

# Games From Folktales

A free podcast for  
the Ars Magica  
and Magonomia  
roleplaying games

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Podcast transcripts  
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# The Miraculous Draught of Fishes from “Stories of the Rhine” by Erekmann and Chatrian

Back in the satyr episode of the Magonomia Bestiary Kickstarter I mentioned Gabrinus as the creator of beer. In this story, a less powerful Gabrinus, with a touch of faerie, is playing the an ancient game against painters, to steal the fruits of their creativity.

Readers at the time would know that schiedam is a type of jenever, which is the ancestor of English gin. Gin doesn't become the tippie of the English until after Elizabeth's reign. When William of Orange becomes co-monarch he bans French brandy. Oddly, he makes it stick: it's a patriotic duty to drink Dutch gin rather than French brandy. The rich don't just smuggle it in, as in previous wars. The translator calls gin “Geneva” at one point, which is a common shorthand. It's not that the jenever they are drinking comes from Geneva. They do make some there, but the drinker calls for Schiedam, which is the name of the town where a particularly old variant comes from. The similarity of names is claimed in some books to be because both Genenva and jenever are named after the juniper, whose berries give gin its traditional flavour. So far as I can tell, this isn't true at all – Geneva is named after a word meaning a bend in a river, as is Genoa in Italy – and this folk etymology just grew up because they sound similar.

The authors, or at least translators, also mention other drinks. Porter would be an anachronism in game, so far as I can tell. Porter doesn't appear in written records before the 18th century. There's a note of a strong beer being called “stout” as far back as 1677. He mentions “potato whisky” which I take to be something like poitín or vodka. Triple X ale is strong ale: the idea being that each x is used to mark a level of strength. This is also why, in my own state of Queensland, the local beer is called XXXX, pronounced “Fourex”. It was meant to mark the beer of as being of surpassing strength, purity and quality. Lambic is beer produced with wild yeast in a particular Belgian valley. Oddly, although alembics are used to make jenever in the area, they are not used to make lambic, because it is not distilled.

Pandemonium is the capital city of Hell.

Irce turned the companions of Ulysees into pigs. This may not be literal.

A magic lantern is a simple slide projector. A horn lantern is a standard lantern which uses the outer layer of cow horn instead of glass for its windows.

One morning, in the month of September, 1850, old Andreusse Cappelmans, the marine painter, my worthy master, and I were quietly smoking our pipes at the window of his studio, on the upper floor of the old house which forms the right-hand corner of the Rue des Bi-abancons, on the bridge at Leyden, while we emptied a pot of ale to our respective healths. I was then eighteen years of age, with a pink and white face and fair hair. Cappelmans was about fifty ; his large nose was becoming rather blue, his hair was silvery at the temples, wrinkles were forming round his little grey eyes, and deeper ones traversed his brown cheeks. Instead of the cock's plume which it was once his pride to wear, he now carried but a single feather from a raven's wing in his hat.

The weather was very fine. Before us the old Rhine flowed along, a few white clouds were floating in the blue sky, the port and its great black barges, with their sails motionless, seemed asleep at our feet, the blue waves reflected the rays of the sun, and hundreds of swallows were cleaving the air in all directions. There we sat, musing, much disposed to sentimental reflections ; the large vine-leaves which grew round our window quivered at every breath of air, a butterfly fluttered by, and a dozen chirping sparrows immediately set off in pursuit ; down below, on the roof of a shed, a great tortoiseshell cat sat blinking in the sun, and waving gently its tail from side to side, in a mood as meditative as our own. It was the most tranquillising sight imaginable; nevertheless, Cappelmans seemed sad and anxious.

” Master Andreusse,” said I suddenly, “you seem verv much out of sorts.”

“You are right,” replied he. ” I am as melancholy as a cudgelled donkey.”

” Why ? We have plenty of work, you have more orders than you can execute, and we shall have the kermesse here in a fortnight.”

I have had a bad dream.”

“Master Cappelmans, do you believe in dreams?”

”” I am not sure, Christian, whether it was a dream or not, for I had my eyes wide open.” Then, knocking the ashes out of his pipe on the window-sill ” You must have heard,” said he, “of my old comrade Van Marius, the famous marine painter, who understood the sea as well as Euysdael did the land, Van Ostade a village, Rembrandt dark interior effects, and Rubens temples, palaces, and feasts. He was indeed a great painter. When one looked at his picture, one did not say ‘ How well painted !’ but ‘ How beautiful the sea looks !’ or ‘ How grand, how terrible it is. You could not see the brush of Van Marius at work ; it seemed like the shadow of God's hand on the canvas. Oh, genius, genius, what a sublime gift that is, Christian !” Cappelmans was silent, his lips were closed, his brows contracted, and he had tears in his eyes. It was the first time I had ever seen him in this; mood, so I was quite astonished. In another moment he continued

” Van Marius and I had studied together at Utrecht under old Byssen. We were in love with two sisters ; we used to pass our evenings together at the sign of the Frog, like two brothers. We afterwards came to Leyden arm-in-arm. Van Marius had but one fault. He liked Geneva and schiedam better than ale and porter. You must do me the justice to admit, Christian, that I never get intoxicated with anything but ale, and for that reason I am always in good health.

Unfortunately, Van Marius used to get drunk on geneva. Even then, if he had only drunk when he was at the tavern, but he used to have liquor sent to his studio ; he could only work with energy when he had a couple of pints of spirits under his belt, and his eyes were coming out of his head. Then you should see him, and hear him yell, and sing, and whistle ; he would roar like the sea as he worked, every touch of his brush raised a wave, at every whistle you could see the clouds getting larger, and heavier, and darker ; then he would snatch up a brush with red, and lo ! the lightning flowed from the sky down on the dark waves like a stream of melted lead, while in the distance was a vessel, a cutter maybe, a dismantled wreck, amidst the darkness and the white foam of the waves. It was frightful! When Van Marius painted a calm he made the old blind man, Coppelius, play the clarionet to him for two florins a day ; he mixed his geneva with ale and ate sausages to inspire his



magination with scenes of country life. You must see yourself, Christian, how destructive such a regime as that must have been to the talent of any man. How many times did I say to him, ‘ Take care, Jan, take care ! Geneva will be the death of you some day.’

“But instead of listening to me he would begin to thunder out some drinking song, and he always ended by crowing like a cock. This was his greatest pleasure. For instance, at the tavern when his glass was empty, instead of knocking the bottom against the table to call the waiter’s attention to him, he would shake his arms and begin crowing until his wants were attended to. For some time past Marius had often spoken to me about his chef-d’œuvre, the ‘ Miraculous Draught of Fishes.’ He had shown me his first sketches for it, and I was delighted with them, when one morning he suddenly disappeared from Leyden, and since then no one has heard anything of him.”

Here Cappelmanns thoughtfully lighted his pipe again, and continued ” Last night I was at the Golden Jug with Doctor lLtuner, of Eisenlaffel, and five or six comrades. About ten, apropos to what I cannot say, Ecemer began declaiming against potatoes, declaring they were the scourge of the human race ; that since the discovery of potatoes the aborigines of America, the Irish, the Swedes, the Dutch, and, generally speaking, all those nations which consume great quantities of spirituous liquors, instead of taking their former position in the world, were now reduced to nothing. He attributed this decay to potato brandy, and while I was listening to him—I cannot tell by what chain of reasoning it came into my head—the memory of Van Marius presented itself to me. ‘Poor old fellow,’ thought I, ‘ what is he doing now ? Has he finished his great picture ? Why have I never heard from him ?’ While thinking over these things, Zelig, the watchman, came into the tavern to tell us it was time to go—it was striking eleven. I went straight home, my head felt rather heavy, and I went to sleep. ”

About an hour afterwards, Brigitte, the stockingmender opposite, set fire to her curtains. She screamed out, ‘ Fire !’ I hear a noise of people running in the street, I open my eyes, and what do I see ? A great black cock perched on the easel in the middle of the room.

“In less than half a minute the old woman’s curtains had blazed away and burnt themselves out. Every one went

home again laughing—but the black cock remained there on his perch, and as the moon shone brightly between the towers of the town hall, this singular animal was perfectly visible to me ; he had large yellow eyes, with a red circle round them, and scratched his comb with his claw.

” I had been watching him for at least ten minutes, trying to explain to myself how this strange creature could have found its way into my studio, when it left off scratching its comb, raised its head, and said ” ‘ What, Cappelmanns ! you don’t recognise me ? I am, nevertheless, the soul of your old friend Van Marius !’

” ‘ The soul of Van Marius !’ cried I. ‘ Is Van Marius dead, then ?’

” ‘ Yes,’ replied the cock with a melancholy air, ‘ it is all over, my poor friend. I wanted to have a trial of strength with Herod van Gambrinus; we drank two days and two nights without stopping. The morning of the third day, as old Judith was extinguishing the candles, I rolled under the table ! My body now rests in Osterhaffen Cemetery, facing the sea, and I am looking out for some new organism. But that is not the question now. I came to ask a service of you, Cappelmanns.’

” ‘ A service ? Say, what is it ? All that man can do will I do for you.’

” ‘ Very good,’ replied the cock—’ very good. I was sure you would not refuse my request. Well, this is how the matter stands. You must know, Andreusse, that I had gone to the Herring Creek on purpose to finish the ‘ Miraculous Draught of Fishes.’ Unfortunately, death surprised me before I could put the last touches to this picture. Gambrinus has hung it up as a trophy in the great room of his tavern, and that fills my soul with bitterness. I shall only be at rest when it is finished, and I come now to pray you to finish it for me. You promise me you will ; is it not so, Cappelmanns?’

” Rest assured, Jan, it shall be done.’

” ‘ Then good night.’ Whereupon the cock flapped his wings and flew through one of the panes of glass without making the least noise.” Having concluded this extraordinary story, Cappelmanns laid his pipe down in the window and finished his glass at a gulp. We sat for some time in silence, looking at one another.

” And do you believe that this black cock was the soul of Van Marius ?” said I at last to the good master.

” Do I believe it ? I feel sure it was.”

” Then what do you intend to do, Master Andreusse?”

“It is very clear what I have to do—I shall go to Osterhaffen. An honest man must keep his promise, and I have given mine to Van Marius to finish his picture for him, and I will finish it, cost what it may. In an hour Van Eyck, the one-eyed man, will be here with his cart for me.” Then he ceased speaking and looked earnestly at me. ” Now I think of it,” said he, ” you had better come with me, Christian ; it is a good opportunity for you to see the Herring Creek. Besides, who knows what may happen ? I should be well satisfied to have you with me.”

” I should like to go very much, Master Andreusse,” said I, ” but you know what my aunt Catherine is as well as I can tell you ; she will never let me go.”

” Your aunt Catherine ! I shall tell her it is indispensable for your improvement that you should see the coast. How can a man become a painter of marine subjects who has never quitted the neighbourhood of Leyden, and all he knows of the sea is the insignificant port of Kalwyk ? That is all nonsense ! You must come with me, Christian—that is a settled thing.” While the good man was talking he put on his loose red jacket, and then taking me by the arm he gravely took me to my aunt. I need not repeat to you all that was said on both sides—my aunt’s objections, and how they were met by Master Cappelmanns, in order to induce her to allow me to go with him.

The fact is, he ended by having his own way, and two hours after we were rolling along in the cart towards Osterhaffen, Our cart, drawn by a Zuyder-zee pony, with a big head, short and hairy legs, and his back covered with an old dogskin rug, had been rolling along for three hours between Leyden and Herring Creek, without appearing to be any nearer the end of our journey. The setting sun shed its long purple rays across the marshy plain ; the ditches were flaming red, and all around the reeds, rushes, and shave-grass which grew on their banks threw their black shadows across the dyke.

It soon grew dark, and Cappelmanns, rousing himself from his meditations, called out ” Wrap yourself up well in your cloak, Christian ; pull your fur cap over your ears, and keep your feet well covered with straw. Hop, Barabas, hop ! we are crawling along like snails !” At the



same time he had recourse to his stone bottle of schiedam, and then wiping his lips with the back of his hand he offered it to me, with the remark "Take a pull at it, Christian, to keep the fog out of your stomach. It is a sea fog, the very worst of all fogs." I thought it right to take Cappelraans' advice, and the goodness of the liquor put rue in a good humour directly.

"My dear Christian," said my old master after a few moments' silence, "as we shall have to pass five or six hours in this fog with nothing to help us to pass the time but smoking our pipes and listening to the creaking of the cart, let us talk about Osterhaffen." Then the good man began to give me a description of the tavern called the Jar of Tobacco, the house the best supplied with beer and spirits of any in Holland. "It is situated in the lane of the Trois- Sabots," said he. "It is easily recognised a long way off by its large flat roof and small square windows overlooking the port. A great chestnut-tree stands opposite ; on the right there is a skittle-alley running along an old moss-covered wall, and behind is the poultry-yard with hundreds of ducks, geese, fowls, and turkeys, the screaming, cackling, and quacking of which only cease at night. "There is nothing very extraordinary in the great room of the tavern ; but there, under the dark rafter-; of the ceiling, in clouds of blue smoke, at a counter made in the shape of a cask, sits enthroned the dreaded Herod van Gambrinus, surnamed the Bacchus of the North.

"This man can drink at a sitting two gallons of porter ; treble X, ale, and lambic go down his throat as easily as down a tin funnel ; it is only geneva which he acknowledges as a master.

"Woe be to the painter who sets foot in this pandemonium ! I tell you, Christian, tie had better never have been born. Good-looking young serving-girls, with long yellow curls, are forward in offering their services, and Gainbrinus holds out his large hairy hand, but it is but luring him to his soul's destruction ; the victim leaves the tavern as the companions of Ulysses quitted the cavern of Circe."

After talking very gravely in this strain for some time, Cappelmans lighted his pipe and began to smoke in silence. I had become very melancholy ; an overpowering feeling of sadness took possession of me. It seemed I was getting every instant nearer an impassable gulf, and had it been possible I would have

jumped out of the cart ; and, God forgive me, I would have left my old master to prosecute his enterprise of danger alone. The only thing, perhaps, which prevented my doing so was the impossibility of crossing those unknown marshes in the darkness of night. So I was obliged to follow the course of events, even if I suffered the fatal consequences which I anticipated.

About ten Master Andreusse fell asleep, his head dropped on my shoulder. I kept awake an hour longer, and then fatigue sent me, in my turn, to sleep. I know not how long this state of rest lasted, but the cart stopped with a jolt, and the driver called out "Here we are ! Cappelmans uttered an exclamation of surprise, while a cold shiver ran all over me from my head to my feet.

If I lived a hundred years the Jar of Tobacco, such as I then saw it for the first time, with its little windows blazing with light, and its large roof reaching nearly to the ground, will always be present to my recollection. It was a very dark night. The sea was roaring about a hundred yards behind us, and I could hear the droning of bagpipes above the clamour of the waves. In the darkness I could see the grotesque outlines of the dancers on the glass of the windows. It was quite the effect of a magic-lantern. The dirty lane, lighted up by a horn lantern, the strange faces appearing and disappearing again into the darkness like rats in a drain, the uninterrupted drone of the bagpipes, the pony belonging to Van Eyck standing with his feet in the mud, Cappehnans wrapping his cloak still closer round him, and the moon half obscured by clouds, all contributed to confirm my apprehensions, and made me feel sadder than ever.

We were about to leave the cart, when from out the darkness a tall man suddenly advanced ; he wore a large flapped hat, a pointed beard, turned-down collar on a velvet pourpoint, and a threefold gold chain round his neck, after the fashion of the ancient Flemish painters.

"Is it you, Cappelmans?" said this man, whose sharp profile was distinctly visible against the windows of the den before us.

"Yes, master," replied Andreusse, quite stupefied.

"Take care," said the unknown, raising his finger ; "beware—the slayer of souls is waiting for you."

"Rest assured Andreusse Cappelmans will do his duty."

"That is well. You are a man of your word ; the spirit of the old masters is on your side."

As he spoke the stranger disappeared in the darkriess, and Cappelmans, pale but resolute, got down from the cart. I followed him, but I cannot describe in what a state of mind I was after this short dialogue.

We went up the dark passage, and Master Andreusse, who was leading the way, soon turned round to me and said "Pay attention, Christian !" He at the same time gave the door a push, and under hams, herrings, and strings of black puddings hanging from the black rafters of the ceiling I could see about a hundred men sitting in rows at long tables, some crouching like monkeys, with their shoulders up to their ears, others with their legs stretched out before them, their fur caps over their ears, and their backs against the wall, puffing forth volumes of smoke, which eddied along the room. They all seemed to be laughing with their eyes half closed, their cheeks wrinkled to their ears, and appeared to be plunged in a state of drunken contentment.

On the right a blazing fire sent gleams of light from one end of the room to the other ; and here old Judith, who was as long and as thin as a broomstick, and her face purple with heat, was holding a frying-pan over the fire, in which she was preparing supper for some of the customers. But what astonished me most of all was Herod Gambrinus himself seated at his counter, a little to the left, just as Master Andreusse had described him ; his shirtsleeves tucked up on his hairy arms, his elbows leaning on the board surrounded by shining pots, and his cheeks resting on his enormous fists, liis thick red wig all in disorder, and his long yellow beard flowing over his chest ; he was looking earnestly at the picture of the "Miraculous Draught," which was hanging up at one end of the room, just above the little wooden clock.

I had been watching him for some seconds, when outside the watchman's horn was audible close to the lane of the Trois-Sabots, and at the same moment old Judith, giving her frying-pan a toss, began to say with a sneer "Midnight! the great painter Van Marius has been lying for twelve days in Osterhaffen Cemetery, and "the avenger comes not !"

"He is here!" said Cappelmans, stepping forward into the room.



All eyes were fixed upon him, and Gambrinus, turning his head towards him, smiled, and began caressing his beard. "Is that you, Cappelmans?" said he in a jeering tone. "I have been expecting you; so you have come to fetch away the 'Miraculous Draught of Fishes'?"

"Yes!" replied Master Andreusse; "I have promised Van Marius to finish his chef-d'oeuvre, and finish it I will."

"You will—you will have it?" returned the other. "Comrade, that is easier said than done; do you know that I won it, tankard in hand?"

"I know it; and I intend to win it back, tankard in hand, as you did."

"Then you are determined to play the great game?"

"Yes, determined; may the God of justice be on my side! I will keep my word, or I roll under the table a vanquished man."

The eyes of Gambrinus glittered. "You have heard him?" cried he, addressing himself to the toppers around him; "it is he who challenges me; let it be as he desires." Then turning to Master Andreusse "Who is your umpire?"

"My umpire is Christian Eebstock," said Cappelmans, motioning to me to come forward.

I was in a terrific fright. Then one of the spectators, Ignace van den Brock, Burgomaster of Osterhaffen, wearing a great flaxen wig, drew a paper from his pocket and read as follows like a schoolmaster:

"The drinker's umpire has of right a white cloth, a clean glass, and a white candle; let him be supplied!" And a tall, red-haired girl put those articles by my side.

"Who is your umpire?" asked Master Andreusse.

"Adam van Rasirrus." This Adam van Easimus, with a pimpled nose, a villainous stoop, and a black eye, came and seated himself by me; he was supplied with the same articles by the same handmaid.

Then Herod, holding out his great hand across the counter to his adversary, called out "You have recourse neither to charms nor witchcraft!"

Neither charms nor witchcraft," replied Cappelmans.

"Are without hatred towards me?"

"When I have avenged Fritz Coppelius, Tobias Vogel, the landscape-painter, Ecemer, Nickel Brauer, Diderich Vinkelman, Van Marius, all painters of reputation, and drowned by you in ale and porter, and then plundered of their labours by you, then I shall feel no hatred towards you."

Herod burst into a loud laugh, and stretching out his arms till his powerful shoulders touched the wall behind him, he exclaimed "I vanquished them, tankard in hand, honourably and loyally, as I am about to vanquish you. Their works have become my rightful property; and as to your hatred, I laugh at it and despise it. Drink!" Then, my dear friends, began a struggle the like of which has never been known in Holland within the memory of man, and which will be talked of for ages to come if it pleases God. Black and White had met in arms; the destiny of one was about to be accomplished.

A cask of ale was placed on the table, and two pots containing a pint each were filled to the brim. Herod and Master Andreusse drank them off at once, and so on every half-hour with the regularity of a clock until the cask was empty. Then they passed on to porter, and after porter to lambic. I could easily tell you how many barrels of strong beer were emptied in this memorable battle; the burgomaster Van den Brock noted down the exact quantity in the parish register of Osterhaffen, for the information of future drinkers, but you would refuse to believe me, it would seem so incredible. Let it suffice to tell you that the struggle lasted three days and three nights. The like had never been seen.

It was the first time Herod had found himself in presence of an adversary capable of resisting him. The news, therefore, soon spread abroad; all the world, on foot, on horseback, and in carts, hurried to the tavern; it was quite a procession; and as no one seemed inclined to leave before the termination of the struggle, it happened consequently that the second day the tavern was crammed with visitors; one could hardly move about, and the burgomaster was obliged to tap the table with his cane and call out, "Room! room!" to allow the cellar-men to carry the casks to the table on their shoulders.

All this time Master Andreusse and Gambrinus continued swallowing their pints with marvellous regularity.

Sometimes, as I added up in my mind the number of quarts they had drunk, I thought I must be dreaming, and I would look uneasily at Cappelmans; but he would wink his eye, and say with a smile "Well, Christian, we are getting on; have a glass; it will do you good." Then I was quite confounded.

"The soul of Van Marius possesses him, surely," I thought; "it must be that which keeps him up."

As for Gambrinus, with his little boxwood pipe between his lips, his elbow on the counter, and his cheek resting on his hand, he sat smoking his pipe like a respectable old shopkeeper taking his glass of beer while he thought over the affairs of the day. It was inconceivable. The oldest drinkers themselves had never seen anything like it.

The morning of the third day, before the lights were extinguished, seeing the struggle threatened to be prolonged indefinitely, the burgomaster told Judith to bring a needle and thread for the first test. Then there was great excitement, and every one came nearer to see how it would be. According to the rules of the great game, the combatant who comes victorious from this ordeal has a right to choose what liquor he prefers for the rest of the battle,

Herod had laid his pipe down on the counter; he took the needle and thread which Van den Brock offered him, and raising his huge body, with his eyes coming out of his head, he lifted his arm, and applied the thread to the eye of the needle, but whether his hand was too heavy or the light of the candles dazzled his sight, he was obliged to make two attempts, which had a great effect on all the spectators; for they looked at one another quite bewildered.

"It is your turn, Cappelmans," said the burgomaster. Then Master Andreusse rose, took the needle, and, at the first attempt, threaded it. Frantic applause shook the room. I expected to see the whole building come down about our ears. I looked at Gambrinus; his great fleshy face was puffed up with blood; his cheeks shook. At the expiration of one minute, after silence had been obtained, Van den Brock struck three blows on the table, and then gravely asked "Master Cappelmans, your glory in Bacchus is great; what drink do you choose?"



Schiedam,” replied Master Andreusse—“old schiedam, the oldest and the strongest.”

These words produced a surprising effect on the tavern-keeper. ” No,” cried he—“no ; beer if you will—always beer —no schiedam.”

He got on his legs and looked frightfully pale. ” I regret,” said the burgomaster briefly, ” that the regulations are formal. Let Cappelmans have what he chooses.”

Then Gambrinus reseated himself like a criminal who hears his sentence of death, and they brought us some schiedam of the year ’22, which Van Rasimus and I tasted to guard against any deception or adulteration. The glasses were rilled, and the struggle recommenced.

The whole population of Osterhaffen was thronging about the house and staring in at the windows. The lights had been extinguished and it was broad daylight. As the contest approached its denouement the bystanders became more and more silent. All the customers were standing on chairs, on tables, and on empty barrels, watching attentively. Cappelmans had called for a black-pudding, and was eating it with a good appetite, but Gambrinus was no longer the same man ; the schiedam had stupefied him ! His great crimson face was covered with perspiration, his ears were violet, his eyelids dropped ; sometimes a nervous shudder made him raise his head, and then with staring eyes and dropping lip he gazed at the sea of silent faces crowded together before him, and then he took his glass in both hands and drank while his throat rattled. In all my life I never saw anything more horrible. Every one saw that the tavern-keeper’s defeat was certain. ” He is a lost man,” said they. ” He thought himself invincible, but he has met his master. Another glass or two and it is all over with him.”

But there were some who thought otherwise ; they declared that Herod might hold out three or four hours longer, and Van Rasimus offered to bet a cask of ale that he would not roll under the table before sundown ; but a circumstance, trifling in itself, occurred which hastened the catastrophe.

It was nearly midday. Nickel Spitz, the cellarman, had filled the jugs for the fourth time.

Old Judith, after having attempted in vain to put water to the schiedam, had just left

the room drowned in tears, and we could hear her crying and lamenting in the next room. Herod was dozing. All at once the old clock began to grate and creak in a strange fashion ; it struck twelve amidst a general silence, and the little wooden cock perched above the dial flapped his wings and began to crow. Then, my dear friends, those who were in the room were spectators of a frightful scene.

When the cock began to crow the tavern-keeper raised himself to his full height, as if acted upon by an invisible spring. I shall never forget that half-open mouth, those haggard eyes, and that face livid with fright. I can see him now stretching out his hands to drive some horrid image away. I can hear him now screaming as if he was being strangled ” That cock ! O that cock !” He tried to move, but his legs bent under him, and the terrible Herod van Ganibrinus fell like an ox struck down by the butcher at the feet of Master Andreusse Cappelmans.

The next day, about six in the morning, Cappelruans and I quitted Osterhaffen, carrying with us the picture of the ” Miraculous Draught of Fishes.” Our return to Leyden was quite a triumph.

The whole town, having heard of Master Andreusse’s victory, came out to meet us in the streets ; it was like a Sunday in fair time, but it seemed to have no effect on Cappelmans. He had not opened his mouth the whole journey home, and seemed very much preoccupied. As soon as he reached his house his first order was that he was at home to no one. ” Christian,” said the good man to me as he took off his great cloak, ” I want to be alone. Go home to your aunt and try to work. When the picture is finished I will send Kobus to tell you.” He embraced me, and pushed me gently into the street.

One very fine day, about six weeks later, Master Andreusse came to my aunt Catherine to fetch me to see the picture. The ” Miraculous Draught of Fishes” was hanging against the wall opposite two lofty windows. What a sublime work ! Is it possible it can be in the power of man to produce such things ? Cappelmans had thrown all his heart and all his genius into the work. The soul of Van Marius ought to be satisfied.

I could have remained there till night, mute with admiration, before this incomparable painting, if my old master, tapping me on the shoulder, had not said very solemnly “You find that very fine, do you not, Christian?

Well, Van Mark’s had a dozen of similar chefs-d’œuvre in his head. Unfortunately, he was too fond of ale and schiedam ; his belly was his destruction. It is the fault of us Dutchmen. You are young ; let this serve you for a lesson—sensuality is the enemy of everything that is great.”



# Infernal Regiones from Regina Bloch

Regina Bloch was a London-based, Jewish, poetess who worked in the 1920s. Strangely, her work is filled with Christian allegory. She also wrote a biography of one of the first Sufi masters who became widely known in London. Her representations of what he believed are relatively accurate compared to some of the stuff that had been available before through the Golden Dawn and those sorts of people. As you know in *Ars Magica*, sins – particularly cardinal sins – performed by large groups of people simultaneously can rot a hole in the fabric of reality, such that those who are nearby are tempted to, and empowered to, sin themselves. These are called Infernal regiones.

We have a couple of huge operatic level ones in the Far Western Isles of Mythic Europe, where the forces of Hell have already lit their forges to create the weapons they will need for the battle of Armageddon. Generally however our infernal Regios are small and tend to have a single, big figure in them that the characters can confront. What follows is two high-fantasy, infernal regions from the works of Regina Bloch.

They're useful to us because, with a small stretch, they can be tied to the corruption of House Tytalus.

I'd like to mention a plot hook. When I've been doing the Corruption of House Tytalus, I've used the Lady of Pain, who's turned up in earlier episodes. As an alternative you're about to be introduced to a swine god, and there are two versions given. Moloch and Mars. Moloch is a North African god originally. Mars is the Roman God that you're imagining, except in Regina Bloch's cosmology there's no way that the God of War can be anything but a demon, and therefore he is.

I want to mention Moccus. Moccus is an alternative destroyer of House Tytalus. He was a Celtic, boar-headed god whose cult area was around the mouth of the Seine River in France. He was invoked for all of the sorts of things you associate with fertility gods. He was also considered to be a version of Mercury when the Romans entered the area, which is why he might be suitable as a false Mercury that leads House Tytalus into the Corruption.

Ben Tucker released this through LibriVox. X

For the first time in six years I've made an error, so I can't transcribe the material here. Regina Bloch died long enough ago that her writing is in the public domain, but the introduction to her book was written by a more long-lived scholar, so the book is copyright-clamped. Here's a link for American friends: <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/102749433>.



# The Wolf of Ironwood by Eleanor Smith-Dampier

A quick Librivox recording to give us our monster of the month. We have a werewolf, a witch and a Faustian bargain.

I wondered why I'd not seen this one before. Eleanor Smith-Dampier was a translator of Danish sagas, so I thought I'd missed it because it's from the area to the north of the Ars Magica playspace in Mythic Europe. Turns out I was wrong. At the end of her series of translations published as "The Norse King's Bridal" she added a chapter of her own work. This one's original, and arguably set somewhere in Britain.

Thanks to Kerry Adams and her team for the for the recording.

Ho for the white of the withered bough  
And the red of the wrinkled leaf!  
Sir Arngrim sits in Ironwood,  
And his heart is filled with grief.

The sun sinks down on Ironwood  
Blood-red behind the trees;  
Sir Arngrim stares upon the sword  
That lies across his knees.

"Oh my father died a death of blood,  
And my mother of wasting woe;  
And their spirits dwell in the rocky fell  
Where the trees of Ironwood grow.

"And still the guilt of the life-blood spilt  
Doth unavenged remain;  
And in the red of the wrinkled leaf  
I read my father's pain.

"Oh the kings were three, sailed o'er the sea  
To work us havoc and harm;  
And I see in the white of the wizened bough  
My mother's beckoning arm."

Sir Arngrim stood with the sea beneath  
And the rocky fell behind,  
And there he saw three gallant ships  
That sailed before the wind.

"Oh red of hand, they come to land  
With a host and a mighty horde!  
And how shall I wreak my father's death  
With the power of a single sword?"

When the writhen shadows in Ironwood  
Grew long, and the fading rim  
Of the sun sank low behind the fell,  
The witch-wife came to him.

"Now hearken to me, thou goodly knight!  
And, if thou grant me grace,  
I'll work a spell shall serve thee well  
For love of thy fair young face.

"Oh a maid am I from dawn till dusk—  
But by night of a magic rune,  
And a weird of woe, a wolf I go  
O' nights beneath the moon.

"Thou shalt slay three hosts in Ironwood  
That the wolf her fill may feed—  
Then as lover true, when the fight is done,  
Shalt pay the maiden's meed."

Sir Arngrim looked upon the witch,  
And her face was fair to see.  
He's plighted her troth on his knightly oath  
And sealed it with kisses three..

It was the first o' the hosts came on  
With the rush of a roaring gale—  
But they might not stir the single sword  
That bit through bone and mail.

Oh half o' the host at eve were slain,  
And half o' the host were fled;  
And all night long in Ironwood  
The wolf howled o'er the dead.

It was the second host came on  
As levin leaps from the sky;  
But they might not quell the witch's spell  
And the sword of grammarye.

Oh half o' the host at eve were fled,  
And half in their blood lay still;  
And all night long in Ironwood  
The wolf did feed her fill.

It was the third o' the hosts came on  
Like the waves of a winter sea;  
But they broke on the sword as billows break  
Where the hidden skerries be.

Oh half o' the host at eve were slain,  
And half were fled away;  
And like the dead, among the dead,  
In a swoon Sir Arngrim lay.

The moon shone down on Ironwood  
Above the trees so tall;  
And lo! the red and wrinkled leaves  
Upon his face did fall.

And lo! the shade of the withered bough  
Across his face lay dim,  
And the wolf she leapt, and seized, and tore  
The warrior limb from limb

Ho ho for the red of the wrinkled leaf!  
His spirit has gone to dwell  
With the grimly ghosts of the ancient hosts  
That haunt the rocky fell!

Ho ho for the white of the withered bough!  
The witch she wails full sore;  
And Ironwood, for that deed of blood,  
Is accursèd evermore!



# Mythic Venice: January

This week an experiment I've been participating in #Dungeon23, or the #City23 variant, which is a challenge where people write a dungeon room (or in the city variant a chunk of a city) each day, at about a paragraph length for the entire of 2023. For the dungeon 23 people each month is a level in the dungeon, eventually creating 12 levels. #City23 is a little more nebulous. Some of the people who've been following #City23, through my tweets or insta posts, have asked that it be made accessible on the Arts Magica Forum and in the blog so, as an experiment, I'm going to read the first month's worth of entries into this podcast episode. Feedback on this format is particularly welcome. If this seems valuable I'll do it for every month for the rest of 2023. If you don't want me doing it you'd better tell me.

## JANUARY 1: WHAT WE ALREADY KNOW – FAERIE FOUNDATIONS

Mythic Venice is founded on a faerie forest. The wooden piles that hold up the artificial islands were sacred to a Diana cult. Even the first patron saint of Venice, the virgin of the grapevine, is faerie aligned. In 1004 this allows the strongest faerie in Europe to move his court to Venice, as per the blog entry about the Rotting Princess.

This faerie, The Master of Games, claims to have once been the Founder Tytalus. In the beginning people thought he was harvesting the emotional energy of the city to craft a body for one of the creatures of Deep Arcadia. This may even have been true, there is a glass statue of a dogaressa hidden somewhere. The thing is he's changed a lot of unnecessary stuff. The new theory is that since faeries reflect human stories, he wants us to tell better ones. He's basically starting the Renaissance early. If humans are more interesting they create more interesting Fae creating is a virtuous circle.

This means that anachronisms are found in Mythic Venice. Gondolas for example.

## JANUARY 2: WHAT WE ALREADY KNOW – THE CITY OF WOMEN

The mystical version of Venice is called "Serenissima".

Cosmetics and domestic alchemy have been tied together since ancient times. The perfumes etc. of the Venetians are meant to have quasi-mystical results. Women trade alchemical recipes as a sign of favour. In the real world Elizabeth the First and Catherine de Medici did this. Catherine was the granddaughter of a famous alchemist, Caterina Sforza.

Women dye their hair with family recipes and this has strange effects. The oddest is that during the siege of Padua, when the ancestors of the Venetians were fending off the Huns, they replaced the cables in their siege engines with ropes made of human hair. This gives us magical strings for pocket crossbows. Women hunt with standard crossbows in real life. They take grebe heads as trophies. Their crossbows use clay pellets. Left over from that battle: Attila's sword is in the church of Saint Michele. Also his throne is on Torcello, although that's not in my notes.

Some Venetian women wear a cornu, which is a sort of horned hairstyle that we will tie to the Goddess Diana.

## JANUARY 3: WHAT WE ALREADY KNOW – GARDENS

All wealthy people had gardens and used them for luxuries like flowers, not practical food items. Many great festivals were in the public gardens – well, their afterparties were. Picnics were apparently a big deal. It extraordinary that gardens are so popular when space is at such a premium. There's no space to bury people, for example, and yet they conspicuously waste space on greenery. This is for spell components obviously. These are used in bocchero (which are scented clay balls), cosmetics, home remedies, food, confections, decorating, and religious observances. Houses of the rich are three sides of a square, with a garden in the middle. The roof (or altane) is used by women as their space. It may have plant containers. In Venetian houses servants live on the lowest floors, master bedrooms are on the upper floors. The altane is also used to bleach linen in the sun and perform weaving magic

## JANUARY 4: WHAT WE ALREADY KNOW – ST MARK

The Venetians steal the relics of Saint Mark from Egypt by smuggling them past customs inspectors under a load of pig carcasses. His relics are kept in a purpose-built chapel in the Piazza San Marco. The Doge specifically does not give his relics to the Church: they belong to the Doge. The Basilica of Saint Mark is legally the doge's personal chapel. The church in Venice has little land or money and so they can't fight this. There's also the fact that Venice is theoretically a duchy of the Roman Empire in the East and could go Orthodox without very much bother. Saint Mark's lion is the symbol of Venice. The statue of it in the Piazza is an Egyptian statue that's been repurposed. His saints day, April the 25th, is the Bocolla, a sort of national courtship day. This is apparently coincidence but it still prevents the Dominion from increasing on that day: too many hopes, rosebuds, and broken hearts

## JANUARY 5: WHAT WE ALREADY KNOW – FESTIVALS

Previous podcast episodes have discussed:  
\* the Festa Del Marie which is the marriage of mannequins  
\* the Boccola which is the rosebud/lovers festival  
\* the Marriage to the Sea, which to summarize some new information was oddly commanded by Pope Alexander III in 1177. This adds to our evidence that Alexander III was a weird weird sort of dude.

There is an annual athletic festival (shooting, wrestling, boxing etc) on the beach. Jews are buried on the beaches [that's an aside but it may prove use for later]. The annual athletic festival was training in archery and street fighting and revived after a lapse. It was originally started by a Teodora Selvo, the Rotting Princess. It causes factional rivalries between the eastern and western sides of the city. The two sides of the Castellani and Nicolotti. The Church of San Trovaso is their neutral territory for meetings.



Executions are always carried out between two pillars at the south end of the Piazza. This is to spite the architect that put them up. He was offered any reasonable fee, and he asked to put a gambling tent, the first gambling in Venice apparently, between them. The doge responded by hanging rotten corpses above his gambling den

**JANUARY 6:  
WHAT WE ALREADY KNOW – THE  
FRAGILII**

A trade school is called a fragilia, which has something to do with the whip. The dogaressa is the particular patroness of tradespeople. Early trades include: clockmakers; silversmiths; ivory carvers; makers of dowry chests (which are called aricelle); blacksmiths; fishers; saddlers; carriers by water; shepherds; butchers; masons; carpenters; cabinet makers; shoemakers; furriers; mazeri (silk merchants). After the conquest of Constantinople the fine arts kick off historically speaking. It's briefly debated if they should rule from Constantinople but the Doge decides not to.

In 1220 the dogaressa is Princess Costanza the first princess since Teodora Selvo. She's the daughter of Tancred of Sicily. Her husband is Pietro Ziani. The Ziani fortune was founded on an ancestor finding a golden statue of a cow in a ruined Temple of Juno. The private contract they have with the state was designed to favour the civic treasury but fortunately for them "as rich as a Ziani" is an aphorism, so they don't care.

There's a note on the side of this entry saying "Time to cheat. I've had some good ideas so I'm going to get them down but keep to daily writing and posting."

**JANUARY 7:  
WHAT WE ALREADY KNOW –  
GEOGRAPHY**

The islands have been extended artificially so maps of the coast are weirdly smooth. The largest island is divided into six administrative regions called sestieri. There are three on either side of the Grand Canal. In Ars Magica (1220) there is a single bridge over the canal called The Bridge by the Mint. By the time of Magonomia it's been rebuilt in stone and is called the Rialto.

The districts are:

Castello which is the one around the Arsenale. It's the seat of the Bishop of Olivio and this merges with the Patriarchate of Grado in the 15th Century to become the Patriarchate of Venice. This is based in the Basilica that the Doge owns . Cannaregio is where people land when they're coming from the mainland. It contains the Jewish ghetto, which we'll come back to in another episode.

San Marco is the ceremonial centre of Venice.

and then across the canal are

Saint Polo which is where the city markets are. it's the smallest but most densely populated of this sestieri.

Dorsoduro has the highest land in Venice and includes (administratively) the island of Guidecca which isn't, in some senses, part of Venice legally.

San Croce. My notes indicate that in the 13th century this belongs to a Hungarian nobleman. I need to check that one.

**JANUARY 8:  
THINGS WE ALREADY KNOW – THE  
OTHER ISLANDS**

The Venetian Lagoon is cut off from the sea by barrier islands. The two largest are the Lido and Palestrina. The towns of Malamocco and Palestrina are the largest on those two islands. Malamocco was probably the old capital, at least it was nearby. There is an island called Choggia which is far to the south. It's the customs house for Venetian trade.

Murano is the third island. It's really seven tied together by bridges. In 1291 all the glass makers are forced to move there. This makes an odd group of rich guys who make mirrors for a living. San Erasmo is mostly farmland and is governed from Murano.

The square, graveyard island is from the 19th century which is a pity. There was an earlier one, but that went missing. When an island goes missing I think it may be Shrouded Glen. The locals think it's caused by flooding. The northern parts of the lagoon are less busy and are a good spot for chapter houses.

Torcello was the centre of the area before it fell into decay and was superseded by Venice. It's a cathedral for the infernal. Howell says the angels look infernal or weird and I want to bring in the Walter De La Mare All Hallows idea here All Hallows is a short story where Satan is rebuilding a decrepit cathedral.

Burano is an island where lace is produced. The lace-making skills are based on the net-making skills of the fisher people. The design was first seen in a fragment of red coral. It's a centre for weaver magic



**JANUARY 9:  
THE INFERNAL ISLAND OF TORCELLO**

Hell runs Torcello. It pays the Magister Ludi souls as rent. There are rules and there are agreements about what demons are allowed to do. Masks help them get away with more than they're allowed to do.

Hell's Ambassador to Venice is Dona Soranza Quirini. She was the daughter of a doge, imprisoned by her father because her husband had rebelled against the state. She escaped her convent with the aid of Hell and now she's their grateful, loyal representative.

I need to write up a basic local demon.

People don't know what the Magister Ludi is doing with the souls. These are deliberately not souls hell hates losing. They're let out of Limbo (presumably) as his bondspople. I need to write that up as a character design kit.

There is a small infernal regio on the Piazza between the two pillars because of the gambling and executions which, in this project were mentioned a week ago but you heard a couple of minutes ago. There's got to be something about demons working with molten glass. The infernalists probably have a compagna, a club for young noblemen. They need a uniform. I don't know whether that should be crimson or black, both of which are pretty common colours in Venice but they need law

**JANUARY 10:  
COMPAGNIA**

Staley says there were 40 compagna but they may not have been simultaneous. The obvious one is the Compagnia de la Calza. This group arranged public spectacles for the Doge and Dogaressa. Calza are tights: they wear them. They're run by a prior who has a costume made of cloth of gold. Its other offices are two councillors, a treasurer, a chaplain, a painter, a sculptor, an architect, a poet, an analyst and a notary. I'm doing this in such detail because a covenant could pretend to be a compagna.

Each club has different stripes on its tights. They wear tight silk doublets. They have a badge for their club, slashed sleeves with puffy white shirt cloth coming through (that's linen). They wear short cloaks (which is cloth of gold or damask and fur lined). They have a small hat with a heron's feather and a jewel. They wear red, pointed shoes, a leather belt and pouches (which they call scarelle). Women were also members but they didn't wear tights. Instead they had the word Calza printed in gold thread on a visible petticoat. They wore gold hairnets.

The compagna ra the Caccio Del Tori which were public games on Maundy Thursday, the first Monday in September, Santa Marta's Day, and the first Monday in October. They ran them at the Lido and The Piazza

**JANUARY 11:  
THE BUCINTORO / THE BUCENTAURUS  
/ THE BUCENTAUR**

This is the state barge of the Doge. It's used in the annual Marriage to the Sea. The earliest reference to it is in 1252. There were a series of them – at least four. The name bucintoro means “lagoon ship of gold” however medieval Latin people mis-etymologized it as “bucentaurus”. Supposedly there's a man with the head of a bull on the prow as a figurehead. This is untrue: there are plenty of paintings of this ship, so we can be certain of that. I'm happy, however, to take an aquatic minotaur variant and use it in Mythic Venice.

I'm going to have the second-last bucintoro as the one being used, so that the player characters can be involved in the creation of the last version. It has two decks, 42 oars with four rowers per oar, and 40 sailors in addition to the rowers. There are removable canopies and a throne for the Doge at the back. The deck has sufficient seating for 80 passengers. It's decorated with sculptures of lions and the figurehead, which is of Justice although we would probably swap in a Minotaur because it is cool. The final bucintoro has sirens and hydras instead. We must also assume there are musicians and catering.

Eventually I need to get a deck plan of this done because it's too good as a setting for story events. Oil paintings exist for reference also there is a group trying to recreate the ship.



**JANUARY 12:  
WATER**

This is where I start going through Peter Ackroyd’s *Venice: Pure City* to remove useful ideas.

*“When you look down upon the water Venice seems to have no foundation except Reflections. Only reflections are visible. Venice and Venice’s image are inseparable. In truth there are two cities which exist only in the act of being seen.”*

I’d like to suggest that reflections are ways into regio levels in Serenissima. There is a season called the Acqua Alta – the flooding season – which can be used for the Cyclical Magic Virtue.

Water is collected from the roofs in campos into cistern wells. These use a sand filtration system. These areas used to be graveyards (gross and creepy). Anyway there are also two big public cisterns at the Ducal Palace and water carriers (who are women) roam the city from there.

Water works as a centre of public life and gossip. The wells are considered holy, particularly the carved wellheads that protect them. After floods cisterns may be contaminated with salt water and boats are dispatched to the Bottenigo and Brenta Rivers for supplies. If these are blocked, adventurers are needed. Floods are caused by demons and they are held at bay by prayer. In Venice floods come up from below. Water rises through the cobblestones. Canals turn green in warning of coming floods. Glass is metaphoric water  
d law

**JANUARY 13:  
THE BELLA FIGURA  
(THE HONOUR CULTURE)**

Venice is an honour culture, but your honour is based on how you appear to the public. This is the Bella Figura. Ackroyd notes that Venetian houses are decorated only on the canal side, and people entertained in public because they don’t want other people seeing the inside of their homes. You can be rich by being publicly profligate and miserly at home. You can be an upstanding citizen by maintaining public forms while being absolutely depraved at home. Gossip is currency in honour cultures.

I need to recheck “Why honor matters” by Tamler Sommers.

The Ars Magica Reputation rules need additions for gossip attacks. In Magonomia there’s already a social combat rule system, but it needs examples. Ackroyd later mentions Istrian limestone being used as a marble replacement, as a sort of metaphor for how a veneer or façade suffices.

One commentator in Ackroyd says Venetians are easy to con because they are trained to not look past the superficial layer. It’s rude to look and it puts everyone else’s illusion in danger. A person pointing out the artifice is saying everyone should step down a social level. Even wealthy people don’t do this because their money lets them buy props to cut a finer figure. You must be polite. Although there are social classes the patricians demand personal frugality (which they call mediocrity) in their number. It’s not like the British class system. It’s not like the American system of pretending everyone’s equal, but letting everyone work out who’s in charge using expensive status symbols. Masters must not be insolent to their servants. Masters must not strike their servants. There is freedom of belief by the Magonomia period, of a sort. You can’t speak against Venice, or its structure of government, but other than that you are free to be (for example) a Muslim, even during Wars with the Turks.

**JANUARY 14:  
THE CITY OF EXILES**

The Jewish Ghetto will need its own entry.

Venice welcomes immigrants from everywhere. They are used as cheap labour for industry and by the end of the Magonomia reign, Venice is the most densely populated city in Italy. Immigrants tend to live in streets by community and to be packed in. Sometimes ethnic groups dominate Industries. Marriage into mainstream society is common.

German merchants must live in a complex called the Fondaco Dei Tedeschi at the Rialto. It has two dining halls and 80 rooms. It may be a model for covenants.

The Flemish settled during Elizabeth’s reign.

The Greeks have their own quarter which enlarges after The Fourth Crusade.

The Armenians have a district and they have a school based at the monastery of San Lazzaro.

Albanians have a district.

Turkish merchants live at the Fondaco dei Turchi. It has an Arabic school.

Venice prides itself on being a refuge. Dispossessed nobles love to come to Venice. Religious outliers come to Venice (for example Anabaptists). Venice is theoretically Catholic but it resists Rome in ways which will follow in other episodes.

Ackroyd mentions there are about 6 000 beggars in Venice I’m not sure why I’ve recorded that separately on this page. Interestingly Venice has socialized medicine in the 16th century possibly before.



**JANUARY 15:  
THE GHETTO**

Jews were not allowed to live in Venice (the island) or work there. Note that Guidecca is outside this boundary. Early on it's called Spinalunga). Their graveyard is at the Lido.

They forbidden all professions except medicine and all trades except money lending. Again enforcement outside of Venice's main island is quite loose. The first ghetto opens on the 29th of March 1516 and it's in the foundry area around Cannaregio. Two adjoining neighbourhoods are soon added. As precursors the Germans and Turks were similarly forced to live in gated communities. Venice also has other national quarters in colonies.

The Jews were forced to live on a single island with a wall and drawbridge. They were allowed out at dawn and locked down at sundown. All windows in the ghetto faced inwards. Guards and two patrolling boats (that worked for the city) were paid for by the Jews through a tax. The area is quite poor and very overcrowded. Buildings reach eight stories in places. Jewish leaders run the place. It has non-Jewish inhabitants. It's renowned for gambling dens (but then again so is most of Venice). It also has a Jewish carnival on Purim.

It's a centre for rabbinical studies and Jewish publishing. Christians go there as tourists, particularly for the Purim plays, but also to attend synagogues. The state tried to ban this, but the reaction was so severe that they reversed the policy. Basically the ghetto is a valuable internal colony. Jews in danger in other kingdoms send their capital to relatives in Venice. Ackroyd states there were no pogroms I believe he's wrong: Staley states that the people tried to have one. The doge sent the military to protect the ghetto. Jews or not mobs of poor people aren't allowed to steal stuff from rich people in Venice.

Ackroyd does have a paragraph about cultural similarities between Jews and Venetians, but it seems like he's gilding the lily quite a bit. He mentions superstitions about statues coming to life on page 60 and I'm not sure why that note is on this page.

**JANUARY 16:  
THE SIGNORIA (THE STATE)**

Venice loves a bureaucracy. They have a census. They develop some of the statistical sciences to a degree not seen elsewhere, which means they may have faeries based on mathematics. They have a huge bureaucracy for pageants, particularly popular processions.

It is illegal to speak ill of Venice. Locals who do it are sent to prison. Immigrants are deported and assassins are possible, indeed we have documentary records of payments being made to assassins to silence people who've criticized Venice. Social rituals govern the city and its office bearers. They give spaces meaning.

This deep story may be the mechanism building the Glass Dogaresa, which is rumored to be an avatar of a being from Deep Arcadia. Is she Justice? Liberty? Venus No she's not. I shouldn't do these sorts of things. I'll get back to her on the 18th. All art is for presentation. Rhetoric is prized. Some of the most skilled diplomats in Europe come from Venice. Ambassadors are not just random nobles or royal favourites, the way they are in Elizabeth's Court.

From the 16th Century, Venice is nominally neutral in all external affairs. Her ambassadors, however, are ruthless intriguers for the good of Venice, which is their moral cynosure. At the end of their terms ambassadors write detailed reports to the senate about every possibly-interesting feature of the state they are sent . These are called relazioni and if they go missing that's an adventure hook. The nominal neutrality may tie into the loss to the League of Cambrai.

There's a note here telling me to check for a period text called "A survey of the signor of Venice" by James Howell in 1561.

**JANUARY 17:  
THE COUNCIL OF TEN AND PRISONS**

The Council of Ten started as a conspiracy, but became a government body. It meets daily and it's served by a network of spies and assassins. Some of these are the Signori de Notte, the Lords of the Night. Members wore black mantles. They examined the accused in the dark. They meet above a prison and torture chamber. They are called the Small Council or Black Inquisitors. There are lion-mouthed sculptures around the city in which people may post anonymous attacks. No cross-examination of witnesses or defendants, or discovery process exist.

The most notorious prison in Venice is under the Doge's Palace. Individual cells have names. The worst of these are the Wells, which flood occasionally. The stories about the prisons are exaggerated to a tremendous degree. I will mention particularly the artist Piranesi whose carceral etchings are entirely unreal, except perhaps in a regio. There's a separate force called the shirri who kidnap criminals and take them to jail. There is about one policeman for every 250 inhabitants in Venice. By way of comparison in the current U.S it's one policeman for 418 inhabitants. The oath of the Council of Ten is to "Swear, forswear and reveal not the secret."

The city archives are maintained by a man who cannot read or write. The Doge must not visit the city archives unless accompanied. Where they are is none of your business.

There is a special inn called the Golden Ship which is for sharing rumours and intelligence. Venice is a centre for rumours, particularly merchant news. Almanacs and fly sheets exist. The first newspaper in the world is created in Venice in the 17th century.

The Council of 10 have a code breaker as a secretary.

Interestingly Venice has socialized medicine in the 16th century possibly before.



**JANUARY 18:  
SPIES AND INFORMANTS**

They are everywhere. If you are a Venetian overseas it is your patriotic duty to be a spy. People in Venice expect spies. Every foreign household has at least one. If you do not have one it means people don't know that you are dangerous and interesting. You should have an adventure to get one.

Gondoliers and sex workers are notorious as spies. I will come back to this in the gondolas section. They are notorious spies except in matters of amour. If a gondolier mentions that a lady has been with a gentleman in his gondola, the other gondoliers will seize him and drown him as a matter of honour.

Even cardinals and bishops have a civic duty to act as spies in the private councils of the Vatican. The Vatican knows this. Merchants perform espionage as a matter of course. They are great story instigators: "I learned X, if we do Y, then Z."

The patron saint of spies is Joshua. His feast day is the 1st of September. He was one of the 12 agents Moses and the land of Caanan. Venice has counter agents and also freelance information brokers. Foreign ambassadors get in on this too, apparently. Meetings at the theatre (or opera after the game period) are the stereotypical things – so much that there's some sort of ban on foreigners renting theater boxes, to make it more challenging.

Accusations could be posted in the mouths of lion statues. Informers were paid if their accusations proved true. Accusers were never identified to their victims but denuncia had to be signed and there had to be two attestations of the informer's good character on the denunciation. Certain lion mouths are for specific infractions.

**JANUARY 19:  
THE QUEEN OF GLASS**

When I started this I decided I wouldn't do a twist ending, because it's an RPG supplement not a fiction piece, but apparently I can't help myself. On the first day I mentioned the plan to make a body for a creature from Deep Arcadia, and then I said "No! No! Look at my other hand!"

So no secrets...my idea and there will be other options for other campaigns...is that the Queen in Glass is Eve's youngest daughter Naamara, which you'll see I constantly mispronounce, or Norea in Greek, is an embodiment of wisdom that was tainted by the fall of humanity. She is sometimes called the Lesser Lilith. Noah wouldn't let her on the Ark so she set it on fire a couple of times and then was saved by an Angel (or some sort of emanation from God).

She comes from before the Realms divided not just before Faerie and Magic fission, but from before the Divine and the infernal were distinct. She's seen God, been a demon, embodies human wisdom, and is one of the deep Arcadian Powers.

For those confused, because they can't remember this from Bible school, this is Sethian Gnosticism. It was an early heresy which, among other things, said that Jesus wasn't actually fully human. Also in Sethian Gnosticism the snake's a good guy: he gets us out of the dead end in which God has placed us

**JANUARY 20:  
TRADE CONVOYS**

Venice's first Monopoly was in salt. All Adriatic colonial salt is sold from Venice to ensure a monopoly on prices. There are seven annual trading expeditions. The city owns galleys and rents them out. In addition there are thousands of ships in private trade. These expeditions start in 1315 and end in 1533, so PCs could start or restore the idea.

Think of the trade routes as two distinct rings: an eastern ring and a western ring. In the eastern ring the things that go out are cloth, silver, timber, and weapons. The things that come in are spices, incense, perfume, silk, and cotton. In the western ring the things that go out are spices, cotton, and finished cloths. The things that come in are wool, Flemish cloth, and African gold. Silver comes by land: it trickles down from Germany through the Alps.

The muda or trading expeditions are as follows  
Flanders which includes England, France and Aragon.  
Barbary which is North Africa, Grenada and Aragon.  
Trafego which is Tunis, Alexandria, Beirut and Modone.  
Syria: Cyprus, Beirut and Laiazzo (for cotton mostly).  
Egypt: which is Dalmatia, Modone, The Peloponnese, Crete, Cypress, Beirut, Tyre, Acre, Diametta, Alexandria (which is twice a year).  
Romania: this splits off the Egyptian one at Modone and it goes to Athens, Calcis, Thessalonica, Abydos and Constantinople and after 1318 they added Tana and Trebizond.



**JANUARY 21:  
REMINDER**

This is a reminder to myself to create a shape and material table for Venice, with things thrown into it and where they come from. The carpets from Alexandria and caviar from Caffa and so on. That's not complete so I'll just move on.

Venice has an annual luxury fair for 15 days each year, which attracts a heap of tourists. The finest goldsmiths in Europe are in Venice. New luxuries are vital to the national economy so technical advances occur. The Rialto needs an episode. So does the Merceria. The commercial zone is just one of hundreds of zones by trade. Every industry seems to have a physically-mappable spot. They have approved streets, approved quarters, and you can just make them up. You want some soap, go to the Street of the Soap Makers. Want a clock? Go to the Campo with the Clockmakers. Weird new trades emerge and these take over chunks of older areas. For example, net making arises from fishermen and lace arises from net-making. Factory line production of a sort happens in ship building glass making and in textiles.

**JANUARY 22:  
MARKETS**

The Rialto is the Central Market of Venice. It continually gets bigger, in part by clearing property and in part by repurposing residential buildings at its fringes. Canals next to it have improved. Its streets are widened. The centre is a small church called San Giacomo Del Rialto and more valuable goods are sold closer to the centre. Sex workers, taverns and rag men are at the edge the Merceria and runs off the Rialto towards the Piazza where the bankers do business. Streets and the Rialto are named by craft. The names change when the crafts move about. I need to look at the slave trade and how the PCs break it up.

Art is a trade commodity. It's easier in the sense that you can get the best pigments in the world here and you can learn powdered-gold painting techniques which aren't found anywhere else. Well not these set of techniques. A lot is made of stock figures and sizes and a lot of art is exported there are art dealers by the 15th century

**JANUARY 23:  
COLLECTORS**

Venetians, if rich, collect things as a form of display and conspicuous consumption. Initially they just grab interesting stuff. Collectors later specialize. This means treasures that PCs find are more valuable if they have the social contacts to know who collects the thing they've found. There's money to be made in brokers and forgers. Magicians seeking a thing to enchant, like an antique ring, may need to source it from a collector by trade or theft.

After people die their collections are often sold and broken up. This means suddenly there's a flood of [cool thing X] and this may cause a fashion. Collectors are rivals in honour cultures. You have to stick up for yourself. If some other person is causing you to lose face, even if it's in the tiny circle of people who collect antique brass plates, you have to stickup for yourself. In Ars Magica collections can be a source of study XP. Collections aren't necessarily static. They can be, but they can also be an investment or a source of gifts, kind of like fountain pen collectors. I've really got into fountain pens recently, part of the reason I'm doing this is an excuse to try out different inks and pens. They presumably have swap meets the same way pen dealers do. There are auctions there are trade shows. I think I should do the PG Woodhouse story with Bertie Wooster and the cow creamer and the trade for Anatole the peerless chef but in Venice

**JANUARY 24:  
NUNNERIES**

The number of dogaressas who retire to particular places can be treated as part of the Diana cult thing. Nuns were, in some contexts, freeish. They had servants, entertainers. wore what they liked , ignored dietary rules, some had lovers. The men in charge tried to tamp this all down, sometimes, but the hierarchy of the Church is weak in Venice and the abbesses are rich and very well connected.

San Zaccharia needs investigation and floor plans because too many dogaressas retire there. I need to get some general rules together here. In 1581 there are two and a half thousand nuns in Venice out of roughly 50 000 women. Over fifty percent of Patrician women become nuns. Ackroyd suggests this is because of dowry inflation. Abbesses in Venetian nunneries are unusual in that they are elected by the "mothers of advice", a sort of ruling council. Someone tried to shut down San Zachariah in 1514 and the nuns stoned them from the walls. Papal dispensation gives nuns holidays. Ackroyd also notes fist fights and a knife duel. Some nuns dressed as men during Carnival so they they could attend.



**JANUARY 25:**  
**THEATRES AND THEATRICALITY**

In Venice, imagine that in your public life, your PC is an improv actor surrounded by a giant LARP with the best sets ever. Everything is built for drama, Fate Aspect style. The Piazza is literally designed as a ceremonial stage. Jewish and Christian priests go to each other's churches and synagogues to study oratory. Church verandas and outside balconies and gondolas are all designed to be seen. If you break character you are demeaning everyone else and they have to stand up to you. Court testimony isn't "nothing but the facts", it is advocates going full drama and witnesses going full scene-chewing. Costumes are deliberately ostentatious. Women will choose up to 18 inches high until the government banned them, particularly for pregnant women. Workers wear role-related uniforms so much that you can tell how you're expected to treat people by how they dress. The most popular colour is turchino which is sky blue.

Rich people wear black as daily wear. Since black robes were the formal dress of many of the rich, many of the rich look intimidating. Ackroyd says that only the Doge wore gold, but he contradicts himself on the next page. He notes a sudden change in 1529. Before this men have long hair and only wear beards in mourning and after that they have short hair and they wear beards.

Opera is invented in Venice, but after the period. I may need to add it in. People who attend the Opera and the theatre are not silent. They are raucous, Shakespearean-style crowds. Venetians are great at stagecraft some of the big, painterly names you know from the Renaissance had a sideline in painting stage sets.

The idea I was working with on "The discovery of witches", with people who use special effects rather than actual magic, suits Venice even better than it does London. Scenery pieces are called apparati and this links to the word apparatus but it also links to the word apparition. Gondoliers get into theatres for free. Vendors sell halftime snacks. Comedy is popular and tragedy is not. Goldoni who was Venice's Shakespeare (actually he was more popular and prolific than Shakespeare) wrote city comedies and there is not much violence and there are no monologues

**JANUARY 26:**  
**THE SLIDE OUT OF DEMOCRACY**

At the foundation every island had an elected Tribune.

In 697 the first doge was elected by popular acclaim.

By the end of the 12th century the council of aristocrats chooses the doge and presents them to the people for acclimation.

By 1297 men may only sit in the Grand Council if their father or paternal grandfather sat in the council. It is therefore a hereditary aristocracy.

In 1423 Venice stops calling itself a commune and it's informally a plutocracy. The government is like a complicated clock. The general assembly passes basic laws. The Great Council, which is about 800 paid officers, picks judges, members of smaller councils and they also pick the Doge. The 40 are the immediate councillors of the Doge. The doge is the leader but he is tightly bound by a legal obligation called a promissione, which is a contract. It changes between doges. The promissione is sacred and it's between the state as represented by the Great Council and the doge. Dogadal promissiones become increasingly onerous. Most doges need permission to travel, read mail, meet foreigners, receive gifts, or discuss policy. No one bows to the doge. His title is Messier Doge and it is no higher. The Doge wields power obliquely through chairing the Ten, the Fortym the Council and through public audiences twice a week. The doge is not in charge except in a ceremonial sense.

Here's how you get a new doge (brace yourself). The youngest member of the Signoria prays at St Marks and goes outside. There he grabs the first boy he finds. The boy draws nomination slips from an urn at the Ducal Palace. The Great Council elects 30 members. From that 30 they elect nine. That nine then pick 40, each of whom needs at least seven nominations. The 40 is reduced by ballot to 12. The 12 pick 20. The 20 elect 9. The 9 elect 45. The 45 elect 11. The 11 elect 41, and then the 41 elect the Doge. The average doge is aged 72 at the point he gets the job. The point of all of this is to make it very difficult to fix the election for your personal faction.

Social classes: the popolari make up about 90 of the population. These are the guild laborers and the sub guild laborers. Six percent of the population are citidanni These are people whose fathers and grandfathers were born in Venice. Four percent of the aristocracy are called the patricians. To be a citizen your father and grandfather can not have been laborers: they have to have been bureaucrats. Patricians are trained in the bow, sword, and lance. They are also trained to be ship captains. There are jousts in the Palazzo from 1242.

**JANUARY 27:**  
**THE ISLANDS OF SORROW**

Some of the smaller islands are dedicated to civic purposes.

San Servolo is an asylum for men. San Clemente is an asylum for women. suckers and soloists of fever Hospital. Isola della Grazia is a fever hospital. Sacca Sensola is a consumption hospital. Poveglia is a leprosarium.

Constanziaca disappeared during the Ars Magica game period so that could be hidden by Shrouded Glen. It was originally a funeral Island.

Each island has a bell tower and some sort of square, except the leprosarium and the graveyard.



**JANUARY 28:  
VENETIAN CRETE**

Venetian Crete is designed as a clone of Venice. It has a Duke and they rename the public square as the Palazzo St Marco. Does this create a local Magister Ludi?

They invented plantation slavery. Venetian conquests are sent a governor for civil affairs and a captain for military affairs. Crete's odd because it's so far away that the Venetians give land for military service to create a garrison. These lands export all of their surplus to Venice. Other conquests keep their traditions.

In structure Venice reminds me of America in the Pacific. If they can't get what they want they don't invade, but every so often the cost and value calculation clicks over, then they do invade. When I say "America in the Pacific" I mean during the Admiral Perry "Let's invade Japan for Commerce and Trade" era, and the invasion of Hawaii.

Once the Venetians have land they can't be isolationists anymore, because they need alliances to stabilize their distant territories. Again they can use money (and they do). The next step is mercenaries. A fleet is only sent if trade is threatened and bribery is not enough.

The vassals of Venice call Venice "the illustrious mistress."

**JANUARY 29:  
FOREIGN ENEMIES**

The Genoese traders are rivals. Genoese diplomats and Venetians counter each other. The Siege of Chioggia is significant to Ars Magica players and historical for Magonomia players. There is presumably some sort of magical Divine or infernal counterbalance to the Magister Ludi. There are naval clashes between the two. They are rivals for external adventures. Genoa is called "La Superba" which means "the Proud".

The Ottoman Empire takes over as the chief rival after 1452, when they take Constantinople. The Venetians try to trade but the Turks want to expand. The other Italians think that the Venetians will eventually win, so they sit out the Turco-Venetian War. Unexpectedly the Venetians lose. In the ensuing piece they lose the Black Sea and the Aegean Islands. The venetians keep Crete and Corfu, but lose some colonies that they've had for 250 years.

In 1509 Venice loses all of its Italian holdings in 15 days to the League of Cambrai. the Venetians fight back and by 1517 have pretty much all of that back (well all of the Italian mainland territory). In some cases the Italians preferred the rule of the Venetians to the rule of the French or Germans.

The territories at the start of the Magonomia period are Crete, Corfu, Cyprus, the Po River Valley, Ravenna, and Remini. There is no further expansion: Venetians now try to balance the French, Habsburgs and Turks as the point of their foreign affairs.

In 1527 unpaid mercenary troops sack Rome and the artists flee to Venice. The public areas of Venice are restored on the Roman model. There is much talk of Venice being the "New Rome" as the last free vestige of the Roman Empire. Things get really, really theatrical really fast.

In 1570 the Turks take Cyprus from the Venetians. The West gives no help. In 1571 the Holy League decides that enough is enough and they have the last galley-based naval battle. They defeat the Turks at Lepanto. From here on the Arsenale, which is still building galleys, is building anachronisms. They want to take back Cyprus but the Spanish and the Poopes won't go for it. They keep Crete for another hundred years but don't get Cyprus back. Ackroyd says that at this point Venice's Imperial power is replaced by "its power to dazzle" which is a faerie vitality engine in Ars Magica.

**JANUARY 30: HOW BIG IS THE  
VENETIAN NAVY?**

In 1423 it has 35 galleys, 300 roundships, and 3 000 merchant ships. Venice could maintain 40 000 troops. The fleet above requires 36 000 sailors, which is about 25 percent of Venice's population. Crews are professional in the Ars Magica period and conscripted in the Magonomia period. The social status of sailors dives by the end of the Elizabethan reign as crews are a form of carceral service. Their diet is deliberately designed to supplement the sanguinary humour. Transmissible illness is a common. Captains are appointed by the Senate from young men of the upper crust. Being a naval commander is necessary to, eventually, gaining other forms of higher office.

The flute is supported by the Arsenal. The Arsenal is eventually 60 Acres of workshops surrounded by walls and towers. It employs somewhere between six and sixteen thousand men. Local people are called Arsenalotti and they are the ceremonial bodyguards of the Doge. The Arsenal is an early assembly line. It is very quick in emergencies. It turns out 30 galleys in 10 days once. It once made a galley in two hours while the visiting king had lunch.

**JANUARY 31:  
THE ARMY**

In the middle of the 16th century the army raised is 20 000, plus militias, and at the end of the century it's twice that. No Venetian may be a general. No Venetian may command more than 25 men. Covenants need to be careful. Generals are always foreigners so that no faction can take the city by force. Every general needs to pass his orders by two patrician supervisors who are appointed by the Senate. This is not a swift command structure. These people are called conditteri which means "contracted men". Generous, prompt payment (including palaces and land in the Empire) is the policy. This is to lessen the possibility that the other side could bribe them into changing sides. I need to write basic soldier kit.



# Who? by Maurice Level

**When Maurice Lavelle is discussed people oversimplify by saying he's France's answer to Edgar Allan Poe. He's similar to Poe in that he has atmospheric, spooky stories. In the same way that most of Poe's stories aren't suitable for Games From Folktales because they eventually come down to a rational explanation, similarly most of Level's don't quite work for us. Here's one exception that was released into the public domain through LibriVox. Thanks to Ben Tucker, who was the reader, and the production team.**

That day I had worked very late. So late that when it length I raised my eyes from my desk, I found twilight had invaded my study. For some minutes I sat perfectly still, my brain in the dull condition that follows a big mental effort, and looked round mechanically. Everything was grey and formless in the half-light, except where reflections from the last rays of the setting sun made little patches of brightness on table or mirror or picture.

One must have fallen with particular strength on a skull placed on the top of a bookcase, for, looking up, I saw it clearly enough to distinguish every detail from the point of the cheek-bones to the brutal angle of the jaw. As everything else became swallowed up in the fast-deepening shadow, it seemed to me that slowly but surely this head quickened into life and became covered with flesh; lips came down over the teeth, eyes filled the orbits, and soon, by some strange illusion, I had before me, as if suspended in the darkness, a face that was looking at me.

It was watching me fixedly, the mouth set in a mocking smile. It was not one of those vague floating images one sees in hallucinations : this face appeared so real that for a second I was tempted to stretch out my hand to touch it. Immediately the cheeks dissolved, the orbits emptied, a slight mist enveloped it and I saw nothing but a skull like all other skulls. I lit my lamp and went on with my writing. Twice or thrice I raised my eyes to the place where I had seen the apparition; then the momentary excitement it had caused died away, and my head bent over my desk, I forgot all about it.

Now, a few days later, as I was going out of my house, near my door I passed a young man who drew aside to allow me to cross the road. I bowed. He did the same and went on. But the face was familiar, and believing it was someone I knew, I turned to look after him, imagining he might have stopped. He had not, but I stood watching him till he disappeared among the passers-by. "A mistake on my part," I thought, but to my surprise, I kept on asking myself: "Where the devil have I seen him? .. In the drawing-room! . . . At the hospital? . . In my consulting-room?" . I concluded that he must resemble someone else and dismissed him from my thoughts. Or tried to — for in spite of myself I continued to endeavor to place him. I certainly knew the head well: its deeply-set eyes, hard, steady gaze, clean-shaven lip, straight mouth and square jaw

made it too characteristic to be either forgotten or mistaken for that of another person. Where on earth had I seen it?

During the whole evening it obsessed me, coming between me and what I looked at, giving me that feeling of irritation caused by not being able to remember a name or some melody that haunts you. And this persisted for a long time, for weeks. One day I saw my Unknown again in the street. As I approached I almost stared at him. On his part he looked at me with the same frigid expression, with the cold look I knew so well; but he betrayed no sign of knowing me, did not hesitate a second, and avoided me by turning sharply to the right. My conclusion was the inevitable one. If I really knew him he must also know me, and meeting me face to face for the second time, would have shown it by a glance or movement as if to stop: there had been nothing of this: I was therefore the victim of an illusion. And I forgot all about him.

Some time after this, late one afternoon, a man was shown into my consulting room. He was hardly over the threshold when, much surprised, I rose to greet him: it was my Unknown. And once again the likeness that had so obsessed me was so striking that, mechanically, I walked towards him with outstretched hand as to an acquaintance. He showed surprise, and I almost stammered as I pointed to a chair, saying:

"Excuse me, but you are so extraordinarily like..."

Under his cold, intent gaze, I left my sentence unfinished, saying instead: "What can I do for you!"

Sitting quietly with his two hands stretched on the arm of his chair, he did not reply immediately. I was beginning once more to cudgel my brains: "Where have I seen him?" when suddenly a thought, or rather an extraordinary vision flashed into my mind, a vision amazing enough almost to surprise me into crying aloud: "I know."

At last I had succeeded in locating him — I had recognized on the shoulders of this living man the head that had appeared to me one evening in the darkness above my bookcase! It was not a resemblance: it was identically the same face. The coincidence was sufficiently curious to distract my attention from what he was saying, and he had been talking for some moments before I began to follow his case:



"I don't think I was ever normal. When I was quite young I began to feel different from other boys, to have sudden desires to rush away, to hide myself, to be alone; while at other times I longed passionately for society, for wild excitements that would make me forget myself. Sometimes, for little or no reason, I had sudden fits of temper that almost choked me . . . They sent me to the sea, to the mountains : nothing did me any good. At the present time I start at the slightest sound; a very bright light hurts me like a pain; and though all my organs are sound – I have been to several doctors – the whole of my body aches. Even if I sleep, I wake in the morning as tired as if I had been dissipating all night. Frequently a feeling of agony of mind for which there is no real cause makes my brain giddy; I can't sleep, or if I do, I have horrible nightmares "

"Do you drink?"

"I have a horror of wine, of every kind of alcohol; I drink nothing but water. But I haven't yet told you the worst . ." (he hesitated) "what it is that is really grave in my condition If anyone contradicts me even about a trifle, for a look, a gesture, a nothing, a sort of fury takes possession of me. I am careful never to carry any weapon in case I might be unable to resist using it. It seems to me that at these times my own will leaves me, as if that of someone else takes its place; it drives me on, I cease to be my own master, and when I come back to myself I can't remember anything – except that I wanted to murder someone! If one of these crises takes me when I am at home, I can shut myself up safely in my own room, but if, as sometimes happens, I am out, I know nothing more till I find myself perhaps sitting on a bench alone at night in some strange place. Then, remembering the fury I felt and coupling it with the lassitude that has followed and the impossibility of recollecting what I have done, I begin to wonder if I have committed some crime. I rush home and shut myself up, my heart beats violently whenever the bell rings, and I have no peace of mind till some days have gone by and I feel sure that once again I have been saved from myself. You will understand, Doctor, that this state of things can't go on. I shall lose not only my health, but my reason. What am I to do?"

"There's nothing to be really alarmed about," I replied. "These are only the symptoms of a nervous condition that will yield to treatment. Let us try to find its cause. Do you work very hard? – No – Is

there anything in your life that is likely to cause great nerve-strain? – No – Any excesses ? – None – You can tell a doctor anything."

His tone was convincing as he replied: "I have told you the truth."

"Let us look for other reasons. Have you any brothers or sisters ? – No – Your mother is alive? – Yes – She is probably very highly-strung? – Not at all – And your father? Is he strong, too?"

In a very low voice he replied: "My father is dead."

"He died young?"

"Yes, I was just two years old."

"Do you know what he died of?"

This question seemed to affect him deeply, for he grew very pale. At this moment more than at any other I was struck by the extraordinary resemblance between him and the apparition. After a pause, he replied: "Yes and that is why my condition terrifies me. I know what my father died of: my father was guillotined."

Ah, how I regretted having pushed my investigations so far! I tried to glide off to something else; but we now understood each other. Endeavoring to speak naturally and hopefully, I gave him some general advice and some kind of prescription; then I told him that he must have confidence in himself, and be sure to come back to me soon. After I had gone to the door with him I said to my servant: "I will not see any one else to-day."

I was not in a state to listen to or examine a sick person. My mind was confused: the apparition. the resemblance . . . this confession .. I sat down and tried to collect my thoughts, but in spite of myself my eyes kept fixing themselves on the skull. I looked in vain for the strange resemblance that had for so long puzzled me I saw nothing but its mysterious mask. But I was unable to keep my gaze from it; the head drew me towards it . . I ended by leaving my chair and going to lift it down.

Then it was that, raising it in my hands, I became aware of an extraordinary thing that had till now escaped my notice. The lower part of the back of the head was marked by a broad and sharp groove, an unmistakeable gash such as would be made by the violent stroke of an axe, such as is made on the necks of those who are

executed by the instinctive retreat of the body at the supreme moment from the knife of the guillotine.

It may have been nothing but coincidence.

Perhaps it could be explained by saying that I had already seen, without noticing, my consultant in the street, and that, unknowingly, the face thus subconsciously registered in my memory had come before me when I was looking at the skull the night of the apparition . . Perhaps perhaps? . But there are mysteries, you know, that it is wiser not to try to solve.



# The Vampyre by Vasile Alecsandri

This is your Monster of the Month, and this month I'm cheating. The creature is a vampire and the reader is Newgate Novelist, who's one of my favourites from LibriVox. I'm including it because this is one of the few English sources I can find for the work of Vasile Alecsandri, who was a Romanian folklorist in the 19th century. Think of the Grimm brothers, except instead of Germany, further east. He can give us a genuine feel of the vampires of the Transylvanian Tribunal.

The Vampire, Strigoi, from the Romanian of Vasili Aleksandri, translated by William B. Kingston, from the English Illustrated magazine, December 1886, read for LibriVox.org by Newgatenovelist.

Near the cliff's sharp edge, on high  
Standing out against the sky,  
Dost thou see a ruined cross  
Weatherstained, o'ergrown by moss,  
Gloomy, desolate, forsaken,  
By unnumbered tempests shaken?

Not a blade of grass grows nigh it,  
Not a peasant lingers by it.  
E'en the sombre bird of night  
Shuns it in her darksome flight,  
Startled by the piteous groan  
That arises from the stone.

All around, on starless nights,  
Myriad hosts of livid lights  
Flicker fretfully, revealing  
At its foot a phantom, kneeling  
Whilst it jabbars dismal plaints,  
Cursing God and all the saints.

Tardy traveller, beware  
Of that spectre gibbering there;  
Close your eyes, and urge your steed  
To the utmost of his speed;—  
For beneath that cross, I ween,  
Lies a Vampyre's corpse obscene!

Though the night is black and cold  
Love's found story, often told,  
Floats in whispers through the air,  
Stalwart youth and maiden fair  
Seal sweet vows of ardent passion  
With their lips, in lovers' fashion.

"Restless, pale, a shape I see  
Hov'ring nigh; what may it be?  
'Tis a charger, white as snow,  
Pacing slowly to and fro  
Like a sentry. As he turns  
Haughtily the sword he spurns.

"Leave me not, beloved, tonight!  
Stay with me till morning's light!"  
Weeping, thus besought the maid;  
'Love, my soul is sore afraid!  
Brave not the dread Vampyre's power,  
Mightiest at this mystic hour!"

Not a word he spake, but prest  
The sobbing maiden to his breast;  
Kissed her lips and cheeks and eyes  
Heedless of her tears and sighs;  
Waved his hand, with gesture gay,  
Mounted—smiled—and rode away.

We rides across the dusky plain  
Tearing along with might and main  
Like some wild storm-fiend, in his flight  
Nursed on the ebony breast of Night?  
'Tis he, who left her in her need—  
Her lover, on his milk-white steed!

The blast in all its savage force  
Strives to o'erthrow the gallant horse  
That snorts defiance to his foe  
And struggles onward. See! below  
The causeway, 'long the river-side  
A thousand flutt'ring flamelets glide!

Now they approach, and now recede,  
Still followed by the panting steed;  
He nears the ruined cross! A crash,  
A piteous cry, a heavy splash,  
And in the rocky river-bed  
Rider and horse lie crushed and dead.

Then from those dismal depths arise  
Blaspheming yells and strident cries  
Re-echoing through the murky air  
And, like a serpent from its lair,  
Brandishing high a blood-stained glaive  
The Vampyre rises from his grave!



# Mythic Venice: February

This year I'm taking part in #Dungeon23 which is a challenge where people write a small chunk of a dungeon each day. There is a variant, called #City23, which I'm using to collect ideas for a Mythic Venice supplement.

The January episode is already up and none of you told me to stop so this will be the February episode.

## FEBRUARY 1: THE INEVITABLE GONDOLA EPISODE

Gondolas appear in the documentary record at the end of the 12th century according to Ackroyd which is earlier than some of my preliminary reading. Game period gondolas are shorter and wider than modern ones and they are symmetrical. Modern ones are slightly asymmetrical to improve manoeuvrability. They have cabins, some of which are removable. They have livery but I'm not sure that's required. Noble houses have multiple but there are public ones for hire. All ornamentation is forbidden on gondolas in 1562 as part of the Venetian sanctuary lords.

During Elizabeth's reign there are 10,000 gondolas in the city.

Gondoliers must be discreet. This is odd in a city of spies but if a gondolier denounces a lady to her husband the other gondoliers drown him. They are trusted with sensitive letters.

After 20 years of service, a gondola is too warped to use and is incinerated at Murano to heat the glassworks. This is a link for sympathetic magic.

## FEBRUARY 2: SUMPTUARY LAWS

The law is believed to be ancient and fair but changes weekly. [Adventure idea, the Traditionalist and Transitionalist Guernicii come to study this paradox and create a third faction.] Venetian law is codified at the end of the 12th century but custom may override written law. Venetian trials are pragmatic, swift and efficient. Lawyerly tricks are despised. Venetian legislation is a constant, basically futile process. Laws may not be enforced, traditions that are unsupported are retrospectively buttressed by law.

Ackroyd mentions sumptuary law and makes the novel point that its purpose is to stop the poor loathing the rich enough to rebel. Feasts were circumscribed because they brought together powerful people who might conspire against the state. Slaves and cooks were paid to inform on those who had feasts.

Sumptuary laws were often ignored but could annoy magi. The law is saying that you can't wear more than two rings or you're not allowed to wear anything "made of X" might prohibit the mundane shape of a magic item. As an adventure idea, the characters may want to change the law to allow them to carry openly a magic item imported from another state.

Sumptuary laws are fiercest when the state is in trouble. After losses against the League of Cambrai, the state cracks down very hard, no swanning about being rich and carefree when the midden is hitting the windmill.

## FEBRUARY 3: THE METAPHORICAL PERSONIFICATION OF VENICE AS A BODY FOR NOREA.

Norea, as mentioned in the January 18th episode, is the spirit from Deep Faerie that the Master of Games is drawing forth. Venetian artists love to compare their city to a body. What bits are which varies but they get really complicated about it, down to the circulatory system and digestive tract. Venice has a desire to grow, express its quintessential self, reproduce, as in Crete and Corfu, and it has a sort of nervous system and reflexive reactions. Henry James says that Venice notices your affection. This is the opposite of what I expected, which was more of a "New York as a woman" by Suzanne Vega thing. He thought Venice mild, interesting and sad.

This is the body of Norea, not the Queen In Glass. That might be important, maybe it isn't. Maybe that's just an interface for dealing with humans. The civic plan of 1557 is the city's final physical border. After that it concentrates on internal complexification. A covenant could be a parish about a campo, or all of them could be stuck in a single place, much as the German merchants have stuck in a single place. Does Norea have different moods in her different suburbs? Ackroyd says that the stones are the soul of Venice. Does that mean that Norea inhabits them as her anchor? He also notes that Venice has eclectic architecture, not solemn or menacing.

Venice's basic social unit is the family. The family can be fined for transgressions of members. Businesses are run in families. The senate is a meeting of aristocratic families. It's common for only one patrician male in each generation to marry, and for unmarried men to lead their estates to their nephews. There's a bee metaphor here that Ackroyd runs with that I'll skip.

Venice runs orphanages and public health care.



**FEBRUARY 4:  
EDUCATION.**

There is no university in Venice, although there is one in Padua, which is a possession so loyal that after the League of Cambrai take it, it rebels to restore Venetian rule. There are grammar schools in every its sestieri and there are academies, public and private tutors, and the most favoured subjects are very practical. Venetian clubs and societies specialise in all kinds of things, so formal training in obscure fields of learning is possible.

Ackroyd says that the Renaissance came late to Venice because it was so interested in practical things. He seems not in this to factor in technological progress or artistic progress. His story about Galileo is that he's a lecturer in mass at Padua, in vents the telescope, and he pitches it as a device to detect enemy ships at a distance. For this he's made professor of astronomy for life and paid an ungodly salary.

The epicentre of European printing is Venice. Paper comes from Venetian territory near Lake Grado. Staley says that the dogaressa is the special patroness of printing. Around 1500, there are around 200 print shops in Venice. Venice finds a way to commodify learning as books. One of the early printers ran a sort of printer academy, his name was Aldous Manotitis.

Venetians may only study at Padua. None of this weird foreign learning for a Venetian. Walsingham, our constant interest in Maginomia, and probably your character's boss in some versions of the game, studied at Padua. Padua has all kinds of cool stuff seriously. We should do some sort of setting here. It was the secular centre of learning in Europe, according to Ackroyd. This city does not support literature. Its best known writers do memoirs (Marco Polo, Cassanova). It is the home of "rags to riches" as a genre, with fairy tales like Puss in Boots.

Venetians use their own language when legislating in public speaking, but use Greek, then French, then Tuscan, as their language of learning. I'll just note that Tuscan is the direct ancestor of modern Italian. Venetian is intelligible, but has an accent. For example, they use the letter Z far more often.

**FEBRUARY 5:  
COLOURS**

Ackroyd goes into the dyeing trade a bit on pages 222 and 223. I can reuse some of that for the colourmen alchemy stuff I was working on for London. [See also Color by Findlay and Chromatopia by Coles.] Ackroyd mentions some familiar sources of colour: orpment, realgar, vermillion, lead-white, lapis lazuli. He mentions, but doesn't name, ultramarine. He also mentions saffron from the east, but seems again to be coy about the slave plantations that the Venetians had there. Venetian red is a new one on me, Veneto is a mineral, and it's used to colour the blood of Christ.

Colourmen, which I mentioned before, are people who make paint and dye. Before about 1500, artists used to make their own colours. Later the colourmen are linked to the apothecaries and cosmeticians, that is, they're a branch of alchemy. Cleopatra wrote a treatise on cosmetic alchemy, but I'm not sure if it's known in period, secret society stuff maybe.

[Added later, Venice is also a centre of marquetry, glass tesserae, which come from Murano, are needed in the shape and material table.]

**FEBRUARY 6:  
CARNIVAL**

Ackroyd says that Carnival dates from the end of the 11th century. Carnival's web page gives 1162. Originally it was 40 days long, eventually it became six months. It encouraged tourism, made the people less likely to rebel, and made Venice seem rich and powerful. It makes works for musicians, theatrical performance, and pyrotechnicians. Lots of sex work, theoretically, and gambling, certainly. There's a group here called the tolomazi, who act as guides, translators, and money changers all in one. That could be a useful contact for the player characters, or a player character option.

Masks are first mentioned in 1268. Gambling while masked is forbidden. By the 18th century everyone is masked during carnival, except money changers. Masked balls were open to everyone with a mask. You were expected not to break character, a full description of the main masks and characters will occur later in the sequence of episodes. The state doesn't own a casino, but it does license casinos. There is a city lottery however, the prize for 1590 was 100 000 crowns.

**FEBRUARY 7:  
SPORTS**

A popular sport in Venice is the Labour of Hercules, which is making him in pyramids. Racquets, fencing, horse and boat racing, and balloon (which is a sort of football) were popular. They were always competitive and they were always prizes.

One sport that's of interest to us is the War of Fists, which is people fighting over bridges. There are two great tribes in this, the Castellani, who are from the Arsenal and the Nicolotti who are the fisherfolk. For the War of Fists, you can use helmets, shields and rattan clubs, and the idea is to take and hold the bridge. The bridge is over a canal by the way, so if you get knocked off you just land in the water to the amusement of everyone nearby. This seems to post-date Ars Magica and predate Magononia.



**FEBRUARY 8:  
ART**

Art is produced in workshops using a sort of assembly line. There's no suggestion that a single artist should do all of the work. Painters are a trade guild and there's no real difference between portrait artists and commercial painters because famous artists are commercial painters. Many have side-lines doing set dressing for the theatre or for the state. There's one painter, the state painter, in charge of professional banners, state processional properties, and maintaining official portraits.

Venetian artists are known for quick, improvised work. There are basically two schools of thought which Ackroyd calls the Opulent and Narrative. Two fires in the 1570s see a heap of public art in the Ducal Palace replaced. A fresh history is published to explain the new art. History is refurbished. Vasari, who's turned up as a villain before in the podcast because he hated Cellini, was annoyed that Venetians don't sketch out before they paint. Paintings are not meant to be accurate historically. They're not very experimental. They are meant to look good to the purchases and their friends.

The Venetians were huge fans of cartography as decoration and arguably they were the most accurate cartographers in the world. There are some brilliant period maps which I should steal as decoration for the final project.

Music is very important in the state. All guilds have songs. Most popular songs already have dancers attached to them or will quickly develop them. All festivals have music. This is because music, the harmonious, choral activity is seen as a symbol of the harmony of the state. You aren't allowed to applaud in church. Dancing is popular and schools exist.

Singers do have a guild. Female orphanages trained talented singing girls as choirs. Some are so good they could make listeners faint, weep, or propose marriage. This sounds like a hedge tradition.

Music is for sale as printed sheets and this is invented in Venice, centre of trade and commodification of art. Instrument fabrication for export is also a specialty of Venice, particularly and strangely church organs.

**FEBRUARY 9:  
SEX WORK**

Ackroyd's numbers are weird. He says 10,000 out of a population of 100,000 were sex workers. Female sex workers. So that's 20% of women and no men at all. So I must have misread what he was saying. He suggests that dowry inflation makes it so that only one child of each patrician family can be a bride, so lots of horny, single patrician men and lots of nuns are about.

In addition to basic sex work, there's an upper-class, geisha sort of deal called the "honest courtesan". Coryat suggests that you should carry moly, a herb, so that they can't charm you. This is clever, witty, and political because moly is the herb that Hermes tells Odysseus to eat so that Circe cannot charm him. It is, I believe, poisonous, so that's probably not a good idea. Sex work is a licensed profession. They have a guild.

In Venice, homosexuality is illegal and that doesn't work at all. Ackroyd suggests that good cruising spots are certain churches, gyms, apothecaries and pastry makers. Honestly, Ackroyd would know: he did a lengthy discussion of gay culture in London from the Romans forward, which at some point we should mine for Magonomia, because it's brilliant. I'm probably not the author for that though.

He then discusses cicisbeo. These are male escorts, arguably not sex workers, that women are expected to have with them in the 16th century. Some cicisbei lived in the household and many were gay, according to Ackroyd. They were for public show and husbands were expected to insist on their presence. They acted as a sort of chaperone to maintain the honour of the wife.

Ackroyd notes that prostitutes and nuns tended to get on really well as women outside the civic structure. I've seen that noted in several places.

**FEBRUARY 10:  
PLACES I NEED PLANS FOR**

The Doge's Palace  
The Basilica  
St Mark's Square

The gibbet leaves the square in 1505 in the real world, in 1550, Jacopo San Savino remodels the square to be more classical and he builds the library and the mint.

I need to check Thomas Coryat's book. I need to make sure the Church of San Germanio is in the plans. It's pulled down by Napoleon, which is why it's not in the modern plane.

I need plans for San Zacharia.

Ruskin has the Basilica of Torcello as the centre for the Infernal, which I am happy to steal.

German merchant palace, that's the Fondaco de Tadeshi. It could be used as a version of a Hermetic quarter. It's a current day shopping centre, so there are maps online.

And then there's also another note of Debarbari's woodcut, A View of Venice, which I should use as art.



**FEBRUARY 11:  
THE CHURCH**

Bishops are appointed by the Senate. Bishops who receive orders from the Pope cross check them with the Council of Ten.

St Mark, or possibly St Mary is the top saint.

Ackroyd draws the link to Orthodox caesaropapism in Constantinople. Sermons were checked by bureaucrats.

Protestants are accepted by the government. Jews are accepted by the government.

Venice has more miracles per square mile than any comparable space. They see the city itself as an act of God, and so they don't care about the popes. Venetian cardinals are expected to report back on the secret councils of the Vatican.

They are very attached to relics, and they import a heap of them, icons too.

Saints who were stolen for Venice wanted to be stolen, or they would have stopped it using miracles.

Many religious houses are named after Old Testament figures.

St Francis lobs in during the 1220s. He's on his way to try and convert the Sultan. This is where the Franciscans have their church.

Children taunt Jesuits in the street.

The Inquisition arrives in 1571, and uniquely the Venetians force changes so that there are six judges, three ecclesiastic and three secular. Sentences are comparatively light the usual sentence for witchcraft was the pillory.

Property owners of a parish elect their priests. There are about 600, of whom 75% are not of the patrician class.

In the 17th century the Pope excommunicates Venice, and in response priests were forbidden to read the papal bull, and threatened with hanging if they closed their churches. Basically, the people didn't care.

**FEBRUARY 12:  
ACKROYD'S NOTES ON VENETIAN  
WITCHCRAFT**

Venetians are very superstitious. This is an extension of folk Catholicism. Their witchcraft is focused on wealth, good fortune, and healing.

The devil is big on contracts in Venice, and he often accepts coins or salt for minor things.

Gamblers use charms a lot.

Ackroyd mentions a love potion made of sage and a woman's own menstrual blood and mixed with the food of the man who they wish to charm.

There are lots of ghosts. Second sight is only found in those not properly baptized. Unfinished business is usually a hidden treasure, and there are haunted canals and houses.

I've cross-referenced [Marina's Wail](#) in Staley, which was a very early Venice episode, which is a banshee variant.

**FEBRUARY 13:  
THE SPANISH PLOT**

In the real world this happened in 1618, but for Magonomia you could put it earlier. On the 18th of May two anonymous bodies were found on the public gibbet. They are, by rumour, French. No official says anything, which of itself is unusual.

People notice 500 French merchants have gone missing. The rumour spreads that the Council of Ten drowned them all. The story circulates that the Spanish and French plus some mercenaries had formed a pact to set fires simultaneously at the arsenal, mint, and ducal palace. This may not have been true.

This might have been a crowd hysteria with the same sort of deadly effect.

This isn't in my notes, but I'll mention it now. There is a particular point in the canals outside of Giudecca where they drop dead people so that they wash out with the tide. Well, executed, dead people.

**FEBRUARY 14:  
ACKROYD'S NOTES ON LAW**

Ackroyd mentions a "Guild of death".

Executions are solemn, and public. People are also strangled privately in the cells under the Ducal Palace and their bodies are dumped in the Canale Orfano.

Sample punishments:  
Forging coins: Burned alive.  
Senators singing blasphemy songs: Tongues ripped out and their hands cut off.  
Friar who impregnated 15 nuns: Burned at stake.  
Priest accused of treason: Burned alive upside down.

It's not true in the real world that the Council of Ten had a band of assassins on retainer. But in the game world, it's true, and it's not just them.

Insulting Venice can get you killed or have your tongue ripped out.

Property crime is more important than violence to Venetians. For theft, you're hanged, for rape, you get sent to prison for eight days, and then a fine equal to the dowry.

Patricians are the most violent class. All men carry knives.

There is a special police force called the Lords of the Night who keep peace at night time. Even today Venice is quieter than other cities at night. There's less traffic and fewer pedestrians.

I don't have this mentioned here, but in another book, it was mentioned that the Lords of the Night were also responsible for gate-crashing gay clubs.



**FEBRUARY 15:**  
**CATERINA SFORZA**

Having broken down Venice: Pure City for RPG hooks, the next book is Daughters of Alchemy by Meredith K. Ray.

I feel like I have made a mistake there. Yes, I have. During my notes, I keep swapping between Kay and Ray, but yes, it's Meredith K. Ray.

It leads out by talking about Caterina Sforza and her book Experimenti. Sforza is the maternal great-grandmother of Catherine de Medici, the sorceress and rival queen in the Magonomia setting. Experimenti, or Experiments in English, is a Book of Secrets. That is, it's part of a genre of writing of the time.

Caterina swaps secrets with people. She's part of a Republic of Letters. See the Catholic wizard in the Tower of London in the basic Maginomia rules or, for Ars Magica players, this is an epistle network.

Experimenti isn't a philosophical book. There's none of that mucking about trying to get to immortality that you get in other books. The recipes are intensely practical in effect, and about 30 are alchemical in the sense that they try and transform metal. A few are in Latin, rather than Italian, a few have their methods encoded using an included key.

Sforza uses colour as her marker for process completion. The style of alchemy, therefore, needs glass vessels. She includes medicines, antidotes, poisons, money-making things, cosmetics, and confectionery. She has an apothecary in the city of Forli. She also bought ingredients from nunneries, which sold pharmacological supplies. These were leftovers from their gardens. Caterina and all her kids have botanic gardens, for materials. She may have her own laboratory in that garden. Ray calls this her officina, so if you don't want to call your laboratory a lab, Ars Magica or Magonomia, office seems a perfectly period-effective alternative.

The Florentine nunnery where she was educated had a retail pharmacy and it sent her fruit, flowers, and so on. It also has a famous scriptorium.

“Pills, unguents, liquors, elixirs, and possibly cosmetics.” – from Nuns as pharmacists by Sharon Stroschia.

Cosmetics are part of alchemy from the very beginning. There's a recipe for a triple distillation in Sforza. The first distillation removes freckles, the second distillation cures fistulas, and the third distillation cuts through iron.

Alchemical secrets are state secrets, because they destroy and disrupt economies.

The next chapter in Kay is about Isabella Cortese. I've not previously seen this work in English. Sforza dies in 1509

**FEBRUARY 16:**  
**VENETIAN TREACLE**

The earliest panacea, was made by Mithridates VI of Pontus, who tested venoms and antidotes on his prisoners. A variant was used by the Romans. Galen had one, but it takes years to make. These curatives were called “theriacs”.

The main ingredient of theriac, in the Venetian version, is vipers caught in the hills around Padua, where the university is. In English, the word theriac becomes “treacle”, and the best comes from Venice. It's also where the word “apothecary” comes from. The London Guild of Physicians inspected apothecary shops for cleanliness and medicinal purity.

There is a law about treacle quality, the Pharmacy Wares, Drugs, and Stuffs Act in 1540. Eventually, only one guy was licensed to make it, during Elizabeth's reign, and that was a man called William Besse. Seems like a valuable monopoly. In 1669, Moyse Charas deliberately published the recipe he used, so that he could damage the Venetian monopoly on theriacs.

Theriac making includes fermenting herbs, so it takes months. It's strongest after being stored for six years, but it lasts for decades.

**FEBRUARY 17**  
**SPEZIALE**

Speziale are apothecaries.. Socially below a physician. They stock “not just ingredients from medicinal prescriptions but also with foods, sugar, candy, oils, pigments, papers and ink” and that's a quote from Meredith Kay.

Howell says that in Venice physicians hang out in apothecary shops, but put a copper plaque above the door. If you want a physician, you go to the apothecary. Jews are allowed to be doctors and bankers and not much else so there are a lot of Jews in medicine.

Venice is a centre for supplies much as it is a centre for spices. Courts have purchasing factors here. The name “speziale” literally means “spicers” but in the extended sense of pharmacist / compounding apothecary / cosmetician / ink and dye seller / stationer. Padua University has one on staff.

Camilla Erculiani was an apothecary in Padua, a writer and a salonniere. She thought that the deluge was caused by human extreme longevity because human earth was not returning. It allowed the waters to be comparatively strong to rise up.

Speziale were social spaces where news was exchanged so they were important for spying. They were also surveilled by the Inquisition, but recall that in Venice the Inquisition is cowed by the civil government. Camilla Erculiani also thought science was a way for women to prove their worth and to demand fairness.



**FEBRUARY 18:**  
**EPISTOLARY NETWORKS**

Here’s a quote from Ray.

*"Recipes performed different functions, depending on the circumstance. By supplying a valuable secret to someone in a higher social position, one might earn status or financial reward. Those already established among the highest levels of society circulated recipes among themselves to reciprocate favours or gifts, establish goodwill and maintain networks of communication, and cement their own position and reputation through access to valuable and even clandestine knowledge."*

And another quote:

*"Recipes were indeed a form of currency used to reciprocate important political, intelligence and counsel."*

A few other quick notes from this section of Daughters of Alchemy:

- \* secrecy can’t be a solitary pursuit, it needs insiders and outsiders.
- \* Epistolary novels are considered a feminine genre.
- \* A female participant is called a letterata and a male participant is called a letterato.

Sometimes the correspondent is fake. It lets the author talk in two viewpoints and shields them if the “other” says something heretical because reporting a conversation isn’t the same as holding heretical beliefs. It lets you head off objections by having the “other” voice them. Some collections are written for the receiver, others for an audience and when they are collected for publication, serious editing might occur. It gives your ideas reflected glory if the “other” you are writing to was famous and lets you show off your classical learning as the “other” and your experimental credentials as you. Then I make a note about Griffin and Sabine, which you should check out if you haven’t read, and it lets the “other” praise you so you get to big note yourself in front of the reader.

**FEBRUARY 19:**  
**THE FASHION FOR SECRETS**

A secret or experiment is valuable “not as something unknown but as something proven”. It is not the rarity or weirdness that gives it its value, it’s that it works and it has provenance (that is, it comes from a celebrity noble or a doctor). Books of Secrets are popular amongst the moneyed class and are part of a movement towards vernacular Italian literature, the vulgari, and they are targeted at women.

Books of Secrets demystify despite their name. Women are the target audience because they contain practical advice on their interests. These books are effective and entertaining but don’t teach underlying philosophical theory.

Collecting recipes is linked to the Venetian habit of collecting art, luxury items, and natural curiosities.

The occult/secret is integral to the marketing of the books. Books in Venetian and Tuscan are easier to sell to women because they are rarely taught Latin.

**FEBRUARY 20:**  
**ANATOMY OF A SECRET**

This is according to Cardano (1562). A secret may be discovered in six ways. These are Ars Magica experience sources,

- \* learned insight
- \* comparison of similar things
- \* from teachers
- \* by travelling the world,
- \* by having enough money to do research at home
- \* through good fortune.

Secrets have three levels, great mediocre and trivial. The examples given are a cure for the plague, a cure for the fever, and a cure for rashes.

Secrets can be perfect, which means 100% effective or rare, not effective most of the time due to complexity.

They may vary in difficulty and cost.

Good secrets have seven attributes, they are authentic, useful, morally sound, have easily acquired ingredients, are relatively quick, are not labour-intensive, and have a noble goal.

Recipes and secrets are related. The format (ingredients > methods > tools) isn’t similar coincidentally. Most look like early cookbooks, because books of secrets assume that you know certain terms and techniques, much as cookbooks do. So a good secret is

- \* easy to use
- \* fast
- \* cheap
- \* dependable
- \* profitable
- \* moral.

It is not necessarily secret in the sense of being occluded.

**FEBRUARY 21:**  
**BASICS OF PRACTICE FROM ISABELLA DE CORTESE**

- \* Work is practice, do not waste time on the puzzles of philosophers.
- \* Use recipes which are direct, none of this medieval mystical rubbish.
- \* Work alone.
- \* Use strong glass or terracotta vessels.
- \* Become familiar with basic materials.
- \* Watch your file
- \* Keep tongs nearby.
- \* Do not discuss the Art.
- \* Keep people out of your lab.
- \* Acquire a faithful helper.
- \* If successful, give thanks to God and give to the poor.

A faithful helper is defined later as experienced, loyal, and discreet.

The arrangements of secrets in the four volumes shows that stuff we take for granted is miraculous in her time. For example soap balls, that removal stains are in with making gold and dyes, not over in the beauty waters and cosmetics. This is because they renew expensive fabric,



**FEBRUARY 22:  
MODERATA DE FONTE (MODESTA  
POZZO)**

Again, this is Ray. This section is about the Querelle des femmes”, which is a sort of rolling, many-sided debate about the role of women. It’s not a lot of use for this in the Mythic Venice setting, because women being equally capable is baked in. Enemies from the “women suck” or “cosmetics are cursed”. lines of argument are boring.

One take that I saw, which I thought was interesting and I hadn’t read before, is that cosmetics are longevity potions. By staving off death they stave off Salvation. It’s insane, but it’s new insane.

Fonte’s earliest work is an incomplete chason in the Orlando style called Floridoro. Its characters are Risamante: who’s like Bradmentine except less interested in men

Circetta: a literal “Maga”. She’s not a witch, she’s a magus with the female form. This links into Ars Magica, where we’re used “maga” for magi who are female for real-world decades. It’s good to find it in the source documents.

Risamante’s impetus is getting back her inheritance from her sister, and in her happy ending she has a daughter, Salarisa, who is the progenatrix of the Medicis.

Circetta is an amalgam of Alcina, the princess of Cathay, who does illusions, Logistilla and Melissa (who is the daughter of Cersei and Ulysses). She is virginal and wise.

The book is dedicated to Bianca Cappello, and Francesco de Medici, who are alchemical practitioners. Then I notice that Circetta means “Little Cersei”. Then I debate whether Bianca Cappello needs an episode because she’s a Venetian practitioner of alchemy, who marries into the Medicis in 1579.

Circetta can turn men into trees. She’s kept eternally young in a regio by her mother’s “curse” that works suspiciously like a blessing. She can’t leave until a man as good as Ulysses comes to rescue her. She’s described as brave, severe, courteous, kind, honest, and marvellously wise. She commands the beasts of the forest, and she has three handmaidens, who appear to be alchemical assistants, among other things.

Circe’s lore is in the books of the island, and Circetta’s arts are the good parts. Circetta’s a powerful natural magician.

**FEBRUARY 23:  
CIRCETTA CONTINUED**

Check: Fonte’s “Worth of women”. This is only 16 cantos long.

Circetta can use her magic to  
\* cover every city in the world in fog  
\* raise mountains  
\* build a temple  
\* change men into swine, bulls and bears  
She can only do this because it’s closer to the true nature of the victims, that is, she has a method to unlock heartbeasts.

Her palace has astrological statues. Astrology is blamed for women loving men despite their moral deficits. She puts true friendship above true love.

Ferrara was damaged by earthquakes in 1570 to 1574, causing a lot of learned speculation about the cause of earthquakes. This book makes really quite extreme claims to Ars Magica’s Law of Essential Nature, stating that magic cannot alter men’s morals or nature.

Similarly, women seem doomed to slavery by their love and compassion, which are not alterable. Fonte gives seeking alchemical gold as a masculine practice, which would surprise many of the practitioners already named in these notes. She then cops out by saying that the sweat of a man’s brow is transmuted to gold by his own work, and that is an alchemy that never fails.

**FEBRUARY 24:  
HAPPY ARCADIA**

Marinella, has a maga called Ernia in her book “Enrico.”

Has two magi and a maga in “Happy Arcadia”. Check also Ersilla in the same book.

Then there’s a family tree. There’s a magus called Ciberione. He can travel the world in a few hours via his chariot pulled by four black courses. He has an apprentice called Erimeno.

Erimeno  
\* can talk to all creatures  
\* has a garden of multigrafted trees via natural magic  
\* has a collection in a grotto, including gems, roots, sstones, herbs  
\* a camera obscura  
\* a hydraulic organ  
\* an automaton of a shepherd that puts real shepherds into the uncanny valley, so they think it’s \* motivated by demons  
\* and a substance called Rabiano, which conveys the air of respectability to the wearer. There’s \* a note here that that might be radium. Hmm, seems strange, I don’t think that was discovered at the time.

It says he was trained on the highest mountains, which in Ars Magica probably means in a big magical aura.

Ciberione has a daughter called Erato. She’s a natural magician, astronomer, and prophetess. She has a fiery visage, which I presume is Piercing Gaze virtue. She has a companion called Armilla. She is chaste, virginal, and Diana-like. She has an exceptional mind. Erato is called the “new Hypatia.”. She has a garden above the clouds, and thinks the Milky Way is made of stars, not the afflatus of the earth.



## FEBRUARY 25: ENRICO

Enrico is a historical epic set around the Fourth Crusade. It contains a maga called Erina. She is wise, chased, rules an island of women (a hundred beautiful virgins). She greets a noble, male shipwreck victim. She has a study companion called Altea.

Erinaq's teacher was her father, Fileno, who learned from his father, who learned from the Magus Armano. Her father was an astrologer, so his lab is up another mountain. He is very perceptive of first causes and only teaches good magic to his daughter. He counsels his daughter in a dream, force ghost style, because he is dead, that the shipwrecked knight is related to her and was wrecked on the island via a divine providence. If he returns to the war, he will die. Still, he must be allowed free choice in the matter.

Erina takes a knight on a tour of the world, giving the reader a primer on Venetian ideas of geography. He leaves to join the Venetian assault on Constantinople and dies. They travel by a flying chariot, led by a winged lion. Note the winged lion is an important Venetian symbol.

## FEBRUARY 26: PADUA UNIVERSITY

Good grief, this is short. This needs to be done far better. Founded by Venice in 1545. There are a mix of students and scholars from all across Europe. It has alumni all over the place, Walsingham for example.

It has the first botanical gardens, it says here, I doubt that's true, because I know that the French had them before. First in where I wonder? It's a centre for study of medicine and anatomy, It exports alchemical practices via alumni to many courts. Padua has a humanist curriculum, focusing on classical languages, history, theology, astronomy and mathematics.

## FEBRUARY 27: THE PREDICTED FLOODS OF 1524.

I've already used this in Magonomia, but in Venice the idea that a rare conjunction in Pisces means global deluge is a huge, huge deal. This is first published in 1522 and this leads to a flurry of what's called Deluvian literature. Oddly the Church's position that global flooding would require a miracle because Aristotle says that water doesn't spontaneously flood the land is more reassuring than contemporary science, which is full of "Yeah, but maybe..." ideas. Italy does get floods in that decade, likely because of deforestation.

There's a note there that we should do something for its 500th anniversary. And a note to myself that I have not worked on the Saeftinghe Flotilla idea. It's not at all relevant to this but I'll just quickly mention it. There's a flood in Holland in 1570 that does enormous damage and the English send relief fleet. So that could be useful for a story idea.

## FEBRUARY 28: MARGHERITA SARRROCHI

Calidora is a maga in the poem Scanderbeide by Margherita Sarrochi.

Sarrochi was a correspondent with Galileo and asked him for editing assistance and help to translating her writing into paid patronage. Her book was published in a second edition with the Calidora plotline removed, which is suspicious. In real life that was probably to make the war story the sharper focus. Calidora forms a link Circetta the earlier Erina, This could be actual in-game. The editions are in 1606 and 1623 so the acceleration that is caused by the Master of Games is needed.

Calidora wears a sun and moon diadem and is presented as an amalgam of male and female, which are science and love as elements. She is slighted in love by her husband and heads out to the forest to make a love potion. There's some good flavour text here.

"At the appointed hour in a lonely spot she sprinkles amber, myrrh, and other choice scents over a fire of ebony that burns with no smoke at all...She lets down her golden locks into the wind and removing the hearts from three live doves with a single knife, she writes [his] name upon the page in her own blood." She has a wax image in him as well. That quote is from Ray.

She could be a Tytalus because she is said to revel in public enmities by her detractors.

That brings us to the end of February and to the end of my notes from "Daughters of Alchemy". Next month we start filling out what you would find in a spices shop by going through all of the colours and their sources and what mystical associations they had in local folklore.



# Crimson Flowers

**This week a brief episode containing an infernal regione. The story that's following is called Crimson Flowers and it's read into the public domain by Ben Tucker through LibriVox. Thanks to Ben and his production team.**

John Carew was working in his garden. Far away over the distant hilltops, the dying Sun hung like a huge paper lantern on an invisible wire. Against this background the small, bent figure of the old man resembled a spider weaving its web before the open gate.

Leaning on the hedge I spoke to him. "So you are at work again, Mr Carew. How are your flowers progressing?"

Dropping his shovel nervously he turned his yellow, shrunken face toward me. From the midst of the roses it looked like a misplaced sunflower. "So you have been watching me!" he cried, in a shrill quavering voice. "That is good, for people to watch me at work! It may teach them other things than gardening."

"What, for instance?"

"Why life itself! The mind is a garden, my friend. What lies hidden there must spring to life. These flowers are crimson thoughts. See how quickly they grow into deeds, if I do not cut them each day? So must all men do if they would live in the sunlight. They must cut the crimson thoughts out of their gardens even as I!"

Once more he bent over his flowers, picking up the shears with grim satisfaction. He began cutting off their languid, drooping heads.

"But this must be a very wicked garden." I said. "What is buried here?"

"Ah!" said he, "You would like to know that, eh? What a man my son was. You can have no idea! Such a sly one. Such a cruel one. Such a bloodthirsty one! Crimson thoughts were in his head continually, but now they grow nicely in my garden. He ruined me. He tortured me. He made my head revolve on my shoulders. Yes actually revolve, like a wheel! But now I have him here and he supports me in my old age. Each day I sell his thoughts – his evil crimson thoughts. What revenge that is. He lies there grinding his teeth because of it, and he can do nothing! Nothing! When the hangman was through with him, they gave me what was left for my garden. But have a thought lady! Have a crimson thought for a remembrance!"

So saying he rose and hobbled toward me with a single flower in his hand. A flower that glowed like a handful of the bloody sunset in the West.



# The Diary of Mr Poynter by M. R. James

**This is your monster of the month. It's from "The Diary of Mr Poynter" pointer by M. R. James. There have been a series of James episodes previously on the podcast, and I left this monster out because it wasn't suitably challenging for magi in the Ars Magica role-playing game. Now that I'm writing for Magonomia, which has a lower power setting, this has become perhaps, suitable.**

**The reader for us today is David Wales, who I believe invented LibriVox. I don't think we've had David on before.**

The sale-room of an old and famous firm of book auctioneers in London is, of course, a great meeting-place for collectors, librarians, and dealers: not only when an auction is in progress, but perhaps even more notably when books that are coming on for sale are upon view. It was in such a sale-room that the remarkable series of events began which were detailed to me not many months ago by the person whom they principally affected—namely, Mr. James Denton, M.A., F.S.A., etc., etc., sometime of Trinity Hall, now, or lately, of Rendcomb Manor in the county of Warwick.

He, on a certain spring day in a recent year, was in London for a few days upon business connected principally with the furnishing of the house which he had just finished building at Rendcomb. It may be a disappointment to you to learn that Rendcomb Manor was new; that I cannot help. There had, no doubt, been an old house; but it was not remarkable for beauty or interest. Even had it been, neither beauty nor interest would have enabled it to resist the disastrous fire which about a couple of years before the date of my story had razed it to the ground. I am glad to say that all that was most valuable in it had been saved, and that it was fully insured. So that it was with a comparatively light heart that Mr. Denton was able to face the task of building a new and considerably more convenient dwelling for himself and his aunt who constituted his whole ménage.

Being in London, with time on his hands, and not far from the sale-room at which I have obscurely hinted, Mr. Denton thought that he would spend an hour there upon the chance of finding, among that portion of the famous Thomas collection of MSS., which he knew to be then on view, something bearing upon the history or topography of his part of Warwickshire.

He turned in accordingly, purchased a catalogue and ascended to the sale-room, where, as usual, the books were disposed in cases and some laid out upon the long tables. At the shelves, or sitting about at the tables, were figures, many of whom were familiar to him. He exchanged nods and greetings with several, and then settled down to examine his catalogue and note likely items. He had made good progress through about two hundred of the five hundred lots—every now and then rising to take a volume from the shelf and give it a cursory glance—when a hand was laid on his shoulder, and he looked up. His interrupter

was one of those intelligent men with a pointed beard and a flannel shirt, of whom the last quarter of the nineteenth century was, it seems to me, very prolific.

It is no part of my plan to repeat the whole conversation which ensued between the two. I must content myself with stating that it largely referred to common acquaintances, e.g., to the nephew of Mr. Denton's friend who had recently married and settled in Chelsea, to the sister-in-law of Mr. Denton's friend who had been seriously indisposed, but was now better, and to a piece of china which Mr. Denton's friend had purchased some months before at a price much below its true value. From which you will rightly infer that the conversation was rather in the nature of a monologue. In due time, however, the friend bethought himself that Mr. Denton was there for a purpose, and said he, "What are you looking out for in particular? I don't think there's much in this lot." "Why, I thought there might be some Warwickshire collections, but I don't see anything under Warwick in the catalogue." "No, apparently not," said the friend. "All the same, I believe I noticed something like a Warwickshire diary. What was the name again? Drayton? Potter? Painter—either a P or a D, I feel sure." He turned over the leaves quickly. "Yes, here it is. Poynter. Lot 486. That might interest you. There are the books, I think: out on the table. Someone has been looking at them. Well, I must be getting on. Good-bye—you'll look us up, won't you? Couldn't you come this afternoon? we've got a little music about four. Well, then, when you're next in town." He went off. Mr. Denton looked at his watch and found to his confusion that he could spare no more than a moment before retrieving his luggage and going for the train. The moment was just enough to show him that there were four largish volumes of the diary—that it concerned the years about 1710, and that there seemed to be a good many insertions in it of various kinds. It seemed quite worth while to leave a commission of five and twenty pounds for it, and this he was able to do, for his usual agent entered the room as he was on the point of leaving it.

That evening he rejoined his aunt at their temporary abode, which was a small dower-house not many hundred yards from the Manor. On the following morning the two resumed a discussion that had now lasted for some weeks as to the



equipment of the new house. Mr. Denton laid before his relative a statement of the results of his visit to town—particulars of carpets, of chairs, of wardrobes, and of bedroom china. “Yes, dear,” said his aunt, “but I don’t see any chintzes here. Did you go to—?”

Mr. Denton stamped on the floor (where else, indeed, could he have stamped?). “Oh dear, oh dear,” he said, “the one thing I missed. I am sorry. The fact is I was on my way there and I happened to be passing Robins’s.”

His aunt threw up her hands. “Robins’s! Then the next thing will be another parcel of horrible old books at some outrageous price. I do think, James, when I am taking all this trouble for you, you might contrive to remember the one or two things which I specially begged you to see after. It’s not as if I was asking it for myself. I don’t know whether you think I get any pleasure out of it, but if so I can assure you it’s very much the reverse. The thought and worry and trouble I have over it you have no idea of, and you have simply to go to the shops and order the things.”

Mr. Denton interposed a moan of penitence. “Oh, aunt—”

“Yes, that’s all very well, dear, and I don’t want to speak sharply, but you must know how very annoying it is: particularly as it delays the whole of our business for I can’t tell how long: here is Wednesday—the Simpsons come to-morrow, and you can’t leave them. Then on Saturday we have friends, as you know, coming for tennis. Yes, indeed, you spoke of asking them yourself, but, of course, I had to write the notes, and it is ridiculous, James, to look like that. We must occasionally be civil to our neighbours: you wouldn’t like to have it said we were perfect bears. What was I saying? Well, anyhow it comes to this, that it must be Thursday in next week at least, before you can go to town again, and until we have decided upon the chintzes it is impossible to settle upon one single other thing.”

Mr. Denton ventured to suggest that as the paint and wallpapers had been dealt with, this was too severe a view: but this his aunt was not prepared to admit at the moment. Nor, indeed, was there any proposition he could have advanced which she would have found herself able to accept. However, as the day went on, she receded a little from this position: examined with lessening disfavour the

samples and price lists submitted by her nephew, and even in some cases gave a qualified approval to his choice.

As for him, he was naturally somewhat dashed by the consciousness of duty unfulfilled, but more so by the prospect of a lawn-tennis party, which, though an inevitable evil in August, he had thought there was no occasion to fear in May. But he was to some extent cheered by the arrival on the Friday morning of an intimation that he had secured at the price of £12 10s. the four volumes of Poynter’s manuscript diary, and still more by the arrival on the next morning of the diary itself.

The necessity of taking Mr. and Mrs. Simpson for a drive in the car on Saturday morning and of attending to his neighbours and guests that afternoon prevented him from doing more than open the parcel until the party had retired to bed on the Saturday night. It was then that he made certain of the fact, which he had before only suspected, that he had indeed acquired the diary of Mr. William Poynter, Squire of Acrington (about four miles from his own parish)—that same Poynter who was for a time a member of the circle of Oxford antiquaries, the centre of which was Thomas Hearne, and with whom Hearne seems ultimately to have quarrelled—a not uncommon episode in the career of that excellent man. As is the case with Hearne’s own collections, the diary of Poynter contained a good many notes from printed books, descriptions of coins and other antiquities that had been brought to his notice, and drafts of letters on these subjects, besides the chronicle of everyday events. The description in the sale-catalogue had given Mr. Denton no idea of the amount of interest which seemed to lie in the book, and he sat up reading in the first of the four volumes until a reprehensibly late hour.

On the Sunday morning, after church, his aunt came into the study and was diverted from what she had been going to say to him by the sight of the four brown leather quartos on the table. “What are these?” she said suspiciously. “New, aren’t they? Oh! are these the things that made you forget my chintzes? I thought so. Disgusting. What did you give for them, I should like to know? Over Ten Pounds? James, it is really sinful. Well, if you have money to throw away on this kind of thing, there can be no reason why you should not subscribe—and subscribe handsomely—to my anti-Vivisection League. There is not, indeed, James, and I shall be very seriously annoyed if—. Who did you say wrote

them? Old Mr. Poynter, of Acrington? Well, of course, there is some interest in getting together old papers about this neighbourhood. But Ten Pounds!” She picked up one of the volumes—not that which her nephew had been reading—and opened it at random, dashing it to the floor the next instant with a cry of disgust as an earwig fell from between the pages.

Mr. Denton picked it up with a smothered expletive and said, “Poor book! I think you’re rather hard on Mr. Poynter.”

“Was I, my dear? I beg his pardon, but you know I cannot abide those horrid creatures. Let me see if I’ve done any mischief.”

“No, I think all’s well: but look here what you’ve opened him on.”

“Dear me, yes, to be sure! how very interesting. Do unpin it, James, and let me look at it.”

It was a piece of patterned stuff about the size of the quarto page, to which it was fastened by an old-fashioned pin. James detached it and handed it to his aunt, carefully replacing the pin in the paper.

Now, I do not know exactly what the fabric was; but it had a design printed upon it, which completely fascinated Miss Denton. She went into raptures over it, held it against the wall, made James do the same, that she might retire to contemplate it from a distance: then pored over it at close quarters, and ended her examination by expressing in the warmest terms her appreciation of the taste of the ancient Mr. Poynter who had had the happy idea of preserving this sample in his diary.

“It is a most charming pattern,” she said, “and remarkable too. Look, James, how delightfully the lines ripple. It reminds one of hair, very much, doesn’t it? And then these knots of ribbon at intervals. They give just the relief of colour that is wanted. I wonder—”

“I was going to say,” said James with deference, “I wonder if it would cost much to have it copied for our curtains.”

“Copied? how could you have it copied, James?”

“Well, I don’t know the details, but I suppose that is a printed pattern, and that you could have a block cut from it in wood or metal.”



"Now, really, that is a capital idea, James. I am almost inclined to be glad that you were so—that you forgot the chintzes on Wednesday. At any rate, I'll promise to forgive and forget if you get this lovely old thing copied. No one will have anything in the least like it, and mind, James, we won't allow it to be sold. Now I must go, and I've totally forgotten what it was I came in to say: never mind, it'll keep."

After his aunt had gone James Denton devoted a few minutes to examining the pattern more closely than he had yet had a chance of doing. He was puzzled to think why it should have struck Miss Denton so forcibly. It seemed to him not specially remarkable or pretty. No doubt it was suitable enough for a curtain pattern: it ran in vertical bands, and there was some indication that these were intended to converge at the top. She was right, too, in thinking that these main bands resembled rippling—almost curling—tresses of hair. Well, the main thing was to find out by means of trade directories, or otherwise, what firm would undertake the reproduction of an old pattern of this kind. Not to delay the reader over this portion of the story, a list of likely names was made out, and Mr. Denton fixed a day for calling on them, or some of them, with his sample.

The first two visits which he paid were unsuccessful: but there is luck in odd numbers. The firm in Bermondsey which was third on his list was accustomed to handling this line. The evidence they were able to produce justified their being entrusted with the job. "Our Mr. Cattell" took a fervent personal interest in it. "It's 'eartrending, isn't it, sir," he said, "to picture the quantity of reelly lovely medeevial stuff of this kind that lays wellnigh unnoticed in many of our residential country 'ouses: much of it in peril, I take it, of being cast aside as so much rubbish. What is it Shakespeare says—unconsidered trifles. Ah, I often say he 'as a word for us all, sir. I say Shakespeare, but I'm well aware all don't 'old with me there—I 'ad something of an upset the other day when a gentleman came in—a titled man, too, he was, and I think he told me he'd wrote on the topic, and I 'appened to cite out something about 'Ercules and the painted cloth. Dear me, you never see such a pother. But as to this, what you've kindly confided to us, it's a piece of work we shall take a reel enthusiasm in achieving it out to the very best of our ability. What man 'as done, as I was observing only a

few weeks back to another esteemed client, man can do, and in three to four weeks' time, all being well, we shall 'ope to lay before you evidence to that effect, sir. Take the address, Mr. 'Iggins, if you please."

Such was the general drift of Mr. Cattell's observations on the occasion of his first interview with Mr. Denton. About a month later, being advised that some samples were ready for his inspection, Mr. Denton met him again, and had, it seems, reason to be satisfied with the faithfulness of the reproduction of the design. It had been finished off at the top in accordance with the indication I mentioned, so that the vertical bands joined. But something still needed to be done in the way of matching the colour of the original. Mr. Cattell had suggestions of a technical kind to offer, with which I need not trouble you. He had also views as to the general desirability of the pattern which were vaguely adverse. "You say you don't wish this to be supplied excepting to personal friends equipped with a authorization from yourself, sir. It shall be done. I quite understand your wish to keep it exclusive: lends a catchit, does it not, to the suite? What's every man's, it's been said, is no man's."

"Do you think it would be popular if it were generally obtainable?" asked Mr. Denton.

"I 'ardly think it, sir," said Cattell, pensively clasping his beard. "I 'ardly think it. Not popular: it wasn't popular with the man that cut the block, was it, Mr. 'Iggins?"

"Did he find it a difficult job?"

"He'd no call to do so, sir; but the fact is that the artistic temperament—and our men are artists, sir, every one of them—true artists as much as many that the world styles by that term—it's apt to take some strange 'ardly accountable likes or dislikes, and here was an example. The twice or thrice that I went to inspect his progress: language I could understand, for that's 'abitual to him, but reel distaste for what I should call a dainty enough thing, I did not, nor am I now able to fathom. It seemed," said Mr. Cattell, looking narrowly upon Mr. Denton, "as if the man scented something almost Hevil in the design."

"Indeed? did he tell you so? I can't say I see anything sinister in it myself."

"Neether can I, sir. In fact I said as much. 'Come, Gatwick,' I said, 'what's to do here? What's the reason of your prejudice—for I can call it no more than that?' But, no! no explanation was forthcoming. And I was

merely reduced, as I am now, to a shrug of the shoulders, and a cui bono. However, here it is," and with that the technical side of the question came to the front again.

The matching of the colours for the background, the hem, and the knots of ribbon was by far the longest part of the business, and necessitated many sendings to and fro of the original pattern and of new samples. During part of August and September, too, the Dentons were away from the Manor. So that it was not until October was well in that a sufficient quantity of the stuff had been manufactured to furnish curtains for the three or four bedrooms which were to be fitted up with it.

On the feast of Simon and Jude the aunt and nephew returned from a short visit to find all completed, and their satisfaction at the general effect was great. The new curtains, in particular, agreed to admiration with their surroundings. When Mr. Denton was dressing for dinner, and took stock of his room, in which there was a large amount of the chintz displayed, he congratulated himself over and over again on the luck which had first made him forget his aunt's commission and had then put into his hands this extremely effective means of remedying his mistake. The pattern was, as he said at dinner, so restful and yet so far from being dull. And Miss Denton—who, by the way, had none of the stuff in her own room—was much disposed to agree with him.

At breakfast next morning he was induced to qualify his satisfaction to some extent—but very slightly. "There is one thing I rather regret," he said, "that we allowed them to join up the vertical bands of the pattern at the top. I think it would have been better to leave that alone." "Oh?" said his aunt interrogatively.

"Yes: as I was reading in bed last night they kept catching my eye rather. That is, I found myself looking across at them every now and then. There was an effect as if someone kept peeping out between the curtains in one place or another, where there was no edge, and I think that was due to the joining up of the bands at the top. The only other thing that troubled me was the wind."

"Why, I thought it was a perfectly still night."

"Perhaps it was only on my side of the house, but there was enough to sway my



curtains and rustle them more than I wanted.”

That night a bachelor friend of James Denton’s came to stay, and was lodged in a room on the same floor as his host, but at the end of a long passage, half-way down which was a red baize door, put there to cut off the draught and intercept noise.

The party of three had separated. Miss Denton a good first, the two men at about eleven. James Denton, not yet inclined for bed, sat him down in an arm-chair and read for a time. Then he dozed, and then he woke, and bethought himself that his brown spaniel, which ordinarily slept in his room, had not come upstairs with him. Then he thought he was mistaken: for happening to move his hand which hung down over the arm of the chair within a few inches of the floor, he felt on the back of it just the slightest touch of a surface of hair, and stretching it out in that direction he stroked and patted a rounded something. But the feel of it, and still more the fact that instead of a responsive movement, absolute stillness greeted his touch, made him look over the arm. What he had been touching rose to meet him. It was in the attitude of one that had crept along the floor on its belly, and it was, so far as could be recollected, a human figure. But of the face which was now rising to within a few inches of his own no feature was discernible, only hair. Shapeless as it was, there was about it so horrible an air of menace that as he bounded from his chair and rushed from the room he heard himself moaning with fear: and doubtless he did right to fly. As he dashed into the baize door that cut the passage in two, and—forgetting that it opened towards him—beat against it with all the force in him, he felt a soft ineffectual tearing at his back which, all the same, seemed to be growing in power, as if the hand, or whatever worse than a hand was there, were becoming more material as the pursuer’s rage was more concentrated. Then he remembered the trick of the door—he got it open—he shut it behind him—he gained his friend’s room, and that is all we need know.

It seems curious that, during all the time that had elapsed since the purchase of Poynter’s diary, James Denton should not have sought an explanation of the presence of the pattern that had been pinned into it. Well, he had read the diary through without finding it mentioned, and had concluded that there was nothing to be said. But, on leaving Rendcomb Manor

(he did not know whether for good), as he naturally insisted upon doing on the day after experiencing the horror I have tried to put into words, he took the diary with him. And at his seaside lodgings he examined more narrowly the portion whence the pattern had been taken. What he remembered having suspected about it turned out to be correct. Two or three leaves were pasted together, but written upon, as was patent when they were held up to the light. They yielded easily to steaming, for the paste had lost much of its strength and they contained something relevant to the pattern.

The entry was made in 1707.

“Old Mr. Casbury, of Acrington, told me this day much of young Sir Everard Charlett, whom he remember’d Commoner of University College, and thought was of the same Family as Dr. Arthur Charlett, now master of y<sup>e</sup> Coll. This Charlett was a personable young gent., but a loose atheistical companion, and a great Lifter, as they then call’d the hard drinkers, and for what I know do so now. He was noted, and subject to severall censures at different times for his extravagancies: and if the full history of his debaucheries had bin known, no doubt would have been expell’d y<sup>e</sup> Coll., supposing that no interest had been imploy’d on his behalf, of which Mr. Casbury had some suspicion. He was a very beautiful person, and constantly wore his own Hair, which was very abundant, from which, and his loose way of living, the cant name for him was Absalom, and he was accusom’d to say that indeed he believ’d he had shortened old David’s days, meaning his father, Sir Job Charlett, an old worthy cavalier.

“Note that Mr. Casbury said that he remembers not the year of Sir Everard Charlett’s death, but it was 1692 or 3. He died suddenly in October. [Several lines describing his unpleasant habits and reputed delinquencies are omitted.] Having seen him in such topping spirits the night before, Mr. Casbury was amaz’d when he learn’d the death. He was found in the town ditch, the hair as was said pluck’d clean off his head. Most bells in Oxford rung out for him, being a nobleman, and he was buried next night in St. Peter’s in the East. But two years after, being to be moved to his country estate by his successor, it was said the coffin, breaking by mischance, proved quite full of Hair: which sounds fabulous, but yet I believe precedents are upon record, as in Dr. Plot’s History of Staffordshire.

“His chambers being afterwards stripp’d, Mr. Casbury came by part of the hangings of it, which ’twas said this Charlett had design’d expressly for a memoriall of his Hair, giving the Fellow that drew it a lock to work by, and the piece which I have fasten’d in here was parcel of the same, which Mr. Casbury gave to me. He said he believ’d there was a subtlety in the drawing, but had never discover’d it himself, nor much liked to pore upon it.”

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The money spent upon the curtains might as well have been thrown into the fire, as they were. Mr. Cattell’s comment upon what he heard of the story took the form of a quotation from Shakespeare. You may guess it without difficulty. It began with the words “There are more things.”



# Shakespeare hunts the elfin deer

This week a brief extract from *Tales of the Mermaid Tavern* by Alfred Noyes.

Some of you will already know Noyes's work: he wrote *The Highwayman*. If you don't know it, it will be an episode later in the month.

He's making reference to a tradition here that Shakespeare moved to London because he'd been caught poaching.

I  
Will Shakespeare's out like Robin Hood  
With his merry men all in green,  
To steal a deer in Charlecote wood  
Where never a deer was seen.

II  
He's hunted all a night of June,  
He's followed a phantom horn,  
He's killed a buck by the light of the moon,  
Under a fairy thorn.

III  
He's carried it home with his merry, merry band,  
There never was haunch so fine;  
For this buck was born in Elfin-land  
And fed upon sops-in-wine.

IV  
This buck had browsed on elfin boughs  
Of rose-marie and bay,  
And he's carried it home to the little white house  
Of sweet Anne Hathaway.

V  
"The dawn above your thatch is red!  
Slip out of your bed, sweet Anne!  
I have stolen a fairy buck," he said,  
"The first since the world began.

VI  
"Roast it on a golden spit,  
And see that it do not burn;  
For we never shall feather the like of it  
Out of the fairy fern."

VII  
She scarce had donned her long white gown  
And given him kisses four,  
When the surly Sheriff of Stratford-town  
Knocked at the little green door.

VIII  
They have gaoled sweet Will for a poacher;  
But squarely he fronts the squire,  
With "When did you hear in your woods of a deer?  
Was it under a fairy briar?"

IX  
Sir Thomas he puffs,—"If God thought good  
My water-butt ran with wine,  
Or He dropt me a buck in Charlecote wood,  
I wot it is mine, not thine!"

X  
"If you would eat of elfin meat,"  
Says Will, "you must blow up your horn!  
Take your bow, and feather the doe  
That's under the fairy thorn!"

XI  
"If you would feast on elfin food,  
You've only the way to learn!  
Take your bow and feather the doe  
That's under the fairy fern!"

XII  
They're hunting high, they're hunting low,  
They're all away, away,  
With horse and hound to feather the doe  
That's under the fairy spray!

XIII  
Sir Thomas he raged! Sir Thomas he swore!  
But all and all in vain;  
For there never was deer in his woods before,  
And there never would be again!



# Mythic Venice: March

This year I'm participating in Dungeon 23, which is a writing challenge where people write each day to build up a series of rooms for a megadungeon. In the City23 variant, which is what I'm doing, a mass of material to be used to write a gazetteer for Ars Magic or Magonomia about the City of Venice. I had to take some time off for illness, so there are only 19 entries in my journal for March.

## THE DUCAL PALACE

The cool thing about writing on real places is that real maps exist.

The Ducal Palace is now a museum, and their webpage has floor plans, so you know where the facilities are when you visit. They also have room descriptions and illustrations of the development of the palace over time. During the Ars Magica period it is the Zianni Palace, but by Magonomia it's the 15th century Foscari Palace. See [Palazzoducale.visitmuv.it](http://Palazzoducale.visitmuv.it). Their maps are presumably copyright, but as the palace is real, an illustrator making floor plans for me is fine because it's real data, not artistic IP.

I could go room by room in the description, I won't now, but I might in the final book.

There is a virtual tour on Google Art and Culture that allows you to walk through it, and also there are further maps on Wikiarchitectura.

## NOTES FROM CHROMATOPIA BY DAVID COLES

Colours and dyes are interesting in RPGs because they are treasures and spell components.

I'm going to use "Chromatopia" as my basic book for this, because it sorts by historical period and is generously photographed. I may then supplement with "Colour" by Victoria Finlay and with "The secret lives of colour" by Kassia St Clair. Each of these also has a textile history for weaving magic.

There are still painters making their own materials in Mythic Venice, but they can now also buy paint, varnish and other supplies at speciale stores, which are apothecaries.

## COLES INTRODUCTION : NOTES FOR SHAPE AND MATERIAL TABLE

Alum is used to turn dyes, liquid, into pigment which is insoluble. Note Venice has an alum monopoly because they use alum in glass making. Paint made this way is referred to as a "lake". Distemper is painting with a mix of warm rabbit-skin glue, chalk, and pigment, yet another use for monster hides. Encaustic is painting with molten wax. Gesso is a mixture of chalk and glue, made of rabbit skins and bones. Glair is clear egg white binder used for manuscripts and paints. Gum Arabic is acacia sap used for watercolour and gouache binder. Natron is a historically significant alkali. Paint is pigment plus a binder. Pink is the historical name for a lake pigment, it's not a colour. Potash is the historical source for alum from burned plants. Tempera is an animal binder, egg tempera is albumen from eggs. Coles's problems in affording a mill, page 6, are a background for an Ars companion or a Magonomia alchemist.

Coles can recognise the paints he made in finished works. In game this would let you determine if there's been a theft or a forger in some cases. Also, an alchemist may know his secret formula has been stolen but can't prove it, because it's not obvious to others that it is a version of his paint, which is in the painting.

The Craftsman's Handbook by Cennini is a 15th century manual of medieval painting techniques which I will add to the length list of books to follow up with.

### *Basics*

When you mix two colours to make a secondary, the new colour is less bright than the originals. With weak medieval paints you can't just get a good red, blue and yellow and then mix out your colours the way you can with modern paints.

## BLUE

The further you are from a thing the paler and bluer it looks.

Blue is not a primary colour to the ancients. It becomes popular in Europe in the 13th century when ultramarine, which comes from across the sea is the name, costs more than gold. It's a symbol of the Virgin Mary and is made of ground lapis lazuli. 96% of the mineral is lost in the purification process. It's bright in egg tempera, dark in oil. In oil you need to add white and this is the first crack in the painter's axiom, of the time, of not mixing colours. Most modern blues are 18th century inventions.

Egyptian blue is a lost alchemical technique that creates a glaze which was an alternative to lapis lazuli. It's called cerulean blue but it's also used as a generic name for sky blue from smalt or azurite.

In Roman culture blue was a low status colour for barbarians, it only gets a boost during the 12th century when it's considered holy.

Venetian worker clothes are a pale blue because of a vegetable dye, I note here that that may be a British invention but I can't see where I got that from. An artificial azurite called blue verditer was really popular in the Middle Ages according to Coles but I can't find a pre-16th century source, there's some argument that it's all azurite until the 17th century.

Indigo is known in Europe but it's rare, it's a luxury product from India which is where it gets its name. You can make an identical chemical either by fermenting balls of wood in urine or by letting air get into the murex purple process but do you want to make blue when you could be making royal purple.

Woad's annoying because it destroys the soil where it grows while the dye is being made a scum rises out of it that can be used as paint, I'm not sure if it's colour fast. Wode dye is clear to yellowish I believe, the clothing becomes blue as the dye oxidizes.

The biggest deposit of azurite is in Hungary, azurite is mined alongside malachite, it's sometimes sold as the



more expensive lapis lazuli, it's hard, it needs to be washed and sieved many times and needs many layers to build up hue because it's so translucent. Still it's the best that the artists can afford and in Venice the gruelling prep work can be done by your apothecary.

Chrysocolla is a solder for gold, it's found with azurite and malachite and is used as a pale blue in watercolour and egg tempera painting. It's also very translucent and is sometimes called cedar green.

Smalt is a blue pigment made of grinding cobalt glass and that appears around the 1540s. In *Ars Magica*, we've done the kobold/cobalt thing before, I expect the paint is made from bloom of cobalt, blue crystals found with the metal, which may be a vis source.

French ultramarine was introduced in 1828 and it could be a treasure as a process. The traditional method of true ultramarine manufacture is detailed in calls in page 182 which is basically an enormous amount of washing and grinding.

## PURPLE

In *Ars Magica* we've already written a lot about Tyrian purple: dye made for murex shells and lichen from the Canary Islands. Purple dye is ridiculously expensive, in Venice you'd be an idiot to wear purple because what you wear tells people how you expect them to treat you. If you wear purple you're asking to be treated like a king. I believe one doge was violently deposed for dressing like a king.

The modern tendency to paint shadows as violet isn't known in period.

The technique for making true imperial purple was lost in 1204 and rediscovered in 1988. it was lost in 1204 when the Venetian sect Constantinople, so secrets can be treasured as there's a chance that someone found something that the characters can use as a sort of reconstructive archaeology.

There's another dye called orchil which reaches Europe from the Levant in 14th century, first found in Florence.

## RED

The earliest red dyes are ochres, one of which (Veneto red) is exported from Venice for use as the colour of blood in painting. That's useful for sympathetic magic.

In ancient Greece, people manufacture red lead which is more famous in alchemical circles as the beginning ingredient for all kinds of potions.

In the 8th century, people manufacture vermilion, it's a very bright red made from sulphurous mercury which are the two parent substances in alchemy, this is cinnabar, mercury sulphide and the name Vermilion means it looks like kermes (discussed later) Cinnabar is the older name, the king of Spain sends prisoners to mine mercury at Almedin which is a natural source of cinnabar.

Kermes dye comes from shieldbugs. In the Eastern Roman Empire decrees were written in this red.

In Venice, red is permitted but an opulent colour. Red is so popular for merchants that the highest quality of fabric, scarlet, now makes people think of a particular colour of red.

Cinnabar is very toxic,

Coles has dragon's blood on page 48 but it's mostly what's in the "Ancient Magic" book so I won't cover it now.

Alchemists take note, you can change yellow ochre to red or brown by baking it. This is where the 'burnt' colours come from like burnt sienna.

Vermillion is what magi in *Ars Magica* use to rubricate texts.

The little drawings are named after lead, minium, and your gaming miniatures are named after the colour, minium originally came from Spain.

Red lead is cheaper than vermilion so it's the most common red in medieval painting.

Lac is made from an insect that infests fig trees. It's first imported into Europe in 1220 which is the starting year for *Ars Magica*. It gives its name to lake pigments and becomes the primary red dye, alchemists mucking about with the pH level of lac can get it to go from red to orange to violet, and it's also one of the few paints that is edible. Its downside is that it's not light fast.

Medieval people called kermes "baca" or "berries" because under the medieval paradigm they might be berries rather than insects. A related product was called "grain" and 'ingrained' comes from the colour fastness of kermes dye. It's also the source of the names of crimson and carmine. It's slightly purple. Cochineal comes from the Americas and eventually it outcompetes kermes.

Brazilwood is a dye from Sri Lanka and it's very popular although not light fast. It's what the country of Brazil is named after, it has a fiery colour and its name means "brazier" wood.

Madder is imported to Europe by returning crusaders in the 13th century. The process of turning the dye into a pigment is extremely complex: the lake process has post-game development. Dependent on the mordant (that's the fixative) used madder can turn brown or purple.

Cochineal exports from South America begin after the Spanish invasion in 1529. The Spaniards spread the story that the cochineal is a pea-like plant, it's not.

Crocus martinus are iron oxide colours made alchemically from the 15th century onwards and it needs aqua regia which is a mixture of hydrochloric and nitric acid or iron sulphate, which needs marshal vitriol to make. It comes in red, yellow, orange and brown colours. It's not made industrially until the 18th century and it replaces some ochres, cardinals swap from purple to red in their robes in 1464.



## ORANGE

Orange is one of those weird colours that show up late, historically. In *Ars Magica*, people won't know what you mean when you say "orange", and if you show them something that is orange, in English at least they'll say it's golden-red. The name orange enters English when the Portuguese traders lob up to flog their fruit during Elizabeth I's reign. The colour becomes associated with the ruling house of the Netherlands.

That being said there were orange paints, ochres, red leads, even Vermillion is on the yellowish side of red. The main orange paint from Roman times is is realgar (other than "red" lead) which is an arsenic-laced mineral. Have you noticed that pretty much everything I've described so far is very poisonous. Realgar and orpiment are mined together. It's a red crystal that grinds into an orange powder. It's also handy as a rat poison.

It wrecks copper and lead paints. Titian was a huge fan though and we are talking Venice so you'll see some. The Dutch flag used to have an orange stripe but they gave it up in the 17th century because they couldn't find a colourfast dye.

## YELLOW

Ochre, "red" lead and gold can be used instead. There are some yellow plant dyes.

Venetians really push yellow along by inventing powdered gold painting techniques and running slave plantations to harvest saffron. Saffron needs hand pollination and each flower gives three tiny stamens. We have covered this in *Ars Magica* before, because making spices how some magi make money. The Venetian spice markets are where these shenanigans can be hidden most easily. I'd note that saffron isn't light stable and that Zoroastrian priests used to use it to write demon banishing prayers.

Venetians also import Indian yellow which is manganese salts. The technique for making it is lost. Modern studies hint it may have been from the urine of cows fed exclusively on mango leaves. Again secrets can be treasures. Europeans don't import gamboge, which is the Buddhist robe colour, until the 17th century. It's plant-based and not poisonous, which is odd for a paint in the period.

Coles mentions there are no dark yellows: you can add black to red or blue but if you add it to yellow you get green. If you invent it you get a new treasure, much in the same way as the person who invented mauve became terribly rich. I'd note this is a problem even today, I'm a bit of a fountain pen fan and many people quest for their perfect yellow. The problem is that if you have a yellow that's too bright when you put it on a page you can't see it. The temptation by people who make fountain pen ink is to give it a bit more depth of colour by putting a little bit of red in, which makes it an orange.

There is a yellow paint called orpiment (auripigmentum in Latin). As destiny would have it that Latin name was shortened to "arphenicum" from which we get the modern word "arsenic". Caligula said he could get gold out of it but that's not how it's done in most Renaissance alchemical texts. Orpiment hates other paints, it turns lead and copper based paints black.

The basic yellow of medieval painting is called giallodini. Modern scholars call it lead-tin yellow. It doesn't mix with sulfur and literally vanished from human memory in the 18th century to recently when it was rediscovered. Naples Yellow folkloristically comes from Mount Vesuvius (likely from 1600 onwards). It's a lead-antimony blend and it uses the same name in period as tin-lead yellow so it's hard to tell one from the other in documents.

Arzica is made from weld, a dye or glaze. It fades in sunlight and is used as cheap opiment. Its name is likely is a derivative of "arsenic" just because the colour is similar.

Stil de gran, which is yellow madder berries, can produce yellow, orange or green dye. It's not light fast but it's used to illuminate books. It's sold as a syrup in bladders not as a powder.

## GREEN

A safe, light-fast green is a sort of alchemical holy grail. In real life, it's a 19th century thing which is why landscapes before look so varnishy brown and then they go absolutely nuts for pastoral scenes.

There are green ochres but they're rare and there's lots of green plant dyes but they're not colourfast. You can grind up emerald which is expensive or malachite which is hard to source and tends to blue or you can mix blue and yellow but then it can't be bright. Also the good blue is made up of ground-up semi-precious stones at this point and yellow is a poisonous nightmare.

The alchemical workaround is by making verdegriis. This is done by boiling vinegar under copper sheets. Long time listeners may recall this is one of the ingredients in artificial saltpetre, used to make gunpowder. Do you want to sell your salt to poor artists so they can paint things or to well-financed kings so that they can shoot people? Verdegriis isn't a great green. It's got a lot of blue in it but it's there. Seriously make a decent green and the world will beat a path to your door.

I'm missing one ochre there: Verona green. It's a pale, weak green used to underpaint skin tones in medieval art. For Venetians it's mined nearby in Verona and in Cyprus. Modern artists call it terra verde or "green earth". It's not toxic and it binds well in oil but it has those colour limitations.

Malachite is found alongside azurite which is why it tends to blue. Its crushed and washed and panned to get a green powder but oddly for a paint material you don't grind it fine, because once it's too fine it's translucent. So it can't hold a bright colour, many people try and many people fail. Some Renaissance paintings have brown foliage in them because there was a brief fashion for verdegriis resin paint which was unstable, but only in the medium term, so the painters at the time didn't know that centuries on we would be looking at brown foliage.



## WHITE

Lead white is very popular as a cosmetic but incredibly toxic. The basics of making it are well understood. You take clay pots which are purpose built with an internal division. Put coils of lead foil in one side and vinegar in the other. Stack them high and cover them within manure. Seal the room and wait. Coles says you wait for 90 days: St Clair says 30, I'd note that Coles has photos of the result of him doing this. One also says it's a 15th century invention and the other one says it's in Pliny. The point of the manure is that it releases carbon dioxide and there is heat from the decay, so it's cooking the lead. It is ridiculously toxic so it's replaced by zinc white in 1782, and then in modern painting by titanium white in 1916.

Most silver in Europe comes from Spanish colonies in South America and is mined by slaves.

Chalk is used to make gesso which is the plaster used to prepare wood for painting. This is phased out once canvas becomes the substrate of choice. Chalk is brittle and that means that you can't roll the paintings. It's also used as a paint extender.

Talc is of great interest to Caterina Sforza who uses talc water as a base for many of her preparations.

Bone white is a great way of using up monster bits. Hartshorn white is made from shed deer antlers. It is gritty and it's used to size paper for silverpoint.

Silverpoint is when you draw using a thin silver pencil much in the same way that you would use a modern lead pencil. You can't erase as easily and you don't get the same sort of pressure gradings that you can with modern pencils but I'm off into the weeds. Librarian note: sizing is the spray that's put on the surface of the paper to make it ready for ink. Modern paper uses starch which is why when you get modern books even a little bit wet they become mould farms. Bone white is toothier. (Hello anyone else who's into stationery) That means it resists the pen more than modern sprayed starch paper.

## BLACK

Lampblack is ancient and just turns up as a freebie in most alchemical practices. Lamp black is basically what happens when hot smoke hits a cold surface. Technically it's bluish black and the Romans burned wine dregs to make it bluer. Modern lampblack is purer than Renaissance lampblack.

Bone black is made by roasting bones with a little oxygen to make a charcoal. This is washed and ground. A use for monster bones. Ivory black is a way of using up the offcuts of the ivory carving trade, it sounds kind of necromantic.

Vine black: You know those charcoal sticks that people sketch with? They're made in game period from grape vines. Modern ones are made from willow. Grapes are sacred to Venice's first saint, Guistiana, and she has this whole Diana cult thing going on. Similarly char blocks can be made from the stones of fruit, notably peaches.

Graphite is often mistaken for lead. Actual lead and silverpoint are used to draw. In 1565 a huge deposit of graphite is found in Borrowdale in England. The first pencils have string or hide jackets. It's also used for cannonball moulds, so the Crown watches the mine intensely.

Gall ink has been written about extensively in *Ars Magica*. I finally bought myself some gall ink although it isn't made from oak galls. It's made from tea, but it is chemically similar. I can't put it in my fountain pens because it'll rot them out from the inside. It's purplish in *Ars Magica*, after it oxidises. Technichally gall ink is clear untile it oxidises so they put lampblack in it so you can tell where you've put it on the page. Mine isn't: has a sunset yellow guide in, and it goes to a strange muddy grey-green over time.

Logwood is an early, true black that comes from the Americas in the 17th century, True black dyes appear from about 1360 onwards. Before that people just used very dark browns, which fade. Brown becomes more fashionable after black is colorfast.

Kohl is the eye treatment that you see in Egyptian art. Its active ingredient is galena. They added color and scent to it. It's mildly poisonous, which is why it's used around the eyes: it prevents eye infections.

Printing presses use lampblacks which are suspended in linseed oil. Venice is the European center of printing.

## BROWN

I've discussed ochres at some length already so I'll just skip those.

Bistre is beechwood resin from the 14th century. It's a charcoal used on a water base. It's called caligo in Latin.

Asphaltum is a richer brown but it's tarry and it won't mix with water. It's made out of asphalt.

Sepia is cuttlefish ink. It's used as writing ink from the Romans onwards. It's a drawing ink in the Renaissance. It's made from carefully-dried ink sacks, so it is transportable. It is also an example of how you can make treasures out of monster innards. The process is given in detail, in Coles on page 89.

Walnut comes from nuts. It's warm brown, colour fast, light fast, and the full process is in Coles on page 91,

Mummy or mummet is literally made from mummies. It was originally used medicinally. Mummy was originally the bitumen they were wrapped in, rather than the bodies themselves. Eventually the demand was so high that you got bits of people. It's used in painting from the 16th Century. Obvious plot hooks like haunting, possession, necromancy, multiple possessions by shared people eating bits from the same mummy. By preference some people use mummified animals, so it's a little less disgusting.

On from colour...



SHAPE OF THE EMPIRE

The empire is broken into three chunks. The bit run by the doge directly, which is called the degardo, has been covered in detail. The Stato Dio Mar, which means the state of the sea, is the navally-supported empire. The Domini de Terrafirma are the dominions of the land.

What’s in the two non-degardo bits changes a lot. In 1220, the Ars period, the Stato Dio Mar contains Istria, the podesta of Constantinople, Euboea, the Cyclades and Crete, which is a weird case. By 1600 we add Corfu, Argos, Napulia, Duazzo, Alessio, Scutari, Drivasto, Lepanto, Patras, Navarino, Cyprus and some other places. They lost Istria, then added back bits (Cres, Reb, Pag, Zadar, Vrana, Novigrad) The Domini di Terraferma spreads out over northern Italy.

THE DUCAL CORNO

The Corno is not a crown: it’s deliberately a hat. Sure, it’s a silk hat, with a gold circle around the brim, but if you get too fancy with it, other nobles will overthrow you. Every Easter the doge leads a procession to the deeply-suspicious nunnery of San Zaccharia and they give him a new hat.

Lots of writers suggest that it’s related to the Phrygian cap. This is the signature cap of House Mercere and their ancestors, the Milvi. They are hawk-formed shapeshifters and Egyptian priests, mentioned in their housebook. A note on Wikipedia links its shape to the hedjet, which is the white crown of Upper Egypt. Could the corno be sacred to Nekhbet like the White Crown? She’s the vulture-headed funeral goddess. Does it link to the Rotting Princess? Nekbet is related to the Eileithyia, the chthonic lady of the Eleusinian Mysteries. If so, is there a shen with an annual duration in the corno?

A shen, by the way, is a protective circle of rope. The descendant of it is something you’ll see as a cartouche. So, cartouches are a name surrounded by a protective magical rope. They’re called cartouches, because when the French saw them, the shape reminded them of the cartridges from their weapons. That’s not a term that’s used in period.

THE LOVE SONG OF J ALFRED PRUFROCK BY T.S. ELIOT.

I’m going to harvest this for, at minimum, a monster, and as an inspiration for split character sheets.

*Let us go then, you and I,  
When the evening is spread out against the sky  
Like a patient etherized upon a table;  
Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets,  
The muttering retreats  
Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels  
And sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells:  
Streets that follow like a tedious argument  
Of insidious intent  
To lead you to an overwhelming question ...  
Oh, do not ask, "What is it?"  
Let us go and make our visit.*

*In the room the women come and go  
Talking of Michelangelo.*

*The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes,  
The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes,  
Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening,  
Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains,  
Let fall upon its back the soot that falls from chimneys,  
Slipped by the terrace, made a sudden leap,  
And seeing that it was a soft October night,  
Curled once about the house, and fell asleep.  
And indeed there will be time  
For the yellow smoke that slides along the street,  
Rubbing its back upon the window-panes;  
There will be time, there will be time  
To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet,  
There will be time to murder and create,  
And time for all the works and days of hands  
That lift and drop a question on your plate;*

\*\*\*

*I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each.  
I do not think that they will sing to me.  
I have seen them riding seaward on the waves  
Combing the white hair of the waves blown back  
When the wind blows the water white and black.  
We have lingered in the chambers of the sea  
By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown  
Till human voices wake us, and we drown.*



**DANDOLO’S WAGER (INSPIRED BY THE HISTORY OF BYZANTINE PODCAST EPISODE 259)**

We are so used to thinking of the sack of Constantinople in 1204 as fixed history that we don’t ever seem to consider that, to the Venetians at the time, this was the final throw of the dice. Enrico Dandolo had re-gearred Venice’s entire economy around the Crusade, then found out that his customers had no money. Annual trading voyages had been foregone. There was no way of getting in external money. The government had paid out of fortune in materials and labour. Could Venice go broke? What would that have done to the West?

Contrarily, what happens if the Order, or some magi, or some demons, front up with a loan for the Crusaders and say, here’s 85,000 marks. It’s a lot, but the plunder of Egypt might be worth it. Sole trade privileges to Egypt, well Alexandria, are hugely significant to the Venetians. Remember that the crusade that took out Constantinople was originally going to attack Alexandria. This was so that they had the wherewithal to sustain an army in an Outremer.

15,000 soldiers are shipped to the Lido, so they can’t attack the Venetians. Innocent III is much annoyed. The papal legate is left behind. Zara, which is one of the points of resistance on the shore of the Tyrrhenian Sea Sea, offers to surrender to Dandolo. When he leaves to consult with the other leaders of the crusade, Simon de Montfort tells the Zaran ambassadors that their city is under papal protection. When Dandolo returns, they have left. He chooses a siege.

As the new emperor flails about, Dandolo needs to keep him in power. If he’s deposed, Venice loses the cost of the fleet, Egyptian access, and Byzantine access. He needs to double down and he needs to do it every time something goes wrong. It ends with the sack and it claims some territory, but was a really great strategy to impoverish Venice’s largest trading partner? You can pour out Eastern treasure on the Lido shore and everyone thinks that’s fantastic, but the daily life of the people making the exports and shipping them takes a terrible battering in 1204.

**THE MOST HOLY LEAGUE AND THE TREATY OF LODI**

The Treaty of Lodi sits between the Ars and Magonomia period. It ushers in four decades of guarded peace in northern Italy, based on constantly-changing factions that seek a balance of power. Venice being rich is one of the heavyweights in this balance.

A direct effect of the treaties following Lodi is that embassies change from trips with a particular purpose to physical places with permanent staff. Venice gives its ambassadors a private budget for intelligence gathering as a matter of course. This is shocking to some of the other states, for whom spying is either irregular or done by a unit reporting directly to the monarch.

So the doge runs the Council of Ten, the doge may have agents, the Council of Ten do have agents, and they are appointed by a council which has a secret police. Then they appoint ambassadors who also have agents. There are agents everywhere. The Venetian argument is that this is cheaper than an army, and also it’s less likely to seize power than an army.

**THE GRAND SCHOOLS**

A school isn’t an educational institution, it’s a confraternity. There are “great” and “little” schools. The six great schools are supported by, and function for, the state. The little ones could be centred on a trade, a nationality, or a charitable cause. The great schools are all religiously motivated, the little schools are more flexible for PC and storytelling uses.

Scuole members are meant to be citizens but not nobles. Also, officebearers kept their role for ages, not like the patrician roles in the government, which were deliberately cycled rapidly to “prevent” corruption. Eventually, the state regulates the schools and delegates its social functions to them, so medicine, drugs, hospices, pauper burials, pilgrim support, all of that remains a government function but it’s run by the great schools. It also regulates their legal articles, which are called capitulars.

The standard structure after the state takes an interest for the great schools is that the financial members of a school elect as a board: a leader, his deputy, a treasurer, a scribe, and two staff members per sestiere, then another group to check the board’s finances on a regular basis.

Most small schools were linked to a church. Great schools each had a meeting hall. The first floor is a large hall for business and charity and upstairs is a salon for meetings of the members and a smaller room for the boardroom. These are sometimes lavishly decorated. Sounds a bit covenanty.

**INITIAL THOUGHTS ON MASKS**

I’ve been working on mask magic on and off for decades and there’s a version of it mentioned in the Istrian section of “Against the Dark”. I’ve also stated them up as a type of parasitic prosthetic in Episode 18 podcast, (yes it was that long ago). I think I was over-complicating it though, ours already has mechanics for possession, not just demons but fairies. Certainly Mormo is terrible, but it’s a model we could use. Similarly in Maginomia there’s an example of a symbiotic possessing spirit. It isn’t public yet so I’m going to stop talking about it and keep moving on.

Loosely male masks are white and female masks are black. Carnival lasts roughly from Christmas to Lent. Some people wear masks out of season. A person in a mask is socially anonymous. Even if you know who they are you are required not to say. There are rules for noppera-bo already in Ars Magica and I will probably reuse them now, Noppera-bo are a Japanese monster that has a face like an egg.

**THE ZANNI**

This is a servant type that comes in two varieties, the foolish servant and the cunning servant.

Zanni generally wears patched clothes. After the Magonomia period this changes into the diamond shapes of Harlequin’s costume. He wears a mask but it doesn’t cover his mouth so that he can talk to his master. The longer his nose the stupider he is meant to be. This isn’t an anti-Semitic thing: it is a phallic thing. Although the gait of most Zanni emphasize that they carry heavy loads for living, they also do physical comedy and acrobatics. One of their walks is intended to indicate they are going off stage, which is a handy magical power. They also borrow props from other characters in a sort of magical way. They’re driven by their appetites.



VARIANTS OF THE ZANNI.

Arlechinno – see below  
Scapino is an escape artist and he has green stripes on his costume.  
Scaramouche is a little skirmisher, dressed in black like a Spanish Don.  
Pedrolino is in all white clothes which are comically oversized and he doesn’t wear masks. He wears infarinato instead, which is a white flour makeup paste. It’s a possible ancestor of modern clown whiteface.  
Brighella is a cruel, vindictive, clever master of lies and an alcoholic who loves money. He wears white clothes and has an olive green mask.  
Mezzetino is a variant of Brighella but less violent, more musical and rather more creepily flirtatious. He has a brown or rust mask and a short cape.  
Punchinella has black or dark brown for a mask. He’s from Naples. Has baggy clothes which are white and carries a short stick as a weapon and a coin purse. He accidentally triumphs. He untangles the problems of others but not his own. There is a common saying in Venice: “a punchinella secret”. This is a truth widely known but not spoken of – a widely known truth, treated as a secret.  
Pierrot is a late 17th century invention. He’s a sad clown and he’s a rival for Columbine’s affections. He wears whiteface instead of a mask and oversized white clothes.

ARLECCHINO OR HARLEQUIN

So he’s a servant but he’s a clever one. He often tricks his master and his romantic rival Pierrot. He is the lover to Columbine. He can’t do simple physical movements when acrobatic ones are possible. He often carries a wooden sword. He’s always hungry and he’s afraid of his master. He’s likely descended from a French demon, Hellequin. He’s possibly related to the Herla Cyning, the Earl King, in Walter maps book from the 12th century. There is a version of him in Dante’s Inferno. Oddly for a male character his mask is black. This could be because of his infernal origin. His mask has warts, small eyes, a short nose, and hollow cheeks. This could be a default demon.

VECCIO

The Veccio are a class of characters. The name means “elderly”. They often serve as a barrier to prevent the lovers getting together. They’re generally the antagonists. Pantalone is the decadent merchant and he’s the source of Shakespeare’s pantaloon. There is a Saint Pantalone. I’m not sure that they’re related. Anyway he’s the butt of jokes. He’s usually the father of one of the lovers. He has enough money to meddle in the lives of others. He’s petty. He’s single. He does hell of a flirt. But he never marries. He’s violently over-emotional.

His costume is red with a cap, a codpiece, or coin purse. He has a sword, a medal, or a walking stick.

Balanzone, or Il Dottore, is a decadent, erudite doctor, often linked to Bologna. He is rich, vain and wordy. He’s a parody of the educated class. He’s either boring or clearly out of his depth. He wears a one-third mask and the robes of a scholar. He, optionally, has rouge cheeks, which is meant to demonstrate that he’s an alcoholic.

Il Capitano is a coward, a braggart. He tells tall tales about his exploits. He’s greedy, he changes sides. He wears a parody of military uniform, carries an oversized sword, and wears a mask with a phallic nose. The original of these is Magnifico Gloriosus, which dates back to Roman theatre. There is a competent, useful variant of the Capitano. He’s called a Scaramouchia, or Scaramouche in French.

NON-COMIC MASKS

Mattasin / Frombolatore  
This is a warning costume. The person is warning you that they are armed with scented eggs.  
Batua wears a classic white mask. The mask bows out at the base for speech and eating, so there is no mouth. It’s held on by a tricorn, a hat, no strap. The more I read, the more I see women wearing this, and a tricorn and a tabard.  
A volto has a white ghostly mask, male or female.

A moretta is a small black female mask with no mouth, that is held in place by a button between the teeth. It’s sometimes called a virtue mask because the woman can’t talk. It’s considered very mysterious and erotic.

The De Coltra is a person who is bundled in a blanket. They are a spirit of fornication.

A Spirito Folleto is a screaming devil mask. It’s a female mask.  
A Gnaga is a man dressed as a parody of a nanny.  
A Viloti is a peasant or rustic mask.  
A Povereto is a beggar costume.  
A Vechia is an old woman.  
A Bullo is a braggart in armour.  
A Bernardon is a fake beggar with fake shoes. Pushed about in a barrow. He’s bandaged. He pretends to be syphilitic. He sings bawdy songs.  
Salvadeago is a savage man  
A burritin is some dressed as a puppet.

Notes on the law enforcement for the poor. The rich get away with more.

1338, you’re no longer allowed to travel through the streets after dark wearing a mask.  
1448, beggars may not wear masks.  
1585, if you have a mask, you’re not allowed to carry a gun in the street anymore. Carrying blades is allowed.  
1606, you’re not allowed to wear masks in church.  
1703, you’re not allowed to wear masks while in gambling houses.  
1718, you’re told to stop wearing them during the Lent

The mascheri, the mask makers, are legally speaking, painters. Masks are made of plaster of Paris, fortified with wax or leather. The leather ones are heavier and less comfortable for long-term use.

ОВИ ОДОРИФЕРИ: SCENTED EGGS.

These are blown eggs filled with rosewater, and they are thrown or slung at women flirtatiously, particularly during Carnival, when street vendors sell them. In 1241, they are banned from the Piazza. People were making noxious ovi, and some of them have ink inside. This is a classic splash potion.

Basically, it’s a potion grenade like a water balloon. I know there’s a modern version in Central and South America, which have confetti inside instead.

There is an odd note on italiancarnival.com, when you’re looking up these eggs. It shows a fortune-teller from Venice that’s communicating with someone by whispering through a hollow cane into their ear. I’ve got no idea why they’re doing that. I’ll come up with a good reason.

And I find that I have gone into the April material. So, let us stop there.