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**Abstract**
Considers the influence of Williams on Heath-Stubbs’s Arthurian poem cycle. Part II examines particularly the symbolism of the Muses in *Artorius*.

**Additional Keywords**
John Heath-Stubbs' Artorius and the Influence of Charles Williams

Joe R. Christopher

Part II

III. The Nine Muses—and a Tenth

Artorius, a true epic, is a triumph of the Muse.

—Dorothy Donnelly

Structure, discussed previously, in Section II, is, of course, part of the artistry of a work; but it is only one part of many. I cannot touch on many aspects in one essay; but I would like to discuss, if too briefly and in terms mainly of the verse forms, the versification. But I will approach this topic in terms of the Muses, which will lead me, at the end, into a comment or two on the content.

Heath-Stubbs invokes all nine of the classical Muses at the start of his poem, beginning with Calliope, the Muse of epic poetry:

Take down, Calliope, your trumpet from its tack:
Rested has it long, and rusted? Give us a rouse, girl!
Your voice I invoke now, and your eight with violets crowned
Sisters to sing, to a star-dance I dispose them,
Through the zone of the zodiac, where Zeus' son,
And Leto's, Apollo, shall lead with his lyre. (1)

Later, in the fourth book, "Cancer," Heath-Stubbs reinvokes this goddess:

Come back, Calliope, at call, we have been staying
With some of your sisters down sylvan byways.

His purpose, he explains, is

To describe a descent to the depths of creation,
And Artorius even underneath the earth
Moving his wars; warily I make for it. (34)

These passages from two books are enough to establish several points about Heath-Stubbs' Artorius.

First, the tone of the poem is far different from what those in the English tradition have come to think of as epic. Milton begins Paradise Lost very formally:

Of man’s first disobedience, and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
Brought death into the world, and all our woe,
With loss of Eden, till one greater Man
Restore us, and regain the blissful seat,
Sing, Heav’ly Muse....

The contrast with Heath-Stubbs is striking:

Take down, Calliope, your trumpet from its tack:
Rested has it long, and rusted? Give us a rouse, girl. (1)

Heath-Stubbs is writing an epic, but obviously it is a modern epic. More specifically, the sentence structure is simpler, the diction is more English than Latinate or Italianate, and the tone is more colloquial than formal. These first lines are not all there is to Heath-Stubbs' poem; but, as a general indication, this contrast to Milton will do.

Let me add a striking support to Heath-Stubbs' consciousness of what he is doing. As I mentioned in the first section of this paper, C.S. Lewis was listed by Heath-Stubbs as one of the Oxford teachers—I suppose he means lecturers—who most influenced him. Lewis' A Preface to "Paradise Lost" appeared in 1942, and probably Heath-Stubbs went to hear Lewis' lectures on Milton at Oxford in 1939. Either in those early lectures or in the book, Heath-Stubbs would have met Lewis' defense of Milton's style as appropriate to the great epic. But Heath-Stubbs, nevertheless, has chosen an opposed method. He is, I am certain, conscious of what he rejects, both of Lewis and of Milton.

Second point. Another contrast with Milton is the verse form. Milton writes blank verse, the English equivalent to the unrhymed dactylic hexameter of the Greeks and Romans. For an epic, if he had wanted to be thoroughly classical, Heath-Stubbs had available to him either blank verse—unrhymed iambic pentameter—or I suppose, an accentual dactylic hexameter, such as Longfellow used, with fair success, in Evangeline. Perhaps even, writing as late as he did, Heath-Stubbs could have chosen the loose six-beat line which C. Day Lewis and others have used for modern translations of the classical epics. But Heath-Stubbs chose the alliterative meter.

Again, as with his diction and sentence structure, Heath-Stubbs chose the English Example, for the alliterative meter may be called the native epic meter. This is simply to say that Beowulf is written in the alliterative, four beat line. Other Anglo-Saxon poems, written in this verse form, which are near to the epic are such Biblical retellings as Crist and such saints' lives as Cynewulf's Elene. In the early Middle English period appeared such Arthurian alliterative works as The Alliterative Morte Arthure and Layamon's Mort (both mentioned in Professor Chelifer's lecture in "Sagittarius," 71 and 72 respectively). With these works, a reader is somewhere between a historical chronicle and a romance. In what is called the Alliterative Revival of the fourteenth century, two major poems, one of them Arthurian, appear—the Pearl Poet's Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and William Langland's Piers Plowman. And finally, one of the major poems of our own age, W.H. Auden's The Age of Anxiety, is written in the alliterative meter. In a way, the latter completes a cycle, for Auden was inspired to write a long alliterative poem by hearing,
in his student days at Oxford, J.R.R. Tolkien recite Beowulf. But, more to the point, there is a long tradition in English of the lengthy, serious alliterative poem, beginning with what is usually called an epic—a primary epic, by Lewis in A Preface to "Paradise Lost" (12).

I do not argue that Beowulf and Arthurius have the same tone—although, who knows how colloquial that opening "Hwaet!" sounded to Anglo-Saxons? Overall, however, the traditional formulae must have given Beowulf a more formal style, something like the 1928 Episcopal Book of Common Prayer compare to the contemporary version. I should add one oddity which I have noticed in reading Arthurius. Anyone who has studied Old English versification will recall that the third stress set the alliterative pattern for the line; and in at least the two later works which I know best—Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and Piers Plowman—although lots of irregularities have crept in, still the third stress is usually involved in the alliteration. But Heath-Stubb's fond of a line which alliterates AAAA. I find four clear examples on the first page of "Aries," and they appear throughout. An example is

Lastly and lyrically Euterpe shall lament.

(1)

Of course, I feel certain that Heath-Stubb's, like most modern poets, is writing more by ear than by formula: but this variation also serves to divide his alliterative meter from other works in the tradition.

Not all of the books in Arthurius are written in this meter. But the first is, with its invocation of the Muses; its description of the first of the Battle of Mount Badon; its conversation between Gwion and Daegrah; and its concluding conversation between Arthurius and his fellows after their victory. So the fourth book, "Cancer," with its description of Arthurius's adventures underground. Its opening invocation of Calliope has already been quoted. The seventh book, "Libra," telling of the attempt to establish laws for the kingdom, is also in the alliterative meter. Finally, the tenth book, "Capricorn," telling of the Christmas celebration and Mordred's rebellion, is, except for the inserted version of "The Twelve Days of Christmas," in the alliterative meter too. This makes four books out of eight. These, I take it, are the heroic core of the book. However, if a critic were to judge only by content, the discussion of the laws seems hardly heroic in the traditional sense and the omission of the final battle seems odd. But I will discuss the latter later—I have already indicated that it is in the form of classical tragedy. Let me add the obvious. When I began this essay, I mentioned that Arthurius was subtitled A Heroic Poem in four books and eight episodes. The "four books" are clearly those in alliterative meter; the "eight episodes" are those books in other meters or in prose—Heath-Stubb's quite aware of what he is doing.

Since I am discussing the Muses, let me add here the transition in the first book between the Battle of Mount Badon and the poets' conversation. Heath-Stubb's writes about not telling all the battles:

But frankly, Calliope, do you find this com­modious For the liting of your lyre, so late in the day as this is? I, at any rate, would avoid this argument, And turn aside from the sanguine spectacle of battle:

Murder in the mass is no matter fitting For a maiden lady, like you, to muse upon, Or so would I presume—though precedents suggest themselves. (6)

I do not plan to dwell on minute details in this account of the Muses and their influence, but I must say I find this transition delightful, both for its pun about Calliope, a maiden lady, musing on murder, and for its comment about precedents—reducing the Iliad to a not-to-be-accepted literary antecedent (almost legally considered).

The third and final point I wanted to make about those invocations of Calliope which I quoted earlier is that the fourth book, "Cancer," in which Merddyn sends Arthurius underground is based on Milton's comment that in his youth he had planned to write on "Arthur's" wars underneath the earth; in fact, one of the two epigraphs to Heath-Stubb's poem is the two lines from Milton's "Manus" which mention this, so it is important in Arthurius:

Si quando indigenas revocabo in carmina rages, Arthuramque etiam sub terris bella movemt.

(9)

In Merritt Y. Hughes' translation:

If ever I shall summon back our native kings into our songs, And Arthur, waging his wars beneath the earth

Since Milton gave no details of his plans, there is no reason in this survey to consider how Heath-Stubb's has developed the epic. But a reader finds here both a Miltonic completion, which indicates the competition with which Heath-Stubb's is daring comparison, and a descent into the underworlds, inviting comparison to Aeneas' visit to Hades, for example. Indeed, Arthurius, before he descends, mentions both the episode in the Aeneid and a somewhat parallel situation in Scipio's Somnium. And Merddyn, in reply, alludes to Dante's yet-to-be-written Divine Comedy (36). Thus, both in the epic tradition and in the Arthurian mythos, there is reason to include the alliterative book four. (Merlin is called "Merddyn" in this fourth book, as indicated, but "Myrddin" in the seventh; Heath-Stubb's failure to catch this is probably due to his near blindness.)

At this point, I have completed my discussion of the invocations of Calliope and I turn to her sisters. Heath-Stubb's mentions each of them in his invocation immediately following the six opening lines which were quoted above; he gives each sometimes one line and sometimes two. The first of the eight:

Urania in a dialogue shall discourse delightfully. (1)

Urania is the Muse of Astronomy, and Milton, in Paradise Lost, turned her into a "Hea'venly Muse" (1.6, assuming the same Muse is addressed in VIII.1). But Heath-Stubb's is thinking of Astronomy as he writes this—or, rather, Astronomy's credulous sister, Astrology. For this Muse governs the second book, "Taurus," which is a prose dialogue between Tiltud and Bedwini, with their names printed at the first as in a classical manuscript announcing the speakers. It is in this book, as stated earlier, that Tiltud and Bishop Bedwini mention the planets which rule the various
The second of the eight:

Thalia come also, colloquial in a clown's mask. (1)

This refers to the third book, "Gemini," which is a comic drama in which Gwion and Daegrafn, the two poets, meet Phyllidulus, a scholar in the fens of the future Cambridge, and his ward, Lalage. I will return to this book, for a comment about content; but now it is enough to mention the genre. Gwion, Daegrafn, and the other characters discourse in free verse, except when Phyllidulus lectures in prose to tadpoles in the marsh. The free verse has occasionally alliterative lines, and most of it stays fairly close to a four-beat line—most often four, sometimes two, three, five, or six. It must also be admitted that, without alliteration to mark the stresses, some of the lines are not easily scanned.

There are several inset lyrics. The chorus of tadpoles has one poem, which it presumably sings, in iambic tetrameter couplets, which ends with the famous onomatopoeia which Aristophanes gave his frogs in his comedy of that title (23). After their transformation into frogs, toads, efts, newts, and salamanders, they have an echoing song or chant in the same meter (27). Both Gwion and Daegrafn have a passage of longer lines in which they boast of their poetic credentials; this echoes a poetic boast which Robert Graves made much of in The White Goddess—in the chapter called "Gwion's Riddle" (Ch. 5). Graves is discussing a passage in the Welsh Hanes Taliesin (The Tale of Taliesin). (Gwion and Taliesin are alternate names for the poet; in Artoirius, Gwion is called Taliesin one time, by Modred [79] ). I do not assume, perhaps unwisely, that Heath-Stubs means the boasts in his poem to be riddles in the same way as the Welsh work's boast is. The chorus of amphibians has two other songs, both in tetrameter lines, the first in couplets, in which they ask Lalage to marry one of them, and the second, a parody to "Fairest Isle, all isles excelling," with its words by John Dryden and music by Henry Purcell, from Dryden's opera, King Arthur. This latter is both an Arthurian echo, of an unexpected kind, and an anachronism, since Gwion gives the amphibians the tune. Finally, there is a formal invocational ode, of Apollo and Mercury by Gwion which sounds like a condensed version of the fourth Homeric Hymn. (The invocation is successful, since this comedy ends with a deus ex machina, like some classical tragedies.) If the invocation is supposed to have a perfectly regular meter or verse form, classical or not, I fail to find it. However, most of its lines are close to iambic pentameter. I do not assume that all of these lyrics, boasts, and invocations of various forms violate the comic genre, or Thalia's province, since Old Comedy, at least, had choral inserts.

Near the end of the comedy, Phyllidulus comments:

But I have been made the protagonist of a shoddy farce—
An improper blend of the Old and the New Comedy.
I shall abandon these ungrateful tadpoles,
And these soggy fens,
Instructing the woolly sheep with a hemlock pipe. (32-3)

This reminds the reader that Thalia is the muse not only of comedy but also of pastoral poetry. But it also indicates that Phyllidulus is the protagonist, a hopeless pedant. His lecture, an attack on all the Roman poets, is a parody of humorless, moral, and unpoetic reason applied to poetry. However, one point I find interesting in light of C.S. Lewis being influential on Heath-Stubs at Oxford and of his probable knowledge of A Preface to "Paradise Lost." When Gwion and Daegrafn interrupt Phyllidulus' lecture, Gwion only says,

Stop! Stop! One cannot bear any more of this.

but Daegrafn makes an interesting claim:

By what right, sir do you thus sit adjudicating the poets? By our English custom, they should be judged by their peers. (25)

It is at this point, when Phyllidulus questions their interruption, that Gwion and Daegrafn state their claims to be poets in the imitation of Taliesin's boast and/or riddle. No doubt someday a scholar will go through these speeches, cataloguing the allusions; but I will just say that in the first speech by Gwion I recognize references to Chaucer, Milton, Marlowe, Gray, Keats, Dryden, and Shelley—and I could run down the other two without great trouble. Here is the Shelleyan allusion:

I distributed a pamphlet on the Necessity of Atheism,
And was with Prometheus in the rocks of Caucasus. (25)

This is enough to suggest the form that poetic credentials should take, according to these poets and, I assume, Heath-Stubs.

The action of this book goes on to suggest that great poetry produces maturity in its readers, while criticism produces dependency rather than maturity, students rather than adults, tadpoles (in terms of the book's imagery) rather than amphibians. But for my purpose, Phyllidulus' complaint against the two poets' position is basic:

If poets are to be judged by their peers, who is to establish
Which are indeed the true poets? One can only answer
A trained, objective, critical mind. (26)

I find in this an echo of C.S. Lewis' elaborate reply to T.S. Eliot, in the second chapter of A Preface to "Paradise Lost," after Eliot had written he would only accept the statements of Ezra Pound and other poets on the merits of Milton. Heath-Stubs, if I read him rightly, chooses Eliot's side of the argument (despite Gwion's allusion to Milton's Samson Agonistes in his first statement of poetic credentials, which suggests a less limited set of sympathies than Pound and the early Eliot had). I should make it clear that I do not assume Phyllidulus is entirely intended to be a portrait of Lewis; in his humorless moral attack on the Roman poets, and also in his academic style, he sounds much more like F.R. Leavis than Lewis. ("A trained, objective, critical mind" sounds like Leavis.) And, of course, this book is set in Cambridge, where Leavis taught. Leavis' prominence as a critic in Heath-Stubs' undergraduate days—and, indeed, far longer than that—would explain his choice
The fourth book, "Cancer," begins with lines which have been quoted:

Come back, Calliope, at call; we have been straying
With some of your sisters down sylvan byways.

I am not certain what Heath-Stubbs means by "some of your sisters"; I find Thalia by herself sufficient explanation of the third book and its "sylvan" nature. Perhaps the poet just needed an alliterative line, and "some of your sisters" suggested itself. Or perhaps, more probably, he is referring to both Urania of the second book and Thalia of the third. In that case, the second book's recounted setting of a Church council in early Oxford—on an island in the marshes—can be called sylvan, as well as the Cambridge fans of the third book.

The third of the eight sisters of Calliope:
Polyhymnia with a pompous paean of ecomium
Is commanded to the solemn ceremony of crowning. (1)

Little comment is needed here. Polyhymnia is the muse of sacred poetry. The reference to "the solemn ceremony of crowning" shows these lines prepare for the Pindaric ode which makes up the fifth book, "Leo." The form has the most common Pindaric form, made up of a sequence of three stanzas—strophe, antistrophe, and epode—here repeated three times. In classical productions, it is generally believed, the chorus danced one direction during the strophe ("turn"), danced back during the antistrophe ("counterturn"), and stood still during the epode ("stand"). Since these odes were produced at religious festivals in Greece, the association of them as sacred poetry with the muse of sacred poetry is appropriate. Further, since the coronation of a monarch involves in England a crowning by the Archbishop of Canterbury now, and by analogy involved Bishop Bedwini then, it too can be considered an occasion for Polyhymnia's sacred poetry. The ode, with its references both to Zeus and to Samson, unites its content to the pagan and Judeo-Christian sources of its sacredness.

The fourth of the eight non-epic muses:
And blithe Erato with ballads and with badnage
Promises prothalamion for a bride and her paranymph. (1)

Erato is the muse of erotic lyric poetry, and this certainly fits the sixth book, "Virgo," with Modred's song and verse recital about love. The former is an eight-stanza lyric which imitates a bird's song in the last line of six stanzas and has a pun in the English translation of the Latin last line of the final stanza (48-50); the latter is a three-stanza mythological poem combining the Courtly Love cry for the lady's mercy and the Renaissance topos of the lady's eyes being like stars—both in the third stanza (51). In short, Modred's two works suggest both the native English tradition with its birds and its sung form and the learned wit of the Renaissance—although the witty verse sight well also have been sung in the sixteenth century. The prose tale surrounding Modred's song also implies the attraction between Modred and Guanhumara. When the description of the Muse refers to "a bride and her paranymph," the latter term refers not to Artorius, I suspect.

Let me add a curious reference to a Muse which appears in a prose passage before Modred had received Guanhumara:

The appointed meeting-place was at the mouth of the River Rhone, where stands the shrine of the Three Marys of the Sea, Marra Galliae. For the Jews had put them on the sea in a rudderless and sailless boat, and they drifted to that spot. And with them was their black servant, the Egyptian Sara: the dark moon, honoured by outcasts and vagabonds, tinkers and itinerant smiths, fortune-tellers, horse-thieves and musicians. To pay respects to her, Modred descended to the unconsecrated crypt which had been a Mithraeum. He said, "Inspire me, Muse," but what other prayers he uttered is not reported. Phyllidius did not go with him. He remained in the clear air, for he worshipped Apollo Maponos, bright god of day. (48)

I doubt that I understand all of what is intended in this passage. Presumably Heath-Stubbs is following some regrettable medieval legend, such as Chaucer's "The Second Nun's Tale," which makes Jews the villains. Further, it is obvious that the dark Sara has been apotheosized into a goddess of the dark of the moon, to be worshipped in the darkness of underground chambers. However much a reader believes in racial equality and avoidance of slurs based on skin color, he or she can understand, if not approve, the traditional association of blackness and evil in Sara in this passage. That Modred dedicates himself to evil is not surprising, and when he calls upon her as a Muse, he is obviously intending to use music and poetry for an evil purpose. Perhaps one can say that Sara is the Muse Erato as dedicated to the seduction of an engaged woman.

What I have been describing is the long, first part of this sixth book; the short, second part does mention Artorius' marriage and an epithalamion Clym sang for it, but most of it is given over to three stanzas sung respectively by "a kite, a long-tongued magpie, and a hoody crow" (52). Their song is a dialogue ballad in the tradition of "The Two Corbies," but the tie to the erotic material is in the second quatrains of the magpie's stanza:

A worthy king—but not so young—
Has taken a youthful wife:
May such a match breed jealousy?
Jealousy breeds strife. (52)

The crow's prediction of warfare and young men's bodies for the birds to feast upon shows an outcome of this unfortunate, disastrous, marriage. This is stretching the content area of the muse Erato beyond its usual bounds, but perhaps all three of the inset lyrics in the prose of this book can be said to be inspired by her.

The fifth of the eight:

And Terpsichore, she too, with her castanets, shall testify,
With a sexual dance, a saraband of death. (1)

Terpsichore is the muse of dancing. But the reference is not as clear as the preceding. So far the
pattern has been direct: the muses, in the order they are mentioned, govern the books in the order they appear, once those dedicated to Calliope are omitted from the sequence. This, if continued, makes the eighth book, "Scorpio," to be the book of the dance. As I will indicate, this is possible. But the clearest reference to a sexual dance is in the tenth book, "Capricorn," even though it is in the alliterative meter and thus should be Calliope's:

In the castle of Cadbury the Happening commenced:

A grotesque gallimaufry of horned goat-men, Satyrs and sylvans in a savage rout, Missshapen forms, monstrously masked, Trottled into the hall, tripping among the tables.
The diners in wonderment, dizzy with wine, Watched this cortège capering and cavorting, Covered with hair, with clattering hooves, Their prodigious and priapic codpieces and pricks
The waggled and wobbled, as wildly they lurched In capricole or carmagnole—a double chorus, Each team led by a taller leader; Marched in the foremost, framing their music, Squeezing the bellows of a squalling bag-pipe, As brutally and boorishly they bleated a carol. (79)

These are Modred's maskers, of course, who turn out to be more interested in power than in sex; indeed, when Modred pulls Guanhumara from the throne "by the hair of her head" (84), he reveals himself, as the poem comments, no longer interested in her as a person, but only as an object to be controlled and used. Perhaps this false appearance of sexuality keeps this book from being Terpsichore's, despite "a sexual dance" fitting the mummers and "a saraband of death" perhaps fitting the battle which ensues.

Therefore, I return to the eighth book. In what ways is it about a dance? The book is a short drama, based on the Japanese No genre probably, or on Yeats' adaptations of it, in which a Traveler, who turns out to be a Professor of History, meets at the neolithic stone monuments in Strathmore, Scotland, a Woman, who turns out to be, in some sense, Queen Guanhumara and who then vanishes and returns as the ghost of Guanhumara. In the first part of the play, the Woman sings a three-stanza ballad telling "the words of Arthur the king to his Queen Gaynor, the faithless woman" (67). Here are the first two lines:

Your false love ca'd you till the dance, And tuik you by the hand. (67)

Here the image of the dance is a paraphrase for the sexual affair, and it does indeed fit the description of Terpsichore's "sexual dance." In the second part of this book, after the opening prose of the play has given away to free verse, the ghost of Queen Guanhumara says:

Like Ishtar I go down, Dancing a dance of seven veils, Through the gates of the Underworld: At each gate I give up A piece of finery to the scorpion-guardians; The watchmen of the City of Dis Have stripped me of my garments. (69)

I do not take this stripping of the queen in any sexual way, although it is traditional to have sexual sins, among many others, punished in the Underworld. Instead, I assume this is a stripping of the pretensions, the role-playing, the follies, the self-directions, of this world. But whatever Heath-Stubbs means, this description of the afterlife fits the phrase "a saraband of death." Thus, although it seems less likely at first, the eighth book is Terpsichore's.

The sixth of the sisters of Calliope:

Plain-suited Clio, in prose, though she plod. (1)

(The second comma may be a misprint.) Clio is the muse of history. I suspect the original celebrators of the Muses, whoever they were, had something like metrical chronicles in mind. But that guess is not what Heath-Stubbs says. By the 400s B.C., Herodotus had established prose as the medium for history; and Heath-Stubbs gives in the ninth book, "Sagittarius," the prose lecture of Professor Chelifer. In a paragraph on Geoffrey of Monmouth's Historia Regum Brittan-niæ, the professor wanders from the historical background of Geoffrey's work into this comment:

But Clio also is a muse, in prose though she plod, that hard mistress whom I serve. (71)

This identifies the book with its Muse. The professor's topic is "The Possible Historical Basis for King Arthur's Conquest of the Roman Empire," which ties the lecture to history, to possible history, as Clio's domain. The professor mentions a large number of early Arthurian writers or works in a rather jumbled fashion—Nennius (72), Geoffrey, Wace (71), Layamon (72), the alliterative Morte Arthur (71), Malory (70-1)—as well as a group of modern scholars—"Chambers, Collingwood, Ashes, to say nothing of Saklatvala" (72). It is odd that Roger Sherman Loomis is not mentioned, but perhaps he is considered more of a comparative folklorist than a historian. At any rate, these names suggest something of the historical, scholarly side of the lecture. Professor Chelifer manages a couple of conjectures about the origins of the early accounts of Arthur's attempted conquest of the Roman Empire, but those are not of importance to my thesis about the Muses.

I would like to make one point about an overlap here which relates to my discussion of the astrological Signs of this book and the last, when the scorpions of book eight continued into this one. In the first paragraph of the professor's speech, he has images of dances which seem more fitting for Terpsichore than for Clio:

I must ask you indulgence, I am not, as one may say, wholly myself. Since I encountered the White Phantom in the circle of stones. White-footed Jennifer, dancing in her foam. The scorpion of the loins, and the mating dance of the scorpions. (70)

I suppose the allusion to the action of the previous book is simply the cause of this overlap, but it is curious.

The seventh of these eight Muses:

And grave Melpomene shall give us a goat-song. (1)
Again this sounds like a reference to book ten and the nummers, but again that is misleading. Melpomene is the muse of tragedy, and the derivation of the word tragedy is from two Greek words which mean "goat" and "to sing." Scholars generally agree that the origin of this name was the chorus of satyrs in the early plays. At any rate, the reference here (or at least the main reference here) is to the eleventh book, "Aquarius." It has a prologue, spoken by the Morgan, the goddess (88-9); an opening ode, sung by a "chorus of supernannuted non-combatants" (89); a first scene between Bedwyr and the leader of the Chorus (89-90); another ode (90-1); a scene between Bedwyr and a Messenger (91-2); a third ode (92-3); a scene between Bedwyr and Arthur (93-5); a fourth ode (95); a final entry and speech by Bedwyr (95-6); and a final ode from the Chorus, which disagrees with a famous statement in a play by Sophocles (96). I do not find the traditional five scenes of a tragedy here (unless what I have called the prologue is considered an "act"), but the general pattern is very much that of the earlier Greek drama before Euripides introduced the third speaker onto the stage. Perhaps I should add that the verse is free verse, and the chorus' odes do not imitate the proper strophe, antistrophe, and epode structure. (Neither did Milton's in Samson Agonistes.) Despite the verse, which is not classical in meter, the dramatic form, scenes divided by choruses, is enough to identify this small tragedy.

And finally, the eighth of Calliope's eight sisters:

Lasty and lyrically Euterpe shall lament
Over the waves, at winter's and world's end. (1)

Euterpe is the muse of music and of lyric poetry. This refers to the twelfth book, "Pisces," in which Zennora appears:

...she held in her hands a great crowd,
Or a lyre, formed from the shell of a green
sea-turtle,
Strung with dolphin's sinews. (99)

One of the three men who brought Arthur's body to the coast says to her,

'There is no one here
To hallow this parting, or to sing
The praises of the dead. Lady, if you have
any skill
In music, sing for us.' And she: 'I have
such skill,
And I will sing." (99)

The next-to-last line of the poem associates Zennora's song and the Muse of the book:

Hang up, Euterpe, on the coral bough your
harp. (101)

It is true that the ultimate line mentions another Muse—

Take down, Calliope[,] your trumpet (101)

—but that, with the lack of any final punctuation, is part of the life cycle, and the heroic cycle, of the book. It echoes the first line—

Take down, Calliope, your trumpet from its
tack (1)

—for this poem, more like Finnegans Wake than
Sir Gawain and the Green Knight is a cyclic work, not just setting a frame around the narrative. I have quoted previously the passage in which Calliope is asked to

Present then for man's life a paradigm. (1)

The cycle ends with a man's death, and it continues with his son. Of course, in this case, Arthur leaves no son. His illegitimate sons—Llachew (93), Falcus (64), and Modred—are dead (all but Falcus certainly); and the crown descends to Custennyn, Arturus' cousin. However, Arthur predicts as he lies dying:

But what can he achieve, leading a band
Of refugees and guerrillas in the mountains
Of Wales?
Ananoke assigns this realm to the English. (95)

Whether with son or cousin or Saxon stranger, the poem suggests at the end that the cycle begins again:

Take down, Calliope[,] your trumpet [from
its tack;
Rested has it long, and rusted? Give us a
rouse, girl.]

At this point the Nine Muses have been traced in the book, with their appropriate influences in the epic. (My readers will notice that the Muses fit the theme of the conference at which parts of this paper were read, being women—like Beatrice—who have inspired writers.) One thing which could be done now is to treat these Muses as aspects of the White Goddess, as Graves insisted they were. For example, Professor Chelifer describes the ghost of Guanhumara as "white-footed Jennifer" (70), and I made much of the white hair and face of Zennora earlier. These can be taken as incarnations—of the Muses of their books and of the White Goddess herself. But, as a Christian, I must confess my heart is not in this celebration of the Goddess. Neither Graves nor, I suspect, Heath-Stubbins means that she is simply the feminine aspect of the one Eternal (and beyond sexual) God; they mean something more pagan than that. Or, no doubt, I could play scholarly games and call her (all nine or more of her) a Freudian Projection or a Jungian Anima. However, I will not. I leave this development to some other scholar.

Instead, I turn to a tenth Muse who is mentioned in the poem—tenth, if one disregards Modred's Sara. This is back in the third book, "Gemini," inspired by Thalia, the Muse of comedy and pastoral poetry. I have discussed Gwion and Daergraf's meeting with Phyllidius, the poets' meeting with the professor; but I have barely mentioned that the professor has a young ward, a sixteen-year-old woman whom he found as an infant (22). Let me quote from the gods who are summoned at the end of the play. Apollo says:

Let me observe this virgin. Ah yes,
My all-seeing eye, which discerns the inner
nature
Of things in heaven and earth, informs me
who she is.
Lalage, child—for so you are called
By mortal men—know that among the gods
You are named Chrysophone: the youngest of
the bright
Choir of Muses, that sing eternally
About the throne of Zeus. (31)
 Besides the parody or imitation of the "choir of Muses" with a Judeo-Christian choir of angels about the throne of God, this also gives the name, Chrysophone, which, if my checking of Greek roots is valid, means "golden sound" or "golden speech." I will return to this.  

Mercury then says, in part, about the Mother of the Muses:  

"...Mnemosyne had a tenth daughter, the child 
Of her old age; and I regret to say, 
In her old age, Mnemosyne 
Grew somewhat absent minded.  

That is a joke, since Mnemosyne means Memory. He continues:  

Walking one day 
By the clear river of heaven, the streaming 
Galaxy, 
She put the child down, intending 
To take a brief siesta. But while she nodded 
The infant slipped into the starry stream, 
And was carried along to the limits of the sky, 
Where it fell, like a glittering meteor, 
down to earth; 
But none exactly knew upon what spot 
Of earth the child landed. Ever since 
The gods have been looking everywhere for you.  

I assume this account is supposed to be humorous, since this occurs in a comedy; but the general point of the Tenth Muse seems to not be just a joke, for Lalage goes back up to heaven with Apollo and Mercury. 

This is her speech upon leaving:  

So it's goodbye then. And I am half sorry to go; 
And if Olympian regulations permit, 
I shall come again to visit this western island, 
And be its special Muse. And, by the lucid streams 
Of Cam and Isis, Thames and Usk and Duddon, 
And silver Trent, I'll seek out my elect 
And favoured friends—young poets, dreaming 
In chequered rides of sunlight woods, 
On moon-touched mountains, or in foetid dens, 
Urban or suburban; and I will teach them 
The secrets of my new home, 
Apollo's music, and swift Hermes' eloquence. 

(31) 

At this point, the very patriotic nature of Heath-Stubb's Artorius is apparent. This is very much a British epic, as the Aeneid was a Roman one. If it were not obvious before, it is now clear why Gwion and Daegrafn name only British writers in their earlier catalogues. Indeed, Gwion as a Celt and Daegrafn as a Teuton sum up the basic cultural strains of Great Britain. I could expand this beyond the theme of poetry, by discussing, for example, some political statements in the tragedy, "Aquarius," and elsewhere; however, I will, for my present purposes, stay with the Muses—for a final point.  

Chrysophone has to say that she shall come "to visit this western island, / And be its special Muse," if she is permitted. But the catalogues of Gwion and Daegrafn have already shown that Great Britain has been blessed with poets, dramatic, lyric, and narrative; they have shown that she has been permitted to return. The golden voices predicted in the Muse's name have produced their golden sounds. Indeed, although it is not often flatly said, Great Britain has the richest tradition of poetry in the world. We can all name great works elsewhere: Homer's epics, Sophocles' Theban tragedies, the Book of Job, Vergil's Aeneid, Dante's Divine Comedy, the Bhagavad-Gita, many others. I do not want to run a list of British authors as if I were trying to "answer" these works. Italian poetry with Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio, Ariosto, Tasso, and others is not diminished by one's saying that British literature, ultimately, has a larger number of good poets. Perhaps I can make my point by mentioning the major epics or heroic poems of Britain. Beowulf, of course, even if one considers it a heroic-lyric poem as Tolkien does; Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde; Spenser's The Faerie Queene, a romance-epic; Milton's Paradise Lost, a marvellous product of Christian humanism, as humanism was understood at the time; perhaps a highly polished mock epic should be included—Pope's The Rape of the Lock; perhaps Blake's Jerusalem; Wordsworth's The Prelude, which he considered a type of internalized epic; two crossovers between the epic and other genres, Browning's The Ring and the Book and Tennyson's Idylls of the King; C.N. Doughty's The Dawn in Britain, which includes The Darkling Plains; finally, I would include Heath-Stubb's Artorius. I do not argue that these poems are equally good or equally great—simply that each has some claim to be considered in the epic tradition, and that each is successful in its own terms. I have my own favorites, of course—those of Chaucer and Spenser, augmented by my current fascination with that of Heath-Stubb—but my point is not in picking and choosing. My point is, in Heath-Stubb's terms, how great has been the influence of Chrysophone in general.  

TO BE CONCLUDED  

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