite; for human beings, the universe as it is themselves is moving towards a final wholeness -- the finality of Being. Mrs. Jackson tells of being, Being, from what she knows to be there, as the universe itself is there, as littleness of muchness, and her regard of the outer is to match and confirm the inner, confusion falling away as inner is seen to be more and more true, more and more truth. She looked to this in an early poem called 'One Self' (Collected Poems, p.71):

One self, one manyness,
Is first confusion, then simplicity.
Smile, death, O simultaneous mouth.
Cease, inner and outer,
Continuous flight and overtaking.

This is one of the things she learned as a poet, and is everywhere evident in her work, though with the limitations poetry imposes, while in The Telling there are no limitations

of an artificial nature.

Passage 28 extends the account of creation from before-physicality to after-physicality:

I28I Yes, I think we remember our creation! -- have the memory of it in us to know. Through the memory of it we apprehend that there was a Before-time of being from which being passed into what would be us. And the Soul was gone, that had been the entire Form of Life, become transmuted into formless spirit. But, spirit working where matter spread in Soul's place, and farther, into emptiness, dispersed being was contained in a saving possibility of souls -- souls to fill Soul's absence with a new One-being, risen up out of plurality: ... each soul shining the Form of Life on the other. (No, a promise of this. All that is to be, however, is mere possibility until it is.) For long and long there were no souls; there lived only bodies that were types of diversity, combinations of aspects of diversity exemplifying, more than unity, variety, of being. Souls there were not until there were bodies in which, each, diversity's extremes were brought into a union; ... another and another and another, to that rounding-in and exhaustion of diversity which is human. Thus from physicality emerge persons -- ourselves.

(The Telling, p.30)

This is the outer, physical record of dispersed being which the original flaw of Being caused. There ensues, after All-Being's dispersion in contrariety, matter, in which spirit spreads as the base of living form, eventually ^{to} _^arise to the apex of soul -- spirit as formless, leading to souls. But there were no souls until the diversity of physicality -- all things, whether 'alive' or 'dead' -- in its extreme forms, found union in the human form as the final point of emergence. Then spirit could seek, intimate, soul:

I29I We are physicality's ultimate response to spirit's working, we answer spirit's beseeching with spirit, we deliver up to spirit in the shape of ourselves the spirit within: thus is it possible for it not eternally to die in and with its works, and have all to try and do again eternally, as from the beginning of numbered being. Such is the work of souls; and spirit finds its repose in them, and the Soul that was once Entirety

is revealed in them as the single principle of each. But there are no souls, we do not have souls, except as we remember the Soul's before-being, in our bodily after-being.

(The Telling, p.30-31)

Mrs. Jackson has carefully brought the word 'soul' out of the blurred understanding that characterizes its use to the point where she is able to say that "the Soul that was once Entirety is revealed in them [souls] as the single principle of each [soul]." Gradually, she has cleared away the haze of misconceptions with which the word is regarded, showing how it is only part-known even to the religions, and how it may be known for what it is.

A notable point in this passage is that, unlike the various religions, Mrs. Jackson does not assume that human beings, by virtue of humanness, automatically possess souls. The fundamental tenet of religion is that each possesses soul, and that each must tend and care for the soul or lose it. In Mrs. Jackson's thought there are no souls "except as we remember the soul's before-being, in our bodily after-being." This takes us back to her early work in which truth, as the final reality of mind, must be brought into existence. It does not not-exist - truth is waiting to come into existence, the universe shapes itself towards this end, moving towards final perfection (truth) which the consciousness of human beings actively seeks, or would seek were it not afraid of it. Truth, though it exists, is pressing to come into existence, must have a mind capable of perceiving it, and being its instrument. As she had said in Epilogue and in the later addition to 'A Last Lesson In Geography' in Art And Literature,

one must be reality in order to know it in the whole, and there is only one way to be it, "and that is to speak it." Similarly here, there is Soul, but humans do not have souls unless they can summon them into existence by the path-line of memory.

In passage 34, Mrs. Jackson introduces mind, and the place it occupies among body, soul, spirit and being:

I34I I must return to my talk of the memory of what was before every before! The summary of my ideas on this subject is: -- to have the memory is to have a soul. With the memory, we are soul, besides being body. Without it, our minds, however agilely they work, cannot be more than servants of our bodies; with it, our minds can make our bodies, soul-subdued, accompany and sustain them in their work. Mind is the reason of all-being -- which, once of one presence with being's one Soul, was loosed into the universe in which the Soul was dissolved -- gathering in beings. Where there is body that is the universe drawn into a littleness living beyond its great cycles of change, each such littleness has a destiny of enlargement: Soul in-little and Mind in-little await such body, as the means of presence. There is a readiness in the Spirit of being for our being All ... a multiple One! Our souls and our minds are like First and Last self-forms existing in one time; in them, body-joined, Before and After touch. This is the human condition
[...]

(The Telling, pp.35-6)

But not, she adds, the weakness of the human condition spoken as an indulgent self-contempt, but "a readiness in us for a reunion of being in ourselves."

Mind, here, is a new factor. With soul, it waited for bodies in which it could have "presence", but its function is to "accompany and sustain" bodies in their soul-directed work. Bodies themselves are a place of beginning for which dispersed soul and mind wait to enter. Soul, I think Mrs. Jackson is saying, has so far been kept waiting, while mind has pre-

dominated, serving only body. This would be in accord with her earlier thought where she sees history (which might loosely be thought of as body) as having come to conclusion, and a new order of mind taking over. There, she came as close to defining soul as she could in terms of the "vivid reality of thought" of Epilogue and its final ordering of values, and, as her poems show, a yearning for something known to exist but inexpressible in poetic terms. Now she is able, in her knowledge of the memory of soul, to know the relative positions of soul and mind and body, how each came to be, and how mind and body without soul are not enough. Passage 34 ends:

We must think our way into our condition in order to know what it is for. And, where knowledge fails, we must go back to remember.

(The Telling, p.36)

This is the mind's function: not merely to wait upon the future to bring finality, whole reality, to the mind, but for mind to think itself into finality, moving from First to Last "in one time." By doing this, Before and After, between which stand First and Last, are known -- "body-joined." This is not dissimilar to 'A Last Lesson In Geography.' There, Tooth can be seen as between First and Last, reaching towards Before and After, the she-spirit. She is the continuum before Tooth and after him, in whom he begins and ends, but with the knowledge that the end is something yet to come, rather than an actual end -- an After. Mrs. Jackson could not see that After clearly then, though she knew of it. It was only "a smile engraved with smiles, a word expressed in words, an everywhere mapped out from somewhere." (Progress, p.287).

Now she speaks as from everywhere.

In passage 35, she acknowledges the introduction of mind as an added complexity to what she has already said of soul, spirit, matter and body, and she defines its place:

I have said it is the reason of being that was with the Life-Soul in which being moved all as one; and then reason went with the spirit, when the soul passed (disappearing) into it. As spirit was formless, reason was formless; and, while spirit worked, reason rested, rested, and Thought was Futurity; and all sense there was in the world-in-the-making -- even to the latest world-phase of the universe antecedent to the human, when the making will be fulfilled -- was adduced backwards from final ought-to-be. Not mindlessly travels the world through its phases. While reason rests, rests, mind -- in a mutual boundness of reason and spirit to each other -- keeps a watch; mind is the watch reason keeps, the watch spirit, by reason's following attendance, keeps, on its works. And mind translates the not of the world's successive states of incompleteness into not-yet, not-yet, until ourselves are, and completion is, in us.

(The Telling, p.37)

This passage holds in its grasp a tremendous, but wholly imaginable, sweep of time, in which can be seen the place of humankind, as the universe, "not mindlessly", makes its way from Before to After, from wholeness to breaking, and then to wholeness once more, with the human mind as agent. Even before there were human beings, there is mind and reason, but while reason rests, as though waiting for humanity to come in-to existence, mind is watching the universe, "its works," until the time is ready for reason to enter -- for the time when there are minds, human beings, for it to reside in. Mind and reason here are kept, as the difference in the forms of the words requires, quite distinct. Both are of cosmic nature, but, for there to be active reason, there must first be minds in which to act. As soon as reason is free to act,

has something through which to act, then the stage of completion is reached. The passage continues:

Mind, then, is contained, becoming our minds -- and these, by our calling on them for our truth (as on ourselves perfected!), become as our mind in each. No one's was mind before we were: reason had no home after the Life-Soul ceased, except Temporariness.

(The Telling, p.37)

There is a strength of reasoning in this passage which persuades the mind to it. It possesses a clarity of thought in its account of both the journey forward of humanity (which, despite its failings, is always striving to advance somewhere), and of the shaping of the universe, which is utterly satisfying, and yet which leaves no room for complacency. It is followed by a heart-felt and mind-felt appeal:

-- Oh, shall we not command ourselves to take the watch? From the watch we shall rise to do, when spirit in us reaches its utmost, and can no more: we shall give reason action, and give spirit rest. We shall live as souls and endure as minds; and our bodies will perpetuate us as ourselves, in the new being. Everything will be taken along, in the new being, except what belies it. Thus, in the very telling of our story to one another is the crux of salvation: as we speak it true, we have new being, and are in the new time ... Where, when is that -- marking time from now? Where, then, is now? To ask so is to tarry in the old time. There is no answer outside the story of us, true-told by us to one another; and we shall cease to ask, as we tell. I myself, speaking of such truth and, at once, attempting to open the door to it (which cannot be opened except from the other side -- but this is only a way of saying that the thing is not done till it is done), stand as in no-moment, turn to and from and to the told-of-telling, and make no count of time. We shall have certainty of our being in the new time not when we can prove that we are in it, but when it proves itself to us to be that: it will shine a new light upon us, and we shall see the cause to be in ourselves.

(The Telling, pp.37-8)

There is contained in these words a force which, indubitably, might be likened to religious conviction, a strength of speaking which derives its energy from the knowledge (the sure knowledge) that there is a greater happiness to be gained than is known of in the present. But although Mrs. Jackson shows herself aware of this futuristic possibility, she is at great pains to show that this is not a future event, but an immediate event which must be looked to now; not a possibility of the future to be awaited passively, but a certainty for which to seek actively. This marks the difference between what she speaks of and what the various religions tell, and it is to this that she now turns her attention.

In religion, she explains, there has been too much emphasis on memory of the origins of the soul, by comparison with which human beings are "belittled," with the consequence that there has been "not enough seeking of an immediate knowledge of our being, a whole sense of our immediate being, a full knowledge of ourselves" (passage 37, p.39), as though human beings, "who recreate" soul, had little to do with it:

I39I The way in which religions come to be can be read in our still uncompact human-nature. Memory-of-the-Before works in us separately from Knowledge-of-the-Now, competing with it for our mind's care; and sometimes the one leads (though we might scarcely think it is what it is), and sometimes the other. And, in our nature's total course, against the press of Now, Now, Now, rises the protest Once, Once, Once; and this becomes someone's unique impassionment ... Sometimes in someone rises a passion of resolution to speak of Before, and to remember enough to speak true; and round this passion forms a religion. The religion-making part falls to the one who cannot avoid playing it. Then, as a flock of birds suddenly drops to a tree to break the journey, listeners to the story are there, purpose and chance indistinguishable in their attendance.

To some degree, she continues in passage 40, (p.40): "all the religion-makers have a madness in them." They press with such earnestness upon the memory of the Before that they believe themselves to be "the single equipment of all our truth," and see the Before as "the greater part of our life," and "they dwell not enough on the Now-After." However, this is not to say that the religions should be spurned. We should beware parting from them in bad faith, for we "have borne the waiting without madness through the religious passion of a few." Those who deny what religion teaches "deny us more than they deny 'God'" (passage 42, p.42). They do not think "into the heart of the ignorance with which the notion of God is substacked." The notion of God is not merely that there is a mythical creator of the universe, separate from human beings, but a desire by human beings for unity:

I45I 'God' takes the story of the Life-Soul that dispersed itself as spirit to a point of partial reunion, partial restoration of Being's One-being. Calling of 'God' speaks the wish of men that the cycles of disunion die in us, as we are men and women living out the war of men with men. But the cycles of disunion have their nexus in us as we are men and women living out the whole unmaking of being and remaking of it in ourselves as men and women. And what we have to do is not for 'Man' (which includes 'Woman' counted Nought) or 'God', and not for ourselves, but is for Being. Being, which was first ever all-one, waits to be made all-one again, through our being: it waits for our soul to recreate Soul. And what is God, according to such storying? -- it is men's hope of themselves enkindled by the love, of them, of women, who have made their plights of anger, despair, vanity, self-despite, their own. To the hope of one another, which is Being's hope of itself, God is a rival to be dealt with generously.

(The Telling, p.44)

Mrs. Jackson touches here on what she calls, in passage 47, "a story within a story" -- the relation between man and

woman, men and women, as it is a part of what she has to tell. She had referred earlier in The Telling, in passage 13, to the role men had played as the authors and makers of religions, who were "men of honest purpose." But, she says there:

they were especially men -- they were man-minded, more man-minded than human-minded. They looked with the eyes of self-tenacious part-of-being, seeing a garbled whole-of-being from their vantage of abstracted self; they were right with a twisted rightness, and narrowly imperious in their resolve that their visions serve as visions of the whole, and their telling as the truth of the whole. They, like their fellows in time, were but time-creatures, beings perpetuative of that contrariety-and-counter-contrariety into which Being broke -- once, completely; they were men among men-and-women, members of a divided and sub-divided Congregation, relying on the percipience of their sex-kind as if it were pure human vision, and using their powers of self-insistence to enforce their belief. They, undifferently from others alive in the past, were dwellers in dividing shadows, lone wandering beings for whom the joining light that outspeeds time flashed only sometimes, and only to be gone again.

(The Telling, p.18)

Throughout her life-time's work Mrs. Jackson has pointed to this essential difference between the man-identity and the woman-identity as containing within it a division of wholeness in which man has discounted the woman-part, though feeling the lack of it. And in several places she has stated the view, notably in its fundamental aspects in her essay in Civilita ^{7Y} _{5/21} Delle Macchine, that woman contains the essential answer to, not merely man's problem, but the problem, with men and women, women and men, counted equally, of the human journey's direction. In passages 47 to 53 she once more puts forward her view of the essential difference between men and women. This is not ancillary to what she says of religion but integral to it, as religious belief is the closest human beings have

come in their knowledge of there being a whole greater than the part which they constitute, and yet of which they are the nexus.

The religions undoubtedly form the basis of present society, even though it is said and widely believed that religion is passing. Equally, religion is the product of male thought, and the civilised world, which followed in direct line from religion, is also a product of male thought. Language itself takes its bearings from male thought, and in language is sustained the total of human thought towards the eventual perfection of human beings -- their eventual arrival at truth. But that arrival is governed by one half, only, of the human total. This belief, that one half, men, are capable of arriving at the end of human desire on behalf of the total, remains unchallenged only as long as it is believed that women are men merely in different form -- that women are, that is, less than men. Where men are seen to form only one half of human beings, and that half of a particular dualistic nature of thought, and women as one half, possessed of a distinct unitary nature of thought, the answer to the question 'Where are we going?' immediately begins to clear and takes on entirely unsuspected shape. In her struggle to clear pathways through the entangled confusion of contemporary thought, Mrs. Jackson's work reveals this fundamental division of identity of men and women, showing how it, in its seeming smallness, is in fact all there is to know. As she said in passage 34:

Where there is body that is the universe drawn into a littleness living beyond its great cycle of change, each such littleness has a destiny of enlargement:

Soul in-little and Mind in-little await such body as the means of presence.

(The Telling, p.36)

In this seeming smallness of identity of human beings is

"the wish of men that the cycles of disunion die in us"

(passage 45):

But the cycles of disunion have their nexus in us as we are men and women living out the whole unmaking of being and remaking of it in ourselves as men and women.

(The Telling, p.44)

One of the most important distinctions of Mrs. Jackson's entire work is its continuing definition of the unitary nature of woman, women, her faith in it as she knew it to be of her nature. "Most mute," she says, in passage 47 (p.45), "as rememberers of First Things and perceivers of Last Things, and knowers of ourselves as that in which First and Last are bound together, are women":

I48I Our sexuality is the record, and the obstinate process itself, of antagonism (sprung up of first-old in being, in the repetition of One in One) countered with counter-antagonism throughout time's numbers, to the turn in time, and numbers, where being ends the exploration of multiplicity and begins the repossession of its unity. In the turn, the human quality of being -- before, hovering like a collective dream over multiplicity -- becomes immediate;... becomes ourselves fitfully. The reality lives, we are human at whiles, we are men and women risen out of this twofoldness (legacy of Division) into a onefoldness of knowing One in one another. -- Then the recognition is gone! At the turn in time where being turns human, sexuality over and over plays out the pre-human, the drama of numbers. Hardly is the turn rounded.

(The Telling, pp.45-6)

One senses, here, the part that love plays in the recognition of "One in one another," the desire of love to be eternally One, and its unfulfilment, its partial but never completed

reality. In the record of sexuality, the "man-part" (passage 49), which is the "harborer of the force of antagonism come from time's beginning seeking an end," postpones "the human beginning, the beginning of the universal reconciliation," and the "woman-part" is its captive. The man-part "speeds and delays, desiring to be both its-self and our-self," a "self-doubling":

1501 And the woman-part of ourselves, harborer of the force of kindship (I use this old word to go beyond the softer, lighter meaning of kindness to a meaning of making-one-kind-with, by the painful work of feeling the likeness of the different) -- how, when, does the captivity cease, the woman-part become free? Through an instant readiness, eternized by the woman-part in itself, to pass beyond kindship to oneship (to extend humanship) when the man-part, knowing itself at last its own prisoner, ceases to love the half-world formed of its self-doubling -- in which both parts huddle -- and calls for the whole. Foresense of Being-made-whole-in-us sits secret in women, in the mute mind of their kindship; and they listen for the call with this, and this will hear it -- even above the clatter that rises above their garrulity of heart (which is but a cheerful defiance of free souls offered to their confinement). And they will respond to the call from another world, go to another world, to speak, that will be whole, because of their responding, and because of the calling. They will have risked the other world's being not whole, not anything -- and the half-world lost. Thus shall the woman-part and the man-part make each other free; thus shall we, men and women, locked in the intricacy of being men and women, free ourselves to be ourselves.

(The Telling, pp. 46-7)

What is this other world? It is not, assuredly, a fictional world. Mrs. Jackson sees two worlds: The first is the world as it is, the man-part world, based on the analogue of nature. This is the world of the mixture of the individual-real and the collective-real of Anarchism Is Not Enough. Everything in it -- its civilisation, social formation, arts and crafts, thought processes, history and tradition -- has as its basis the simple thesis that humanity is part-animal, belongs in the

natural world and takes its shape from it. This view of humanity arises from the rooted subjectiveness of the man-mind and its dualistic nature which, sensing the difference between itself and all else, blurs it by attempting to be both, thus condemning itself (all ourselves) to futility. But the futility is relieved by the woman-part which, though it has remained in passive attendance on the man-part, carries within it a unifying force, withheld from the man-mind for self-protection, countering multiplicity with unity. There is the known world in which the man-part continually confirms and reaffirms itself as all there is, and there is "another world", existing in the same continuum, unknown and yet known, to which the woman-part will go in response to the man-part's call for the whole. It is an unimaginable world, except to know that it is wholly different from the world of the man-part mind:

I51I This going to another world, that it is in women's fate-life to attempt, and, attempting, accomplish, will be only a brief journey -- a journey into an unknown to their hearts well-known. All the steps but one have, indeed, been taken by them. Only not taken has been the step of the mind. When women take their step of the mind out of the world that, less than a world, has been at most a mirror made of nature by man-minds for men's justification of themselves to themselves before their eyes -- we shall not, then, be all in a mirror-world created by woman-minds, but in the place of the Whole, where for every being who would be according to the Whole (would be a being of the Whole -- one of One) is a whole mind, a complete gift of reason. The minds of women are not, as seems, either partners or competitors to men in the reading of the mirror of the self. It is through mere love that they live according to men's self-reflecting half-world, preserving their woman-selves to men's longing to be themselves and preserve themselves from themselves: their love, fed upon the praise and favor of men, is of that world, but not their honor. And men will be preserved neither by their own self-love nor the love of women, but by the ultimate honor of women, the prior

motive of their souls, and the principle of their minds -- put by fate ever and ever out of harm's daily way into Reason's last keeping.

(The Telling, pp.47-8)

The man-part, she says, in the next passage (52, p.48), can go no further. Women went with man, "tried to think by such mind-books, such man-thought" as man fashioned, but knew little happiness. They wait "the time of the Claiming" (passage 53) when men "call for the total common indivisible human inheritance from Forever." When the "cry of true need" comes, it "will be light, not loud, will be breathed, not hurled," and women must be intent in listening for it:

-- and women's mere moving in mind from a sense of First Things and Last Things to a sense of Last Things in which First Things and Last Things are one actuality... by the mystery of Being, which is a mystery because of men, and no-mystery because of women, we, human, shall arrive, all, at our full actuality in Being, and Being at its whole actuality in us. And the story of ourselves as men and women will then have been told; and the further telling will then be in a Henceforth dating from our having become ourselves finally, become human selves finally, each one spelling One, each communicating All from the vantage of a fidelity of one to All as One.

(The Telling, pp.48-9)

This is nearly the completion of The Telling. Mrs. Jackson, addressing the reader, notes that "some of what you have here read you will have already dispatched to the category of the **S**trange, that to which your concern does not reach, some cast into the category of the Familiar, with the things you feel you always knew" (passage 54, p.49). But, she continues, in the opening sentence of passage 55 -- and having gone so far with her, not in The Telling, only, but in all her work, one may not suspend belief, or, as it may be, conviction -- "My subject is all ourselves, the human reality" (p.49).

It is the same subject that first took her to the writing of poems, stories, and the essays until 1940; and the same subject that carried her through to, besides The Telling, the work of the later years, most importantly, her and her husband's as yet unpublished book on language¹:

If my words have the intonations of importunate appeal to your ears, let this be with you neither against me nor for me. I do not urge you to take my say for yours; I propose that you seek in yourselves remembrance of the Before, and tell what you find, and believe your words. How can we altogether believe the say of others unless we can believe our own?

(The Telling, p.50)

There is, she says in passage 60, "no going back":

There is nothing left to us but to be sufficient to one another in our human need to pay to Being the debt of ourselves, that will enrich it with its Oneness, restored. All else has proved itself false -- the difference between the insufficient and the false fading as the insufficient fades. There is nothing left to us but to speak in the pure language of this need -- to speak only truth.

(The Telling, p.53)

The Telling ends with four unnumbered passages, each in parentheses, which form a later "consideration of the vices" that readers may bring to their reading of The Telling, that they might, "not recognizing entirety in [her] storying of it," attempt the entire story themselves but "tell differently for the triumph of difference, and not for truth's sake" (p.55). But, she goes on, such "could do nothing more than follow the

1 Two essays from the book have been published to date. 'Dr. Gove And The Future Of English Dictionaries;' 'Supplementary Comment Concerning George Watson's Thinking On Noam Chomsky,' Denver Quarterly, 10 Spring 1975, pp.1-18; 19-25; and 'Bertrand Russell, and Others: The Idea of the Master-Mind,' Antaeus, 21/22, Spring/Summer 1976, pp.125-135. Both were written for Appendix II of Rational Meaning: A New Foundation For The Definition Of Words by Laura (Riding) Jackson and Schuyler B. Jackson.

trace of old falsity" which "will be repeated to the extinction of its capability of seeming new, true; we shall suffer from it only to the extinction of our capacity for being deceived."

The final passage reads:

(As the number mounts of circles drawn by us to encompass the Story of the Whole, and the words begin to come faster from the different telling - centers, a spell of concentricity -- the out-spoken force of original One-being travelling between them -- will be upon us; and other than true-telling, whether in mutual error of difference or in the evil of isolate purposed difference, will become impossible. There will be no where in which, no when at which, to tell other-than-true, and no one to tell it. We shall have arrived at our ultimate identities, selves that Agree. And none shall be missing from the count of those: it will tally perfectly with ONE.)

(The Telling, p56)

There The Telling ends. For the critic, the question now arises of what to say of it, and to discover what place it occupies in the literature of civilisation.

I have not tried, in this dissertation, to locate Mrs. Jackson and her work in the literary tradition, either that of the recent past of the 1920s and 1930s, when she was active as a poet, or in the more distant past. The important work, it has seemed to me, was first to grow into an understanding of her work rather than to enter into comparisons of it with that of others. I am aware that I have been unable to do her and her work full justice in this respect of the limitations of what I set out to do. There is, looking back, so much more one might have said, in drawing her one theme closer together, in drawing attention to the identifiable parts of this portion of her work and that part. I have accomplished a little of this, but by no means all. The Telling itself, as it relates in its outer appearances and

circumstances, and its inner realities, to her earlier work, requires a book to explain and define. Leaving to one side its larger thematic content, I give one example of what I mean.

The final numbered passage of The Telling is as follows:

I62I And look upon one another with the look of One. And speak to one another with a self in which the selfhood of One moves, lives ... If we will but begin, we shall continue, and there will be no end ... Should my names and descriptions of things not draw for you or you the circle of entirety, draw you or you that circle, as you know entirety; if each different circle contains all ourselves, an infinite coincidence of truth will ring us ever round ... Now I leave off.

(The Telling, p.54)

What is there to learn here of the end of 'Miss Banquett' (quoted above, p.84) from the passage that begins, "An island is all round an island," and ends, "Or which. Which circle. This roundness"? Such instances are extremely common, and I have been able to give only a few indications of the whole. Not merely 'Miss Banquett' but many, if not all of the stories, such as 'A Last Lesson In Geography' and 'A Fairy Tale For Older People,' and all the poems, even to the earliest, such as 'The Quids,' and the critical books and essays, have not only relation to each other, but direct and indirect relation to The Telling. How, in a critical analysis, to draw all this together!

There has been, in fact, less critical analysis, in terms of style, diction, form, word-use and craft, than is common in work of a critical nature. I might, for example, have said a great deal more of craft, of similarities of word and thought to the work of others, in my appraisal of the poems or stories. I might have said something of similarities

between Mrs. Jackson's 'style' and that of the early French modernist poets, such as Francis Ponge, or the work of Gertrude Stein. But it seems to me that there are, first, extraordinarily few such similarities, and of such a superficial nature as to suggest no more than, at the very most, coincidence, acknowledging Mrs. Jackson to be breathing the same language-air feeding the whole of the modernist convulsion, following the 1914-18 war; second, and more important, the whole of Mrs. Jackson's work is concerned with meaning, not 'style'. From the first, in A Survey Of Modernist Poetry, her aim was to leave to itself felicities of expression in order to reach the core of meaning, fundamental human meaning. The look of a poem or, especially relevant when the beautiful books of the Seizin Press are considered, a book of poems, was of great importance, but as it coincided with meaning - arose from meaning - and not as an end itself, even to the point where, when she realised that craft ('style') was a "parasitic partner in the poetic enterprise" (Preface to Selected Poems, p.15), she renounced the practice of it. She did not ignore the poet's craft, but with her it was not a first cause but an elementary consideration as part of the first cause, with the critical consciousness the other part, while the first cause itself was the poem's meaning as identifiable with the poem -- the meaning, that is, as something made through the poet in the poem. To have paid elaborate attention to the creative style of her poems, though common practice in examining the work of other poets, would have misdirected understanding away from the crucial active meaning-principle which is present in all she wrote. The essential

understanding of Mrs. Jackson's work lies in understanding its meaning, not its style.

This **leads** me to another consideration. In the question of verbal analysis the investigation of style has as its basis the further question of comparison and categorisation: how does this style **compare** with that and what do the differences signify, is the critical question. Once the similarities and differences are noted, the work under scrutiny can then be placed in any one of many different categories, such as modernist, modern, romantic, classic, pastoral, Imagist, Georgian, surrealist, metaphysical, modern realism, cynical - in fact, any category that fits will do. The desire behind this is partly the need to characterise the work, to sum it up in a word or phrase and place it in the understanding as something the nature of which is already understood. Work thus characterised, though it may, in isolated parts of it, continue to illuminate the critic's understanding of it in the whole, has the threat (the threat of not being able to understand it, as well as any intrinsic threat it may possess as one reality challenging another, critical reality) removed from it. One feels safer with a work knowing it to be of a particular category, than with a work seemingly without a category, except, say, the larger hold-all category of 'literature' or 'poetry' or 'art'. Work that makes a strong impression on critics and is long esteemed is generally that which appears to belong to no particular category, and the critic must either seek a category for it, or invent one (invent a characterising phrase which fast becomes a category), so that the work may then be viewed as in a direct line with literary

tradition. It is, to put it another way, accommodated to the understanding, even though the understanding of some of the parts will, for the moment, be sacrificed.

I suggest, in the case of Mrs. Jackson's work, such an attempt at categorisation is to look in the wrong direction; and further, that it is this very attempt to see her work in this or that category that has been the direct cause of the consistent failure to understand her. Mrs. Jackson's work does not derive from any critically understood category of thought except -- and this is the immense irony -- the 'category' human, being human and human being, which is that which makes category. It is not a category itself, for human being is everything it is possible to be, irreducible and unconfined. The only 'category' into which it can fall is itself, which is everything, which, as far as category is concerned, is nothing. It is ^{to} human being, beings, not categories, that Mrs. Jackson has given and continues to give her allegiance. To read her from the vantage-point of this or that category is to seek in her work what one might wish to find but what is not, in fact, there. It is this coming to poetry for precisely the wrong reasons, and then labelling the poet 'obscure' or 'difficult' when what is found is of a different order, to which Mrs. Jackson pointed in her Preface to

Collected Poems:

My poems would, indeed, ~~be~~ much more difficult than they have seemed if I did not in each assume the responsibility of education in the reasons of poetry as well as that of writing a poem. Because I am fully aware of the background of miseducation from which most readers come to poems, I begin every poem on the most elementary plane of understanding and proceed to the plane of poetic discovery (or uncovering) by steps which

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deflect the reader from false associations, false reasons for reading. No readers but those who insist on going to poetry for the wrong reasons should find my poems difficult; no reader who goes to poetry for the right reasons should find them anything but lucid; and with few other poets are readers so safe from being seduced into emotions or states of mind which are not poetic.

(Collected Poems, p.xvii)

It is in the very nature of her work to persuade the critic-reader away from verbal analysis, which leads to categorisation in the comparison-endeavour, and towards the poems and their meanings. In the later view, when her work is better understood, verbal analysis may well have its rewards, but it will still be found, I think, to urge the critic to a scrupulous study of meaning, rather than lend itself to comparisons of her 'style' and the style of others, or the literary tradition in which she writes and that in which others write. One need only think of, say, 'Auspice Of Jewels', to see that its fundamental importance lies in the meaning of it, as well as in the general meaning of it as it is a portion of her work, rather than the verbal effectiveness and verbal felicity it possesses, resplendent as it is in this. This is a further reason why I have not given too much attention to the critical analysis of Mrs. Jackson's verbal similarities or dissimilarities to other writers.

Mrs. Jackson's writing has a 'style', it is true, but it is a style that challenges, in her case, the very use of the word, and that is why I have placed it in inverted commas where I have used it with reference to her. James Joyce and D. H. Lawrence have style, and so does E. E. Cummings, and so do Yeats, Pound, Eliot and Frost, but their styles, in each

case, are an improving or up-dating, or are in reaction against, the style of the past (and reaction is only negation of something positive, its roots still lie in what preceded it.) The predominant effect of style, and what it has come to signify in an author, is the heightening of ordinary speech -- language heightened, to any degree heightened, as Hopkins said. Even claims of a return to 'ordinary' speech have as their aim the dramatic presentation of speech, not speech itself. Mrs. Jackson's 'style' is that of direct communication, "the general human ideal in speaking ... of how to make words fulfil the human being and the human being fulfil words" (Selected Poems, p.15). Her language does not look to having effect but a one-to-one meaning as self, self-as-meaning. It relies upon nouns and verbs, with adjectives and adjectival phrasing sparse and controlled, hyperbole strictly disciplined out, and metaphor and simile employed only where their accuracy under-pins her meaning. It is speaking, but not 'ordinary' speaking, in the sense of permitting speech its lapses into (intentional) mis-meaning, mis -use, casualness; nor is it heightened speech. It is a trueness of speech, of self and words as one where self is words' meanings and words' meanings are self. This is the ideal which she has always attempted to fulfil, and which eventually led to the writing of The Telling.

The Telling does not have 'style' in the sense of the literary use of the word, but diction. "Diction," Mrs. Jackson says in 'Preface For A Second Reading' (The Telling, p.67), "I consider to be the actual substance of style; and style, to be a vague, figurative identification of - a literary name for - diction." And she continues: "I view myself as

having spoken to the page, in The Telling, not engaged in a kind of writing."

I did not approach the making of The Telling from a point of decision as to what its diction ought to be 'like'. I composed myself in the making of it to a stand of non-predilection in the choice of the individual word and of words in phrased combination. I endeavored not to let any sort of bias or carefreeness in verbal taste rule the deciding processes. Unaccustomed choices of word and patterns of word-combination are found mingled in it with accustomed falls of speech. Some of what is unaccustomed, seeming simple accidents, could be taken for new commonplaces; and it may have an effect, generally, of stylistic variableness, because of not being formed with a predetermined literary diction-policy. On the whole, I think, a sustained unity of diction has been achieved in it; this opinion is supported by my having found, in my scrutinizing it after it was finished, that it forbade nearly all attempts at modification -- those of incidental character included -- that I was moved to consider making. I could not claim the distinction for it of being a perfect example of just diction. I can in good linguistic conscience aver that I have come closer in it to purity of motivation in word-choice than in all previous efforts of mine to do well by, and with, words.

(The Telling, p.69)

It is this that makes it impossible to classify The Telling literarily. It does not arise from literature, or attempt to be literary -- and I use 'literature' and 'literary' in their widest possible senses -- which is why it evades any attempt at categorization of the literary kind. It is not poetic, philosophic, religious or mystical. Its allegiance is to words, not in the scientific sense of linguistic, but words as the clarifying reality of human being. The only category into which it might fall is the one it makes as it proceeds. Mrs. Jackson's "non-predilection" in her choice of words, her giving to words their full say as they are of her being, marks the difference between The Telling and all other works written

on this, as she has so often said, the subject. This is the crucial difference she points to in the section entitled 'Notes', at the end of The Telling, between it and the works of other authors who have attempted to define or explain the same subject, authors such as Teilhard de Chardin, Plotinus, Spinoza, Jacob Boehme, and others.

What of Mrs. Jackson's poetry, and the work that derived from her poetry and the knowledge she gained through poetry? If Mrs. Jackson's work is held up, for the purposes of literary comparison and judgement, against the work of now famous figures such as Yeats, Pound, Eliot, Frost, Auden, Stevens, Crane, Edith Sitwell and others, or the less celebrated but at times oddly more memorable Gertrude Stein and E. E. Cummings, then Mrs. Jackson compares more than favourably. In terms of whole-hearted and whole-minded commitment to poetry, and the cause which is poetry's, Mrs. Jackson is at least the equal of any one of these, as the number and nature of her books, their moral and intellectual earnestness, show. If she has not provided the poem or poems of the age, that is because her work has been persistently not-understood and dismissed as obscure. When her work is assimilated, it may well indeed be found that she has provided the poems of the age -- the final poems of the final age, for such is what her poems record.

In the vexed question of critical evaluation, as to how one author compares as against other authors, I am reminded of two statements which strike at the root of the problem where Mrs. Jackson is concerned. The first is the early

declaration in A Survey Of Modernist Poetry that, "Never, indeed, has it been possible for a poet to remain unknown with so little discredit and dishonour as at the present time." And the second is from The Telling, in passage 53 (p.48), where Mrs. Jackson speaks of "the clamoring of man-selves for a more-self deemed better-self." She adds, in parenthesis: "which, often, men endeavor to give themselves by robbing size from one another." There is no need to rob others of size to make Mrs. Jackson bigger. She has honour and credit enough without comparison.

A P P E N D I X

Critical Bias

Anthony Thwaite on Laura (Riding) Jackson

by Mark Jacobs and Alan Clark

(This revised essay was originally a paper put before a Modern Language Association (J.S.A.) seminar, Focus On Robert Graves, 'Laura Riding And Robert Graves,' December 1974.)

Anthony Thwaite's Contemporary English Poetry: An Introduction was first published in Japan in May, 1957, and revised for publication in Britain in April 1959 (Heinemann); it was reissued in 1964. The book did not come to our attention for some time, but so much has been published both before and after its appearance, continuous to the present day, which in the various treatments of Mrs. Jackson's work and of herself is of a similar nature, that we have found it to provide a sadly adequate focus for thought on the matter of misreporting of critical fact.

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It has long been recognized that some of the best-known authors writing in English in this century have used as source material for their literary effort the inspirational work of Laura (Riding) Jackson, though there is a tendency -- generally an incorrect one -- to fix this use of her work as somehow confined to a pre-1940 period, when she was active as a poet, with some drifting over to a post-1940 period, of short duration, after which a writer who is said to be

'influenced' by her is seen as having recovered. Names such as W. H. Auden, Robert Graves, James Reeves and Roy Fuller spring to mind. Further, a host of minor and not so minor writers today, taking their lead from Mr. Graves' mythologizing in The White Goddess, fail to realise that that book takes its direction from Laura (Riding) Jackson's work, its detailed thesis being a distorted expansion of her primary thought on the subject of woman's nature, and woman as seen from the male viewpoint¹; these writers also may be said to be 'influenced'.

From 1920 to 1940, when she was active as a poet, Laura Riding, as she was called then, was greeted by some critics as a writer of great importance and distinction, bringing to the poetic practice and theory of the day much-needed visionary insights into the roots of poetry's nature and being. She identified those roots as located in lasting humanly good and truthful values -- values that had existed hitherto half-glimpsed by poets here and there in isolation but which had not been comprehensively formulated as a whole. The poetic climate of the day was one of stale disillusionment, concerning itself with the expression of a cynical technique of disillusion; into this climate Laura Riding tried to breathe, with all she wrote, values of wholeness of thinking and being. For her, poetry was truth, and a poem

1 Pointed out by Professor Michael Kirkham in 'Robert Graves's Debt To Laura Riding,' a paper put before a Modern Language Association (U.S.A.) seminar in 1972 and published in December 1973 in no. 3 of Focus On Robert Graves, a bibliographical newsletter edited by Dr. Ellsworth Mason. An extensively re-worked essay, in part based on this, entitled 'Laura (Riding) Jackson', was later published in Chelsea, no. 33, September 1974. Professor Kirkham is the author of a

'an uncovering of truth of so fundamental and general a kind that no other name besides poetry is adequate except truth'². She saw poetry as having come to a stage of finality in history where the practice of it becomes 'more real than existence in time -- more real because more good, more good because more true'³. Poetry, in her view, offered a practical and immediately attainable final reality of being:

'To live in, by, for the reasons of, poems is to habituate oneself to the good existence. When we are so continuously habituated that there is no temporal interruption between one poetic incident (poem) and another, then we have not merely poems -- we have poetry; we have not merely the immediacies -- we have finality. Literally.'⁴

Writing of Laura Riding's Collected Poems in 1939, the poet and critic Robert Fitzgerald -- who was later to produce widely-admired translations of Homer, and was appointed Boylston Professor of Rhetoric at Harvard -- said:

'Of all the contemporary poems I know, these seem to me the furthest advanced, the most personal and the purest. I hope, but hardly believe, that they will be assimilated soon into the general consciousness of literature.

The authority, the dignity of truth telling, lost by poetry to science, may gradually be regained. If it is, these poems should one day be a kind of

book on The Poetry of Robert Graves (Athlone Press of the University of London, 1971).

We wish at once, and with gladness, to record our feeling of obligation to Professor Kirkham, who, on hearing that we were at work on the present essay, kindly gave us leave to use his writings on the Riding/Graves work-relationship as freely as we might need. Although we have not, in the event, drawn on his work to a specially heavy extent, the sense of our discussions - for instance, as to the differing significances of sun-and-moon in the work of the two writers - will be found often to be consonant with his. We commend Professor Kirkham's pioneering writings: they are of much value to all interested in pursuing the subject with which we have here attempted to deal.

2 Laura Riding. Collected Poems (Cassell, 1938) p.xviii

3, 4 Collected Poems p.xxvii

Principia. They argue that the art of language is the most fitting instrument with which to press upon full reality and make it known.'⁵

But from some quarters -- New Verse, the magazine edited by Geoffrey Grigson from 1933 to 1939, is typical⁶ -- her work was viewed with hostility, often combined with utter blankness of comprehension of what she was 'about'; the criticisms taking the form of diatribe, not that of close inspection and study, the warp being, as it were, the critic's frustration at being left behind. From other quarters her work was disliked as taking upon itself too much in what it said of the fundamental issues of poetic practice, and in its demanding from poets greater concern with the moral principles implicit in poetry, rather than the poetic-technique principles fostered by literary criticism. Such an attitude is strikingly revealed by W. B. Yeats, in a letter written to Dorothy Wellesley on May 22, 1936 -- Yeats was editing his Oxford Book Of Modern Verse⁷ at the time, and had refused to include the work of James Reeves in it:

'I wrote today to Laura Riding, with whom I carry on a slight correspondence, that her school was too thoughtful, reasonable and truthful, that poets were good liars who never forgot that the Muses were women who liked the embrace of gay warty lads. I wonder if she knows that warts are considered by the Irish peasantry a sign of sexual power?'⁸

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- 5 Robert Ritzgerald. Kenyon Review, 1, Summer 1939, pp.341-345.
- 6 New Verse, 6, December 1933, pp.18-20 (Louis MacNeice); New Verse, 31-32, Autumn 1938 (Geoffrey Grigson?) Note also Laura Riding's response to 'An Enquiry', New Verse, 11, October 1934, pp.3-5.
- 7 The Oxford Book Of Modern Verse, 1892-1935; chosen by W.B. Yeats (Clarendon Press, 1936)
- 8 W.B. Yeats Letters On Poetry From W.B. Yeats to Dorothy Wellesley (O.U.P., 1940) p.69.

Although the name and reputation of Laura (Riding) Jackson figures in much contemporary discussion of poetry, the nature of the hostility towards her expressed by Yeats among others has changed. Since the mid-1940's, and increasingly, there have been manifestations, where the name 'Laura Riding' appears in literary-quarters discussion, of deceptions, and distortions of facts, literary and historical facts. In several contexts of critical discussion, but most notably in the context of the work of Robert Graves, treatment of Mrs. Jackson as subject repeatedly fails to square with the ascertainable character of her work. Thus, in Douglas Day's book on Mr. Graves, Swifter Than Reason⁹, and, as will shortly be seen, in Anthony Thwaite's Contemporary English Poetry, mounting contradictions of statement betoken something more than a basic ignorance of Mrs. Jackson's work.

On page 118 of Swifter Than Reason, Professor Day begins by saying that 'Without more tangible evidence of the exact nature of Miss Riding's influence [on Robert Graves], it is impossible to determine precisely the extent of that influence.' That seems unequivocal enough in its caution. On page 120, speaking of a Riding poem, he moves to a denial of 'influence': 'Such lines as these, moreover, so lacking in verbal discipline and rhythmic pattern of any kind, cause one to disbelieve that Miss Riding could have taught Graves, from the earliest days of his career a highly skilled technician, much about prosody.' Whether the lines

9 Douglas Day. Swifter Than Reason: The Poetry And Criticism Of Robert Graves (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press; London: O.U.P., 1963.) See the whole of Part Three: 'Self-Exile to Majorca: The Influence of Laura Riding.'

he quotes lack 'verbal discipline and rhythmic control of any kind' is highly questionable:

The rugged black of anger
Has an uncertain smile-border.
The transition from one kind to another
May be love between neighbour and neighbour;
Or natural death; or discontinuance
Because, so small is space,
The extent of kind must be expressed otherwise;
Or loss of kind when proof of no uniqueness
Confutes the broadening edge and discourages.

Perhaps Professor Day cannot hear the feminine rhymes and half-rhymes, the consonance and assonance, and the way in which each line comes to a natural breathing pause.¹⁰ But, still on page 120, he goes on to blur and confuse the issue: 'There are, however, certain aspects of Graves's poetry during this period that probably reflect the practical influence of Miss Riding.' He does not expand upon the difference between the nature of this 'practical influence' and that of the 'influence' he finds 'impossible to determine,' nor upon how either might relate to the teaching or not teaching Graves 'much about prosody.' To these confusions he adds another when he suggests that two poems of Laura Riding's, 'The Quids' and 'The Tillaquils', 'probably prompted Graves to revive his early fondness for the grotesque' [our emphasis] (p.121). There are three further admissions of Professor Day's which concede the possibility, at least, of 'influence':

p. 124: 'Many of Graves's poems during this period

10 It is interesting to note that this poem, 'The Rugged Black Of Anger,' is printed, and discussed in some detail as an example of modernist poetry, in A Survey Of Modernist Poetry, by Laura Riding and Robert Graves (Heinemann, 1927) pp.138-149.

also reflect Laura Riding's fondness for ingenuity and the exercise of wit.'

p.126: 'There is one other note in Graves's poetry during this third phase of his career which seems derived from Laura Riding: a scorn for society in general..'

p.129: '... we are likely to agree that Laura Riding's influence was a substantial factor in determining the course Graves took at this time in his poetry.'

These self-contradictions of what he has said earlier are extraordinary in a critic. It may be that Laura Riding's influence was a 'substantial factor' in Graves's poetry -- it may indeed well be that, as Professor Day has said in his own Introduction (p.xvi), 'The influence of Laura Riding is quite possibly the most important single element in his poetic career...' -- but he does not let the matter rest there. His series of to-and-fro comments again returns to his basic denial, to the reader's utter confusion, with:

p.130: 'We cannot, then, assume with finality that Miss Riding's poetic techniques or subjects had any very great impact on Graves's practice.'

However far his later perceptions drive him away from it, Professor Day appears to feel impelled to return to his original negative observation, even though his heading, for two chapters is 'Poetry Of The Laura Riding Years'! Significantly, Professor Day ignores, in his final assessment, the plain meaning of two of Mr. Graves' own statements, both of which he quotes. The first is to be found in the Foreword to Graves's Collected Poems (1938), where Laura Riding is thanked for 'her constructive and detailed criticism of my poems in various stages of composition...' ¹¹ (Professor Day

11 Robert Graves. Collected Poems (Cassell, 1938) p.xxiv.

does not, however, complete the quotation: '... a generosity from which so many contemporary poets besides myself have benefited.') The second statement is elicited from Mr. Graves by Professor Day himself. Another critic has described Norman Cameron and Alan Hodge -- who published their own poems alongside Graves's in a small three-part volume in 1942¹² -- as Graves's 'disciples': Professor Day reports Graves's comment on this....: "They were in fact disciples of Laura Riding's". Disciples or not, one has only to glance at the volumes of the 'critical summary' Epilogue, edited by Laura Riding -- in which Cameron and Hodge, and Graves, the 'associate editor', appear among the twenty or more contributors -- to see how much of her time and energy had been spent in helping others¹³.

Another oddly widespread tendency in the critical treatment of Laura (Riding) Jackson is also exhibited by Professor Day: it is the manner in which her name is used against her in order to diminish sense of a continuance of her actuality. Even in the last few years, almost wherever there is mention of her, she is still referred to as 'Laura Riding' -- the contexts of the pre-1940 years are thus brought in to enclose her -- though the subject itself be post-1940 and her name of the later period of her life and work has, in any case, become Laura (Riding) Jackson. A further example of the results of

12 Robert Graves, Norman Cameron, Alan Hodge. Work In Hand (Hogarth Press, 1942).

13 Epilogue: A Critical Summary: Laura Riding, Editor; Robert Graves, Associate Editor (Deya: Seizin Press; London: Constable) I: 1935; II: 1936; III: 1937. Laura Riding's The World And Ourselves (Chatto, 1938) formed the fourth volume of the Epilogue series.

It should be noted that the name 'Madeleine Vara' in Epilogue is a pseudonym of Laura Riding. The identification was authorised by Mrs. Jackson in Michael Kirkham's 'Robert Graves's Debt To Laura Riding.'

this kind of treatment is an essay-collaboration by James Jensen on the derivation of the key-idea of William Empson's Seven Types Of Ambiguity (1930) from A Survey Of Modernist Poetry by Laura Riding and Robert Graves (1927)¹⁴. Later in the present article we shall be taking this piece of Mr. Jensen's as an example of other varieties of mistreatment; here we note that in it Mr. Jensen invites three of the four authors concerned -- William Empson, I.A. Richards, and Robert Graves -- to contribute to his argument, and completely ignores 'Laura Riding'. Mr. Jensen thinks her (there are no other presumptions to make) either of little account or else dead. Mr. Anthony Thwaite acts in a similar manner. By discussing Laura (Riding) Jackson in the name of 'Laura Riding', Mr. Thwaite fixes her field of endeavour in a pre-1940 context, as though after that point she ceased to be, in literature and as a person. With his mind released from all sense of 'Laura Riding' as possessing current human reality, Mr. Thwaite feels free to take liberties with her work, for who cares about someone who has ceased to exist? Laura (Riding) Jackson's life as author in the past as well as in the present is of little consequence to him, she being someone of long-ago who happens to have been called 'Laura Riding'; her real substantial pertinence to his subject is therefore inevitably blurred.

Had Mr. Thwaite and the others maintained an awareness of the continuing reality of Laura (Riding) Jackson as one

¹⁴ James Jensen. 'The Construction Of Seven Types Of Ambiguity', Modern Language Quarterly, 27, September 1966, pp. 243-259.

committed not just to poetry (whether pre-1940 or later) but to understanding and realizing, as placed within language's reach, the full potential of all human aspiration toward what is wholly good, wholly true, and that she continues to work long and hard for that understanding and realization -- as long and as hard as she formerly worked for it within poetry -- then their writing on her would have undergone a change for the better, at least, if not for the adequately good. Let it be understood, then, that if we speak, as the context sometimes forces us to, of 'Laura Riding', there is a same-breath consciousness of Laura (Riding) Jackson, whose human reality is the same as -- or is it more than? -- that of Anthony Thwaite, Douglas Day, or Robert Graves; emphatically it is not that of one who ceased to exist in or around 1940.

.....

Within the general critical discussion-area of Laura (Riding) Jackson's 'influence', or of 'discipleship' (the more accurate word 'plagiarism' is not often used), or other descriptions of the character and effect of her work in the literature and literary history of this century, there is included a wide variety of hostile expression. It ranges from certain petty-spiteful character assassinations, such as can be found in some writings on the 'Fugitive' group of poets in America, to some more broadly antagonistic criticism dealing with the subject of what others have taken from her work -- the generally large business of taking being played down so that the taking appears minimal. Even in this latter sort of criticism, where it is least expected, a note of personal attack not infrequently enters, in thin disguise,

usually to shore up the critical attack. Much of both sorts, both personal-spiteful and critical-personal, is to be found, as we have indicated, in books either on the work of Robert Graves or in which that work is dealt with. Mr. Thwaite's dealing with this subject exemplifies naïvely, in its twisting of facts, what has been done and what continues to be done, though usually with more sophistication, elsewhere.

In the British edition of Mr. Thwaite's Contemporary English Poetry (1959), the Author's Note speaks of '... as close and careful a revision as I can...' (p.viii), and indeed the narrower factualities of the work -- titles, places, dates -- are in general accurate and reliable: decent use of standard sources appears to have been made. It is only when Mr. Thwaite's treatment of Robert Graves is reached that the reader encounters two statements which are factually inaccurate: they occur, conjoined, in the second paragraph of the following passage (p.131):

'To Graves, the answer to his neurosis was apparently work; in 1925, for example, he published six books, and eight in 1927. Yet much of what he was doing at this time was fragmentary; though everything he wrote -- both in verse and prose -- had a tart, individual flavour, there seemed to be little "body"; many of his poems, in particular, were simply pieces of fancy or whimsy.

However, in 1929 he left England to settle in Mallorca (one of the Balearic Islands in the Mediterranean), and from that time on his gifts have grown and matured. His self-imposed isolation from English literary life has left him free to work out his own poetic salvation and to take an idiosyncratic view of what everyone else is writing. In Mallorca, too, he met Laura Riding, the American poet, and collaborated with her in many ventures...'

This passage immediately follows a quotation from Martin Seymour-Smith's British Council pamphlet Robert Graves (1956); Mr. Thwaite appears to have made a count of items in the bibliography of that work to arrive at his figures for Graves's

publications in 1925 and 1927. Yet although the 1927 publications include A Survey Of Modernist Poetry, and the 1928, A Pamphlet Against Anthologies, both by Laura Riding and Robert Graves (Mr. Seymour-Smith lists them as by Robert Graves 'with L. Riding'), and although Mr. Seymour-Smith elsewhere in his pamphlet gives the correct date -- 1926 -- for the 'meeting' of the two writers, Mr. Thwaite goes on to give an account by which -- and unwary or uninformed readers would be forced to assume this -- such collaborations could not have become possible until 1929, or even later.

If, in connection with the matters with which Mr. Thwaite is here attempting to deal, 'standard' sources are to be looked for in Mr. Graves's own writings, two at least might be identified in works readily available for many years before 1957/59: the well-known Goodbye To All That (1929) and Mr. Graves' Collected Poems (1938). In the first, Mr. Graves's early autobiography, there is a 'Dedicatory Epilogue to Laura Riding,' which tells how Nancy Nicholson, Graves's wife at that time, and he '... happening by seeming accident upon your teasing Quids, were drawn to write to you, who were in America, asking you to come to us .. you forthwith came' (p.444); there is also reference to Riding and Graves 'printing and publishing in partnership as The Seizin Press' (p.443). The Foreword to Collected Poems (1938) records that 'In 1925 I first became acquainted with the poems and critical work of Laura Riding, and in 1926 with herself; and slowly began to revise my whole attitude to poetry. (The change begins half-way through Part II [of this volume])' (p.xxiii), and

concludes, as we have noted, 'I have to thank Laura Riding for her constructive and detailed criticism of my poems in various stages of composition -- a generosity from which so many contemporary poets besides myself have benefited.' (p.xxiv). Knowledge of the import of passages like these should be demonstrated by anyone venturing on such comparisons of Laura Riding and Robert Graves as Mr. Thwaite undertakes, such offerings of judgement and 'information' as to how things were. Critics whose admitted cynosure is the Robert Graves of 'what may be called the years in which he emerged into world fame' -- a recent phrase of Mr. Seymour-Smith's ¹⁵ -- regularly exhibit their need of the corrective of such contemporary statements.

Neither of the Graves books cited can safely be taken to have been superseded by later editions. The revised edition of Goodbye To All That, published in November 1957, omits both the whole of the 'Dedicatory Epilogue to Laura Riding' and Laura Riding's poem 'World's End', used as the 'introductory motto' in the original edition; her name, in fact, has been 'revised' out of the volume completely. The case is similar with the later recensions of Robert Graves's Collected Poems: in the 1948 edition the 1938 acknowledgements of Laura Riding are replaced by '... twelve years later

15 Martin Seymour-Smith. Guide To Modern World Literature (Wolfe, 1973) p.244; the treatment of Mr Graves here is based, with significant omissions and emendations, on Mr. Seymour-Smith's essay under 'Robert Graves' in the reference work Contemporary Poets Of The English Language (St. James Press, 1970; 2nd ed. 1975).

[than 1926] with the help of Laura Riding -- we had long been in close literary partnership -- I made a second revision, and a revision of all the poems that I had written meanwhile. Having by then a clearer notion of the poetic course that I was steering I could discard more generously than before' (Foreward, p.xi); in editions after 1948 Laura Riding is not named at all.

If information available to Mr. Thwaite in Mr. Seymour-Smith's British Council pamphlet is added to that derivable from the two passages quoted above which we have called 'standard', a simple chronology may be constructed. It is given here, with a few additional facts in parentheses:

- | | | |
|--------|----------|--|
| (1924) | (Feb.) | Laura Riding's 'The Quids' published
(in <u>The Fugitive</u>) |
| 1925 | (early) | Robert Graves and Nancy Nicholson 'happen upon' 'The Quids' |
| | (early?) | R.G. and N.N. write to L.R. |
| | (July) | R.G.'s <u>Contemporary Techniques Of Poetry</u>
(reprints 'The Quids') |
| | (Dec.) | (L.R. sails for England) |
| 1926 | (Jan.) | 'You forthwith came': L.R. 'meets' R.G. and N.N. |
| 1927 | (Nov.) | <u>A Survey Of Modernist Poetry</u> , by L.R. and R.G. |
| 1928 | (Jul.) | <u>A Pamphlet Against Anthologies</u> , by L.R. and R.G.

'Printing and publishing as The Seizin Press': (<u>Love As Love, Death As Death</u> , by L.R., the first S.P. book) |
| 1929 | | L.R. and R.G. go to Mallorca |
| | (Nov.) | <u>Goodbye To All That</u> , by R.G. |
| | (Dec.) | <u>Poems 1929</u> , by R.G. (the third S.P. book) |

... all this before Mr. Thwaite allows his curtain to rise on the association! Why did his facts go wrong there, in the Graves/Riding context? Any why did they go so wrong, making a farrago of the passage in which they occur? Was Mr. Thwaite preferring some plausible private source of Graves 'authority' over the reliable, and presumably public, authorities used elsewhere in his book? Whatever the answers to these questions -- and the rest of this essay should suggest directions in which answers may be sought -- we must note here how well Mr. Thwaite's inaccuracies, his suave dropping of several years, suit the tendency of his treatment of Mr. Graves. He first introduces the notions of 'growth' and 'maturity', and of Mr. Graves' working out 'his own poetic salvation'; only after these things have been lodged in the reader's mind as virtually accomplished by Mr. Graves in 'his self-imposed isolation' does the name of Laura Riding appear. Then, it does not come as the name of one eagerly and specifically invited by Graves: instead, the initiation of their association is given a flavour of the accessory, the incidental -- it happened, we are told, 'in Mallorca, too.' Only after question of Laura Riding's contribution to the earlier 'growth' of Mr. Graves' 'gifts', his work's acquisition of "body", has been thus obfuscated does Mr. Thwaite tell us that they 'collaborated in many ventures.' However, the substitution of 'England, 1925-26' for 'Mallorca, 1929,' simply of its accurate self, brings into just perspective the drift not only of Mr. Thwaite's words so far quoted, but all the rest of his handling of the Riding-Graves relationship.

We pause here to note a further peculiarity of chronological treatment, this being one of Mr. Graves' own making: it is concealed in the words we quoted earlier from Goodbye To All That (p.444), and makes necessary the query in our chronology, above, against the date of Graves and Nicholson's first writing to Laura Riding. Either that occasion was months after the two 'happened upon' 'The Quids', or Mr. Graves is using the word 'forthwith' ('you forthwith came') very loosely. For in his Contemporary Techniques of Poetry, published in July 1925 and therefore prepared in earlier months, Mr. Graves reprinted 'The Quids' in full, calling it 'a first favourite with me'; yet Laura Riding did not sail for England until December 1925. Students of Mr. Graves's accounts of happenings will be familiar with such time-and-circumstance difficulties: he has, for instance, as Sydney Musgrove has pointed out¹⁶, published three conflicting versions of the tale of when and how he came to begin writing The White Goddess.

The second half of Mr. Thwaite's account of the Graves-Riding association runs:

'... collaborated with her in many ventures. Most important of all was the mutual influence of each other's poems and, as is often the case, the work of the less important poet served as stimulus to the better. Laura Riding's work has never been well known, but I guarantee that if some of her poems were read out to a competent audience, nine out of ten would say that they were by Graves. Yet what is abstract and delicate in Laura Riding becomes concrete and tough in Graves; his poetic tone of voice is wry, ironical, reserved, and yet immensely strong.'

16 Sydney Musgrove. The Ancestry Of The White Goddess (University of Auckland, 1962)

Here Mr. Thwaite's intentions can clearly be seen in the contradictory procession of his thought. After he has asserted that there was 'mutual influence' -- a statement which refers to a two-way process, and from which it is proper to infer that each of the two poets admired the other sufficiently to want to exchange tone, ideas and style -- he brings us to the curious proposition that one poet, Laura Riding, whose 'work has never been well known,' is the 'less important' poet, and this even while managing to serve (his use of 'served' is not without interest) as 'stimulus' to the other poet, the 'better' one. And what does Mr. Thwaite mean by the lesser poet stimulating the better poet 'as is often the case'? Is he thinking of Shakespeare and the pre-Elizabethans? Johnson and Pope? Wordsworth and Coleridge? Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot? or W.B. Yeats? Which of these are 'less important'? There is, in truth, no legitimate 'case' to which to refer: Mr. Thwaite's use of the phrase is an attempt to lend the air of historical authority to what follows. Somehow or other we have been manoeuvred from the ascription of 'mutual influence', denoting equality, to the observation that the 'less important poet,' even though less important, even though the influence is 'mutual' (!), serves, oddly, as 'stimulus' to the 'better' poet.

The two notions 'less important' and 'stimulus' are the linch-pins in the passage. 'Less important' is intended to dispose of any inclination to attribute to Laura Riding at least equal rights with Robert Graves in respect of poetic merit, implanting the idea of her inferiority in our minds

in preparation for 'Laura Riding's work has never been well known,' a key idea upon which the whole of Mr. Thwaite's text depends. The word 'stimulus' is selected by him for its covert implication of largeness of stature of the thing stimulated. Though misleading, it serves the author's intentions by contradicting the suggestion of 'mutual influence'. Having taken us from 'mutual influence' to 'less important', and then attempted a circumvention of the issues thus raised with 'stimulus' (though 'influence' would be more nearly true if the word took into account what it has been made to cover, generally, in the case of the relation between the work of Laura Riding and that of Robert Graves), Mr. Thwaite then arrives at the observation that 'if some of her poems were read out to a competent audience, nine out of ten would say that they were by Graves.' In taking us from 'mutual influence' awkwardly to 'less important', and from there to his 'guarantee' (no less!) that Laura Riding's poem would be indistinguishable to a 'competent' audience from Mr. Graves's, Mr. Thwaite disingenuously implies, in effect, that she was the one influenced (what happened to 'mutual'), for it is she who is put to the test and found wanting, not Graves, in the suppositious finding that her poems are no different from his. Mr. Thwaite by 'competent' does not mean competent at all -- he means Graves-orientated, as he himself is Graves-orientated; for a competent audience would know the work of both authors. What he is suggesting is that Laura Riding's poems are subsumable in Robert Graves's poems, and this allegation, by Mr. Thwaite's way of thinking, need not be supported by criti-

cal evidence.

Mr. Thwaite shows his hand further by his concluding contrast of Laura Riding's 'abstract and delicate' poetry with Robert Graves's 'wry, ironical, reserved, and yet immensely strong' poetry. Superior to members of that 'competent' audience he spoke of, Mr. Thwaite can tell the difference between the work of the two poets. But a word he uses in putting his case betrays him by the very accuracy of its characterization: 'Yet what is abstract and delicate in Laura Riding becomes concrete and tough in Robert Graves'. Surrounded by all Mr. Thwaite's euphemistic belittlement, the real pertinence of the word 'becomes' may easily be lost upon the reader. But as Mr. Thwaite, judging by his letting the word slip, must know, what is of one nature in Laura Riding really does become something else in Robert Graves, he being not stimulated, in fact, but as we will show, taking the whole substance of her thought and attempting to make it his own.

Given equal weight of attention, Laura Riding's poems are quite distinguishable from Mr. Graves's, presenting no problem for the reader in identification of authorship: this is so even where Mr. Graves imitates or makes variation on Riding themes or linguistic procedures. For, whereas his poetic career is erratic, turning first to this and then to that theme -- from war to country sentiment to psychology to mythology (both classical and home-made) -- she is constant, her poems a movement of vision centred within the human aspiration towards truth, which, for her, poetry enshrined.

This basic divergence can be seen even where particular poems of each are selected for "comparability". Take first a very early poem of hers, 'How Blind And Bright'¹⁷, in which the ways of seeing are shown to have controlled the ways of thinking, the sun belonging to the 'visibility of men' where

Eyes looking out for eyes
Meet only seeing, in common faith,
Visibility and brightness.

The visibility which the sun gives, here, is seen as directing the thoughts of man outwards to what is visible to the eyes, so that what is seen is only other eyes, seeing similarly and meeting 'in common faith.' Darkness, on the other hand, forces the eyes to

Look inward and meet sight.

In a later poem, 'The Signs Of Knowledge'¹⁸, the sun and moon are still used in this sense:

The first sign of the two signs
Shall be unlove of the sun.
The second sign of the two signs
Shall be unlife of the earth.
And the first with the second sign locked
Shall be undeath of the moon.

The sun, the earth, and the moon are used quite literally here. When man can bring himself to turn his eyes away from the sun and the visible world it illuminates, the world of the moon will assume its rightful place of importance as inner thought. As Mrs. Jackson said recently in a paper accompanying a reading of her poems¹⁹:

'Nowhere should I be taken as speaking by what are called "symbols." If, for instance, I say "the sun

17 Laura Riding. Collected Poems p.11

18 Collected Poems p.229-233

19 Laura (Riding) Jackson. From a reading for Lamont Library, Harvard University; quoted with author's permission applicable to the present article only.

which multiplied" or "the moon which singled", as I do in one poem, I am endeavouring to indicate actualities of physical circumstance in which our inner crucialities are set. My moon may look like the old tired poetical symbol, and I like an old tired poetic romanticist, but I truly meant that the moon's being what it is where it intervenes in our outer circumstances as a negator of the sun's fostering excessiveness in our regard, both lush and destructive, as a tempering counter-agency, relatively little but near.'

Mr Graves' liking for sun and moon symbols is attested to widely in his work, and many of his poems display some contrast between sun and moon, or between light and dark, or between sun-god and moon-goddess. And this is where the essential difference lies. Laura Riding's sun and moon are literally that, and no more or less; Graves's use of sun and moon, however, always contains the personal, emotional gesture, placing sun and moon outside himself as symbols. A glance into any of the later volumes now included in Mr. Graves's Collected Poems 1975 will soon encounter a display of this. So, in 'Blessed Sun'²⁰:

Honest morning blesses the Sun's beauty;
Noon, his endurance; dusk, his majesty;
Sweetheart, our own twin worlds bask in the glory
And searching wisdom of that single eye --
Why must the Queen of Night on her moon throne
Tear up their contract and still reign alone?

Here, the 'twin worlds' of the speaker and the lover are seen as governed by the capitalized 'Sun' and 'Queen of Night' moon, ciphers outside the poem influencing events inside. Or look at the rather contrived poem, 'The Crane'²¹:

The Crane lounes loudly in his need,
And so for love I loune:
Son to the sovereign Sun indeed,
Courier of the Moon.

20,21 Robert Graves. Collected Poems 1975 (Cassell, 1975)
p. 349; p.352.

In this both sun and moon are capitalized, indicating their powers, while the speaker is an agent of both, identified with the crane who 'lounes' for help. The dramatic element of the poem, its emotional gesture, is the appeal made to a potency beyond the human distress. The majority of the poems in the volume in which these two first appeared consist of such appeals²². In Laura Riding's poems, sun and moon are the 'actualities of physical circumstance in which our inner crucialities are set'. Male thought is identified with the sun because it is beneath its light that he has evolved, the sun providing the visibility not only of seeing but of thinking. Man's ordered world, as historically present, is a visibly ordered world, identified as existing outside him. He repeatedly fails to understand or comprehend the significance of the world of 'darkness' where eyes, in the words of her poem, 'Look inward and meet sight.' Before this world the male feels insecure, as before woman he feels insecure: to him both represent the unknown quantity, the 'something else,' as Laura Riding characterized it in Epilogue²³. Whereas for her the sun and moon possess a particular potency which is manifested in thought, for Graves the sun and moon are removed from thought, as being outside it.

Graves is an emotional poet. The substance of his poems is provided by transferring the material of ideas to a personal

22 Robert Graves. Poems 1965-1968 (Cassell, 1968)

23 Epilogue I, p.18.

plane, and fleshing them out with rhetorical gesture. As Professor Michael Kirkham puts it, where Graves's poems are 'subjective,' Laura Riding's are 'suprapersonal'; what is an idea expanded to universality in her becomes, in him, 'an expression of violent emotion'²⁴. Mr Graves is adept at turning others' thought to personal use, though not so adept that he does not occasionally let slip the source. We now cite two instances, selected from many possible examples, in which Mr. Graves' source is plainly Laura Riding. Here is a passage from his novel Seven Days In New Crete, first published in 1949²⁵:

'It seems to me that a Late Christian poet was committed in the name of integrity to resist, doubt, scoff, destroy and play the fool...' (p.199)

In 1928, in Contemporaries And Snobs, Laura Riding had suggested that one way for the poet to avoid losing self-reliance was to leave the contemporary world to its own devices:

'To help pass away the time, while this is happening, the poet with the poetic faculty strapped on his back may play the buffoon, call criticism "nuncle" and cajole it into a historical accuracy in the dating of poetry...' (p.120-121)

Our second example shows the process at work in poetry: it is one to which Mrs. Jackson herself has recently drawn attention, in an essay in Denver Quarterly (1974)²⁶. She

24 Michael Kirkham. 'Robert Graves's Debt To Laura Riding,' p.42. In addition to the works mentioned in note 1, Professor Kirkham has contributed an article on 'Laura Riding's Poems' to the Cambridge Quarterly, 5, Spring 1971, pp.302-308.

25 Robert Graves. Seven Days In New Crete (Cassell, 1949); published in the U.S.A. as Watch The North Wind Rises (Creative Age Press, 1949).

26 Laura (Riding) Jackson. 'Some Autobiographical Corrections Of Literary History', Denver Quarterly, 8, Winter 1974, pp. 1-33.

there reprints a poem of hers, one of the sequence 'Fragments', which is to be found in her now rare book Poems: A Joking Word (1930), on p.159:

Here is escape then, Hercules, from empire:
Where Zero the Companionable
Consoles unthinkable lusts.

Compare this with Robert Graves' poem 'To Ogmian Hercules,' published in his Poems 1965-1968, which Mrs. Jackson also quotes; it begins:

Your Labours are performed, your Bye-works too;
Your ashes gently drift from Oeta's peak.
Here is escape then, Hercules, from empire.

There is no need to comment on these two examples except to say that the word 'influence' is obviously out of place. The following passage by Laura Riding is to be found in Epilogue I (1935), in her essay 'The Idea Of God' - which consists of answers to questions put to her by T.S. Matthews, one of the collaborators in Epilogue. We provide the quotation as an example of the thought, the writing, of hers, which Graves takes and makes general use of later: in this case in, for instance, The White Goddess. These are Laura Riding's words²⁷:

'... There is available to man at every moment all the finally available material of experience. It is not a question of 'new' or 'more' material, but how he uses the material available to him, and whether he uses it all. You have asked me what must have seemed to you a fantastic question -- about 'seeing' God. And I allowed

²⁷ Epilogue I, 'The Idea Of God,' by Thomas Matthews and Laura Riding, pp. 6-54. The main text is by Laura Riding, initialled by her. Thomas Matthews' initials appear after eight questions listed at the beginning of the essay, and after some of the notes at its close; there is then a 'Supplementary Argument' between T.M. and L.R. It is to be noted that Mrs. Jackson, neither in the quotation here given, nor elsewhere, equates woman with God or with a god or goddess.

it its full extent of fantasticness by changing it into a question about 'seeing' the something else. My answer to this question is that man can only 'see' the something else in 'seeing' woman. And whether it is less fantastic to envisage, in a sudden apparition, a completely unfamiliar material of human experience, than to envisage, in the accustomed apparition 'woman', all the humanly available material of experience, is a point that the spiritually perplexed commonly evade in lives divided between irregular mystical fantasy and conventional sexuality.'

Even such a short quotation may, incidentally, convey something of the violence done to thought of this quality by the kind of transfer and adaptation of it that Graves has made: to contexts of "Goddess" and of "seriously"-discussed "Muse." In The White Goddess these uses of her thought ^{are} ~~is~~ much padded are out by Graves with a great show of learning; in his later poems they are made more "exciting" with admixtures of the emotions of 'conventional sexuality'; or they appear watered-down in such musings of his as that upon 'Real Women' in the Ladies Home Journal for January 1964²⁸. Still, it is strange that the connexion continues to be missed by commentators who with one part of their minds know very well that Graves was in virtually daily contact for not less than thirteen years (1926-1939) with the source of this thought and writing. Sydney Musgrove, for example, in his otherwise extensively researched pamphlet The Ancestry Of The White Goddess²⁹, completely overlooks Epilogue, with its abundance of material of the kind we have cited.

28 Robert Graves. 'Real Women', collected in his Mammon And The Black Goddess (London: Cassell; New York: Doubleday 1965)

29 Sydney Musgrove, see note 16.

Epilogue also contains a number of clear instances of Mr. Graves' presentation of himself at that time as an eager learner from her, notably in the long article "From A Private Correspondence On Reality"³⁰. The "Correspondence" was conducted between Laura Riding and Robert Graves; at one point he says:

'It was as a poet in search of an integration of reality that you first knew me. The problem for me was at that time... what to do when the world of thought had grown unmanageable?'

On the following page he remarks that:

'To you the problem of poetic scope presents no difficulties. You are able, by orderly definition, to reduce to the status of idiosyncrasies large fields of specialist activity....'

And asks:

'Could you give me a simple clue to your method of gradation?'

A lengthy book is really required to unravel all the implications of what the word 'influence' means when applied to the effect Laura (Riding) Jackson has had on Robert Graves. He is congenitally given to converting all sorts of material within reach into stuff bearing his authorial stamp; and from no other quarter has he taken so much as from Laura (Riding) Jackson. Yet, wherever question arises of how things stand between Graves and Riding, there is to be found, in nearly every case, a tangle of contradictions at the centre of which is Mr. Graves, actively untying threads. He has assiduously unpicked the name of Laura Riding from his literary record: we have already given examples of this, in

³⁰ Epilogue III, 'From A Private Correspondence On Reality' by Laura Riding and Robert Graves, pp.107-130; our quotations are taken from p. 121; p. 122; p.123.

citing the revisions of Goodbye To All That and of the Collected Poems prefaces, and there are more. Mr. Graves has misrepresented what pertains to Laura Riding's part in material used in his Introduction to The Collected Poems Of Norman Cameron (1957)³¹, where quotations from Cameron's letters are reprinted as though addressed to Graves. In actuality the letters were addressed to Laura Riding; they are to be found in her book Everybody's Letters (1933), addressed to 'Lilith' and signed 'Cyril' -- pseudonyms for Riding and for Cameron respectively³². Further, Graves has belittled the role she played in the collaborative - 'word by word collaboration' - A Survey Of Modernist Poetry and A Pamphlet Against Anthologies, by referring to the former as though his, and, with both books, relegating her to the addendum status of '(with Laura Riding)',³³. Further again, he has claimed writing wholly hers as his own -- see his presentation of her essay on Nietzsche in The Common Asphodel³⁴ and, later, in the Penguin edition of The Crowning Privilege³⁵. That essay apart, about two hundred of the 329 text-pages of

31 Norman Cameron. The Collected Poems Of Norman Cameron (1905-1953); with an Introduction by Robert Graves (Hogarth Press, 1957).

32 Laura Riding. Everybody's Letters; collected and arranged by Laura Riding, with an Editorial postscript (Arthur Barker, 1933). For the correspondence from 'Cyril' to 'Lilith', see pp. 48-62.

33 Robert Graves. The Common Asphodel: Collected Essays On Poetry 1922-1949 (Hamish Hamilton, 1949).

34 Epilogue I, 'Nietzsche', by M(adeleine) V(ara), pp. 113-125. M.V. is L.R.: see note 13.

35 Robert Graves. The Crowning Privilege (Penguin Books, 1959). The first English edition of this book (1955) did not reprint the 'Nietzsche' essay; it did appear, however, in the first American edition (Doubleday, 1956).

The Common Asphodel -- its subtitle is 'Collected Essays On Poetry, 1922-1949, by Robert Graves' -- are occupied by work written in collaboration with Laura Riding or under her close editorship, but that significant fact is overlaid by the tissue of misrepresentations (to employ that perhaps over-kind word again) which there surrounds Mr. Graves' use of her name. This common asphodelling of his has persuaded unwary later authors also to refer to the collaborative Riding-Graves books as by Graves '(with Laura Riding)': two of the many examples are to be found, one in the entry under 'Graves' in The Oxford Companion To English Literature (4th ed., 1967), another in The Story of English Literature, by Anne Tibble (1970). Ann Tibble also states, in speaking of A Survey Of Modernist Poetry, that 'He [Graves] was probably the first to recognize the greatness of the poetry of Gerald Manley Hopkins',³⁶.

Awareness of the key role played by The Common Asphodel in deceiving a generation of readers makes it difficult to enjoy the comic aspect of the professed puzzlement of 'Gravesians' about the master's failure, since 1949, to produce more criticism of Common Asphodel quality. Yet the comedy is there, grim and pathetic both. Mr. Martin Seymour-Smith took up a representative Gravesians-in-waiting stance in his British Council pamphlet in 1956: 'The critical strength of The Common Asphodel as compared with the lack of

³⁶ Ann Tibble. The Story Of English Literature (Peter Owen, 1970) p.231.

care often displayed in The Crowning Privilege [1955]... leads one to hope Graves will some day devote his energies to a comprehensive survey of English poetry.³⁷ In 1970 Mr. Seymour-Smith modified this passage by substituting for 'leads one to hope' the disclamatory phrase 'led many to hope'³⁸. By then the rocket of Mr. Graves' reputation was well on its way to the upper levels of populo-critical acclaim; part of our endeavour here, however, is to show that its launching-stages (so to speak) have not fallen away into invisibility but are available for, and demand, close critical scrutiny.

To restate our main theme in brief: the problem of critical evaluation in the Graves-Riding relation is not resolvable in terms of 'influence', nor even of 'plagiarism'; nor is the answer that the Riding to be found in Graves is just a 'phase' or transitory 'period' (two terms used by Professor Day) that Graves went through -- unless it be admitted to be an ever-convenient self-repeating phase or period. From nowhere in the Graves sphere of power, within the climate of which Mr. Thwaite and others write, could we expect acknowledgement that Graves has been engaged in putting Laura Riding's work and its teachings to use in his work all this long time. Nevertheless, the actuality is appropriation, as Mrs. Jackson has felt compelled to characterize it these later years.³⁹

37 Martin Seymour-Smith. Robert Graves (Longmans, for the British Council, 1956; 1965)

38 Martin Seymour-Smith. Robert Graves (1970)

39 Laura (Riding) Jackson. 'Some Autobiographical Corrections Of Literary History', pp. 15 and 24.

We are indebted, for a good deal of what we have cited of Mr. Graves' appropriations, to Mrs. Jackson's article 'Some Autobiographical Corrections Of Literary History' (1974)⁴⁰; as we are also indebted to her late catching up, in a letter published in The Modern Language Quarterly of December 1971⁴⁰, with a concerted 'manhandling', as she describes it, of her in a presentation published in that magazine in 1966 of an article by James Jensen⁴¹ on William Empson's Seven Types Of Ambiguity. This article, examining the origins of Empson's book, was accompanied by commentaries solicited from Professor Empson, Dr. I.A. Richards^b and Mr. Graves, these having been offered an opportunity to say their say, but not Mrs. Jackson -- who, 'mishandled' by Messrs. Jensen, Empson and Graves (Dr. Richards made no reference to her), was herself left in ignorance of the article's procedure. Mr. Graves, in his contribution in the form of a letter, puts on a pious show of reproaching Jensen and Empson, not for their specific derogatory treatment of 'Laura Riding' but for their 'unchivalrousness' in quoting 'our joint works as if simply mine' -- he who has treated them as really such! -- and he throws in Douglas Day for good measure as another culprit. (Professor Day wrote Swifter Than Reason with plentiful help from Mr. Graves on the subject of Laura Riding, the extent of Day's use of it redounding later to Graves' embarrassment.) Having established his own

⁴⁰ Laura (Riding) Jackson. 'Correspondence', Modern Language Quarterly, 32, December 1971, pp.447-448.

⁴¹ James Jensen. see note 14.

credentials of 'chivalrousness', Mr. Graves proceeds to out-strip the others in misrepresentation:

'I was, I believe, responsible for most of the detailed examination of poems in A Survey Of Modernist Poetry -- for example showing the complex implications of Sonnet 129 before its eighteenth-century repunctuations; Laura Riding certainly for the general principles quotes on page 5...'

Mrs. Jackson, in her letter of protest at this composite assault, wrote:

'According to this magnanimous certitude, my contribution is essentially a matter of fifteen lines; but "general principles" might among equally fair-minded people win me credit for -- perhaps double (!) the worth of an ordinary (detailed examination) line. It seems to me appropriate to record that, without public statement of mine, recognition of my intellectually and verbally sensitive hand within the glove of the Survey method has been mounting, with perception of its connection, via Mr. Empson's hobby-horse use of it, with the 'New Criticism', which tried to make real horse-flesh of it.'

Any scholar of integrity will, if he pursues the issue of the Riding-Graves collaborations, agree that Mrs. Jackson's is a just account. The critical follow-through of A Survey ... is not to be found in Graves' work but in Laura Riding's -- in such books as Contemporaries And Snobs (1928), Anarchism Is Not Enough (1928), and Experts Are Puzzled (1930) -- while the 'general principles' are given literal application in her poems, not in his. With a little knowledge it is not difficult to see through Mr. Graves's attempt airily to reduce the extent and quality of Laura Riding's work in A Survey.... to a few 'general principles.' Nothing is further from the truth. Mr. Graves' words, there, do not represent a simple yielding to the blandishments of Mr. Jensen and Mr. Empson: his statements lead to the heart of the Graves

strategy of combining utmost possible use of Laura Riding's with utmost appearance of gallantry by patronization, along with utmost possible effort to cast the subject of her into his shade. Those who take the trouble to go beyond the recently-manufactured appearances in these matters will know just how many those 'general principles' are, and how formidable their scope.

Critics engaged in writing on Mr. Graves' work seem to become hypnotized by the spell of his magic in making 'Laura Riding' disappear. They do so without struggle: if the created illusion is given authority, it is so easy to follow the Graves line. The effects spread far and wide, rippling into the corners of even the most ephemeral commentary of the day, until the formulations are hardened into a rigid common acceptance of falsity. So every year, up to the present, brings its many instances of the attributing to Robert Graves what properly belongs, at the very least in terms of the order of names, to Laura Riding. On June 6th, 1975, in the Times Literary Supplement, we find Professor William H. Pritchard agreeing with a review (May 2nd) of a book on Yeats criticism edited by him that 'a place should have been found for Robert Graves, and if I had known about it would have included the hilarious Graves-Riding treatment of "Innisfree" (sic) in A Pamphlet Against Anthologies.' And, in the New Statesman of July 25th, 1975, Mr. Frederick Grubb, in a 'tribute' entitled 'Odd Man Not Out: Graves At Eighty', quotes 'Graves and Riding' as saying that art should not 'react into a satiric or actual primitivism,' so that once again Graves is

accorded pride of authorial place, Riding appearing something of an afterthought (the quotation is from A Survey ...). Worse, Mr. Grubb then refers to Mr. Graves as the addressee of the Norman Cameron letters, as found in the Graves introduction to The Collected Poems Of Norman Cameron: '... from Norman Cameron .. he [Graves] gets an answer - "I'm in disfavour with the Director .. for wearing that red jersey you gave me"'. (Examination of the letter as originally printed in Everybody's Letters⁴² reveals that it ends with the question 'How is Hubert?' [i.e. Robert], so its addressee, and the donor of the jersey, was undoubtedly Laura Riding. Mr. Grubb would surely not have focused on those particular words in his 'tribute' had he known what petty meanness would thus be actualized.) Thus, whether intentionally or by defaulting on the obligation to accuracy, do such writers abet Mr. Graves in his not-relaxed purpose of playing down (and down) the connections between his work and Laura Riding's by any methods which yield results.

The extent to which the unjust situation we have described is maintained and perpetuated via confidants of Mr. Graves himself is grimly suggested by a slight passage quoted in a recent Sotheby's literary-auction catalogue (16 July 1974, lot 403.) This has Mr. Graves telling a correspondent in 1943, evidently apropos of Laura Riding's poem 'Though In One Time' (published in her Love As Love, Death As Death, 1928), '... I think [her use of] "bewilderment" picks up the thought of

42 Laura Riding. Everybody's Letters, pp. 50-51

my poem of "Pure Death," written a few months beforehand...'

So far as we have been able to establish, the Graves poem was indeed published earlier than the Riding, and in the absence of precise datings of composition the matter might have had to rest there, sense of the intrinsic unlikeliness of the indicated 'pick up' notwithstanding. However -- at the risk of taking Mr. Graves' private claim of one-word-influence more seriously than it deserves -- it can as it happens be demonstrated that, if we are to regard the word 'bewilderment' as poetic trove, it was one of the earliest pieces of such to roll downstream (to anticipate a figure we use below) from Laura Riding to Robert Graves. It will be remembered that, by Mr. Graves' own account, his attention was first drawn to Laura Riding Gottschalk's work by her poem 'The Quids,' printed in The Fugitive for February 1924. That issue also contains her poem 'To An Unborn Child', in which occurs the line 'For there is sorrow here for your bewilderment': that poem appears on page 9, and 'The Quids' on pages 10-11!

We return, in closing, to the case of Mr. Thwaite's account offered to -- we might say, imposed upon -- his Japanese students and other readers. That accuracy need demand no more space or energy than inaccuracy, but that identifying and correcting even 'straightforward' inaccuracies may take much of both -- and can rarely undo harm done -- are commonplaces worth repeating. Yet inaccuracy in itself is a minor offence: Mr. Thwaite makes it a major one by using it in the service of an abetting of Mr. Graves, in his treatment of Laura (Riding) Jackson, that vies with Graves' own in

purposefulness. There is not so much a warping of the truth, in Mr Thwaite's account of the relations between the two, as, in reality, no truth at all. There was no 'mutual influence': the influence went all one way, from Laura Riding downstream to where Graves was drawing off -- as he has never stopped drawing off -- as much as his reservoir could hold. She was not a 'stimulus' for Robert Graves: she was a source. Her poems are quite distinguishable from his, except where he imitates or makes variations on her themes or uses of language: he has tried and tried to write 'like' her, but he cannot pull it off, try as he may. If critics do their work thoroughly, not to say fairly, there can be no danger of confusion.

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Note: A fuller bibliographical checklist of the work of Laura (Riding) Jackson compiled by Mr. Alan Clark may be found in the forthcoming issue of Chelsea 35, Autumn 1976.