

# Games From Folktales

Transcripts for December 2017

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An experiment in podcasting for the Ars Magica roleplaying game

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# Patreons

**Jason Italiano**

**Daniel Jensen**

**Jason Tondro**

**Dan Cassar**

**Jarkman DeVries**

**Pantelis Polakis**

**Without you there literally  
would not be a podcast.**

**Thank you so much.**

Despite the advertisements of rival firms, it is probable that every tradesman knows that nobody in business at the present time has a position equal to that of Mr. Nuth. To those outside the magic circle of business, his name is scarcely known; he does not need to advertise, he is consummate. He is superior even to modern competition, and, whatever claims they boast, his rivals know it. His terms are moderate, so much cash down when the goods are delivered, so much in blackmail afterwards. He consults your convenience. His skill may be counted upon; I have seen a shadow on a windy night move more noisily than Nuth, for Nuth is a burglar by trade. Men have been known to stay in country houses and to send a dealer afterwards to bargain for a piece of tapestry that they saw there—some article of furniture, some picture. This is bad taste: but those whose culture is more elegant invariably send Nuth a night or two after their visit. He has a way with tapestry; you would scarcely notice that the edges had been cut. And often when I see some huge, new house full of old furniture and portraits from other ages, I say to myself, "These mouldering chairs, these full-length ancestors and carved mahogany are the produce of the incomparable Nuth."

It may be urged against my use of the word incomparable that in the burglary business the name of Slith stands paramount and alone; and of this I am not ignorant; but Slith is a classic, and lived long ago, and knew nothing at all of modern competition; besides which the surprising nature of his doom has possibly cast a glamour upon Slith that exaggerates in our eyes his undoubted merits.

It must not be thought that I am a friend of Nuth's; on the contrary such politics as I have are on the side of Property; and he needs no words from me, for his position is almost unique in trade, being among the very few that do not need to advertise.

At the time that my story begins Nuth lived in a roomy house in Belgrave Square: in his inimitable way he had made friends with the caretaker. The place suited Nuth, and, whenever anyone came to inspect it before purchase, the caretaker used to praise the house in the words that Nuth had suggested. "If it wasn't for the drains," she would say, "it's the finest house in London," and when they pounced on this remark and asked questions about the drains, she would answer them that the drains also were good, but not so good as the house. They did not see Nuth when they went over the rooms, but Nuth was there.

Here in a neat black dress on one spring morning came an old woman whose bonnet was lined with red, asking for Mr. Nuth; and with her came her large and awkward son. Mrs. Eggins, the caretaker, glanced up the street, and then she let them in, and left them to wait in the drawing-room amongst furniture all mysterious with sheets. For a long while they waited, and then there was a smell of pipe-tobacco, and there was Nuth standing quite close to them.

"Lord," said the old woman whose bonnet was lined with red, "you did make me start." And then she saw by his eyes that that was not the way to speak to Mr. Nuth. And at last Nuth spoke, and very nervously the old woman explained that her son was a likely lad, and had been in business already but wanted to better himself, and she wanted Mr. Nuth to teach him a livelihood.

Dunsany:

How

Nuth

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First of all Nuth wanted to see a business reference, and when he was shown one from a jeweller with whom he happened to be hand-in-glove the upshot of it was that he agreed to take young Tonker (for this was the surname of the likely lad) and to make him his apprentice. And the old woman whose bonnet was lined with red went back to her little cottage in the country, and every evening said to her old man, "Tonker, we must fasten the shutters of a night-time, for Tommy's a burglar now."

The details of the likely lad's apprenticeship I do not propose to give; for those that are in the business know those details already, and those that are in other businesses care only for their own, while men of leisure who have no trade at all would fail to appreciate the gradual degrees by which Tommy Tonker came first to cross bare boards, covered with little obstacles in the dark, without making any sound, and then to go silently up creaky stairs, and then to open doors, and lastly to climb.

Let it suffice that the business prospered greatly, while glowing reports of Tommy Tonker's progress were sent from time to time to the old woman whose bonnet was lined with red in the labourious handwriting of Nuth. Nuth had given up lessons in writing very early, for he seemed to have some prejudice against forgery, and therefore considered writing a waste of time. And then there came the transaction with Lord Castlenorman at his Surrey residence. Nuth selected a Saturday night, for it chanced that Saturday was observed as Sabbath in the family of Lord Castlenorman, and by eleven o'clock the whole house was quiet. Five minutes before midnight Tommy Tonker, instructed by Mr. Nuth, who waited outside, came away with one pocketful of rings and shirt-studs. It was quite a light pocketful, but the jewellers in Paris could not match it without sending specially to Africa, so that Lord Castlenorman had to borrow bone shirt-studs.

Not even rumour whispered the name of Nuth. Were I to say that this turned his head, there are those to whom the assertion would give pain, for his associates hold that his astute judgment was unaffected by circumstance. I will say, therefore, that it spurred his genius to plan what no burglar had ever planned before. It was nothing less than to burgle the house of the gnoles. And this that abstemious man unfolded to Tonker over a cup of tea. Had Tonker not been nearly insane with pride over their recent transaction, and had he not been blinded by a veneration for Nuth, he would have—but I cry over spilt milk. He expostulated respectfully; he said he would rather not go; he said it was not fair; he allowed himself to argue; and in the end, one windy October morning with a menace in the air found him and Nuth drawing near to the dreadful wood.

Nuth, by weighing little emeralds against pieces of common rock, had ascertained the probable weight of those house-ornaments that the gnoles are believed to possess in the narrow, lofty house wherein they have dwelt from of old. They decided to steal two emeralds and to carry them between them on a cloak; but if they should be too heavy one must be dropped at once. Nuth warned young Tonker against greed, and explained that the emeralds were worth less than cheese until they were safe away from the dreadful wood.

Everything had been planned, and they walked now in silence.



No track led up to the sinister gloom of the trees, either of men or cattle; not even a poacher had been there snaring elves for over a hundred years. You did not trespass twice in the dells of the gnoles. And, apart from the things that were done there, the trees themselves were a warning, and did not wear the wholesome look of those that we plant ourselves.

The nearest village was some miles away with the backs of all its houses turned to the wood, and without one window at all facing in that direction. They did not speak of it there, and elsewhere it is unheard of.

Into this wood stepped Nuth and Tommy Tonker. They had no firearms. Tonker had asked for a pistol, but Nuth replied that the sound of a shot "would bring everything down on us," and no more was said about it.

Into the wood they went all day, deeper and deeper. They saw the skeleton of some early Georgian poacher nailed to a door in an oak tree; sometimes they saw a fairy scuttle away from them; once Tonker stepped heavily on a hard, dry stick, after which they both lay still for twenty minutes. And the sunset flared full of omens through the tree trunks, and night fell, and they came by fitful starlight, as Nuth had foreseen, to that lean, high house where the gnoles so secretly dwelt.

All was so silent by that unvalued house that the faded courage of Tonker flickered up, but to Nuth's experienced sense it seemed too silent; and all the while there was that look in the sky that was worse than a spoken doom, so that Nuth, as is often the case when men are in doubt, had leisure to fear the worst. Nevertheless he did not abandon the business, but sent the likely lad with the instruments of his trade by means of the ladder to the old green casement. And the moment that Tonker touched the withered boards, the silence that, though ominous, was earthly, became unearthly like the touch of a ghoul. And Tonker heard his breath offending against that silence, and his heart was like mad drums in a night attack, and a string of one of his sandals went tap on a rung of a ladder, and the leaves of the forest were mute, and the breeze of the night was still; and Tonker prayed that a mouse or a mole might make any noise at all, but not a creature stirred, even Nuth was still. And then and there, while yet he was undiscovered, the likely lad made up his mind, as he should have done long before, to leave those colossal emeralds where they were and have nothing further to do with the lean, high house of the gnoles, but to quit this sinister wood in the nick of time and retire from business at once and buy a place in the country. Then he descended softly and beckoned to Nuth. But the gnoles had watched him through knavish holes that they bore in trunks of the trees, and the unearthly silence gave way, as it were with a grace, to the rapid screams of Tonker as they picked him up from behind—screams that came faster and faster until they were incoherent. And where they took him it is not good to ask, and what they did with him I shall not say.

Nuth looked on for a while from the corner of the house with a mild surprise on his face as he rubbed his chin, for the trick of the holes in the trees was new to him; then he stole nimbly away through the dreadful wood.

"And did they catch Nuth?" you ask me, gentle reader.

"Oh, no, my child" (for such a question is childish). "Nobody ever catches Nuth."



# Who is Nuth?

The least interesting possibility is that he's just the most skilled thief around, and playing this game of surrogates against the gnoles is the only way he can earn experience points.

A second option is that he's a faerie that gains vitality from building up the Pretence of thievery: lending it to each apprentice and taking it back as each dies.

These obvious options aside, can we find a deeper etymology for the character, much as the characters last month had strange links to their roles? What is Nuth? Could he be an embodiment of absence? Let's play a game of bad etymology.

Imagine the word "nothing". Here, at least, it is pronounced "nuthing". Now, if you mistakenly believed it ended in the "-ing" suffix, and thus was a participle, that would mean that "nuth" was a verb, much like the "run" from "running" or the "swim" from "swimming". Is he an embodiment of absence? That would explain why he is never caught: he literally can't be caught. He isn't there: or anywhere, or even where he is.

There is a folktale I wanted to quote here, but the version I can recall is by Neil Gaiman, so I can only allude to it. There is a creature in Books of Magic called No-one. It is called up by people accidentally giving themselves away to it. A bride says "If I cannot have my way, I will marry no-one" and so No-one comes to claim her. "No-one will steal my secret" says another, and so No-one has it.

I presume he's a descendant of Ulysses, who calls himself "No one" when he blinds the Cyclops.

"Who hurt you?" asks Poseidon.

"No-one!" the blinded monster cries.

Is this what Nuth is? The creature that is the defined by absence? In one of my fictions, I have the absence of the road take a form and marry a redcap. Is Nuth the same sort of thing? What's left when you take out everything else?

# Story hooks

## Gnoles

Dunsany came up with the term "gnole". The hyena / humanoid blends from Dungeons and Dragons take their name from this story, but not their form. Gnoles are not described in any real detail. This is one of the stories where Syme did the illustration first, and Dunsany buttressed it with a story, so we can take some little detail from the picture. The gnoles are shaggy or spiky. They probably have digitigrade gait (walk on their toes) because they have legs that bend like those of a dog or cat. They may have hooves, depending on how you interpret the picture.

Tommy Tonker is a large, strong sort of man, and the gnoles are broader than he, and equally tall.

## Tommy Tonker

Tommy's name reads very oddly in English, but perhaps Dunsany was not as interested in slang as I am. A tonker is literally a penis in certain types of British slang. That, by extension, can mean a fool.

In Australia, conversely, it was slang, for a while, for a homosexual man.

In British English, a tonker is one who tonks, and that means to hit something soundly. It's unclear if this relates to the 19th century American word "honky-tonk".

I wonder if he's a tinker, possibly?

Interesting that you need to lock your windows once your son is in the business.

# Was phyllo pastry invented by the Order of Hermes?

Phyllo pastry (or Filo to our American friends) has a disputed origin. The name means "leaf" pastry, which I'll come back to later. If you accept that the earliest modern dish using it is baklava, it first appears in the Thirteenth Century, in the the Eastern Roman Empire. Baklava is basically interlayered flaky pastry and nuts, soaked in a syrup or honey. There are earlier dishes which seem something similar. Cato mentions a Roman dish called placenta which appears to be made out of honeyed leaves of pastry. Placenta just means "layered" and Cato calls an individual piece of pastry a "tractus". There are also a few eastern European meat dishes, and a wrapped almond paste from further east. Regardless, baklava's ancestors become prevalent in the written record just after the game period.

When I say it is called "leaf" pastry, I'd like to play on words here, and suggest the leaves of a book. I first had this idea when I was watching Great British Bake Off. When rolling phyllo, the way to tell if your leaves are thin enough is to check if you can read through them. I saw it and thought that if you slipped and dropped the sheet, on a medieval manuscript you'd get trace transfer of the type from the page to the pastry. This immediately put in mind a mystery cult from one of the older supplements, where people memorized books perfectly by eating them. Could phyllo, which is made far more easily with Rego magic than by hand, be the invention of a cultist who was sick of eating tanned vellum etched with iron gall ink?

How old is this tradition really? We know very little about Jerbiton's wife, except she was named Miriam and bought honeyed cakes to the first Tribunal meeting. The assumption was that these were of the Roman style, but could they have been primer placentas of the new Hermetic Magic Theory? If this is the case, who wrote them? In the depths of Valnastium, is there a lost xylographic block of Magic Theory, or is it kept by the society that eats books?





Wittgenstein is one of my favorite philosophers, regardless of what his philosophy actually was. At one point, he thought the primary task of philosophers was to stand in the corner of other people's lectures and yell 'Semantics!' at them whenever they suggested metaphysics was worth considering. Maybe you need to be me to think that's really, terribly funny.

In *Philosophical Investigations*, he writes "If a lion could talk, we could not understand him". It's given as an axiom or aphorism: no attempt at argumentation is made. Many commenters suggest what he means is that the lion does not share the culture that enshrouds the language with sufficient context to give it meaning, or, alternatively, that the lion's sensations are so different to ours that we, lacking a frame of reference, could not understand what the lion perceives, regardless of how clearly he enunciates his interpretation of the environment.

In Mythic Europe this is simply untrue. Everything is alive, in a spiritual sense, and can communicate clearly, if idiosyncratically, using the right spells. In House Bjornaer there are magi who are Essentially lions, but who can take the human shape and converse. Given that he is simply wrong in Mythic Europe, can the aphorism about the lion provide us with value in another area where communication fails?

Magi code switch, like children raised in multiple social environments. Code switching is the term which encapsulates the changes in the way people talk, move, and even think, when they move from one communicative community to another. When a magus is commanding the anima of a rock to talk, the magus is doing something fundamentally different to talking to a merchant about the price of a bag of flour. As the magus becomes more closely tied to the mystical, the capacity to code switch breaks down a little.

Many people who live for a time in two countries talk about the need to shift gears when moving between them, about the culture shock of transition. The magus begins to experience this. They interact with mortals so rarely that each of these conversations suffers due to the lack of a cultural framework. The magus is Wittgenstein's lion: it can talk, but not be understood.



# Wittgenstein's Lion as a model for the Blatant Gift



# Cornwall: Saints and Holy Wells

During this concentration of Cornish material, I'm trying to focus on folklore that can be easily turned into story hooks. The problem with Hunt's chapter on saints is that there's not a lot of useful material, so for the first time, this podcast will boil down two chapters in a week.

# Saints

Cornish saints are literal giants. There are several sets of stones that were physically thrown by saints, and they are described as completely titanic. St Just steals a chalice from Saint Keyene and when the wronged saint flings boulders, he creates the monoliths now known as the Crowza Stones. When Saint Sennen and Saint Just got annoyed and threw stones at each other. God in his wisdom made the stones strike each other and fall from the sky, again making a set of monoliths.

They are petty. St Leven curses anyone baptised "Joanna" in his parish to imbecility, after he has a minor dispute with a housewife of that name. St Leven also left a couple of other miracles floating around in 1220: the path from his house to his fishing spot is greener than surrounding land, and the rock he sat on to fish is cracked in half. This is because the saint struck it, and then prophesied that when a horse with panniers could walk through the crack, the world would be over. Leven once had two fish miraculously strike his hook at once, not once, but three times in succession. This was god's way of telling him he had guests at home. The bones from the fish caught in the throats of the children who had dinner with him, so the Cornish call them choke-children.

Saint Brechan was a king in Wales. He 28 children, 15 of whom were saints after whom Cornish parishes are named. The most famous is Saint Kenye, whose holy well has the property that if newlyweds drink from it, the one who partakes first will have the power in the relationship.

Saint Denis is named for the patron of Paris. When he was beheaded, blood fell from the sky in St Denis in Cornwall, hence the name. The bloodstains reappeared before plagues struck in London.

St Kea floated to Cornwall from Ireland on a lump of stone, transformed into an impromptu raft by God.

St Neot is only 16 inches high. He seemed to get disciples in an instant: animal or human.

St German was sent to Cornwall to defeat the Pelegian heresy, but failed. When a mob formed to martyr him, his tears became a well, and a burning chariot guided by two angels whisked him away. The burns from the wheels of the chariot are still visible, and Germans cursed his church as he left, stripping it of its holiness.

## Saint Piran: Patron of Cornwall

Saint Piran had done various miracles in Ireland, but he was to be put to death. He'd fed the armies of ten kings for ten days with just three cows, bought his hounds back from the dead, and then raised fallen warriors. The kings turned against him and sentenced him to death. He was chained to a millstone, which was rolled off a seacliff. In a miracle, it floated to Cornwall.

Piran was baking in an oven he'd made out of stones, and a line of silver metal dripped from it. He discussed this with his friend St Chiwidden, "knew the mysteries of the East". They worked out that the black rock that made up part of the oven was an ore, and how to smelt it properly. They called the Cornish together and explained the nature of the treasure they'd found. Days of feasting followed, which is the ancestor of the current saint's day celebration. The flag of Cornwall: a white cross on black ground, represents the metal and ore.



# A covenant?

St Nectan's Kieve is a waterfall and lake near Tintagel. When Saint Nectan was dying, he dropped his silver bell into the pool. After his death two sisters came from the East and tidied up all of Nectan's effects, and his body, and buried them. They diverted the river, drained the kieve, interred the saint and his treasures, and then allowed the river to resume its course.

This pair strike me as a potential covenant. Time for some Hunt. "The oratory was dismantled, and the two ladies, women evidently of high birth, chose it for their dwelling. Their seclusion was perfect. Both appeared to be about the same age, and both were inflexibly taciturn. One was never seen without the other. If they ever left the house, they only left it to walk in the more unfrequented parts of the wood ; they kept no servant ; they never had a visitor ; no living soul but themselves ever crossed the door of their cottage. The berries of the wood, a few roots which they cultivated, with snails gathered from the rocks and walls, and fish caught in the stream, served them for food. Curiosity was excited; the mystery which hung around this solitary pair became deepened by the obstinate silence which they observed in everything relating to themselves. The result of all this was an anxious endeavour, on the part of the superstitious and ignorant peasantry, to learn their secret. All was now conjecture, and the imagination commonly enough filled in a wild picture : devils or angels, as the case might be, were seen ministering to the solitary ones. Prying eyes were upon them, but the spies could glean no knowledge. Week, month, year passed by, and ungratified curiosity was dying through want of food, when it was discovered that one of the ladies had died. The peasantry went in a body to the chapel ; no one forbade their entering it now. There sat a silent mourner leaning over the placid face of her dead sister. Hers was, indeed, a silent sorrow no tear was in her eye, no sigh hove her chest, but the face told all that a remediless woe had fallen on her heart. The dead body was eventually removed, the living sister making no sign, and they left her in her solitude alone. Days passed on ; no one heard of, no one probably inquired after, the lonely one. At last a wandering child, curious as children are, clambered to the window of the cell and looked in. There sat the lady ; her handkerchief was on the floor, and one hand hung strangely, as if endeavouring to pick it up, but powerless to do so. The child told its story the people again flocked to the chapel, and they found one sister had followed the other. The people buried the last beside the first, and they left no mark to tell us where, unless the large flat stone which lies in the valley, a short distance from the foot of the fall, and beneath which, I was told some great person was buried may be the covering of their tomb. No trace of the history of these solitary women have ever been discovered."

I think perhaps the snails and roots are vis sources, harvested and used to create sufficient food that they are entirely self-sufficient. Are they refugees from the loss of Lyonesse? Are they really sisters, or are they a maga and a familiar able to take human shape? Pets look like their owners in a literal sense in *Ars Magica*, and familiars often die slightly before or after their magi.

# Holy Wells

Holy Wells are kind of like dependable miracles embedded in the landscape. Players can use them for their miracles, or to get bonuses for the Covenant's Environment modifier since so many cure disease.

**The Well of St Ludgvan:** After arriving from Ireland and building a church, this missionary prayed for a holy well to appear, to draw people. Time for a bit more Hunt: "The holy man prayed on, and then, to try the virtues of the water, he washed his eyes. They were rendered at once more powerful, so penetrating, indeed, as to enable him to see microscopic objects. The saint prayed again, and then he drank of the water. He discovered that his powers of utterance were greatly improved, his tongue formed words with scarcely any effort of his will. The saint now prayed, that all children baptized in the waters of this well might be protected against the hangman and his hempen cord ; and an angel from heaven came down into the water, and promised the saint that his prayers should be granted. Not long after this, a good farmer and his wife brought their babe to the saint, that it might derive all the blessings belonging to this holy well. The priest stood at the baptismal font, the parents, with their friends around. The saint proceeded with the baptismal ceremonial, and at length the time arrived when he took the tender babe into his holy arms. He signed the sign of the cross over the child, and when he sprinkled water on the face of the infant its face glowed with a divine intelligence. The priest then proceeded with the prayer ; but, to the astonishment of all, whenever he used the name of Jesus, the child, who had received the miraculous power of speech, from the water, pronounced distinctly the name of the devil, much to the consternation of all present. The saint knew that an evil spirit had taken possession of the child, and he endeavoured to cast him out ; but the devil proved stronger than the saint for some time. St Ludgvan was not to be beaten ; he knew that the spirit was a restless soul, which had been exorcised from Treassow, and he exerted all his energies in prayer. At length the spirit became obedient, and left the child. He was now commanded by the saint to take his flight to the Red Sea. He rose, before the terrified spectators, into a gigantic size ; he then spat into the well ; he laid hold of the pinnacles of the tower, and shook the church until they thought it would fall. The saint was alone unmoved. He prayed on, until, like a flash of lightning, the demon vanished, shaking down a pinnacle in his flight. The demon, by spitting in the water, destroyed the spells of the water upon the eyes and the tongue too ; but it fortunately retains its virtue of preventing any child baptized in it from being hanged with a cord of hemp. Upon a cord of silk it is stated to have no power...The peasantry of the neighbouring districts began to send for the renowned water before christenings ; and many of them actually continue, to this day, to bring it corked up in bottles to their churches, and to beg particularly that it may be used whenever they present their children to be baptized." Redruth's Well has similar properties. This saint is known for always wearing a scarlet cloak, which seems odd.

**Gulval Well** predicts death and sickness of absent friends and family members. The querent prays by the well, and if the answer is good, the water bubbles, but if the person is ill, mud bubbles up instead. If the named person is dead, there is no change in the surface of the well..

**The Well of Saint Keyne** as mentioned in previous podcasts, whichever of a newly-married couple is first to drink from the well will have the power in the relationship.

**Maddern or Madron Well:** This well has several properties in folklore. People take the water away, because it slowly cures bodily infirmities including, in some cases, being crippled. Some sources say you drink the water, others that you bathe in it. It's also handy for lesser problems, like colic. Those who dip their hands in are burned if they are untrue in love. There's a minor ritual which involves lying on the ground and offering little things, like pins to activate the well.

Time for a bit of Hunt: "I once witnessed the whole ceremony performed by a group of beautiful girls, who had walked on a May morning from Penzance. Two pieces of straw, about an inch long each, were crossed and the pin run through them. This cross was then dropped into the water, and the rising bubbles carefully counted, as they marked the number of years which would pass ere the arrival of the happy day. This practice also prevailed amongst the visitors to the well at the foot of Monacuddle Grove, near St Austell. On approaching the waters, each visitor is expected to throw in a crooked pin ; and, if you are lucky, you may possibly see the other pins rising from the bottom to meet the most recent offering. Rags and votive offerings to the genius of the waters are hung around many of the wells. Mr Couch says : At Madron Well, near Penzance, I observed the custom of hanging rags on the thorns which grew in the enclosure."

The Well at Altar-Nun: Hunt quotes Carew "The water running from St Nun's well fell into a square and enclosed walled plot, which might be filled at what depth they listed. Upon this wall was the frantic person put to stand, his back towards the pool, and from thence, with a sudden blow in the breast, tumbled headlong into the pond ; where a strong fellow, provided for the nonce, took him, and tossed him up and down, alongst and athwart the water, till the patient, by foregoing his strength, had somewhat forgot his fury. Then was he conveyed to the church, and certain masses said over him ; upon which handling, if his right wits returned, St Nun had the thanks ; but if there appeared small amendment, he was bowssened again and again, while there remained in him any hope of life or recovery." The 2nd of March is dedicated to St Nun, and the influence of the water is greatly exalted on that day....Its position was, until lately, to be discovered by the oak-tree matted with ivy, and the thicket of willow and bramble which grew upon its roof. The front of the well is of a pointed form, and has a rude entrance about four feet high, and spanned above by a single flat stone, which leads into a grotto with arched roof. The walls on the interior are draped with luxuriant fronds of spleenwort, hart's-tongue, and a rich undercovering of liverwort. At the further end of the floor is a round granite basin, with a deeply moulded brim, and ornamented on its circumference with a series of rings, each enclosing a cross or a ball. The water weeps into it from an opening at the back, and escapes again by a hole in the bottom.

Keby's Well: This well is almost impossible to move, and to attempt it causes miraculous death. Are the plants Corpus or Mentem vis sources?

Saint Cuthebert's Well is obviously a vis source. It's sometimes called Holy Well because it was discovered on All Hallows Eve. Time for some more Carew in Hunt. "The same stands in a dark cavern of the sea-cliff rocks, beneath full sea-mark on spring tides, from the top of which cavern falls down or distils continually drops of water from the white, blue, red, and green veins of those rocks. And accordingly, in the place where those drops of water fall, it swells to a lump of considerable bigness, and there petrifies to the hardness of ice, glass, or freestone, of the several colours aforesaid, according to the nature of those veins in the rock from whence it proceeds, and is of a hard, brittle nature, apt to break like glass. " The virtues of this water are very great. It is incredible what numbers in summer season frequent this place and waters from counties far distant."

Cuthbert's Well is also used to dip children with rickets on the first three Wednesdays in May, so that may point to a better harvesting time. The crowd is sometimes so large that there's an impromptu fair.

The Well at Chapel Uny is similar, but for mesenteric diseases, remembering that Hunt claims changelings were really children with intestinal diseases.

Penan's Well has similar healing properties.

On Palm Sunday the Holy Well at Little Conan tells the future. People pay the priest, and throw a cross in, and if it floats they will live until next year.



In 1976 Jaynes published a book called **The Origins of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind**. It was popular in the science fiction community. The core premise is that before approximately 2000 years ago, humans did not have consciousness.

Let's pause here to note that by consciousness he means something different to the general use of the term. He means metacognition. According to Jaynes, before the coming of modern consciousness, people could not think about thinking: they could not consider their own minds, or define how they learned. Instead of having consciousness people had, according to Jaynes, a second way of processing the information. One lobe of the brain did the sort of thing modern consciousness now does, but communicated it to the part of the brain that has executive behaviours through auditory hallucinations.

This, according to Jaynes, is why in books like the Illiad, characters never seem to decide anything for themselves. Whenever a piece of tension emerges, a god pops by and tells the person what to do. Odysseus was written a bit later, and he has a bit more personal volition, but even then there are some gods about. This style of writing also turns up in the Bible: Pharoah decides not to let the Jews go because God hardens his heart.

I won't belabour Jaynes point: it has problems in the real world. As an Australian, I'd note that our Aboriginal cultures just wreck this theory, because they don't do city-building, but they have consciousness.

In Mythic Europe, though, faeries are not conscious in a human sense. Can we model at least some of them with bicameralism? Incognizant faeries are guided by their role, which they cannot think about directly because they don't know it exists. It nonetheless guides their action. There isn't the element of hallucination found in Jaynes' work, but there is the division between the part of the mind that decides and the part of the mind that executes decisions.

The "gods in your head driving your story" thing seems to match a few types of incorporeal faerie, but these could also be the little angels and devils sitting on your characters' metaphorical shoulders.

# Jaynes's Bicameral Mind in Mythic Europe