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**Abstract**
Considers the influence of Williams on Heath-Stubbs’s Arthurian poem cycle. Part I looks at zodiacal imagery.

**Additional Keywords**
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Joe R. Christopher

I. "Fit Audience... Though Few"

...I am to this day ignorant of what damnable heresy lurks in John Heath-Stubbs' capacious mind.

—John E. Van Domelen

One hundred years ago Charles Williams was born, but I would like to begin elsewhere: sixty-eight years ago John Heath-Stubbs was born, and twelve years ago (as this paper was read at Mythcon 17) he published Artorius, subtitled A heroic poem in four books and eight episodes. It is, to my taste, the greatest Arthurian poem published so far in this century. Perhaps I should add that I do not consider T.S. Eliot's use of Arthurian allusions enough to make The Waste Land into a really Arthurian poem.

Of significant poems to balance it against, Edwin Arlington Robinson's poems are basically psychological studies — Merlin (1917), Lancelot (1920), and Tristram (1927). I feel that Robinson's interests in the poems run contrary to the romance material, but no doubt the poems speak to other readers than me. John Masefield's lyric sequence Midsummer Night (1928) does not, to my judgement, contain first-rate lyrics. Charles Williams' two books in this competition — Taliesin through Logres (1938) and The Region of Summer Stars (1944) — are, like Robinson's, not dismissible to some tastes. Williams' odes seem to me, however, more a coterie taste than a general one. This may be no more than to say they are modern poems; but I think it is a little more. Williams' theological interests are alien to the modern world, and the geometric imagery which he uses to convey Heaven's precision does not convey his meaning to the Common Reader. I agree this is the reader's loss, but I also think my estimate is accurate. Now it is true that Ezra Pound's historical references and Chinese ideograms in his Cantos are just as alien to the Common Reader; but there is just to say that Pound's Cantos, except for a few excerpts, are also for a coterie — a different coterie, to be sure, but a coterie.

Heath-Stubbs' Artorius is certainly a modern poem, mixing verse forms and, like John Wain's Feng (1974), prose passages. But Artorius is like Feng in another way: both are based on stories which are part of the Common Reader's knowledge, if not on the best-known versions. Wain's poem is based on the Hamlet story; and Heath-Stubbs' on the King Arthur legend — except, in the latter case, on a pre-Lancelot version of the legend. I should stress that, since Williams' odes are certainly based on the Arthurian materials also, that a second way in which Heath-Stubbs avoids the full coterie designation is that his poem is, episodically, a telling of the story. This takes sometimes the form of dramas, sometimes of narrative verse; but the structure of the myth is there — in a clearer way than it comes through Williams' odes.

A third way in which Heath-Stubbs may reach the Common Reader is through his use of anachronism. He brings in modern references as he presents the story. His poem has "applicability," as the jargon says; that is, the modern meanings are made clearer than in many poems. These references are sometimes brief and sometimes extended, as will be illustrated later and, in one area, discussed in the fifth section of this paper.

Now, I realize there is something absurd in discussing how Heath-Stubbs reaches, or may reach, the Common Reader when the Common Reader has never heard of him. But I am, by critical indirection, making a point. I believe that Heath-Stubbs has made an effort to reach a general audience, even if he has not been successful yet. I do not consider this a vice in a poet; neither is necessarily a virtue. Milton did alright with his "fit audience... though few" (Paradise Lost VII.317). I suspect, outside of forced readings in schoolrooms, which do not ultimately count — only private re-readings count — that Milton has today achieved his prediction. Indeed, it may reach the point when an audience which knows the classics and the Bible is also considered a coterie: but not yet, not yet. There is something of a western cultural tradition still.

I wrote that I considered it neither a vice nor a virtue for a poet to try to reach a broad audience. Probably it depends on how he attempts to reach it. What I do consider, if not a vice, then a species of folly, is for a poet to do the opposite, to write obscurely and perhaps with personal references, and then complain about his small readership. C.S. Lewis, in his commentary on Williams' odes, spends some space on considering to what degree Williams' references are esoteric (187-190). At any rate, John Heath-Stubbs seems to be attempting, in general, to communicate.

So much for that thesis. If I want to argue against my case, I think I would cite Heath-Stubbs' diction. He may use too many rare words to ever be popular. But an extensive vocabulary comes with the major poet's role.

About the religious beliefs of Milton since the publication of De Doctrina Christiana, and about his political beliefs far before that, there is, in a general sense, agreement. Williams also left theological and other works which indicate his views. But I do not know a full, written-out equivalent for Heath-Stubbs. This may be my ignorance. At any rate, I can indicate enough of a position for the purpose of this paper. John Heath-Stubbs seems to be a curious combination of a neo-pagan, as the term is used in America, and a Christian. First the former term.

Two editors of an anthology have said that he "has avowed a moral commitment to speak out... as a votary of [a] muse — sometimes neo-Hellenic, sometimes at her home in the English countryside" (Kermode and Hollander 2172). I will be explicit enough for many of my readers if I say that the first time I came upon Heath-Stubbs' name it was in the acknowledgements at the first of Robert Graves' The White Goddess (v). I am certain that it is no slip that Artorius is sung to his watery grave in this poem by the virgin Zennora —
Her hair was white
As the cotton-grass, and her face dead-white,
Like bleached bone that lay upon the shore. (99)

It is true that the poem says that no one knew if she was Christian or Druid (99), and it is true that her song has Biblical echoes and invokes the Trinity (100), appropriately enough for Artorius; but her appearance suggests at least an incarnation of the White Goddess, the Muse, if partly in service of the Christian God.

Now then, why do I call Heath-Stubbs a Christian? First, because in two different printings of his listing in Contemporary Authors John Press is quoted in calling him "a Christian haunted by guilt, remorse, and a fear of damnation" (Contemporary Authors, Vol. 13-14 [1965], 201; First Revision, Vol. 13-16 [1975], 373). Second, Heath-Stubbs himself, in an interview, says that he became an atheist in his later public-school days. The interviewer asks, "Does that still remain your attitude?" "No," Heath-Stubbs replies, "I'm a practicing Anglican" (Wightman 74). Of course, as my readers all know, a practicing Anglican can believe almost anything these days; but I assume he means something more than one who goes to Church out of a sense of decorum. Third and finally, in a poem titled "Epitaph," Heath-Stubbs describes himself as

Orthodox in beliefs as following the English Church
Barring some heresies he would have for recreation
Yet too often left these sound principles (as I am told) in the lurch
Being troubled with idleness, lechery, pride, and dissipation.

I am not here interested in Heath-Stubbs' sins, just in his beliefs. Orthodox, he calls himself, barring some heresies. I would suggest that his orthodoxy is Christian and his heresy is, in Graves' terminology, Arkite. That is, he venerates the White Goddess.

I do not want to put too much emphasis on Robert Graves in my paper. That is a topic for someone else, at another time. But I would like to suggest that the half pagan, half Christian background of the Arthurian tales is made to order for a person like Heath-Stubbs who can take both sides seriously.

Finally, to bring this introduction back to its starting place, I would like to mention Charles Williams' influence on Heath-Stubbs. This was at Oxford University during World War Two. Heath-Stubbs was at Queen's College, where his tutor was Brett-Smith and the director of his Bachelor of Literature -- which Heath-Stubbs did not finish -- was Nicoll Smith. But in the interview, in reply to a question about the Oxford teachers who influenced him, Heath-Stubbs replies, "C.S. Lewis and Nevill Coghill and Charles Williams" (Wightman 79). A.T. Tolley writes in his essay on Heath-Stubbs:

A figure who commanded the admiration of Heath-Stubbs and his contemporaries at Oxford was the Anglican poet and publisher Charles Williams, who had been enlisted to lecture, as so many younger fellows were away at the war. According to Heath-Stubbs, Williams "exerted a lasting and deep influence" on the work of the younger generation of poets in the 1940s. In his works Williams showed an admiration for the then little-favored romantic poets and an interest in Arthurian legend and in magic. "Younger poets," Heath-Stubbbs later wrote, "became interested in mythological and religious symbolism, as a means of expressing areas of experience inaccessible to the intellect alone." (141)

Thus it may be, if Tolley is right, that the impulse to write Artorius came to Heath-Stubbs, however mixed with other, later motives, from the influence of Charles Williams. I will consider specific debts owed by Artorius to Williams' odes in a later section; but what I am suggesting in this centennial year of Williams' birth is that not only his works but his influence is important.

However, I would like to begin on Artorius elsewhere.

II. The Signs of the Zodiac

When and where the Zodiac originated is not known, but it is believed to have gradually evolved in Babylonia in the life-story of the hero Gilgamesh. --Robert Graves

John Heath-Stubbs, if he had lived in the seventeenth century, probably would have titled his book Artoriad: it is a twelve-book epic. In the first book, Gwion, the bard of the Brythons (7), speaks first of his own time and then of Heath-Stubbs' time:

We evoke an order: an interim is assigned —
As a poet, perhaps, in the future predicament
Of the doubtfulness and dullness of a third Dark Age.

Might undertake the unfashionable inditing of an epic,
Though his colleagues and his confreres confined themselves merely
To little linguistic and logical constructs,
Or deployed their egos in the Dionysiac delirium,
Or surreal illumination, or psychodelic self-indulgence —
He might establish an order, by the example of this experiment,
Driving his through-road across the thickets of thoughtlessness,
And he also [], if temporarily, might turn the tide.... (10-11)

Heath-Stubbs obviously has greater hopes than Eliot's shoring of fragments against his ruin; I think there is no doubt of Eliot's success in his shoring up — Heath-Stubbs' through-road is built, but has few travelers as yet. Perhaps, if others like myself erect some roadsigns...

Unlike the classical epic, however, Heath-Stubbs' work has a title for each book: these titles are not words, but the symbols for the Twelve Signs of the Zodiac. The first book has the symbol Aries the Ram. I am not going to describe each of the symbols, but let me be explicit about this one so that I am certain I am communicating. The symbol is rather like a capital T with the cross bar at the top bumped up on either side of the center line into two curves like the horns of a ram.

Beginning with Aries, the epic follows through the Signs of the Zodiac for the rest of the year. "Aries," after an invocation of which I will return, tells something of the battle of Mount Badon. Heath-Stubbs places this battle in March, which is appropriate since the Sun enters the Sign of the Ram on 21 March:
Man's woe is manifest in the night sky of March,  
In the darkness before dawn of that day of  
battles,  
And the liling of the larks that salute the  
first light —  
Outrageous Area that is arbiter of anger. (3)

Area, the Greek god of war, may well be a pun also, in  
this passage, for Aries.

Late in the book, after the Brythons have  
overthrown the Saxons, this acclamation of Artorius:

"We acknowledge the Yhaherawdr.  
Restore in these islands the regimen of Rome,  
By right, after this rout. As our ram-horned  
Alexander  
We salute you, and as Caesar; seize then the  
imperium —  
By our Praetorian sufferage we promote you to  
that power." (10)

And the feast after the victory is on a near-by flock  
of sheep, for which Cadoc of a small group of Christian  
hermits is promised compensation (12-13). So the motifs  
of the Signs of the Zodiac are found in these books not  
just in the seasons (here, March) but also in  
occasional touches of content (possibly the pun,  "ram-horned Alexander," the flock of sheep).

Book Two, "Taurus the Bull," is cast as a  
retrospective dialogue between Bishop Bedwini and  
another about the unification of the British Church  
in the time of Artorius. The Zodiacal reference is not to  
the time of the dialogue but the time of the synod at  
Oxford, and Bedwini dates it most precisely:

In the month of April, when the sun enters  
the sign of Taurus. The Planet Venus is the  
ruler of that house, as astrologers say. And  
if we are to believe them, her influences  
might not be unpropitious for such a  
gathering.... (16)

He goes on to distinguish, on the basis of Plato,  
between the Spiritual and Physical Venusies; but I have  
quoted enough to show the time. I might add that,  
according to Heath-Stibbs, this synod was held soon  
after the battle of Mount Badon and Artorius' conqust  
of London; at this point, Artorius was still a count,  
not yet a king (15). It was after the celebration which  
ended the synod, at which much wine was drunk, that  
Modred was engendered; as Bedwini expresses it, "One  
must say with regret that Venus Pandemia replaced Venus  
Urania" (18).

Bishop Bedwini's companion, Illtud, following the  
association of Taurus and Venus, gives a brief account  
of the other relationships between the remaining eleven  
Signs and the seven Planets and a different scheme  
proposed by Manilius between the twelve Signs and the  
twelve Olympian deities. This suggests there may be,  
beyond the twelve Signs, one or two other schemes  
runtime through these books; but I will leave those to  
other scholars and content myself, outside of this book  
which pushes the association of Taurus and Venus, with  
just the Zodiacal Signs. In this light, let me mention  
that the legendary origin of Oxbridge, here recounted  
(15), is tied to Taurus; and there are a few minor  
references to cattle in Bedwini's recounting of the synod  
("cow-bells," "bull-necked," and "salt beef," all  
related to heretics [173]).

In Book Three, the opening is a conversation  
between a Celtic poet, Gwion, and a Germanic poet,  
Daegrafn. The latter had been captured in battle and  
given as a slave to the former, but Gwion now considers  
Daegrafn "brother and... colleague" (19). The  
brotherhood of the two poets is appropriate for the  
Sign of Gemini the Twins, which the sun enters on the  
20th of April. This is at what will later be  
Cambridge (19), and Daegrafn indicates that the date is  
the latter part of the Zodial Signs:

The sunshine of May beats down on these marshes,  
Bright with ladies' smock and kingcups.  
The cuckoo calls over the water meadows, and the  
sedge warbler  
Dryly discourses. (20)

The relationship to the history of Artorius is not  
sequentially established. This book's events simply  
occur while Artorius, Gwaichmai, and others are  
involved in a stag hunt (19); it is certainly  
subsequent to the synod of the previous book (21) —  
but how much later is not clear.

A second use of the Twins motif, in the general  
sense of brethren as established by the two poets,  
occurrs in the appearance of Apollo and Mercury near the  
end of the book (29-31); they are called "brothers"  
here (29, 30), but this seems a rhetorical  
relationship, Apollo standing for Mind and Beauty, if I  
read the poem correctly, and Mercury for Communication  
(30, bottom 411.). It is true that most readers  
associate Apollo with poetry generally, but Gwion in  
his invocation stresses that Mercury invented the lyre  
and then gave it to Apollo (30). Perhaps one might say  
that they stand, more precisely than the above  
identifications, for Mental Composition and Performance  
or Publication respectively.

In the fourth book, named with the Sign of Cancer  
the Crab — which the sun enters on the 22nd of June —  
the time is established in the opening invocation of  
the Muse, and Heath-Stibbs mentions his birth under  
this sign:

Come back, Calliope, at call; we have been  
straying  
With some of your sisters down sylvan byways.  
But now it is the solstice, and the sun in  
splendour,  
Caught in the claws of the watery Crab,  
At the topmost of his career turns at the tropic,  
And at Midsummer moves to a retrograde motion.  
This is the mansion of the Moon, and a time for  
mysteries:  
This sign also signalled the beginning of my  
sojourn  
Upon the earth, and by that augury I am oblique,  
Cradled by the Crab, crustaceous and devious,  
And moved by the subjective moods of Selene —  
The more fitted, by that potency, for this  
project which I pass to. (34)

After establishing in a few lines that he is going to  
describe a psychological preparation, an underground  
initiation, of Artorius before his crowning,  
Heath-Stibbs continues:

It is the Vigil of the Baptist; now bonfires are  
built  
To feed and furnish the Sun with Fire  
At his height, and with heat for the ripening  
harvest. (34)

He then turns to the setting at Stonehenge, and  
Merddyn's (Merlin's) instructions to Artorius. (I  
otice the connection of the Moon, then considered a
planet, and the Zodiacal Sign in the invocation; but I will leave, as I promised, the planetary influences to other scholars.)

The allusions to the Crab in the text involve metaphors about Artorius shedding his shell as he goes through his underground initiation: Merdynt tells him "to shed off all your shells" when he starts (35); Anubis, Artorius's guide, later tells him to "Cast off your carapace" (37), which makes the image specific; and Anubis says again to him, "Cast your last shell in the cave of Ceridwen" (41) — and last shell is perhaps appropriate, for Artorius finds himself in the seventh circle "stark as he was born" (41). When Artorius awakes from his visions, "His armour was heavy on him" (44), which may be a Crab reference.

The fifth book consists of a Pindaric ode — presumably that which Gwion said earlier he would write for Artorius' coronation at Caerleon (20). The book is named for Leo the Lion, the Sign that the sun enters on the 23rd of July, and this is established in the first stanza of the ode:

Tangling in the Lion's mane,
The Sun, cast up from the Underworld,
Sweaters the Caesaran month; where now
Kronion, gatherer of the clouds,
Directs his rumbling car across
The arid vault of the air, the unsickled fields. (45)

Typical of the Pindaric odes, this one has a number of obscurities; and two of them involve the time sequence I am concerned with. In the fourth stanza — the second strophe — these lines appear, presumably addressed to Artorius:

Remember your course is set toward the
Scorpion's
Claws, and the resurgence of the adversary. (45)

When I look at the eighth book, titled "Scorpio," I do not find that it itself deals with such matters — at least, not at all directly. Indeed, to even make it work indirectly, the reader would have to consider Artorius' wife, not Modred, to be his adversary. (As part of the myth of the White Goddess this may be so.) However, I will suggest later at the end of the seventh book which may be what Gwion's ode predicts.

The second obscure time reference is the last stanza, the third epode:

In July prepare to fly, beyond the solstice
Where the Scorcher is trapped in the bag, and baited
Like a honey-badger; the sun-king
Shorn of his locks, and blinded. (46)

All this means is that in July, at the present time of the coronation, Artorius must prepare to avoid or to accept — the language is not clear, "to fly" from or to — such an end as Samson had.

The sixth book does not have a clear seasonal reference within it, except that crops are ripe in central Gaul (48), and I am not certain that its action could be contained in a single month. Modred and a scholar are sent to the mouth of the River Rhone, where now the city of Port-St.-Louis-du-Rhone stands to meet and escort back Guanhumara (Guinevere), Princess of Massilia in Gaul (47). Heath-Stubbs describes, briefly their journey back up the valley of the Rhone and across France, called Gaul in the poem (48). When they get back, the marriage of Artorius and Guanhumara is celebrated at Carlisle. The Sign of the Zodiac for this book runs from August 23 to September 22, and all I can say is that it seems to be a busy month. But I have held the obvious connection back: the Sign for this book is Virgo the Virgin, and it obviously stands for Guanhumara, before her marriage. (Modred's second song in this book involves the goddess Astraea — that is, Mercy — who may also be a virgin [51].)

In contrast to the lack of seasonal references in "Virgo," the next, "Libra," begins with this description:

As the autumnal equinox, in even opposition,
The bright and heavenly Balances hold
The softness of summer and the savagery of winter;
As on a field of fighting, the fierce tides
Doubtfully turn, in indescisive [sic] tumult.
Yet the doom of Summer is sealed, though the sun
Suffuses the landscape serenely with light.
There is an edge of death in the dank air,
And the fading leaves, as lierlessly they fall.
The swallow and the swift, and the sylvan warblers
Have moved off on migration; no more is heard
The note of the nightingale, nor the nightjar's churning,
The call of the cuckoo, nor the dry-voiced corn-craiker;
Richly the apples ripen in the orchards;
The harvest is garnered and hauled into granges;
Geese are set in the stubble to glean,
With relish, the residue of the reaped grain, Fattening their flesh for the feast of Michaelmas. (53)

This is a marvelously appropriate description for the period starting on the 23rd of September. I hold back for a while a long subsequent passage in which Myrddyn discusses the events up to this point (53-54); but the conclusion of "Libra" is significant now. After Artorius' meeting with his main followers to establish the rule of law, Modred, who suggested at the meeting that his father invade Gaul to establish order there, and so expand his empire — Modred thinks over his private plans, and the book ends:

Thus Modred mused, in the fane of Michael,
While softly the sunlight faded from the sky:
Antares uprose in the arch of the evening.
The heart of the Scorpion at the heel of the hunter,
Who sank, defeated, in the southern sea. (65)

This reference to the Scorpion, in the penultimate line of "Libra," I think identifies Modred, at least in the most obvious sense, as the "adversary" predicted in the Leonine ode.

Thematically the debating of laws for the kingdom is equivalent to balancing matters on the Scales; but the exact use of language in the debate echoing the Zodiac Sign does not appear. Myrddyn urges Artorius:

Summon then to council your senators and commons,
To deliberate and determine, in form of debate, Wisely and lucidly — of weight and learning, Knowledgable for this matter. . . . (54)

The word weight in this passage may be deliberate. Artorius replies with a reference to the Old Testament, including this line:
"You are weighed in the balance, and wanting, Belshazar!" (54)

But a more important use appears later, when the meeting occurs in the Church of Michael, Cornhill, London:

On the westward wall was displayed for worship
An image of the Assize of the end of the ages:
The Judge Tremendous, with tokens of terror
And majesty of mercy, was enthroned in the midst,
On the clouds of glory....
...and before Him was set
A pair of balances with brazen pans.... (56)

As I said, the image of the Scales, the Balance, does not appear in the actual debate; but this image of Heavenly Weighting is indeed an impressive background for it.

The sun enters Scorpio the Scorpion on the 24th of October; the eighth book, named for this Sign, can be dated more precisely, however, as occurring on the 31st of October — that is, on All Hallows' Eve. A modern Professor of History tells of his adventure at Bury Hill, in Strathmores, Scotland. He says:

I see before me the great stone circle, impressive in its antiquity, in the fading light of an autumn evening ...tomorrow will be November the first, and by the old way of reckoning, from the setting of the sun, it is already November. (66-67)

At one point the ghost of Queen Guanhumara appears to him, apparently with reference to her affair with Modred and the war which followed:

The Scorpion, the scorpion in the loins—
Its burning heart is Antares,
The fixed brother of Mars;
Swords, swords — the clouds
Rain swords down from the sky;
Blood, blood — the earth
Is drinking the red dew. (68)

As with most ghosts, she is more attitudinal than clearly communicative; but the echo of Modred's time of musing is impressive. She has a later reference to "the scorpion-guardians" of the gates of the underworld (69).

The next book, the ninth, is named for Sagittarius the Archer; the sun enters that Sign on the 22nd of November. This book is a lecture by the same professor who appeared in "Scorpio." He is, as he says, rather confused

Since I encountered the White Phantom in the circle of stones. White-footed Jennifer, dancing in her own foam. The scorpion in the loins, and the mating dance of the scorpions. But we do not have any scorpions in these islands. Only the harmless book-scorpion, Chelifer, which has no sting. It is found under mossy stones, and between the pages of old books; feeding on psocids or book-lice, and, I suppose, on the book-worms themselves.... (70)

One would think this would be the end of scorpions in this book of Sagittarius — just a small carry-over into the first paragraph of this next book — but at the very end "Professor Chelifer" (stress added) is thanked for his address (74; cf. 73). So much for professors of history!

There is nothing in this ninth book to indicate the time in late November or early December. In the second paragraph of his address, the professor says, by way of apology for not giving a formal address, "I draw a bow, as it were, at a venture" (70), which does identify him, to an extent, with Sagittarius. And he has a later reference to the "nomad archers of the steppes," referring mainly to the Huns; it is one of his digressions, but it does include the Sagittarian note in its "archers".

Near the end of the speech, in one of the prophetic passages which have crept in since the professor met the mysterious woman on All Hallows' Eve, he says:

I bore a banner in the battle order of Artorius. I behold him among the dark forests of Armorica, in rebellion against the Emperor, an act of hubris. And to him comes a travel-stained messenger, with tidings of disaster. It is the courteous Gwalchmai, with news of the wounding of his honour. The unnatural rebellion of Modred, the nephew against his mother's brother. Of the son against the father, unnaturally and incestuously begotten. (74)

I call this a prophetic passage (in the popular sense; not in the religious sense of speaking the mind of God), and rightly so in this volume, for both the ghost of Guanhumara in "Scorpio" and this passage here precede the rebellion which is told in the next book. That is, despite the professor being a modern, so far as the internal chronology of Heath-Stubb's recounting of the myth is concerned, this passage predicts what is yet to come — in the original Arthurian time sequence and in the experience of the reader.

The tenth book is named for Capricorn the Goat, whose Sign the sun enters on the 22nd of December. The book has a long introduction about the gods, which is of importance in a discussion of Heath-Stubb's view of religion, I suspect, but not to this seasonal catalogue. Near the end of the history, he writes:

The Saturnalia was celebrated at the Winter Solstice
In remembrance, by the Romans, of the reign of Saturn:
By ritualized ribaldry, and licensed riot —
The posts are decked, the poticos and the doorways,
With gaiety and greenery, and gifts exchanged.... (76)

After four more lines about the Saturnalia, he continues:

But at this season of midwinter mirth, the Saviour,
Christ was born, in the cavern at Bethlehem,
To oust from Olympus the etiolated eidola.... (76)

Nine lines later, this astrological image appears:

From the Solstice of Capricorn the Cross stems up,
The ends of the transon transfixing the equinoxes,
The summit at Cancer — Christ in the circle
Of the stars of fateality, to ensure our freedom,
Slain for our salvation, in the celestial wheel,
From the foundation of the world; he was found worthy. (77)

Whatever the paradoxes of fatality and freedom mean in this passage, the general effect is to place Christ within the ancient cycle of the Signs of the Zodiac. In one sense, there is nothing wrong with this: the Church Year, as it is called, does use the annual cycle for the purposes of Christian edification and reminder. But Heath-Stubbz possibly has something more pagan in mind, making Christ into another solar hero, perhaps.

After this opening, the poem describes some Christian (or Christianized) customs of Christmas — the giving of gifts, for example — and some of the less Christian aspects of the modern season. Then it returns to the Arthurian setting:

They kept the feast at the castle of Cadbury;
While solid snow silvered the landscape,
And hungrily the wolves howled to the wind. (77)

Heath-Stubbz describes the decorations at length — mistletoe and greenery of holly and ivy — and the foods (78). After dinner, a variety of entertainments is offered. Perhaps I should be explicit that Arthur is off invading Armorica, while Guanhumara rules in the castle. Modred lets in his soldiers for the rebellion in the guise of letting in Christmas mummers, and they sing a marvelous pagan parody of "The Twelve Days of Christmas" before they reveal themselves (80-82).

Thus, the first part of the book takes place on Christmas. The second, simply "On a night in January" (85); that is when Bishop Bedwyr, Gwalchmai, and Brother Cadoc come to Queen Guanhumara, rescuing her by bribery from the White Tower in London (84-85). The third section, with Guanhumara at a nunnery in Ireland, is not dated, and may or may not fall under the Sign of the Goat. Certainly Brother Cadoc's emphasis on her lechery in the second section may be related to Capricorn (86), and perhaps the Gluttony and Avarice mentioned in the Christmas celebrations in the first section can too (77). The most certain reference is Modred's mummers who are referred to as

A grotesque gallimaufry of horned goat-men,
Satyrs and sylvans in a savage rout,
Trotting into the hall, traipsing among the tables. (79)

And, in the third section, after the part about Guanhumara, there is a brief description of the sack of Cadbury castle in which the Picts who were helping Modred continue to sing "the garbled goat-song" (87) — that is, the version of "The Twelve Days of Christmas" with its reference to "the horned man in a holly tree" (80).

The eleventh book is titled with the symbol for Aquarius the Water Bearer, whose sign the sun enters on January the 20th. The chorus, in its opening formal ode, the Parados — for the form is that of a classical tragedy — mentions the Sign:

It is past midwinter, but not yet
The sun glints on the candour
Of Abyssinian snows; not yet
The heavenly water-bearer reverses
His fruitful urn. (89)

Eleven lines later, the chorus refers to the battle between Arthur and Modred taking place under the razor of the January wind. (89)

So the final battle takes place in late January, according to Heath-Stubbz — to fit the Sign, it must be after January the 20th. But according to this text, not yet February.

There are a large number of references to wells, rivers, and rain in this Aquarian book — "Blessing on the wells and springs of Britain" (89) — but I will content myself with two matters. First, Arthur asks Bedwyr (Bedivere) to throw his sword, Caliburn (91; Excalibur), to the "Lady of the glistening lake" (94). Although it is not thrown in this play, Bedwyr agrees to do it (94, 96), and the lake reference is appropriate for Aquarius. Second, intertwined in presentation with the references to the sword, which Bedwyr calls "The active power" (94), are references to a crystal cup, called by Arthur "the passive power" (94) — and called by a goddess, "The Morigan" according to the text (Morgan le Fay), a "gleaning grail" (88): this is far, indeed, from the usual Grail theme of the Arthurian mythos. This crystal cup is also referred to as the "Luck," with a capital _L_ of Arthur's (94); but the goddess refers to it as her Luck, capital _L_, and calls it Arthur's "luck only with a small _l_" (88). However a critic wishes to discuss this, the goddess takes the crystal cup at the first of the play, then when the dying Arthur asks for a drink of water in it, he cannot have it. (For its origin, cf. 44) Then Arthur asks for, "in an earthen cup, some drink" (94); Bedwyr offers him, and he drinks after some hesitation, some wine. I do not know if Arthur could have lived if he had drunk water under the Sign of Aquarius, but Heath-Stubbz does emphasize the wine.

The twelfth Sign of the Zodiac is Pisces the Fishes, which the sun enters on the 19th of February. I find eight versions of the word fish in the book, distributed among fishes, fishermen, and a cuttlefish. There are three seals of some significance (99-101), and references to a mermaid or sea-morgan (98), "a green sea-turtle" and a dolphin (99), and, in Zennora's song, a crab, a squid, a shark, and another sea-morgan (100). (The sea-morgans may be intended to remind a reader that the name of Morgan le Fay began as a term for a sea-goddess.) The book, as indicated before, tells of setting Arthur's body on a raft to float out to sea.

This concludes the survey of the ties of the Signs of the Zodiac to the twelve books of *Arthurius*. What I have intended is one type of structural analysis of the poem: the events of Arthur's reign over a period of years are restructured into a year's cycle, into the cycle of the Zodiac. This is made explicit by Myrddyn's speech at the beginning of "Libra", the seventh book:

"Listen to my words, the last of my wisdom:
In the sign of the Ram, in the raging slaughter
Of the field of Badon, the four-sided fortress,
You prosecuted war for the promotion of peace,
Establishing externally the order of empire;
In the sign of the Bull, the bishops in synod
Determined by dogma the *lines* of doctrine;
In the sign of the Twins, song and sentence,
The lines of communication, by your laureates
were cleared;
The conduits of rhetoric were cleansed of rubble

In the sign of the Crab, I sent you to Ceridwen,
From the maddening moonlight to the mother's
cauldron,
And you utmost anxieties — an inner order
Was created in that descent to the darkness
of her cavern;
In the sign of the Lion, the loud suffrage
And the plea of the people prompted you to your
crowning;
In the sign of the Virgin, this was validated by
the solemnity
Of wedlock to a bride — the wine and the bread
And the common cup, signify the completeness,
The consumption of life; to the crowned couple
The guests do homage, in gladness of that
grace[1]
Now is the time for this knowledge to be
translated
Into forms of government, to guide those who
follow;
That stability of the state may stand the firmer,
And a code of law be left to the land. (53-54)

This last instruction applies to the Sign of Libra, as
has been said; but, due to Modred, the debate never
reaches its issuance in law.

The next two signs, Scorpio and Sagittarius, deal
with a modern Professor of History and not directly
with the events of Arthur's reign. I could write a
defense of this use as a foil, but it would take me away
from my Zodiacoal theme. Let me add my suspicion that
the references to scorpions in "Sagittarius" mean that
that book, less its two brief references to archery,
was once the last part of "Scorpio" (a No play + a
lecture). I suspect that Heath-Stubbins tried and failed
to write a book for "Sagittarius" on Arthur's war in
Gaul. If I am wrong, then Heath-Stubbins is doing
something more subtle in "Sagittarius" than I
comprehend.

The last three books are straight-forward in their
relationship to Arthur's career. In the Sign of the
Goat, Modred rebels; in the Sign of the Water Bearer,
the battle of Camlann between Arthur and Modred
occurs; and in the Sign of the Fish, Arthur's body is
given to the sea.

One question remains. What Heath-Stubbins has done
is clear; but why has he done it? What function does
the Zodiac have? Most intelligent moderns do not
believe in astrology; certainly the influences of the
Signs are the realm of entertainment, financial conning
of the naive, and folly, today. I hesitate to
conjecture that Heath-Stubbins believes in such material,
whatever his theology. Therefore, I assume that he is
using it for historical purposes. His material is
medieval, and he has used medieval beliefs to structure
his work. There is an essay by William Spencer, "Are
Chaucer's Pilgrims Keyed to the Zodiac?", which argues
elaborately and, I believe, convincingly that Chaucer
organized the portraits in "The General Prologue" on
the basis of the Signs and their planetary influences.
In the present age, in which James Joyce has organized
the episodes of Ulysses elaborately by classical
parallel, color, organ of the body, and what-have-you,
Heath-Stubbins' organization by the Zodiac can be taken
as a similar structuring device, without the belief
which lay behind Chaucer's use.

But, as Heath-Stubbins makes clear in the opening
invocation, he sees the Zodiac as symbolic of the life
of man, Arthur or another:

But principally you, Calliope, I presume to ask
preside
At equinox and at solstice, at the sun's turnings
to sing
Of war and of Justice, of Warlockry and a

Wounding.
Present then for man's life a paradigm, his
passage,
Like the sun, through symbols; his season's
progress
From spring's heyday to high summer and harvest,
And lastly to the laggard lagoon of old age
Where his son supplants him and the cycle
returns.
Labour continual is his lot; Alcides learned
this
In his twelve month of toils, under a hard
taskmaster —
Battling against beasts, and against brigands
also,
Monsters whose hollow dens are in the mind of
Man;
The heart of the human being is its own Heaven's
ruler.
Through baleful constellations its course it must
keep. (29)

Thus, the Zodiac serves in three ways: it gives a
simple structural pattern of twelve episodes for an
epic; it reinforces the medieval background; and to
some degree, it enlarges the story of Arthur's life
into that of Everyman.

To Be Continued

Enlist Now for Awards Committees

The Mythopoeic Fantasy Award and Scholarship
Award Committee Chairperson would like to remind
members that it is time to think about nominations for
the 1986 awards — and about volunteering to serve on
the selection committee. Eligibility requirements for
nomination of books for the Scholarship Award and for
serving on the selection committee are the same as for
the Fantasy Award: you must be a member of the
Society; for nominations, no more than five books; for
serving on the committees you must state your
willingness to read or reread all finalists. Members
may nominate books for both awards, and may serve on
both committees.

Criteria for book selection: for the Fantasy
Award, a fantasy work published during 1986 that best
exemplifies "the spirit of the Inklings." A work
reissued in paper during 1986 that had been published
earlier may be nominated whether or not it had
previously been nominated, as long as it did not make
the finalists' list. At the nominations level, and at
the finalist level, a majority of "no award" votes (if
the committee members feel none of the choices should
receive the award) will require we make no award for
the year. The scholarship award is given for a book on
Tolkien, Lewis, and/or Williams that makes a
significant contribution to Inklings scholarship.
Books published during 1984-6 are eligible for the
award; books may be renominated.

Nominations for both awards, and for selection
committee volunteers, should be sent to Christine
Lowentrout, 1017 Seal Way, Seal Beach Ca. 90740, by
FEBRUARY 20, 1987. Committee members, please state
your willingness to read all the finalists, and also
state whether or not you are willing to have your name
and address included on a list to be distributed only
among the members of your committee for purposes of
intercommunication. There will be a preliminary vote
in May, and the final vote is due July 15. The awards
will be announced at the XVIIIth Mythopoeic
Conference. Let your voice be heard!
The 18th Annual
Mythopoeic Conference
JULY 24-27, 1987 MARQUETTE UNIVERSITY

Scholar Guest of Honor
CHRISTOPHER TOLKIEN
Author Guest of Honor
JOHN BELLAIRES

"Looking Back from Weather top: A Fifty Years' Retrospective"
Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the publication of
The Hobbit by J.R.R. Tolkien

Location
Marquette University is in Milwaukee, Wisconsin
(90 miles north of Chicago), and is the home of the
Marquette University Archives' J.R.R. Tolkien
Special Collection. This includes the original
manuscripts of The Hobbit and The Lord of the Rings,
variants, unpublished material, and many other kinds
of Tolkien related materials.

Membership
The total room and meals package, including
three nights (double occupancy), nine meals (Friday
dinner to Monday lunch, including the Banquet) and
registration is $130 until December 31, 1986; $145
until June 1, 1987; $160 thereafter. Space may be
limited; please make your reservations early.

Registration for those providing their own
lodging and meals is $30 until June 1987, $40
thereafter.

Special Exhibits
There will be a display of Tolkien's original
manuscripts of The Hobbit and The Lord of the Rings
courtesy of University Archives' Special Collection.
J.R.R. Tolkien's original illustrations from
The Hobbit will be displayed, courtesy of the
Bodleian Library, Oxford.

There will also be translations of The Hobbit
and other works by Tolkien in 24 languages, with
illustrations, courtesy of Glen H. GoodKnight,
Founder of the Mythopoeic Society.

Call for Papers
The Conference especially welcomes papers that
deal with all aspects of The Hobbit, as well as
other works by J.R.R. Tolkien such as The Lord of
the Rings, and The Silmarillion. Papers dealing with
other authors and topics are sought. A brief
description of the intended paper should be sent as
soon as possible to Papers Coordinator: Richard C.
West, 1919 Madison St., Madison, WI 53711.

Besides papers and panels, there will be films,
an art show, an auction, a masquerade, dealers' room, awards (the Mythopoeic Fantasy and Scholarship Awards), a banquet, and Bardic circles.

20th Anniversary
1987 is also the twentieth anniversary of the
Mythopoeic Society, the sponsoring organization of
the Conference, and special program items are
planned. The Society is interested in the works of
J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and
the genres of Myth and Fantasy from which they have
drawn and then enriched. For a descriptive brochure
and order form, listing the many publications and
other items available, write to the Mythopoeic
Society, Box 6707, Altadena, CA 91001

Mythcon XVIII. Box 537. Milwaukee, WI 53201-0537