

Games From Folktales

Transcripts for September 2017

Dunsany: Quest of the Queen's Tears

The Triclops Plague

Funereal Biscuits

Cornwall: Lost Cities

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have happened.**

Dunsany: The Quest of the Queen's Tears



Let us continue the
conceit that the works
of Lord Dunsany are the
reminiscences of a
retired redcap.

This time, we have a
queen, a quest for her
hand, a hero, his servant,
and a monster.

What could better suit
our purpose?

Sylvia, Queen of the Woods, in her woodland palace, held court, and made a mockery of her suitors. She would sing to them, she said, she would give them banquets, she would tell them tales of legendary days, her jugglers should caper before them, her armies salute them, her fools crack jests with them and make whimsical quips, only she could not love them.

This was not the way, they said, to treat princes in their splendour and mysterious troubadours concealing kingly names; it was not in accordance with fable; myth had no precedent for it. She should have thrown her glove, they said, into some lion's den, she should have asked for a score of venomous heads of the serpents of Licantara, or demanded the death of any notable dragon, or sent them all upon some deadly quest, but that she could not love them—! It was unheard of—it had no parallel in the annals of romance.

And then she said that if they must needs have a quest she would offer her hand to him who first should move her to tears: and the quest should be called, for reference in histories or song, the Quest of the Queen's Tears, and he that achieved them she would wed, be he only a petty duke of lands unknown to romance.

And many were moved to anger, for they hoped for some bloody quest; but the old lords chamberlain said, as they muttered among themselves in a far, dark end of the chamber, that the quest was hard and wise, for that if she could ever weep she might also love. They had known her all her childhood; she had never sighed. Many men had she seen, suitors and courtiers, and had never turned her head after one went by.

Her name literally means "of the woods". She seems superficially to be a dryad, however regal, but her nature, as the poem unfolds, makes her more of an ice queen. Perhaps the Queen of the Winter Forest?

Her palace in the woods has an unnatural number of retainers. It may be in a regio, or Arcadia.

Where do new myths come from? I'd note that by the time PCs hear this, it may not be new.

Throwing the glove and asking them to retrieve it is a classic combat encounter, which you could build a story around, as is the quest for the heads of the snakes of Licantara. It's a made up name, but it contains "cantar" which is Latin for a type of poem,, from which we get the English "chant" and thence "enchant". The heads of the magical serpents are a bit more puzzling for magi, when they note that the symbol of the Order is three magical serpents.

They may trace to Thessalian witchcraft.

Dunsany runs out of steam here...but the quest potential for the hand of a queen is obvious.

I know how modern this sounds, but maybe she's just not into guys. She might be an ace. She might be gay. She's technically a tree: maybe she's really into other trees, or the Sun?

Her beauty was as still sunsets of bitter evenings when all the world is froze, a wonder and a chill. She was as a sun-stricken mountain uplifted alone, all beautiful with ice, a desolate and lonely radiance late at evening far up beyond the comfortable world, not quite to be companioned by the stars, the doom of the mountaineer.

If she could weep, they said, she could love, they said.

And she smiled pleasantly on those ardent princes, and troubadours concealing kingly names.

Then one by one they told, each suitor prince the story of his love, with outstretched hands and kneeling on the knee; and very sorry and pitiful were the tales, so that often up in the galleries some maid of the palace wept. And very graciously she nodded her head like a listless magnolia in the deeps of the night moving idly to all the breezes its glorious bloom.

And when the princes had told their desperate loves and had departed away with no other spoil than of their own tears only, even then there came the unknown troubadours and told their tales in song, concealing their gracious names.

And there was one, Ackronnion, clothed with rags, on which was the dust of roads, and underneath the rags was war-scarred armour whereon were the dints of blows; and when he stroked his harp and sang his song, in the gallery above maidens wept, and even old lords chamberlain whimpered among themselves and thereafter laughed through their tears and said: "It is easy to

It's kind of amazing how far you can get, in designing stories based on European folklore, with one set of ice queen statistics. Then again, her powers may not be based on that sort of thing. She may just have a heart of wood.

For a faerie, this great outpouring of pain and love is a feast.

She's compared to a magnolia here. This flower is unknown in Mythic Europe. This name first develops in the Eighteenth Century, and they are native to South-East Asia and North America.

They are a strangely fitting flower. Some magnolias appear very early in the spring, before other plants put forth leaves so they are the flower of the end of winter. Also, in the real world, the magnolia evolved before the bee. It was pollinated by beetles, and so it is a really solid flower, resistant to damage.

make old people weep and to bring idle tears from lazy girls; but he will not set a-weeping the Queen of the Woods."

And graciously she nodded, and he was the last. And disconsolate went away those dukes and princes, and troubadours in disguise. Yet Ackronnion pondered as he went away.

King he was of Afarmah, Lool and Haf, overlord of Zeroora and hilly Chang, and duke of the dukedoms of Molong and Mlash, none of them unfamiliar with romance or unknown or overlooked in the making of myth. He pondered as he went in his thin disguise.

Now by those that do not remember their childhood, having other things to do, be it understood that underneath fairyland, which is, as all men know, at the edge of the world, there dwelleth the Gladsome Beast. A synonym he for joy.

It is known how the lark in its zenith, children at play out-of-doors, good witches and jolly old parents have all been compared—how aptly!—with this very same Gladsome Beast. Only one "crab" he has (if I may use slang for a moment to make myself perfectly clear), only one drawback, and that is that in the gladness of his heart he spoils the cabbages of the Old Man Who Looks After Fairyland,—and of course he eats men.

It must further be understood that whoever may obtain the tears of the Gladsome Beast in a bowl, and become drunken upon them, may move all persons to shed tears of joy so long as he remains inspired by the potion to sing or to make music.

Ackronnion's name seems to have the -ion suffix, which means the first part of the name is a verb. -ion comes, through various paths from Greek, so I'd suggest his name is a corruption of "Akronion", Akros means "summit" or headland" meaning "the state of having travelled to the furthest point" This fits the character's later actions. I suppose this is either a sign of nominative determinism or his actual name has been lost and replaced with a description of his role. He is, metaphorically, the mountaineer.

Is he a faerie prince, so that the names of his kingdoms make no sense or have they, like another kingdom in Dunsany's work, been taken into Faerie? Is this the price of the courtship?

I love that last line, and in Mythic Europe, it's so true. There are lots of faeries that eat people, in one way or another, but destroying the cabbages of the Old Man Who Looks After Fairyland? That's just the Gladsome Beast.

I'd like to flag him as an example of Nozick's Utility Monster, an idea we will come back to in a future episode.

I've snuck the Master of Games into Mythic Europe, mentioned passingly in a single sentence. He's what I think Tytalus became. I am, however, charmed by the idea that he's now an annoyed old guy in a hut on the edge of Faerie and Magic, trying to grow a decent cabbage.

Now Ackronnion pondered in this wise: that if he could obtain the tears of the Gladsome Beast by means of his art, withholding him from violence by the spell of music, and if a friend should slay the Gladsome Beast before his weeping ceased—for an end must come to weeping even with men—that so he might get safe away with the tears, and drink them before the Queen of the Woods and move her to tears of joy. He sought out therefore a humble knightly man who cared not for the beauty of Sylvia, Queen of the Woods, but had found a woodland maiden of his own once long ago in summer. And the man's name was Arrath, a subject of Ackronnion, a knight-at-arms of the spear-guard: and together they set out through the fields of fable until they came to Fairyland, a kingdom sunning itself (as all men know) for leagues along the edges of the world. And by a strange old pathway they came to the land they sought, through a wind blowing up the pathway sheer from space with a kind of metallic taste from the roving stars. Even so they came to the windy house of thatch where dwells the Old Man Who Looks After Fairyland sitting by parlour windows that look away from the world. He made them welcome in his star-ward parlour, telling them tales of Space, and when they named to him their perilous quest he said it would be a charity to **kill the Gladsome Beast**; for he was clearly one of those that liked not its happy ways. And then he took them out through his back door, for the front door had no pathway nor even a step—from it the old man used to empty his slops sheer on to the Southern Cross—and so they came to the garden wherein his cabbages were, and those flowers that only blow in Fairyland, turning their faces always towards the comet, and he pointed them out the way to the place he called Underneath, where the Gladsome

Dunsany has a lot of luck, or he's deliberately put some deep cuts of mythology in here.

Cabbages, for the Greeks, were created from the tears of King Lycurgus of Thrace. He forced Dionysus from his kingdom and tried to destroy his vines. In revenge the god made the king think his son was a mature ivy plant, sacred to Dionsys, and Lycurgis trimmed his son's extremities off, so that he died. Then he gets fed to meat-eating horses, or panthers, depending on who you listen to.

Cabbages don't grow well with vines, and if you eat them, they correct the humours for drunkenness. That's a long way to get to a piece of agricultural wisdom, but the cabbage was the potato of the medieval world.

Speaking of cabbages, the headed cabbage doesn't seem to reach Britain until the 14th Century. The word "cabbage" is from a Norman word meaning "head". The general class of crops we now call brassicas they called "coles" and they did have loose leaf coles. The Scottish pronunciation, kale, is still used for one type.

The earliest cabbage variety doesn't compete well with other plants, but it is salt-resistant, so it dwells best on cliffs. Is it purely co-incidence that the man is growing them at the very edge of the world?

Sometimes I wonder if Dunsany is doing deep cuts like this all the time and I'm missing them, or if he's just been lucky.

Beast had his lair. Then they manoeuvred. Ackronnion was to go by the way of the steps with his harp and an agate bowl, while Arrath went round by a crag on the other side. Then the Old Man Who Looks After Fairyland went back to his windy house, muttering angrily as he passed his cabbages, for he did not love the ways of the Gladsome Beast; and the two friends parted on their separate ways.

Nothing perceived them but that ominous crow gluttoned overlong already upon the flesh of man.

The wind blew bleak from the stars.

At first there was dangerous climbing, and then Ackronnion gained the smooth, broad steps that led from the edge to the lair, and at that moment heard at the top of the steps the continuous chuckles of the Gladsome Beast.

He feared then that its mirth might be insuperable, not to be saddened by the most grievous song; nevertheless he did not turn back then, but softly climbed the stairs and, placing the agate bowl upon a step, struck up the chaunt called Dolorous. It told of desolate, regretted things befallen happy cities long since in the prime of the world. It told of how the gods and beasts and men had long ago loved beautiful companions, and long ago in vain. It told of the golden host of happy hopes, but not of their achieving. It told how Love scorned Death, but told of Death's laughter. The contented chuckles of the Gladsome Beast suddenly ceased in his lair. He rose and shook himself. He was still unhappy. Ackronnion still sang on the chaunt called Dolorous. The Gladsome Beast came mournfully up to him. Ackronnion ceased not for the sake of

As Faerie mediates between the mundane and the Magical, this may be vim. The breath of stars, the wind from Space, may be magic in its pure form.

How terrible if the world tree is a cabbage...and yet it is called a brassica because its flower is like a cross. Might the cabbages be a metaphor for the ascendance of Heaven, and if they go to seed might they crack the join between Faerie and Magic? Is this how Tytalus is planning his escape?

Who built the steps from the lair to the edge, and for what use? Does someone sail the sea of stars? Do they seek the beast, to feed it, or worship it, or harvest its tears? How do they respond to its death?

his panic, but still sang on. He sang of the malignity of time. Two tears welled large in the eyes of the Gladsome Beast. Ackronnion moved the agate bowl to a suitable spot with his foot. He sang of autumn and of passing away. Then the beast wept as the frore hills weep in the thaw, and the tears splashed big into the agate bowl. Ackronnion desperately chaunted on; he told of the glad unnoticed things men see and do not see again, of sunlight beheld unheeded on faces now withered away. The bowl was full. Ackronnion was desperate: the Beast was so close. Once he thought that its mouth was watering!—but it was only the tears that had run on the lips of the Beast. He felt as a morsel! The Beast was ceasing to weep! He sang of worlds that had disappointed the gods. And all of a sudden, crash! and the staunch spear of Arrath went home behind the shoulder, and the tears and the joyful ways of the Gladsome Beast were ended and over for ever.

And carefully they carried the bowl of tears away, leaving the body of the Gladsome Beast as a change of diet for the ominous crow; and going by the windy house of thatch they said farewell to the Old Man Who Looks After Fairyland, who when he heard of the deed rubbed his hands together and mumbled again and again, "And a very good thing, too. My cabbages! My cabbages!"

And not long after Ackronnion sang again in the sylvan palace of the Queen of the Woods, having first drunk all the tears in his agate bowl. And it was a gala night, and all the court were there and ambassadors from the lands of legend and myth, and even some from Terra Cognita.

Dolorous means "painful" in period, but means "causing grief" by ours.

Agate bowls really exist and were popular in the Renaissance, although perhaps not of the size found in the Syme illustration to the end of this section, Agate takes its name from the River Achates in Sicily, where they were found in exportable quantities.

Agates are said to cure insomnia and nightmares, which seems a useful link.

Where is the beast getting enough people from that the crow gets a meal?

Does it emerge from faerie and kill in the real world?

Legends are meant to be vaguely historical. Myths are instructive, but not real. Terra Cognita is the known world, where the rest of you are from.

I'm from Terra Incognita Australis.

And Ackronnion sang as he never sang before, and will not sing again. O, but dolorous, dolorous, are all the ways of man, few and fierce are his days, and the end trouble, and vain, vain his endeavour: and woman—who shall tell of it?—her doom is written with man's by listless, careless gods with their faces to other spheres.

If someone sings this song in the real world, does it attract demons? Acedia demons for example? It is known, from a previous episode, that they are in leauge, in some sense, with the Snow Queen. Is this a new tactic of hers?

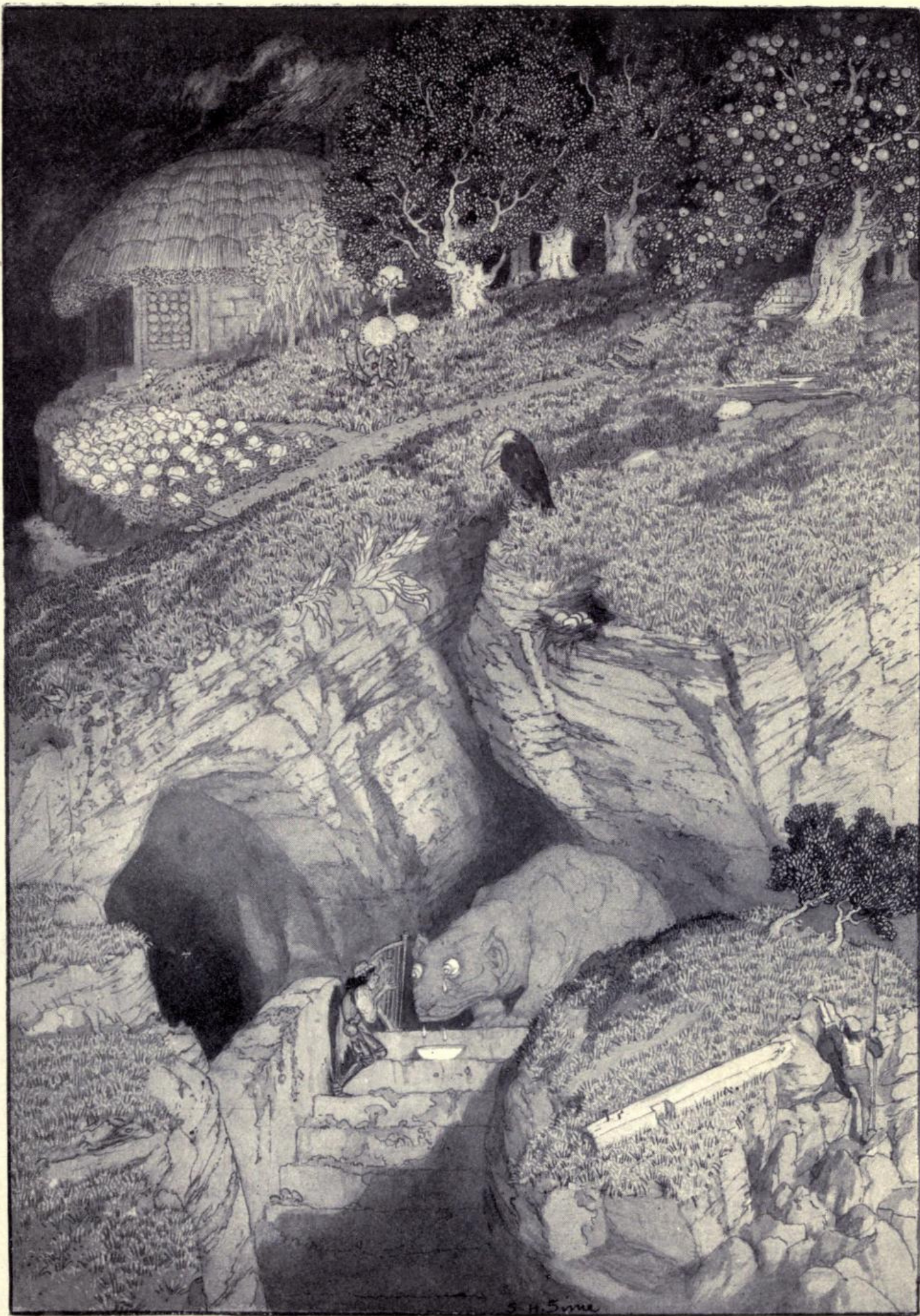
Somewhat thus he began, and then inspiration seized him, and all the trouble in the beauty of his song may not be set down by me: there was much of gladness in it, and all mingled with grief: it was like the way of man: it was like our destiny.

Sobs arose at his song, sighs came back along echoes: seneschals, soldiers, sobbed, and a clear cry made the maidens; like rain the tears came down from gallery to gallery.

A literal rain of tears might break a curse. It also reminds me of a jazz classic about crying a river.

All round the Queen of the Woods was a storm of sobbing and sorrow.

But no, she would not weep.



As I was watching older seasons of the Great British Bake Off, I learned of a custom I hope magi emulate: the sending of funereal biscuits. We know little of the funerals of magi. Tremere practice cremation, then pour your ashes into a hole that leads to Twilight. Criamon magi sometimes kill themselves, or fade from reality without leaving a corpse. Jerbiton magi often have Christian burial. Flambeau magi have vast pyres, lit communally by their Housemates. The Mercer look after their family, but exactly how we are not sure. The archmagi have, in older editions, a surprising custom of putting all of their corpses together, in what I imagine is possibly the highest concentration of potential trouble outside of Pandemonium. What happens when a conventional magus dies? We don't know. We assume their covenants have individual customs. If you're a busy SG and you don't want to invent such customs, steal this one.

The lower middle class of Britain, in the Victorian period, spent a heap on funerals, and one of the big expenses was hand delivering the invitations. The person who did this was called a "bidder". I like to imagine there's a redcap who just does that job, but it's likely too big for one person. I imagine they have a mourning uniform. I imagine they do not just yell their name to the door guards at each covenant, but have some ceremonial way of declaring their arrival. I'd like to suggest a call from a roman tuba (or cornu, despite how troublesome its size would make it to carry). Perhaps instead the tolling of a low bell?

As a story idea, what happens when faeries or demons impersonate a bidder to wangle an invitation into the Aegis?

I'd suggest that the bidders carry an oscilla, a sort of death mask or portrait sculpture. The Order repeats names a great deal and there must have been some sort of embarrassing incident when people could not quite place which Justina of Guernicus had died.

Funeral masks have all kinds of odd histories in Europe, and there's one I've been trying to work up for some time. In some Roman funerals of high status, an actor wearing a mask would impersonate the deceased, riding as them in procession with the body, and even attending the feast after the funeral. This person was called the archimimus (which just means "head actor"). I've been interested in masks as magical items for a while now, and I think that via the archimimi and the death masks, we can link Classical theatre mask magi to Tytalusian personae magic, remembering the teacher of Tytalus was the archnecromantrix Gurona, the Fetid. I haven't used a lot of Cthonic magic in my games, but there's something there, about allowing the body to be possessed by outside forces while the mask is worn.



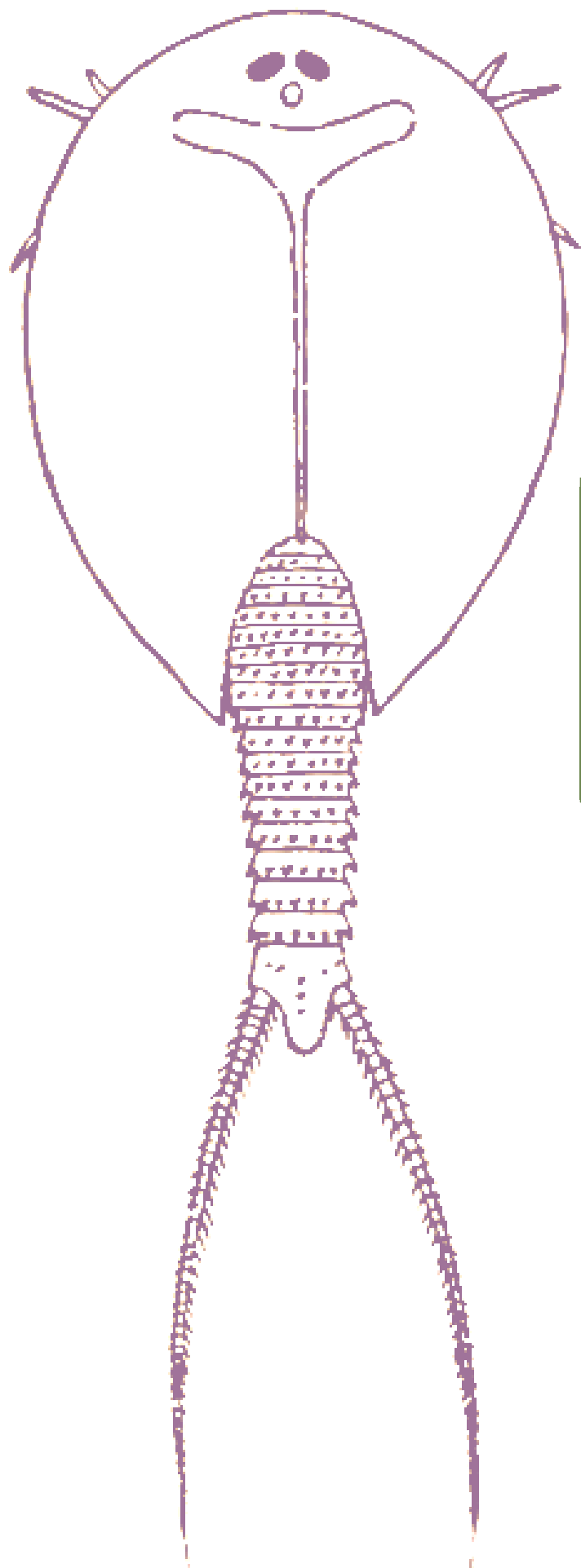
In the Victorian period, the bidder would not just pass an invitation, but a package of two shortbread biscuits, into which had been stamped a suitable design. Given the ease with which magi can manufacture things, and their relative wealth, this might be the sigil of the magus. The biscuits were wrapped in paper printed with suitable moral lessons, and sealed with black wax. In the Order's case paper is known, but cloth might be easier in some circumstances. The paper may merely give the eulogy of the magus (so, it records an epitaph). There are, however, other possibilities.

A magus who is really well off could prepare for the funeral and arrange for something valuable to wrap around each set of biscuits. A Tytalus might put clues to a challenge, or a map to a treasure. A Bonisagus might include a piece of Original Research she had yet to integrate. A famous magician might hand out individual pages of a new Branch of the Arts, so that people need to gather them together. A Jerbiton might have beautiful poems, or works of art. A Verditus might make each a single-use magic item, which provides some interesting effect. The Verditus might similarly invest the biscuits themselves.

Even something as simple as a will might create stories. Characters may seek political support to have it overturned, or need to negotiate with heirs for resources promised them by the dead magus. A will that gives unexpectedly large amounts of any resource may flood the market, or provide opportunities.

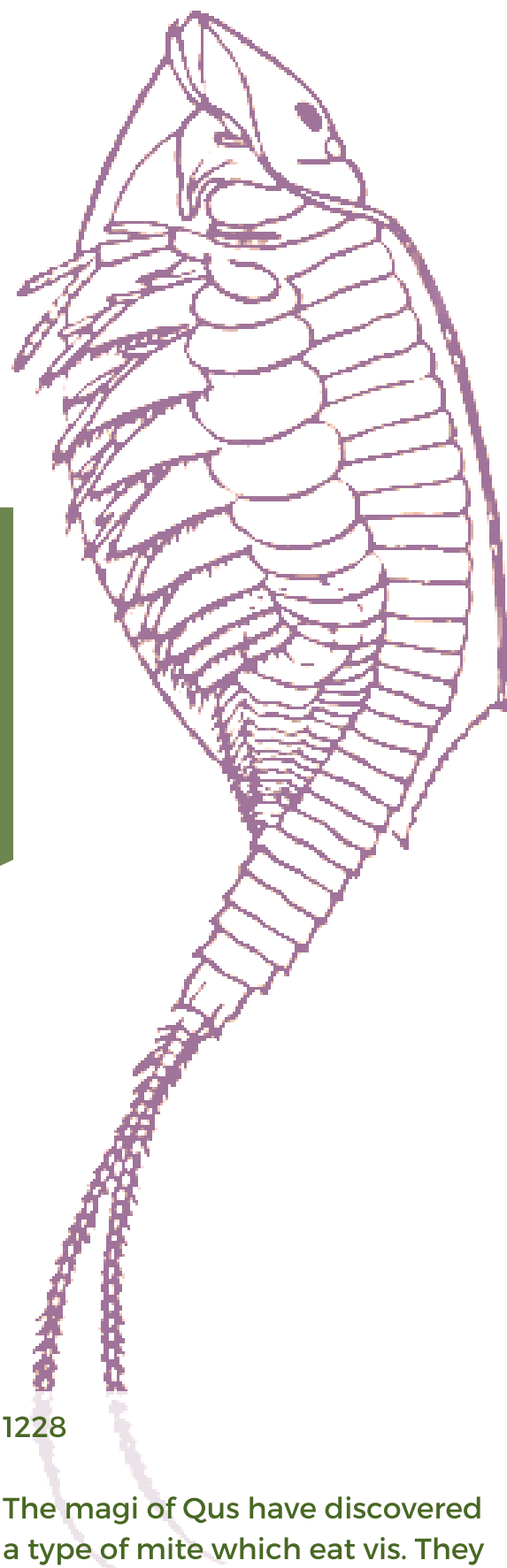
Beyond the invitation biscuits, there's the travel to the funeral and the magi met there. This could be where a covenant is formed: a gathering of heirs, considering what to do with their benefactor's resources, may choose to give them to the next generation, to seed a spring covenant.

In the strangest of the blog's links we'll return to biscuits next month, complete with a recipe. Before then, we have a plague of vis eating mites, Lyonesse, and the Dread Pirate Shard to get through.



Collected
Alexandria, Egypt
1228

Circles for scale



1228

The magi of Qus have discovered a type of mite which eat vis. They were swarming about a mummy they uncovered in a freshly opened tomb. I am carrying samples of the magicophages to the magi of Alexandria.

The triops plague:

1229

Andrea of Bonisagus notes that the triops mites have several fascinating properties. She first wishes to dispel the idea that they eat vis: instead the vis they were found crawling over was excreted by them. The most significant property, to our military minded sodales, is that the mites have cumulative magical resistance. It is negligible for each mite, but when thousands are gathered, it detectably inhibits spontaneous spells.

1231

Actively farmed swarms sometimes suffer a colony collapse, and the mites eat each other, rapidly increasing in size as they ingest each other. The resultant bugs are able to catch their smaller nest-mates despite substantial difference in speed. Large triopses have measurable, but minor, magic resistance.

Andrea of Bonisagus has bound one of these creatures as her familiar. Her notes indicate several interesting properties. She can see ghosts now, and has intuitions concerning the outcome of events.

Underside

Collected
Alexandria, Egypt
1252
(third wave)

To scale



1250

Andrea of Bonisagus disagrees, but I am sure of my observations, so I must formally report them to you, my Prima. The mite farms weaken the auras in which they are kept. My concerns over the small size and rapid reproduction rate of the smaller mites continue to be ignored. Please, as a matter of urgency, consult the Order's records for similar creatures.

Trioptic structure

Collection point disputed
Possible: Alexandria, Egypt
1259 (fourth wave)

To scale

1252

It is with great sadness I report the death of Andrea of Bonisagus. Her familiar was set upon by a larger version of the creature than previously observed. The sudden death of her familiar rendered her insensible, and unable to defend herself.



1296

[Mercere symbol for plague]

This message is inscribed into metal: I passed it through flame before sending it to you. At the death of Andrea of Jerbiton, her experiments went unattended. Her hives breached her sanctuum's defences. They infested her covenant. As her sodales fled, they carried the contagion to the covenants which gave them shelter.

Alexandria Covenant is destroyed. The final triops is a giant, covered in its tiny progeny.

Quarantine Africa.

Heriophage
"Temple eater"

Largest size observed before the
abandonment of Africa

Shield (head) length 11 feet
Body length (inc shield) 23 feet
Complete length 34 feet

Commentary

The triopses provide an alternative to the explanations for why orders of magicians rise and fall in European history, and why epochs change, so that the titans go silent or the oracles fall silent. They are like Fermi's Great Filter, but for magical orders.

At the largest level, one of the earlier Orders may have found some way to deal with these creatures. Could it be, for example, that the entire Realm of Faerie is a great engine designed store the power needed to exterminate the triopses? On a less cataclysmic level: careful magi could use the mites as weapons, or as resources.

Cornwall:

Lost

Cities

When researching a new work, you collect bits of trivia until eventually they click into a structure. I think this chapter is the one which draws Hunt's work together for roleplayers. I can't detail it here, more research is required, but this is the chapter about Lyonesse, and for us, Lyonesse is the low hanging fruit that makes the rest of this material simple to use and integrate.

The Saxon Chronicle says that Lyonesse was inundated on the 11th of November 1099. That's well within two Hermetic generations. It might also explain why there is no covenant in Cornwall, despite it being an interesting site (once it has been detailed to make it so). The covenant at this end of Great Britain was on the main part of Lyonesse, and has vanished.

A note on names: there's no good etymology for Lyonesse. The Cornish name may be Lethowsow, or that may, like the English "Seven Stones" refer to the remnant rocks of Scilly. The Cornish name for the places within the stones is Tregva ("dwelling") and is said to be the site of the major city that was lost when Siluria was inundated.

Time for a quote from Hunt:

"A region of extreme fertility, we are told, once linked the Scilly Islands with Western Cornwall. A people, known as the Silures, inhabited this tract, which has been called Lyonesse, or sometimes Lethowsow, - who were remarkable for their industry and piety. No less than 140 churches stood over that region, which is now a waste of waters; and the rocks called the Seven Stones are said to mark the place of a large city. Even tradition is silent on the character of this great cataclysm."

Latin writers call this land, either entire or merely the largest island, Siluria. That's a perfect covenant name. Strabo says that Silura is divided from the rest of Britian by a narrow channel with fierce currents. It is accompanied by nine smaller islands which his people seek for trade. He calls these the Tin Islands ("Casseriterides"). William of Worcester (who died around 1482) recorded that there was land from "the eastern shore of Mount's Bay to the northwestern rock of Scilly" with the exception of a narrow strait between Longships and Land's End.

The Grey Rock in the Wood

Saint Michael's Mount used to be a hill surrounded by a forest, which was later developed, at least partially. It's name in Cornish is still Karrek Loos yn Koos, which Hunt says is the "white rock in the wood", but more modern sources seem to say "grey rock in the wood". The land used to extend six miles south of the the Mount, to a line from "Clement's Isle to Cudden Rock" according to Hunt. For modern players, that's Mousehole to Cudden Point. Cudden Point's interesting to us, because there's lost treasure there, sought by children at extreme low tides. Sometimes they even find it, although that may just be faeries starting their games. Time for some more Hunt:

"Amongst other things, an especial search is made for a silver table, which was lost by a very wealthy lord, by some said to be the old Lord Pengerswick, who enriched himself by grinding down the poor. On one occasion, when the calmness of summer, the clearness of the skies, and the tranquillity of the waters invited the luxurious to the enjoyments of the sea, this magnate, with a party of gay and thoughtless friends, was floating in a beautiful boat lazily with the tide, and feasting from numerous luxuries spread on a silver table. Suddenly no one lived to tell the cause the boat sank in the calm, transparent waters ; and, long after the event, the fishermen would tell of sounds of revelry heard from beneath the waters, and some have said they have seen these wicked ones still seated around the silver table." This may be an Infernal aura or regio.

Hunt notes that the main anchorage in Mount Bay is called a "Gwavas Lake". Folkloristically it was a lake, but the sea has eaten into the land so far that it is now aggregated to the ocean. There is a forest of beech trees visible under the water, which sweeps from Gwavas to the Mount. Beech nuts can be collected on the shore after rough tides, at at neap tides, visitors may cut wood from the beech trees. In the real world, there is the remnant of a forest under the bay, which has been investigated by archaeological digs. The beech nuts may be a vis source.

Time for a long quote from Hunt:

"We cannot say how many years since, but once there stood on the northern shores of Cornwall, extending over all that country between the Gannell and Perranporth, a large city called Langarrow or Langona. The sand-hills which now extend over this part of the coast cover that great city, and the memory of the sad and sudden catastrophe still lingers among the peasantry. So settled is tradition, that no other time than 900 years since is ever mentioned as the period at which Langarrow was buried." Hunt was writing in 1908, so that would be 1008, if taken literally. "This city in its prime is said to have been the largest in England, and to have had seven churches, which were alike remarkable for their beauty and their size. The inhabitants were wealthy, and according to received accounts, they drew their wealth from a large tract of level land, thickly wooded in some parts, and highly cultivated in others from the sea, which was overflowing with fish of all kinds and from mines, which yielded them abundance of tin and lead. To this remote city, in those days, criminals were transported from other parts of Britain. They were made to work in the mines on the coast, in constructing a new harbour in the Gannell, and clearing it of sand, so that ships of large burden could in those days sail far inland. Numerous curious excavations in the rocks, on either side of this estuary, are still pointed out as being evidences of the works of the convicts. This portion of the population of Langarrow were not allowed to dwell within the city. The convicts and their families had to construct huts or dig caves on the wild moors of this unsheltered northern shore, and to this day evidences of their existence are found under the sand, in heaps of wood-ashes, amidst which are discovered considerable quantities of mussel and cockle shells, which we may suppose was their principal food...For a long period this city flourished in its prime, and its inhabitants were in the enjoyment of every luxury which industry could obtain or wealth could purchase. Sin, in many of its worst forms, was however present amongst the people. The convicts sent to Langarrow were of the vilest. They were long kept widely separated ; but use breeds familiarity, and gradually the more designing of the convicts persuaded their masters to employ them within the city. The result of this was, after a few years, an amalgamation of the two classes of the population. The daughters of Langarrow were married to the criminals, and thus crime became the familiar spirit of the place. The progress of this may have been slow the result was, however, sure ; and eventually, when vice was dominant, and the whole population sunk in sensual pleasures, the anger of the Lord fell upon them. A storm of unusual violence arose, and continued blowing, without intermitting its violence for one moment, for three days and nights. In that period the hills of blown sand, extending, with few intervals, from Crantock to Perran were formed, burying the city, its churches, and its inhabitants in a common grave. To the present time those sand-hills stand a monument of God's wrath ; and in several places we certainly find considerable quantities of bleached human bones, which are to many strong evidence of the correctness of tradition. Crantock was, according to tradition, once a trading town, and it then had a religious house, with a dean and nine prebends. The Gannell filling up ruined the town. This must have happened when Langarrow was destroyed. On Gwithian Sands the remains of what is supposed to have been a church has been discovered, and according to Hals and Gilbert, a similar tradition exists here of a buried town."

The City of Langarrow or Langona

Other lost territory

Many other areas are marked as being stolen by the sea, in local lore. Hunt records the tradition that "from Rame-head to the two Looes very fertile valleys are stated to have extended at least a league southwards, over a tract now covered with sea". On a smaller level the Black Rock in Falmouth Harbour used to be a tidal island.

Two towns, Lelant and Pillackam near Hayle, were both covered in a single night. Lelant was the mother church of St Ives, which argues it once had a substantial population.

The land around the Chapel Rock at Perran-Porth has been washed away, but the Lord allow pilgrimages to it to continue. It's possible to walk, dry foot, to the island at eleven o'clock, despite the sea clearly being in the way. It's a mystery, or a Divine regio, if you're a magus.

Story hooks

There's a myth that is encoded in the coat of arms of the Trevilian family of Cornwall. It's "gules a horse argent, from a less wavy argent, and azure, issuing out of a sea proper". Their ancestor fled the encroaching floodwaters on his horse, landing on the Cornish coast. That makes the family one point of inquiry into the nature of the disaster.

Hunt works through a digression in this chapter on the Padstow hobby horse, which locals "ride" into the sea each year. He suggests it is linked to the Padstow mermaid, or the horse that bought someone safely from Lyonesse. He also suggest the miner's sayings that there is "a horse in the lode" (a valueless stone in the tin ore) and "Black Jack rides a good horse" (tin ore often indicates the presence of copper ore) may be related. Then he tries to rope in the water horse myth, in the vaguest of ways. These are weak links, but that's fine for gaming. The riding of the horse into the sea may be a way of stopping more land being taken by a faerie power.

Far later, Hunt notes that a sister of a vicar received a vision in which she was told to prepare a potion and pour it into the waters, so that the land would rise, and the people be reanimated from an unaging, magical sleep. Her technique or faith failed her, and the land did not rise. Maybe the magi might arrange the ritual better? Might there a covenant in this unaging sleep?

Lyonesse is the home of Tristran, of the Round Table. There's a heap of material there, which we'll need to circle back to mine when we discuss Arthur in later weeks.

Is this where the selkies or merryfolk come from: not a faerie race, but a group of transformed humans? Might it be possible to live among them? Could a whole kingdom still be there, walled off in Arcadia or by simple magic?

Near Tregva, Cornish fishermen often catch artefacts in their nets. The oddest mentioned in Hunt are windows. He is unclear, but if he means glass windows, then that argues for supernatural manufacture: flat glass windows are not known in period. Flag this as a contested vis source, at least.

Why aren't people more worried about the loss of Lyonesse? 140 parishes isn't a small country: it's about a quarter the population of Kent, the richest county in England in 1220. The loss of a city, and therefore a bishop, seems to have slipped the mind of Mythic Europeans in a most distressing way. Is this tidying up by the Order after they sank the whole place during the Schism? Is this God, or the faeries? Does this forgetting make it difficult to research, or even remember, the folklore of Lyonesse?

Saint Michael appeared on the rock in 495. People make pilgrimages to the Kader Migell: a stone seat he left there, that is difficult to reach. Sitting on the chair is the traditional end of pilgrimage to the Mount. When Saint Keyna visited the mount she sat on the chair and gave it the same power as her well: whichever of a set of newlyweds uses it first will have the power in the marriage.

The forest of trees under Mount Bay is, in the real world, just a remnant, but in Mythic Europe, particularly at certain times, might it not be a full and verdant woodland? What, or who, might dwell therein?

Langarrow may have been destroyed by the Lord, but it is inundated, suspiciously, slightly before the formal declaration of the Renunciation of Diedne, in an area where the druids were, presumably, strong. This dating assumes that exactly 900 years have passed: but a slightly rounding in folklore places this event during the active phase of the war.