GAMES FROM FOLKTALES

TRANSCRIPTS FOR AUGUST 2018

Losing the Tapestry
Wittgenstein's Ladder
Dunsany: A Moral Little Tale
Was Bonisagus an Epicurean?
Adventures of the German Student
Cornwall: Plot Hooks From Bottrel - Volume One

An experiment in podcasting for the Ars Magica roleplaying game

Original images sourced from CC0 sites.

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 xxxxx

PATREONS

Dan Casar
Daniel Jensen
Jarkman DeVries
Jason Italiano
Jason Newquist
Jason Tondro
Pantelis Polakis
and
Anonymous

LOSING THE FIRST COMIC STRIP

The Bayeux Tapestry was a piece of monarchical propaganda produced by the Normans after 1066 to explain to their side of the conflict to illiterates. It was made in England somewhere: although precisely where is not clear. We know this because structurally it is not a tapestry at all: it's an embroidery, and the techniques used, although known outside England, were not practiced at the scale or level of skill.

It was then shipped to Bayeux, to decorate a new chapel in the cathedral of Bishop Odo. Odo was William's brother, and appears in the Tapestry itself. He's wielding a club. The story that this is because he was forbidden from using swords because of his ecclesiastical office led to generations of Clerics in Dungeons and Dragons not being allowed blades.

The Tapestry is about 70 meters long, and about half a meter wide. It contains fifty scenes, and these are described with brief captions. The final caption was probably added in the !9th Century, and it's only the latest rework to edit the contents of the tapestry. At least two sections of tapestry are missing. One of these is the final panel, so it is possible that it's more than a single scene. One scholar estimates the missing section was a meter and a half long.

In 1220, the Tapestry is missing. It was hidden during a siege of the city last century. In the real world, it turns up again in a register of the cathedral's possessions in the 15th Century. Finding treasure is one of the great plot hooks in roleplaying games, but that there's a four century failure in the provenance of the Tapestry gives us additional opportunities.

Plot hooks:
Finding the Tapestry

A Jerbiton magus interested in embroidery wants to examine the Tapestry, and asks the player characters to find it. If it is still within the precinct of the Cathedral, magic may prove unreliable. The tapestry has been destroyed, so you can make a new one, which contains useful images, and slide it into the cathedral, for a fortunate discovery. What would your characters like to include?
Contents of the tapestry

There is a panel which shows a fleet of ghost ships. Did the Order cause that, as shown in a missing panel?
There's a comet linked to the ghost ships. Does this simply mean that it was a time of ill omen, or is it a hint that during the time of the comet, the Land of the Dead was closer, and easier to enter? Can necromancers make use of the time of the comet?
Missing panel options

House Tytalus influenced the Norman invasion of Britain. One of them is in the missing coronation panel. Is he kneeling to the king, which is a great shame on his House, or is he giving power to the king, which is illegal, but still useful to the House if demanding concessions from the Crown?
The damnatio memoraie of the Diedne was not complete in 1070. Does one of the magi shown in the panel carry a magic item shaped like the symbol of the proscribed House? It might have been looted during the War.
The coronation panel shows the king making obeisance to a demon, hence the massacre at his coronation and his corpse exploding at burial. The king's oath makes the Church lands he owns accessible to the demon and his servants.
A missing panel shows a faerie aiding the king. The story of the faerie has been expunged so it cannot collect its fee, but if the panel revives the creature, it may claim a large section of the Crown's territories, or aid those opposing the current king. Has a rival of the king set the characters up to rediscover the creature?

WALKING UNDER WITTGENSTEIN'S LADDER

This week I've been thinking about Hermetic applications of Wittgenstein's ladder, but to get there, I need to take three steps back. I hit upon the idea in Terry Pratchett's books, where it's called lie-to-children, which is taken from Cohen and Stuart. An example I can think of is when Neil Gaiman wrote a Doctor Who episode called "The Doctor's Wife" in which the Doctor and his companions were in a tiny pocket universe. When asked to explain it, the Doctor said roughly, "Can you imagine a big soap bubble with a second, tiny soap bubble stuck to the side? Well it's nothing like that."

That's a lie to children, or a rung on Wittgenstein's Ladder. It's a lie, in the strictest sense of a deliberate untruth, but its function is to teach a person sufficient that, when they have more data, you can use that model to illuminate something which is more closely in line with the complexity of reality.

Initially I was thinking of it in terms of a story. A few centuries ago, a magus completed some Original Research which has the effect that once you reach a certain score in Vim, let's say 12 for this example, all spells in Vim become a magnitude easier, just because you've reached the point where you are no longer interacting with Vim through a limited conceptual model, a lie to children, but have actually grasped the material. Over time, people have performed additional research, to make better lies for children, and so the score at which you strike this effect has fallen to 11.

Just recently, a second magus has discovered a similar simplification-and-complexification at score 22. Now magi of Bonisagus and Criamon are really excited, because they want to see if, when they finally manage to make the original effect fall to score 10, if it alters when new students hit the second realisation. Will it still be unchanged at Score 22, one level lower at Score 21, or retain its place at double the lower score, at 20?

It matters a great deal to people who study Vim,, because if simplifying the model at the lowest score multiplies out, it may draw down the similar simplifications. For example if, in the original scheme, the scores were 12 and 24, but the breakthrough concerning the lower automatically shifted the higher down, then it may have also moved a theoretical simplification at 36 down to 33. This means getting the lowest score down to 10 might drag two undiscovered, simplifications down to 30 and 40, which is within the theoretical range of specialist magi. If fully integrated, this would allow magi to cast spells four magnitudes more powerful before hitting the barrier that makes tenth magnitude spells rituals.

For your own campaign you can swap out Vim for any other Art. I've used it here because there are so few PCs who specialise in it that a radical improvement in Vim scores won't much affect the game. If this turned up in, for example, Creo or Terram,

there would be whole House throwing resources at the problem, which might give your covenant a focus, and funding. Even if your characters weren't interested in the research, they might handle the covenant's daily business while the researchers focused on their task.

The ladder is also probably used in Mystery Cults. I know I've been critical of the "choose your own" buffet nature of ordeals in the current system. I think it breaks the barrier between player and character knowledge. That being said, there is a concept in Buddhism which may explain this: upaya.

An upaya is a way of approaching enlightenment which works, but works less well than a more conventional teaching. What counts as an upaya, and what is the best road, varies according to different schools. Nonetheless, this explains why you can get Buddhists who drink and fornicate to reach Enlightenment, when it clearly goes against the teachings. For them, it's a lie to children that gets them to the point where they can eventually abandon it and go on with a better practice. Mystery Cult Lores may just be a series of lies to children. The riddles in Zen are quite like this in a sense: the point is the mental state the riddles guide toward, not the answers to the riddles themselves. There's a similar idea in Taoism, that the Tao which is written is not the Tao. This isn't so much a riddle as a statement that, to choose another metaphor or lie-to-children, the Tao is the path, not the map showing the path. This could explain why self-directed initiation scripts are possible, but harder then the conventional ones: they are using upaya.

This view doesn't work so well in the West. Buddhism means different things to different schools, but basically the state of the universe is such that Enlighenment without the assistance of a God is possible, as an innate feature of humanhood. That's not the general view of western mystery cults. Sure, there are a few, but basically the idea of Western Mysteries is that there's a supernatural force that you are drawing toward by participation in ordeals. You don't get to say "I don't like the way Christian baptism is done, so I'm going to add some honey and bloodletting": there's something that judges your ordeals. That being noted, the upaya model gives us a bit of wiggle room in some of our cults: particularly those which are interested in powers innate to the human, rather than through service is an external, spiritual force

DUNSANY: A MORAL LITTLE TALE

A quick Lord Dunsany story. The Puritanical Devil is a sort of inverse of the Merry Devil which I wrote up for Realms of Power : Infernal (p.73). It is likely hated not only by the angels, but a lot of faeries as well.

There was once an earnest Puritan who held it wrong to dance. And for his principles he labored hard, his was a zealous life. And there loved him all of those who hated the dance; and those that loved the dance respected him too; they said "He is a pure, good man and acts according to his lights."

He did much to discourage dancing and helped to close several Sunday entertainments. Some kinds of poetry, he said, he liked, but not the fanciful kind as that might corrupt the thoughts of the very young. He always dressed in black.

He was quite interested in morality and was quite sincere and there grew to be much respect on Earth for his honest face and his flowing pure-white beard.

One night the Devil appeared unto him in a dream and said "Well done."

"Avaunt," said that earnest man.

"No, no, friend," said the Devil.

"Dare not to call me 'friend,'" he answered bravely.

"Come, come, friend," said the Devil. "Have you not done my work? Have you not put apart the couples that would dance? Have you not checked their laughter and their accursed mirth? Have you not worn my livery of black? O friend, friend, you do not know what a detestable thing it is to sit in hell and hear people being happy, and singing in theatres and singing in the fields, and whispering after dances under the moon," and he fell to cursing fearfully.

"It is you," said the Puritan, "that put into their hearts the evil desire to dance; and black is God's own livery, not yours."

And the Devil laughed contemptuously and spoke.

"He only made the silly colors," he said, "and useless dawns on hill-slopes facing South, and butterflies flapping along them as soon as the sun rose high, and foolish maidens coming out to dance, and the warm mad West wind, and worst of all that pernicious influence Love."

And when the Devil said that God made Love that earnest man sat up in bed and shouted "Blasphemy! Blasphemy!"

"It's true," said the Devil. "It isn't I that send the village fools muttering and whispering two by two in the woods when the harvest moon is high, it's as much as I can bear even to see them dancing."

"Then," said the man, "I have mistaken right for wrong; but as soon as I wake I will fight you yet."

"O, no you don't," said the Devil. "You don't wake up out of this sleep."

And somewhere far away Hell's black steel doors were opened, and arm in arm those two were drawn within, and the doors shut behind them and still they went arm in arm, trudging further and further into the deeps of Hell, and it was that Puritan's punishment to know that those that he cared for on Earth would do evil as he had done.

WAS BONISAGUS AN EPICUREAN?

A few weeks ago the blog discussed the weeping philosopher, Heralcitus. His parallel, the laughing philosopher Democritus, doesn't have a lot of surviving work, but one of his followers was Epicurus, and he seems to have been a Hermetic magus before his time. Epicurius gets a bad rap in history. His name is used for "hedonist"or "heretic" in medieval writing. In modern writing, it's a synonym for "gourmand". Instead, let's have a look at what he actually said. His thoughts and lifestyle seem so familiar that it seems fair to ask if Bonisagus was one of his admirers.

Epicurius said the goal of life was "ataraxia" by which he meant something similar to tranquillity of spirit. There were several key features to ataraxia, but a key one was aponia, which means freedom from pain or want. Epicurius believed pleasure was freedom from pain, so true painlessness was as much pleasure as a person could have.

What is a life of pleasure?

Physical pleasures, like eating, are only momentary, but mental pleasures, like memories, are persistent and so are more important. Each can be divided into active and passive types. Eating when you are hungry is an active pleasure: no longer being hungry afterward is a passive pleasure. Passive pleasures are superior to active pleasures. Overindulgence causes pain, so there's a sort of moderation built into the philosophy. Pleasures of the body should not include artificially induced things that disturb mental equilibrium.

Friendship is important to a happy life: the works of Epicurius's successor didn't survive beyond a few pages. One of them says gods must be able to breathe, because they must talk, because they must converse, because they must have friends, because that's the key to happiness, and they are defined as happy. Friends you can talk about important things with are the primary key to happiness. If you're a magus, you need other magi. The solo lives magi lived before the Order are, by definition, miserable.

The Epicurean school as embyronic covenant

Epicurius's school was called the Garden. His students sat around in the garden, and talked. He included women and slaves on merit. Epicurians suggested it was important they be secluded from society, to avoid trouble. He commanded his followers to "live in obscurity" to avoid being noticed. His followers avoided politics, because it lead to mundane difficulties, and because it inflamed megalomania.He was against passionate love, and thought sex was a distraction from thought. He had no wife or children of his own, preferring to care instead for his friends and students. This seems very similar to the early versions of Bonisagus.

Types of desire

Some desires are natural and necessary, some are natural but not necessary, and some are neither natural or necessary. Necessary, in this case, means something required for happiness, for freedom from physical discomfort, or to maintain life.

Natural but unnecessary desires include things like the craving for luxurious food, and the lust for sexual intercourse. Epicurius believed that these didn't make you so much happier that they were worth the hassle. The final category includes limitless desires, like covetousness for money, which can never be satisfied, and so draw implacably away from happiness.

Divine power is never used

Gods exist, are immortal, and are blessed. There's nothing else to know about them. They may be ideals to contemplate, or they may physically exist in the voids between worlds. Given that you can't interact with either, why worry? Their rituals may be something you do to avoid annoying their followers, but that's not the same as them being true. Epicurius did not believe in any afterlife at all: and saw this as a profoundly liberating truth. His followers often had a particular motto on their gravestones Non fui, fui, non sum, non curo "I was not; I was; I am not; I do not care" to testify that they had passed from any possibility of pain.

The Source of the Code

The school operated under a social contract. People would avoid both punishment and doing those things which required punishment, because either drew the person away from being happy, in the highest sense. Laws and punishments were necessary for the unwise. The idea that the law was just what everyone agreed that it was, that justice was a human construction rather than an expression of natural law, seems to lead to the Code being drawn up by the Founders. They don't need a historical template or precedent, because they think they have the right to say what justice is.

Atomic theory

Epicurius was a follower of Democritus, who believed the world was made out of atoms separated by void. They thought there was an infinite number of atoms and an infinite amount of void, but there must be a finite number of types of atoms, which means they can only be combined in a finite, if potentially very large, number of configurations. The infinite number of atoms mean there are infinite worlds (or, as Epicurius called them, cosmoses) separated by vast voids.

Atoms cannot be created or destroyed, but they can be called from elsewhere and banished (Creo and Perdo). They can collide, then bounce off or fuse (Rego), or collide then join and change (Muto). When not forced to do anything else, they naturally slide downwards toward the ground, but sometime they unpredictably swerve. This swerve caused the universe and allows free will. The swerve also allows magic, because it breaks the mechanical chain of causality. They also believed in something like species : items shedded atoms carrying information.

Scientific principles

Ideas should not, according to the Epicureans, be considered as true until they had been tested. As a foundational position, they thought you should keep in mind all possible explanations for a thing, until each was disproved by evidence. The followers of this school had three, later four, criteria for something to be true.

Sensations: All sense perceptions are true, but can be misperceived. The way of checking is examining a thing more clearly. That actually seeing things yourself was the

primary way to discern their truth is not radical to us, but in a world filled with occluded truths and superstitions, it's startling. It's how Intellgo makes sense as an Art.

Preconceptions: Epicurius thought we learned what, for example, an apple, is by watching other people and learning what they meant when they said the word "apple". Plato thought to know what an apple was, you needed an inherent knowledge of apples, a sort of built in vocabulary. Epicurus believed you could just keep discovering things outside your collective experience, and that you and your friends would come up with names for them.

Feelings are the bedrock of Epicrius's philosophy. Pain is bad and pleasure good. We know that hitting our hand with a hammer is a bad thing, and that hitting our neighbour's hand with a hammer is a bad thing, not through any deep consideration of the nature of the will of the Divine as it related to good and evil, but because it hurts. Some things hurt a lot. They are very bad things. Some things cause us vast mental distress over a prolonged period. We should not do those things. Things which make you miserable probably aren't right, because wisdom is pleasurable, and maybe you should look more clearly at them. I'm reading in a seed of the argument for scientific truth having elegance here.

The fourth criteria, from after Epicurius's time, was that once you had a system of observations, you could build up logical conjectures from there. Thus, the gods have friends, because it is logical that they have friends, rather than that someone has been peering at them with a set of binoculars.

This looks a lot like a primitive version of the scientific method, and explains why things like laboratory experimentation are considered useful in Hermetic thought. Earlier magicians don't do this. I've called Bonisagus the Great Seculariser before, but I never really understood where that drive came from, beyond the cosmopolitanism caused by his travels as a young man. Could Epicurius provide this?

Epilogue

A library of papyrii containing some Epicurean writing was found in the ruins of Herculaneum after the game period. One of his followers sums up his philosophy like this:

Don't fear god,
Don't worry about death;
What is good is easy to get, and
What is terrible is easy to endure.

WASHINGTON IRVING: ADVENTURES OF THE GERMAN STUDENT

I thought this story was folklore, but it turns out it's fiction by Washington Irving.

On a stormy night, in the tempestuous times of the French Revolution, a young German was returning to his lodgings, at a late hour, across the old part of Paris. The lightning gleamed, and the loud claps of thunder rattled through the lofty narrow streets–but I should first tell you something about this young German.

Gottfried Wolfgang was a young man of good family. He had studied for some time at Göttingen, but being of a visionary and enthusiastic character, he had wandered into those wild and speculative doctrines which have so often bewildered German students. His secluded life, his intense application, and the singular nature of his studies, had an effect on both mind and body. His health was impaired; his imagination diseased. He had been indulging in fanciful speculations on spiritual essences, until, like Swedenborg, he had an ideal world of his own around him. He took up a notion, I do not know from what cause, that there was an evil influence hanging over him; an evil genius or spirit seeking to ensnare him and ensure his perdition. Such an idea working on his melancholy temperament produced the most gloomy effects. He became haggard and desponding. His friends discovered the mental malady preying upon him, and determined that the best cure was a change of scene; he was sent, therefore, to finish his studies amidst the splendors and gayeties of Paris.

Wolfgang arrived at Paris at the breaking out of the revolution. The popular delirium at first caught his enthusiastic mind, and he was captivated by the political and philosophical theories of the day: but the scenes of blood which followed shocked his sensitive nature, disgusted him with society and the world, and made him more than ever a recluse. He shut himself up in a solitary apartment in the Pays Latin, the quarter of students. There, in a gloomy street not far from the monastic walls of the Sorbonne, he pursued his favorite speculations. Sometimes he spend hours together in the great libraries of Paris, those catacombs of departed authors, rummaging among their hoards of dusty and obsolete works in quest of food for his unhealthy appetite. He was, in a manner, a literary ghoul, feeding in the charnel-house of decayed literature.

Wolfgang, thought solitary and recluse, was of an ardent temperament, but for a time it operated merely upon his imagination. He was too shy and ignorant of the world to make any advances to the fair, but he was a passionate admirer of female beauty, and in his lonely chamber would often lose himself in reveries on forms and faces which he had seen, and his fancy would deck out images of loveliness far surpassing the reality.

While his mind was in this excited and sublimated state, a dream produced an extraordinary effect upon him. It was of a female face of transcendent beauty. So strong was the impression made, that he dreamt of it again and again. It haunted his thoughts by day, his slumbers by night; in fine, he became passionately enamored of this shadow of a dream. This lasted so long that it became one of those fixed ideas which haunt the minds of melancholy men, and are at times mistaken for madness.

Such was Gottfried Wolfgang, and such his situation at the time I mentioned. He was returning home late on stormy night, through some of the old and gloomy streets of the Marais, the ancient part of Paris. The loud claps of thunder rattled among the high houses of the narrow streets. He came to the Place de Grève, the square, where public executions are performed. The lightning quivered about the pinnacles of the ancient Hôtel de Ville, and shed flickering gleams over the open space in front. As Wolfgang was crossing the square, he shrank back with horror at finding himself close by the guillotine. It was the height of the reign of terror, when this dreadful instrument of death stood ever ready, and its scaffold was continually running with the blood of the virtuous and the brave. It had that very day been actively employed in the work of carnage, and there it stood in grim array, amidst a silent and sleeping city, waiting for fresh victims.

Wolfgang's heart sickened within him, and he was turning shuddering from the horrible engine, when he beheld a shadowy form, cowering as it were at the foot of the steps which led up to the scaffold. A succession of vivid flashes of lightning revealed it more distinctly. It was a female figure, dressed in black. She was seated on one of the lower steps of the scaffold, leaning forward, her face hid in her lap; and her long dishevelled tresses hanging to the ground, streaming with the rain which fell in torrents. Wolfgang paused. There was something awful in this solitary monument of woe. The female had the appearance of being above the common order. He knew the times to be full of vicissitude, and that many a fair head, which had once been pillowed on down, now wandered houseless. Perhaps this was some poor mourner whom the dreadful axe had rendered desolate, and who sat here heart-broken on the strand of existence, from which all that was dear to her had been launched into eternity.

He approached, and addressed her in the accents of sympathy. She raised her head and gazed wildly at him. What was his astonishment at beholding, by the bright glare of the lighting, the very face which had haunted him in his dreams. It was pale and disconsolate, but ravishingly beautiful.

Trembling with violent and conflicting emotions, Wolfgang again accosted her. He spoke something of her being exposed at such an hour of the night, and to the fury of such a storm, and offered to conduct her to her friends. She pointed to the guillotine with a gesture of dreadful signification.

"I have no friend on earth!" said she.

"But you have a home," said Wolfgang.

"Yes–in the grave!"

The heart of the student melted at the words.

“If a stranger dare make an offer,” said he, “without danger of being misunderstood, I would offer my humble dwelling as a shelter; myself as a devoted friend. I am friendless myself in Paris, and a stranger in the land; but if my life could be of service, it is at your disposal, and should be sacrificed before harm or indignity should come to you.”

There was an honest earnestness in the young man’s manner that had its effect. His foreign accent, too, was in his favor; it showed him not to be a hackneyed inhabitant of Paris. Indeed, there is an eloquence in true enthusiasm that is not to be doubted. The homeless stranger confided herself implicitly to the protection of the student.

He supported her faltering steps across the Pont Neuf, and by the place where the statue of Henry the Fourth had been overthrown by the populace. The storm had abated, and the thunder rumbled at a distance. All Paris was quiet; that great volcano of human passion slumbered for a while, to gather fresh strength for the next day’s eruption. The student conducted his charge through the ancient streets of the Pays Latin, and by the dusky walls of the Sorbonne, to the great dingy hotel which he inhabited. The old portress who admitted them stared with surprise at the unusual sight of the melancholy Wolfgang, with a female companion.

On entering his apartment, the student, for the first time, blushed at the scantiness and indifference of his dwelling. He had but one chamber–an old-fashioned saloon–heavily carved, and fantastically furnished with the remains of former magnificence, for it was one of those hotels in the quarter nobility. It was lumbered with books and papers, and all the usual apparatus of a student, and his bed stood in a recess at one end.

When lights were brought, and Wolfgang had a better opportunity of contemplating the stranger, he was more than ever intoxicated by her beauty. Her face was pale, but of a dazzling fairness, set off by a profusion of raven hair that hung clustering about it. Her eyes were large and brilliant, with a singular expression approaching almost to wildness. As far as her black dress permitted her shape to be seen, it was of perfect symmetry. Her whole appearance was highly striking, though she was dressed in the simplest style. The only thing approaching to an ornament which she wore, was a broad black band round her neck, clasped by diamonds.

The perplexity now commenced with the student how to dispose of the helpless being thus thrown upon his protection. He thought of abandoning his chamber to her, and seeking shelter for himself elsewhere. Still he was so fascinate by her charms, there seemed to be such a spell upon his thoughts and senses, that he could not tear himself from her presence. Her manner, too, was singular and unaccountable. She spoke no more of the guillotine. Her grief had abated. The attentions of the student had first won her confidence, and then, apparently, her heart. She was evidently an enthusiast like himself, and enthusiasts soon understand each other.

In the infatuation of the moment, Wolfgang avowed his passion for her. He told her the story of his mysterious dream, and how she had possessed his heart before he had even seen her. She was strangely affected by his recital, and acknowledge to have felt an impulse towards him equally unaccountable. It was the time for wild theory and wild actions. Old prejudices and superstitions were done away; everything was under the sway of the “Goddess of Reason.”

Among other rubbish of the old times, the forms and ceremonies of marriage began to be considered superfluous bonds for honorable minds. Social compact were the vogue. Wolfgang was too much of theorist not to be tainted by the liberal doctrines of the day.

“Why should we separate?” said he: “our heart are united; in the eye of reason and honor we are as one. What need is there of sordid forms to bind high soul together?”

The stranger listened with emotion: she had evidently received illumination at the same school.

“You have no home nor family,” continued he: “Let me be everything to you, or rather let us be everything to one another. if form is necessary, form shall be observed–there is my hand. I pledge myself to you forever.”

“Forever?” said the stranger, solemnly.

“Forever!” repeated Wolfgang.

The stranger clasped the hand extended to her: “Then I am yours,” murmured she, and sank upon his bosom.

The next morning the student left his bride sleeping, and sallied forth at an early hour to seek more spacious apartments suitable to the change in his situation. When he returned, he found the stranger lying with her head hanging over the bed, and one arm thrown over it. He spoke to her, but received no reply. He advanced to awaken her from her uneasy posture. On taking her hand, it was cold–there was no pulsation–her face was pallid and ghastly. In a word, she was a corpse.

Horrified and frantic, he alarmed the house. A scene of confusion ensued. The police was summoned. As the officer of police entered the room, he started back on beholding the corpse.

“Great heaven!” cried he, “how did this woman come here?”

“Do you know anything about her?” said Wolfgang eagerly.

“Do I?” exclaimed the officer: “she was guillotined yesterday.”

He stepped forward; undid the black collar round the neck of the corpse, and the head rolled on the floor!

The student burst into a frenzy. “The fiend! the fiend has gained possession of me!” shrieked he; “I am lost forever.”

They tried to soothe him, but in vain. He was possessed with the frightful belief that an evil spirit had reanimated the dead body to ensnare him. He went distracted, and died in a mad-house.

Here the old gentleman with the haunted head finished his narrative.

“And is this really a fact?” said the inquisitive gentleman.

“A fact not to be doubted,” replied the other. “I had it it from the best authority. The student told it me himself. I saw him in a mad-house in Paris.”

CORNWALL: TRADITIONS AND HEARTHSIDE STORIES OF WEST CORNWALL, VOLUME 1

Bottrell was one of the researchers that Robert Hunt used to flesh out his book, so his material has been already fossicked over, at one remove. Bottrell uses a lot more of the local dialect, and his colour text is better than Hunt's. For example, all the descendants of Jack the Giant are shaggy because their ancestors were suckled with goats. That being said, the amount of material is tremendous, and I'd mentally prepared myself to move onto the next stage, so I'm fossicking in Bottrell very lightly.

There's a chance some future Ars Magica author is going to scoop up my research for a book set in Stonehenge, and if they do, a bit of guidance. "Welcome visitor from the future. You may wish to spade through Bottrell again. I'm well past my self-imposed deadline here, and I have more material than any sensible author would need for this project, so I'm just grabbing the obvious bits. Good luck."

An obvious treasure or contested vis source

"Every now and then, down to the present time, many persons have dug all about the cairns on Trecrom, of moonshiny nights, in hopes of finding the crocks of gold that the giant buried there, but whenever they dig so deep as to touch the flat stone that covers the mouth of the crock, and hear it ring hollow, out from the crevices of the rocks and cairns come troops of frightful-looking spriggens who raise such dreadful weather that it scares the diggers away."

A stopping place for Mercere, or a faerie inn? "He was one of an ancient family that came from Normandy and settled in Sennen soon after the Conquest. They held their lands, 'tis said, as a gift from the Conqueror. The two oldest branches of the family terminated in daughters, who gave themselves, and their lands, to other names; but, at the time, they had not much to bestow, as the 'First and Last' inn of England belonged to them for many generations and they could do no less, they thought, than be the best customers to their own hotel."

Pellar

The Pellar was mentioned briefly in Hunt. His practices are described in far more detail in Bottrell. I think some of these are far later than period, but the annual renewal in spring seems useful as a plot hook.

According to ancient usage, the folks from many parts of the west country make their annual pilgrimage to some white witch of repute, for the sake of having what they call "their protection renewed." The spring is always chosen for this object, because it is believed that when the sun is returning the Pellar has more power to protect them from bad luck than at any other season...

There used to be rare fun among the folks in going to the conjuror in the spring, when they were sure to meet, at the wise man's abode, persons of all ages and conditions, many from a great distance. Then the inhabitants of the Scilly Isles came over in crowds for the purpose of consulting the white witches of Cornwall, and that they might obtain their protection, charms, spells, and counter-spells. Many of the captains of vessels, belonging to Hayle, St. Ives, and Swansea, often visited the Pellar before they undertook a voyage, so that, with seaman and tinners, there was sure to be great variety in the company....

The conjuror received the people and their offerings, singly, in the room by courtesy styled the hale (hall). Few remained closeted with him more than half-an-hour, during which time some were provided with little bags of earth, teeth, or bones taken from a grave. These precious relics were to be worn, suspended from the neck, for the cure of prevention of fits, and other mysterious complaints supposed to be brought on by witchcraft. Others were furnished with a scrap of parchment, on which was written the ABRACADABRA or the following charm:–

SATOR, AREPO, TENET, OPERA, ROTAS.

These charms were enclosed in a paper, curiously folded like a valentine, sealed and suspended from the neck of the ill-wished, spellbound, or otherwise ailing person. The last charm is regarded as an instrument of great power, because the magical words read the same backwards as forwards. A gritty substance called witch-powders, that looked very much like pounded brick, was also given to those who required it. An aged crone of the pellar blood, mother or sister of the white witch in chief, received some of the women upstairs to cure such of the least difficult cases, as simple charming would effect; but the greatest part of them preferred the man, as his charms only were powerful enough to unbewitch them. Instead of the earthy powder, some are furnished with a written charm, which varies according to the feelings of the recipients. Most of the very religious folks have a verse of scripture, concluded with the comfortable assurance that, by the help of the Lord, the White Witch hopes to do them good.

But those who have no particular religious sentiments he furnishes with a charm, of which the following is a literal copy:

On one side of a bit of paper, about an inch and a half by one inch,

NALGAH.

Here follows a picture of what must have been the conjuror's own creation, as such an object was never seen by mortal eyes in the heavens above, the earth beneath, nor in the waters under the earth. The only object we can compare it to is a something which is a

cross between a headless cherub and a spread-eagle. Underneath what might have been intended for angel or bird, there is an egg, on which the creature appears to be brooding. There is another egg at the extremity of one of the outstretched legs of the creature. This picture, which is the most singular part of the charm, can only be represented by the aid of the pencil. The word

TETRAGRAMMATON,

is under it. On the reverse,

JEHOVAH.
JAH. ELOHIM.
SHADDAY.
ADONAY.
HAVE MERCY ON A POOR WOMAN.

From the worn condition of the charm (which had been in use many years before it came into our hands) it is difficult to make out the writing.

Another amulet, which is commonly given by the Pellar to his patients, to be worn suspended from the neck, is a small bag of earth taken from a man's grave.

Besides the above-mentioned precious charms, the Pellar gives his neophytes powders, to throw over their children, or cattle, to preserve them against witchcraft, ample directions as to the lucky and unlucky times, and a green salve, which is said to be an excellent healing ointment. I have talked with many who have visited the Pellar every spring, for years running, that they might get their protection renewed. Yet there is no finding out all that takes place at the time of this important pilgrimage, as the directions are given to each individual separately, and all are bound to preserve the greatest secrecy about some portion of the charm, or it will do no good.

Others were supplied with blood stones, milpreves, or snake-stones, and other trumpery, manufactured by the pellar family, to be worn as amulets. The blue-stone rings, in which some fancied they saw the figure of an adder, or when marked with yellow veins the pattern of a snake, were particularly prized, because it was believed that those who wore them were by that means safe from being h armed by any reptile of the serpent tribe, and that man or beast, bit and envenomed, being given some water to drink, wherein this stone had been infused, would perfectly recover of the poison. The amulets, reliques, and charms supplied by the white witch served to tranquillize the diseased fancy as well as the bread pills, coloured waters, and other innocent compounds of more fashionable practitioners, or the holy medals and scapulars of other professors. There are no new notions under the sun; the only difference is the fashion in which they are disguised.

There's a quote from a witch that I'm keeping because it shows the methods used to discourage the devil in the local white magic.

After taking a good drink of the brandy, she said, "Don't you be frightened even if you happen to see Old Nick. Perhaps it would be well to tie a nackan (handkerchief) over your eyes, because often, in spite of all my charms, mystifications, conjurations, toxifications, incantations, fumigations, tarnations, devilations, and damnations, besides all the other ations ever known to the most learned

passon or conjuror, the devil will often be here trying to catch the sperats, and the sight of his saucer eyes of fire, ugly horns, and cloven hoof, is enough to frighten one into fits. And oh! the smell of brimstone he brings along with him es enough to poison one! You arn't afraid, are 'e, that you're trembling so?"

A faerie trick

"...before the good men came home from work. They would be sure to go out to coursey (gossip) a bit while the cake was baking. Then Bucca would steal in, carry off the cake, and place a turf under the bake-pan carefully covered with fire again. When the gossip came to take up the nice bit, she might be heard to exclaim, "Well, I never thought I'd been out so long; my cake is burned to ashes!"

The Demon Mason and Lenine the Cobbler

There's an original story which I can harvest for a couple of monsters and a sort of contagious infernal aura, which here I'll quote in full.

Few more pleasing scenes for a rural picture can be found than the bowery land, the brook, and mill of Bosava; and the high hills crowned with hoar rocks in the background form such a combination of savage and sylvan beauty as most artists delight in. How very appropriate, too, the soft-sounding old name is for such a sheltered spot. Most Cornish scholars agree that the name Bosava is composed of Bos (house), and aval (apple), with the signification of Orchard-house.

The common saying of the inhabitants of this neighbourhood that "Bosava was the first house built after the flood," implies that they regard it as the most ancient habitation of the vale.

Little more than a century ago there might be seen, just below Bosava mill, the ruins of a very old house, which must have been much larger than any other dwelling in the glen, and of superior masonry to anything seen elsewhere except in the old churches. In accordance with the usual habit of simple primitive folks to assign a supernatural agent (whether giant, saint, or demon) as the cause of every extraordinary performance, and to connect the agency with the religion or mythology of the time and place, the erection of this remarkable dwelling was ascribed to a demon-mason, who engaged to build a house of better workmanship than was ever seen in the parish before, for an old miserly cobbler named Lenine, on the usual conditions–that the employer was to depart with the demon craftsman at a stated time and serve him. They say that one of the boots which old Lenine made for the dark gentleman-mason was much larger than the other, to hide his cloven foot. No one, at first, except the old cobbler, knew whence the dark and silent workman came, nor was it known how or when he departed: yet, in an incredibly short space of time, the building was completed...

Old Lenine enjoyed the house in his dismal way for many years after it had been finished, in all respects according to contract, by the honest mason-devil. The term was drawing near to a close for which it had been agreed that old Lenine was to live in his grand mansion, before he had to pay the builder; yet he didn't seem to think much about it, and hammered away at his lapstone as if he didn't care a cobbler's cuss for what was soon to come.

At last the term expired. And the cloven-footed craftsman, whose name is never mentioned, returned to claim his own–to take his ancient employer home with him. The night he arrived (late as it was when he reached Bosava) he found old Lenine mending a pair of shoes for some neighbour. The cobbler desired his visitor, who was for immediate departure, to let him finish the job and the inch of candle remaining, stuck on the edge of the window-seat (that it might not be wasted) before they started together. The good-natured simple devil consented. And then, when he turned his back a moment, and went out to see how his work stood the beating of wind and weather, that instant the old cobbler blew out the candle and placed it in the bible. The devil, as one may expect, was much enraged to find himself fooled by the old miser, and declared that from that time old Lenine should never be able to keep a whole roof on the house nor anybody else after him, so that he would find himself worse off than if he would go then, like a man to his word. The old cobbler cursed and swore, that, roof or no roof, he would remain in his house, in spite of all the black gentry in the place the dark workman carne from, as long as one stone stood on another. The crow of the cock soon after made the devil decamp, and, in taking his departure, he raised a whirlwind which blew off all the thatch from one side of the roof. The old cobbler didn't mind that, for as soon as the devil departed he cast the candle in tin that it might be safe. (When we asked the person who related the legend what was meant by "cast the candle in tin,"she answered that she did'nt know unless it was soldered up in tin, but that was the way she always heard the story told).

Old Lenine tried every means that he, or anyone else could ever think of, to keep a sound roof over his head, but all in vain. The thatcher (old Lenine himself,–no one else would ever venture on the roof) might drive the spars in the thatch as close together as he drove the sparables in the soles of the old shoes he was for ever cobbling when not on the roof; or he might bind down the thatch to the rafters with the newest and strongest rods and ropeyarn,–it was all the same...

Whether he died in a natural way no one could say for certain. Those who inherited the property thought they would keep a roof on such a fine high house, that they might either live in it, or let it, but they were mistaken, because the contest between the cobbler and the devil was going on with more than ever. Old Lenine might be heard every night making the walls resound with the noise of his hammer ringing on the lapstone: even by day he would often be heard beating his leather from all over the bottom...

The miller begged the parson to come to Bosava without delay, and to exert his power on the devil and cobbler. He thought that if the parson could not succeed in driving them away, he might at least, as he was a justice, bind them over to keep the peace.

After the parson and his friends had well fortified themselves, as well as the miller, with plenty of strong drink (that they might be the better able to undertake the difficult work), they all started about midnight, from the parson's plaisance, for the scene of their ghostly operations, and arrived at Bosava in the small hours of the morning.

They say that when the parson, assisted by Dr. Maddern and the miller, drew the magic pentagram and sacred triangle, within which they placed themselves for safety, and commenced the other ceremonies, only known to the learned, which are required for the effectual subjugation of restless spirits, an awful gale sprung up in the cove and raged up the vale with increasing fury, until scarcely a tree was left standing in the bottom. Yet there was scarcely a breath of wind stirring in other places. As the parson continued to read, the devil swore, howled, shrieked, and roared louder than the raging storm. The parson, undaunted, read on and performed more powerful operations in the art of exorcism, till the sweat boiled from his body so that there was not a dry thread on him, and the parson was beginning to fear that he had met with more than his match, when the whole force of the storm gathered itself around the haunted house, and the tree to which the parson clung, that he might not be blown away, was rooted from the ground, and swept by the gale, parson and all, right across the water. Then the thatch, timbers, and stones were seen, by the lightning flashes, to fly all over the bottom. One of the sharp spars from the thatch stuck in the parson's side, and made a wound which pained him ever after. Yet, not to be baffled, the parson made the black spirit hear spells which were stronger still. A moment after, the devil (as if in defiance of the parson) had made a clean sweep of the roof, from amidst the wreck of the building a figure was soon to rise in the shape of the dark master-mason, and fly away in the black thunder-cloud, with his level, square, plumb-line, compasses, and other tools around him.

After the devil had disappeared there was a lull in the tempest. The brave parson then tried his power on the cobbler, who might still be heard beating his lapstone louder than ever. The parson, after summoning old Lenine to appear, and after much trouble in chasing the obstinate spirit of the old miser from place to place, at last caught him in the pulrose under the mill-wheel. Then the ghost threw his hammer and lapstone at the parson's head; at the same time cried out, "Now, Corker, that thee art come I must be gone, but it's only for a time." Luckily the parson was too well acquainted with spiritual weapons to let ghostly tools do him any harm. The night was passed. The parson's power had compelled the demon and cobbler to depart. After making a wreck of the house between them, the parson could do no more for the miller. But a few days after it was found that the old cobbler had returned to the charge, making more noise and annoyance about the place than ever, by broad daylight even as bad as by night, and that the parson could only hunt him from spot to spot about the wreck of the haunted place, without being able to make the cease from amidst the ruins. It was then decided to demolish all the walls of the devil's building.

Thus the best piece of work ever seen in this part of the country was long ago destroyed, and the stones employed for building hedges and outhouses. No one cared to use them about any dwelling-house, for fear that the old miserly cobbler might claim them and again settle down to beat his lapstone beside them.

Bottrell also includes a great deal of detail about a particular house, which is not of interest save that it, like Glamis Castle, has a hidden, haunted room that can be detected by placing towels in the windows and seeing which has gone unmarked. The nature of the ghost eludes me,.

Mead

He also gives a traditional recipe for mead, but the inclusion of brandy may place it past our period. I recall a Holmes story by Neil Gaiman where boiling the combs for their honey was of great importance. I also think the floating of the egg is a lovely touch. This could be a vis source.

The old method of making mead, or metheglin, in West Cornwall was to put four pounds of honey to one gallon of water; boil it one hour, skim it well then add one ounce of hops to every gallon, and boil it half-an-hour longer, and let it stand till next day. Put it into your cask or bottles. To every gallon add a gill of brandy; stop it lightly till the fermentation is over; then stop it very close. Keep it one year before you tap. More recently the old ladies who were noted for making good mead (or sweet-drink as they call it), boiled the combs from which the honey had been drained until all the honey that remained was extracted. They then strained it, and added as much more honey as made the drink strong enough to float an egg. To every gallon they added one ounce of cloves; the same of allspice; half-an-ounce of coriander; the same weight of caraway-seed. Sometimes cinnamon and mace were used instead of the seeds. Others, who preferred the flavour and perfume of aromatic plants, boiled in the water, before they added the honey, the tops of sweet-briar, flowers of thyme, rosemary, sweet marjorum, or any other sweet herbs they liked; then finished as above. All, or any, of the flavouring ingredients were used according to taste.