

GAMES

FROM

Transcripts for May 2018

FOLKTALES

Dunsany: The Unpasturable Fields

Magus Design for New Players

Dunsany: Tales of Three Idols

Cornwall: Sword of Tristram

Heraclitus the Obscure

Octopus



An experiment in podcasting for the Ars Magica roleplaying game

Original images sourced from CCO sites.
(Foter / Wikicommons)

The theme music for the podcast comes from Free Music Archive's public domain collection. It is "The Fall of the Village of the Infinitesimal Forest at the Hands of the Royal Aggressor : An Epic in Seven Parts" by Room 34.

Librivox is an online community group that records books published before 1923 into the public domain. The audio sampled this month was: recorded by Thomas Copeland.

Ars Magica and all of its related trademarks are used with the kind permission of Atlas Games.

The Sacnoth episode is not transcribed here: I'm going to record an interpretative episode later in the year.

PATREONS

Dan Casar

Daniel Jensen

Jarkman DeVries

Jason Italiano

Jason Newquist

Jason Tondro

Pantelis Polakis

and

Anonymous

I've just got home from Adelaide, a city in the far south of Australia. I took my children on a plane for the first time, and as I did, I thought of you, dear listener, because looking out the window I saw an endless sheet of cloud and thought "Sigh...there's that Dunsany story I can't think of any ideas for called The Unpasturable fields". Then I had these ideas.

First I remembered seeing a photograph of a Kármán vortex street caused by a lighthouse. Let me explain what that is. A von Karman vortex street is a regular pattern of vortices that appear in the tail of a solid object that is obstructing a current. Now in the photograph, there were clouds being blown by a straight wind onto a lighthouse, and so in the building's lee, there were a series of vortices of gradually decreasing size.

We talk about the vim field that fuels spellcasting as a fluid. It flows, it has tides, it circles the Axis Magica. We talk about the Aegis as an obstruction: it's a dome or pillar. So, in this metaphor the vis field takes the place of the wind and the covenant takes the place of the building. This means that behind the newly established covenant you might have a vortex street.

This turbulent area of magical energy would have a fluctuating aura. This probably displeases nearby faeries because it makes it harder for them to maintain their glamour. This may be an in-game explanation for the many early faerie rivals which spring up to challenge Spring Covenants.

It also probably has strange effects on humans because when auras rise, people's senses are sharper - there are more colours, sounds are clearer, tastes are brighter - and minor magical abilities are easier to trigger, either accidentally, or deliberately. Given that the vortex is a regular pattern, there might be predictable periods where people have supernatural powers or enhanced senses, and these might be tied to specific locations along the street. Similarly, if your covenant was in the street of another object, this would explain the Flickering Aura Hook.

The Lord Dunsany story is essentially about how two tribes of elementals, represented as clouds and mountains, say disrespectful things about each other. Magi can get involved in their battles if they wish and are unwise. The mountains seem to like cities, and have a sense that they fade into myth. The clouds say that pegasus is pastured up them, and that he is fed by songs bought by larks, and can see future wars. This is useful if you'd like a pegasus farm, but it didn't strike me as a strong use of the story, so it's been sitting at the end of the Dunsany pile. Then I remembered a piece for an earlier Ar book that ties in.

In one of the Third Edition books there was a Sailor from the Sea Above - a sort of humaniform spirit which sailed in a sort of cloud-ship, and his anchor snagged on the ground. He slid down the anchor line to clear it, but if detained he "drowned" in the mortal air. Characters were encouraged to explore the Sea Above, and discover a place that allowed rapid, safe travel. I can remember being against it, when it first came out, because stories need stakes and conflict, and striving to go to a place that deliberately had neither seemed boring, but that was a hasty judgement. Whoever wrote it just got to the idea that magi should be able to get to the story without hitting random monsters faster than I did.

If you accept the existence of the Upper Sea, then it is of obvious value to various people. House Mercere, for example, presumably wants to put infrastructure there. Ars Magica has some rules for creating megastructures, in "Transforming Mythic Europe" and "Legends of Hermes". If Mercere is trying that sort of thing, then either, because where you have humans you have conflict, or there are indigenous creatures that do not wish the space colonised, you have story potential.

Alternatively, the space could already have been colonised by a previous magical civilisation. The Atlanteans, for example, were a skilled magical civilisation which held imperial control of a large section of the continent. They could have used the sea for troop transport and logistical support. If that's true, when your characters arrive, there could be a series of levitating bases, filled with the artefacts, wards, and servant spirits of ancient ancient Hellenistic sky fascists.

I also recall a story, Horror in the Heights, by Arthur Conan Doyle, about an early aviator who discovers a new biome in the clouds. He returns to get evidence of his discoveries, but there are predators in this new environment, and a pack of them get between him and the ground. He leaves a note in his journal, which is found by his crashes plane, indicating that this is a terrible way to die. I think that could be stripped for a monster at least. The story is 35 minutes long, so I need to cut it down to colour and hooks before putting it up.

If there is already infrastructure there, is it decaying? What do you do if a piece of road falls out of the sky? What do you do if only one end falls from the sky, and the other stays attached to places beyond the clouds? If there are any Atlanteans up there you don't want them, or their pets, coming down. Worse, there are a heap of kids wandering around Mythic Europe with magic beans that create towering planets that can reach these places. You can't just blow it all up, because it would shower down on Mythic Europe. Can you make it scatter like dust, or light? Can you tow it out into the Atlantic and crash it there? Does this create a wave? Is this how the wave that destroyed Atlantis was made?

DUNSANY:

THE UNPASTURABLE FIELDS

THE UNPASTURABLE FIELDS

by Lord Dunsany

Thus spake the mountains: "Behold us, even us; the old ones, the grey ones, that wear the feet of Time. Time on our rocks shall break his staff and stumble: and still we shall sit majestic, even as now, hearing the sound of the sea, our old coeval sister, who nurses the bones of her children and weeps for the things she has done.

"Far, far, we stand above all things; befriending the little cities until they grow old and leave us to go among the myths.

"We are the most imperishable mountains."

And softly the clouds foregathered from far places, and crag on crag and mountain upon mountain in the likeness of Caucasus upon Himalaya came riding past the sunlight upon the backs of storms and looked down idly from their golden heights upon the crests of the mountains.

"Ye pass away," said the mountains.

And the clouds answered, as I dreamed or fancied,

"We pass away, indeed we pass away, but upon our unpasturable fields Pegasus prances. Here Pegasus gallops and browses upon song which the larks bring to him every morning from far terrestrial fields. His hoof-beats ring upon our slopes at sunrise as though our fields were of silver. And breathing the dawn-wind in dilated nostrils, with head tossed upwards and with quivering wings, he stands and stares from our tremendous heights, and snorts and sees far-future wonderful wars rage in the creases and the folds of the togas that cover the knees of the gods."

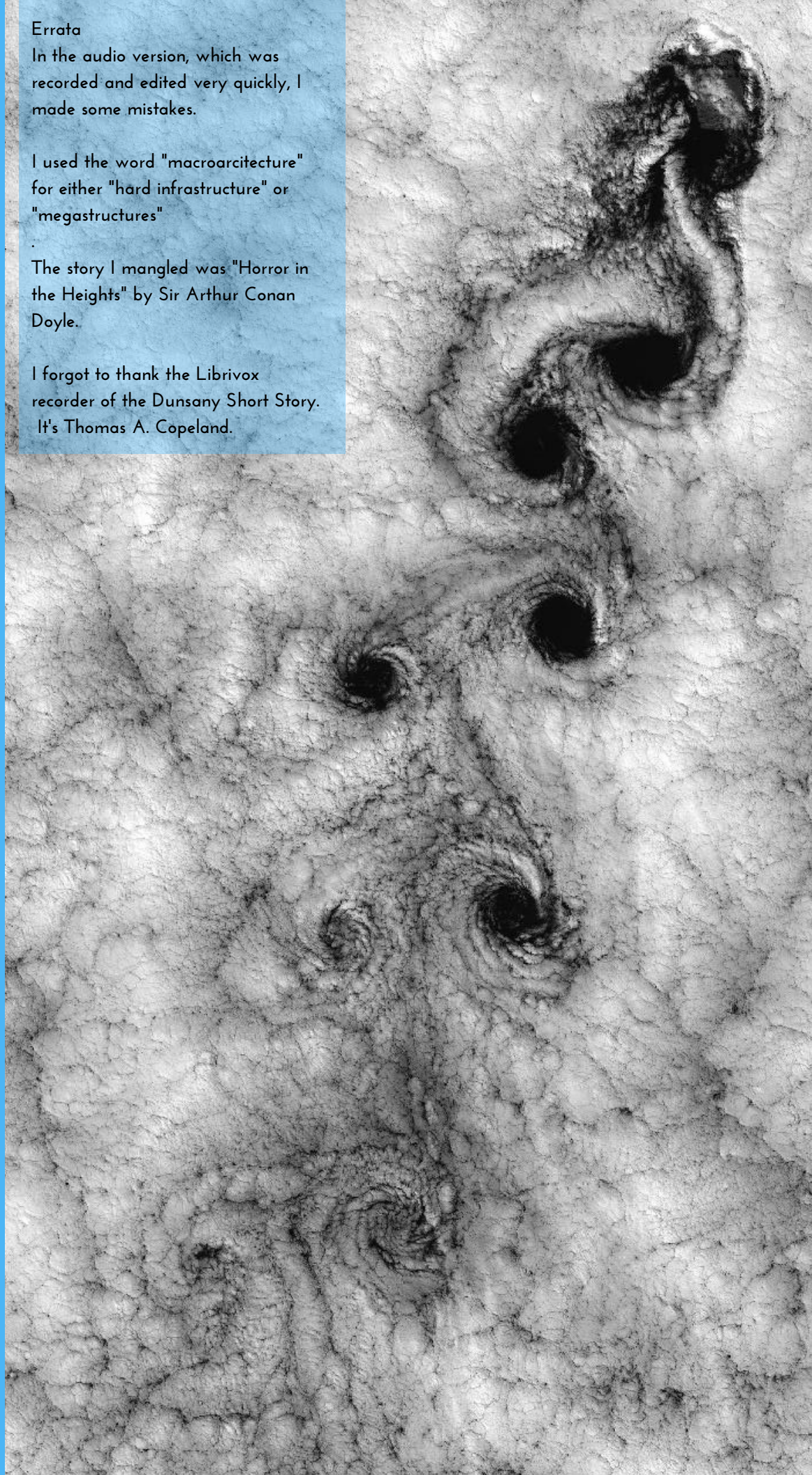
Errata

In the audio version, which was recorded and edited very quickly, I made some mistakes.

I used the word "macroarchitecture" for either "hard infrastructure" or "megastructures"

The story I mangled was "Horror in the Heights" by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

I forgot to thank the Librivox recorder of the Dunsany Short Story. It's Thomas A. Copeland.



Hi, and welcome. I'm Timothy Ferguson, and I was one of the most prolific authors for the last edition of *Ars Magica*. Here are some hints to designing a character you'll enjoy.

Play style

Get your group to decide if they are going to do the suggested thing, which is that each story has one or two magi and companions, or the thing most troupes seem to do, which is that everyone just sends their magus. This matters, because it determines what role your magus will play. Is the magus going to be in charge whenever he is on stage, or is he part of a group of equals? Is he going to be the heavy artillery, despite not being from a combat-ready House, or is there going to be another magus bringing the fire, so that yours can specialise on something else?

House

Which House you pick doesn't matter, initially, but some bind your character development choices more than others. Houses Merinita and Verditus have inner mysteries which use a completely different sort of rule system, and most Criamons are pacifists. I believe the best Houses for new players are:

House Bonisagus: pure magical researchers and diplomats. They can be researching pretty much any style of magic, and this gives them a reason to be out in the world discovering secrets.

House Flambeau: There's a philosophy behind it, but they love solving their problems by killing things and breaking stuff. *Ars Magica* can cause a sort of choice paralysis in new players. House Flambeau strips this away by essentially saying "Your options are the knife, the pistol, the grenade, or the flamthrower." One the game rolls on there a lot about chivalry and flame mysticism, but as a new player, it's a simple choice.

House Jerbiton, which just lets you pick a minor Virtue in lieu of a House virtue: in the setting they also don't care if you later join another House. This is the one to choose if you don't want to make a big deal out of your choice for now.

House Tremere prizes obedience. This means your character will always have something to do, and may be provided with resources to do it. Sure, you follow orders, but so does James Bond, and he seems to enjoy his life most of the time.

Characteristics

Characteristics are a bad idea, and the game should not have them. As a magus, you'll feel the need to put Intelligence at a minimum +2, so your character is not the stupidest magus in the group. This means you are all making the same boring choice, and when Intelligence is required, you all make the same Knowledge rolls. This leaves you enough points to put +1 against any other two Characteristics. There are rules to get extra points by trading down your physical Characteristics, but ignore them on your first go around. Just wade through this.

Virtues and Flaws

Virtues and Flaws are ways to make your magus unique, but their usual effect is to make them more like their Housemates. You'll be given one free minor virtue based on your choice of House. Most of these you can safely ignore in your first game, although the one for House Bjornaer (turn into a specific animal at will) is useful and fun.

As a rule of thumb, a virtue adds +1 to your dice roll if it covers an entire characteristic, +3 if it covers an entire ability, and +6 if it covers a specialised situation in an Ability. If you can't find one you like, use this to just make them up and have your troupe approve them. Sometimes this is faster than wading through the book to find the precise name for what you hope to find. "I want to great fun at parties", for example, is a +3, even if you don't manage to decode it down into *Ars*-speak as a Knack in Carouse.

Just because you can choose a heap of Flaws doesn't mean you should. Virtues can be earned in-game, so there is no need to make your character a one-eyed, kleptomaniac with a determined enemy just to afford another Major Virtue. Pick Flaws you will enjoy having and that signal the kinds of stories you want.

Similarly, don't pick virtues because they maximise your killing potential unless you really want stories about your killing potential. Pick virtues for the fun, not the mechanical advantage. As an SG, I keep a copy of the VF list of each character, so I can make sure I hit those narrative marks.

The Magical Affinity virtue is the game's way of telling you it will give you a bonus if you pick a character theme. Take it, but not at the Art-wide level: choose a motif that's yours. This is far more important than most of the number on your sheet.

Spells

Pick spells you think would be fun to cast: your SG's job is to give you great opportunities to cast them. In roleplaying games, the GM sets the size of the creatures attacking you to suit the power of the player characters. It doesn't matter if you can deal +5 or +10 damage: that just means the enemy you are facing in the story looks a bit different. I'm not saying don't take combat spells: I'm saying that designing for maximum killing power is pointless, and you know its pointless.

Don't spread your build points across the Magical Arts.

Pick a Form (a noun) and one or two Techniques (verbs). Don't choose Aquam, Auram, Imaginem or Vim. I love them, but they take a bit more getting used to than practical things like Herbam. A high enough Form will let you do minor magic in the other Techniques of that Form using the spontaneous magic rules.

My rule of thumb is cribbed from the Amber Roleplaying game: always choose at least one attacking spell, one defensive spell, and one spell that affects your surroundings. Sometimes spells do double duty. It's great to have majestic spells: I loved playing a new maga who had Incantation of Lightning and a flight spell, but In Ars Magica, small spells get through magic resistance, or the diminishing effect of civilisation, better than powerful spells. Think about clever ways to use spells in the 10-20 level range.

Abilities

Don't get bogged down in Abilities. For new players I let them keep a pool of unspent points, and use them up as their idea of the character gels through play. Avoid spending 1 point on heaps of Abilities. Abilities are what your magi have servants for. Make big purchases in the Abilities you want to do cool things with during scenes in stories. Your character's already a superhero: you shouldn't care if they have 1 or 2 in their Area Lore skill..

I also have a "buyer's remorse rule". If you've spent points on something, and it's never mattered to your character, you can cash it back in and spend it on something else. Did you buy Artes Liberales 6 to look wise, and then find out you wanted practical skills? Take your points back. I personally extend this to spells and Virtues, but your troupe may vary.

Each ability gets a specialisation, which is a 1 point bonus in limited circumstances. Again, fill them in as you go, and switch them under the buyers remorse rule. Don't get bogged down on how to make sure you wring every advantage from the design phase.

Weapons

Most magi don't use them. You're a magician. You can kill people by waving at them for a minute or so. Even if your best combat spell just throws a rock, it's still better than a dagger: just carry some really pointy rocks. You have a bodyguard. Let them do the weapons while you cast spells.

Suggested stat block for a new magus:

Intelligence +2, +1 in any two other Characteristics, all others 0, which is human average.

Virtues and Flaws: You get a free one for your house, which you can often ignore in the beginning. Take a Minor Magical Affinity, and a Story Flaw, at minimum. Work up from there if you like.

Abilities: You get 165 experience points to spend here, but there are some compulsory buys. At minimum the game suggests (Native language (specialisation)) 5, Latin (specialisation (specialisation) 4, Artes Liberales (specialisation) 1, Magic Theory (specialisation) 3, Parma Magica (specialisation) 1. Your native language is a free, so that costs 90 points, leaving you 75 to spend. That's:

two abilities at a score of 3 with three at a score of 1 or one ability at a score of 3, with three abilities at a score of 2.

or five abilities at a score of 2.

If you already have a score of 1 in something because of a Virtue choice, then just have a 1 in something else, to refund the point.

Arts: you have 120 points to spend on Magical Arts. Chose one noun and one or two verbs.

It costs 121 points to have a score of 11 in one art, 10 in another, and 0 in the rest. I'd give you the point if it were my game. Alternatively, two verbs at 7 and one noun at 11 (with two freebie points).

Pick spells. You have 120 levels of spells. Spells are the fun bit. Since you are limited, don't browse the entire book. now: just read the bit that matches your technique and form combinations. If you are specialised as above, each spell's maximum level is Technique+Form + 8. Technically it's 9 with a relevant Magic Theory specialisation. That means if you have only two arts, and a relevant MT specialisation, your maximum spell level is 30. If you have three arts as above, the maximum level is 26.

In Ars Magica, idols are ways for the stories the fuel faeries to be preserved, and restarted. That being said, some idols are linked to darker powers...and some dark powers are linked, merely, to idols. I hope you enjoy these three stories.

THE LONELY IDOL

I had from a friend an old outlandish stone, a little swine-faced idol to whom no one prayed.

And when I saw his melancholy case as he sat cross-legged at receipt of prayer, holding a little scourge that the years had broken (and no one heeded the scourge and no one prayed and no one came with squealing sacrifice; and he had been a god), then I took pity on the little forgotten thing and prayed to it as perhaps they prayed long since, before the coming of the strange dark ships, and humbled myself and said:

"O idol, idol of the hard pale stone, invincible to the years, O scourge-holder, give ear for behold I pray.

"O little pale-green image whose wanderings are from far, know thou that here in Europe and in other lands near by, too soon there pass from us the sweets and song and the lion strength of youth: too soon do their cheeks fade, their hair grow grey and our beloved die; too brittle is beauty, too far off is fame and the years are gathered too soon; there are leaves, leaves falling, everywhere falling; there is autumn among men, autumn and reaping; failure there is, struggle, dying and weeping, and all that is beautiful hath not remained but is even as the glory of morning upon the water.

"Even our memories are gathered too with the sound of the ancient voices, the pleasant ancient voices that come to our ears no more; the very gardens of our childhood fade, and there dims with the speed of the years even the mind's own eye.

"O be not any more the friend of Time, for the silent hurry of his malevolent feet have trodden down what's fairest; I almost hear the whimper of the years running behind him hound-like, and it takes few to tear us.

"All that is beautiful he crushes down as a big man tramples daises, all that is fairest. How very fair are the little children of men. It is autumn with all the world, and the stars weep to see it.

"Therefore no longer be the friend of Time, who will not let us be, and be not good to him but pity us, and let lovely things live on for the sake of our tears."

Thus prayed I out of compassion one windy day to the snout-faced idol to whom no one kneeled.

THE TROUBLE IN LEAFY GREEN STREET

She went to the idol-shop in Moleshill Street, where the old man mumbles, and said: "I want a god to worship when it is wet."

The old man reminded her of the heavy penalties that rightly attach to idolatry and, when he had enumerated all, she answered him as was meet: "Give me a god to worship when it is wet."

And he went to the back places of his shop and sought out and brought her a god. The same was carved of grey stone and wore a propitious look and was named, as the old man mumbled, The God of Rainy Cheerfulness.

Now it may be that long confinement to the house affects adversely the liver, or these things may be of the soul, but certain it is that on a rainy day her spirits so far descended that those cheerful creatures came within sight of the Pit, and, having tried cigarettes to no good end, she bethought her of Moleshill Street and the mumbling man.

He brought the grey idol forth and mumbled of guarantees, although he put nothing on paper, and she paid him there and then his preposterous price and took the idol away.

And on the next wet day that there ever was she prayed to the grey-stone idol that she had bought, the God of Rainy Cheerfulness (who knows with what ceremony or what lack of it?), and so brought down on her in Leafy Green Street, in the preposterous house at the corner, that doom of which all men speak.

HOW THE ENEMY CAME TO THLUNRANA

It had been prophesied of old and foreseen from the ancient days that its enemy would come upon Thlunrana. And the date of its doom was known and the gate by which it would enter, yet none had prophesied of the enemy who he was save that he was of the gods though he dwelt with men. Meanwhile Thlunrana, that secret lamaserai, that chief cathedral of wizardry, was the terror of the valley in which it stood and of all lands round about it. So narrow and high were the windows and so strange when lighted at night that they seemed to regard men with the demoniac leer of something that had a secret in the dark. Who were the magicians and the deputy-magicians and the great arch-wizard of that furtive place nobody knew, for they went veiled and hooded and cloaked completely in black.

Though her doom was close upon her and the enemy of prophecy should come that very night through the open, southward door that was named the Gate of the Doom, yet that rocky edifice Thlunrana remained mysterious still, venerable, terrible, dark, and dreadfully crowned with her doom. It was not often that anyone dared wander near to Thlunrana by night when the moan of the magicians invoking we know not Whom rose faintly from inner chambers, scaring the drifting bats: but on the last night of all the man from the black-thatched cottage by the five pine-trees came, because he would see Thlunrana once again before the enemy that was divine, but that dwelt with men, should come against it and it should be no more. Up the dark valley he went like a bold man, but his fears were thick upon him; his bravery bore their weight but stooped a little beneath them. He went in at the southward gate that is named the Gate of the Doom. He came into a dark hall, and up a marble stairway passed to see the last of Thlunrana. At the top a curtain of black velvet hung and he passed into a chamber heavily hung with curtains, with a gloom in it that was blacker than anything they could account for. In a sombre chamber beyond, seen through a vacant archway, magicians with lighted tapers plied their wizardry and whispered incantations. All the rats in the place were passing away, going whimpering

down the stairway. The man from the black-thatched cottage passed through that second chamber: the magicians did not look at him and did not cease to whisper. He passed from them through heavy curtains still of black velvet and came into a chamber of black marble where nothing stirred. Only one taper burned in the third chamber; there were no windows. On the smooth floor and under the smooth wall a silk pavilion stood with its curtains drawn close together: this was the holy of holies of that ominous place, its inner mystery. One on each side of it dark figures crouched, either of men or women or cloaked stone, or of beasts trained to be silent. When the awful stillness of the mystery was more than he could bear the man from the black-thatched cottage by the five pine-trees went up to the silk pavilion, and with a bold and nervous clutch of the hand drew one of the curtains aside, and saw the inner mystery, and laughed. And the prophecy was fulfilled, and Thlunrana was never more a terror to the valley, but the magicians passed away from their terrific halls and fled through the open fields wailing and beating their breasts, for laughter was the enemy that was doomed to come against Thlunrana through her southward gate (that was named the Gate of the Doom), and it is of the gods but dwells with man.

DUNSANY: THE SWORD OF TRISTRAM

I was listening to a novel from the St Mary's Chronicles, and a plot hook linked to Cornwall emerged. Let's harvest it for the gazetteer.

Curtana, the sword of Tristram, Prince of Lyonesse, was in the English royal treasury until 1215 when it was lost, along with most of the portable wealth of King John, as his baggage train tried to cross a marshy area, called the Wash, during a storm. The sword was taken by the waters, as well as the king's hopes of defeating his many enemies, and he died slightly afterward.

This was one of the swords made by Wayland Smith, a faerie god or Sandinavian magus trained by dwarfs. Its more famous brothers are Joyeuse, which was wielded by Charlemagne, and Durendal, which was carried by Roland. In the Roland cycle is carried by Ogier the Dane, and called Cortain. It had an inscription

stating it was made at the same time, of the same metal, as the other two. It's hard to understand how Durendal, which had the power of splitting boulders, and Curtana, which left part of its tip in a man's skull, could be of the same metal, but this missing chip is one of Curtana's defining characteristics.

Curtana is named from the Latin "curtus", which means "short". A copy of it, under the same name, is still used in the regalia when crowning a monarch of the United Kingdom: it's the Sword of Mercy, with the tip squared off. In 1220 it did not represent mercy. In the time of Henry V (1400s) it was called the Sword of Justice. Onje modern scholar suggests it was used in the proclaiming of (then prince) John as lord of Ireland in 1177 because the tip was said to have been left in the head of a gigantic Irish knight.

Finding the lost treasures in the Wash is a plot hook I've sold to Atlas before, and I believe David put it in *The Heirs to Merlin* as well. People can't just leave about that much money lying about without roleplaying authors putting monsters on top of it and suggesting your characters buy a boat. The interesting idea which came up in the St Mary's series is that the treasure was not lost, it was stolen by John himself, to allow him to pay his mercenaries without being seen to give away his grandmother Matilda's Imperial regalia. The St Mary's story has a caper within a caper where some time travelling historians steal the sword from John's removalists.

The author, Jodi Taylor, doesn't cite her sources, but even the most cursory research indicates that John's son, Henry III, used a sword he claimed was the same when he married, and then crowned, Eleanor of Provence in 1236. How could he have a

sword his father claimed was lost n the Wash? It's unlikely to be one of the faerie swords that turn up around heroes, because the process of coronation always occurs in a high Divine aura, surrounded by relics. The brother swords also both have potent relics in their pommels (the tooth of Saint Peter and the spearhead of Longius among other things) Henry might have just had a second one made. Possibly, though, Taylor's story has the right or it: John stole his own crown jewels.

Tristram's sword seems a useful tool in the quest for Lyonesse. Can a sword be a key, allowing the rightful prince to return to the

sunken realm? How do you steal or borrow it from the king?



Finding the lost treasures in the Wash is a plot hook I've sold to Atlas before, and I believe David put it in *The Heirs to Merlin*

HERACLITUS THE OBSCURE

Heraclitus was an ancient Greek philosopher who said everything was made of fire. Why, in Mythic Europe, do the Flambeau not revere him as a spiritual ancestor?

As always for the episodes dealing with philosophers, we begin with an infodump. Heraclitus was a prince from Ephesus in modern Turkey who abdicated to follow a philosopher's life. His work survives only in fragments quoted in the responses of others. We know he was fond of conundrums. His best known, for example, is that you "cannot step into the same river twice". The fragmentary nature of his remaining writings makes it unclear if he meant that the water had moved on, or that you, yourself, had changed sufficiently that you would not be capable of doing anything twice. He seems to have believed in an afterlife, and so he must have had some sense of personal continuity, but even at the time, people thought his teachings paradoxical and so they called him "the Obscure".

When we say that, to Heraclitus, everything is made of fire, we are cheating a little, because he may not have meant what we mean by the word. In the purely mechanical sense he did seem to believe that everything was originally fire, then half of that became water, then half of that became air, then half of that became earth (I may have the order wrong here). In this sense, Fire is the foundational state of nature. If true, this would explain why it's easier to hurt people with *Creo Ignem* spells than other types of created material: it's not just that fire is hot, so that the human body is fundamentally more vulnerable to it than falling rocks or jets of water. Fire is easier to make, because fire is matter in its most basic form.

What Heraclitus may have meant is that everything is constantly in a state of flux: "flux" may be a better translation of what he meant than actual flame. He believed things were defined by their current state in the dynamic balance between opposing

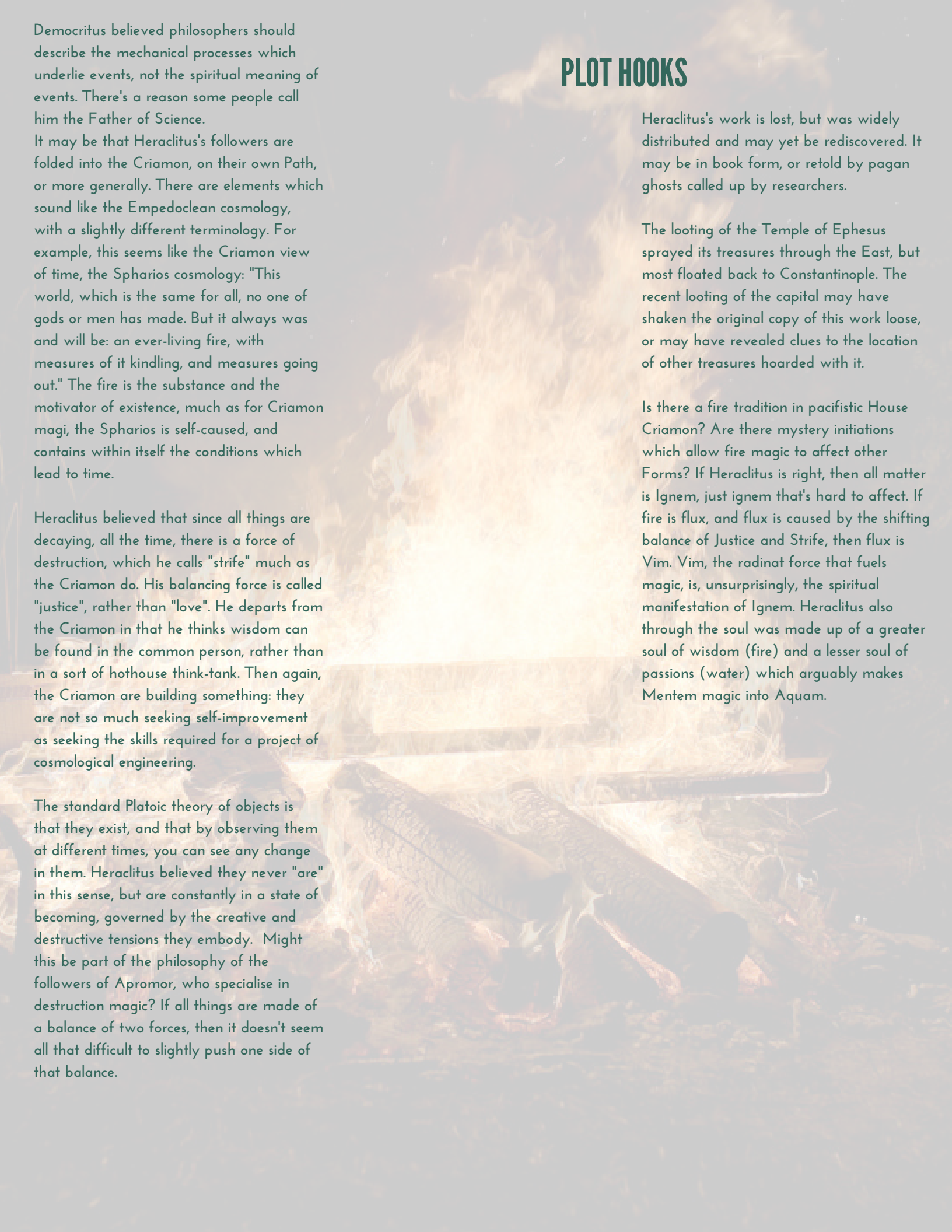
forces. No object embodies a single force, at a single time, ever. "Everything flows. Nothing stands still"

In this, he's way offside with Plato. There's none of this World of Forms pressing into matter that he carries on with. An arrow seems still because it is cradled between the forward force of the bowstring and the backward force of the arm. A person is at their current point between birth and death. Everything that appears stable is just made up of a fortunate happenstance of opposing forces. Every individual thing, added together, is just the current state in the universal flux, which is motivated by the universal logos (that is, plan, or word, or design). We have so little of his text we don't know what he thought the logos was, but some later Christian writers, when they were describing the pre-incarnate Jesus as the fiery Word of God, were cribbing from his symbolism. Justin Martyr, for example, calls him a Christian before Christ.

Heraclitus claimed to be self-taught, and that learning from experience was superior to learning by introspection or instruction. He wrote a book called "On Nature" which was widely available, but is now lost. The first copy of it was in the Artemision, the great temple of Ephesus which was one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. Where it went after the temple's destruction is not known. The book is believed to have been left incomplete.

The traditional explanation for this is that Heraclitus suffered from depression. There's a tendency, in Greek and medieval work, to pair him with Democritus, the laughing philosopher. Lucian, who is one of my favourite ancient writers, pairs them. Democritus was absolutely hated by Plato, who wanted to burn his books. This makes him an interesting guy in *Ars Magica*.





Democritus believed philosophers should describe the mechanical processes which underlie events, not the spiritual meaning of events. There's a reason some people call him the Father of Science.

It may be that Heraclitus's followers are folded into the Criamon, on their own Path, or more generally. There are elements which sound like the Empedoclean cosmology, with a slightly different terminology. For example, this seems like the Criamon view of time, the Spharios cosmology: "This world, which is the same for all, no one of gods or men has made. But it always was and will be: an ever-living fire, with measures of it kindling, and measures going out." The fire is the substance and the motivator of existence, much as for Criamon magi, the Spharios is self-caused, and contains within itself the conditions which lead to time.

Heraclitus believed that since all things are decaying, all the time, there is a force of destruction, which he calls "strife" much as the Criamon do. His balancing force is called "justice", rather than "love". He departs from the Criamon in that he thinks wisdom can be found in the common person, rather than in a sort of hothouse think-tank. Then again, the Criamon are building something: they are not so much seeking self-improvement as seeking the skills required for a project of cosmological engineering.

The standard Platoic theory of objects is that they exist, and that by observing them at different times, you can see any change in them. Heraclitus believed they never "are" in this sense, but are constantly in a state of becoming, governed by the creative and destructive tensions they embody. Might this be part of the philosophy of the followers of Apromor, who specialise in destruction magic? If all things are made of a balance of two forces, then it doesn't seem all that difficult to slightly push one side of that balance.

PLOT HOOKS

Heraclitus's work is lost, but was widely distributed and may yet be rediscovered. It may be in book form, or retold by pagan ghosts called up by researchers.

The looting of the Temple of Ephesus sprayed its treasures through the East, but most floated back to Constantinople. The recent looting of the capital may have shaken the original copy of this work loose, or may have revealed clues to the location of other treasures hoarded with it.

Is there a fire tradition in pacifistic House Criamon? Are there mystery initiations which allow fire magic to affect other Forms? If Heraclitus is right, then all matter is Ignem, just ignem that's hard to affect. If fire is flux, and flux is caused by the shifting balance of Justice and Strife, then flux is Vim. Vim, the radinat force that fuels magic, is, unsurprisingly, the spiritual manifestation of Ignem. Heraclitus also through the soul was made up of a greater soul of wisdom (fire) and a lesser soul of passions (water) which arguably makes Mentem magic into Aquam.

OCTOPUS

Thanks to all of the Patreons and listeners who have kept the podcast going for two years. This is a brief, bonus episode to celebrate the anniversary.

For the 100th episode of Games From Folktales I posted a poem by Charles Swinburne that contained the initiation script for Dolores, the Infernal Saint of Sorrow. When Swinburne originally released the poem, on of his colleagues (Arthur Charles Hilton) released an imitative work, discussing Swinburne's passionate desire for an octopus. I'm not going to stat up the octopus now, although I may eventually prepare it as an alternate form for the Infernal Saint. She might be a kraken that people fed themselves to in pieces, in exchange for the Dark Muse Virtue.

Octopus

By Algernon Charles Sin-Burn

Strange beauty, eight-limbed and eight-handed,
Whence camest to dazzle our eyes?
With thy bosom bespangled and banded
With the hues of the seas and the skies;
Is thy home European or Asian,
O mystical monster marine?
Part molluscou and partly crustacean,
Betwixt and between.

Wast thou born to the sound of sea trumpets?
Hast thou eaten and drunk to excess
Of the sponges -- thy muffins and crumpets,
Of the seaweed -- thy mustard and cress?
Wast thou nurtured in caverns of coral,
Remote from reproof or restraint?
Art thou innocent, art thou immoral,
Sinburnian or Saint?

Lithe limbs, curling free, as a creeper
That creeps in a desolate place,
To enroll and envelop the sleeper
In a silent and stealthy embrace,
Cruel beak craning forward to bite us,
Our juices to drain and to drink,
Or to whelm us in waves of Cocytus,
Indelible ink!

O breast, that 'twere rapture to writhe on!
O arms 'twere delicious to feel
Clinging close with the crush of the Python,
When she maketh her murderous meal!
In thy eight-fold embraces enfolden,
Let our empty existence escape,
Give us death that is glorious and golden,
Crushed all out of shape!

Ah! thy red lips, lascivious and luscious,
With death in their amorous kiss,
Cling round us, and clasp us, and crush us,
With bitings of agonised bliss;
We are sick with the poison of pleasure,
Dispense us the potion of pain;
Ope thy mouth to its uttermost measure
And bite us again!